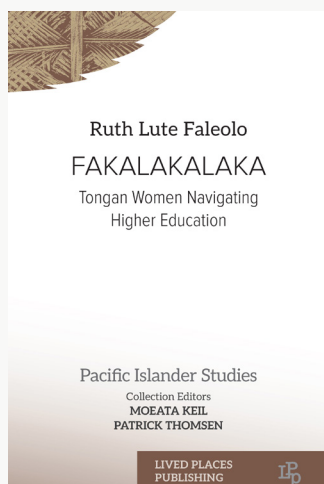




Fakalakalaka: Tongan Women Navigating Higher Education

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COLLECTION EDITED BY Moeata Keil and Patrick Thomsen

COLLECTION
Pacific Islander Studies

EDITION
1st edition

MARKET
College/higher education
and Professional and
Scholarly

This course reading...

- Centres the lived experiences of Tongan women navigating higher education in Aotearoa through authentic talanoa narratives.
- Introduces fakalakalaka as a holistic, culturally grounded framework for understanding progress and success.
- Challenges deficit narratives surrounding Pacific learners and offers a strengths-based Pasifika feminist perspective.
- Explores the intersections of identity, faith, family, gender, and place in shaping educational aspirations.
- Provides practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to better support Pacific women in tertiary education.
- Ideal for educators, researchers, policymakers, Pacific studies scholars, and students of gender, education, and cultural studies.

What does it mean for Tongan women to thrive in Western higher education systems while staying true to their cultural and spiritual values?

In *Fakalakalaka: Tongan Women Navigating Higher Education*, **Dr Ruth (Lute) Faleolo** brings forward the lived experiences of Tongan women pursuing university study in Aotearoa. Drawing on talanoa interviews and grounded in the concept of *fakalakalaka*—a holistic and culturally situated understanding of progress—**Dr Ruth (Lute) Faleolo** explores how identity, faith, family, and place shape educational aspirations and journeys. The book examines the tensions Tongan women navigate between family expectations, gendered responsibilities, and the structural inequalities of Western higher education systems, while remaining anchored in their cultural and spiritual values.

Through personal narratives and critical cultural reflection, **Faleolo** challenges deficit-based perspectives of Pacific learners and offers a Pasifika feminist framework for understanding academic success. Rich with insight and practical relevance, the book provides educators, researchers, and policymakers with culturally grounded strategies to better support Pacific women in tertiary education.

Ideal for educators, researchers, policymakers, gender studies scholars, and students interested in Pacific studies, higher education, and feminist approaches to culturally responsive learning.

Dr Ruth (Lute) Faleolo is a New Zealand-born Pasifika academic, researcher, and mentor whose work advances Pacific knowledge systems, culturally responsive education, and equitable pathways for Pacific women and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia.

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