**Supporting successful learning outcomes for secondary Pacific
students through home-school relationships**

by

Margaret Flavell

A thesis

submitted to Victoria University of Wellington
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Victoria University of Wellington

2019

Abstract

A need to improve learning outcomes for Pacific students has been highlighted by the Ministry of Education in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with the reflection that the education system has not adequately catered for these learners. The development of home-school relationships is recognised by the Ministry as one way of promoting the achievement of Pacific students; closer links with Pacific families are encouraged so that students' needs may be better met. The aim of this research was to explore how secondary schools could develop relationships with Pacific families and communities in order to support students' successful learning outcomes.

A qualitative case study, using a grounded theory approach, was employed. An Appreciative Inquiry framework helped guide the research design to facilitate the exploration of how home-school relationships worked well within the context of a New Zealand town, and how they can be enhanced to benefit secondary Pacific learners. A Communities of Practice lens supported analysis; and an appreciation of Pacific relationality was supported by the theoretical frameworks, *Teu le va* and Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM).

Key findings demonstrate the willingness and expertise from members of the Pacific community to support schools' endeavours to cater for Pacific learners, helping address any barriers to family engagement. Despite the strong commitment from teachers and school leaders to work more closely and creatively with Pacific families, this study concludes that knowledge and ideas do not always flow freely between home and school. An inherent risk is that schools hold onto decision-making processes although there is a capacity within the Pacific community to offer effective solutions. To alleviate this risk, school structures need to open up to permit a freer exchange of information, prioritising relationships that accord with Pacific values. The bricolage of frameworks employed in this study have the potential to be applied to school settings for the review and development of home-school practices for Pacific families.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge and express heart-felt thanks to all those who facilitated my research journey. If ever I wanted to appreciate the significance of relationships, then I need only reflect on the strength of those which have carried me from beginning to end. Thank you to my supervisor, Cherie Chu, for your quiet but firm direction, bringing ideas back on track when they went astray. Thank you to Carolyn Tait, for your thoroughness and clarity of thinking which propelled me forward at the start; and thank you to Fuapepe Rimoni, for keeping a vigilant, Samoan eye on me towards the end which I so appreciated.

I stepped into unfamiliar worlds when I engaged in fieldwork. I am most grateful for the warm response, trust and support that I received from participants and those who contributed to this investigation. I am particularly indebted to my cultural advisor who, despite her many commitments in a very busy life, found time to guide my efforts. I hope I have done justice to her belief that the strengthening of home-school relationships will help Pacific learners become successful, confident young people who can excel in whatever field they choose.

Thank you to my friends and family – listening when needed; providing space to write and think when required; and lighting up the day with good company and humour so I remember how lucky I am that you are all part of my life. Thank you to Doug, my husband, for your patience when my mind is otherwise distracted. I have noticed how adept you have become at explaining my research to other people. Thank you, Di and Tessie, for the beach walks, catch-ups over coffee, and showing a genuine interest in my research topic. I am very grateful, Di, that you were able to point me in the right direction when I was getting underway.

Thank you to my children, Lucy, Ian and Lizzy, for keeping in touch, despite our distance apart. I appreciate your messages of support – asking me how I am doing, encouraging me to keep going, and metaphorically patting me on the back when my work has gone

well. I hope I haven't been too absorbed to return the same thoughtfulness you have shown me in recent times.

Thank you to Laura van Peer for your thorough proofreading. Naturally, you found ways in which I could clarify my writing and I am grateful for that. Thank you to all those with whom I have come into contact at Victoria University so that time spent there has been rewarding (especially, the Cluster meetings). Finally, I am very grateful to Victoria University for the opportunity to undertake this doctoral research. Thank you for that, too.

In memory of Salim Akhtar,
a former student

I wish I'd known then what I know now

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgement	li
Table of contents	iv
List of Appendices	xiv
List of tables	xiv
List of figures	xiv
Glossary	xv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Overview of research	1
Purpose of chapter	1
Rationale from the literature	1
Pacific students in Aotearoa/New Zealand	2
Socio-economic factors affecting Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand	2
Home-school relationships	5
My background and personal rationale	7
Master of Education degree	7
Vaka Pasifiki Conference, 2014	9
Personal Values	9
Background context	10
Pacific population of Aotearoa/New Zealand	10
The context for this study	11
<i>Geographical setting</i>	12
<i>The Fale Pasifika</i>	13
Key concepts	13
Community	13
Knowledge	15
Successful learning outcomes	16
The Influence of Appreciative Inquiry on the research questions	16
The 4-D cycle	17
The research questions	17

Overview of theoretical frameworks and methodology	18
Thesis structure	18
Chapter 2: Home-school relationships	21
Introduction	21
The nature of home-school relationships	21
The influence of parental involvement on student achievement	21
Engagement over involvement	24
Partnership – implication for schools	25
Home-school partnerships involve the community	26
Drawing the literature together	29
The engagement of minority families – unequal partnerships	30
Socio-economic status	30
A cultural mis-match	30
New Zealand schools	33
Home-school relationships for Pacific learners in New Zealand	33
Students’ perspectives	33
Parents’ perspectives	34
Teachers’ perspectives	36
Chapter summary	37
Chapter 3: Strategies and models for developing family engagement	38
Introduction	38
Examples of how schools have engaged with Pacific families and communities in New Zealand	38
Pacific Island Community Parent Liaison Project	39
Leadership practices supporting Pacific student success	40
Research and development project on Pacific students’ progress and achievement	42
Summary	43
International models of family and community engagement	43

INCLUDED – a European project	43
Brazil's Citizen School Project	46
Summary	48
School governance in New Zealand – the role of parents	48
The Board of Trustees (BOTs)	48
A system under review	51
Chapter summary	52
 Chapter 4: Social constructionism and Appreciative Inquiry	 54
A brief recap	54
Aim of chapter	54
SECTION 1 A social constructionist paradigm	54
Introduction	54
A relativist's perspective (Gergen)	55
The role of language (from a relativist's perspective)	56
A critical realist's perspective (Elder-Vass)	57
The role of language (from a critical realist's perspective)	58
A positive approach	59
Implications for identity and agency	60
Identity as dynamic self	60
Ethical agency	62
SECTION 2 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)	63
Introduction	63
Underlying principles	64
Optimum conditions for successful outcomes in an AI process	65
The 4-D cycle	66
AI in practice	67
A range of contexts	67
Summing up	72
A critique of AI	73

AI's potential to bring transformation through a positive approach	73
The influence of positivity on power relations	74
The shadow process	76
The role of dialogue	77
Summary of critique	77
Summary and conclusion of AI	78
 Chapter 5: Communities of Practice	 79
Introduction	79
Key ideas and concepts	80
Mutual engagement and shared enterprise in a community	80
Learning through engaging in social practices	81
<i>Shared practices</i>	81
<i>Participation and reification</i>	81
<i>The influence of boundaries and brokers</i>	81
<i>Summary</i>	82
Learning through identity formation	82
<i>Participating, learning and belonging</i>	82
<i>The spatial and temporal nature of identity</i>	82
<i>The interplay of imagination, engagement and alignment</i>	84
<i>The issue of power</i>	85
<i>Summary and concluding comments</i>	85
Examples of how Communities of Practice has been used	86
Learning and identity	86
Learning, identity, and relationships	87
Learning, relationships, and organisational practices	89
Concluding comments	93
Theoretical rigour	94
Confusion about membership	94
Confusion about participation	95

Shift in thinking and issues with implementation	96
Response to critiques	97
Appreciative Inquiry and Communities of Practice	100
 Chapter 6: <i>Teu le va</i> and Talanoa Research Methodology	 104
Introduction	104
SECTION 1 – Va	105
Introduction	105
Understanding Va	105
Spirituality and unity in relationships	105
A harmonious existence (taking time into consideration)	106
Connection between people and the land	107
The preservation of wellbeing through <i>teu le va</i> and <i>tauhi vaha’a</i>	108
Summary and reflection	110
SECTION 2 – <i>Teu le va</i>	110
Introduction	110
Understanding <i>Teu le va</i>	111
Key principles	111
Recommended practices	112
Summary and reflection	113
SECTION 3 – Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM)	114
Introduction	114
Understanding Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM)	115
Tongan concept of talanoa	115
Pan-Pacific perspective	117
Respect and trust	117
The research context	118
Talanoa as both a research methodology and method	118
A review of talanoa in practice	119

Evaluating Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM)	123
Concluding thoughts – aligning Talanoa Research Methodology with <i>Teu le va</i> , Appreciative Inquiry and Communities of Practice	125
Chapter 7: Methodology	127
Introduction	130
Recap of research questions and theoretical framework	130
SECTION 1 - A theoretical and personal perspective	130
Qualitative approach	130
Positionality	130
Rationale for a case study	130
Defining a case study through its boundaries	133
SECTION 2 – fieldwork	135
Context	135
Culturally-responsive approach	136
Data collection decisions	137
Data collection plan	137
Sampling decisions	138
The phases	139
How phases one, two, and three worked in practice	141
Participants from phases one, two, and three	144
Data analysis	145
Grounded theory approach	145
Nvivo	153
Appreciative Inquiry to shape findings	154
Reporting the findings	155
Trustworthiness and ethics	155
Trustworthiness and reliability	155
Ethics	157

Chapter 8: Findings – Discovery and Dream	158
Introduction	158
SECTION 1 Perceptions of Pacific/community participants	158
Discovery – parents/community participants’ perceived strengths	158
For the future of their children	159
We need to encourage our children	161
I understand the system	162
We can help each other	163
That was really cool to see	164
Dream – Pacific parent/community participants’ perceptions of ideal home-school relationships	166
Students and parents make informed choices	166
Decisions aren’t made as an individual	167
I think the schools need to shift the way they do things	168
Students “may go back home, stay there and do nothing”	171
A trusting relationship	171
You’ve got to be genuine	173
You actually have to go out of your way	173
A so’ataga	174
SECTION 2 – Perceptions of teacher participants	175
Discovery – teacher participants’ perceived strengths	175
People are genuinely trying to build relationships	176
I still run into them and they greet me like a long-lost friend	177
We are trying our best	178
Passion for their children to do well	180
They bring a beautiful flavour, wairua/spirit energy	182
Dream – Teachers’ perceptions of ideal home-school relationships	183
If we can create a situation where the best option is to be fully engaged and involved and do their best	183
Capture their creative essence	184
It’s trying to get parents to understand	184

Families can struggle	186
I'm struggling with what I want to achieve	188
Lack of confidence	190
It has to be more flexible	191
Quality mentoring	192
SECTION 3 – Perceptions of Pacific students	193
Discovery – Pacific student participants' perceived strengths	193
You have to try and make them proud	194
I've really wanted to be a police officer since I was seven	195
Mine have been crazy supportive	196
Teachers who helped in their spare time to catch up	198
Appreciate the gift of God	199
It is really my own responsibility	201
Dream – Pacific student participants' perceptions of ideal home-school relationships	202
Your teachers and parents are there to support you – but you decide whether you want to learn	202
Have a certain goal to reach	203
Most of the Pasifika students don't have that much confidence	204
You do stupid things	206
They didn't really know much	206
Please help me to work	208
Getting involved in school	210
Chapter summary	210
Discovery	210
Dream	211
 Chapter 9: Findings – Design and Destiny	 213
Introduction	213
Relationships	214

John (PC6)	214
Arihi (PC12)	215
Alipate	217
Summing up	220
The planned construction and dissemination of a report	220
Report content	221
<i>Findings</i>	221
<i>Recommendations</i>	222
The report process	223
<i>Consultation and co-construction</i>	223
<i>Engaging in feedback</i>	224
Reviewing the Design and Delivery phases	225
 Chapter 10: Discussion and conclusion	 228
Introduction	228
SECTION 1 - Discussion of Findings	229
Discovering participants' strengths which positively influence home-school relationships	229
Pacific parent/community perceptions	229
Teachers' perceptions	231
Students' perceptions	232
Concluding comments on participants' strengths	233
Participants' dreams for ideal home-school relationships	234
Summarising participants' dreams	234
Effective home-school partnerships for Pacific students	234
Supporting mutual understanding through relationships	236
Summary comments	237
Doubts about how to achieve ideal relationships	237
Summarising doubts	237
Social and economic barriers to parental engagement	237
Teacher assumptions	238

Lack of student confidence with academic learning	239
Power dynamics in home-school relationships	240
Summary and concluding comments	241
Designing home-school relationships to help deliver ideal conditions	241
Participants' ideas for designing effective partnerships	241
Lessons learnt from the report process	243
Creating opportunities to participate	245
Summary and reflective comments on methodology	246
SECTION 2 – Reflections and recommendations	248
Key points and implications	248
Attending to relationships which validate knowledge exchange	248
A more participatory structure	249
Application of theoretical frameworks in a school setting	250
Appreciative Inquiry	250
Communities of Practice	251
Teu le va	251
Key considerations	252
Summing up	252
A road map for developing home-school partnerships	253
Limitations	255
Closing thoughts and recommendations	256
References	258
Appendices	
1 Report for Pacific community and schools	278
2 Proverb from cultural advisor	283
3 Consent forms for:	
Principal	284
Pacific parent/community interview	285
Pacific parent/community meeting	286
School interview	287
Student interview	288

4	Confidentiality Agreements for: Cultural advisor	289
	Transcriber	290
5	Information sheets for: Cultural advisor and Pacific parent/community participant	291
	School participant	293
	Student participant	295
6	Interview questions	
	Pacific parent/community participant	297
	School participant	298
	Student participant	299
7	Questionnaires	
	Pacific parent/community participant	300
	School participant	301
	Student participant	302

List of Tables

1	Achievement results published by NZQA (New Zealand Qualifications Authority)	3
2	Profile of parent/community participants	146
3	Profile of member of staff participants	148
4	Profile of student participants	150
5	Summary of findings	227

List of Figures

1	A bricolage of frameworks	20
2	Home, school, community partnerships	29
3	AI and CoP	103
4	Recruitment and data collection plan	140
5	Frameworks applied to good practice in home-school partnerships	253
6	The 5-D Cycle	254

Glossary

Ako	According to Thaman (1997), a Tongan concept of ako refers to the learning processes of formal education; its original meaning relates to the learning of knowledge and skills for island survival. A Māori concept of ako refers to reciprocal learning (Ministry of Education, 2013).
AsTTLe	Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning used by New Zealand schools, frequently online (Te Kete Ipurangi, n.d.).
Board of Trustees	Schools in New Zealand are managed by a Board of Trustees (BoTs). Trustees are elected from the parent community, school staff and include one student member (NZSTA, n.d.a).
Decile	New Zealand schools are allocated a decile rating from 1 to 10. Approximately 10% of schools are decile 1, 10% decile 2 and so on. Decile 10 are in the highest socio-economic areas and attract the lowest level of funding. Conversely, decile 1 schools serve the poorer communities and receive the highest level of funding (Education.govt.nz, n.d.a).
Fale	Samoa word meaning house
Māfana	Tongan word meaning to feel warm-hearted
Malie	Tongan word meaning to feel elated. Malie arises from doing something worthwhile that makes one feel warm-hearted (Manu'atu, 2017).
Māori	Indigenous peoples of New Zealand
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement is the national qualification for secondary students in New Zealand (NZQA, n.d.).
Palangi	Samoa word used for European
Pasifika	The term used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to refer to students who identify with one or more Pacific cultures
So'ataga	A Samoa word meaning connection. It has been used to describe how schools can connect with Pacific families to support their engagement in the learning process (e.g., Education.govt.nz, n.d.b).

Talanoa	Pan-Pacific way of conducting informal dialogue, designed to engender mutual trust and respect (Vaiotele, 2006)
Tapasā	Approximate meaning is compass. It refers to the skills Pacific peoples have employed in navigating oceans, drawing strength from their spirituality (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 5).
Tauhi vaha’a	A Tongan phrase meaning to nurture and protect relationship space (Thaman, 2008)
Teu le va	A Samoan phrase meaning to nurture or tidy up the relationship space (Anae, 2010)
Va / vā	Pan-Pacific word referring to the relationship space which connects everyone and everything together (for example, Wendt, 1999). Can be spelt as vā to reflect pronunciation
Vaka	Pan-Pacific word meaning canoe or sailing vessel. Used by Vaka Pasifiki conferences to capture the idea of collective journeying to progress an ‘educational vision’ for Pacific peoples (University of the South Pacific [USP], n.d.).
Whānau	Māori word for extended family

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Here in New Zealand, we are all on that one deck together”
Karlo Mila on the Samoan proverb “O le fogava’a e tasi”
(Mila, 2013, p. 101)

Overview of research

A qualitative case study, employing a grounded theory approach, was used to explore how schools can develop relationships with Pacific families and communities in order to support students’ successful learning outcomes. The specific context was a rural town in Aotearoa/New Zealand* with two secondary schools where Pacific learners constitute approximately ten per cent of the student population. In particular, the aim was to explore within this context what works well in terms of home-school relationships and also how relationships could be enhanced so as to be most beneficial for Pacific learners.

Purpose of chapter

This chapter introduces the research. It includes:

- the rationale for this study from literature
- my personal rationale
- the background context, including details on the specific context in which this study took place
- key concepts relevant to this study
- the research questions with relevance to Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
- a brief overview of the theoretical frameworks adopted
- an outline of the thesis structure.

Rationale from the literature

The rationale for this study comes from literature that relates to Pacific learners’ academic achievements within the New Zealand education system; literature relating to

* To be referred to as New Zealand from now on

the impact of socio-economic factors on the lives of Pacific families; and literature on home-school relationships for Pacific families.

Pacific students in New Zealand.

Despite the progress that Pacific learners are making in educational gains in the New Zealand system, the need to improve educational outcomes for this cohort of the student population remains. This is illustrated in the report from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA, 2018) (see Table 1, page 3). For instance, a promising sign in 2017 is that 80.7 per cent of Pacific students attained level 2 NCEA (National Certificate in Educational Achievement), compared with only 67.8 per cent in 2013. However, still of concern are the figures relating to the final year of schooling. In 2017, 32.3 per cent of Pacific students obtained University Entrance credits compared with 57.3 per cent of New Zealand European students (NZQA, 2018). Pacific people have the lowest participation rates in degree courses and are, subsequently, the least likely of all ethnicities in New Zealand to hold a higher qualification; for example, in 2015, 8.6 per cent of the Pacific population held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared with 20.7 per cent of the New Zealand-European population (Sorensen & Jensen, 2017). A further factor to consider is that Pacific peoples are a young population, with a median age of 22.1 compared with 38 for the New Zealand population (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016). The implication is that by 2040, most primary school children will be either Pacific or Maori (Alton-Lee, 2003, p. 5). The trend that indicates a growing, youthful population adds further urgency to the need to improve educational outcomes for Pacific learners.

Socio-economic factors affecting Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

Pacific Peoples in New Zealand are consistently reflected in statistics that illustrate social and economic disadvantage. Sorensen and Jensen (2017) argue that they are “most at risk of material hardship of any ethnic group in New Zealand” (p. 36). Pacific peoples are reflected negatively in employment statistics, with an over-representation in low-skilled, low-paid employment and an under-representation in higher-paid, managerial and professional roles (Sorensen & Jensen, 2017). They (and Maori) are more likely to be unemployed than other ethnicities. For instance, statistics for August 2018 from the

Table 1 Achievement results published by NZQA for roll-based students
(Roll-based students are those who are on the roll at four key stages of the academic year)

Pacific students			
Attaining:	Percentage learners attaining NCEA level in 2013	Percentage learners attaining NCEA level in 2017	Percentage difference
NCEA level 1	64.8	73.3	+8.5
NCEA level 2	67.8	80.7	+12.9
NCEA level 3	47.8	65.3	+17.5
University entrance	34.9	32.3	- 2.6
European students			
NCEA level 1	78.7	81.8	+3.1
NCEA level 2	78.6	84.5	+5.9
NCEA level 3	63.7	70.4	+6.7
University entrance	59.1	57.3	- 1.8

Data obtained from NZQA (2018)

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment indicate the unemployment rate for Pacific peoples was 8.8 per cent compared with 3.6 per cent for Europeans (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, n.d). Statistics regarding the health of Pacific peoples also compare unfavourably with other ethnicities.

For instance, Pacific children have the highest hospitalisation rates compared to other ethnic groups, with diseases related to poor housing conditions (such as respiratory diseases) being the most common complaint (Duncanson, Oben, Wicken, Richardson, Adams, & Pierson, 2018). Statistics on housing conditions reveal that Pacific families

experience the highest level of crowding, with four out of ten Pacific people living in crowded houses (Stats NZ, 2018). Crowded housing is associated with households on limited income where a range of factors can impact negatively on material comforts and well-being. These include avoiding visits to the doctor, cutting back on fresh fruit and vegetables, and experiencing living conditions that have dampness and mould (Stats NZ, 2018). “When half of Pacific children grow up in poverty without having their basic needs met”, it signifies that social inequality for Pacific families is a serious issue in New Zealand that requires attention (Mila, 2013, p. 92).

The growth of the Pacific population in New Zealand began in the 1960’s when migration was encouraged to meet increasing demands for semi-skilled labour (Spoonley, Bedford, & Macpherson, 2003). Families came to New Zealand to follow their aspirations for a more prosperous future. However, in the 1980’s, they endured hardship when a downturn in the economy meant they faced significant poverty and were subject to harassment as “overstayers” (Barcham, Scheyvens, & Overton, 2009; Spoonley et al., 2003). Of particular concern to Mila (2013) is that second and third generations of Pacific families continue to experience similar hardships. Social inequality for Pacific peoples has now become embedded into the fabric of New Zealand society, with prosperity and wealth only achieved by the minority (Mila, 2013). New arrivals from Pacific countries may continue to be subject to the same vulnerable circumstances as those who have come before. For instance, they may undertake seasonal work in industries such as horticulture, perhaps as a means to permanent residency (Bedford, Bedford, Wall, & Young, 2017). However, temporary workers are subject to conditions such as low pay, uncertain hours, limited sickness and holiday benefit, and lack of training or rights (New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 2013).

Improving the educational outcomes for Pacific learners is one way that social inequality for Pacific families in New Zealand can be addressed. As Wylie (2013) states, education can have “a significant role in countering inequality and fostering opportunity” (p. 134). The problem is that children from low-income families can be disadvantaged in their education in a number of ways. For instance, there may be inadequate funds for food and clothing, or educational resources like computers; or parents’ erratic working hours combined with instability with housing can affect school attendance and parents’ ability

to guide and support their children's learning (Wylie, 2013). Children's learning outcomes are then negatively affected so that opportunities are lost for well-paid, secure work that higher-level qualifications bring (Sorensen & Jensen, 2017). Supporting student success for Pacific students is, therefore, critical so that Pacific young people can achieve positive learning outcomes at school that bring promising career opportunities and financial stability for Pacific peoples. This is not just for the benefit of Pacific peoples but also for the benefit of a more cohesive New Zealand society which, Rashbrooke (2014) argues, delivers social stability and economic prosperity. As Mila (2013) says, using a boat analogy from the Samoan proverb *O fogava'a e tasi*, "We are all on that one deck together" (p. 101).

Evidence that the New Zealand government is turning its attention to inequity in the New Zealand education system is contained in a report on education policy, published December 2018. The report acknowledges good practice within certain schools but that the education system, as a whole, does not adequately cater for disadvantaged young people. It claims that Pacific (and Maori) families "remain the most poorly served by the system" (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.a). A rationale for undertaking this research is that it could contribute to the body of literature on how schools might engage Pacific families so as to support successful learning outcomes for Pacific young people in order to widen their career options and future prospects.

Home-school relationships.

One way to support successful learning outcomes for Pacific students is through the development of relationships between home and school. The focus on schools and families working together in order to support achievement is well supported in the research literature (for example, Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008) and is relevant for all years of schooling (Bull et al., 2008; Desforges & Abouchar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2007; Jeynes, 2007), regardless of socioeconomic or ethnic background (Catsambis, 2001; Jeynes, 2007). The New Zealand Education Review Office (which informs the Ministry of Education) has drawn on document analysis to make a link between positive home-school relationships with Pacific families and academic achievement (Education Review Office [ERO], 2013); and

the New Zealand Ministry of Education specifically promotes the closer engagement of schools with Pacific families and the community for raising student achievement. This is evident in key documentation such as the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) 2013-2017 (Ministry of Education, 2012a) and, also, Tapasā, a cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Given the high importance placed on relationships between schools and Pacific families, the Ministry of Education has highlighted this as a research priority. Particular attention is given to research relating to the engagement of Pacific families at secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2012b, p. 9). In a review of Pacific education research literature, Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis, and Meyer (2013) have noted what particular research is urgently required. A gap relates to research on how schools can best create positive connections with family and the community so that teachers better understand families' aspirations, and families can better support students' learning trajectories and academic choices. A further gap identifies the need to promote Pacific peoples in more governance and decision-making processes within schools. When searching for relevant literature to review for this thesis, the scarcity of recent research in New Zealand relating to partnerships with Pacific families was noticeable; for instance, a review of a significant project relating to family and community engagement has been conducted by Gorinski but this was over twenty years ago (Gorinski, 2005).

The priority for research on partnerships with Pacific families reflects the tension that can exist between home and school where there has historically been a lack of engagement. Pacific families, in gaining access to the education system in New Zealand, are required to adopt the Western values and beliefs contained therein; yet, the worldviews which influenced them to come to New Zealand may reflect quite different ideas (Samu, 2010). Although teachers can help create bridges between these two worlds by making connections to the cultural background and experiences of these families (Nicholas, Fletcher, & Parkhill, 2013), the values of the school are often prioritised over those of minority families, and this can lead to feelings of marginalisation (Cummins, 2009). Thus, a significant reason for undertaking this research is to explore how schools can make positive connections with Pacific families and the community, overcoming any sense of marginalisation which might hinder families from taking a more proactive role in

Pacific students' education. The originality of this study lies in its application of a strength-based model, Appreciate Inquiry. The use of Appreciative Inquiry in a New Zealand school context is an innovative feature; it avoids the production of research that simply resurfaces already-known issues and, instead, helps capture and build on existing good practice.

My background and personal rationale

There are a number of reasons from a personal perspective why I have engaged in the topic of home-school relationships for Pacific learners.

Master of Education degree.

In 2008, I left England and arrived in Aotearoa/New Zealand to take up an English teaching position at a high school (referred to as "college" in New Zealand). Whilst teaching full time, I began a master's degree in Education at Victoria University in Wellington. The main reason for this was to provide me with some familiarity and confidence for working in the New Zealand system. There were increasing numbers of Pacific students attending the college at that time and, in an endeavour to better understand and engage with them, I focussed on these learners for my master's thesis. I explored the families' perceptions of the parental role in the learning process. I realised that I did not understand the backgrounds of my Pacific learners very well and was unsure how to engage with their families in order to have learning conversations. I experienced conversations when parents would sometimes nod in the affirmative to whatever I said, although I knew they did not really understand. Sometimes, when I communicated with families, I realised we had very different perceptions. For instance, I might ask for their help to support their child with a task I had set. This could, for instance, involve drafting a speech to be delivered in class where I thought parents could offer valuable knowledge and experiences to guide content. However, instead, parents offered support in terms of behaviour.

As a result of my master's degree, I learned that Pacific students often keep their worlds of home and school apart. This was not a new finding (for instance, Hill & Hawk, 1998; Siopoe, 2011). I learnt, however, that the separation of worlds still continued, despite the

passing of time and a different context. This separation caused friction for some students as they endeavoured to juggle sometimes conflicting demands between their different commitments (for example, Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). In my study, parents reported that they wanted their children to discuss their school progress with them, especially as they did not always understand the school system. However, students often reported that they avoided learning conversations with family members in case it caused disappointment. Sometimes, in an endeavour to encourage their child, parents set high expectations; but, if these were not realistic, they could further discourage their child from engaging in conversations about their learning. As a result of this study, I appreciated how important it was that parents, students, and teachers shared progress and learning targets so that students could receive well-informed and co-ordinated support from home and school (Flavell, 2014). Furthermore, I realised that the school system is not always responsive to the worlds of the families. There can be a lack of opportunity for teachers to learn about the families whose children they are teaching; rushed parent meetings can overlook space for relationship-building with insufficient time for teachers to listen to and get to know the parents (Flavell, 2017).

After I completed my master's degree, I perceived that there was a need for further research but saw no point in dwelling on problems. It has already been established in the research literature that there can be barriers to parental engagement for Pacific learners. For instance, long working hours as well as family and church commitments can negatively impact upon parents' involvement (eg, Green & Kearney, 2011); and a lack of understanding and feelings of discomfort within the school setting can further discourage them (see Gorinski, 2005). A different angle was required if further research was to add value. A focus on problems can draw attention to what is wrong and simply exacerbate issues (Cooperrider, 1986). Thus, I sought an alternative lens which would draw attention to the successful way that families and schools already do engage, and consider how further success could be achieved. It was time to celebrate the positive energy and commitment of those who have been dedicated to bringing the worlds of home and school closer together, and support these endeavours through the research process.

Vaka Pasifiki Conference, 2014.

A significant and uplifting experience which encouraged me to undertake this PhD was attending the Vaka Pasifiki Conference in Tonga in 2014 where I spoke about the findings from my master's study. I also had the opportunity to be involved in a village stay. I experienced, first hand, Tongan hospitality where sharing and gifting were embedded practices, and I began to appreciate how spirituality was an important aspect of Tongan life. It was through this conference that I was introduced to the Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative by and for Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP). RPEIPP is a movement designed to mobilise Pacific nations and people to reshape education processes so as to reflect values and practices that are pertinent to them; it is a deliberate intent to shift curriculum and pedagogy away from the colonial influences that have historically influenced the design of education systems (see, for example, Koya, 2009; Thaman, 2009). This movement encourages researchers to draw upon indigenous epistemology and paradigms so that research is authenticated through Pacific methodology rather than through a reliance on Western frameworks; and this helps to redress the impact of Eurocentric thinking which has marginalised Pacific perspectives (Johansson Fua, 2009; Nabobo-Baba, 2009).

Through the RPEIPP movement, I have a growing awareness of the historical influences on education systems which have geared them towards Eurocentric thinking. These systems foster educational pathways that lead to employment and economic prosperity in a global market, but to the detriment of indigenous knowledges, values, and ways of being (Afamasaga, 2007, Thaman, 2010). A reason for undertaking this research is so that I might better understand how schools can engage in a culturally-responsive way with families that is inclusive of values which may not be automatically acknowledged within the school system. It is anticipated that such research would then be of benefit to other educators and contribute to research literature concerned with the development of home-school relationships for Pacific learners.

Personal values.

The motivation to undertake this research does not solely come from the trajectory that started with teaching in New Zealand. It is important to emphasise that this research has

been an opportunity for me to explore core values, which have resonated with me since I was a child and influenced my work experience. As a child, I liked to see that classmates were included. I was uncomfortable with unfairness and stepped in, where possible, to deter bullies. As an adult, I worked for many years in adult learning programmes which focussed on giving adults a second chance at education. This was rewarding work because it was about delivering education aimed at meeting the needs of the learner, as opposed to making the learner meet the needs of the curriculum. One of my managerial responsibilities at this time was to run family literacy programmes and, through these, I witnessed how parents' confidence to support their children's learning further developed their confidence to negotiate the school system. In their case, it was a better command of the kind of literacy that their child would need that made the positive difference. When I reflect back on the work that I have found motivating and worthwhile, a common theme is to promote inclusiveness so as to break down barriers that create division and marginalisation. This research has enabled me to develop an understanding of values which I have been intuitively drawn to but which I had not previously considered at any deep and reflective level. To be able to do this in support of promoting inclusivity and collaboration between Pacific families and schools has made this research a most meaningful experience.

Background context

This section includes an overview of Pacific peoples in New Zealand as well as details on the specific context of the study.

Pacific population of New Zealand.

The Pacific population of New Zealand encompasses a wide diversity of peoples. It incorporates those who have been born in, or culturally identify with, a Pacific Island country. These include Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu (Bruce Ferguson, 2008, p. 5). The population is also diverse in that it comprises those who have migrated to New Zealand, and those who have been born in this country. Six out of ten Pacific people are now born in New Zealand (Pasifika Futures, 2017), and nearly a quarter identify with another ethnic group besides a Pacific one

(Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016). Furthermore, whilst Pacific peoples are predominantly religious (with 79 per cent of the New Zealand population claiming to have a religious affiliation), there is a wide range in choice of church attendance. Mainly but not exclusively Christian, almost twenty different religious affiliations have been reported (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016).

This diversity may not be apparent when the umbrella term, “Pasifika”, is used. Traditionally, the Ministry of Education has used the term Pasifika to describe this cohort of the New Zealand population because there is deemed to be sufficient commonality to consider Pasifika learners as a distinct group deserving special attention (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). The use of Pasifika has both advantages and disadvantages. One disadvantage is that diversity may be overlooked, and thus identities undermined by giving the impression that it is one homogenous group (Wendt Samu, 2015). On the other hand, the term Pasifika can illustrate how the identities of Pacific peoples are evolving as they find expression in their adopted country. They are able to maintain cultural affiliation to their homeland yet also accommodate to different ways of living and being (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016). Thus, as Pasifika, this population in New Zealand is recognised as a dynamic and adaptable group of people (Wendt Samu, 2015). A further implication of the word Pasifika is that it is empowering because it can be seen to represent unity rather than homogeneity; it shows how Pacific peoples can operate as a collective force (Wendt Samu, 2015). The Pacific population in the particular context where this study was conducted displayed a preference for Pasifika over Pacific. The cultural advisor, who supported me with fieldwork, explained that the local community felt they had more impact as a group when they came together under this label.

The context for this study.

The choice of context arose through an introduction to a committee, the Fale* Pasifika, which looks after the interests of the Pacific population in a town in the North Island. Committee members wished to see a closer engagement between home and school for Pacific families, and sanctioned my research.

*Fale is a Samoan word meaning house.

Geographical setting.

In comparison to other locations in New Zealand, this town has a small but significant Pacific population. In the 2013 Statistics New Zealand census, Pacific people made up 8.3 per cent of its overall population with one part of the town showing a higher concentration at 14.7 per cent (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.a). While there is a predicted decline in the European population in this area, the Pacific population is expected to rise (Statistics New Zealand, n.d.b). The rise in Pacific population is reflected in student numbers. For instance, a 2016 Education Review Office (ERO) report for one of the feeder primary schools indicated that 32 per cent of its student population identified as Pacific, an increase of 8 per cent since the previous 2012 report (Education Review Office [ERO] n.d.). The two colleges, in this town, are in close proximity to one another. Currently, Pacific students make up approximately ten per cent of the overall student secondary population, the largest ethnic group being Samoan (Education Review Office, n.d.). Each college has a student population of just over 600 students (Education Review Office, n.d.), indicating that this study has focussed on a population of approximately 120 Pacific students. Given that Pacific numbers are rising at primary level, one can anticipate an increase at the secondary level as well.

The colleges serve a community in a lower socio-economic area; this evidence is derived from the description of one school as decile 3 and the other as decile 2 (education.govt.nz, n.d). At the time of writing, schools are allocated funding according to the socio-economic factors in the community which they serve. They are awarded a decile rating from 1 to 10; the lower the decile rating, the higher the amount of funding allocated to the school (education.govt.nz, n.d). The decile ratings, based on information from Statistics New Zealand censuses, consider household income, parents' skill levels, their educational qualifications, household crowding, and also their access to support benefits (education.govt.nz, n.d.). The low decile rating for the colleges suggest that Pacific families in this study may experience some of the social disadvantages that are associated with Pacific peoples in New Zealand, such as crowded housing and low income.

A general pattern for the area, as outlined in the local council's economic development strategy 2014-2017, indicates there are more people in low-skilled employment than the national average; and a breakdown of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2012 for the industry sector in the area shows that agriculture, fishing, and farming were the highest contributors at 22 per cent of the total GDP. The location is known for its horticultural industry, which tends to offer seasonal employment. It attracts workers from Pacific countries who gain temporary employment under the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme and who may, subsequently, seek permanent residency (Department of Labour, 2012).

The Fale Pasifika.

The aim of the Fale Pasifika is to “promote and preserve the cultures, and to identify the aspirations of all Pacific Island people in order to benefit and advance the Community”; and one of its objectives is to “facilitate improved outcomes for Pasifika People in health, education and for their social welfare” (<https://www.facebook.com>). The Fale has welcomed initiatives which promote the educational achievements of Pacific young people in the area. For example, they have engaged with Power-up (a programme to support families with children undertaking NCEA* run jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs). They have also worked with local schools. They had recently invited the primary and secondary school principals to a Sunday church service so that Pacific families could meet the principals and ask questions about their children's education.

Key Concepts

For the purposes of this study, it is useful to clarify a number of key concepts that are relevant to discussions.

Community.

The term “community” is applied to many different circumstances and open to different interpretations; however, there tends to be some generic characteristics associated with

*NCEA refers to National Certificate of Educational Achievement – New Zealand national qualification for senior secondary students.

its use (Amit, 2010). One generic characteristic is “joint commitment”, which results from the sharing of values where a strong sense of interdependence is fostered (Amit, 2010; Wenger, 1998). The other is a sense of “belonging” which reflects the personal connection that individuals make with each other (Amit, 2010; Wenger, 1998). How a joint commitment and sense of belonging intersect with one another depends upon the particular situation or context where a community is said to be in existence (Amit, 2010). It is through exploring their intersection that one can develop an understanding of how the concept of community has been applied to a particular situation and so distinguish it from other situations (Amit, 2010). Wenger’s concept of community includes the idea of shared practices which help foster a joint commitment and sense of belonging (Wenger, 1998). The Fale Pasifika could be described as a community of practice since members have established practices (such as regular meetings) which draw individuals together through their shared commitment to Pacific peoples in their town.

Whilst belonging to a community does not necessarily mean that individuals are geographically close to one another (Amit, 2010; Wenger, 1998), this study is concerned with a specific location where Pacific families live. Within this Pacific community will be many smaller Pacific communities, reflecting the diversity of the population. These communities will also entail membership to communities that are located beyond the boundaries of the town (such as their home village in a Pacific country). Of particular relevance to this study, however, is a discussion on how schools interact with their local community to support Pacific learners. As Vesper (2016) points out, schools serve their local community yet there can be some tension involved in relationships. She points out three potential issues: schools may focus on parents without consort to the wider community; they may be reluctant to share decisions with individuals and organisations who are not part of the school leadership structure; and efforts to engage with the community are time consuming (so, therefore, avoided) because the emphasis is on achieving outcomes within fixed time frames. This study, therefore, explores ways in which schools might move beyond possible limitations and connect with their local Pacific communities, so that inclusive home-school relationships benefit from the strengths and skills of Pacific community members. Although, in this instance, the use of the word community refers to groups of people geographically close to the school, a wider

understanding of what it means to be part of a community is also relevant and will influence later discussion.

Knowledge.

This research has adopted a social constructionist lens which supports the idea that knowledge is subjective. It is understood through our experiences as social beings, as we interact with others to make sense of the world (Burr, 2015; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). This research, therefore, accepts the existence of multiple realities which has implications for the sharing of knowledge between home and school. The degree to which knowledge is shared is dependent upon the quality of the relationship. Any inequity in the relationship means that some knowledge has more “authority” than others (Osberg, 2010, p. iv). The assuredness that something seems certain does not come from its essential truth but that it has been given status in the playing out of relationships (Osberg, 2010).

One way to frame this dilemma regarding the hierarchy of multiple perspectives is to take a “pragmatic” stance (Bernstein, 2015, p. 28). Drawing on a history of American philosophers (Peirce, James, and Dewey), Bernstein argues that a pragmatic interpretation of reality avoids fixed views of knowledge about what is or what is not. Pragmatism appreciates that what one might accept as knowledge today could require correction and be re-interpreted tomorrow. He argues there is an ethical element to this because it requires the imagination and willingness to understand and appreciate ideas that may not have hitherto been contemplated.

Furthermore, drawing on historical perspectives of pragmatism, Bernstein (2015) reminds us that we are social beings whose ideas are shaped by the influences of others as we participate in society. Thus, what we believe (and, consequently, how we perceive our own individuality) are shaped by “the types of communities in which we live” (p. 33). Developing our own knowledge relies upon our engagement with others. Thus, a pluralistic view of the world accepts others’ ideas just as one would wish others to accept ours. Developing knowledge is, consequently, an active and ethical process (Bernstein,

2015) where relationships can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and lead to valuable learning experiences (Wenger, 2010).

Successful learning outcomes.

This study explores how home-school relationships can support Pacific students' successful learning outcomes. Success with learning outcomes can be interpreted as academic achievement. For instance, the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) set a target that 85 per cent of Pacific students would achieve Level 2 NCEA by 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2012a). This target was not reached (see Table 1, p. 6). When attention is drawn to the academic achievement of Pacific learners, it can show these learners in a deficit light. A narrow focus on academic achievement, as is exercised in the school system, may not capture the creativity and capabilities of Pacific learners (Milne, 2009). Nor might it reflect the kind of success which Pacific learners themselves value (Reynolds, 2018). Milne (2009) argues that a strong sense of self and cultural assuredness, which can lead to academic achievement, are equally as important outcomes as academic ones (Milne, 2009). This study, therefore, acknowledges that the notion of successful learning outcomes is subject to interpretation, and that attempts to define success draw attention to tensions within the New Zealand education system regarding its provision for Pacific learners.

The influence of Appreciative Inquiry on the research questions

The aim of this study has been to explore what has worked well in home-school relationships for Pacific learners, and how relationships might be enhanced. The adoption of an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) framework was undertaken so as to discover participants' strengths, and to capture any ideas they might have for positive change. AI acknowledges the transformative power of drawing together multiple perspectives into a collective energy that has the potential to bring about worthwhile outcomes (Cooperrider, 2012).

The 4-D cycle.

The incorporation of AI directly influenced the research design by following a 4-D cycle (Calabrese, Hester, Friesen, & Burkhalter, 2010; Reed, 2007). The 4-D cycle operates as follows:

- The first phase, Discovery, encourages participants to explore what is working well. Participants share positive experiences and stories of success.
- In the Dream phase, participants identify key themes which they believe are essential for the creation of success. Participants use their imagination and are aspirational in thinking of what would be ideal.
- This leads into the Design phase where participants collaborate on rethinking values, strategies, and processes which could turn their aspirational ideas into reality. It is an opportunity to create a shared vision through collective discussion.
- Finally, the Destiny phase allows participants to embark on planning for the future and consider specific actions which work towards the desired vision.

The research questions.

The 4-D cycle directly influenced the shape of the research questions. The overall research question was:

- How can schools develop relationships with secondary school Pacific students, families, and the community in order to support students' successful learning outcomes?

This question was broken down into sub-questions which specifically relate to the 4-D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry. They include:

Discovery

- How do participants perceive they have contributed to successful relationships between school, home, and the community which support learning outcomes for Pacific students?

Dream

- What do participants perceive to be ideal relationships between school, home, and the community which support learning outcomes for Pacific students?

Design

- How do participants envisage the creation of more successful relationships between school, home, and the community to support learning outcomes for Pacific students?

Destiny

- What specific actions do participants believe could lead to more successful relationships between school, home, and the community to support learning outcomes for Pacific students?

Overview of theoretical frameworks and methodology

A bricolage of frameworks has been employed to support this study, all of which are compatible with a social constructionist ontological lens. Aside from AI, a Communities of Practice lens has helped inform discussion on how inclusive relationships can promote learning and sharing of knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Also included are two Pacific-related frameworks which are based on the concept of *va*. *Va* refers to the relationship space which connects all beings together. These frameworks are *Teu le va* (Airini, Anae, & Mila-Schaaf, 2010) and Talanoa Research Methodology, referred to as TRM (Vaiote, 2006). *Teu le va* provides guidance on how relationships should be nurtured so that successful outcomes can be achieved in research with Pacific peoples (Airini et al., 2010). TRM focusses on the incorporation of respectful dialogue with “talanoa” specifically referring to a pan-Pacific way of conducting informal conversation that encourages mutual trust (Vaiote, 2006). Reciprocity and collaboration are key ingredients for both these frameworks. (See Figure 1 for an overview of the bricolage, page 19).

Thesis structure

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to present a rationale for undertaking

* ‘Teu le va’ is a Samoan phrase which means to nurture or cherish relationships (Anae, 2010, p. 2). When written in italics, it refers to *Teu le va*, the framework.

this study, and to provide a basic overview. This thesis is divided into the following chapters:

Chapters Two and Three are a review of literature. Chapter Two focuses on the nature of home-school relationships, including a discussion on what constitutes good practice and how there may be tensions in home-school relationships for Pacific families. Chapter Three explore strategies used to engage families, both in New Zealand and internationally.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six discuss relevant theory. In Chapter Four, a social constructionist lens is discussed along with Appreciative Inquiry. Chapter Five is dedicated to Communities of Practice, and Chapter Six is concerned with *Teu le va* and TRM so that values appertaining to Pacific peoples may be better understood.

Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine discuss methodology and findings. Chapter Seven covers methodology; Chapter Eight describes findings from participants; and Chapter Nine presents my observations.

Chapter Ten closes this thesis with a discussion of findings, the conclusion, and recommendations.

Figure 1 – A bricolage of frameworks

Chapter 2: Home-school relationships

“When parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins to work”
(Epstein, 1995, p. 701)

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study has been to explore how relationships can be developed between home and school for secondary Pacific learners. Its specific context was a town in New Zealand with two secondary schools where Pacific learners constitute approximately 10 per cent of the student population. This chapter is dedicated to a review of relevant literature which explores the nature of home-school relationships and, in particular, how Pacific families and teachers in New Zealand perceive relationships between home and school.

The chapter is divided into three key sections:

- The first section is a review of international and national literature in order to explore the nature of home, school, and community relationships, eliciting common characteristics and desirable qualities
- The second section further explores these relationships with specific reference to the engagement of minority families
- The third section looks at relationships between home and school for Pacific learners in New Zealand with a particular emphasis on secondary students. The perspectives of parents, teachers, and students are explored.

The nature of home-school relationships

A review of literature facilitates an understanding of why and how the promotion of home-school relationships is valuable for students' learning.

The influence of parental involvement on student achievement.

One way that home-school relationships have been measured is by the impact they have on student achievement. Whilst the research literature is overwhelmingly positive about

the involvement of families in students' learning, research evidence on measuring success has been limited (Bull, et al., 2008; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). However, meta-analyses conducted by Jeynes (2005, 2007) have provided evidence which links parental involvement with positive student academic achievement. Based in America, 41 quantitative studies in elementary schools were analysed (Jeynes, 2005) and 52 quantitative studies in secondary schools were analysed (Jeynes, 2007). Parent involvement was broadly interpreted as "parent participation in the educational processes and experiences of children" (2005, p. 245; 2007, p. 83). A strong positive association was made between parental involvement and achievement and this was true for all age ranges and regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic status. The secondary school analysis showed that voluntary parental involvement was more powerful than specific programmes designed to cater for the engagement of families. Nevertheless, dedicated programmes still showed positive results. According to Jeynes (2007), they are an effective way of narrowing the gap in achievement between minority students and their "white" counterparts when applied to the engagement of minority families (p. 100).

A particular conclusion which Jeynes formed from both meta-analyses was that parental involvement was most effective in its subtler forms rather than in specific, explicit ways. That is, attendance at parent meetings or school events, or supervision of homework did not bear the same degree of results as what Jeynes referred to as "parenting style". This was described as being "supportive and helpful" towards their children, demonstrating "qualities such as trust and being approachable" (2005, p. 246; 2007, p. 89). Goodall (2013), who reviewed 60 studies, concluded that parenting styles may differ but there are some generic characteristics which are effective in supporting a child's achievement. This involves parents articulating aspirations to their child to do well, setting boundaries and expectations, yet also "treating them warmly" (p. 138). Hill and Tyson (2009) also concluded, from a review of 50 studies, that parent attendance at school was not as salient as strategies parents might use to encourage their children's approach to learning. They focussed on middle school students (age 11-14 years) and claimed, like Jeynes, that parent involvement does have a positive impact on student achievement, regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic background. However, parents' strategies do need to recognise adolescent children's increasing desire for autonomy, otherwise these efforts

could have a detrimental effect on their children's achievement. Parents can positively influence their children's learning by setting expectations and acting in an advisory capacity, supporting with matters such as learning strategies, course options, and career choices (Hill & Tyson, 2009). A similar conclusion has also been made by Catsambis (2001). She conducted a statistical analysis of surveys from students, parents, teachers, and school administrators which were collected as part of a national, longitudinal study in America between 1990 and 1994. Like Hill and Tyson (2009), she noted the need for parents to encourage autonomy whilst also offering support with course-related decision-making and setting high expectations.

In a New Zealand context, Clinton and Hattie (2013) linked student achievement with high expectations from parents. They surveyed over 1500 students across 59 New Zealand schools (from years 8 to 11) and reviewed their responses from a national on-line assessment, called asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning). AsTTle assesses reading, mathematics, and attitude. The findings showed that higher achievement was linked to the perceptions of students that their parents expected them to do well. Thus, the authors formed the conclusion that it was important for students to believe that their parents were interested and involved in their school performance in order to help them be academically successful. These findings were similar to another New Zealand-based study. Over 5,000 Year 10 and 11 students were surveyed across a diverse range of schools (Walkey, McClure, Meyer, & Weir, 2013). There was found to be a positive correlation between students' intentions to do their best and their successful academic results. A key recommendation from this study was that students' aspirations can be enhanced (particularly, if they are underachieving) by family members who encourage high expectations, yet help set achievable goals.

The implication from this latter study is that, if parents are to set high but attainable expectations, they need to understand how their child is doing. Whilst students may value high expectations from their parents as Clinton and Hattie (2013) indicate, there is a danger of parents setting expectations that are unrealistically high. In order to take ownership of learning, it is important to feel competent (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Parents may (inadvertently) undermine their child's confidence through the expectations they set. This was a conclusion drawn from my master's study relating to Pacific parents'

perceptions of their role in supporting learning, where parents sometimes set high expectations without understanding their child's performance at school (Flavell, 2014). It is, therefore, helpful if parents are informed about their child's progress and educational matters. They may more easily assist with important decisions related to their academic learning (Catsambis, 2001), or direct them towards future study which makes it clearer what qualifications to focus on at school (Jeynes, 2005), or help set attainable goals (Flavell, 2014; Walkey et al., 2013). It is in the interest of schools, therefore, to find effective ways of sharing information with parents, so that parents may more ably assist their children.

To summarise, the research literature validates the valuable role that informed parents can play in supporting their children at school. Parents can share aspirations with their children to do well, and show that they are interested in their learning. This might involve offering encouragement, setting boundaries and expectations, yet also giving advice whilst recognising their child's growing need for autonomy in the senior years of schooling.

Engagement over involvement.

Whilst the literature tends to use "involvement" and "engagement" interchangeably, Goodall and Montgomery (2014) conclude, from their review of international literature, that there is a "continuum" in the way that parents can be involved in their children's learning (p. 402). At one end, they may attend parent meetings or other formal events organised by the school. This could be described as a passive role where the school controls the interactions and the agenda. In this regard, parents have little agency in that they are simply receiving information related to their children's learning. Further along the continuum, closer involvement occurs when there is an exchange of information between parents and teachers. A shift from transmitting to sharing information signifies that a shift in agency has taken place, and parents now contribute to and initiate discussion just as teachers might. However, the greatest agency is exercised by parents when they take responsibility for their children's learning, taking into consideration what schools have informed them. Responsibility is thus shared between teachers and parents and can now be described as parental engagement as opposed to involvement (p. 405).

Whilst involvement can be valuable (for example, as stepping stones to engagement), Goodall and Montgomery (2014) argue that the literature points to engagement as the most effective form of home-school relationship. Engagement means that learning is not perceived as simply being located within school under the direction of teachers but that it is equally valuable when directed by parents. As Goodall and Montgomery (2014) attest, the literature emphasises the value of home. For example, Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) state, “Research consistently shows that what parents do with their children at home is far more important to their achievement than their social class or level of education” (p. 87).

This conclusion is verified by Bull et al. (2008). Their findings are particularly relevant since they include a New Zealand context. Four of the eleven home-school initiatives they reviewed were from New Zealand. They also conducted seven case studies in New Zealand, as well as received feedback from a number of schools which were not directly studied. Both primary and secondary contexts were considered. In their findings, Bull et al. (2008) emphasise the importance of parental participation and equitable relationships so that parents and teachers share responsibility for students’ learning. Equity does not mean that parent and teacher roles are identical; rather that what parents do is equally as valuable. Thus, their role at home to support with matters like homework, study strategies, or learning goals are deemed to be significant contributing factors which can successfully support learning (Bull et al., 2008, p. 7).

Partnership – implication for schools.

Whilst Goodall and Montgomery (2014) choose the term engagement to describe parental agency and participation, Bull et al. (2008) opt for “partnership”. They argue that this word reflects the desirable characteristics of home-school relationships. Home-school relationships should be “collaborative and mutually respectful”, involving “two-way communication”. The authors say that when schools are responsive to parents in this way, they know how to be adaptable so as to best meet the needs of the parent community. This leads to a “multi-dimensional” approach where activities and strategies are carefully chosen for their appropriacy so that the school is responsive to families. Success depends upon clarity of purpose. That is, if the ultimate aim for home-school

relationships is to support achievement, then relationships should be “goal-oriented” and “focussed on learning”. This relies on the support of the school leadership team so that strategies for developing home-school practices are integrated into school development plans and regularly reviewed. Furthermore, an important implication is to realise that, for home-school partnerships to be successful, they rely on “time and commitment”. Effort is required so as to achieve a whole school approach where collaborative practices between home and school become an integral feature of school policy (Bull et al., 2008, p. 6-7).

Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) echo these sentiments. Their literature review on home-school interventions for 5 to 19-year olds focussed mainly on United Kingdom studies and covered over 1200 articles. They arrived at almost identical conclusions to those of Bull et al. (2008). When considering the strategic planning, which needs to happen to make parental engagement effective, these authors also make it clear that it involves a sustained and on-going commitment from leadership. This commitment includes ensuring resources are available to engage families, and that teachers receive professional development. They acknowledge the barriers some parents face (such as lack of time, knowledge, or confidence to interact with teachers), and emphasise that creativity is required on the part of the school to overcome these. For instance, using parents as “ambassadors” to engage other parents or making home visits may be effective approaches (p. 88). However, in order to gauge what might work best, schools need to understand the diverse nature and needs of their parents. A needs analysis should be undertaken so strategies can be planned accordingly; these would encourage parents to be proactive with their children’s learning, enabling collaborative relationships between home and school. For instance, when planning programmes to engage parents, parents should be involved in the planning and evaluation of these programmes (Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011). Partnership with parents, therefore, means there is a concerted effort on the part of the school to develop inclusivity and collaboration.

Home-school partnerships involve the community.

Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) recommend that schools develop a strategy for parental engagement that is “outward facing” (p. 5). That is, schools recognise that they are not

operating in siloes and need to interact with other facets of the community in order to provide the best support for their students. Both Bull et al. (2008) and Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) value developing links with the parent community (for example, through the use of intermediaries or parent ambassadors as already noted). Goodall and Vorhaus (2011) and Epstein (1995) recommend interactions with other services and agencies, so that support is integrated and cohesive for young people. Epstein (1995) emphasises that such interactions should be underpinned by care and collaboration. Her argument is that, when a school involves the community, it is because the school is family-minded.

Community services may be drawn into the school structure and system but this is due to the school's neighbourly and welcoming persona. A culture of care is a primary motive. This means the school is sensitive to the development of relationships with families. The school appreciates, for instance, that a child may fare better when an extended family member is involved (as opposed to just parents). Epstein favours the word "child" so that the concept of family underpins the quality of the home-school relationship. Like families, there may be disagreements but these can be worked through in the interest of providing effective support. Interactions in a home-school-community partnership can be complex but they should be respectful and engender trust. The main focus is to centre on the needs of the child, not just by demonstrating care but by ensuring that relationships are productive and promote academic success.

To this end, Epstein (1995) offers a practical framework to help schools deliver home, school and community relationships that "invite power sharing and mutual respect" (p. 711). The framework helps to clarify what might be the purpose for engaging parents. Purposes are:

- parenting (helping families support their child in the home environment)
- communicating (deciding how best to communicate information between home and school)
- volunteering (negotiating the help of parents)
- learning at home (supporting parents so that they can, in turn, support learning at home)
- decision-making (involving parents in school-related decisions)

- collaborating with the community (engaging with community resources and services, and incorporating family practices) (Epstein, 1995, pp. 704 -6).

Within this framework, Epstein redefines community to mean: “all those interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools” (p. 705). She argues that the community should not just be defined by its social-economic status or ethnicity but that “strengths and talents” which support the students and their families should be recognised. She does acknowledge the challenges of drawing in expertise and contributions from community: goals and values may not match; and working with others outside of the school structure leads to questions regarding the allocation of funding, staffing, and responsibilities. Nevertheless, collaboration with the community brings rewards for students through an enriched curriculum and wider opportunities; it draws on the expertise of families and supports their access to resources and activities within the community; it raises the school’s profile within the community, and assists the role of teachers through the use of mentors, volunteers, and other expertise (Epstein, 1995).

Decision-making (in Epstein’s framework) also promotes a collaborative picture. For instance, if a school wants to promote shared decision-making with families, it might set up a school-based committee for parent participation; or, perhaps, the local council might form a committee for developing family and community involvement. A challenge is to ensure that different perspectives can be heard, including parents from diverse groups as well as student voices. Thus, part of the decision-making process is to ensure that parents, who act as representatives for others, have had the opportunity to communicate with different families and understand their views. If the decision-making process is effective, it can benefit students who then perceive that their voices and those of their families are included in key decisions and policies. Parents can gain a sense of ownership in the school and a voice in their child’s education. They may better understand school affairs and policies, and appreciate a sense of connection with other families. Teachers can then gain a better understanding of parent perspectives, and that there is equity in status between family representatives and school leaders in decision-making forums (Epstein, 1995).

If schools are serious about forming partnerships with families and the community, Epstein (1995) encourages them to adopt a cohesive strategy, where there is a dedicated action team to take overall responsibility. Their role would involve securing funds and resources in order to plan, implement, review, and refine partnerships. (She suggests a three-year cycle.) Partnerships should build on any existing practices so that isolated practices become whole-school strengths. Epstein's (1995) framework, therefore, adds a practical and detailed exposition of how home, school, and community partnerships might be enacted.

Drawing the literature together.

There is a significant similarity between the recommendations of Epstein (1995), Bull et al. (2008) and Goodall and Vorhaus (2011). They could be synthesised as depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Home, school, community partnerships

The literature, therefore, provides a valuable picture on how home, school, and community partnerships might successfully be enacted.

The engagement of minority families – unequal partnerships

Despite evidence on the efficacy of home, school, and community relationships and valuable insights as to how they might be enacted, the literature demonstrates significant tension in relationships between home and school for minority families.

Socio-economic status.

There is a strong correlation between minority families, low socio-economic status, and a low academic achievement rate (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Diez, Gatt, & Racionero, 2011). For instance, Sattin-Bajaj (2014) notes the marked social-economic divide in New York where, at the poorer end, Latino students from low-income families have the lowest rate of achievement and are most likely to drop out of high school. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, Pacific families have the lowest income in New Zealand compared with other ethnic groups; and they also have the lowest participation in degree-level education, which is associated with higher earning potential (Sorensen & Jensen, 2017). Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) categorically state, “material poverty has a powerfully negative impact” on parental engagement (p. 41). Lack of time, money, or transport are barriers (Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011), which may not exist for more financially stable families who find it easier to engage in their children’s education (Sheldon, 2002). Low-income families may not have the background experience of the schooling system, nor knowledge of higher education, nor sufficient household finances to help steer students along higher education routes (Grant & Sleeter, 1988).

A cultural mis-match.

Barriers to engagement are not solely economic ones. It is easier for families to engage with school when the families’ values and those of the school are closely aligned. The research of Lareau (2015) has established this argument by showing over a twenty-year period how the different backgrounds of white and African-American children have influenced their trajectory into adulthood. Children are socialised to be comfortable in

particular environments, and can call upon their cultural capital (families' values) and their social capital (families' networking and social circles) to support their negotiation of the world and their interactions in social institutions (Bourdieu, 2011; Lareau, 2015). Thus, in Lareau's (2015) study, "middle-class" children, whose families could relate most closely to teachers and the school system, fared better with their educational journey; and they were more likely to be holding professional jobs as adults in comparison to children from "working-class and poor" non-professional families (p. 1). The middle-class, young adults better understood how to interact in educational situations (for instance, in adding or dropping a course), how to ask for help, and how to cope with any set-backs or problems related to an institution (p. 2). Lareau (2015) argued that these young people had the advantage of being able to match what they did with the expectations of the institutions due to the guidance from adults who could advise or intervene on their behalf. Conversely, those young people, who did not enjoy these benefits, felt "frustrated and powerless" by the nature of institutions (p. 14). This argument could extend to community services with which schools might liaise in order to better support students (Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011), since the risk is that students and their families may also struggle with services that are specifically brought in to help.

The implication is that children whose parents cannot easily relate to the education system nor the professional working world are at a distinct disadvantage (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau, 2015; Ciabattari, 2010). These parents may be reluctant to engage with school. They may feel intimidated by the teacher (Grant & Sleeter, 1988), or leave decisions to the teacher if they perceive themselves to be lacking in knowledge (Ciabattari, 2010). Also, since these families' social networks may be family based or in non-professional circles, any participation in school is likely to be around activities that are non-academic (Ciabattari, 2010). Teachers, in turn, can feel reluctant to initiate contact with parents if they perceive there may be misunderstandings or tension (Grant & Sleeter, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). If they perceive that the family is not that engaged with school, there is a tendency to set low expectations for the students (Grant & Sleeter, 1988). Teachers may actually be unaware that their use of language and practices run counter to those belonging to the families (Allen, Taleni, & Robertson, 2009; Delpit, 1988). If teachers do not address this, then implicit bias remains, and students

and their families are doubly disadvantaged because they do not understand the expected rules of engagement (Delpit, 1988).

Minority families, in particular, are vulnerable to misunderstandings with teachers. Even if they are professional and knowledgeable of the school system, teachers may assume they do not understand and, therefore, view them from a deficit perspective (Grant & Sleeter, 1988). Research undertaken by Lareau and Horvat (1999) demonstrates the privileging of white over black families. Based in a small town in midwestern America, Lareau and Horvat (1999) deemed that the school's practices resonated with white, middle-class parents (such as no raised voices, little criticism, and "positive affirmation") (p. 49). This meant that parents, who knew how to interact this way, could more easily secure positive outcomes for their child. Even if black parents knew how to apply these rules to the advantage of their children, they still felt mistrust and unease due to historical prejudice and racism over the education of black children. Lareau and Horvat (1999) believe there is continual tension where, moment by moment, families negotiate the rules of the institution. Even when they learn the nuanced rules of interaction, their own social and cultural capital may not appear to be legitimised within the school. A particular problem Lareau and Horvat (1999) pointed out was that teachers tend to assume that their knowledge and judgements are more important than the parents'. Thus, social inequity is sustained through the education system and continues to feed the mistrust of black families.

Even when schools make a concerted effort to be inclusive, they may still be exercising practices that marginalise families. For instance, teachers may invite parents into school to celebrate festive occasions or particular cultural customs, but not think to involve them in decision-making (Diez et al., 2011). Gorski (2016) argues that schools need to consider the reasons why they initiate cultural activities. It may be an appropriate way to celebrate diverse cultures within the school; however, if teachers believe they are addressing marginalisation of students' identities, they are seriously misguided because such events only serve to uphold stereotypical views of minority communities. They essentialise cultural identity into generic characteristics and, by not directly addressing issues of marginalisation, further support the inequity that already exists in the education system (Gorski, 2016). Schools are in danger, therefore, of perpetuating implicit bias.

New Zealand schools.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education encourages the engagement of families through a responsive approach that avoids a deficit perspective (Tuafuti & McCaffery, 2005). There is a range of documentation aimed at guiding schools towards collaborative partnerships with families (for example, ERO, 2013; ERO, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2012a).

Nevertheless, Milne (2009) is highly critical of the way schools run so that “white” values are embedded within the education system. She believes that Maori and Pasifika students struggle because schools do not reflect their families’ worldviews. There is a pervasiveness of European values, she argues, that is so deeply embedded in schools that educators may not even realise their own Eurocentric bias. Change can only occur when invisibility is made visible, and educators reflect on what biases and practices help perpetuate inequity. Thus, when the power balance runs in favour of school values and practices (as Milne clearly believes is the case for New Zealand), then equity in home-school relationships for minority families remains an aspirational concept.

Home-school relationships for Pacific learners in New Zealand

This section of the chapter explores literature on how Pacific families have engaged in home-school relationships in New Zealand. An evaluation of literature on the perspectives of Pacific students, their families, and teachers aligns with many points already highlighted in this chapter.

Students’ perspectives.

Research literature on Pacific students’ perspectives confirms that the support of the family is important to them (Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2006; Flavell, 2014; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa’afoi, & Taleni, 2008; McDonald & Lipine, 2012; Mila-Schaff & Robinson, 2010; Nakhid, 2003; Siope, 2011). Students have understood the high value which parents have placed on education, appreciating that families have endured hardship and made sacrifices (such as leaving their island countries to move to New Zealand) in order to provide educational opportunities for the next generation (Benseman, et al., 2006; Flavell, 2014; Mila-Schaff & Robinson, 2009; McDonald & Lipine, 2011; Siope, 2011). Aside from the support of teachers (McDonald & Lipine, 2011; Siope,

2013), students have valued their parents' encouragement and commitment to their education (Flavell, 2014; Fletcher, Fa'aoi, & Taleni, 2008); and expressed appreciation for a home environment that is conducive to study (Fletcher et al., 2008). Many have reported that the support of the family has been a significant factor in helping them gain academic success (Benson et al., 2006; Flavell, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2008; McDonald & Lipine, 2011; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2009). The literature on student perspectives, therefore, aligns with the general literature on home-school relationships which describes how parents can play a valuable role in supporting their children's studies.

However, Pacific students' comments have also reflected difficulties associated with their parents' lack of understanding at secondary level (Flavell, 2014) and at tertiary level (Benseman et al., 2006; Madjar, McKinley, Deynzer, & Van Der Merwe, 2010). They have felt the pressure of family duties and church commitments which have negatively impacted on their time; yet, they have also felt the pressure to do well academically. As previously noted, some Pacific students have avoided conversations with their parents about their learning needs so as not to disappoint them (Flavell, 2014). They may keep the worlds of home and school apart, and experience tension as they juggle conflicting demands (for example, Davidson-Toumu'a & Dunbar, 2009). Whilst students tend to take on more of a mediatory role between home and school as they progress through senior school (Hill & Tyson, 2009), this may not be the case for Pacific students. The voices of Pacific students illustrate the negative consequences when parents lack understanding of their children's studies, illustrating that tension within families can exist when parents are unable to offer advice from an informed perspective.

Parents' perspectives.

Literature, capturing Pacific parents' voices, shows common ground between the perceptions of students and those of parents. Many families have migrated to New Zealand for a better life, perceiving that education is an important tool for gaining economic prosperity for the children (Samu, 2010, Siope, 2011). The focus on education extends beyond a child's individual progress; family members, who remain in the home countries, may benefit financially from the prosperity achieved by those who migrated (Samu, 2006). Pacific peoples align with a collective worldview which values the

interdependent nature of relationships (Ioane, 2017). Thus, for many Pacific people, education is highly valued because it helps to meet the collective needs of the family, including extended or distant members. Consequently, parents are keen for their children to succeed academically (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Spiller, 2012), and they set high expectations (ERO, 2008; Flavell, 2014). For example, in a study which captured the voices of Tongan parents, 'Otunuku (2011) relates that they encouraged their children to sit assessments and wanted them to undertake demanding work. In the light of high expectations, parents like to be kept informed of progress, receiving information and advice from the school so that they can provide support at home (Amituanai-Tolosa, 2009). Again, these perceptions align closely with those from the general literature on home-school partnerships which advocate the value of parents setting high expectations.

As students have suggested, however, parents may be interested in their children's education but are not necessarily sure about their role (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, & O'Regan, 2009; Green & Kearney, 2011). Parents may support cultural activities that take place at school (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). However, they may not understand what their children are doing academically (Green & Kearney, 2011), particularly with senior assessments like NCEA (Flavell, 2014; 'Otunuku, 2011); and they may not know how best to motivate them (Fletcher et al., 2009). Parent meetings can be avoided for a number of reasons such as long working hours and family commitments. Also, parents may prioritise church because of the cultural, spiritual, and community support it offers them (Green & Kearney, 2011). However, parents may not engage with school because they are uncomfortable in the school environment (Fletcher et al., 2008; Gorinski, 2005). This may be due to a language barrier (Gorinski, 2005) or a cultural disconnect between the values of home and school which inhibits an exchange of ideas (Fletcher et al., 2009; Gorinski, 2005; Spiller, 2012; Tuafuti, 2010). For example, parents may exercise listening as a sign of respect when listening to a teacher (Spiller, 2012, Tuafuti, 2010), which can appear as lack of interest or engagement (Fletcher et al., 2009; Green & Kearney, 2011).

Although schools often design strategies for building relationships between home and school, results can be disappointing (Harris, 2013). 'Otunuku (2011) argues that, in the case of Tongan culture, there are changes in attitudes that schools and parents could both make. For example, parents could prioritise academic needs over church and family

commitments, while schools could celebrate student achievement more overtly. Harris (2013) explains how the Christchurch earthquake brought a school and community together in a shared mission to support the children. The disaster triggered the school into playing a central role in the welfare of the community, and this led to a positive shift in relationships between teachers and parents which continued after the immediate impact of the quake. Improved relationships may have been a factor in why the school improved its academic results in 2011 – the year of the earthquake (Harris, 2013). This example illustrates how parents can respond positively to a significant shift in approach undertaken by the school. It suggests that when schools change their practices and perceptions regarding the engagement of Pacific families, then families may be willing to change their perspectives, too.

Teachers' perspectives.

A difficulty for some teachers may be that they may wish to make better connections with students and their families but lack appropriate cultural knowledge (Allen et al., 2009). As international literature has indicated, New Zealand teachers may not even realise how their cultural beliefs and assumptions influence the way they interact (Allen et al., 2009). They may make judgements based on Western values which may not align with those belonging to minority cultures (Nakhid, 2003). The research of Allen et al. (2009) highlighted how a transformation in relationships between teachers and Samoan families was possible when the teachers developed a deeper cultural understanding through their visit to Samoa. This research shows how professional development opportunities for teachers can enhance these relationships but, as Nicholas and Fletcher (2015) indicate, there is very little professional development available to support teachers in their engagement with Pacific students and families. The risk, therefore, is that teachers make negative assumptions based on a lack of understanding.

New Zealand-based studies illustrate this point. In her interviewing of Pacific students and teachers, Nakhid (2003) found that teachers made inaccurate assumptions about students' families, such as assuming they were not interested in their children's education. She concluded that teachers' perceptions impacted negatively on the students who found it difficult to voice their own interpretations and develop their own

identity within the institution. More recently, Spiller (2012) interviewed teachers at a New Zealand high school on their beliefs about Pacific students. Teachers tended to assume that poor student behaviour in class was due to students enjoying a relaxed atmosphere at school in contrast to their home life, and that the emphasis that parents placed on listening at parent-teacher meetings meant that they were not interested in their children's learning. Since the parents listened to the teachers' opinions and did not question their views, teachers continued to perceive that the problem with student underachievement was due to issues with family values rather than something to address in the classroom delivery (Spiller, 2012). More recently, Turner, Rubie-Davies, and Webber (2015) interviewed Mathematic teachers from five different high schools in New Zealand regarding their expectations of students according to ethnicity. The study revealed that teachers held low expectations for both Maori and Pacific students, believing that factors in their home lives such as parents' low education level and limited income affected performance. The conclusion from these studies suggests that teachers can make deficit assumptions about families which then negatively influence the way they engage with students in the classroom. They support the argument that professional development could be very helpful for teachers in supporting shared understandings and relationships with families. However, they also suggest, as per the conclusion from the previous section, that school systems can perpetuate inequality.

Chapter summary

A review of the different perspectives confirms that Pacific parents value education and want their children to succeed at school. However, the review also highlights the tension that can exist between home and school for Pacific learners. The development of closer connections between home and school for families is a valuable way of supporting Pacific students in the education system, and literature advocates home-school relationships that are equitable and collaborative. However, the literature also indicates there may be challenges in achieving these.

Chapter 3: Strategies and models for developing family engagement

“Active participation in decision-making makes education more meaningful for everyone in the community.”
(Flecha, 2015, p. 59)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature on the nature of home-school relationships. I concluded that collaborative and reciprocal partnerships between teachers and families can help students achieve successful learning outcomes. These partnerships should be equitable, recognising the valuable role that parents play in supporting their child’s education. However, when the values and practices of families do not match those of the school, it is much harder to achieve partnerships where information and decision-making are shared. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to review initiatives and models to see how successful they can be at bringing the worlds of home and school closer together for minority and, in particular, Pacific families.

This chapter is presented as follows:

- The first section reviews initiatives and models that have been specifically employed in New Zealand to engage Pacific families; I consider what has facilitated successful engagement
- The second explores how international models may offer further insight
- The third section, returning to New Zealand, reviews how Boards of Trustees (a model for school governance) affect parent and community engagement.

Examples of how schools have engaged with Pacific families and communities in New Zealand

A number of schools in New Zealand over recent years have engaged in creative practices aimed at reaching out to families so that they can better respond to their needs.

Pacific Island Community Parent Liaison Project.

A significant initiative that developed relationships between schools and Pacific communities was the Pacific Islands School Community Parent Liaison (PISCPL) project (Gorinski, 2005). This project was part of a larger initiative to improve employment opportunities for Pacific peoples in New Zealand. A qualitative case study was employed to review how a cluster of schools (comprising two primary, one intermediate, and one secondary school) developed a number of strategies to enhance the engagement of families in their children's education. Parents were actively engaged in a number of ways. For instance, they worked with teachers to run after-school homework clubs for students, and also with teachers to run numeracy and reading programmes for other parents to help their children at home. Parents also attended regular meetings in each school where they could receive valuable information on school policy and academic matters as well as training for the Board of Trustees (BOTs). Parents were encouraged to drop into schools to use facilities, ask questions, or make suggestions. In addition, there was a dedicated Pacific Islands Parents' Association where parents could network and organise activities for the school; and, finally, parents were involved as tutors for students' cultural performances.

As a cluster, the schools shared ideas and good practice. There was also dedicated professional development for teachers to support them when working with Pacific students and their families. In particular, they were given advice on how to communicate with families in a way that would support relationships. For instance, personal communication was advised over written forms. The most significant aspect of the initiative was the deployment of a co-ordinator who had a Pacific Island background and could liaise directly with families. She conducted home visits and focussed her energy on responding to and facilitating families' needs. The project was deemed successful because parents felt more confident at being involved, perceiving that they were being respected as partners; teachers perceived they had a better understanding of families and students' needs; and parents and teachers both noted the improved confidence, engagement and achievement of students in their learning. The success was largely credited to the energy and commitment of the liaison co-ordinator whose background

and skills ensured she could work across professional school communities as well as with Pacific families.

Although deemed a worthwhile enterprise, Gorinski (2005) also provided feedback on what issues dented its overall success. There was concern over the erratic nature of funding which had issues for sustainability. It was recognised that, for such projects to run well, funding for key personnel is critical to maintain momentum. It was further recognised that school leadership buy-in was crucial. In one school, the senior management team remained ambivalent to the project's aims and intentions which made it difficult to facilitate the planned strategies. Nor did all the familiar barriers disappear. Some parents still felt alienated in the system; some still worked unsociable hours and could not practically be there to support their children; some still felt that not all information about their child's progress was shared with them and they were not listened to. Teachers still felt that some parents were hard to communicate with and did not always understand children's lack of attendance at school nor parents' lack of attendance at meetings. Thus, the project illustrated that positive home-school relationships can bring rewarding results but that considerable commitment and energy are required if systemic change is going to result. Commitment involves the leadership of the principal and the willingness of the teachers to promote power-sharing and inclusive strategies; and energy involves key drivers, such as a liaison co-ordinator, to maintain the momentum.

Leadership practices supporting Pacific student success.

The influence of school leadership on developing strategies for Pacific students and their families has been recognised in a series of reports produced by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (Spee, Oakden, Toumu'a, Sauni, & Tuagalu, 2014a; Spee, Toumu'a, Oakden, Sauni, & Tuagalu, 2014b; Toumu'a, Oakden, & Sauni, 2014). These reports have focussed specifically on three New Zealand secondary schools which have achieved strong academic results for their Pacific learners. For instance, McAuley High School, which has predominantly Pacific students, achieved a 91 per cent success rate at Level 2 NCEA in 2012 (Toumu'a et al., 2014). To find out what this success might be attributed to, data was gathered in a number of ways. In each school, approximately 30-35 individuals were

interviewed; these included senior staff, teachers, pastoral staff, students, families, and board of trustee members. Student surveys were also done, and a range of school documentation and achievement data were examined.

One of the practices, for which all schools were credited, was their commitment to engage with families and the community. This commitment took the form of effective, practical strategies which the colleges employed to engage families. For instance, at Otahuhu College, parents were personally invited to parent-teacher meetings and, afterwards, received follow-up phone calls (Spee et al., 2014a); and at De La Salle College, assistance from Pacific families was called upon to help with individual issues which students might have (Spee, et al., 2014b). A strategy which both these colleges have employed has been to liaise with a group of Pacific parents who advise the principal and act as a conduit between the community and the school (Spee et al., 2014a; 2014b). This is an effective way of connecting with different communities who come under the umbrella of Pacific identity (Flavell, 2017).

McAuley High School exemplifies the commitment to working with Pacific families and the community in a number of ways, with a wide range of strategies. For instance, Pacific parents have been co-opted onto the Board of Trustees (BOTs). (Two Samoan and one Tongan parent were noted). A proactive role is given to BOTs members at this college where student data on progress is shared, and active participation in decisions related to Pacific achievement and the school curriculum is encouraged. Another strategy employed by the school has been the incorporation of Pacific people into roles within the school, as well as the employment of those who are connected with the local community. This has helped establish valuable links between the school and the community; and it has helped other staff develop their understanding on the diverse backgrounds of the students and how best to work with their families. Yet another effective strategy has been the access of funding to support a chaplain in making home visits to families of prospective Year 9 students to discuss their needs and ease their transition to secondary school (Toumu'a et al., 2014).

When communicating with families, the school has aimed for two-way communication evenings at the school where they can learn about NCEA and hear useful data (translated

into Samoan or Tongan); the purpose has been to ensure that parents are well informed and, therefore, can set appropriate expectations for their children. Also, for instance, parent meetings have been re-formulated so as to make parents feel more comfortable; student presence has helped put parents at ease, as have changes to room layout, timings and languages used. (This has resulted in a 95 per cent increase in attendance.) One focus of these meetings has been on listening to parents and students, rather than allowing teachers to dominate the conversation. An important point in regard to all the strategies employed is that they have been influenced by two key principles. One has been to prioritise high expectations and achievement for all students, and the other has been to explicitly promote Christian and caring values. These principles have then underpinned how the school has worked with families, resulting not just in strong academic results but an appreciation from families that the practices of the school resonate with their home values (Toumu'a et al., 2014). What has been highlighted in this particular report, therefore, is the strong vision and commitment from the principal to raise achievement by working more closely with families in a culturally-appropriate way.

Research and development project on Pacific students' progress and achievement.

Although the project Ngāue Fakataha ki he ako 'a e fānau is primary-based research, it is an example of how schools and families can work together for the benefit of students. It focusses on how the sharing of progress and targets with parents can be done with attention to cultural values which resonate with families. It illustrates, in particular, how families can be engaged when listening and consultation are prioritised in the reporting system (Tongati'o, Mitchell, Tuimauga, & Kennedy, 2016a; Tongati'o, Mitchell, Tuimauga, & Kennedy, 2016b). Working in partnership with three schools and their Pacific parent communities, researchers developed the Talanoa Ako Cycle to actively engage parents and their children in discussion about progress and targets at three key meetings over the course of the year (Tongati'o et al., 2016a; 2016b). Key to this engagement is the preparation done prior to parent meetings. For example, parents can be sent advice about what to discuss with the teachers. This advice contains questions which parents might ask about progress and next steps of learning; it also prompts parents to share what they are proud of or concerned about with regard to their child, and how they have

supported learning at home. Further recommendations are that parents receive reports prior to the meeting and send in any particular questions in advance. So, by the time meetings take place, parents and teachers are well prepared to have a meaningful discussion in which the student also participates. Thus, the process has the capacity to prevent the domination of teacher-led meetings where parents feel disempowered. Instead, the principles of reciprocity and inclusion are brought into the process because parents have more opportunity to be proactive in the conversations with the teachers.

Summary.

These examples illustrate some key points regarding good practice for engaging families. They include:

- sharing information on students' progress and targets
- setting and sharing high expectations for academic achievement
- acknowledging and valuing families' cultural practices
- allowing space for families' voices to be heard.

Good practice is facilitated by strong leadership which means that strategies can be embedded into the school system. It is further enhanced by key personnel who can drive actions that support home-school connections, and by opportunities for professional development to help staff engage with families. Reliable resourcing also helps to deliver cohesion, avoiding ad-hoc practices. Commitment and energy are required to bring about effective and sustained change.

International models of family and community engagement

Examples from international literature offer further insight on the nature of home-school relationships.

INCLUD-ED – a European project.

INCLUD-ED was a European project which ran from 2006 to 2011. Its aim was to promote “academic success and social cohesion for all children and communities in Europe” (Flecha, 2015, p. 1). The project was concerned with aspects of society (such as housing, health, and employment) which might impact negatively on some communities (such as

cultural minorities), leading to social exclusion and inequality. That is, negative social conditions contribute to students' failing in the education system and, consequently, the marginalisation of young people who are unable to participate in and contribute to society. A serious concern is that schools have not been responding to the needs of many learners and are, therefore, contributing to social exclusion. This project was ambitious in that it involved collaboration across 15 different research institutions, conducting 20 case studies and a further six longitudinal case studies all across Europe, and involving 120 schools. The aim was to generate evidence of "successful educational actions" which have supported student success and social cohesion (p. 3). This evidence could then inform policy. Policy would be effective because it had been informed by evidence of successful actions that have taken place across many different contexts (Flecha, 2015).

Communicative Methodology was applied for the collection of data (both quantitative and qualitative). The aim of this methodology was to create evidence built from a wide range of voices. This included "end-users" ("children, families and vulnerable groups") and "stakeholders" (teachers, administrators and policy-makers) (Flecha, 2015, p. 9). The underlying premise is that everyone is capable of constructing knowledge, and that people have the capacity to understand their own situation; given the opportunity to develop this understanding, they also have the capacity to transform the situations in which they find themselves (Gómez, Puigvert, & Flecha, 2011). This meant that end-users and stakeholders were an integral part of the process in the creation and interpretation of data. For instance, there were two bodies set up to act in an advisory capacity to oversee the whole project. One was comprised of academics and experts, whilst the other comprised ten individuals who had experienced disadvantage but had found ways to overcome it. These individuals had access to the findings and contributed to the recommendations (Flecha, 2015). A further premise was, therefore, that analysis should not just focus on inequalities but that it should also be transformative, shedding light on actions which overcome disadvantage and support social inclusion (Gómez et al., 2011; Flecha, 2015).

One strand of the project looked at family and community participation. Results were obtained from six longitudinal studies in schools, conducted over a four-year period, in Malta, Finland, Lithuania, the UK, and Spain. A key finding was the importance of family

involvement in learning activities within the school, such as volunteer support in the classroom or help with after-school activities like a homework club. Spaces can be transformed, both inside and outside of school, by inviting families into the school context. For instance, student behaviour can be more respectful and focused on learning, and interactions at home about learning can be more informed when family members have spent time in school. Learners from minority cultures may appreciate extra support and, also, relate to the cultural background of the adult volunteer. Another key finding focused on the initiatives to encourage family learning. Examples were: courses for parents on literacy, numeracy, and ICT; shared learning spaces for children and their families; and “dialogic literary gatherings” (p. 53). These gatherings, which took place in Spain, were opportunities for families to discuss classic literature, regardless of their academic background. They were deemed to support parents’ increased engagement in their children’s learning which included setting high expectations for them. Also, students were reported to be more engaged in learning as a result of their parents’ interest (Flecha, 2015).

Another significant finding was the value of family participation in “school evaluations and decision-making” (p. 56). For instance, some schools held committees comprised of students, teachers, parents, and community members. The nature of these committees was that all voices mattered and could influence decision-making. Evidence, such as teachers’ perspectives, indicated that student attendance and academic results were positively influenced by the participation of families in decision-making processes. Thus, whilst the findings supported activities which schools undertook to overcome barriers (as in flexible timing or using interpreters for meetings), the emphasis was on the participation of parents in providing evaluative feedback and on taking part in decision-making. A further point argued was that the closer schools interact with their local community, the more positive are the benefits for both the school and neighbourhood. Thus, some schools brought community information and services on matters like housing and health into school spaces so that families could draw on their familiarity with the school to help them engage with other aspects of their lives (Flecha, 2015).

There have been some positive outcomes from the INCLUDE-ED project. For example, one of the schools achieved a decrease in absenteeism from 30 per cent in 2006-7 to 10

per cent the following year, and further declines thereafter. Its recommendations have been adopted by the European Commission and the European Council for tackling the school drop-out rates. Its principles have been adopted in Spain at both national and regional level; and other countries are adopting ideas, not just in Europe but across South America. The work of INCLUD-ED continues under the title “Schools as learning communities” with key phases that schools can adopt in order to raise academic achievement and promote social inclusion (Flecha, 2015, p. 67). The first phase involves researchers informing educators, families, and community members. The second phase is a dialogic discussion in which all participate in a decision to proceed so that they experience shared ownership of decision-making. The third phase involves participants “dreaming” what vision they want for their school; each group discusses separately (families, teachers, and students), and then they come together; in the third phase, they prioritise what they want to do in the short, medium, and long terms. Finally, various committees are created so that detailed planning can get underway (Flecha, 2015, p. 72). What is significant, therefore, about this project and the generation of “learning communities” is how family and community engagement is enacted. Many schools may undertake similar sorts of inclusive activities but, without an explicit and whole-hearted commitment to engage families in vigorous democratic processes, collaborative practices may not readily materialise.

Brazil’s Citizen School Project.

This project took place in southern Brazil in an impoverished, working-class part of a city, given the pseudonym Porto Alegre (Fischman & Gandin, 2016). The Citizen School Project ran from 1993 to 2004 and was part of an endeavour to address the needs of the population through a dramatic change in state policy. This involved a move away from top-down, government-controlled decisions to more interaction at a local level. Out of the process to engage more collaboratively came the idea of the Citizen School Project in order to address the problem that government officials, who managed the schools, had very little understanding of them. One major aim was the “democratisation of access to school” which involved improving access to students who might, otherwise, have dropped out or never attended in the first place (p. 73). Not only were new schools built in shantytowns where young people were most socially disadvantaged and least likely to

engage in education, but the curriculum was re-organised into three-yearly “cycles” rather than academic years. This helped eradicate the notion of student failure at the end of each year which could lead to students abandoning their education. Another aim was the “democratisation of knowledge” (p. 75). This involved engaging students in the creation of knowledge that was relevant to the local community; teachers supported students’ explorations of the social, historical, and cultural experiences of their own families. Problems and strengths were explored, and related to traditional curriculum content to help students construct how their local community might be transformed. That is, “traditional school knowledge” was not abandoned but engaged with in order that students might become agents of change in their own environment. A final aim was the “democratisation of governance” (p. 78). In line with a more collaborative vision of governance, school councils were established for making key decisions within each school, including budget responsibilities and curriculum direction. Elected to the council were teachers and members of staff, parents, students, and one administrator who was usually the principal. There was a 50 per cent split between the teachers and staff, and the parents and students. The democratic process extended beyond the council and even included the appointment of a principal where the whole school community, including students aged 12 and over, could vote (Fischman & Gandin, 2016).

The overall success of the project was evident in the statistics regarding the school dropout rate which fell from over nine per cent in 1989 to one per cent in 2003. Attendance also dramatically improved with the support of local community organisations which undertook home visits to follow up on absenteeism. Fischman and Gandin (2016) attest to the success of these schools in that they noticed in a recent visit that they were still well cared-for buildings without evidence of vandalism as is often the case for schools in poor areas. They argue that the success of the project came about because the organisational structure of the schools changed so that practices to acknowledge diversity were embedded into the school system, rather than just being add-ons. However, there were barriers to its successful implementation. One was that teachers and administrators still tended to dominate decision-making over those of the parents and students. Another was a change in government policy which moved towards a more centralised system and was resistant to localised decision-making. However, the

authors are heartened by their observations from the recent visit. They witnessed teachers regularly meeting with members of the community in order to construct a curriculum. Thus, whilst a collaborative doctrine may no longer be a political agenda of the government (which has moved towards a market-driven system that perceives parents as consumers), the school has held onto collaborative practices which connect them to their community. Practices have taken traction and become embedded into the school system regardless of government policy (Fischman & Gandin, 2016).

Summary.

These particular examples deliver a critical element to family and community engagement in that they illustrate how students and their families might engage in dialogue regarding education processes in order to positively transform student success and their local communities. The emphasis is also on embedding collaborative strategies into the school system, enabling teachers and families to operate in a school culture that systematically incorporates inclusive practices.

School governance in New Zealand – the role of parents

As identified at the start of this chapter, examples have been provided of creative strategies which New Zealand schools have employed to engage with families in a more collaborative and inclusive manner (such as a co-ordinator who develops links between home and school for Pacific families). The project Ngāue Fakataha ki he ako 'a e fānau has illustrated, for example, how schools can adapt consultation and information-sharing opportunities to develop parent participation about student progress. However, as the previous section highlights on international models, schools may also have specific decision-making processes within their institution that engage families more fully. This section now reflects on how parents and the local community may be able to exercise influence with management decisions in New Zealand schools.

The Board of Trustees (BOTs).

The 1989 educational reforms, known as Tomorrow's Schools, saw dramatic changes to how schools were managed, moving away from a centralised system to allow schools to

make more autonomous decisions. Each school now has a BOTs with a principal, staff representative, and parent representatives, with a parent acting as chair. The BOTs manage the school which includes appointing the principal. One reason for creating them was so that schools could be more efficient in meeting the needs of students, families, and staff rather than being caught up with bureaucracy. Another was to enable parent voices to be heard (Ward & Robinson, 2004). A particular concern of the Labour government at that time was that Maori and Pacific students were not performing well; thus, an approach that was responsive to families and the local community was one way of addressing this issue (Fiske & Ladd, 2017). When the National Party came to power in 1991, a shift towards parental choice influenced the way the BOTs functioned. Geographical school boundaries were abolished with the expectation that schools would respond to what parents wanted. The original intention of the BOTs was to encourage a democratic process in schools where parents could participate in decisions, enabling the school to be sensitive to the needs of the community. However, it moved towards decisions based on competition, requiring schools to respond to parents in order to secure enrolments (Fiske & Ladd, 2017).

Whilst the aim of the BOTs has been to raise standards, there has been no evidence to suggest that they have had any significant impact (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.b; Vesper, 2016; Wylie, 2009). One issue is that parents have tended to opt out of low-performing schools situated in areas where socially-disadvantaged families live, and send their children to schools in more affluent areas. This market-based approach has, then, exacerbated the social divide (Fiske & Ladd, 2017; Vesper, 2016). Another issue is that the creation of self-managing bodies has meant that opportunities for collaboration have been lost; instead, schools have found themselves competing with others for enrolments which has taken precedence over community interests. This has entailed a lack of willingness for schools to open up to each other because they have to present themselves in a positive light (Wylie, 2009).

A number of other concerns have been raised about the way that BOTs operate. One is that, in reality, principals have often held onto decision-making rather than sharing governance with the BOTs (Vesper, 2016, p. 80). For instance, Vesper (2016) relates a story from South Auckland of a principal who did not share data in the belief that the

members would not understand it; and another of members not speaking at meetings as it would seem disrespectful to ask questions. Wylie (2009) reports that, in fact, parents have tended to act conservatively rather than question the status quo. A further issue has been the demanding amount of paperwork which trustee members have been required to do, often within limited timeframes; this has negatively impacted upon considered and thoughtful discussion, and led to resignations (Wylie, 2009). Sometimes members have been unsure of their role, engaging in matters related to every-day running of the school rather than considering the overall direction and governance of the school (Middleton, 2013). Middleton (2013) suggests some parents lack relevant skills and expertise which can be a problem in less affluent areas where it can be difficult to find parents to take on the role. This has also concerned Vesper (2016) about parts of South Auckland; an unintended consequence of finding parents to step up is that extended family members can take over the BOTs and, therefore, control the agenda for parent involvement (p. 100).

The research of Ward and Robinson (2004) helps crystalise these dilemmas. Chairpersons, principals, and ministry officials were gathered together to discuss typical matters relating to BOTs in order to check their understandings of how they perceive governance. Thirty-two interviewees were involved. Although such numbers indicate that findings cannot be generalized, Ward and Robinson (2004) feel they are a good indication of what is happening in BOTs across the country. They concluded that trustee members do not always have first-hand experience of educational matters. Therefore, they are reliant on policies and procedures for guidance, rather than being able to engage in decisions based on practical and informed insight. Added to this is a desire to keep relationships harmonious which inhibits members from raising challenging or controversial thoughts. These factors help explain why trustees have tended to rely on principals' decisions. Also, whilst trustees come from the community, this does not mean they are engaged with the diverse views, needs, and interests of the community. The conclusion of this research, therefore, was that BOTs typically focus on supporting the management procedures of the school without engaging in democratic processes that represent the needs of their community (Ward & Robinson, 2004).

The shortcomings of BOTs have been encapsulated in a recent review of the schooling system. Feedback has been gathered from “hundreds” of BOTs members, principals and parents (Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.b, p. 39). Concern is expressed about the difficult decisions which members have to make, often from a place of limited expertise. This can potentially lead to uninformed decisions, influenced by the strongest voice, with significant repercussions on the direction of the school. For instance, poor financial decisions can be made. The problem is further exacerbated due to insufficient opportunity for support and advice. Whilst the original idea was to engage more families so as to better support Maori and Pacific students, feedback received for the report suggests this is not happening. For instance, 61 per cent of schools claim to have inadequate BOTs representation for Pacific families (Tomorrow’s Schools Independent Taskforce (n.d.b). The findings from this report endorse the conclusion that the intention to engage families and the community through BOTs has not been entirely successful.

A system under review.

At the time of writing, the current government is reviewing the schooling system in order to address policies from Tomorrow’s Schools which might be impeding the raising of standards, particularly for socially-disadvantaged families. The review aims to deliver policy which will produce a more equitable society and better meet the needs of Pacific and Maori learners who, as student cohorts in the educational system, still make up the tail end of achievement. An independent task force was appointed in April 2018 to conduct the review and, after wide consultation, a report was published in December 2018. A period of further consultation is planned up till April 2019 with new government policy expected after this date. One issue which the report wishes to address is the consequences of competition between schools which, it argues, has negatively impacted upon Maori, Pacific, and socially-disadvantaged students. When schools are self-governing, they neither connect with other schools nor their local community. Such isolation has prevented collaboration and left institutions siloed and unsupported. Thus, the future direction is to create more cohesive practices that enable schools to work with other schools, better respond to the needs of their learners and engage more interactively with their local communities. Whilst examples of good practice illustrate how family engagement can work, they are not representative of what is generally

happening in the education system as it is currently engineered (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.b; Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.c).

The report proposes a change to the way the schooling system is structured. Whilst the BOTs will maintain core responsibility for the school's strategic and annual plans, focusing on the curriculum and the wellbeing of the students, education hubs are to be formed so as to provide support and monitor school performance. The Hubs are to draw schools closer together to work in partnership rather than competition, relieving BOTs from some of the decisions they currently undertake (such as property maintenance). The aim is to ensure that BOTs are better supported and thus more capable of engaging with the needs of families and the community (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.b). This is a time of change in the education system. Lorraine Kerr, president of the New Zealand Schools Trustees Association (NZSTA) recognises that there is work to do in order to clarify the role of the Hubs and the role of the BOTs but her hope is that, "the review empowers local communities to actively pursue their aspirations for the education of their children and young people" (NZSTA, n.d.b)

Chapter summary

This chapter has described successful strategies that New Zealand schools have and can undertake in order to develop engagement with Pacific families. There are many ways that schools can effectively develop collaborative and equitable relationships, such as through careful attention to the reporting system or with the help of co-ordinators who can liaise between home and school. However, commitment and resourcing are important ingredients for the development of successful home-school partnerships.

The international examples offered in this chapter illustrate how commitment can take the shape of school-wide strategies to positively influence the nature of home-school relationships. They show how such an approach can develop inclusive practices which enhance family engagement and strengthen outcomes for students. Namely, the engagement of families in core decisions regarding the direction of the school was argued to be an effective way of building reciprocal and collaborative relationships. In New Zealand schools, Boards of Trustees are designed to engage parents in decision-making

but they have not always been successful in achieving this. The closer engagement of communities, particularly those populated by Pacific and Maori families, remains a challenge for some schools.

Chapter 4

Social Constructionism and Appreciative Inquiry

“Everyone has a voice at the table.”

Professor Kenneth Gergen in conversation with Bo Wang
(Wang, 2016, p. 567)

Introduction

This chapter provides the rationale for a social constructionist paradigm as an ontological and epistemological lens for this study. I demonstrate, in particular, the compatibility of social constructionism with Appreciate Inquiry. The chapter is divided into two sections.

The first section relates to social constructionism, and covers:

- relativism and critical realism, focussing on the role of language
- a positive approach
- Implications for identity and agency.

The second section relates to AI and includes the following:

- underlying principles and optimum conditions for successful outcomes
- the 4-D cycle
- AI in practice
- a critique of AI.

SECTION 1 A social constructionist paradigm

Introduction

Guba and Lincoln (1994) argue that any paradigm is a basic assumption about how to interpret the world, and is subject to interrogation and counter-argument. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw on accepted and refined worldviews to help frame the knowledge-gathering process in research; and making these views transparent is a hallmark of effective practice in qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Social constructionism

encompasses multiple approaches, cutting across different academic disciplines (Durrheim, 1997; Elder-Vass, 2012a; Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). The following discussion elucidates some of the variances in ontological and epistemological claims, and will help to clarify the approach to social constructionism I have chosen. I have mainly focussed on two major exponents to support this discussion – Gergen offers a psychologist’s perspective and Elder-Vass offers that of a sociologist.

A relativist’s perspective (Gergen)

From an ontological perspective, social construction focusses on making sense of the world through relationships (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). That is, our understanding of the world is constructed through interaction with others where learning is deemed to be a social process, and knowledge is bound within historical and cultural contexts (Burr, 2015). Whilst social constructivism focusses on how individuals internalise meaning as a consequence of interaction, social constructionism places the emphasis for making meaning on the actual interaction itself (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). From a relativist position, reality is always contextualised and subjective (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). This means that, in the strongest interpretation of social constructionism, all claims about what constitutes knowledge and what is considered to be true are socially constructed (Gergen, Josselin, & Freeman, 2015). Thus, there is no such thing as an independent, objective reality outside of human experience. As Gergen elucidates in an interview with Wang (2016), even scientific knowledge is a product of the social world. Theoretical assumptions are agreed upon through social interaction and even decisions on what is worth studying are subject to social, historical, and cultural influences. Gergen emphasises that any endeavour to understand human behaviour is always value-laden and open to multiple perspectives (including that of the researcher); this, he argues, is a pragmatic approach, opening up possibilities for different ways of engaging in the world rather than maintaining a reductive position that is closed to alternative worldviews (Gergen, 2001; Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

The role of language (from a relativist's perspective).

Epistemologically, therefore, language plays a vital role since this is the medium through which one can establish meaning (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). A significant debate within the field of social constructionism is to what degree language is a tool with which to establish our understanding of the world (for example, Edley, 2001; Elder-Vass, 2012a; Gergen, 2001). At one extreme, reality is entirely the product of language since there is no other way to understand the world but through the use of words, inherent with value judgements (Edley, 2001; Elder-Vass, 2012a; Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). Here social constructionists credit the influence of Wittgenstein for appreciating how language has influenced our understanding (Shotter, 2013, 2016; Wang, 2016). Wittgenstein recognised the influence that language could have. For instance, he stated, "We need to realise that what presents itself to us as the first expression of a difficulty, or of its solutions, may as yet not be correctly expressed at all" (Wittgenstein, Anscombe, & Wright, 1969, p. 142). Wittgenstein signalled that what one might take to be real is achieved through specific choices in vocabulary (Shotter, 2013, 2016). That is, language provides a structure which enables us to feel sure about something; it helps us to enjoy the comfort of certainty.

Social constructionists from a relativist position, therefore, have a subjective understanding of the world which leads to the acceptance of multiple realities where no one can have ultimate possession of the truth (Shotter, 1995, p. 384). Instead, the emphasis is placed on appreciating how individuals relate to one another and come to understand the world around them (ibid, p. 385). A problem with this conception, Nightingale and Cromby (2002) argue, is that it undermines any authority to hold an ontological argument. How can one comment on reality if one is claiming not to know what reality is? Furthermore, how can one engage in language as a way of interacting with the world whilst, simultaneously, questioning its existence since it is a feature of the external world (Elder-Vass, 2014)? Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue that social constructionists, who take a strong relativist approach (like Gergen), actually do assume that an external, objective reality exists even if they appear to claim otherwise.

Gergen's counter argument is to claim consistency in his approach. Through language, it is possible to gain consensus on external conditions through a shared notion of reality (Gergen, 2001). Objects can readily be defined as "real". However, how they are defined is context-dependent, subject to meaning arrived through cultural and historical traditions (ibid, p.423-4). Edley (2001) appeals to common sense when accepting notions of reality from social constructionism that holds a relativist perspective. It does not mean that we have to question the existence of things around us which we take for granted; it does mean that we appreciate that they are a product of social construction and so, when we describe them, our choice of language is "seldom neutral" (p. 439). Nightingale and Cromby (2002) offer their own position on the nature of reality, illustrating a moderated version of relativism. External, objective reality does exist. Through empirical inquiry and discursive practices, it is possible to gain an appreciation of what this is. Given the subjective nature of language, however, our understanding of the world around us can never be described with total accuracy. Reality is, therefore, a co-construction of what exists in the natural world plus the deployment of language to describe it. Nightingale and Cromby's argument is that they add credibility to the social constructionist paradigm that might, otherwise, be accused of holding naïve views by ignoring the existence of external reality.

A critical realist's perspective (Elder-Vass)

Nightingale and Cromby (2002) lean towards a critical realist's interpretation of social constructionism. That is, they argue that access to the objective world is gained through social interaction which is subject to different influences (for example, historical, cultural, institutional), all of which reflect various power structures. Elder-Vass (2014) presents an alternative viewpoint, favouring a form of critical realism that connects human interaction with the impact of social forces upon individual behaviour. The version of critical realism adopted by Elder-Vass (2012a; 2012b) draws on parallels between the material world and the social world. Both operate through causal effects. To understand a social structure (such as a group of people who gather together for a collective purpose or who conform to a shared code of behaviour), one can explore how individuals interact and influence one another within this structure; and one can also examine the power of the social structure itself, in how it exerts social pressure beyond the immediate

participants in a given context. That is, one can determine the agency of each individual and, also recognise how their combined interactions constitute a collective force or influence. Elder-Vass (2012a; 2012b) likens this to a material object, like a torch or a laser pointer, which can be explained in terms of how individual parts interconnect to create a power that only exists once these parts have combined in a certain way. Thus, social forces, which evolve from the way individuals interact with others, manifest into something more powerful and influential than the sum of each participatory individual.

The role of language (from a critical realist's perspective).

It is not just that the physical world offers a model for understanding the social world. Elder-Vass (2012a; 2012b; 2014) is clear that humans are a product of the physical world with the ability to use language which stems from a biological composition of the body. Neurons form pathways in the brain in response to experiences acquired in different social contexts. Although individuals are agents of their own decision-making, they absorb experiences through their neural pathways and learn to behave in certain ways; they are, therefore, subject to the influences of language and discursive practices to which they have been exposed. Thus, language is the means by which one can understand the social world (Elder-Vass, 2012b). This is not the same as the way that Gergen conceives language where the only access to reality is through language (Elder-Vass, 2014). Elder-Vass (2012a; 2012b) is interested in the “causal powers” which exert influence on the individual (Elder-Vass, 2012b, p. 12). Individuals might make their own choices about how to act but, to understand those decisions, one needs to explore underpinning social influences; and these are reflected in the way in which language is used. Thus, the focus lies in what produces language, rather than on language itself.

Elder-Vass, therefore, presents a strong argument which cautions against the view that language creates our understanding of the world around us (Gorski, 2013). Language, rather, is used to reinforce the expected patterns of behaviour within a given group (Elder-Vass, 2014). In the way that there are “norm circles” where groups of people influence one another to conform a certain way, there are “linguistic circles” (ibid). The way that we choose to speak, therefore, is subject to the linguistic patterns of the linguistic circles in which we mix. Inevitably, Elder-Vass (2014) recognises the potential

for conflict and confusion between alternative linguistic circles. However, this can be a positive thing since it creates “the opportunity, and sometimes the need” for individuals find ways to be innovative at adapting language and discursive practices so as to resolve challenging situations (ibid, p. 264).

Whether norm or linguistic circles actually do exist, in the way that Elder-Vass describes, is open to question. Wahlberg (2014) queries the existence of an embodied social structure that is greater than the sum of individuals within it. What counts are the beliefs and values which individuals share and which lead to common practices. Thus, it is this shared commitment which creates the social structure and, without this commitment from individuals, there would be no social structure at all. However, the arguments of Elder-Vass remind us that language, and the social practices it embodies, has a significant influence on individual identity. He helps us recognise that individuals are subject to different social pressures, whether they are consciously aware of them or not. As we engage in different contexts with different groups of people, we are challenged to negotiate potentially conflicting social demands and find solutions that avoid issues by adapting the way we do and say things. Ultimately, we are reminded that we have causal powers by our very existence (Wahlberg, 2014); and in research which explores the intersection between the worlds of home and school, it is encouraging to consider the power that individuals might be able utilise to work through possible differences.

A positive approach

The theoretical constructs of Elder-Vass do not convey the same level of optimism and opportunity for positive change that can be found in the ideas of Gergen (for example, Gergen, 2001, Wang, 2016). Gergen (2001) states that he aims to be “transformative” (p. 419). He wishes to avoid the dryness of analytical discussion over theoretical concepts which, in his view, may not offer any enlightenment on how to look forward with promise (ibid, p. 420). The risk, in particular, is that theorists are so embedded within their particular academic traditions, they may not realise how oriented they are to Westernised, colonial perspectives (Gergen, 2001). By firmly placing the focus on a contextualised understanding of reality, Gergen reminds us that our perceptions are always embedded in traditions and social-historical practices. This requires a reflexive

approach to question what these influences might be, and an open mind to acknowledge the existence of alternative perspectives (ibid). Thus, engagement in social interaction helps to explore multiple perspectives, and to consider new ways of thinking and acting (Wang, 2016). These ideas are worth embracing in research which explores multiple perspectives in home-school relationships with a view to sharing good practice and considering positive pathways for the future.

Implications for identity and agency

From a social-constructionist perspective, we create notions about who we are and how we act through the relationships we form (Shotter, 1993). The following discussion expands upon ideas around perceptions of identity and agency.

Identity as a dynamic self.

One way to conceive of the self is to appreciate that we exist in a state of fluctuation (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012). Social constructionism, from the perspectives of psychologists such as Gergen and Shotter, argue against the view that identity has fixed attributes that are acquired, internalised, and responsible for directing thoughts and actions (Shotter, 2012). Rather, how we come to understand who we are and how we might act is a more temporary and spontaneous phenomenon (Shotter, 2013; 2016). This is because we live in a continually changing environment, adapting and responding to what is happening around us (Gergen, 2009; 2011a). As Gergen (2009, p. 44) states, "Through co-action we come into being as individual identities, but the process remains forever incomplete. At any moment there are multiple options, and self-identity remains in motion".

Gergen clarifies this argument through the example of our emotions. We only know how we feel when we gauge how others are reacting. So, we are continually editing our responses according to the situation. Even when in isolation, what we do still relates to a social context beyond the immediacy of the situation. We, therefore, engage in a performance of actions and reactions, experiencing and trialling different emotions (Gergen, 2011b). Our perception about who we are, then, is dynamic and evolving. That does not, however, necessarily equate to an erratic and turbulent existence. The

relationship space that exists between the individual and the scenario in which someone is placed contains “coherent unity” (ibid, p. 114). Our feelings and actions make sense in a space which connects us to our environment. Thus, we are able to enjoy constancy in the way we experience life whilst, simultaneously, living in a state of flux.

One implication of viewing identity as socially constructed, therefore, is that our environment is continually defining who we are. What we say and do only makes sense in the context of shared social practices (Shotter, 2012). Gergen (2011b) gives the example of memory and argues that what we take to be a personal memory has only come into existence as a result of shared practices that created the social situation that we recall. That is, we can only arrive at an understanding of ourselves when we consider the world of relationships in which we are living. A second implication is that, whilst articulating who we are within a social context, we are always acting in anticipation of what may unfold (Shotter 2012; 2013). Just as we are predicting what may eventuate and then act accordingly, so are others. Thus, actions are conducted in a fluid space of relating to one another where we continually formulate possibilities of what might be (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012).

Shotter contributes to this discussion with reference to Bakhtin (1984, cited in Shotter, 2016), focussing on the emergent quality of events and our individual agency. Although we are separate from one another, we are also connected in a dialogical twisting and turning that means we are never truly separate from anyone else. The indeterminate nature of our identity means that we are driven forward by a sense of “lack” and this prompts us to continually engage in re-thinking in a bid to make sense of our existence (Shotter, 2016, p. 63). We live with the pressure of being unable to just repeat what we do and how we think ad infinitum (Shotter, 2016), and of having constant dilemmas about how we negotiate our way forward (Shotter, 1993). Sometimes, how we act is very deliberately chosen, as opposed to behaving in a spontaneous and responsive way as we engage with the world; but, even on spontaneous occasions, our decisions are based on previous experiences which lead us to make assumptions about what we might expect to happen (Shotter, 2016). We are guided by “a posteriori” observations rather than by “a priori” reasoning so that the forming of our identity is part of an experiential process.

The idea of a relational identity adds a useful dimension to this research. If identity was conceived as a fixed, determined attribute in each individual, this study might be drawn into polarised views that focussed on difference. However, this research seeks to acknowledge and build on the positive aspects of how teachers, families, and the community can work together in order to benefit students. Appreciating the dynamic nature of individual identity opens up the possibility for entertaining dialogue and interpersonal influence so that the fluid space which connects individuals to the external world becomes the focus of attention. It is within this space that mutual understanding and opportunity for positive change exists.

Ethical agency.

A further aspect of perceiving identity in this way is that, as Gergen (2009; 2011c) argues, it can direct us towards ethical practices that promote mindfulness towards others. Gergen (2009) finds the concept of self as a bounded entity unhelpful because it encourages concern for oneself over and above that of others. It can help to actualise negative human characteristics such as self-interest or feelings of isolation, and it can lead to low self-esteem if one is drawn into comparisons with others; relationships are threatened, whether between one person and another or between nations (ibid, p. 27). Therefore, by drawing attention to thinking of ourselves in terms of our relationships, we may be more considerate (Gergen, 2009; 2011a). Collaboration and co-operation become priorities so that relationships are nurtured in the interest of everyone's welfare (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012; Slife & Richardson, 2011). What relationships might achieve, given the open-mindedness of individuals to respond to alternative perspectives, has limitless possibilities (Gergen, 2009). It is worth appreciating the importance of the immediacy of our relationships with others as we interact in the world given the belief that we act in anticipation of what may be. An implication is that interactions unfold according to the assumptions that are influencing its direction (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012). This gives weight to the argument for nurturing relationships as they unfold since the promise of a positive outcome is contained within the execution of the relating to each another.

Critics of Gergen find some of his ideas unsustainable. Concern has been expressed over his leanings towards relationality which minimise ideas about autonomy and personal integrity of the individual (Churchill, 2011). Furthermore, concern has been raised over the focus on relationships with others over and above how we might relate to, say, the natural world or to our spirituality (Slife & Richardson, 2011). Furthermore, according to Slife and Richardson (2011), Gergen's idea of the limitless possibilities for what relationships might achieve has an element of naivety; there are some cultural and moral codes that are so deeply ingrained within us, a radical change in thinking is really not possible. There is actually some inconsistency in contemplating a limitless possibility in how we might interact in the world whilst, simultaneously, acknowledging that we are defined (and, therefore, limited) by our social contexts (Slife & Richardson, 2011). Gergen (2011c) accepts criticism plays a positive role in encouraging a further exploration of ideas. It is through engaging his readers in dialogue that new possibilities can emerge.

Given that an important focus in this research is to acknowledge and support collaborative relationships, Gergen's moral code relating to identity and agency is helpful when setting aspirations for a positive research outcome. Furthermore, his ideas are relevant to someone whose background is European but who is engaging in research with Pacific participants. It is important to recognise there is the potential for mutual understanding and for opportunities to learn through the dialogical space in the research relationships.

SECTION 2 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Introduction

AI is embedded within a social constructionist's worldview, accepting the most comprehensive version of a subjective reality where understanding of the world can only be gained through relationships (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 5). Gergen is explicitly referenced by Cooperrider and Whitney who are advocates of AI (for example, Gergen, 1994, cited in Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Gergen, 1984, cited in Cooperrider, 1986). The confluence of thinking between Cooperrider, Whitney, and Gergen is evident in the fact they are founding members of the Taos Institute (The Taos Institute, n.d.) The Taos

Institute (of which Gergen is the president) is a virtual organisation that is committed to, “exploring, developing and disseminating ideas and practices that promote relational, creative, appreciative and collaborative processes in families, communities and organizations around the world through a social constructionist lens” (The Taos Institute, n.d.). Thus, AI is a way of actioning the idealistic vision of Gergen (2009) where engagement in dialogue that allows for multiple perspectives has limitless potential to achieve positive outcomes for individuals and the social groups in which they belong.

The originator of AI was Cooperrider (1986) who considered how action research could bring about worthwhile change in organisations by taking the focus away from problems and, instead, directing it towards positive change. He felt that a focus on diagnosing problems might not provide solutions. This was because the procedure suggested that there was something that needed fixing within the system, which would lead to the tendency to only consider short-term solutions that did not question the system, itself. In effect, the risk of this approach was that it maintained the system, keeping the status quo, so nothing could really change. The narrow focus inhibited creativity and the flow of generative ideas which might actually achieve something different. Cooperrider (1986) maintained that we should consider the power of human interaction when experiences are shared, and when engagement in meaningful and creative dialogue is encouraged.

Underlying principles

As positive outcomes are envisioned through a social constructionist lens, Cooperrider and Whitney (2000) argue a number of theoretical principles be embedded within AI. The constructionist principle firmly places an emphasis on language and the power of discourse to consider ever-evolving possibilities. Since knowledge is created collectively and is context dependent, then the development of individual learning and the development of the organisation are closely intertwined (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, pp. 17-18; 2005, pp. 49-50). Effective change springs from growth achieved through relationships.

The simultaneity principle acknowledges the theoretical underpinnings of how meaning is socially constructed through dialogue so that we are simultaneously responding and also

anticipating the direction of discourse (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012; 2013; 2016). This means that the moment that questions are asked and an inquiry is launched, the prompts for change are in place as new thoughts initiate new directions. Interaction should be aimed towards strengthening relationships and creating positive outcomes for all (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 18; 2005, pp. 50-51). Therefore, according to the poetic principle, this means that there is no limit to creativity and to what might be envisaged, or in what context or situation AI can be applied. Here, the word “poetically” is used in a metaphorical way to signify open-endedness for learning opportunities and inspiring ideas (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 18-19; 2005, pp. 51-52).

The anticipatory principle is a reminder that an AI approach is forward looking, where our current actions are influenced by our imaginings of what we would like to see happen in the future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 19-20; 2005, pp. 52-53). Finally, the positive principle affirms just that. The more positively oriented the inquiry is (with positive-focussed questions), then the more positive are the outcomes and solutions likely to be (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000, p. 20; 2005, p. 53).

Optimum conditions for successful outcomes in an AI process

Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2010) have considered what are the optimal conditions which allow an AI process to work at its best. The aim of AI is to encourage participation, regardless of boundaries that sanction some voices over others in organisations or communities (Reed, 2007; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). These conditions are:

- to be able to build relationships with others, regardless of status or protocol
- to feel that one can share one’s stories and ideas, knowing that attentive listening will be given to them
- to enjoy a sense of belonging in the community or organisation under investigation
- to know that one can have a sense of autonomy over one’s commitment to the organisation, so that any effort undertaken comes with a personal sense of contribution

- to feel free to support others and work co-operatively (without being drawn into competition and negative judgements)
- to be able to relish in positivity rather than be drawn into a cycle of negativity (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

When people are valued this way, Whitney (2010) describes the coming together of individuals as a “spiritual” experience where an overall sense of well-being has been nurtured (p. 78), and where “faith” in the positive potential of relationships has been placed (p. 84).

The 4-D cycle

A recommended methodological approach for actioning the philosophical aims of AI is that of the 4-D cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Reed, 2007; Whitney, 2010). The 4-D cycle provides specific guidelines which can facilitate practical situations like, for example, how a researcher might conduct fieldwork.

- The first D is for the *discovery* phase. This is an opportunity to discover what strengths can be found within individuals or within the organisation; it is a chance to share stories of success and positive experiences, and to explore important values.
- The second D is for the *dream* phase. Here participants can identify key themes which they believe are essential for the creation of success. Participants can use their imagination and be aspirational in thinking of what would be ideal.
- The third D is for *design*. In this phase, participants collaborate on rethinking values, strategies, and processes which could turn their aspirational ideas into reality. It is an opportunity to create a shared vision through collective discussion. This phase could generate a provocative or visionary statement which upholds the key values which participants collectively want to take forward.
- Finally, the *destiny* phase allows participants to embark on planning for the future and consider specific actions which work towards the desired vision. The word “destiny” is carefully selected over the word “delivery” to denote the possibilities

for real transformation when there is a collective construction and affirmation to adopt new pathways (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000; 2005).

As indicated in Chapter One, the 4-D cycle directly influenced the research questions and design of my study. (See Chapter Seven on methodology.) It is an iterative process that can be applied and re-applied to diverse contexts in order to encourage creative and constructive thinking (Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002).

AI in practice

AI has been used in a range of contexts, demonstrating its flexibility and adaptability.

A range of contexts.

Finegold et al. (2002) report on an Administration and Finance Department of an American university which requested training in AI to help make the department more effective. Four hundred members were involved in sharing stories and dreaming how their work place could be better. It led to much improved communication within the organisation and a personal sense of feeling uplifted. AI became part of the process in annual strategic planning so that interviews fed forward into the goals of each department within the larger organisation. This success led to other faculties within the university being inspired to participate in an AI process. In the same article, Finegold et al. (2002) describe how other successful AI projects had shifted people's thinking so that they worked more collaboratively and creatively; for instance, how AI supported different community organisations within the city of Dubuque, America, where housing was a social issue. By drawing together over 80 individuals with different interests (tenants, landlords, officials, and so on), positive and collaborative decisions were made for the way forward. Stories were shared and new relationships were formed. It led to more trust within the community and more ownership of the surroundings. For example, over a hundred young people spent a weekend clearing up abandoned properties with the support of owners who worked alongside them. Another example describes a turn-around in a village in Nepal when members of the village were led through the AI process and, subsequently, took more ownership of the aid they had been donated. They went on to raise money for themselves, organising their own water supply and building a

school. The final example involves the creation of a united faith group (the United Religions Initiative) that spread after AI training from David Cooperrider in 1996 to combat cynicism which had prevented its growth. By the year 2000, more than 400 religious communities in 60 countries had participated in shared events. The entire article promotes the possibilities for an AI process to change old habits of thinking and engage with new understandings and a collective spirit, showing the diversity of contexts to which AI can be applied.

Michael (2005) report on the use of AI to support her fieldwork as a researcher when she interviewed 60 directors of NGO's across parts of Africa. She only had the opportunity for a one-off interview with each director and was concerned that interviews would raise negative issues relating to lack of power or to problems with fickle decisions from other agencies. She thought participants may be suspicious of her intentions, and reticent to talk. However, her questions, which were framed towards positive storytelling, engendered enthusiasm and honesty. Participants were excited to talk with pride about their work and were more open because they felt their interviewer was non-judgemental. Therefore, any issues which they did raise, were thoughtfully articulated as part of participants' reflection on the past and consideration for the future. Michael (2005) realised that she could not put into place all four phases of the 4-D cycle but felt that her focus on the discovery stage did, in fact, move participants toward opportunities to dream. She concludes that an AI focus had been most effective for enriching the data collection.

An AI formula was also used to support the professional development of Science teachers in the United Kingdom, with training conducted by university staff (Clarke, Egan, Fletcher, & Ryan, 2006). It was intended that an open-ended and unrestricted approach in their training sessions would allow teachers to be creative and inspirational; this would open up possibilities for transformation which could lift teachers' expertise. Collegiality was encouraged and it was hoped that the learning opportunities, gained from one another, would springboard a more collaborative way of working across schools. Clarke et al. (2006) report measured success. A number of teachers found the lack of structure initially frustrating. Also, there was no clear evidence that collaborative practices continued beyond the remit of the research project. However, teacher feedback showed

an appreciation of the chance to be reflective and of tools to help them continue their own professional development once the project was over. Clarke et al. (2006) acknowledge that, as facilitators, they had also gained from the experience and benefitted from the opportunity to develop professionally. A useful observation to make from the authors' evaluation of their work is that AI (in whatever way it is interpreted and actioned) does not necessarily lead to a fixed end goal, but rather sows seeds so that learning and development can continue to grow once the official intervention is terminated. All parties can benefit from the experience.

Giles and Alderson (2008) report on the use of AI to evaluate a family literacy adult education programme in New Zealand. The programme aimed to help adult learners, who had not had successful school careers, improve their own skills whilst learning how to support their own children's literacy development. The authors wanted to avoid an evaluation that measured specific learning outcomes and adopted a business-like lens to judge the efficiency of programme. Rather, the idea was to capture any transformational experiences. Students reported that they appreciated the warmth of tutors, the relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, and the opportunity to involve the wider family in their journey. An important strength in the evaluation process was that students could hear each other's stories; this reflection helped to solidify what had been meaningful to them about this programme and what they wanted to take into future learning experiences. What is useful to note here is that, AI, in this context, helps to validate the role of relationships for students (with tutors, families, and each other) in enriching educational experiences; interestingly, it supports the notion that examining the quality of relationships in an educational setting is a worthwhile way to measure successful learning experiences.

Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, and Black (2009) report on the use of AI to evaluate the practices of a cohort of inclusive educators in America. The AI process was employed for a one-day event with 35 participants to work out how teachers could best work with secondary students with special needs. The 4-D cycle was actioned whereby participants worked in pairs to discover important "values, skills, and knowledge" necessary for successful, inclusive teaching (p. 81); then they worked in groups to elicit key ideas to take forward as their dreams; in the design phase, the groups created provocative

statements; and in the destiny phase, they finished with considerations about what actions participants could take within the next six months. The result was that participants felt empowered to move forward with commitment to create change according to the values that had collaboratively been agreed upon. The article finishes with key benefits from of an AI process: participants are directly involved in creating change; past and present understandings influence future action; and accountability is achieved through ownership and personal commitment to move forward (Kozik et al., 2009, p. 89).

Another American educational context for AI concerned the sustainability of midwestern rural education (Calabrese, Hester, Friesen, & Burkhalter, 2010). The 4-D cycle was actioned over a four-day summit with nine participants. The authors concluded that this process was a positive experience for the participants which enabled them, in turn, to have a positive impact on rural education. Instead of feeling powerless and isolated, they felt empowered through collaboration and a shared vision for the future. Their altered sense of agency led them to create new networks, designed to help rural education to thrive. This study highlights the transformational potential in individuals when, empowered through an AI journey, they become energised and committed to change.

A significant study to highlight is that of a partnership between university researchers and a community programme to support Tongan women's cancer awareness in Southern California (Paige et al., 2015). The authors describe the challenges in the partnership and the bid to use AI as a way to overcome issues in the running of the programme. One problem was that staff changes had made communication challenging. Another related to funding restrictions, attached to aims that were challenging to meet (such as recruitment numbers). There was also insufficient community staffing to support clients; and a further barrier was how to develop and sustain the programme when funding was on a limited time span. These problems resulted in tensions between university and community personnel. The AI process was introduced as a way forward and proved to be very helpful at enabling university and community participants to find common ground. By sharing knowledge and appreciating each other's work and expertise, there was improved clarity and decision-making. Paige et al. (2015) conclude that the incorporation

of AI at the end of the programme was a limiting factor since it would have helped to have had it as part of an ongoing process to support the development of the programme from the start. Also, it would have helped to have involved the funding staff since funding was so critical but not that well understood. A useful point to draw from this study is the recognition that AI can be viewed as an ongoing process to sustain commitment, rather than a one-off intervention. Another is the significance of involving relevant parties (like the funding team) so as to aid effective decision-making. A further implication of this is that AI had the potential to assist the successful running of the programme with the existing resources available had it been more fully incorporated in the way Paige et al. (2015) indicated.

Finally, positive aspects of the AI process are summed up by van Der Vaart and Masselink (2017), Dutch trainers who have found this approach a valuable tool in learning situations. They believe that the 4-D cycle can be directly applied to training where participants focus on their educational goals so that they can “move their education in the direction that means the most to them” (p. 54). Their argument is that, by giving students the freedom to direct their own learning in an appreciative way, they become energised and enjoy a sense of freedom. They consider what matters to them and build on their dreams, so that they design what they want to achieve and then carry out the plan they have devised. A trainer can help with boundaries so that students are not overwhelmed. Van Der Vaart and Masselink (2017) argue that when this kind of training works well, learners thrive on being validated by their trainers and assume responsibility for their learning. Their ideas are similar to the work carried out by Clarke et al. (2006), where the professional development of Science teachers supported the teachers’ ownership of their own learning journey. In both cases, it was noted that some boundaries were needed so that participants could develop their potential within the safety of structured support. When considering a social constructionist paradigm, we are reminded that meaning is created through relationships with others and that the social context in which these relationships unfold always informs our understanding of the world. It is worth noting, therefore, that the successful implementation of an AI process may depend on providing some kind of structure or boundary; otherwise participants,

faced with something too open-ended, may struggle to find a context in which to create meaning.

Summing up.

To summarise and conclude this section on AI in practice, these studies demonstrate the diverse contexts in which AI can take place. From its original conception in the late 1980's, AI continues in popularity. It is shown to be an effective way of producing positive outcomes through utilising the creative energies of those with vested interests. Even if positive outcomes cannot be firmly established, its processes may still enrich the experiences of participants (for example, Michael's energising interviews with directors of NGO's). It has also served as a useful tool for conducting evaluations programmes and practices (eg., Paige et al.'s evaluation of a health programme). Caution was noted for AI in training contexts where open-endedness could frustrate participants (Clarke, 2006; van Der Vaart & Masselink, 2017); and Paige et al. (2015) observed that their application of AI could have been improved by its earlier implementation and a more inclusive participation. As such, these cautionary messages were not aimed at the idea of AI itself; rather, they were aimed at the way it had been implemented. Overall, the studies were positive, arguing that AI supports:

- new ideas and directions (Clarke et al. 2006; Finegold et al., 2002; Giles & Anderson, 2008; Hester, et al., 2009; Kozik et al., 2009)
- collaboration and the value of relationships (Clarke et al., 2006; Finegold et al., 2002; Giles & Anderson, 2008; Michael, 2005; Paige et al., 2015)
- trust and honesty in relationships (Michael, 2005; Paige et al., 2015)
- personal transformation and a commitment to create change (Clarke et al., 2006; Giles & Anderson, 2008; Hester, et al., 2009; Kozik, et al., 2009; van Der Vaart & Masselink, 2017)
- personal responsibility and accountability (Clarke et al., 2006; Kozik, et al., 2009; van Der Vaart & Masselink, 2017).

A critique of AI

Given that, in all cases, there was a conscious decision to undertake an AI approach, it may not be surprising that the consensus was positive. It could be argued that justification for the use of AI influenced the direction of the writers. It is, therefore, worthwhile looking at literature which specifically critiques AI's philosophy and practice. There appear to be two interconnecting aspects which have attracted critical attention: AI's transformative qualities and its positive slant. What follows is a discussion around the claims for AI to bring transformation through the positive contributions of participants.

AI's potential to bring transformation through a positive approach.

Bushe and Kassam (2005) noted that, in an analysis of 20 cases, they found that only seven reported that transformation had successfully occurred. They considered that its open-ended approach might mean that, once an AI process is underway, it is not necessarily clear in what direction it may go. Without any prior decision on what needs to change, new ideas emerge in unpredictable ways through the encouragement of participants' contributions. The avoidance of specifics is actually supposed to generate change faster as individuals embrace new ideas and initiatives which work up through the whole system. However, Bushe and Kassam (2005) considered that with such a fluid approach, AI may be loosely interpreted and its potential to be transformational is lost. They concluded that the more AI was embraced as a vehicle for change, the more likely it was that new directions would come to fruition. If it was only used in its capacity for sharing positive stories, then change was much less likely. If this was the case, they argued, the methodological choices might not be rigorous enough to attend to what needs addressing (Bushe & Kassam, 2005).

Therefore, an issue which has been raised about AI is that by only focussing on the positive it can overlook problems that need attention, and this has rendered it ineffective as a means of actioning change or enabling insightful evaluation (Coghlan, Preskill, & Catsambis, 2003; Dematteo & Reeves, 2011; Grant & Humphries, 2006; Patton, 2003; van der Haar & Hosking, 2004;). For instance, Dematteo and Reeves (2011) reviewed how AI

was used to support collaborative practices for medical professionals in a North American setting. Whilst some interviewees found AI's positive approach refreshing and stimulating, others felt issues were glossed over. Interviewees also had doubt as to whether organisational structures could really change so as to allow more inclusive and empowering ways of working. What concerned Dematteo and Reeves (2011) was that AI might give the illusion of empowerment, whilst actually reinforcing the existing management structure. This argument has been raised by van der Haar and Hosking (2004) who draw on their understanding of social constructionism to wonder if AI only maintains the status quo. From a social-constructionist perspective, meaning is constructed through relationships which take place within "local-cultural" and "local-historical" contexts (p. 1022). Since meaning is dependent upon the context, it is hard to move towards new and transformational interpretations when the conventions of the localised setting are so influential. Thus, meaning will always be constrained by the context in which it has been generated, meaning there will be a tendency to perpetuate the status quo as Dematteo and Reeves (2011) fear.

The influence of positivity on power relations.

Van der Haar and Hosking (2004) draw further on a social constructionist paradigm to claim inconsistency in AI's philosophy about positivity. When meaning is co-constructed through relationships, they argue, power is meant to be equitably distributed to all those who participate in the creation of meaning. This then allows for different perceptions to be equally valid. However, to propose an inquiry based on positive framing is actually limiting the possibility of alternative constructions of reality that may not align with the positive focus. Upholding positivity is incompatible with AI's social-constructionist leanings towards the inclusion of multiple perspectives. An extension of this discussion comes from Grant and Humphries (2006) who consider that the social-constructionist underpinning of AI should extend beyond the immediate setting and include the wider "social, economic and political" context (p. 405). They consider that transformation is not truly possible if the influences of power structures, evident in wider society, are not taken into account.

For this reason, Grant and Humphries (2006) combine critical theory with AI to add the awareness of how power relations impact upon people's perceptions of reality. Critical theorists explore the domination that has been constructed socially, politically, and historically within societies so that certain groups maintain influence over others; and those, with less influence, may find themselves contributing to societal inequality through the deferential way that they position themselves (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). Illuminating the complexity of power dynamics in an organisation can have a liberating effect and is, therefore, compatible with the emphasis on transformative outcomes that is embedded within AI (Grant & Humphries, 2006). Critical theory and AI have elements in common; they both perceive that language is the medium through which multiple perceptions of reality are constructed, and both are committed to change (ibid). The focus of critical theorists is to deconstruct problems, maybe employing methods of disruption or resistance in order to bring about change (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000), which may appear to be quite contrary to the principles of AI (Grant & Humphries, 2006). However, Alvesson and Deetz (2000) argue that a critical approach to change within organisations does not have to be disruptive but can, in fact, be pragmatic and constructive. They recommend an approach as follows: first, explore the processes in place where people or systems may be exerting control over others; second, investigate the political, social, or cultural factors that influence these processes; and, finally, equip the decision-makers in the organisation with the knowledge to enable them to act more democratically. Consequently, the organisation may be more productive and creative (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000).

Therefore, Grant and Humphries (2006) believe a critical approach can actually strengthen the AI process. An appreciation of participants' stories may include an appreciation of what needs uncovering. Participants bring to the surface any perceptions about inequality or marginalisation, and this allows a more honest and rigorous way forward for envisioning constructive change. Ridley-Duff and Duncan (2015) felt they successfully applied a critical element to their AI research into the lives of Pakistani women in the north of England. Instead of asking participants to relate positive experiences, they sought to appreciate what participants valued so as to help them discover what was meaningful in their own lives. Participants were able to relay

perturbing stories. From here, they were encouraged to map out new possibilities where their aspirations challenged the status quo. They could appreciate they had the power to act in alternative ways, and could create new narratives that superseded those that had been previously been inhibiting. CAP (Critical Appreciative Inquiry) is one way, therefore, to challenge the perceived glossing-over of problems (Grant & Humphries, 2006; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015). Participants' values, which may not have hitherto been recognised within the institution or wider societal context, become validated through the inquiry process; and this has the potential to bring about emancipatory thoughts and transformative outcomes.

The shadow process.

An alternative lens through which to consider the apparent positive bias in AI is to draw on the Jungian concept of the "shadow"; this is where individuals consciously or unconsciously suppress or censor thoughts that may appear inappropriate (Fitzgerald, Oliver, & Hoxsey, 2010, p. 221). The authors explain that these may be negative, destructive traits but not necessarily so; individuals may have hidden talents and capabilities which are not recognised within the given context. This is because organisations adopt codes of behaviour which validate certain qualities or characteristics but deem others unacceptable. Therefore, a collective social code normalises what may be expressed and suppresses what may not (Fitzgerald et al., 2010). (This is comparable to Elder-Vass' concept of a social entity which places social pressure upon its members to conform in expected ways.) The implication here is that what may be considered to be positive is a subjective notion, normalised within the organisation and, quite possibly, through the AI process. AI could actually promote the shadow element by censoring discourse that is perceived as negative; the effect could be to promote the interests of the organisation whilst contributing to the marginalisation and frustration of individuals (Fitzgerald et al., 2010). However, they argue, this does not need to be the case. Either there can be a collective immersion in positive and heart-warming stories which strengthens everyone's commitment to embrace and take forward shared values; or the shadow is acknowledged where both positive and negative perspectives are equally honoured. The key, Fitzgerald et al. (2010) argue, is the way that AI is actioned so that the

facilitator is reflexive and non-judgemental, ensuring that multiple perspectives are included regardless of their perceived positioning.

The role of dialogue.

The role of dialogue is important, therefore, in ensuring that participants feel their contributions are valued. In AI, Gergen, Gergen, and Barrett (2004) argue, dialogue should be a co-ordinated activity where people respond to one another in a way that facilitates the co-creation of meaning, and relationships move forward towards mutual agreement that engenders positive action. The aim is to create “generative” and “transformational” ideas (p. 11 & p. 23). To be avoided are actions which show disregard to others (that is, anything which ignores or negates someone’s input) and which place the blame on individuals; if hostility or distrust arises, this only leads to dysfunctional dialogue (Gergen et al., 2004). This does not mean, of course, that rigorous debate is denied since that is how generative ideas come to fruition (ibid). Patton (2003) draws on his own experience to say that it is quite possible to facilitate dialogue with participants that engenders transformative ideas whilst acknowledging any thoughts that appear to the contrary. He argues that the delivery of the 4-D cycle does provide opportunity for participants to work through any issues as they ponder the ideal dream scenario. As he points out, a “nuanced shift” in the language can generate different meanings where ideas can be re-framed (p. 94). This means that when problems are raised, it does not necessarily lead to an exacerbation of them; instead, the sharing of concerns can be framed in such a way that it acts as a precursor to agreeing positive intent for planning a brighter future (Grant & Humphries, 2005, p. 404-5). So, although it seems paradoxical to accept diverse perspectives **and** collective decision-making, the co-construction of dialogue has the potential to take individuals forward to a new, shared vision.

Summary of critique.

AI’s transformative claims have been questioned because some participants may feel that their stories and experiences are invalidated if they are not compatible with the positive direction of the inquiry. To dismiss certain voices runs counter to AI’s principle of including multiple perspectives, and the chance to generate new ideas may be lost in

favour of maintaining the status quo. A critical or Jungian lens helps to explain why participants' perspectives should be shared without fear of censor so that their voices are included and credited. Doing so enriches the potential for transformation. The key is to allow the co-creation of dialogue through respect and collaboration.

Summary and conclusion of AI

AI is a form of action research which can be understood as a philosophical approach and a methodological practice, and is often used in organisational settings. AI seeks change through the inclusion of multiple perspectives. It encourages the sharing of creative and energising ideas so that individuals are inspired to act; collective efforts can bring transformational results to the organisation. The 4-D cycle is one way in which AI can be applied to diverse contexts. Whilst this gives the impression that the success of AI depends upon the successful completion of the cycle with visible outcomes, this is not necessarily the case. The process is a fluid, iterative one where creative and constructing thinking may occur from the moment AI is initiated. The possibility for change is, therefore, embedded from the start and not reliant on a fixed end date. Although AI is often framed positively in order to be uplifting and encouraging, participants may want to share experiences that run counter to the positive direction of the inquiry. It is important to allow this as it contributes to an honest and inclusive approach, where all voices can contribute to the consideration of new possibilities and ideas.

Chapter 5: Communities of Practice

“Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming...”
(Wenger, 1998, p. 215)

Introduction

Aside from Appreciative Inquiry (AI), another theoretical framework which has been a significant influence on the design of the study is Communities of Practice (CoP). CoP has helped inform the analysis of findings in my discussion chapter, exploring how social practices are shared within and across different groupings of people with the potential to benefit (or hinder) personal and collective growth. CoP has been helpful for considering how interactions between home, school, and community can be managed fruitfully for the benefit of Pacific learners through collaborative practices.

The term Communities of Practice is used in academic as well as organisational management literature and can convey quite diverse meanings (Cox, 2005). I largely refer to the seminal work of Wenger, “Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity” (1998). In this publication, Wenger drew on his study of employees who worked on claims processing in order to explore how relationships influence each other’s learning and work practices so as to create a meaningful working existence. Over time Wenger’s ideas have evolved (as has his name to Wenger-Traynor); more recently, he and his associates have concentrated on the world of business and how organisations can thrive through the existence of informal networks where ideas are shared and fostered (for example, Wenger, 2002).

This chapter

- outlines key ideas and concepts of CoP
- reviews some examples of how CoP has been used in practice
- examines the theoretical rigour of CoP
- relates CoP to Appreciate Inquiry and conclude on its effectiveness as a theoretical tool for this study.

Key ideas and concepts

CoP aims to explain how learning is integral to our participation in society (Farnsworth, Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016, p. 5). CoP is founded on the idea that our understanding of the world is attained through ongoing social interaction in which we engage in a continuous process of interpreting, responding to, and predicting others' actions. Learning is, therefore, a fundamental characteristic of daily life as individuals seek to establish meaning within given social contexts (Wenger, 1998). This view aligns with those established in Chapter Four on social constructionism, for example, Gergen (2009, 2011a) and Shotter (2013; 2016). Like Gergen and Shotter, Wenger emphasises how the search for meaning supports identity formation. His particular emphasis is on the way learning happens as part of an engagement in social practices that draw people together into communities of practice. Opportunities to learn and develop identity are, therefore, influenced by the interactions that take place through various social practices within different communities.

Mutual engagement and shared enterprise in a community.

A key idea is that we learn through our “mutual engagement” with others in a common pursuit (Wenger, 1998, p. 73; 2000, p. 229). The word “mutual” indicates there is a degree of trust and familiarity in the way that people socially interact with one another as they participate in a shared interest (Wenger, 2000, p. 230). It is this shared interest or “joint enterprise” which draws individuals together into a community of people who, because of the common interest, hold each other accountable for the way they conduct themselves (Wenger, 1998, p. 77; 2000, p. 229). This does not mean, necessarily, that there is homogeneity or harmony. Tensions and different perspectives may arise but a shared sense of purpose helps individuals to act with a degree of responsibility towards one another. When Wenger uses the term “community”, he is not referring to how people group together geographically but, rather, how people group together through a common purpose, irrespective of physicality (Cox, 2005). Latterly, Wenger has preferred the term “domain” to explain this common ground so as to avoid connotation of a “joint enterprise” sounding like a team or specific organised structure (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 6). This is because boundaries are diffuse; individuals adopt certain ways of acting and

thinking associated with a domain, which is not the same thing as membership of a defined group. Communities of Practice, Wenger (1998; 2000) argues, arise in fluid and informal ways as individuals socially interact in pursuit of a common endeavour and engage in practices that support this common interest.

Learning through engaging in social practices.

Shared Practices.

In order to engage in the world in a meaningful way, individuals adopt shared practices as a way of finding commonality to help them process understandings (Wenger, 1998). By practice, Wenger (1998) means the, “shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action” (p. 5).

For instance, employees may develop consensual agreement about ways of doing and thinking that help them to make their working experience meaningful. These could include specific actions, use of language, documents or processes, or more tacit and subtle practices where common views are held but not openly expressed (like knowing when it is appropriate to hold a conversation). These practices are subject to continual negotiation through relationships with others and are, therefore, open to interpretation. They are key to our sense-making and relationship-building. Our familiarity with them helps us to connect with others, facilitating learning opportunities as we endeavour to make sense of our surroundings (Wenger, 1998).

Participation and reification.

When Wenger refers to “participation” in shared practices, he is suggesting “both action and connection” (Wenger, 1998, p. 55) in order to emphasise active engagement with others. In order to articulate how participation might operate, Wenger has adopted the term “reification” – the “points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organised” (p. 58). Reification encompasses a wide range of “processes” (as in established routines), “discourses” (for example, the sharing of stories) or “artefacts” (such as written documents) all of which support the negotiation of meaning within a community (Wenger, 1998; Wenger 2000, p. 236). Reification and participation act

symbiotically. It is the interplay between them which gives rise to the practices of a community. Participation relies on reification, where learning is negotiated through the use of processes, discourse, or artefacts; and the negotiation of meaning, which results from participation, crystallises reification and supports its continued existence.

Reification can be a helpful shortcut, representing prior negotiated meaning and enabling the negotiation of further meaning (Farnsworth et al., 2016; Wenger, 1998). Whilst reification plays a critical role in supporting learning, Wenger (1998) notes that reification can also hinder learning opportunities. It could cement meaning to the extent that it becomes entrenched, inhibiting active participation in the negotiating of understandings.

The influence of boundaries and brokers.

The various forms of reification help to establish the “boundaries” of a community which, though often very subtle, demarcate one CoP from another through the particular ways that processes, discourses, and artefacts are organised (Wenger, 1998, p. 103; 2000, p. 232). For instance, a certain dress code can visibly establish and affirm membership. Wenger (1998) argues that reification can facilitate or hinder boundary crossing, influencing the negotiation of meaning not just within but also across different communities. For example, using a certain type of communication to convey a message to a diverse audience not only signals meaning through the words used but also through the choices made in its form of delivery. If the aim is to reach out beyond the immediacy of members who commonly share agreed practices, then attention needs to be given to the form of communication if it is going to encourage a diversity of perspectives from individuals outside the immediate CoP (p. 108).

Individuals may be able to help with this kind of dissemination and interaction. Brokers are those who can help move knowledge and shift ideas between CoP's (Wenger, 1998, p. 105; 2000, p. 235). They play a valuable role in ensuring that both individuals and the groups to which they belong do not remain entrenched with fixed ideas but are open to considering new approaches and continued learning. In particular, Wenger (1998, 2000) maintains it is the quality of the relationships which the broker forms with others that particularly affects the transfer of knowledge. Thus, Wenger's theorising affirms the role

that relationships play in facilitating both individual growth and collective learning opportunities.

Summary.

Familiarity with relevant social practices, and their reification, supports the negotiation of meaning. Our learning can be facilitated by individuals who are adept at participating in different social contexts (communities of practice) and, thereby, helping expose us to alternative perspectives.

Learning through identity formation.

Participating, learning, and belonging.

A further aspect of Wenger's ideas is to connect how learning influences our identity. As we negotiate meaning in the world through social interaction, so do we negotiate concepts of ourselves. Our identity is dynamic and evolving, subject to experiences which result from our participation in social interaction with others. During the course of our daily lives, we interact in different situations with different people where a common focus draws us together into different communities of practice. Our level of engagement in these communities is influenced by the degree of competence with which we can engage in the relevant social practices (Wenger, 1998; 2000). We may participate initially on the peripherals of a community or group of people, for example, and later become a fully-participating and knowledgeable member (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The more opportunities we have to participate in and engage with the practices of a given community, the more opportunities we have to learn; and the more competent and familiar we are with the core practices of the community, the greater our sense of belonging.

The spatial and temporal nature of identity.

Since we belong to a multiple number of communities of practice as part of our daily life, we need to adapt what we do according to the different spaces that we occupy (Wenger, 1998). Potentially, there may be tension between the different practices that we come across. We may need to reconcile these differences and decide how to act in

varying circumstances, depending upon how we think others might perceive us. It could be that avenues for closer engagement are denied us, and this way of being (as someone marginalised) may then influence how we come to perceive ourselves so that we act accordingly. Wenger (1998, p. 154) uses the term “trajectory” to signify the traction that happens as our past experiences influence our current and future actions. Identity can be understood, then, in terms of its temporal nature. It is in the present that we negotiate who we are and what we might become, but this is based on the interpretation of our experiences from the past.

The interplay of imagination, engagement, and alignment.

A further element to the spatial and temporal nature of identity is the use of our “imagination”. This is where we may choose to reflect and imagine different ways of “engagement”. Within a particular community, we may draw on practices from other communities so as to consider new ways of doing things; we consider other possibilities for the future (Wenger, 1998, pp. 184-7). Imagination is an important aspect of our identity formation as it allows us to consider our identity beyond the physicality of the present moment (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Engagement without imagination may mean that, when sharing practices in pursuit of a common interest, familiar patterns are maintained and no new ideas are encouraged. However, when individuals can imagine alternative pathways, their ideas could benefit collective growth. A further factor to consider then is that of “alignment”. Imagination without alignment may remain just that: possibilities for the future which do not eventuate. However, when we can align what we do with others so that there is a co-ordinated perspective and common action, then imagined possibilities can become reality. Collective growth results from opportunities that permit new ideas to take traction (Wenger, 1998; 2000; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These ideas resonate closely with Appreciative Inquiry in that they endeavour to show what can be achieved when co-ordinated action is centred around a shared vision (for example, Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000). Like AI there is a strong link between individual and collective growth, in that collective growth builds on the creative input of individuals.

The issue of power.

Wenger's interplay of engagement, imagination and alignment also shows how social relationships are subject to power issues (1998). In terms of engagement, for instance, when we engage in mutually productive interaction, participants all have the opportunity to promote ideas with the understanding that these ideas may be acknowledged and absorbed by others. However, when someone's contributions are overlooked, then such non-participation can lead to feelings of powerlessness and marginalisation.

Furthermore, in terms of imagination, when we involve our imagination in the negotiation of meaning, we can traverse time and space to augment our ideas. However, if our experiences are limited or access to meanings denied, then the opportunity to employ our imagination is curtailed and opportunities for participation are limited.

Finally, whilst the alignment of ideas may result from shared negotiation and lead to a consensus on how to act, it could also reflect control and authority. Alignment could mean pressure is placed upon individuals to participate according to set practices. This could lead, again, to non-participation in the negotiation of meaning because compliance has been imposed (Wenger, 1998).

Summary and concluding comments.

Wenger (1998) equates opportunities to learn with identity formation. We continually negotiate our identity, building on our experiences from the past in order to consider how we might act in the future. In particular, it is the quality of social relationships which affect identity formation. We benefit from relationships where we can mutually engage with others so that ideas are shared, and where we can employ our imagination to consider new possibilities. Relationships, which provide such learning opportunities, facilitate individual growth. Furthermore, if there is alignment where ideas are agreed upon, then collective growth can result from individual learning.

In addition, Wenger (1998) links identity formation with a sense of belonging. When we can fully participate within a community, we gain a strong sense of membership. We know how to socially interact with others and belong within this context, and we can feel competent and secure. Conversely, when participation within a community is limited,

opportunities to actively engage and to feel competent may be restricted. This could negatively impact upon identity because it engenders a sense of powerlessness and marginalisation. One possibility to consider is how individual growth can be supported by a sense of belonging; that is, familiarity with social practices helps promote the active negotiation of meaning and feelings of competence.

Examples of how Communities of Practice has been used

There are a number of ways that a CoP theoretical framework, as visualised by Wenger (1998; 2000), can be applied to relationship-oriented studies. What follows are some examples from educational, community, and work settings which illustrate a range of applications. They are grouped according to different emphases – whether the focus is on individual identity, the quality of relationships, or appertaining to organisational structure. However, each study shows reflection beyond the group into which it has been allotted. That is, identity develops through relationships, relationships are subject to organisational practices, and organisational practices influence identity.

Learning and identity.

Hunter (2010) draws on a CoP framework to explore changes in teacher identity. To support the professional development of Mathematic teachers in New Zealand, she formed a learning community with four teachers who taught seven to eleven-year olds. The purpose was to collaborate and learn from one another in order to develop expertise on how to encourage a more student-centred approach in the classroom. Thus, the emphasis of the community was on learning through participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Hunter (2010) reports on one particular teacher who found it initially challenging to make changes in classroom practice. This teacher employed a teacher-led style in the classroom, drawing on her own learning experiences as a student at school. Initially, she did not have the self-belief to change until she related to her own cultural knowledge and experiences. When she drew on elements of her cultural identity, she was able to shift her classroom practices to create more student engagement in the classroom. (For example, she formed the concept of the classroom as a family where members supported one another.) In order to explore how this teacher developed her

classroom expertise, Hunter relates to Wenger's (1998) idea of participation in multiple communities. As individuals draw on past experiences to shape current and future thoughts and actions, they may need to reconcile any conflicts between the different practices they have encountered. Hunter (2010) believes that the participatory and collaborative nature of the learning group was critical in helping to bring about change in her identity as a teacher.

Kubiak et al. (2015) have also explored identity issues using a CoP framework to consider the influence of multi-membership. Using the characteristics of engagement, imagination, and alignment, as outlined by Wenger (1998), they explored how individuals negotiated and adjusted to different practices in the workplace. For instance, in a research team of 15 people, they learned of conflict in the first face-to-face meeting as different approaches, experiences, and values appertaining to technology were discussed. Kubiak et al. (2015) refers to this issue as unaligned engagement (p. 69). They note how relationships can become uncomfortable as different assumptions influence "thinking and use of language" even though individuals have the desire to participate and engage with others in a shared domain (p. 69). To achieve alignment, however, at the cost of disregarding diverse views entails marginalisation. The optimum situation, Kubiak et al. (2015) argue, is to have open and trusting relationships where individuals can reconcile differences, whilst maintaining the freedom to express and explore their ideas.

A case of aligned engagement, offered by Kubiak et al. (2015), was of a journalist who had travelled extensively and interacted in many different organisations. Given his wide range of experiences, he was able to step into a public relations role. This involved negotiation with some communities in which he had previously been immersed or had knowledge of. For example, he could speak to the police with ease since he had become familiar with their use of language. His familiarity with different practices from different communities eased his role considerably in public relations. Another example of aligned engagement was of a Fine Arts educator. Her own experiences as an artist enabled her to employ her imagination to influence her career trajectory. For instance, she drew on her experiences from other artistic communities to find a new role working in an opera company. Although she was unfamiliar with opera, she was able to imagine how she might participate in a different world where there could be an overlap in practices with

memberships from other artistic communities. An observation from Kubiak et al. (2015) is to note how individuals endeavour to find congruence in terms of their personal identity as they negotiate multi-memberships. Like Hunter (2010), a key message is that effective learning opportunities arise when individuals can make connections to practices beyond the immediate context in order to help make sense of their current situation. This establishes some personal coherence between potentially diverse worlds.

Learning, identity, and relationships.

Churchman (2006) uses a CoP framework to explore perceptions of identity amongst academics in an Australian university post structural reforms from a 1987 Green Paper initiated by the Minister of Education. Twenty in-depth interviews were conducted with academic staff between 1999 and 2001. They captured the tension which staff felt between perceptions of their academic and teaching role and feelings about the “corporatisation” of their university as a result of the restructuring (p. 17). They perceived that the social values that they adhered to within the traditions of their role were being devalued. They felt that their working conditions were also being undermined. To help them find meaning in their working life and cope with disillusionment, they supported each other in informal networking. Churchman (2006) found that they were able to help each other sustain their academic traditions and bolster each other against perceived marginalisation by management. Through sharing stories and understandings about academia, they were able to establish feelings of self-worth in an unsupportive working environment. They also included new members of staff, thus providing opportunities for these staff to learn what practices were deemed valuable to the profession so as to help sustain them. The CoP framework helped to show the importance of collegiality which stemmed from connections made outside the established management structure and which supported positive perceptions of identity.

Peters and Le Cornu (2006) evaluated a professional development programme which covered over 150 schools in South Australia. The Learning to Learn Project was established in 1999 and aimed to support participants in maximising learning opportunities for students. Professional development took the form of learning circles where school leaders could share experiences with each other. Also present in the circles

were project officers and university staff (p. 109). Peters and Le Cornu (2006) applied Wenger's theorising about Communities of Practice to help exemplify the strengths of these circles. They found that participants emphasised mutual engagement as an important ingredient for fostering learning opportunities. In particular, participants expressed the value of building trust, reciprocity, and a shared agenda so that ideas could be openly discussed with one another. The authors note how storytelling (both oral and written) is a valuable form of reification which supports participation in the negotiation of meaning, and leads to rich learning opportunities.

Peters and Le Cornu (2006) report on the tension that members experienced on return to their school environment where the adoption of new practices disrupted existing patterns. A particular tension for school leaders was how to make collaborative decisions (in the manner of the circles) whilst being expected to make top-down decisions in a traditional management style. Like Hunter (2010) and Kubiak et al. (2015), Peters and Le Cornu (2006) perceive how individuals experience intrapersonal tension as they endeavour to reconcile differences between different communities (Wenger, 1998). For Peters and Le Cornu (2006), a CoP lens helps to illuminate the tension for teachers and school leaders who may feel anxious about coping with change in school environments. They recommend learning circles as an effective way for sharing learning experiences; the circles not only encourage the sharing of ideas to develop knowledge and skills but also, just as Hunter (2010) reports, support individuals as they reconcile their identity with changing practices. Peters and Le Cornu (2006) conclude that learning circles are not exactly the same as Wenger's concepts on CoP's. Learning circles work best when formalised and structured so that needs are specifically met. They should be facilitated and have an overt focus on collaboration and learning. Their explicit nature runs counter to the ideas of Wenger regarding the informality and fluidity of CoP's.

Learning, relationships and organisational practices.

The informality in learning situations was a focus for Stehlik (2006). He applied Wenger's CoP theory to support an interpretation of parental involvement at his child's school, a Waldorf school where the emphasis is on developing creativity in children. On a personal level as a parent, he notes how he was influenced by the philosophical ideas of the

Waldorf movement and wanted to learn more. He realised other parents felt the same, and considered that they acted like a Community of Practice. Their domain was a shared interest in furthering their knowledge of the school's philosophy; and a community that centred around informal learning opportunities grew as a result. Practical activities like school fetes or plays formed the practices through which parents could learn. Stehlik concludes that adult learning can often take the shape of formal situations where knowledge is imparted. However, in the case of the parents, it was through informal situations that effective learning actually happened and where opportunities for personal growth were possible.

Whilst Stehlik (2006) observed learning in an unstructured format without organisational intervention, Hart et al. (2013) explore how CoP's could be strategically implemented. They used a CoP framework to help establish and evaluate the effectiveness of community-university partnerships. A case study was used at one particular site where four CoP's were established. Three took the form of groups which had a set membership and which met regularly between 2008 and 2012. The other CoP was promoted as a forum to which anyone interested could attend. The domain for all the CoP's related to supporting disadvantaged children and families. The aim for all of them was to share knowledge in a democratic way, allowing academic, community, and parent voices to all have equal weight. The hoped-for outcome was that the universities and community organisations would engage in joint projects in order to address embedded social inequalities.

The case study explored the management of power dynamics. Given the awareness that there may be a perceived privileging of knowledge in favour of academics, endeavours were made to prioritise the voices of other members. Even though the CoP's were organised by academics, the facilitation of meetings was given to community members. Also, care was taken to ensure that parents and community workers never attended alone. As hoped would be the case, some partnerships did develop in order to work together on projects. Nevertheless, endeavours to engage members in open discussion about the power dynamics between them were not that successful. The hope was to discuss which forms of knowledge (such as that in academia) tended to be given higher status than other forms of knowledge, and to create more equal status between the

different forms within the CoP's. However, many members tended to be reticent to speak up. Some parents did not want to expose too much about themselves; community workers were sometimes reluctant to share information about how they work with clients – since the parents were the kind of clients they were working with; and academics held back from showing their expertise. When parents did speak up, some resisted from expressing an alternative view in fear of causing offence. Eloquent speakers inadvertently silenced others who then felt too awkward to speak themselves. Although the sharing of knowledge and expertise was not always successful, Hart et al. (2013) argue that the CoP's did disrupt typical knowledge hierarchies. Some members, who might not normally have an avenue to make their views heard, were able to express themselves. As Wenger (1998) argues, mutual engagement in learning and the sharing of social practices within a community can be transformative in nature. Thus, the CoP's did provide particularly enriching learning opportunities for some members.

The study also explored the management of participation. Given the diverse nature of the members of the CoP's, efforts were made to encourage as full participation as possible in each community. For instance, training sessions were given at the start of the project so that members could all begin with a similar knowledge base in preparation for the meetings. There was an anticipation that the CoP's would become self-managing as trusting relationships grew. However, levels of participation were mixed. Some members drifted away altogether. When opportunity was given to voice concerns, some parents said they were worried about not having a formal education and not being able to understand what was going on. Conversely, academics worried that their knowledge would not be relevant. Although a CoP model recognises the potential for members to participate more fully over time, there was no census of agreement within the CoP's as to what full participation might look like. Hart et al. (2013) conclude that participation can be challenging when people from diverse backgrounds are drawn into a common domain; the consequence of which is that shared learning experiences are harder to achieve.

Another aspect of the case study was to explore the nature of boundary workers. These are individuals who help transfer knowledge between different groups of people. It was imagined that some members would play a critical role in helping to share knowledge and align views across different worlds. Two different forms of boundary work occurred:

firstly, within the CoP's as members reached out to one another; and secondly, outside of the CoP's as members enthused with others and spread news of what was happening. This latter form of boundary work often led to other activities such as training, consultancy, workshops, and so on. A key finding notes how time-consuming this kind of boundary work was. Another finding was that successful boundary workers were able to span different worlds because they had experience in each of them. For instance, two academics were also parents which helped them establish trust with the other parents. One member shared all three identities – academic, community worker, and parent.

Although these members were deemed to be very helpful in drawing different perspectives together, they could also be a focus of tension. Sometimes, others wanted these members to align with a particular identity, and they resisted the blurring of roles and practices. In fact, some resisted any attempts to change from the practices with which they were familiar, and boundary-crossing work had no impact on them. On reflection, it was felt that boundary workers might have been more explicit about which identity or particular practice they were addressing; then members may have been less confused and more willing to consider change. Also, more could have been done to facilitate the transference of knowledge across different practices. Some effort was made; for instance, journal article summaries were shared to avoid everyone having to read them. However, Hart et al. (2013) believe it would have been better to have considered learning activities that involved co-creation. An example given was the shared construction of a tablecloth in one of the groups where everyone could represent their own understandings in the making of the cloth. In effect, the group was creating a practice in which all could participate, and which could help cement relationships to support the negotiation of meaning.

Hart et al. (2013) conclude that a CoP approach was helpful in influencing and evaluating the direction of their project. Whilst they hoped to create the informal, fluid characteristic of a community of practice, they appreciated that the diversity of the members meant that more attention needed to be given to strategic decisions. They believe that the role of a facilitator was critical in helping to sustain the groups. The question that remains for Hart et al. is how to effectively create spaces where groups with a shared domain can determine the direction of their own learning. That is, how can

such groups flourish without any external influence and controls yet also be able to positively influence the world around them?

Concluding comments.

A number of useful observations can be drawn from these studies:

They are helpful in showing the effectiveness of a CoP lens for exploring identity formation as individuals negotiate different worlds. In particular, Hunter (2010) and Kubiak et al. (2015) both draw on a CoP model to illustrate how past experiences influence current and future thoughts and actions; they share a key message that learning opportunities are enhanced when individuals make effective links between practices from other contexts to support their understandings in new contexts. Many of the studies are also helpful in illustrating how the quality of relationships affect learning opportunities. There is a strong emphasis on building trust and reciprocity in order to secure mutual engagement and shared learning experiences (Churchman, 2006; Hart et al., 2013; Hunter, 2010; Kubiak et al., 2015; Peters & Le Cornu, 2006).

Furthermore, the studies help compare informal, free-flowing communities with those that been established in a more formal capacity. In informal and fluid CoP's, the studies show how relationships can flourish so as to develop effective learning opportunities. These CoP's may align with the principles of the organisation, as in the case of parents at the Waldorf School (Stehlik, 2006); or they may function as an alternative to the organisational structure, like the academics at a university (Churchman, 2006). More formally structured CoP's can also effectively support learning, as in the examples of professional development learning groups (Hunter, 2010; Peters & Le Cornu, 2006). In particular, Hunter (2010) and Peters and Le Cornu (2006) emphasise the power of the learning groups to help individuals manage intrapersonal tensions between different practices.

The case study of Hart et al. (2013) is helpful in illustrating the complexity of CoP's when they have been formalised. Whilst aspiring to create autonomous, democratic CoP's (that could positively influence other contexts), they show the tension that results from combining members with diverse backgrounds. The study shows how the hierarchical

nature of knowledge influences the quality of relationships and affects learning experiences. Hart et al. (2013) highlight power issues in relationships when educational practitioners, families and members of the community work together over a shared concern, and they offer useful insight as to how knowledge and experience could be shared in an equitable and inclusive way so as to overcome potential relationship difficulties. A particularly useful reflection from this study is the role of knowledge brokers and how these individuals can help to maximise the sharing of knowledge and different experiences.

Theoretical rigour

Wenger (1998) acknowledges that his theoretical ideas are based on key “assumptions” (p. 4) which place learning at the heart of all that we do as social beings. He asks us to accept these assumptions because, once we do, we will find his ideas follow with cohesion and consistency. There are a number of issues, however, that have been raised in response to Wenger’s theoretical concepts about CoP’s which suggest lack of clarity and development in his argument, and a shift in thinking. Some of this ambiguity stems from Wenger’s inconsistency with claims. Whilst he purports to be offering a “social theory of learning” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4), he also acknowledges that it is more like a “perspective” (Wenger, 1998, p. 11) than a theory. He explains that his intention was to be accessible to multiple audiences (academic as well as those interested in applying his ideas to particular contexts). Storberg-Walker (2008) concludes, however, that Wenger is too abstract to offer practical advice that can be applied to specific situations, and insufficiently conceptual to provide a solid theory. What has eventuated, in effect, are multiple ways on how one might interpret Wenger’s writings on CoP’s which has weakened CoP’s analytical strength (Storberg-Walker, 2008).

Confusion about membership.

Storberg-Walker (2008) argues that, for a theory to have a strong foundation, interpretations and observations need to logically and coherently relate to one another; and each element or unit within a theory needs to be very tightly defined so that researchers can analyse their results using these components. Her belief is that Wenger’s

use of terminology lacks clarity. For example, she refers to his use of the word “membership” for explaining two connected but actually distinct ideas. One relates to the use of membership for showing how being a member of a community influences our identity; and the other relates to how being a member enables us to interact with others in order to gain meaning in the world. That is, through our membership of CoP’s, we establish our identity and find meaning. Handley, Sturdy, Fincham, and Clark (2006) make a very similar point about the term “non-participation” which refers to different and quite contrary circumstances; it describes those who are denied access to participation and also those who elect not to participate. Storberg-Walker (2008) considers that the overlap in the use of the words signifies a confusion in ideas which makes analysis difficult for any researcher wishing to draw on precise definitions.

Storberg-Walker concludes that Wenger’s ideas appeal to us intuitively because they offer a circular argument; that is, if we accept that individuals develop practices to support their participation in joint endeavours, then we can equally accept that these practices help forge the participation. The participation creates the practices, and the practices support the participation. Within this circular argument, the ideas of negotiating meaning and of establishing our identity are both encapsulated. We accept them because we are persuaded by a seemingly tidy argument.

Confusion about forms of participation.

Handley et al. (2006) are also concerned about confusion. They consider what implications Wenger’s ideas on participation have on perceptions of identity. They appreciate Wenger’s argument that membership in different communities involves familiarisation with different sets of practices; tension arises with personal identity and with the stability of the community as individuals negotiate how to participate. Wenger does acknowledge the possible variances in terms of participation that result as individuals work through any potential tension. For instance, one might choose not to fully embrace the practices of a community if it runs counter to existing ideas about one’s sense of self. However, Handley et al. (2006) ask, for example, what the difference is between participating with a strong sense of personal commitment and participating in a perfunctory way where one might appear to be fully engaged but is not really committed.

Given that Wenger equates participation with a sense of belonging, this is a relevant point since participating with commitment suggests a desire to belong whilst participating without the commitment suggests a lack of desire to belong.

One answer, Handley et al. (2006) argue, could be to distinguish more clearly between “practice” and “participation”. Practice could refer to the act of carrying out social actions whilst participation could refer to meaningful and active engagement that might accompany a sense of belonging. However, they also suggest a philosophical shift by taking the emphasis away from viewing identity as “solely *within* a community of practice” (p. 650). This, they argue, is a compartmentalised approach which overlooks the fluid and nuanced way that individuals engage with the world. A more meaningful approach would be to explore how identity develops in the “*spaces* between multiple communities” (p. 650). This approach avoids the idea of identity as something fractured. Instead, it recognises a sense of continuity as we refer to past experiences to support the negotiation of new ones, acknowledging the continual, subtle shifts in perceptions of self as we adapt according to social contexts. This perspective aligns with earlier discussion in the chapter, recalling the arguments of Shotter (2016) for example, which emphasise the significance of dialogical space in the negotiation of identity.

Shift in thinking and issues with implementation.

A further inconsistency with Wenger’s ideas relates to an ethical shift in his thinking (Cox, 2005). Cox (2005) argues that Wenger has moved from understanding how learning opportunities facilitate individual and collective growth (as in Wenger, 1998) to considering how organisations can inculcate such learning opportunities amongst its workers (Wenger, 2002). If CoP’s are meant to represent the fluid way that individuals interact with one another, then this appears to run counter with the idea that CoP can be used as a management tool as part of organisational policy (Cox, 2005). Wenger’s earlier ideas emphasise how individuals can grow and develop through relationships, whilst his later ideas take ownership away from the individual and place the control of CoP’s upon the institution. The problem with this later idea is that individuals may be encouraged to interact in informal learning situations with others but, if this is a managed procedure, it begs the question as to how much influence they ultimately have.

A danger comes from the situation that meanings generated with a CoP may only reflect the dominant views appertaining to the institution; furthermore, even if new ideas are created, they may not be acceptable because they do not have “expert” status (Roberts, 2006). The consequence is that CoP’s could be used as a subtle mechanism of control in that organisations may foster communities of like-minded people but, without the ability to action their ideas, these communities lack empowerment (Cox, 2005). For instance, in relation to home-school partnerships, school management may wish to encourage communities of parents and teachers to share and develop ways of supporting students, but feel it is important to maintain their decision-making powers. For example, BOTs might operate in this manner. This could result in the implementation of CoP-like structures which, ultimately, only give the illusion of collaborative partnerships between teachers and families.

Although the aim of a CoP approach is that it is a flexible and adaptable means to facilitate individual and collective growth, it could actually be used inappropriately (Roberts, 2006). For instance, Roberts (2006) wonders about its application in fast-paced working environments which enforce short cuts to relationship-building; this could have a negative impact on relational trust and mutual understanding which help engender learning opportunities. She sees a further dichotomy in promoting CoP’s in working environments where limited resources impact upon the time needed to create and nurture relationships. She is also concerned about organisations that become so large that embedded structures within it deter the kind of informal, face-to-face social interactions that foster relationship-building and shared learning opportunities. Whilst Roberts (2006) is not explicitly referring to educational settings, she illustrates some potential dangers associated with CoP approaches that could be relevant to a school environment.

Response to critiques.

There are broadly two areas of criticism which have been discussed above. Firstly, CoP theory has been taken to task over its lack of clarity in analytical concepts. Secondly, it has been questioned for its shift in thinking that favours organisational and managerial influence; the issue here is whether there has been sufficient theoretical insight into the

dynamics of power. An overarching concern is that a lack of rigour has led to confusion in the way that CoP theory may be understood and applied. Wenger (2010) shares the concern that the application of CoP may not always have been used appropriately. He believes that organisations may have applied a CoP approach to reinforce their own agenda as opposed to recognising its transformative potential. He also recognises the tension in cultivating CoP's within an organisation so that there is enough formality to legitimise them but also enough informality to encourage autonomy and free-flowing relationships (Wenger, 2010, p. 193). Whilst the application of CoP may have challenges, that does not mean to say that the theory is weak and overlooks power issues (Wenger, 2010).

Wenger (2010) maintains that power relations are embedded in this theory since it is inconceivable to formulate a social theory of learning without recognising the influence of power. In every situation, individuals are engaged in sense-making. This is an active and dynamic process where one's ability to negotiate meaning is always subject to the responses of others. Within a CoP framework, a sense of competence and perceptions of identity are dependent upon opportunities to participate (Wenger, 2010; Farnsworth et al., 2016). The potential for conflict is always present as members negotiate meaning, perhaps in the hope of gaining experience from others so as to be deemed more competent or in the hope of influencing others to redefine what competence might look like. When we identify with a community, we become accountable to its practices and "vulnerable to its power plays" (Wenger, 2010, p. 189); and, when we experience tension between different practices, it is due to the conflicting nature of different accountabilities (Wenger, 2010; Farnsworth et al., 2016). How we resolve these conflicts and formulate our sense of self in dynamic contexts is ultimately a matter of negotiating power in social relationships (Wenger, 2010).

What Wenger offers in this theory is an appreciation of the paradoxical nature of social interaction and learning (Wenger, 2010). The negotiation of meaning is always influenced by power in the way that participation is subject to the responses of others; however, humans are also beings of agency who can choose how to interpret the experiences which influence their learning. Individuals may have to comply with certain practices but it is they who reflect on their engagement and interpret meaning. Thus, he

points out the intrapersonal tension we experience as beings who are subject to power dynamics but, at the same time, impervious to power since we interpret our own learning experiences. Other paradoxical elements underpin a CoP theoretical approach. We learn by “honouring the history” of practices where our shared knowledge enables us to engage in meaning; yet, we need to explore new ideas and should never be so shackled by practices that we are restricted from looking beyond them (p. 182). That is, we are caught between the need to be accountable to others and the need for personal expression (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 156). Another paradox occurs with boundaries. It is at the boundaries of a community where individuals can explore practices and consider alternatives. Whilst boundaries demarcate what is competent, they are the (metaphorical) place where any confusion about shared practices can stimulate insightful discussion and new direction. However, boundary work might actually contribute to further confusion with “the risk of wasting time or getting lost” (p. 183).

Whilst Wenger may be criticised for a lack of clarity, this could, in part, be due to Wenger’s perceptions about human nature. Learning takes us on a trajectory which requires negotiation in potentially conflicting situations (Wenger, 2010) Living with uncertainty is an aspect of our identity development (e.g. Gergen, 2009). Perhaps a lack of clarity is to be expected given the indeterminate way that humans negotiate their existence. A further consideration, though, is that a lack of clarity stems from an ambitious attempt to set out a complex theory. As Wenger admits, the interplay between individual identity and social systems can be confusing; an aim to explore the space in between might appear ““ambiguous” (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 149). To address this concern, it is worth focussing on the reasons for Wenger’s work. He argues that he has produced a theory on the nature of learning which can be applied to practical situations to help maximise learning situations, and which can then help further develop theoretical understandings (Farnsworth et al., 2016). This is an acknowledgement that his theoretical perspectives on CoP’s, true to his theory on learning, are open to negotiation. The role of critiques, therefore, can play a valuable role in helping with the development of CoP theory.

Since an important reason is to support learning situations, Wenger (2010) has advice to offer. Organisations should create optimal situations where imagination can traverse

social spaces to enhance collective learning opportunities. That is, organisational practices should foster creative ideas and encourage alignment so that these ideas can gather momentum. “Local decisions” should also be encouraged because they spring from understandings that are grounded by the specific context (Wenger, 2010, p. 195). In effect, Wenger is championing creativity and autonomy in individuals by envisaging organisational structures that support these attributes. He believes that management structures could be reconfigured to include “horizontal” power dynamics rather than a conventional “vertical” distribution of power (Wenger, 2010, p. 195). A horizontal approach is achieved through joint endeavours and a shared commitment where peers are accountable to one another (*ibid*). Thus, peers could form communities where mutual engagement helps to set expectations and establish practices that sustains their endeavours. These communities could be formalised by: establishing a clear purpose and a specific agenda; agreeing the boundaries (for instance, deciding who to include so as to support progress); negotiating the practices that will draw participants together to learn effectively; and considering how to sustain the community in terms of resources, facilitation, and so on. Ultimately, however learning is promoted in whatever context, Wenger wishes to impart an important message: there is an ethical commitment for all of us to contribute to a positive learning environment in any capacity that we can (Wenger, 2010).

Appreciative Inquiry and Communities of Practice

Both AI and CoP are embedded in a social constructionist paradigm that conceives reality as consisting of multiple perspectives. They acknowledge that meaning is context dependent, negotiated through social interaction. Individuals are engaged in a continual process of understanding as they interact with others; thus, knowledge is perceived to be dynamic and evolving. Relationships are emphasised because it is through relationships that individuals can establish meaning and support each other’s understanding. Both theories favour relationships which are trusting, inclusive, and reciprocal because these can facilitate the exchange of ideas and maximise individual and collective learning opportunities. Both theoretical perspectives acknowledge, however, that consensus is not a guaranteed outcome. It should be safe to share ideas, even if this entails disagreement.

The key is to create situations where individuals can imagine new possibilities, and be able share them with others. A shared vision can lead to collective transformation. In AI, a shared vision can mobilise joint action, allowing everyone to play their part so that change materialises. In CoP, individuals may influence existing practices so that new ways of thinking and acting are adopted by others, thereby creating change. AI and CoP, therefore, both explore the dynamics between individual growth and collective learning opportunities, showing how the one impacts upon the other. As shown in example case studies, both theories are adaptable to diverse contexts. The case studies reflect how both approaches offer insight on how to promote both individual and collective transformation. These theories are, consequently, both tools to support change within an organisation and, significantly, aim to do this by capturing the energy of individuals. Change is a bottom-up process rather than a top-down one. The theories emphasise empowerment rather than hierarchical control. They both appreciate the role of accountability in that co-operation over a shared agenda or mutual interest encourages individuals to act with responsibility towards one another.

Whilst AI is action-oriented, CoP is primarily a theoretical lens through which to better understand learning. AI aims to unite people, ensuring multiple perspectives are included. It provides strategic tools (like the 4-D cycle) to do so. CoP, on the other hand, explores how people come together. This is done by considering the way communities are formed through shared endeavour and common practices. Through this lens, CoP helps examine what tensions might exist in the formation of relationships, where learning opportunities may be denied rather than enhanced. It is, thus, a useful tool for the exploration of power dynamics, whether at a relational or a systems level. AI recognises how inclusive relationships can empower, liberate, and promote creativity. However, CoP adds an extra dimension to this by exploring what inclusivity might look like. For instance, individuals may enjoy a sense of belonging within a community but not necessarily be able to influence existing practices and express themselves. Thus, it is through CoP that perceptions of identity can be more fully explored and linked to the quality of relationships and organisational systems.

In conclusion, AI and CoP have very similar goals in that both seek to improve learning opportunities and support positive growth through the nurturing of relationships. In

particular, AI has guided fieldwork; and, while both support analysis, CoP has a particularly useful role for an in-depth exploration of data. See Figure 3 on page 102.

Figure 3: AI and CoP

Chapter Six: *Teu le va* and Talanoa Research Methodology

“Within the Va everything is possible ...”
(Mila-Schaaf, 2009, p. 135)

Introduction

This chapter focusses on relationships from a Pacific perspective. It explores the pan-Pacific notion of *va*, which refers to the relationship space that connects all beings together, in order that theoretical frameworks *Teu le va* and Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM) can be understood. These Pacific-related frameworks provide a valuable lens through which to appreciate values such as trust, reciprocity, and inclusivity which are emphasised in Appreciative Inquiry and Communities of Practice theoretical frameworks.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines the notion of *va*, relating it to:

- spirituality and unity in relationships
- a harmonious existence
- a connection with the land
- the preservation of wellbeing.

The second section explains the framework *Teu le va*, covering:

- key principles, and
- recommended practices.

The third section relates to TRM, clarifying:

- a Tongan concept of talanoa
- a pan-Pacific perspective
- the relevance of respect and trust
- its application to the research context
- its use as a research methodology and method
- how talanoa has been used in practice

- an evaluation of its application in research.

This chapter closes by drawing together *Teu le va* and TRM with Appreciate Inquiry and Communities of Practice in order to appreciate their overall effectiveness for guiding this study.

SECTION 1 – Va

Introduction

It is important for those of us who do not directly identify with a Pacific culture to understand the significance of relationships from the perspective of Pacific families. We may underestimate the value placed on nurturing relationships to ensure that they unfold respectfully and lead to positive outcomes. Tamasese (2002) explains from a Samoan perspective, “Within the Samoan worldview, great care is taken to ensure that relationships between people, villages, the land and the spirit remain in good order. When these relationships are disrespected, or crossed in culturally inappropriate ways, there are serious repercussions” (p. 65).

This discussion leans on the writings of Samoan and Tongan academics. Although not fully representative of all Pacific cultures and perspectives, a certain unity is recognised amongst the diversity of Oceanic island countries due to a shared history of migration, sea-faring, and trading (for example, Hau’ofa, 1999; Ka’ili & Māhina, 2017a; Taufe’ulungaki, 1986). Thus, it is possible to find commonality across Pacific cultures on the concept of *va* (Thaman, 2008) and the special nature of relationships (Ihara & Vakalahi, 2011).

Understanding Va

Spirituality and unity in relationships.

A Pacific worldview assumes that reality is subjective and that, epistemologically, knowledge is relative to social context (Sanga, 2004). This view, which accepts multiple perspectives in a relational world, indicates compatibility with a social constructionist

lens. An epistemological lens through which to understand how relationships are viewed by Pacific peoples is the concept of va. Va is the metaphorical space which connects all aspects of life together to provide a sense of wholeness (Wendt, 1999, p. 402). Va is tapuia, meaning sacred in Samoan. This is because it is the space that connects everything (whether animate and inanimate) back to the Creator (Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, 2009). Thus, according to Tamasese Ta'isi Efi (2009), relationships are spiritual in nature because they are a consequence of God energy. This worldview is upheld through a Christian lens as much as it was upheld through the indigenous religion of Samoa. Given the sacredness in all that exists, respect (faaaloalo) should be shown in all relationships in order to acknowledge this essence of spirituality (Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, 2009). Tamasese Ta'isi Efi (2009) emphasises that va is integral to a belief system which treasures spirituality. This idea is supported by Lui (2007) who explains that, as a Samoan, spirituality constitutes “our sense of connectedness to the things that we hold dear, and it provides meaning for our existence” (p. 70).

A harmonious existence (taking time into consideration).

Tongan academics have drawn on the concept of ta (time) to complement va (space) in order to argue that the social configuration of time and space conjointly can create a harmonious and balanced world (Ka'ili, 2005; Ka'ili & Māhina, 2017b; Māhina, 2004, 2008). Tā-vā theory is an ontological concept which recognises that all human existence is contained within the single reality of time and space; but it is also an epistemological construct in that the configuration of ta and va influences our understandings of life “across nature, mind, and society” (Māhina, 2008, p. 78). Ka'ili & Māhina (2017b) explain that ta and va can be measured in concrete form; ta can be measured as an aspect of fuo, as in “a long time” (fuoloa)*; and va becomes evident in uho*, the content of our physical world. The arrangement of ta and va are culturally and contextually specific. For instance, Tongans (and other Pacific cultures) see time in a circular fashion. A circular concept of time recognizes the role of the past in anticipating and guiding how to act in the present (Ka'ili & Māhina, 2017b; Māhina, 2008). A Pacific lens, thus, sees the execution of tā-vā in the physical world as different to Western-oriented perceptions. In

* Fuoloa and uho are Tongan words.

a Pacific world, the past merges into the present through a look back in time; and all aspects of life are connected in space; reality is perceived to be circular, pluralistic, and holistic which is in stark contrast to a Western, singular, linear approach (Māhina, 2008, p. 79).

According to Ka'ili and Māhina (2017b), a consideration of ta and va can produce social interactions that are balanced, “symmetrical”, and harmonious; conversely asymmetry in tā-vā produces conflict in relationships (p. 37). Ka'ili and Māhina (2017b) note how careful attention to ta means that elders and ancestors are respected, and careful attention to va means that status and order in social relationships are respected and privileged (Ka'ili & Māhina, 2017b). Ka'ili and Māhina (2017b) argue that this attention is important because the potential for conflict is always present. They explain that the tā-vā theory is a theoretical view on how human existence is bound within time and space but it translates into a way of guiding social activity so that order transpires. Māhina, (2004) explains how music, dance, and art are all forms of manifestation which symbolize the proportion and symmetry that ideally should underpin all aspects of life. According to these authors, tā-vā reflects a Pacific worldview where everything is connected and where the careful execution of social relationships can lead to a harmonious and balanced existence.

Connection between people and the land.

According to Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009), understanding va also means understanding the special significance of relationships with extended and ancestral family members. This is part of paying attention to va so as to ensure “balance and coherence” in daily life (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009, p. 14). Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009) explains how, for the Samoan way of living (fa'a-Samoa), va is essential in helping the family (aiga) maintain a deep connection to the ancestral land. Samoans identify with members of the extended family whose lineage can be traced back to the communal land from which they originated. Thus, just as the land has supported them, they support the land. Lilomaiva-Doktor (2009) argues that va is the relationship space between individuals who are connected through a genealogical bond and their shared ancestral land. The implication of this is that no person exists as an individual in their own right without reference to

anyone else; maintaining the va encompasses every aspect of life, from spiritual to social, political, and economic matters. For instance, she explains, it may mean that families leave their home village to search for a more prosperous life elsewhere. However, migration is undertaken in order to help maintain the welfare of others (those left behind and those still to come) and the village land. Regardless of distance and where members of the family are geographically located, the emphasis is on working to preserve and protect the va (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, Tamasese, 2002).

Likewise, in Tongan culture, Ka'ili and Māhina (2017b) argue that the maintenance of va to protect relationships with kin and ancestral land are equally important. Kai'ili (2005) refers to kainga to describe how Tongans are “woven” together through kinship which can be traced back to the land (p. 90). Fonua refers to land but it also encompasses the genealogical and spiritual connection which people maintain with their homeland (p. 93). As in a Samoan concept, the relationship with the land is reciprocal; it needs nurturing since it has provided for its people. All Tongans, Ka'ili (2005) argues, can trace their lineage back to common ancestry so that, no matter where they are geographically located, they can demonstrate their genealogical connections to one another and establish how to look after the relational space between them.

The preservation of wellbeing through teu le va and tauhi vaha'a.

Ihara and Vakalahi (2011) state that, in Pacific cultures, attention to va has significant implications for the sense of self in that relationships with others affect personal wellbeing. Certain protocols and ways of behaving are critical because they help secure harmony and balance in relationships (Refiti, 2002; Tamasese, 2002) which, in turn, help to secure a sense of personal worth (Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave, & Bush, 2005). With reference to Samoan culture, Tamasese et al. (2005) explain how being able to exercise responsibility and obligations to others is part of ensuring one's own wellbeing is intact. Vaa (2009) notes how a number of key values and beliefs underpin the way Samoans may act in order to nurture va. These include: usitai (obedience), such as when a child obeys a parent; faaaloalo (respect), such as how children should respect their parents; alofa (love) which may focus on family members but extends to all; and tautua (service) which is done without expectation of a reward (Vaa, 2009). Each person should understand

personal roles and responsibilities (Seiuli, 2013); and, in doing so, they are equipped to *teu le va* – to “value, cherish, nurture and take care of the *va*” on whatever level, whether “physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological” (Anae, 2010, p. 2). *Teu le va*, therefore, acknowledges the interconnectedness of all aspects of human life and the importance of protecting these connections in order to look after the wellbeing of others as well as secure one’s own wellbeing.

Similarly, in Tongan culture, both Thaman (2008) and Ka’ili and Māhina (2017b, p. 43) explain how *tauhi vaha’a* conveys the idea of protecting relationships so as to achieve harmony and social cohesion, and to avoid conflict and “burdens” in life. Thaman (2008) emphasises the importance of exercising compassion and respect towards others. Ka’ili (2005) emphasizes reciprocity as a common way of showing *tauhi vaha’a*; this could be done by sharing food, one’s home, or resources. Thus, one way to achieve a harmonious existence is by attending to the physical needs of others (Ka’ili & Māhina, 2017b, p. 44). Thaman (2008) notes that *ha’a* refers to the different lineage in families so that roles and responsibilities are clarified through the titles that individuals hold, enabling the execution of *tauhi vaha’a*. However, Thaman (2008) argues, rules are flexible to permit evolving family situations; and Ka’ili (2005) notes how *tauhi vaha’a* extends beyond family to include all those with whom lives are shared, such as friends or work colleagues. *Tauhi vaha’a* is also intergenerational so that reciprocity may be exercised in consideration to the actions of elders in the past (Ka’ili, 2005). The maintaining of social obligations carries across space and time so that, when all goes well in relations, it is the pleasing outcome of the well-managed co-ordination of *ta* and *va* (Ka’ili & Māhina, 2017b, p. 42). Whilst there are expectations on how to behave towards one another, Thaman (2008) believes such expectations arise from a deep-seated belief where relationships are valued above all else (p. 463).

However, Māhina (2008) states that this does not mean relationships are always harmonious and balanced, since either conflict or harmony are possible outcomes. Tamasese Ta’isi Efi (2009) urges us all to act with humility because human weakness can create disharmony and spoil the sacredness (*tapu*) in relations. Tamasese (2002) has highlighted, from his research, that relational ways of acting and being are weakened when families find themselves feeling vulnerable and under pressure. For example, this

may be the case for Pacific families who experience financial hardship in New Zealand. Furthermore, Mila-Schaaf (2009) has expressed concerns about interpretations of reciprocity which can become “burdensome and corrupt” because the systems involved are used to perpetuate existing status to the exclusion of others’ needs (p. 140). That is, the reification of practices can have a limiting and restrictive effect on the welfare and growth of individuals (Wenger, 1998). The practice of reciprocity can lead to conflict rather than a harmonious outcome. The adoption of *teu le va* /*tauhi vaha’a*, therefore, is aspirational, something to work towards but not necessarily ingrained in everyday reality. As Anae (2016) recommends, any tension in relationships should be addressed so that harmony can be restored and positive outcomes assured.

Summary and reflection.

An appreciation of *va* has highlighted the difference between a Western worldview and a worldview common to Pacific cultures. According to Māhina (2008), in a Western-oriented world, the tendency is to conceive that time runs in a linear fashion from past, through to present and the future; that events are best understood sequentially; that an individual exists independently from another; and that problems are to be solved analytically. From the perspective of Pacific cultures, relating to others means that the past is ever present as events unfold; that space contains multiple, simultaneous connections to other animate and inanimate entities so that events and people are never understood as isolated cases. The sense of relating to others is so strongly entrenched within individuals, that answers come from the heart. Compassion rather than reason is a driving force for action (Thaman, 2008).

SECTION 2 – *Teu le va*

Introduction

Teu le va, a framework based on understandings of *teu le va*, has been developed by Airini, Anae, and Mila-Schaaf (2010) to guide Pacific educational research and policy making. The authors explain that the intention of the framework is to support the transition of ideas relating to *va* into purposeful action so that there are concrete, positive outcomes for Pacific students. The implication is that positive outcomes result

from practical strategies based on philosophical understandings which appreciate how reciprocal and inclusive relationships underpin all processes. Policy and research decisions which are designed to improve learning outcomes for Pacific students, but which do not appreciate the significance of *va*, cannot really make an effective difference (Airini et al., 2010).

According to Anae (2016), it is relevant to put forward a conceptual framework which provides consistency to Pacific research and methodology so that there is a core philosophical paradigm to underpin theories and models being developed. Māhina (2008) argues there has been much inconsistency in this regard when, in fact, there is a “high degree of unity” in “concepts and practices” relating to Pacific cultures. Māhina (2008) also expresses concern that Pacific models can become disconnected from Pacific notions of reality in a bid to deal with a Westernised context. The dissonance between a Westernised rational approach and the “aestheticism” of a balanced, harmonious perception of reality can cause Pacific theorists to turn to practical-based ideas as they react to how Pacific learners are performing in a Westernised education system (Māhina, 2008, p. 88). It is important, he argues, for Pacific theorists not to overlook a Pacific conceptual view of the world but to ensure it is clearly grounded in their frameworks and models so that clarity and depth of thinking are fully demonstrated. Thus, “theory precedes practice” (Māhina, 2008, p. 88), as in the case of the *Teu le va* framework where conceptual ideas on *teu le va* are embedded in its principles.

Understanding *Teu le va*

Understanding *Teu le va* involves an explanation of its key practices and recommended practices.

Key principles.

Airini et al. (2010) outline three principles of the *Teu le va* framework:

The first principle emphasises reciprocal and inclusive relationships, requiring that these be established throughout the research procedure with all parties involved. This principle

is based on the understanding that social relationships are interconnected and spiritual in nature. All relevant parties need to be included so as to attain balance and harmony.

The second principle, therefore, emphasises collaboration. The research process needs to include “learners, their families and the communities” with researchers and policymakers so that ideas are shared, and new knowledge created. This principle recognises that “collective knowledge generation is pivotal” (p. 13).

Consequently, the third principle recognises that collective knowledge can only eventuate when all voices are heard. Since the “narratives” of Pacific peoples are critical, this means addressing any power imbalances to ensure that research and policy are genuinely collaborative (p. 15). A holistic worldview underpins this principle, where diverse perspectives come together before action can happen. Strategies to be avoided are those that are linear in approach where research and policy are created, and then consultation is sought. Likewise, simplified perspectives which group Pacific peoples together into one cohort overlook the nuances of cultural diversity amongst the population of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. Inclusivity may have challenges but attending to power structures is important in order to avoid marginalisation and ineffective research and policy (Airini et al., 2010).

Recommended practices.

As a result of these principles, Airini et al. (2010) recommend various practices which can strengthen Pacific-related research and policy:

- One practice is to include all relevant parties, ensuring Pacific families and community members are involved in the research process and policy formulation.
- Another is to spend time responding flexibly to the dynamics of specific contexts, working out who to speak with and what are the key issues. This helps to ensure that comprehensive collaboration is undertaken.
- A third is to focus on how to enhance positive outcomes for Pacific learners, rather than dwelling on deficit notions. Comparisons with other cohorts of students which depict perceptions of failure for Pacific learners can undermine Pacific voices and discourage engagement.

- Another practice is to build on previous studies so there is an accumulative body of research rather than studies that simply repeat what has already been done. This aligns with a Pacific worldview where the past guides the present. In this way, a strong and coherent research history, built on Pacific philosophy, can take traction and positively influence the direction of Pacific education.
- A further recommended practice is to be aware that inclusivity entails different forms of knowledge needed for different purposes. For instance, research requires a complexity of ideas whilst community members and teachers may require ideas to be more immediate and accessible. *Teu le va* involves a thoughtful consideration of how best to collect, analyse, and communicate knowledge with individuals whose perspectives and needs differ.
- Finally, “knowledge brokers” are recommended (p. 27). These are individuals who are adept at supporting the transfer of knowledge between groups of people whose perspectives may vary; they may be able to draw such people together in order to form common goals and agendas. Knowledge brokers are valuable; they have the capacity to influence others, possibly encouraging them to take on knowledge broker roles themselves. Then a momentum of knowledge exchange can enable Pacific communities to become more proactive with enhancing educational success for Pacific learners.

Summary and reflection.

Teu le va is a framework which allows for collaboration with Pacific learners, their families, and communities so that they can play a pivotal role in the generation of “new knowledge” (Airini et al., 2010, p. 13), and this, in turn, should positively influence the direction of policies to improve educational opportunities for Pacific families (Airini et al., 2010, p. 14). Thus, a key goal is to address inequity in power relations and provide opportunity for transformation. The intention of *Teu le va* is to raise the voices of Pacific families so that they can actively participate in the discourse of researchers and policy makers (ibid). *Teu le va* does not provide specific strategies as to how this must be done. Rather it is up to the researcher to appreciate the nuances of the context under investigation, taking time to understand relationships so that relevant voices are heard.

Constant vigilance is required, maintaining an ethical responsibility towards “what is the right and good thing to do” (Anae, 2016, p. 5). When relationships are honoured, progress is made (Anae, 2016).

SECTION 3 – Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM)

Introduction

Whilst *Teu le va* provides recommended practices when undertaking research and forming policy decisions, it is useful to consider how further understandings of social interaction involving Pacific families might support this study. Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM) is, therefore, a helpful framework to guide how reciprocal and inclusive interaction might unfold. Vaioleti (2006) proposed that talanoa, a pan-Pacific way of talking, be adopted as a methodology in research. Subsequently, Vaioleti has referred to his conception of how talanoa can be used in research as TRM (2014, 2017). Based on an appreciation of *va*, TRM complements *Teu le va* as a methodology to support research design and analysis, and as a method to support the execution of fieldwork.

Vaioleti (2006) proposes the use of talanoa for research, building on a Tongan concept of how informal ways of talking to one another produces rich dialogue and information exchange. His aim is to respond to Western-oriented approaches which have not reflected the values and worldviews of Pacific cultures. He expresses concern about research on Pacific peoples by researchers who might interpret people’s stories through a non-Pacific lens. This has resulted, he argues, in research that portrays Pacific peoples from a deficit perspective or, at the very least, not actually having achieved anything useful to advance the needs and welfare of Pacific peoples (Vaioleti, 2006). TRM is now one of a number of decolonising methodologies, aimed at producing research that is considered culturally appropriate and, therefore, empowering for “indigenous communities” (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014, p. 320). It has proved to be very popular (Tunufa’i, 2016), particularly in educational research (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). Whilst TRM is part of a drive by Pacific peoples to conduct research for Pacific peoples, Tunufa’i (2016) also notes its use by non-Pacific researchers as well.

Understanding Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM)

This section first clarifies an understanding of talanoa before reviewing how TRM has been applied to the research context.

Tongan concept of talanoa.

Talanoa can be broken down into two core words in Tongan (Māhina, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006). Tala, as a verb, means to tell, as in relaying a story or speaking out what is on one's mind (Māhina, 2008.) Vaioleti (2006) extends this to include to "ask" as well as "command" (p. 23). Vaioleti (2006) and Māhina (2008) also ascribe a number of meanings to noa. It can, in general, be summed up to mean "nothing in particular" so that one understands talanoa as referring to an informal, face-to-face way of "talking about nothing in particular" (Vaioleti, 2006, p. 23). Māhina (2008) expands this discussion to explain that noa implies the absence of something so that, placing tala and noa together, there is a deliberate comparison between the existence of social exchange and the absence of anything. Thus, noa is really implying a state of "harmony" where an absence of conflict in the exchange of tala (a noun meaning stories) leads to balance and symmetry in relationships (p. 81). Talanoa, therefore, is a manifestation of tā-vā (time and space). It allows for critical and rigorous debate to take place, but conducted in such a way as to secure a harmonious environment (Māhina, 2008). TRM, therefore, is founded upon philosophical and ontological roots which are complementary to the *Teu le va* framework.

More recently, Vaioleti (2017) has amplified his conception of TRM. Here he breaks talanoa down into three parts, separating ta and la. Ta is for time, whilst la could refer to a shortened version for the name of any number of gods from old Polynesian religions whose names all began with la. Only the start of the name (la) could be used because, if the whole name was spoken, it could incite a god's displeasure. If la is interpreted as representing the "great spirit", Laumalie, then this supports the idea that malie is a desirable quality to achieve in talanoa (p. 2217). Malie means to feel elated (Vaioleti, 2017) but it stems from doing something worthwhile (Manu'atu, 2017). Manu'atu (2017) explains it is the outcome of māfana. Māfana means to feel warm-hearted, and this is

what should be happening to those participating in talanoa. The experience of contributing to talanoa should be such a positive one that people feel energised. This collective positive energy signals the spiritual unity which binds individuals together. Manu'atu (2017) discusses malie and mafana in relation to Tongan students' cultural performance. She argues that malie is transformative in that the passion and energy from participating in a performance uplifts the audience which, in turn, further energises the performers. In making direct reference to malie, Vaioleti (2017) is suggesting that talanoa is where people can engage with each other in such a meaningful way that, for everyone, it is an emotionally positive experience; people can "talk straight from the heart" without subterfuge and hidden agendas (p. 2218). In terms of research, the idea of TRM is that Pacific participants actively engage and construct meaning, telling and re-telling stories to each other until ideas have resonance and traction.

Vaioleti (2017) believes that malie in TRM is part of an empowering process. If Pacific participants are to have a voice and be able to influence the research trajectory with their ideas, then they need to contribute in a way that is meaningful to them. When talanoa produces the experience of warmth and passion, then this is a positive indication that there has been a meaningful exchange of ideas. Vaioleti (2017), with his addition of la, now depicts the word "talanoa" as a symbolic representation of what talanoa in a research situation should achieve. He pictures the researcher as representing ta, as in time; this is because it is the researcher who is beating out the time by initiating or enabling the talanoa. La, as in Laumalie, is the reminder to work towards goodwill and a positive spirit. Noa then represents va, the relationship space. Thus, talanoa is an endeavour to achieve noa (an absence of conflict) and create a relationship space that is spiritually uplifting for those involved. In a circular fashion, this positive energy feeds into words and actions which can be further reinforced through attention to ta and va. Portrayed this way, talanoa could be viewed as an art form in the way that Māhina (2008) has referred to art forms, like music and dance, for synthesising ta and va, and, thereby, creating malie.

Pan-Pacific perspective.

Vaiotele (2006) believes that talanoa is “natural for most Pacific peoples” (p. 25). Halapua (2007) has used it formally to support economic and political reform, not just in Tonga but in other Pacific countries such as Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and the Cook Islands. The opportunity to share one’s stories and be heard is a “universal human phenomenon” he argues (p. 9). A Samoan interpretation of talanoa tends to refer to discussions around less serious matters (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tunufa’i, 2016). Tunufa’i (2016) explains that talanoa in its noun form, however, can be used for more formal occasions although, sometimes, the word fa’afaletui is more appropriate when elderly or dignitaries are involved. Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) are willing to accept the more formal application of talanoa as a research methodology, as long as there is clarification over any differences in meaning. Likewise, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) confirm that a Fijian interpretation of talanoa can, on occasion, also be less formal. In its more informal use, it is more of a private “chat” to share deeply-felt concerns (p. 321). Like Halapua, they believe that a key ingredient for talanoa is for it to be “talking from the heart” (Halapua, 2007, p. 9). Thus, Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) believe that talanoa, as a research tool, encourages collaboration between researcher and participant where the sharing of feelings and thoughts can achieve genuine, co-constructed data. Talanoa, they affirm, can contribute to improved social outcomes for Pacific peoples through the strength of its processes (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014).

Respect and trust.

Whilst the aim of talanoa may be to converse in a harmonious and non-conflicting way, this does not imply an absence of diverse perspectives. As Halapua (2007) has noted from his role in mediating economic and political development, talanoa is built on “respect and trust” (Halapua, 2007, p. 10). He argues that a Western approach might consider that a positive outcome from dialogue is agreement. However, this could have resulted from a predetermined agenda with an anticipated outcome. In actuality, the agreement would merely be the result of influence imposed upon the participants, a sign of control. In talanoa, the focus is on promoting respectful conversation where people’s voices can be heard. This might not immediately generate “consensus” but it does

generate trust and respect; and from here, it is possible to secure a positive outcome (Halapua, 2007, p. 10). Thus, when talanoa is practised by Pacific peoples, it aims to produce a fruitful exchange of “co-constructed stories” and, in a research context, this can lead to the creation of new knowledge (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 24; 2013).

The research context.

Vaiioleti (2014) claims that there are a number of practical measures which a researcher can undertake to look after the relationship space through attention to the principles of talanoa. Firstly, the researcher should not make assumptions based on his or her own set of personal values but aim to understand those of the participants (Vaiioleti, 2014). This means taking the time to familiarise oneself with the context so as to understand participants’ worlds prior to meeting them (Vaiioleti, 2014). When meeting, it pays to share one’s background and history to help make personal connections (‘Otunuku, 2011). There should also be flexibility with questions so as to allow for free-flowing conversation, and flexibility with time so that participants feel that their contributions are “respected and honoured” (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 26). It is when ideas start to repeat that a talanoa can close, since this indicates there is no more to be said (Vaiioleti, 2006; 2013). The key is to ensure that there is opportunity for listening and for exchanging ideas. Therefore, the researcher should be thoroughly attentive to the way interaction is unfolding, paying attention to what is said, how it is said and what silence might mean (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2012; Vaiioleti, 2014). Respect and warmth should be evident so that disagreements can be voiced without fear of repercussion; it should feel safe for participants to question the thinking of the researcher. When trust and confidence are established, then participants feel empowered to speak (‘Otunuku, 2011). In this way, it is possible to achieve honesty and reciprocity in the dialogue, leading to genuine and meaningful information (Vaiioleti, 2014).

Talanoa as both research methodology and method.

The attention given to talanoa as a form of dialogue suggests that it is best used as a method for capturing data from participants. Its wide use in research related to Pacific cultures has, in fact, exposed it to different interpretations, leading to some confusion as

to whether it serves as a methodology or a method (Tunufa'i, 2016). Vaioleti (2014) is clear, however, that talanoa can be used as a methodology which supports the whole research process. He likens talanoa to the kakala metaphor conceived by Thaman (2010) which breaks down the research process into a number of process akin to those involved in producing a kakala (garland). The first process is Toli which refers to the careful selection of flowers and leaves for the kakala. Just as it is important to know what leaves and flowers to choose depending upon the occasion for which the garland is needed, it is important to make choices about the research. Decisions need to be made as to the reasons for the research and who it might benefit, who might be valuable participants, and how the data will be collected and analysed. It is through talanoa that such decisions regarding the research design can be formulated because talanoa enables a consultative and collaborative process. Tui refers to the intricate and complex weaving of the garland to achieve a beautiful arrangement. Likewise, in research, talanoa can facilitate the rich weaving together of stories so as to produce authentic and relevant research results. Luva is the gifting of the kakala; and this is a reminder that the new knowledge, created by the research, is a gift to pass back to the community which was researched. The new knowledge is dependent upon the careful execution of talanoa which should have ensured that a culturally-sensitive and inclusive approach has been woven into the whole research process (Vaioleti, 2014).

A review of talanoa in practice.

Talanoa has proved to be popular with educational researchers concerned with Pacific learners in New Zealand. For example, Fletcher et al. (2009) opted for talanoa as a research methodology for investigating the "supports and barriers to Pasifika students' achievement in literacy and learning" (p.26). They consider that the informality and spontaneity from holding talanoa conversations with participants was helpful for bringing the researcher and participants closer together. This, they felt, supports a shared ownership on the direction of the discussion. In a bid to make sure that they respected a talanoa procedure from the outset of the research, they worked with two matai (Samoan chiefs) who participated in decision-making on research design along with the researchers and Ministry of Education representatives. Their findings, formed from rich

data gathered from parents, children, and teachers, emphasise the need for culture, language, and identity to be more integral to teaching and learning.

‘Otunuku (2011) employed talanoa for research on “Tongan parents’ conceptions of schooling in New Zealand”. He emphasises the need for the participants to make the key decisions about how the talanoa should take place, so that they can feel at ease with their “surroundings and worldviews” (p. 99). He also emphasises the wide range of what is covered in talanoa sessions from “story-telling, debating, reflecting, gossiping, joking, sharing families’ genealogies, food, and other necessities” (p. 100). The strength of this research was that the research assistants, as Tongans, could interact with the participants in Tongan so that trust was quickly established in the relationships. ‘Otunuku (2011) concludes that Tongan parents based their perceptions of New Zealand schooling on their own school experiences in Tonga so that their understandings of school did not necessarily align with the New Zealand system. He feels that this research was a useful model; through the use of talanoa, it was possible to understand how Pacific parents were thinking, and in doing so, facilitate how to support families and communities in better understanding the New Zealand school system.

Otsuka (2005) clarifies how he conducted talanoa for research in Fiji, articulating how it works in practice for those who are culturally unfamiliar with its concepts. He emphasises the importance of being aware of one’s own cultural values and beliefs as a researcher as well as taking time to understand and appreciate the cultural norms and protocols belonging to those from a Fijian culture. For instance, one needed to appreciate flexibility over timings, to spend time sharing personal detail about each other’s background, not to expect immediate “yes” or “no” answers, and to follow all the protocols in the village so as not to cause offence. He was aware that answers could be given in order to please the researcher, particularly if of a sensitive nature. (For instance, a parent claimed inaccurately to have paid school fees.) It was, therefore, important to triangulate information to check accuracy. However, he concludes that it is possible to conduct worthwhile research using talanoa, and that talanoa is more reliable than trying to secure written responses from a survey. The key is to establish rapport, allowing light-hearted moments to build the relationships. Rapport is easily understood in Western

cultures, he argues, and is, therefore, something that a researcher can readily adopt when undertaking talanoa.

Ioane (2017) has also recommended the use of talanoa, feeling that this is a successful medium through which to engage Pacific youth in New Zealand. Working as a clinical psychologist with Pacific youth and their families, she believes that TRM can be adapted for assessing young people's needs. Building on her own experiences as a New-Zealand born Samoan, Ioane believes talanoa is a highly appropriate way to engage with Pacific families and to listen to the stories of young people. She recommends starting with short, easy questions and allowing a rapport to build until the young person feels comfortable to speak about his or her life. Her advice is aimed, in particular, at non-Pacific professionals. She feels that they can adopt practices which put Pacific families at ease. However, she also emphasises that a genuine understanding of a Pacific worldview helps non-Pacific people to re-evaluate their own values and beliefs. This is to avoid the adoption of ad hoc practices which are not properly sustained due to a shallow understanding. In conclusion, talanoa can be used, by Pacific and non-Pacific alike, as part of a whole process to be culturally sensitive and inclusive when working with Pacific families.

Vaka, Brannelly, and Huntington (2016) explore the use of talanoa in their research on Tongan interpretations of mental health issues in New Zealand. They discovered that the talanoa sessions, which they ran with different groups (Tongan young people, service users, family members, community leaders, women, and men) proved to be a particularly rich way of engaging with participants. The participatory nature of the sessions encouraged ideas and perspectives to be shared, enabling a co-construction of knowledge. The service-user talanoa was noticeably informative as participants opened up and shared what was on their mind. They discussed sensitive issues which Vaka et al. (2016) feel took considerable courage to talk about (p. 540). The use of humour helped to lighten the discussion and ease how participants spoke about painful matters. They conclude that talanoa can work for Pacific and non-Pacific researchers, alike; that what matters is that there is a genuine interest in the concerns of the community, and using talanoa is an effective way of exploring community perspectives in a culturally-sensitive and appropriate way.

However, Fa'avae, Jones, and Manu'atu (2016) have reported that talanoa may not be so easy to achieve, even when the researcher does have a Pacific background. In Fa'avae et al. (2016), Fa'avae explains how he anticipated that his own Tongan culture would facilitate talanoa interviews with Tongan grandfathers, fathers, and sons when exploring educational stories. However, the fact he was Tongan meant that participants in Tonga were keen to know his background before being willing to share knowledge through talanoa. He was required to give personal details such as his age, where his family came from, and so on. His proficiency in Tongan was also questioned. Particularly in the case for the grandfathers, as a researcher, he had to show respect because they were senior in age and social ranking; he had to answer all questions from the grandfathers before being allowed to proceed with his own. It led him to conclude that someone who was not Tongan may have been more easily welcomed and accepted. There were also a number of surprises to contend with – meetings often took place in public places, not the home as he imagined; and other family members sometimes came along, which he had not anticipated at all. In one case, he was expected to conduct a formal interview with a methodical question and answer process which did not bear much resemblance to a talanoa-style conversation at all.

When conducting interviews in a New Zealand context, Fa'avae found that the necessary paperwork, with the signing of consent forms, also impeded an informal, open engagement. Since he was already known to the community, the signing of papers seemed superfluous to the participants. Sometimes the informal, relationship-building conversations happened outside of the interview slot without being recorded. He realises that practising talanoa in research could be challenging and time-consuming. He is also aware of interpretation issues. Whilst the participant may believe that his or her story was being relayed in the research, it is, in fact, the researcher's interpretation that is being relayed. Bearing in mind Western audiences, this relaying may not reveal all that the researcher has uncovered; some level of "concealment" may have been used to protect the participants' stories from being interpreted in a negative light by those "with whom they have no relationship" (p. 147). He concludes that it is worthwhile sharing these dilemmas so that complexities and ambivalences around the use of talanoa in research can be brought to light. Otherwise, there can be a sense of failure where

talanoa has not worked, rather than realising it is not always easy to put into practice in the way that the literature suggests (Fa'avae et al., 2016).

In summary, this review shows how talanoa has been used by researchers and professional practitioners for engaging Pacific people in discussion. The contexts vary but a common theme is a concern to understand the perspective of Pacific participants. There is a tendency to employ talanoa as a method for data collection although Fletcher et al. (2009) acknowledge its usefulness in the research process as a whole. If non-Pacific people do employ talanoa, Otsuka (2005) and Ioane (2017) suggest time is spent understanding the Pacific world so as to engage more thoughtfully with Pacific peoples. Fa'avae's honest appraisal, as a Tongan researching Tongans, highlights how challenging talanoa can be to put into practice.

Evaluating Talanoa Research Methodology (TRM).

The challenges which Fa'avae acknowledges could help to explain why talanoa in a research context has received criticism. Tunufa'i (2016) believes that there has been some confusion in the way that it has been applied, noting that researchers have tended to opt for talanoa as a method for data gathering rather than apply it to the whole research process. Tunufa'i's observation is that researchers have not really understood what talanoa entails since "conversation", "interview" or "discussion" could equally describe what was happening (p. 235). His further concern, however, is that its original meaning has been usurped in favour of meeting a research agenda. This can be viewed as exercising power over indigenous knowledge in that a new meaning has been ascribed; and it is ironic, given that the intention was to promote a decolonising methodology that would empower indigenous knowledge (Tunufa'i, 2016). A pan-Pacific concept does not, he argues, appreciate the differences that exist amongst Pacific peoples. Namely, Tunufa'i (2016) contends, the Tongan concept of talanoa does not readily translate into many of the Melanesian and Micronesian cultures. Furthermore, one cannot assume that New Zealand-born Pacific peoples are culturally familiar with talanoa. These points lead Tunufa'i (2016) to challenge the claims of talanoa as a research methodology that provides a rigorous approach for undertaking research with Pacific peoples, delivering "trustworthiness and quality" to the data (Vaiolleti, 2006, p. 25).

One way that Vaioleti (2014) shows rigour in TRM is by comparing it to phenomenology. In phenomenology, the researcher endeavours to relate to the experiences of the participant as a fellow human being, moving beyond the words to gauge what the participant might be thinking and feeling (Smith, Larkin, & Flowers 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2004). There can be a point where the relating to one another becomes so close that feelings and emotions are shared and inseparable (Finlay, 2005). Likewise, talanoa can be described as an intense sharing of emotions that encourages an outpouring of deep-seated feelings (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014; Halapua, 2007, Vaioleti, 2017). A comparison with phenomenology, Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba (2014) argue, highlights how talanoa can promote intersubjectivity, which can be emancipatory. This is because the researcher empathises so closely with the participants that the research becomes a collaborative process, with the potential to enhance the lives and worldviews of the participants (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). A phenomenological lens for talanoa also emphasises the role of body language and non-verbal cues in developing a shared understanding of emotions. Provided time is spent getting to know the participants, language is not so important and a non-Pacific researcher can potentially conduct talanoa with participants just as well as a Pacific researcher (Farrelly & Nabobo-Baba, 2014). A comparison with phenomenology, therefore, emphasises some advantages in illustrating the capacity of talanoa to empower through the strong relationship formed between participant and researcher, whether Pacific or non-Pacific.

However, talanoa's comparison with phenomenology has been criticised. Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolopotea (2014) disapprove of any form of comparison between Western and Pacific ideology since the former can appear to subsume the latter. The problem with aligning TRM with phenomenology, they argue, is that it undermines the strength of TRM in its own right. Its viability as a research process does not come from how well it fits into phenomenology but, like other indigenous research, from its emphasis on keeping "at the forefront a respect for cultural context and meaning" (p. 336). What matters is the commitment to engage with the stories of participants, appreciating worldviews that may test established, Western perspectives. Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba (2014) agree with the commitment to collaborate, and this takes time. They believe that research practices are

often driven by institutions which enforce tight time schedules, and these inhibit much-needed relationship-building.

This point also resonates with Tunufa'i (2016). He believes it is not so much the method that is used (whether one calls it talanoa, face-to-face interview, or focus group); rather, what makes the difference, is the ability of the researcher to show cultural "sensitivity" when engaging with participants (p. 237). Thus, whether the researcher is Pacific or not, it is important to be responsive to the participant and guided by their needs. If, for example, a participant wishes to be interviewed more formally, then the researcher should respond accordingly (Fa'avae et al., 2016). Consequently, there is a good chance that the research can be executed successfully with the potential to produce knowledge "for the benefit of the community" (Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 27).

Concluding thoughts – aligning Talanoa Research Methodology with *Teu le va*, Appreciative Inquiry and Communitas of Practice

TRM aligns closely with *Teu le va*. Both emphasise the importance of understanding the context for research, building relationships with participants and the community, and ensuring that the research is purposeful and of service to those whom it has involved. They share the same ontological and philosophical roots that treasure the spirituality of relationships. In this sense, TRM is not required as a methodology if its key principles have been catered for within *Teu le va*. However, TRM elucidates the nature of social interaction, providing an understanding of how qualities such as trust, respect, collaboration, and reciprocity matter. Building strong relationships, which rely on these qualities, are for the whole research process and not just for gaining data in the course of fieldwork. This is why TRM should be viewed more holistically, rather than just as a method.

The principles of talanoa also support AI since the execution of trusting and reciprocal interactions facilitate inclusivity which is an integral ingredient for an AI process. Likewise, the principles of talanoa are complementary to a CoP analysis. A CoP lens considers how identity and opportunities for learning are influenced by relationships. An appreciation of talanoa complements CoP in supporting an analysis of how interactions

might unfold in a reciprocal and equitable way for Pacific peoples, facilitating learning experiences and personal growth. Thus, TRM, *Teu le va*, AI and CoP are compatible frameworks which work together to enhance understandings of relationality in Pacific worlds and the promotion of harmonious and inclusive relationships. For these reasons, then, these frameworks were considered appropriate for this qualitative case study to explore how secondary schools develop relationships with Pacific families and the community in order to support students' successful learning outcomes.

Chapter Seven: Methodology

“Reaching new constructions, achieving understandings that are enriching, and achieving fairness are still not enough. Inquiry, and evaluations in particular, must also facilitate and stimulate action.”

(Schwandt, Lincoln, Guba, & Mathison, 2007, p. 23)

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approach for this study, showing its consistency with a social constructionist ontological and epistemological perspective. The chapter begins by recapping the research questions and theoretical discussion before dividing into two key sections.

The first section delivers a theoretical and personal perspective, covering:

- a qualitative approach
- positionality
- rationale for a case study
- defining a case study through its boundaries.

The second section attends to aspects of the fieldwork, covering:

- the context
- a culturally-responsive approach
- data collection decisions
- data analysis
- trustworthiness and ethics.

Recap of research questions and theoretical framework

This qualitative case study explored how secondary schools develop relationships with Pacific families and the community in order to support students’ successful learning outcomes. The context for the case study was a rural town with two secondary schools where the plan was to elicit not only how well home-school relationships worked but also

how they could be further enhanced for the benefit of Pacific students. An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process was used for the research design, influencing questions.

The overarching question was:

- *How can schools develop relationships with secondary school Pacific students, families and the community in order to support students' successful learning outcomes?*

This question was broken down into four sub-questions which related directly to the 4-D cycle of AI. The aim of the first sub-question, which related to the **discovery** phase, was to find out from participants how they have experienced home-school relationships that have worked well. It was:

- *How do participants perceive they have contributed to successful relationships between school, home and the community which support learning outcomes for Pacific students?*

The second sub-question, which related to the **dream** phase, aimed to encourage participants to use their imagination in order to consider what would make ideal relationships. This question was:

- *What do participants perceive to be ideal relationships between school, home and the community which support learning outcomes for Pacific students?*

The third sub-question related to the **design** phase and asked participants to consider how they might, collectively, create a vision which would help actualise the ideal home-school relationship. It was:

- *How do participants envisage the creation of more successful relationships between school, home and the community to support learning outcomes for Pacific students?*

The final question related to **destiny**. This was an opportunity for participants to consider what planning or actions might be helpful in moving relationships towards their ideal vision, and the question asked:

- *What specific actions do participants believe could lead to more successful relationships between school, home and the community to support learning outcomes for Pacific students?*

These questions, therefore, aimed to capture existing good practice on how schools and families had worked together to support Pacific students but, also, ideas for future practice as to how these relationships could be developed so as to further benefit the students.

Social constructionism was chosen as the ontological paradigm to guide this study because it appreciates how relationships influence meaning-making. Meaning is constructed through interaction in social contexts and is subjective in nature. A social constructionist lens, therefore, helps explore how teachers and Pacific families build relationships and, in so doing, develop their understandings of how best to support Pacific learners.

A bricolage of theoretical perspectives and frameworks was also adopted to guide this study. The adoption of a bricolage helps avoid “one-sided reductionism” that might lean towards dominant Western views at the expense of alternative worldviews (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 682). Drawing on multiple perspectives so that interpretations are more complex and rigorous than a single theoretical lens might offer can help with “scholarly breakthroughs” (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 684). The decision to use a bricolage is not only reflective of a social constructionist lens since this decision, itself, is an acknowledgement of multiple realities but the theoretical ideas contained within it are also compatible with this ontological perspective.

In order that this study was supported by worldviews that resonate with Pacific peoples and avoids the dominance of Western perspectives, the bricolage included *Teu le va* and talanoa as guiding frameworks. *Teu le va* and talanoa illuminate how relationships might successfully unfold when interacting with Pacific peoples and have, therefore, influenced the research design. Talanoa is also a method for data collection. Appreciative Inquiry, as highlighted above, supported the research design. Whilst all these frameworks have helped with analysis and discussion of findings, Communities of Practice, in particular, has

been utilised for analysis because it illuminates how learning can be shared in a beneficial manner through relationships that support collaborative practices.

SECTION 1 - A theoretical and personal perspective

Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach is suited to research engaged in understanding multiple perspectives (Caeli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Stake, 2010). It appreciates that meaning-making is context-dependent and influences how people make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2010, p. 457). Furthermore, a qualitative approach can support the development of mutual understanding by drawing people “closer together” through an appreciation of different perspectives (Gergen et al., 2015, p. 3). When considering this study, the decision for a qualitative design was clear. Through an engagement with the multiple perspectives of Pacific students, their families, communities, and teachers, this study could consider how to draw the worlds of home and school closer together so as to benefit the students’ learning outcomes.

Positionality

An implication for qualitative research, where multiple perspectives are acknowledged, is that this includes the perspective of the researcher, too. This is because it is through the eyes of the researcher that data is understood and interpreted (Caeli et al, 2003; Stake, 2010). This is a positive characteristic in qualitative research. The use of the “human instrument” promotes a rich understanding (Merriam, 2010, p. 457) through its ability to be intuitive and exploratory (Thomas & Myers, 2015). Given this subjectivity, however, it is paramount that the researcher makes explicit her own positioning so that bias is clear. This includes clarifying the purpose of the research which might mean “advocating a point of view” or calling for development in “practice or policy” (Stake, 2010, p. 16). Embarking on a qualitative study, therefore, enables the researcher to steer the research in a particular direction. The evident bias in my research is that I hope it may positively contribute to the development of home-school relationships for Pacific learners, and recommendations for practice and policy are articulated in the final chapter.

Further bias results from the complex positioning of qualitative researchers as they engage in the collection and analysis of data (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Probst, 2016; Savvides, Joanna Al-Youssef, Colin, & Garrido, 2014). A traditional argument is that researchers can either be positioned as an insider or outsider, depending upon how closely they identify with the participants' worlds (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Savvides et al., 2014.) However, the perception that a researcher must identify with one or the other fails to take into account the fluid and dynamic quality of interactions; more accurately, the researcher is occupying a space in between these polarised positions (Corbyn-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The relationship with participants might start with face-to-face interactions where they meet for the first time, but the connection to their lives and appreciation of what matters to them remain with the researcher right through the engagement and analysis of data (Corbyn Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Relationships are never static as perceptions change. Both researcher and participant are in a continual process of positioning themselves as relationships develop. This complex interplay has to be carefully handled by the researcher so as to avoid the manipulation of data. For instance, the researcher can exert power through controlling the interaction with participants or inaccurately representing what has been said (Merriam, 2010).

Given the potential for such influence, it is important to exercise reflexivity. This involves critical self-reflection on the impact of "biases, beliefs, and personal experiences" upon the whole research process (Berger, 2015, p. 220). Reflexivity helps ease the tension between the role the researcher plays as an instrument in the research procedure, and as a subjective being whose background and values colour how data are gathered and analysed (Berger, 2015). It is an ongoing process since personal biases and tensions are not always immediately apparent at the outset of the research journey (Clayton, 2013).

In the introduction, I clarified my rationale for this study and thus articulated important aspects of my own positioning. I explained how, coming from the UK to teach in a secondary school, I was prompted to undertake a master's degree so as to better understand Pacific students and their families. The master's degree and exposure to RPEIPP (Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative by and for Pacific Peoples) encouraged me to continue studying and led to a PhD. By undertaking a PhD, I considered I might be able to support other educators like myself (whose background is not Pacific) in developing an

understanding of how to work more collaboratively with Pacific families. I also drew on the background experiences of work I have undertaken in the UK to demonstrate that values, such as inclusiveness and equity, have influenced the direction of my study.

Since embarking on this study, I have reflected on the opportunities afforded to me through my background. I have enjoyed a financially-stable upbringing and access to education that has led to a professional occupation. Identifying with a Western culture has, I believe, facilitated my education and career path. Quite literally, my family were colonisers. Prior to the Second World War, they engaged in business adventures in colonised countries. This is in contrast to Pacific peoples who were subject to Western colonisation. Later, the legacy of colonisation enabled Pacific peoples to establish themselves in New Zealand but they were mainly employed in semi-skilled, low-paid work (Barcham et al., 2009). As the introductory chapter notes, many families continue to experience low socio-economic status. A reflection on the differences between my background and that of the participants has led me to question my own belief systems and re-assess what I have previously taken for granted. This includes the awareness that a Westernised education system is not as inclusive towards all learners as I might formerly have considered.

Although my background has differed from those of participants', I have been committed to relating to participants in an "open, authentic, honest," way (Corbin-Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59). One advantage of not growing up in New Zealand is to be able to engage with participants without pre-conceived ideas that come from a New Zealand upbringing. The use of a research journal enabled me to record reflections and so assist with my interpretations and ability to think reflexively.

Rationale for a case study

An implication of choosing qualitative research is to make sure that the methodological design does actually capture multiple perspectives (Gergen, Josselin, & Freeman, 2015). Since meanings are context-dependent, field work for the collection of data is necessary in order to engage with the natural setting of participants and the uniqueness of the situation (Stake, 2010). A case study is suited for this kind of work, facilitating an

exploration of the dynamic nature of human interaction in a real-life setting (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001, p. 181). A deep understanding can be gained from exploring the chosen subject matter in a particular context, drawing on different viewpoints to build a detailed picture (Thomas & Myers, 2015).

Thomas and Myers (2015) argue that the specifics of a case study make it a sound methodological approach. When this is relayed through rich description, the researcher conveys understandings that can then contribute to a larger pool of knowledge. That is, others can relate to the specificities of the case study, enabling them to connect to different studies and their own experiences (Thomas & Myers, 2015). Thomas and Myers (2017) query the argument that a qualitative case study might be considered a weak form of research because it is context-dependent and cannot be generalised. Generalisations may lead to abstract conclusions which are not as informative and illuminating as the details in a case study where, due to the insight of the researcher, multiple perspectives are woven together to create a meaningful picture (Thomas & Myers, 2015). Thus, the researcher shares her experiences so that others may also benefit from them (Stake, 1994). In my study, therefore, I aimed to explore the uniqueness of the setting, its "intrinsic" nature (Stake, 1994, 1995); a detailed account could then be shared with others, contributing to wider knowledge and experiences on how home-school relationships can support Pacific learners. One particular feature of the research design was to report directly back to the schools and the Pacific community in the context being studied, in order that they might benefit from any observations made.

Defining a case study through its boundaries

Defining a case study is open to interpretation (Merriam, 2010; Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2011; Yazan, 2015). A case could be "a single person, a program, a group, an institution, a community or a specific policy" (Merriam, 2010, p. 456). Stake (1995) refers to it as "a specific, complex, functioning thing" that can be described as an "integrated system" (p. 2). This is not meant to imply that a case is a highly functioning system; rather a case study investigates processes within established boundaries so as to provide a holistic and detailed picture (Stake, 1995). Boundaries help provide structure to what is being

studied. One boundary for my study was geographical in that the research focussed on two secondary schools in close proximity which served Pacific families in the locality. A further boundary related to time due to practical considerations: there was a finite time for me to undertake data collection that was also in keeping with the academic school year. In this sense, it was a snapshot which reflected participants' perceptions of home-school relationships at the time of investigation (Thomas, 2011), even though these perceptions included reflection on past experiences and ideas about future practice.

Further clarification of boundaries involved a decision on the "subject" and "object" of the study (Thomas, 2011, p. 514; Thomas & Myers, 2017, p. 4). The subject refers to the phenomenon of interest. The subject for my study was secondary home-school relationships for Pacific families in a particular context. However, by only considering the subject, the research is no more than a descriptive account (Thomas & Myers, 2015). An object is required to ensure there is a focus for analysis, to draw together the different perspectives in order to shed light on how or why something might be the case (Thomas & Myers, 2015, p. 4). My study, therefore, was an exploration of how home-school relationships could support positive student learning outcomes for Pacific secondary students. Clarifying the object of the research helped integrate the findings into a holistic picture (Thomas, 2011). However, a focus on the object of the study also challenged my definition of boundaries. That is, in order to understand the perspectives of the participants within the selected geographical context, it was necessary to appreciate what aspects from a wider context affected their perceptions. For instance, some participants drew on their connections with their homelands when reflecting on how students could be supported at school.

It has, therefore, been important to appreciate that boundaries are not always clear (Yin, 2015) and are likely to change through the course of investigation (Johansson, 2007; Stake, 2006). The design of a case study is emergent, subject to change according to what the researcher considers important (Stake, 1995). Defining boundaries is part of the interpretive process and not to be seen as an alarming feature (Andrade, 2009; Verschuren, 2003; Yazan, 2015). Careful planning of methods and attention to the research literature should provide sufficient shape to the inquiry without being too rigid (Yazan, 2015). The researcher can then engage in "phronesis" which involves applying

knowledge and reasoning in a practical way that responds to circumstances (Thomas, 2011). The employment of guiding frameworks has supported this. I could draw on these frameworks using interpretive skills to help assess circumstances during the course of fieldwork, and make informed judgements as to what was relevant to the investigation and what lay outside of its parameters.

SECTION 2 - Fieldwork

Context

As discussed in Chapter One, this study took place in a rural town with a small but growing population of Pacific families. The town is known for its horticultural industry which has attracted Pacific peoples into the area for employment. There are two colleges with a combined population of just over 1200 students. Pacific Island students make up approximately 10 per cent of this student population, the majority being Samoan (ERO, n.d.). Given the growing numbers of Pacific students at primary level, the principals anticipated a growth in the Pacific student population at secondary level.

In order to pursue research that explored relationships between home and school for Pacific families, it was important to pay attention to the principles of *Teu le va*. Namely, respectful and collaborative relationships should underpin the entire research process. This is so that new “knowledge and understandings” can stem from co-operative practices with Pacific peoples in order to benefit the development and education of Pacific peoples (Airini et al., 2010). This influenced the choice of context since I would only undertake research where there was a willingness from members of the Pacific community to accept me as a researcher and trust that I would collaborate. Fortunately, a personal friend introduced me to the Fale Pasifika, a committee which acts in the interest of the Pacific community in this particular town. After presenting to the committee, I gained their approval and the chair requested that I conduct the proposed research. Consequently, he set up an introduction to the principals of the two secondary schools in the area.

The support from the Fale Pasifika was crucial, not only because this committee represented Pacific peoples in the town but also because the school principals appeared

to readily accept me in the light of the Fale's approval. The Fale's approval, however, brought to my attention the level of responsibility in undertaking this research. From the first meeting, I learnt that the committee was concerned about the achievement of their Pacific young people and hoped my research might have a positive influence on school practices. This awareness acted as a constant reminder to be thorough and attentive throughout the research journey, ensuring that I communicated regularly with the committee over the progress of my study (such as with the recruitment of participants) and consulted over important decisions (such as the content of a report based on my findings).

Culturally-responsive approach

Given that my background is European, the principles and practices from the research guidelines *Teu le va* and the advice on how to conduct talanoa helped me to act in a culturally-appropriate way when engaging with the Pacific community. I followed advice on protocol for interacting with Pacific people, such as sharing backgrounds and stories in order to build trust and be able to share ideas. I allowed interaction to unfold rather than control with questions and time restrictions. In essence, I paid attention to forming respectful and reciprocal relationships throughout the course of fieldwork, and did not just consider this protocol when conducting participant interviews.

I also took time to participate in community activities so I could meet people. In this way I could familiarise myself with the world of the participants (Vaiolleti, 2014). I attended cultural performances and went to school cultural practices. I attended a funeral service for a well-respected member of the Samoan community. I also accepted a number of invitations. These involved attending a Tongan church service, helping to serve food at a Pasifika community event, and attending meetings at a parent-teacher committee. As part of this committee, I joined parents as they went out into the community in order to fundraise. In effect, I responded flexibly to the dynamics of the context so as to appreciate who to speak with and what might be some key issues (Airini et al., 2010).

It was particularly important that I sought the help of someone who could advise me on how I might meet Pacific participants, engage with them appropriately and how I might interpret data from Pacific participants (whilst maintaining confidentiality). I was

recommended to meet a Samoan lady who was the principal of a kindergarten for Pacific families, whom I will call Arihi. I describe Arihi in further detail in Chapter Eight when I convey key messages which she felt were important to convey. Her support was invaluable. She “looked after” me as I engaged in fieldwork. This involved helping find participants, and ensuring that she and I met regularly. In the meetings, we discussed ideas and shared our thoughts. When I drafted a report based on my findings to present back to the Pacific community and the schools, Arihi scrutinised its contents. I accepted her edits and strengthening of the recommendations. A sign of Arihi’s approval was that she gifted her father’s proverb for me to use. (See Appendix 2.)

Data collection decisions

An explanation of how data collection was planned and actioned now follows.

Data collection plan.

The main forms of data collection proposed for this study were talanoa sessions and one-to-one interviews. I planned to meet participants in groups so that individuals might be able to engage in talanoa-style conversations where a free flow of ideas could lead to critical and insightful discussion (Vaiolleti, 2006). I also planned semi-structured questions in order to prompt participants yet permit flexibility in the direction of interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). If participants could not meet in a group, I was prepared to undertake one-to-one interviews. In that way, I could be as inclusive and flexible as possible. The focus of discussion was to address the Discovery and Dream aspects of an Appreciative Inquiry. This was to discover what participants believed had been successful home-school relationships that supported learning, and to find out what they believed might be even more successful. Each participant was to complete a brief questionnaire on their background when they signed a participant agreement form prior to interview.

I specifically planned one-to-one interviews for the students. My intention was to undertake a narrative inquiry in which I would work with each student to co-construct a story around the student’s perceptions of past events (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I hoped to elicit learning experiences, and discover how participants had changed over time (Bamberg, 2012). Since these young people were not known to me, I considered that asking them to share stories was one way to create a connection and find out about

their worlds. I understood a risk with narrative inquiry is that a researcher can impose her own interpretation of events. As with all participants, I was aware of the need to share transcripts or summaries of the interviews in order to allow for amendments and ensure I had reflected participants' perceptions appropriately (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To support my data collection, I was prepared to attend events in the community (as discussed) and at the schools. I hoped to conduct informal observations in order to help develop an understanding of home-school relationships within this context. I planned to use my reflective journal to record observations as they occurred.

Sampling decisions.

I selected purposive sampling in order seek the perspectives of those whose experiences might be relevant to the research question. Criteria for participation included any of the following:

- member of the local Pacific community, for instance, someone in a leadership or influential role such as a matai (chief) or pastor who might appreciate the needs and interests of Pacific families
- parent (or caregiver) who identified with one or more Pacific cultures, particularly with experience of children in years 12 or 13 when students are building their qualifications and planning their future
- Pacific student who identified with one or more Pacific cultures, preferably with current or recent experience of Years 12 or 13
- member of staff from either school (for example, senior leader, Pasifika dean, teacher or teacher aide).

I anticipated using a snowballing process to build participant numbers, relying on initial contacts to suggest other possible participants. Aside from establishing contacts early on to support recruitment, I also wanted to find key people with whom I could liaise so as to avoid duplication and confusion (Lewis, 2003). When recruiting participants, I wished to promote inclusivity in line with AI which encourages wide participation so that a collective approach can transform practice (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). However,

at the same, the research process also needed to be manageable and practicable so that I could achieve what I set out to do (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In order to address both inclusivity and manageability, as well as an Appreciative Inquiry design, I proposed four phases for the recruitment of participants and gathering of data. These are briefly summarised in Figure 4 on page 139.

The phases.

The first phase of interviewing was to start with members of the Pacific community so as to gain their perspectives prior to engaging with the schools. The aim was to include anyone interested in taking part, with different Pacific cultures in the locality having opportunity to participate. I anticipated 15 to 20 participants.

In the second phase, I planned to interview teachers and school personnel interested in this research. In order to demonstrate inclusivity, I intended to extend a general invitation to members of staff, using any school procedures available to me. I anticipated meeting about 15-20 members of staff in total, with an equal representation of numbers between each school.

For the third phase, I intended to recruit and interview students. Given the time-consuming nature of anticipated individual interviews based on narrative inquiry, I considered approximately ten students was appropriate with an equitable representation of students from each college.

Although the phases were planned in a sequential manner, I appreciated that they overlapped. Thus, whilst interviewing one group of participants, I was to recruit the next group. I was also to review data as I went along, realising that this would influence the focus for later meetings.

In phase four, I planned to report back to the Pacific community and to the schools. This was an opportunity to fulfil the Design and Delivery stages of the 4-D cycle. I aimed to work with any key contacts that I had made in order to co-create a report based on an

Figure 4
Recruitment and data collection plan
(January to December 2017)

initial analysis of findings. I was to present this report to the Fale Pasifika (and any other Pacific groups). Drawing on feedback I received, I was then to present to the schools. Ideally, the Design phase leads to a proposition or mission statement which encapsulates a positive direction based on collective decision-making; and the Destiny phase is where specific plans and concrete steps can be formulated in order to support any proposition made (Golembiewski, 1998). As a researcher, I had no mandate to facilitate these phases. However, the dissemination of my report had the potential to influence decision-making processes between schools and Pacific families if they wished to further develop home-school practices.

Since the final phase involved engagement in meetings and the co-construction of information, it meant that my role as a researcher was more participatory, and field notes were to be the main source of data collection.

How phases one, two, and three worked in practice.

I received ethics approval at the end of December 2016 and started to develop contacts in the field at the end of January 2017 when people returned from summer breaks and teachers prepared for the new academic year. I was able to complete all four phases close to the planned timescale (as indicated in Figure 4 on page 139). The only variation was that I actually completed interviewing by the end of Term 2, which allowed Term 3 for report writing. It was important to complete interviews in a timely manner so that the schools could receive the report prior to the end of the year. This was in case the report influenced any decisions they might wish to make for the following academic year. The schools asked for feedback to be given just after the senior students left in November (when they had time to listen and had begun their planning for the next year). I was able to comply with this request. Thus, all fieldwork was completed by the end of November 2017.

When recruiting parent and community participants, the secretary of the Fale Pasifika set up a meeting, and I was able to conduct a talanoa session with eight participants. This took place at the council offices. The meeting began with an opening prayer, followed by introductions from everyone (at the instruction of an attendee). Then conversation took

its course with minimal interruption from me. Notably, the secretary of the Fale Pasifika directed participants to discuss stories of success after discussion had focussed on problems. This quickly prompted participants to change direction where they praised teachers and aspects of the school system.

Other parent/community participants came through recommendations from my cultural advisor and from a deputy principal. Although I had hoped to arrange group meetings, I found that I needed to respond individually to each contact and exercise flexibility over a meeting time. Thus, I engaged in many individual interviews. Most meetings took place at the local library with one at a café, and another at a participant's place of work. On each occasion, the decision where to meet was made by the participant. The library had a café for refreshments, allowed for confidential conversation away from the school premises and did not necessitate an intrusion into people's homes. I met one participant (the careers advisor) at his home. He worked closely with my cultural advisor on community matters and my relationship with her may have likely influenced him to welcome me at his house. I also interviewed a husband and wife at their home; their daughter attended one secondary school and the husband taught at another. The mother was the treasurer of the parent committee at one college and, by this stage, we had become well acquainted with each other. She wanted the interview in her home because she had young children to mind. In the safety of her house, she was able to communicate observations on how the school contrasted from what she had previously experienced before moving into the area, and what she had noted about families' needs in the vicinity.

In each school, the principal had provided a contact with whom I could liaise. A Pasifika dean was the contact in one school and a deputy principal (who had many years' working with Pacific families) was the other. Responding to their advice, I spent one day in each school where I was given a room and made myself available for teacher interviews. Teachers either booked or dropped in, and I interviewed throughout the day. I made follow-up visits to see particular members of staff who had either followed up with me or who I had contacted through the advice of the Pasifika dean or the deputy. Whilst the majority of staff were teachers, I also interviewed a social worker, two teacher aides (one Tongan and one Samoan), and two members of staff who ran an academy aimed at

recruiting young people into the armed services. Although the original plan envisaged groups rather than individual sessions, I needed to respond flexibly to what worked in the schools. I appreciated that the individual interviews were an easier option for staff.

Again, following advice from the school contacts, I made myself available for one day in each school in order to interview students. I said I could see up to six students. However, when I turned up to the first school, the deputy had decided to double up the sessions so that I would see two at a time, rather than individually. Her argument was that students would be more relaxed and communicative if they had someone else with them.

Although not planned, the deputy was correct in that conversations went smoothly because there were two students present. The more confident student would start talking and this seemed to help the other one to engage. Since I met 12 students at that school, I notified the Pasifika dean at the other school, and she matched numbers. On the day of that visit, I saw 11 students but they had been booked in to see me individually. Although there is an inherent risk with individual interviews that students are compliant due to power dynamics in the relationship between a student and researcher, an advantage is that the interview is then obviously confidential should the student wish to say something personal. For example, when one boy told me about his stepfather's efforts to improve his learning by reducing sport commitments, the boy was keen to emphasise that no one else was to know.

Generally, the senior girls were communicative and informative, and boys were quieter. At both colleges, some junior students were also sent to me as participants. Although I was mainly sent students who could report academic success, not all were like this. Some students discussed with me how they were currently or had been struggling in the school system. I took this to be a sign of trust and commitment to honesty on the part of the schools in that the dean and the deputy would have known the history of the students but were willing to let me see them, rather than just send the most academically-successful ones.

I interviewed one further student at the council offices. The secretary of the Fale Pasifika organised for a group of students to attend a meeting with me (in the way she had organised adults). This was her suggestion and not mine, as I already had seen a number

of students by this time. Only one student turned up on the day of my visit which disappointed the secretary as she thought she had chosen reliable young people. However, as I had exceeded numbers already, I was happy to meet with just one. Given the overall student numbers, I did not focus on narrative inquiry. As with all my interviews, I conducted them using semi-structured questions with the aim of encouraging a free flow of conversation.

An outcome of the data-collection process was that I engaged in many more hours of interviewing (and, subsequently, transcribing) than anticipated. This placed me under time pressure and it was necessary to employ the service of transcribers so as to allow enough space to write the report.

Participants from phases one, two, and three.

There was a greater number of participants than anticipated because student numbers had been unexpectedly large. (See Tables 2,3, and 4 on pages 144-148). Of the 62 participants, 18 were parents or members of the Pacific community. Included in this was the teacher of one of the colleges who I interviewed with his wife. Also, included were the teacher aides and my cultural advisor who participated in an interview. Participants were predominantly Samoan. This could be a consequence of snowballing in that participants were mainly introduced through Samoan contacts. However, Samoan students constitute the highest percentage of Pacific students in the colleges (ERO, n.d.) which suggests that Samoans were the largest ethnic group out of the Pacific population in this town. Of the 18 parent/community participants, 13 were not born in New Zealand. This suggested that migrants from Pacific countries have been attracted to this town, possibly for employment. Finally, it was noticeable that many participants were engaged in community-minded activities, such as participating in church groups. See Table 2, page 146.

There were 20 staff participants in total. Ten were from one college, nine were from the other and a further participant was a retired primary principal who provided valuable background information. She was the wife of a member of staff who recommended that I speak with her and set up a meeting. Although I provided questionnaires for teachers to

complete at the start of the interview, not all teachers completed them. This was probably due to limited time. Nonetheless it was noticeable that a number of teachers had many years' service at their school; and a number were involved in the community through activities like church which connected them to Pacific families. See Table 3, page 148.

Of the 23 students interviewed, 15 were born in New Zealand with nine born elsewhere. A number had, therefore, experienced education in countries other than New Zealand, where English was not the medium of instruction. Most students came from large families and lived in large households; for instance, 21 of the 23 students had three or more siblings. Most students attended church (with 20 reporting that they went at least once a week). Poly group (where Pacific students practised cultural performances) and the church youth group appeared to be the most common activities which these young people attended. It was noticeable that there was a wider variety of Pacific cultures represented in these participants than for the parent and community group. This variety resulted from the contacts at each college opting to find a range of students for me to meet. A Tuvaluan student mentioned the lack of church facilities for her culture, and a Kiribati student mentioned the church was not conveniently located. This suggests that these communities may not have been so well established in the area (as for Samoans and Tongans) since they did not have a dedicated church. See Table 4, page 150.

Data analysis

Data analysis was supported by grounded theory, Nvivo software, and the 4-D cycle of AI. As data was collated into findings, coding was used to protect participant anonymity.

Grounded theory approach.

A grounded theory approach was used for the analysis of data. In grounded theory, the aim is to explore the experiences of people and find patterns in these experiences (Engward, 2013). It is a highly structured yet also flexible system where theory is generated from the exploration of data (Engward, 2013). Analysis of data commences from the first moment it is collected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). It is important to avoid assumptions that might colour the direction of findings but maintain an open mind

(Engward, 2013; Suddaby, 2006). Research literature should not be leaned on too heavily for this reason, but it is helpful for guiding observations (Suddaby, 2006). I adopted a grounded theory approach for my study so that I could be open to any new insights regarding relationships between schools and Pacific families, and not confine myself to any pre-existing ideas or assumptions.

Table 2: Profile of parent/community participants

Coding	Cultural identity	Place of birth	Parent of senior child	Occupation	Role within the community / special interests Other comments	Male / female
PC1	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Careers advisor	Co-founder of new organisation to support Pacific community.	M
PC2	Tongan	Tonga	Not yet	Liaises with Pacific families at a kindergarten	Supports families arriving from Tonga	F
PCT3	Tongan	Tonga	Yes	Teacher Aide	Pastor	M
PC4	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Community support worker	Supports others with language assistance and understanding the New Zealand system	M
PC5	Tongan German	NZ	Yes	Mother	Treasurer of parent committee Married to PCT14	F
PC6	Tongan	NZ	Yes	Social worker	Deputy chair of Fale Pasifika (Former chair)	M
PC7	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Kindergarten teacher	Rugby coach	M
PC8	Samoa	NZ	Now at university	Executive Assistant	Secretary of Fale Pasifika	F
PC9	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Various (shop work/gardening)	President of Sunday School	F

					Secretary for church youth group	
PC10	Cook Island Maori (Rarotonga)	NZ	Yes	Small business owner	Elected councillor	F
PC11	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Sports Executive	Chairman Fale Pasifika Youth leader & coach	M
PC12	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Principal of kindergarten	Many community roles, including the role of co-founder of new organisation to support needs of Pacific community. Cultural advisor for my study	F
PC13	Samoa	Samoa	n/a	Teacher aide	Mentors Pacific youth	M
PC14	Samoa	Samoa		Social work, counselling & teaching	Church minister	F
PCT15	Tongan Fijian	NZ	yes	Secondary teacher	Married to PC6	M
PC16	Samoa	Samoa	Now at university	Teacher aide	Married couple	F
PC17	Samoa	Samoa		Market gardener	Attended talanoa, mainly listened	M
PC18	Samoa	Samoa	Yes	Civil engineer	Attended talanoa, mainly listened	F

Table 3: Profile of members of staff participants

Table 3 does not include any Pacific participants; TA7 identifies with Māori ethnicity

College A

Coding	Role within school	Responsibility or involvement with Pacific learners	Role within the community/special interests Other comments	Number of years at this school
TA1	Head of Department (HoD)	Whanau tutor of Pacific students		
TA2	Teacher	Whanau tutor of Pacific students Ex Pasifika dean	Attends church in the community	
TA3	Teacher	Whanau tutor of Pacific students	Involved in Christian group at school Released a number of hours per week to teach at intermediate school	37 years teaching in total (not sure how long at this school)
TA4	Deputy Principal	Oversight of curriculum, including the needs of Pacific learners		31
TA5	Tutor for Service Academy Programme	Pacific students in the Academy Programme		
TA6	Teacher	Pasifika Dean		Just over 1 year
TA7	Teacher	Teacher of Pacific students		
TA8	Teacher	Pasifika Dean	Contact person	11
TA9	HoD		Employs locals and RSE seasonal workers	18
TA10	Tutor for Service Academy Programme	Pacific students in the Academy Programme		

College B

Coding	Role within school	Responsibility or involvement with Pacific learners	Role within the community/special interests Other comments	Number of years at this school
TB1	HoD	Pasifika Dean	Runs study groups for Pacific students	13
TB2	Teacher	Teacher of Pacific students	Supports study groups for Pacific students	Over 2
TB3	Teacher	Working with a year 9 group of students, identified as requiring extra support.	Lives locally and knows many families.	33
TB4	Learning Support teacher	Works with Pacific students requiring learning support	Attends local Catholic church	Over 3
TB5	Deputy Principal	Has been closely involved in with 'poly' cultural group but now passed on most responsibility	Contact person. Long association with Pacific students and families. Established friendships.	27
TB6	HoD		Involved with Catholic church and in rugby. Comes into contact with Pacific families through this involvement.	19
TB7	Teacher	Aware of raising achievement in Year 13 for all students		
TB8	HoD	Number of Pacific students in Music		Over 1
TB9	Social worker	Some clients are Pacific families		
T1	Retired Primary Principal	Worked closely with many Pacific families as a Principal	Involved in Catholic church, attended by many Pacific families.	

Table 4: Profile of student participants**College A**

Coding	Age	Cultural identity	Place of birth	No of siblings	No in house-hold	Interests/ career plans Other comments	No attendances at church each week	Male/ female
SA1	16	Tongan	NZ	4	7	Interested in teaching Poly group, church youth group	2	F
SA2	17	Samoa	NZ	4	?	Came from Samoa 5 years ago to live with uncle Poly group, 1 st XV rugby, church youth group, Sunday school	3	M
SA3	17	Samoa	NZ	7 or 8	7	Planning to go to university, possibly to study law Netball, rugby, basketball, Poly group, church youth group	1	F
SA4	16	Tuvalu Kiribati	Canada	4	? Family, cousin & grand-parents	Born in Canada. Lived in Tuvalu. Interested in engineering.	1	M
SA5	16	Samoa	Samoa	4	5	Interested in a career as a police officer Poly group leader, volleyball, rugby, church youth group & choir	3 or more	F
SA6	16	Samoa	NZ	3	5	Interested in the Air Force	1	F
SA7	18	Samoa Solomon Islander	Samoa	3	5	Career in the services Rugby 1 st XV, kung fu, firefighter	1	M
SA8	14	Samoa Maori	NZ	4	5	Basketball	1	M
SA9	17	Samoa	NZ	7	Living with aunt & uncle	Reported negative learning experiences	1 or 2	M
SA10	17	Tuvaluan	Fiji	5	10	Born in Fiji. Also lived in Tuvalu.	1	M

					Living with uncle and family	Soccer		
SA11	13	Kiribati Fiji	NZ	5	?	Born in NZ, lived in Kiribati and Fiji.	1 or 2	M

College B

Coding	Age	Cultural identity	Place of birth	No of siblings	No in house-hold	Interests/ career plans Other comments	No attendances at church each week	Male / female
SB1	15	Tongan	Tonga	6	9	Went to school in Tonga in years 9 & 10. Rugby, cactus (a fitness programme), Poly group, church youth group	1	F
SB2	15	Tongan	NZ	6	9	Poly group, church youth group	1 or more	F
SB3	16	Kiribati	Kiribati	4	7	Youth group	'all the time'	M
SB4	17	Tuvaluan	Fiji	4	7	Started education in Tuvalu. Planning Law & Psychology at Otago Debating	Some-times	F
SB5	17	Cook Island Maori	NZ	3	5	Planning Health Science at Otago University Stage challenge, ball committee, quiz teams	-	F
SB6	16	Samoan	NZ	3	5	Cactus (fitness programme), Poly group, stage challenge, volleyball, rugby, softball, cricket	1	F

SB7	16	Tongan	NZ	8	5	Talented musician	1	M
SB8	17	Samoa	NZ	0	3	Poly group, stage challenge, basketball, rugby	1	F
SB9	15	Kiribati	Kiribati	4	7	Poly group	'Some-times'	F
SB10	16	Tongan	NZ	5	9	Interested in a Bachelor of Construction	1	M
SB11	15	Tongan	NZ	2	6	Poly group, basketball, church youth group	1	M
SB12	16	Samoa	Samoa	0	Lives with SB11	From Australia Poly group, church youth group	'all the time'	M

The first step is to identify some initial ideas or themes. This is **open coding** where basic categories are named, staying as close as possible to the words used by participants (Halaweh, Fidler, & McRobb, 2008). Broad categories can be further broken down into subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). **Axial coding** is where the subcategories are subjected to “constant comparison” in order to look for patterns or discrepancies (Halaweh et al., 2008, p. 5); meaning behind the participants’ wording can be interpreted and more abstract ideas are formed. It is important to find multiple examples in the data to support a particular hypothesis in order to be satisfied that that is credible (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The final stage is to form theory through **selective coding**. The central theme of the research can now be established, encompassing the categories which have already been established and enabling coherent theories to emerge (Halaweh et al., 2008). The core theory which emerges from this data should clearly stem from any supporting categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and not be reliant on concepts that have been imported from elsewhere (Charmaz, 2006). The process of collating and analysing data is an iterative procedure, and does not fall into neat stages (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Suddaby, 2006). The researcher keeps checking how data has been organised so as to be alert to any inconsistencies or biases, revising continually until she is satisfied there is no

more evidence to produce (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Suddaby, 2006). It is not always clear when to stop (Suddaby, 2006) but the researcher develops ideas so as to achieve a “cohesive and accessible working theory” (Engward, 2013).

Nvivo.

I used Nvivo, specialised software to support this work. Nvivo refers to categories as “nodes”. The advantage of Nvivo was that I could add and re-organise nodes, and create sub-nodes. I could make constant changes, and categorise data in more than one place as I developed ideas. I could also quickly see which nodes were attracting the most data. It was not a substitute for creative and intuitive thinking (Suddaby, 2006), but it helped with interconnecting themes. I produced over 40 sub-nodes which fell into a number of broad nodes or working categories while I looked for interconnecting patterns. The main categories were as follows:

One node was **communication** where I placed sub-nodes such as *listening* and *power dynamics*. I was able to collate ideas from participants about how teachers and families might interact when building relationships. The most popular sub-node was *reaching out to families*, which was considered important by Pacific parents and teachers alike. I later created another node called **Communities of Practice** (where I placed *knowledge*). On reflection, I appreciated that **Communication** was an aspect of **Communities of Practice** in that the evidence I was collecting related to how knowledge, ideas, and values were shared between home and school.

Another category was **context**. This enabled me to consider what contextual factors might be relevant. For instance, in the sub-node *socio-economic factors* I recorded perceptions on how income or employment affected family engagement. I also added *time* here, since time to develop relationships concerned both families and teachers. How time was interpreted impacted upon the nature of teacher and family interactions.

A third category was **values** where I gathered many nodes and sub-nodes. This was an opportunity to record what values relating to relationships were highly valued by Pacific participants. These included many caring attributes such *supporting others, sharing, nurturing, and encouraging*.

A further category was student **success** which gathered perceptions on how successful learning outcomes might be achieved for students. For instance, one node was *mentoring*, something which a number of teachers and students prioritised. Another example was *responsibility* which reflected how participants felt students could best be supported in order to take responsibility for their own learning.

I also added the category **parental involvement**. Whilst this study was not focussed on barriers to Pacific parents' involvement in their children's education, these cropped up nonetheless and, therefore, a sub-node for *barriers* was created. I also added a sub-node on *parent perceptions* since perceptions about how families should be involved did not necessarily match school practice.

Another category, **school system**, was helpful in order to note perceptions on how systems affected home-school relationships. For instance, the *role of the teacher* and *school strategies* were important nodes for collecting perceptions on how school practices supported family engagement.

Appreciative Inquiry to shape findings.

To support the selective shaping of categories, I returned to the 4-D cycle of AI. The aim of interviewing participants was to address the discovery and dream stages of this cycle. Therefore, I integrated the analysis I had undertaken on Nvivo into these stages of AI. Although my questions were positively framed in that they encouraged participants to consider existing good practice and what might be better, many participants focussed on problems nonetheless. Given problems were raised, I realised that I needed to reflect them. This was not necessarily an issue, however, as a consideration of what has not gone well can lead to a consideration of what could work better (for example, Grant & Humphries, 2006). This reasoning influenced my synthesis of ideas.

For each group of participants, therefore, I drew on the categories from Nvivo in order to discover what strengths schools and families brought to home-school relationships. I further drew on the categories to reflect what each group of participants felt were issues that needed addressing. Then, finally, I addressed how participants dreamt that relationships between home and school could be developed so as to overcome any

issues. In this way, I was able to pull out the key themes which had emerged from the data and shape them into a coherent picture that reflected the focus of the research questions around Discovery and Dream from the 4-D cycle.

Reporting the findings.

Whereever possible, participants' own words were used. To maintain anonymity, codes represent the different participants. The prefix PC represents a parent or Pacific community participant. If a participant is also a teacher or teacher aide, PCT is used. The letter T is used for a teacher participant or member of staff. The letter A represents a participant from one college and the letter B a participant from the other. For example, TA is a teacher or member of staff at one college, and TB at the other. S represents a student participant. Likewise, SA is from one college and SB is from the other. Although pseudonyms could have been used, I opted for a number and lettering representation given the large number of participants and its helpfulness in clarifying participant groupings.

Trustworthiness and ethics

Attention to trustworthiness necessitates attention to ethical practices in that attention to the latter facilitates the former (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Trustworthiness and reliability.

When findings are drawn from multiple perspectives including those of the researcher, it needs to be clear that methodological processes have been undertaken in a rigorous and trustworthy manner that gives credence to the researcher's interpretive skills (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Shenton, 2004; Stake, 1994). Furthermore, these processes need to be transparent so as to demonstrate what Yin (2015) calls "reliability" (p. 198) and Lub (2015) refers to as "validity" (p. 1), meaning that the results of the study are shown to be plausible and "not the analyst's imagination" (Yin, 2015, p. 198). A number of recommended procedures were used to assure trustworthiness and reliability of findings.

Triangulation of data was one procedure (Lub, 2015; Schwandt et al., 2007; Shenton, 2004). This was done by cross-checking the "viewpoints and experiences" of participants

(Shenton, 2004, p. 66); Nvivo helped with the grouping of participants' wording as I searched for consistencies in ideas as well as any inconsistencies. The advantage in my study was the large number of participants with approximately equal numbers of parents, teachers, and students; this meant that the cross-checking could take place across different perspectives relating to home-school partnerships. Furthermore, as the study was conducted over the course of an academic year, a "prolonged engagement" in the field helped avoid weak interpretation of data due to limited time spent in the context (Schwandt et al., 2007, p. 18). Another technique employed was member checks in order that participants' perspectives were appropriately interpreted (Lub, 2015; Schwandt et al., 2007; Shenton, 2004). This entailed regularly recapping in interviews to check understanding and also emailing summaries of interviews to participants who wished to receive them. Some participants did not respond but most confirmed they were happy with the summaries. On one occasion I was asked to edit information and re-send it in order to gain the approval of the participant. Another technique I could have used was "iterative questioning" to check consistency of ideas; that is, I could have repeated a question to see if the response tallied with what was said earlier (Shenton, 2004, p. 67); however, the process of *talanoa* was a preferable method. Rather than having to directly repeat questions, it was better to allow participants to talk freely so they could revisit and reframe their ideas; this helped clarify their thinking.

Further rigour was applied to the research process through the opportunity to feed back to others in order to check ideas (Lub, 2015; Schwandt et al., 2007; Shenton, 2004). Not only did supervisors help in this regard but so did my cultural advisor. When preparing for meetings with either my cultural advisor or supervisors, I wrote detailed emails articulating ideas and sent them prior to the meeting. These emails prompted discussion and helped keep track of thoughts. Likewise, after each meeting, I summarised understandings and sent them out to be checked. My cultural advisor commended me on thoroughness in this regard. Another procedure which assured trustworthiness was the use of the reflective journal since this, too, was a medium in which I could scrutinise ideas and make observations.

In addition, the aim of supplying rich descriptive detail in reporting this study was so that those reading it could ascertain if the description supplied was compatible with findings

presented. Finally, rigour has been shown in that the findings have been built on an extensive review of existing literature (Shenton, 2004).

Ethics.

This project was approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and complied with the stipulated ethical procedures. However, adhering to ethical paperwork does not necessarily ensure that a researcher has exercised sensitivity and respect towards participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The criterion of fairness, as described by Schwandt et al. (2007), illustrates an interconnection between trustworthiness and ethics. Schwandt et al. (2007) argue that the researcher needs to pay careful attention to fairly representing the diverse values and beliefs which emerge in a qualitative study. A rigorous process, and an ethical process, ensure that such diversity is reflected in the way data are gathered and analysed, as well as in the recommendations which are formed in collaboration with stakeholders (or representatives of them). The result is research that raises awareness of a complex situation where different perspectives have not always been understood but can now be better appreciated. Potentially, the research is also a “catalyst” for action in that collaborative practices model future decision-making processes (Schwandt, et al., 2007). These principles of fairness have been applied to the execution of my study, since its purpose was to facilitate understandings of potentially diverse perspectives on home-school relationships. Collaboration with key stakeholders was used in the co-construction and dissemination of a report with the aim of informing decision-making. Attention was paid to guidelines for research with Pacific people so that research processes might be collaborative and support outcomes for Pacific peoples (Airini et al., 2010; Bennet, Brunton, Bryant-Tokalau, Sopoaga, Weaver, & Witte, 2013).

Finally, ethical practices meant exercising respectful relationships with Pacific peoples where respect is “demonstrated through humility and is reciprocal” (Bennett et al., 2013, p. 109). This entailed paying attention to and appreciating face-to-face interactions through talanoa in order to produce trusting and harmonious relations.

Chapter Eight: Findings – Discovery and Dream

“Community perspectives tend to cut to the bone of issues and can provide astute and perceptive responses about feasibility, applicability and success of projects in local settings.” They must be “included as active agents in developing knowledge that they themselves value and desire.”

(Airini, et al., 2010, p. 22)

Introduction

This chapter reports on findings from the Discovery and Dream phases. An overall finding is that all groups of participants favour the idea of parents, teachers and students working together to support the learning needs and career goals of the students. Whilst all groups want to take students’ interests into account, student participants emphasise the need to take responsibility for their learning.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section reports on the perceptions of parent/community participants; the second reports on the perceptions of teachers and members of staff; and the third reports on those of students. In each section, findings are described as follows:

- the discovery of participants’ perceived strengths
- the dream which participants hold for ideal home-school relationships.

When relating participants’ dreams, participants share factors they feel are important for supporting student success. However, they also share doubts and concerns, and draw on these to suggest how ideal relationships can be realised.

This chapter closes with a summary which connects the findings from the different groups of participants.

SECTION 1 – Perceptions of Pacific parents/community participants

Discovery – parent/community participants’ perceived strengths

Parent and community participants conveyed what they perceive to be key beliefs, values, skills, and knowledge which they or members of their community possess that relate to home-school relationships. From these perceptions, it is possible to appreciate

what strengths Pacific parents/community members can bring to the relationship-building process between home and school in order to support Pacific secondary students.

“For the future of their children.”

An important belief conveyed by some participants is that families have migrated to Zealand in order to provide a better future for their children. PC1, who arrived in New Zealand as a child from Samoa, explains how his parents came first before bringing their children over:

Initially my parents came over to chase the dream of the better life, the land of milk and honey. So, they left me with my grandparents. My grandparents raised me from when I was 8 months old. And Mum and Dad came over to set up a life for us.

PC2, who has lived in New Zealand for only a few years, gives a similar story about how she and other Tongan families had come to settle in New Zealand for the sake of the children’s futures. She speaks of these families in this way:

They had [a] dream, but how to get that dream to happen....And I found out that most of them, they wanted their children to achieve more and to be a success in school. That’s mainly what they wanted. For the future of their children.

PC2 connects the idea of providing a successful future for one’s children with ensuring they have access to education in New Zealand because the education here is perceived to lead to increased job opportunities. The belief is that children have much better prospects in New Zealand than if they remain in their homelands. PC2 explains it this way:

Your job is to go and work at the Chinese shop and you can’t go get the job from the government because...there’s no job. ...there’s no opportunity for young children. But here there are lots of opportunities.

PCT3, a Tongan pastor and teacher-aide, concurs with PC2 that the lack of opportunity at home for young people is an issue:

I think at home there is not much opportunity. We train at home for those big jobs, like doctor, nurses, teachers, stuff like that. Some of them successfully accomplish those goals. Some of our students do very well when they come here.

They go back with degrees. Here there are lots of opportunities.... There are other choices as well for our students. If they can't go to uni, they go to polytech or work in factories or anything like that you know.... There are a variety of options for them to choose here.

PC2 and PCT3 do not say, directly, that it is the New Zealand's education system, itself, that attracts families; rather, they are suggesting that families are more interested in the idea of better job prospects for their children, resulting from an education in New Zealand.

PC4 also confirms the idea that an education in New Zealand is a step towards a brighter future. PC4 migrated to New Zealand from Samoa in recent years with a young family. He places a strong emphasis on education, perceiving that this leads to a successful life in New Zealand for his children. He sums up the message that he relays to his own children:

There is something that you need to do there (school), and you need to learn and practise. That's why you go there. That's what I want from you guys that it's easy to learn and they can go to university and get a good job. That's the focus I tell them. Because we grew up on the island and it was a difficult life. You need to be successful in this life. (PC4)

PC1, PC2, PCT3, and PC4 all contrast the idea of a "better life" in the future with negative experiences from the present or past. In order to improve circumstances, families have made decisions so that they might deliver better outcomes for the future: the decision to migrate to New Zealand is made in the hope that the next generation will enjoy a better quality of life than the previous one.

This idea is summed up by PC2. Commenting on the need to work in New Zealand in order to pay rent, an unfamiliar concept in Tonga, she says:

We must survive here because we want our children to have more than what we have [had].

Thus, even if it involves hardship in the short term, there is hope for the family in the long term.

In summary, participants speak of family decisions to settle in New Zealand as a way of securing a desirable future for their children that will, hopefully, deliver better outcomes

than what families might, otherwise, experience. Therefore, it is very important to them for their children to succeed at school.

“We need to encourage our children.”

Participants express the importance of encouraging and supporting their children so that successful educational outcomes for them can be achieved. When talking about his children’s schooling, PC4 expresses it very simply:

We need to encourage our children.

The idea that it is important to support children so they can succeed at school is echoed by other participants. For instance, PCT3, through his experience as a pastor and teacher-aide, had also observed (and approved) of the way that some parents prioritise their children’s education:

Some parents are good you know. You can tell that they are really onto their children’s studies and they are very supportive.

PC2, a relative newcomer to New Zealand, refers back to her home of Tonga to explain how parents rally round their children to encourage them to be successful:

Because [if] she got asked for sport, if he was success[ful] in sport, we wish him [or] her to be a success in sport. [Laughs]. We give them lots of dreams! And hopefully in the future they achieve what they want to.

Thus, for PC2, support takes the form of encouraging children to recognise their strengths and future direction.

For other parents, such as PC5, support is defined as being able to give time to one’s children so that they can manage their studies effectively. PC5, also Tongan, was born in New Zealand; she was, perhaps, more able than PC2 to give specific help due to her familiarity with the education system and life in New Zealand. She advocates the following approach:

I think it is really important to have that time with them [children] as well and not just to be left to do their homework on their own or find out how things run either at home or social or at school. You need to actually spend some time with them. It

makes a difference, I think...but just that quiet intimate time with them I found helpful for my kids.

PC6 (New-Zealand born Tongan) notes how effective some families had been in doing just that:

So parents we know here...who have invested the time and energy into their children, have reaped the benefits of a clearer pathway to tertiary education.

There is, therefore, a consensus amongst participants about the value of giving support and encouragement to children (in whatever form) so that they can succeed with their education.

“I understand the system.”

Some participants connect the idea of being able to give support to their children by developing their knowledge of the school system. Increased knowledge means that parents can better engage with teachers. PC6 clarifies his perspective as someone educated in New Zealand and now a qualified social worker. He feels able to provide the support for his children to succeed in their education, explaining:

My kids did really well simply because of the transparency with process. Because I understand the system. And I understand how to contribute to it and participate within it.

PC7 presents a similar story. He joined the education system as a teenager and struggled because Samoan was his first language. As a parent, though, he built up his knowledge of the school system (stemming from training as an early childhood educator). Over time, he has felt more confident at engaging with teachers:

I’ve been the parent that didn’t understand the process, transferred now to the parent [who does] and I see the big difference. Like I said, I was the parent who used to just go sit down and nod our heads. Now I see the difference because I’m the one who is doing the question and I don’t feel bad at questioning now.

Thus, PC7 is better able to interact with teachers because he has some knowledge of the school system. With the knowledge comes the confidence to ask questions and, consequently, the opportunity to engage with his children’s learning.

This is something that PC6 has noticed about some families over time. As families become more familiar with the education system, it is possible for them to engage more readily with teachers:

The percentage of success and engagement increases when like second generation, third generation, fourth generation...because we understand and we know how it works. But if you're new to it, it's very...(pause) like we talk about the power. The shift of the power or being empowered to make contributions is not always foreseen.

Some parents, therefore, have engaged in their children's learning and in interaction with teachers, and felt this had been successful. They acknowledge that familiarity with the school system helps them to be more confident at communicating with teachers so that they can be proactive rather than passive when discussing their child's progress. They also acknowledge, however, that it could take some time to develop this level of knowledge and confidence.

“We can help each other.”

A number of participants commented on the way they support and help one another. This is particularly the case if they have acquired knowledge and skills to negotiate certain aspects of living in New Zealand. They are then able to help others. PC4 expresses it this way:

We can help each other and build up confidence.

PC3 relates the idea of being helpful back to his home island, Tonga, to explain that this is a common way of relating to one another:

Back in the island everyone was very helpful.

Help is often described in practical terms. For instance, PC2 helps families to settle when they first arrive in the area:

But I am happy to have this new family with me....And they are very nice people and it's really good for us from the Pasifika to come and someone to help them to start before they go on with their journey.

PC4 uses his language skills to support families in any way that they need:

I always give them my support just a little thing....I support them in ways of communications. I take them to their employment. If they need a translator.

A number of participants are willing to give their help to schools and assist where they can. PC8 describes how parents frequently go into schools in order to support students with their cultural performances, at both primary and secondary level. She refers directly to another participant to explain that:

[Name] was a tutor at the primary school.

Moreover, it was clear that schools call on parents if they required assistance. PC6 provides the example of how the College Principals ask him for help when working with Pacific families:

And both [Name] and [Name] have approached me on numerous occasions to support them with problematic stuff that's come up. You know, with students and parents and things like that.

Another participant, PC9, also speaks about how she helps schools. PC9, Samoan, had lived in New Zealand for many years. She not only supports cultural performance practices in the colleges but also helps staff by communicating with families when needed. She explains her help this way:

If you volunteer, you volunteer. But if there is no money to pay you, you just do your job. Help the kids, help the family.

Within the Pacific community of this town, therefore, there appears to be support networks operating to help one another. This support extends into the school context to assist teachers, students, and families. Thus, members of the Pacific community, who feel they have some expert knowledge or relevant experience of the New Zealand education system, are willing to offer their services to other Pacific families if required.

“That was really cool to see.”

Participants demonstrate (for example, through their commitment to support others) that they want the best for all Pacific young people. One participant, PC10 was delighted to see so many Pacific students from the town when she visited the local university with her daughter:

Last month I took our daughter down to the Pasifika Students' Welcome down at (Name) Uni and we walk in and there's a line of about five girls from (Name) who were there also for their first year. And that was really cool to see. And then I talked to another one at Celebration Day and she was at the back somewhere. So, there was probably a good seven of our kids in that room. And I know your girl's gone off to (Name)

PC6 makes a similar comment in recognising the academic success of Pacific students:

If you take a step back and you look at the progression of students that have successfully gone through the system. It's awesome. From my day, I mean I'm just in awe every time I go to those academic sort of celebrations [and] then you see lots and lots of our Pasifika kids up there. And the parents are in the crowd just loving it.

These comments indicate that parents have appreciated success being celebrated, particularly as the opportunity to see success has grown from what was evident in the past.

Another participant, PC11 (Samoan-born but educated in New Zealand), also praises the way young people were developing in comparison to his own educational experiences. He praises the work within schools where students work on cultural performances in preparation for a regional event, Pasifika Fusion:

I see that with Pasifika Fusion in that opportunity there they have to grow, learn, and to learn as leaders. Because the kids actually do a lot of the leading of their own college groups.

As current chair of the Fale Pasifika (the committee which promoted opportunities for young Pacific people to celebrate their culture), PC11 values the work within schools which help support the talents and personal growth of these students.

PC7 explains why the cultural practices in the "Poly Group" are so important:

What I say is that [the Poly group] is where they feel [like they] belong and is what makes them want to have a place.

PC7 qualifies why it is important for students to feel that they belong:

We all know the best thing that we could get out of a kid is to be confident to learn and they feel [that they] belong in an environment to learn....our kids need to be comfortable.

Participants show an overall commitment to wanting Pacific young people to be successful; success includes academic success as well as success with personal growth and confidence. This personal growth and confidence could stem from an engagement in cultural activities (which the schools facilitated). The benefits of enabling students to connect with their culture in the school setting means that they could feel more comfortable in this environment and, consequently, more connected with their learning.

Participants, therefore, appreciate any opportunities to celebrate students' academic success and also opportunities for students to celebrate their culture within the school system.

Dream – Pacific parent/community participants' perceptions of ideal home-school relationships

Participants consider what factors make home-school relationships ideal. They also share concerns. An awareness of these, however, helps formulate their ideas on how to achieve ideal relationships.

“Students and parents making informed choices.”

Some participants are very clear that the ideal relationship ensures that parents are knowledgeable and involved. As PC6 says:

I am passionate about students and parents making informed choices.

PC6 explains further why and how students and parents should be informed:

On the onset of entering secondary school then there must be some level of understanding between the school and the parent and the student where they see themselves in five years' time. There's got to be...even if it's only a snippet. I want to be a plumber. I want to be a tradesman. I want to be a nurse. I want to be a doctor. If that thought's there then we can talk about that negotiated stuff.

This point is also made by PC1, who speaks from the perspective of a career's advisor for Pacific young people:

If schools can identify that [what students enjoy doing] with their learners, and support them and wrap the support around the pathways that they choose. If parents can understand that not all their kids are going to be doctors and

lawyers...understand the labour market and understand where the skills shortages are, and where they can support their kids even those that are undecided....If parents have a good understanding, then they can support their kids, schools know how to support their students and then students will build pathways that they can come out the end and be successful. Not for the school, not for the parents but something that's right for them.

The ideal relationship, then, is one in which parents, students, and teachers are all working together in order to help students pursue their chosen career path. This involves ensuring parents are knowledgeable so they know what opportunities might be available in the workplace. Then, along with teachers, they can support their child in line with his or her career interests.

It was acknowledged that parents could be setting children up for failure if they make the decisions about their children's future without understanding the implications of doing this. As PC1 explains, it is vital that parents understand pathways:

If they [the students] take a pathway that you [parents] want them to take, they're going to go to university and not succeed there.

“Decisions aren't made as an individual.”

PC1 further explains why it is so significant that parents are involved. They need to be part of discussions at school relating to their child's progress because:

Decisions aren't made as an individual but they are made as a collective. Schools need to understand that they are not working with the individual but they are working with the collective. Not even the nuclear family, it's way bigger than that.

PC9 makes this point, too, providing a specific example of how the extended family provides wrap-around support for a student. A nephew had had some behavioural issues at school, and members of the extended family came for a school meeting:

All our whanau, all our family. 30-50 of us.

She thought it was very important that they were all there because:

The whole family is coming to support him. Did he think about the family when he did it? No, he did not. Now he is crying and thinking about the aunties, parents, the grandparents, everything. Everyone is there.

Thus, for PC9, the extended family plays a crucial part in helping this student address his behaviour at school. Her overall point is that family involvement is critical in order to provide the support that a child might need. It reaches beyond the immediate parents because there is a collective concern in the welfare of the student. She says that family and community would:

work together to support this child to achieve and do whatever he can do. (PC9)

Ideally, then, everyone is informed about how best to help Pacific students succeed with their learning:

Unless we do something with the parents and with the teacher and with the kid and we work together, the teacher know, I know, the kid know. The parents know. And the next thing the community. Church. And they all go together and make this work and achieve for the kids. (PC9)

PC12 refers to the same incident, as this student was also her nephew. From her perspective, the sooner the school consults with families, the better the outcome might be. She suggests that early intervention from someone in the extended family might have helped to prevent issues escalating in the school for this young man:

I know my nephew. I know he's an angry kid. He reacts...Just one call he'll stop and I'll sit him down and have a good conversation.

Thus, from the perspective of these participants, ideal home-school relationships keep families informed about students' progress so that their involvement can help deliver "wrap-around" support. This might be to tackle specific needs, such as a behaviour problem, where prompt consultation would be valued. However, it is considered particularly important to involve families in decisions which influence the students' future careers.

"I think the schools need to shift the way they do things."

Participants are conscious that ideal home-school relationships are not necessarily happening. For a number of reasons, they realise that many Pacific parents do not interact with school. The ideal home-school relationship, from their perspectives, would address some of the issues which prevents engagement.

Parents, who are more recent migrants, may not be used to engaging with school since that is not the tradition on their home island. As PC6 explains,

All you [the parent] had to do was to make sure that you paid the bill.

PC1 further qualifies the situation:

Parents are intimidated with the school. And a lot of them are even second generation, or even first generation. And it's the first-generation parents that it is difficult to get to. Because their mentality is that it is the school's job to educate the kids. They're intimidated because they lack education and they don't understand the system. And they can't have a proper conversation with the teachers, so they don't bother coming.

If parents do attend parent meetings, they may not engage well with teachers because:

Parents don't know how to ask questions.

P6 realises that some parents do not even attend parent meetings because:

Lots of our people tend to work in the gardens and that so, therefore, their timeframes to be able to come to parent-teacher evenings or have the energy to invest that level of contribution to the plans is not always there.

As PC9 pointed out, unsocial working hours might mean that parents are:

working at the farm from 6 o' clock to seven or eight o' clock at night.

PCT3 describes the reasons for parents' lack of engagement this way:

Different parents have different reasons. Some of them are work, long hours. Some of them are language barrier. Some of them are never interested in study in their time.

His concern is that:

Some parents are not really supportive of their students' studies. (PCT3)

PCT13, a Samoan teacher aide, shares a similar concern, saying:

For Samoan values I was taught that inside of the home, that is where the teaching and learning [happens]. And sometimes I wonder what is the teaching at home? How is that responsibility at home? How are they working with parents?

PC7 alludes to social issues that might be the reason why some Pacific families have lost focus on the needs of their children:

We've got a lot of shit going on to be honest. It seems like our kids become the last thing we worry about.

Participants, therefore, provide a range of reasons for parents' lack of engagement. Consequently, they look to changes in the school system as a means of helping to engage more families.

PC6 explains:

I think the schools need to shift the way they do things to work with the whānau.

Not only is he concerned that parent meetings might not suit busy parents, he is also unsure about the reliance on students to pass on communication:

I would like to hear from the school. I don't want a piece of paper that's coming home or is still in the kid's bag three days after rugby training.

PC11 feels that decisions made at school with the student are not necessarily shared with the parents once the student was home:

The decision's being made, or the incorrect decision is being made, for you without you even knowing.

Even letters in the post are not effective at ensuring parents are informed or involved, according to PC12:

Whether you send the paper home or whether they will pick it up from the mailbox and it will go straight to the rubbish.

Nor might some parents be familiar with using computers or the internet to keep in touch with school:

School is working really hard with technology so parents can access but not all parents can access the computer. (PC12)

Participants have a number of concerns, therefore, about the way that school endeavours to communicate with parents.

Students “may go back home, stay there, and do nothing.”

Participants are particularly concerned about the effect on Pacific young people’s education through parents’ lack of engagement.

PCT3, a parent and teacher aide, is concerned that some students are so involved in co-curricular activities at school that their own studies are slipping:

Students can get caught up with all the opportunities and lose their academic focus.

PC12 also argues this point:

It's important for parents to know what is happening in the school....A lot of children are involved in so many things in the school and they’ve forgotten that they've got this NCEA.

PCT3 is concerned that some of the Pasifika students are struggling at school, especially if their language skills are not strong:

They are trying to catch up every day.

PC9, through her volunteer work, is concerned about students’ poor behaviour:

You know, the behaviour of the kids, I tried to ignore it but sometimes I just helped them because they are not doing their school work well.

PCT3 has also noticed that some students may get to university but then not be able to cope:

They just drop out and go back home and stay there and do nothing.

These participants (who all had some knowledge of the school system) are worried about lack of progress for some students and think it is important for parents to have more understanding of and be more engaged in their children’s learning.

A “trusting relationship.”

Participants feel that a trusting relationship between home and school could help families to become much more engaged with their children’s learning:

Once you build that trust, you can get into anything. You can get anything you want out of the students and the parents. As long as they trust you and see that you are genuinely there to help them. (PC1)

This trust could be established, for example, if a teacher makes a particular commitment to help the student. PC14 describes what a teacher did for her when she arrived in New Zealand as a teenager:

It's those little things. I remember this teacher, Sylvester, who really spent time with me with English and she made a commitment to see me, even in my lunch hour, like at break time.

PC7 appreciates the commitment of one particular teacher who, not only put in extra time with his daughter, but also went out of his way to keep in contact with him as a parent:

This one teacher, a pālagi 'fella', he came to [Name] and often he'd call us every day to tell us that [child's Name] had done just two marks better than last time. He was keeping us interested rather than us trying to chase him. For me that relationship quite literally became a very trusting relationship. I was willing to give my time because I felt somebody there trusted me. At the end of the year I was proud to say she was pretty average in every [subject] but she was first in that subject in particular and for me I take it back to what the teacher did for her. (PC7)

The effort that the teacher made in ringing home shows that he values the input of the parents. Consequently, PC7 feels trust has been placed in him as a parent and, therefore, he trusts the teacher.

Strong relationships can evolve, then, when there is some sense of partnership. As PC1 says, communication is:

Not just to deliver your mandate.

In other words, participants indicate that schools need to share information and consult, rather than just tell parents what they need to know. This is why PC6 liked how principals of the local colleges were open to ideas on how to make connections with families because:

they are more willing to embrace whatever that may look like.

“You’ve got to be genuine.”

Participants have further advice on how to create trusting relationships between home and school. They consider that there is a need to create space to get to know each other. As PC1 explains:

If you want to engage with parents, you’ve got to make sure you share a bit about yourself. Because if you go to any Pasifika context, it’s similar to Maori, you introduce yourself where you’re from, your whakapapa. Then they find out where they can find that connection with you. Then they’ll start opening their ears up and listening to your mandate. You’ve got to be genuine because you will be judged right from the get go.

These responses indicate that it is very important to participants that parents get to know the teachers. If teachers are willing to share something about themselves, it signals openness. This enables relationships to build and, from that, parents’ commitment to become more involved with school can follow.

PC8 also emphasises the importance of introductions:

Because Pacific Island people need that one-on-one introduction as well in the classroom and they need that time at the start of the year with the teacher rather than just six months later or whenever school reports are done. They need the teacher to know I’m from whatever village or whatever island.

So, for PC8, introductions also worked the other way. Teachers need to make space to learn about the families, too.

“You actually have to go out of your way.”

Participants feel that home-school relationships need to take into account contexts that worked for parents. PC1 and PC6 both note the effectiveness of principals attending a Sunday church service. As PC1 says:

When the school takes the time to come to their environment, the parents are more open. They start to trust the school because they made the effort to come to their space.

Home visits were suggested as an effective way of reaching out to families. PCT15, a parent of a child at one college and a teacher at the other notes:

You actually have to go out of your way. I did that a couple of times last year and you really get their attention. It's a good thing and I think they appreciate your effort to come and make the connection straight to them face-to-face.

PC10 is on the Board of Trustees at one of the primary schools. She has first-hand experience of the effectiveness of face-to-face communication through home visits.

We started ringing families and going around to visit families....It was actually positive. It was enjoyable. For the first few I was, "Oh, I'm a bit nervous about this." And then it was, "Oh, I get welcomed with open arms. They're happy to make you a cup of tea and sit down and talk about stuff." But it was great. (PC10)

An important ingredient for forming ideal home-school relationships, therefore, requires schools to consider the context of the parents for face-to-face meetings. Responses indicate that this effort is appreciated by parents and helps to establish trust.

"A so'ataga."

Furthermore, participants consider there should be a nominated person or persons to enable such face-to-face meetings. Participants want to see an official role within the schools so that home-school relationships can flourish. A co-ordinator or so'ataga would be able to:

go [to the] home and have a conversation because they can go whatever time that those parents are available (PC12)

PC9 believes such a person would bring positive benefits:

The school contact will explain everything to the community, and to the family, and they will love to support.

PC3 and PC12 feel that the so'ataga would be particularly useful in situations where communication between home and school needed an extra boost. PC3 explains the need for:

an official person to do that role. When parents are not supportive, they [teachers] need to find out why. And I think the school needs to appoint someone to do that. To do that connection with the home....Its' good to have someone to go and talk. They are ok, people are quite ok, talking at home discussing things. And I think that's the only way to find out. To get out there.

PC12 thinks, in particular, about students who might not be progressing well at school. (She had in mind her nephew who was struggling):

If this child is not doing well school...that person will go [to the] home and have a conversation....Let's look at other pathways. What does a child want?...That person will come back to school.

PC12, like a number of other participants, is extremely keen for the role of a so'ataga. In her view, this person would act as the conduit between home and school, enabling family members to understand and participate in decisions relating to their child's progress.

The parents don't understand or the parents don't have the time and then that's it for them. That's why that so'ataga person needs to be more active. They will be paid because the so'ataga...will make the time to go. (PC12)

Furthermore, PC8 expresses that, for anyone working with Pacific students and their families:

Ideally that person would be a Pasifika person and there's that natural connection that they have with the young people...because you don't want to have six months or a year to get used to someone or make a connection.

The participants realise that building relationships with families requires time and commitment in order to meet families in circumstances that suit them. Thus, a paid role which undertook this work would actually enable schools to reach out to the families who might not otherwise engage. It is essential, from these participants' perspectives, that extra help is brought in to facilitate home-school relationships.

SECTION 2 – Perceptions of teacher participants

Discovery – teacher participants' perceived strengths

Teacher participants conveyed what they perceive to be key beliefs, values, skills, and knowledge which they or other teachers possess that related to home-school relationships. From these perceptions, it is possible to conclude the perceived strengths teachers could bring to the relationship-building process between home and school in order to support Pacific secondary students.

“People are genuinely trying to build relationships.”

Teachers at both colleges express a commitment to relationship-building with Pacific students and their families. TA1 described it this way when considering students:

People are genuinely trying to promote relationships with kids that are so necessary for learning.

TB1 explains it as:

Because Pasifika kids blossom when you know them, when you build a relationship with them.

TB2 qualifies what relationship-building might look like with students:

Like if you can get involved with coaching or taking them away on trips be it volleyball or Fusion [a Pasifika cultural event] or whatever is going on. Once you show that you got their back and you care, then they're on to it and they're all really be a lot more comfortable around you in terms of the relationship because you offer to kind of help them out.

TB3 also emphasises the caring aspect of building a relationship with students:

The smile and the greeting in the morning- “how was your weekend?”, “how’s that little cousin of yours, you told me was ill?”

She believes that relationships with families develop as a consequence of the connections in the classroom:

I was supportive and caring of the kids in the classroom, I developed a friendly relationship with parents. It went that way, rather than me being involved in a community group and then developing...it came from just being a classroom teacher. (TB3)

For TA2, interaction with both students and parents results from students’ cultural performances. When she was Pasifika dean (with responsibility for looking after the wellbeing and academic progress of Pacific students), she travelled to:

[Name] to look for material. And so it was quite hands-on. The mothers did make the costumes, but I helped get the material and got some sponsorship at one time for a drum for them. So, it was a very enriching time for me. (TA2)

TB4 describes how teachers at her college understood that building a relationship with students also meant connecting with their families:

That connection between family and home is something that is really valued here. We are expected as teachers and tutor teachers to make those connections at home on a regular basis.

TB5 provides a specific example of how she connects with families:

I've got one or two families who just bypass the office system and come down straight to my office they know where it is....It might only be an absence they are reporting but if there's a death or something like that I always make sure that I'm in that loop...so that is such valuable information.

Thus, at both colleges, teachers illustrate that they appreciate the importance of building relationships not just with Pacific students but with their families as well. The relationship with families can have practical benefits, as in receiving help with costumes for the students or with receiving information from home which the school would find useful. However, an important aspect of building relationships is because it stems from teachers wanting to show students that they cared about them.

“I still run into them and they greet me like a long-lost friend.”

Some of the teacher participants explain how relationships have formed with parents through strong links in the community. For instance, TB3 says:

I still run into them [parents] and they greet me like a long-lost friend. Share with me what their children are doing. Still thank me for teaching their kids.

TB5 also has long-standing relationships with Pasifika families:

It's just a long association with the community and a lot of my own personal friends on Facebook are Pacific Island family connections.

Other participants, too, have strong connections in the community which helped them to get to know Pacific families. TA3 explains:

Our school counsellor goes to the Catholic Church and has a good relationship with many of our Pasifika. I don't go to the Catholic Church but they know I go to church. And if there's an event on in town I make a great effort to go along...to Pasifika things, talk to the families, say hello. Make sure I'm seen and friendly. I think that's really important.

TB4 also has links to the Pacific community through church:

Our family is part of the Catholic church and we have a large Tongan group and a large Samoan community and a Filipino community. Within our parish we strengthen and support, and incorporate their cultures into our practices.

TA2 explains her links with Pacific parents through church:

Something that really did help me in that position [as Pasifika dean], working with the families etcetera, was being a Christian myself and having links to church, and talking with parents with their strong connections to the church as well, so that kind of gave us a real bond and understanding.

TB6 has a link through the Catholic church, and has found this enables Pacific families to approach him:

After Mass would be a normal community interaction time. And so, if they had an issue, they could really ask you then.

He had a further link through rugby:

The rugby was a good connection because then you often met with the fathers and I suppose we were doing the same thing...So, you do a lot of your parent interviews at the after-match function. (TB6)

A number of teacher participants, therefore, have strong links within the community (for example, through church). They believe these help in building relationships with Pacific families which, as a result, support home-school interaction.

“We are trying our best!”

Teachers demonstrated that they want to make a positive difference to students’ learning. Just as parents think it is important to provide support where possible to enable student success, teachers also show that they want to support success. This is illustrated in a number of ways. TA4 explains how she works with a Pasifika dean at her college to help students follow a pathway to university if that is what they wanted. One of her examples was of a shy boy who needed extra help with an interview:

[The Pasifika dean] and I actually gave him a bit of practice of doing an interview because otherwise they just say yes/no, it is really hard to get information across to the panel....And, at the end of it [the interview], the interviewing panel said, “We

were so impressed with that boy!” There was another candidate that they wanted to give it to but, because he impressed them so much, they [gave] us two scholarships and he [got] one. (TA4)

TA4 also helped another student get to university by providing guidance on obtaining a scholarship. As TA4 reports, this student might not have gone to university because:

She says, “I don’t think I can go because I need to earn some money.”

TA4 sums up the school’s efforts:

We are trying our best!

TB1 explains how she had set up a specific study group for Pacific students at her college. She put in extra effort to help students take advantage of it:

If it was dark when it finished then I’d drop them home [the girls] just to try and encourage them to go.

TB1 also tries to make herself available to Pacific students if they need someone to talk to:

I try and mentor these guys as well. Because a lot of them, although they have the tutor group teachers or their official mentor, they still want me to...they say, “Well, can I talk to you Miss?”

Both colleges have a range of services and dedicated professionals to support their students which can benefit Pacific learners, liaising with external providers where appropriate (such as for a mentoring service for Pacific students). For instance, TA5 talks about the commitment to look after students at the Academy Service, which is based at one of the colleges. The aim of the Academy is to help prepare students for a career in one of the armed services and the programme affords plenty of opportunity for mentoring and guidance for students who might not have experienced success in mainstream. A number of Pacific students attend. TA5 explains how the tutors’ caring role often means that:

Some of the students do actually look at us like fathers.

TB4, who works in the learner support department of her college, says:

We have some wonderful support with...[members of staff]. They are making a lot of those connections....We've been able to get a teacher aide, from the local Tongan community who's with him [a particular student]. We've got another teacher aide up here who is from the Samoan community. So, he scoops up a bag of our Pasifika students, and not just here when we are working but at interval and lunchtimes with basketball or volleyball and things like that.

The learner support department at this college, therefore, has incorporated teacher aides into their provision with the specific aim of providing support for Pacific students.

However, even if students do not end up in Learner Support, there is an awareness at this college that students often need extra help in class. For instance, TB7 explains how there is to be a whole school approach at Level 3:

We are looking at increasing the scaffolding around year thirteens this year to try and lift our Level 3 achievement.

He acknowledges that extra consideration is needed if:

You are coming from an ESOL background and you are already struggling with the literacy and then that support drops away that has been really strong for levels 1 and 2. (TB7)

TB7's comments show that the school is considering what might be the best strategies to help students attain high levels of academic achievement.

At both colleges, therefore, teachers provide examples of how students can receive well-considered support in order to help bring about successful outcomes.

“Passion for their children to do well.”

Not only do teachers express a commitment to support Pacific learners but they also realise how much support and encouragement comes from home to help these learners succeed at school.

TA6, a newly-appointed Pasifika dean, is learning just how keen some parents are:

That's been really positive to see and hear their passion for their children to do well which has been really good. I have found it very supportive they want for us as teachers to be able to do well with their children so they actually are on our side.

TA6 realises that many parents want to support the work of the teachers so that students can do their best. He mentioned one parent, in particular, who regularly came into school to run cultural performance practices:

[Name] is good in so many ways and she is quite proactive in terms of and doing what she does. So, I have been very thankful for that.

TB8 has noticed how well-attended musical events are, where family evidently enjoy student performances:

I find that Pasifika families are very, very good at supporting their kids. Often, you'll get the whole whanau there supporting, aunts and uncles and grandfathers, grandmothers, the whole group.

TA4 notes the desire from some parents to see their children go to university:

It is really fabulous that they have those aspirations and that they are trying to move their children in that direction. We have had quite a few students who have gone on to university who are doing really well and that is where they should be.

TB2 notes how engaged in their son's learning are the parents of a Pacific student at his college who gained Excellence at level 1:

They were really active at interviews and telling me what they expected from their student what the student expected to and what they were wanted him to go for. And even at the start, when I thought that he wasn't able to go for it, he worked so hard and that work ethic brought him up from an A [Achievement] to an E [Excellence].

TB2 feels the communication with parents over time has helped this student to succeed:

That strong contact and relationship from year 10 and with his parents as well helped facilitate that [Excellence grade]).

TB5 sums up what she has noticed about Pacific families:

They want the best for their children. There's no doubt about that. Ever.

Teachers show, therefore, that they understand the perspective of many parents in wanting their children to succeed in the school system. Teachers, too, appreciate opportunities to build relationships so that combined efforts could help deliver positive outcomes for the students.

“They bring a beautiful flavour, wairua/spirit, energy.”

Some teachers also express their understanding of how important it is for students to feel confident with their culture in the school setting. For instance, TA7 wants to acknowledge the positive aspects of Pacific students’ culture in the school environment:

They bring a beautiful flavour, wairua/spirit, energy.

She describes a house meeting where she prepared her students to chant:

I got all of our whanau from the Pacific to count us in. We counted in Samoan and in Tongan. And they just felt so good about how they were being included in a school mainstream thing. (TA7)

TA2 comments how valuable Pacific student cultural performances in the college are:

It was the opportunity for the Pasifika students to shine. And so, when they perform...they would go up and they would put money...it was really nice for them to do that in a school setting, because that is part of their culture. So that was good, very successful.

TB1 also wants students to feel comfortable with their own culture in the school environment, explaining:

I tell them, “Why aren’t you wearing a lavalava at school?” And when they’re wearing a black lavalava, of course they’re allowed to. And I say to them, “Come to the ball. Wear a Pasifika...you don’t have to get a pālagi ball dress. Put something smart on. Be you. Reflect your own selves.”

TA1 notes that some Pacific learners have been successful in drawing on their culture to feel confident and comfortable in the school setting:

I am just very impressed with the strength of cultural awareness, if you like – that sense of cultural identity that the students that I work with have. Many of them, if not all of them can speak their language. Their culture is kept alive that way....When they are in the classroom, they’re always heads up and – what’s the word? Sort of culturally-reassured people, if I can put it that way, and I think it’s such a huge strength.

Thus, TA1 validates the comments of some of the Pacific parent/community participants who see the benefits of Pacific young people feeling connected to their culture within the school setting.

There is, therefore, common ground between the perceptions of teachers and those of the Pacific participants. Responses clearly show that both sets of participants are committed to relationship-building to support students' academic progress and cultural identity within the school.

Dream – Teachers' perceptions of ideal home-school relationships

Teachers considered dream home-school relationships. Like parent/community participants, they do have concerns which they feel detracts from students' successful learning and from relationships with families. However, these concerns prompt ideas on how to create ideal relationships.

“If we can create a situation where the best option is to be fully engaged and involved and do their best.”

Teachers envisage an ideal situation for Pacific learners as being fully engaged in their learning and where relationships between home and school facilitate such engagement.

TA6 explains his dream:

Pacific students are fully engaged with what we do at the school, whether that be to class on time, extra-curricular activities, just in general class life but at the same time that the communication between home and school would be quite easy.

TA6 appreciates that young people need guidance from school and from home to help direct them:

I think it's good to have input from students and have them choosing what they want but you're talking about an age where they haven't had the experience to know what's right. If we can create a situation where the best option is to be fully engaged and involved and do their best.

According to TA4, the system at her college is designed to enable communication between teachers, parents, and students with the very purpose of helping guide the students in a positive direction. Conversations between teachers and families are based on the input from the students:

At our parent conferences the students, before the meeting, do a little profile sheet where they talk about their goals and some of them, especially the younger ones, don't know what they want to do, but they write them down and then we talk about

that with their parents when they are there. So, I guess that is an opportunity for the student to say what they want to do.

TB2 explains how positive conversations like these can be when they go well:

Once you've got that kind of triangle between school, teacher, and home, the kids seem to go well. It seems to intrinsically motivate them a lot more, even though it's kind of extrinsically, coming from the outside, they can kind of instil that within themselves from that and internalise, "Ah so this is why we come in here. I'm here to do well, my best". It's strive to do your best, rather than why be at school, why are we doing this.

TB3 emphasises how the student must be involved:

There's no point meeting with the family, there would be no point...sorting out what we are going to do, where we're gonna go, without that kid having buy in.

These comments from teachers indicate that an ideal relationship between home and school would be one where they could easily engage with parents. Teachers would like shared communication with parents and the student; they would, particularly, like to see the students involved in decision-making and also responsive to guidance so that, with support, they can achieve their best in the school system.

"Capture their creative essence."

Some teachers express a desire to see more than just "easy" communication between home and school, centred on the needs of the student. They focuss on what they perceive to be the cultural strengths of students and their families, and want to see a school system that recognises such strengths. For instance, TB5 wants to see an education system that builds on the talents of many Pacific students:

There are so many opportunities out there for such a creative people in design and graphics, all sorts of things like that...and they just need to be exposed to that a little bit more.

She, therefore, wants to see the school system:

capture their creative essence and to be able to get credits.

Her point is that there could be more opportunities in school to draw on Pacific students' skills which they have acquired through their cultural experiences outside of school.

TB4 also wishes to see more synergy between the school culture and the students' culture, noting, for example, that:

the Pasifika community give their time back in service.

She would like to see more of their values, such as service, recognised within the school system so that Pacific families feel more closely connected to the way that the school operates:

In order to fit within the school community, it's about blending...because we all learn so much from each other.

Like TB5, TB4 sees strengths in Pacific culture which she would like recognised within school, and which she thinks could enrich the values of the school. TB9 makes a very similar point. She sees strength in the capacity of Pacific people to serve others and believes this is something for everyone to learn:

It's kind of that grass roots; this is how we keep a community balanced and healthy as we serve others.

Thus, a number of teachers look beyond the specifics of ideal home-school relationships to include Pacific cultural values in their vision for the future.

“It's trying to get parents to understand.”

As teachers consider the ideal home-school relationship, they acknowledge some of the tensions which challenge a more positive direction. Teachers share some of the same frustrations that Pacific participants have shared. For example, TA8, a Pasifika dean, has been particularly proactive in terms of organising dedicated meetings for Pacific families in an attempt to engage more parents. She comments:

It's trying to get the parents to understand how the system works and why they need to be here, why they need to be more involved in what subjects the kids are taking...courses they're taking.

Even if parents try hard to support, teachers notice that their lack of understanding can be an issue. For instance, TA4 notes (as some Pacific parents had done) that parents' lack

of knowledge about opportunities for students can force students into a direction they might not want:

Often the parents will want something like law and accounting, so those sorts of areas and, whether the students want it or not, that is where their parents are pushing them....and they have that little bit of conflict with their parents because the parents want them to do this and the student wants to do that.

Like some Pacific participants have expressed, TA4 also wants the parents to participate in important decisions that relate to the students' academic and career path.

A lack of understanding from parents also extends to how they might enforce discipline with their children in a way that is contrary to values in New Zealand (even though parents may have thought they are supporting the school). TA10, a member of staff who works in the Academy, has learnt the importance of knowing parents because:

Two years ago, I rang up this Pacific Island girl's parents and when she got home she got a hiding.

TB4 emphasises the importance of building relationships with parents so that teachers can let them know that physical punishment is not acceptable:

It's relationships and trust and educating parents into ways of supporting and managing these students that's without physical punishment that's traditional.

TB4, therefore, realises that teachers can share understandings with families once trusting relationships are formed.

"Families can struggle."

Teachers understand that there are a number of barriers which impede engagement. They are aware of the long working hours of parents, often on low incomes. The focus on economic survival can override a focus on their children's education. TB5 explains:

Labouring work is hard for money to come and you don't have a lot of money....It is a struggle for them, a huge struggle. They are struggling with the cold that has just come.

It could mean that students often forgo study time in order to undertake household chores, as TB1 explains:

Parents understand they should be doing two hours of homework a night. But the kids are cleaning the house. They have chores to do at home. They're actually the ones cooking dinner. They're the ones picking up the kids from Kindy and dropping them off at Kindy.

TA8 has become aware of some of the financial commitments of families, in terms of giving to the church or sending remittances back to their homelands:

They might be earning some money but they [the church] are asking for more money. Plus, they've got more expenses here and if they've given all their money because so and so has got their 21st and the chief says everyone has to give a thousand dollars. The family hasn't got access to feed themselves like they would in Tonga or Samoa.

TA9 is concerned that financial hardship could inhibit learning opportunities for the children:

Money is still, I think, a real barrier there for education. Like we're using 'education perfect' at the moment and that's a \$25.00 subscription; and I've got quite a few Pasifika students in one of my classes this year and I'm quite concerned how they are going to pay the subscription and then do they actually have internet at home. Because a number of students who say to us that they don't have internet access at home.

An issue is that students may work to bring in extra money when they should be at school. TA9 not only teaches at one of the colleges but is also involved in a family horticultural business in the area. She explains:

[Parents] would have them working in the fields very early in the mornings and they wouldn't be at school when they should be at school. And so, by working with them, we've overcome that problem, so they know that it's really important to actually be at school. (TA9)

It is in TA9's capacity as an employer that she is able to educate families about the importance of attendance.

TA5 has come across a similar problem in the Academy:

They were out working until 10 o'clock at night, weren't they? They come to school and they just want to sleep and they didn't have lunches and that. We got breakfast here for them if they wanted breakfast.

T1, a retired headteacher of a local primary school, sums up some of the financial constraints which families may find themselves in:

As winter draws in and the picking season is over, families can struggle financially. They may have to double up in accommodation. Families can be cold, and suffer from sleep, food, and health deprivation. All this can be happening for the families at exactly the same time as key learning is expected in the academic year – the two middle terms. The 2013 Deprivation Index showed that [place [Name]] was one of the most deprived areas in New Zealand. (T1)

TB9, a social worker in one of the colleges, understands how difficult it can be for some families:

What have I seen through my own young people and colleagues would be that there would be overcrowding in houses, lots of people over one or two houses. There could be immigration stuff going on, not having the proper immigration status, maybe just a real lack of understanding of the New Zealand culture in all sorts of levels. (TB9)

There is an awareness among teachers, therefore, that some families are struggling with life in New Zealand. Teachers understand that economic and social issues can negatively impact upon how parents understand, engage with and support their children's learning. It could mean that parents' support for their children's education was not a priority nor in line with school values.

“I’m struggling with what I want to achieve.”

There is also an awareness amongst teachers that the current practices within the school system do not fully support their efforts to engage with families. For instance, TB1 comments on the lack of time she is awarded as a dean to commit to the students and their families:

I’m struggling with what I want to achieve, what I can see I need to do within that timeframe. It’s really difficult.

TA8, too, comments on difficulties she has with her role as a dean. The previous dean left hastily which means that:

I had absolutely nothing, you know, I had no idea even how to contact him [the previous dean] to find out when Fusion [the regional Pasifika celebration] is or what Fusion is.

A further comment came from TB6 who feels the context of the parent meetings is not conducive to parents' engagement:

I don't think the school, you know it's not a place really to have a meaningful discussion about your child when you're in a room with a whole lot of other people. You know you couldn't almost get a worse [situation].

The issue TB6 sees is that meaningful discussion can not easily happen in this context because:

It's gonna take time. You can't just say...now about your kid, you know, it's going to take a long time before we get to that...have a discussion.

TB6 seems to be suggesting that families need some space for relationship-building before a fruitful discussion can take place with the teacher.

The idea that the current system does not sufficiently enable Pacific perspectives to be heard is also made by TB8. Her concern is that advantage could be taken of Pacific people by relying on their goodwill to help out:

We only end up pulling these other people out of their jobs and then they do it out of the kindness of their heart, and then there is no data showing how much need there is.

For her, it is a serious issue about:

community and political empowerment, and cultural empowerment.

TB9 is concerned about the lack of recognition afforded to Pacific people for the work that they do. For different reasons, therefore, some participants feel that relationships between school and Pacific families are hampered by the current school system. There is a suggestion of power imbalance in relationships between Pacific families and the schools. Therefore, teachers are aware that changes in the school system are needed to support relationship-building with families.

“Lack of confidence.”

Although teachers find opportunities to praise students for their confidence and success at school, they share their concerns about some Pacific learners who are not so confident.

TA1, for instance notes that last year’s head girl’s confidence,

was just quite stunning.

However:

The older students – the ones that should be leaders, are sometimes struggling in themselves to actually know what they’re doing and where they’re going.

This sentiment was echoed by others. TB3 says:

Some are withdrawn. But, for me, it’s just lack of confidence.

TA2 understands there might be some friction for these students, which impacts negatively on their identity, because of the differences in values between home and school:

I guess it’s sad when I see Pasifika students definitely having two lives and not all of them are like this but there are some who do. Like they’ll be – they’ll have their church life – identity if you like, in the weekend, and when they come to school they are a different person. The language and – you know – if their parents heard them speaking like that they would be disappointed. But why they do that? I think possibly – maybe it’s to be accepted.

TB8 also notices a lack of confidence with identity for some students. He provides a specific example of a girl in his music class:

They use the term plastic to describe themselves because they feel like they’re fake. The Tongan girl, she’s never been to Tonga and so she doesn’t speak Tongan, not a lot of time but her parents do. So, I’ve asked her to go to ask them to help her with the translations but I think she feels a little guilty or something about writing lyrics about her cultural homeland when she has never actually been there, and doesn’t have a lot of cultural connection to it other than her family.

TB8 further comments on how easily some Pacific students give up on their work:

All of the sudden the books close and they'll be talking about something completely different and I found that they are not bored. They use the word bored a lot but I think they're using it incorrectly. They're not actually bored; they don't understand the work and they don't ask me a question. They just close the book and do something else. It then becomes a struggle to get them to actually open the book, figure out where they were and try to answer the question that they haven't asked.

As TB4 points out, a lack of confidence was often linked to off-task behaviour. She notes:

The lack of English, that is the huge barrier for them and then the trigger for the inappropriate behaviour in class.

She explains that it is often the poor behaviour, resulting from struggling in class, that leads to attendance at Learning Support:

They don't get the help that they need and they don't understand what's going on. So often they pull out of the class that they might be causing some trouble in, and then brought up here. (TB4)

In summary, teachers express concern that some students are not always culturally or academically confident at school. Students may be struggling with their identity, reflected through a lack of direction; they may also be struggling with the demands of their subjects, requiring extra language support to help them understand lesson content.

“It has to be more flexible.”

Teachers participants, like Pacific participants, reflect on how Pacific students can be better supported through families' engagement with school. Teachers look to changes in the school system to facilitate ideal relationships between home and school.

TB6 thinks that flexibility is the key. The ideal situation for building relationships and interaction between teachers and families is to find a space and time that works for the families.

It has to be far more flexible than that [parent meetings at school] and you have to allow the teachers...if that's what is needed, to be able to go out...at a time suitable to the parents and talk with them but let the parent initiate that or let a community member, the Pastor or whatever. Because you can't just barge into someone's house either...we'll break the door down and tell them what they need to know. (TB6)

TB6 shows awareness of the importance of listening to families and building trust in the way that Pacific participants have described.

TB2 has received professional development on working with Pacific families. His comments, also, resonate with those of the Pasifika participants:

[Name] was talking about the stages like meeting and greeting is very important, doing the home visit and all that kind of jazz. Once you have established that contact, then it is a lot easier to build on that before the interview. So, you might want to ring back before then and give them some ideas before interviews. When they come to interview, they are more involved and in those two steps you've got them invested in your student's education.

Like TB6, TB2 appreciates the importance of relationship-building so as to enable meaningful discussion.

One college has understood that home visits are beneficial. Not only have the Pacific teacher aides engaged in this work but also TB5, who says:

I often go to homes and they're very welcoming. There is never an issue. They understand that I'm coming from the right... "I really want your child to do really well at school".

Some teachers, therefore, envision home-school relationships which reach out to Pacific parents in a more flexible and creative way.

"Quality mentoring."

Some teacher participants also consider how best to ensure that support is always centred upon the needs of the student. TA1, for instance, calls upon his knowledge of Māori students to recommend what he considers to be:

the strength of someone in the family who stops what they're doing and takes time to care, and to do whatever is required to make sure that person is working on task at school, avoiding all the distractions.

This is a technique that TA3 has directly employed when she was concerned about the behaviour of a group of Pasifika students (who were cousins):

I finally got hold of Grandma and told her and she was like, "They did what? She was...righteous indignation, horrified...The next day, one-by-one, they came to my room, very sad, heads hung, very ashamed because Grandma told us blah blah blah. Situation solved...they've never done it again.

TA3 knew which family member to contact, just as participant PC12 recommends (on p. 166).

However, the ideal home-school relationship does more than just have a point of contact within the family, according to T1. She would like to see a situation where:

Students would all benefit from quality mentoring by interested adults or older students.

TB2 visualises this level of support potentially coming from older siblings:

You might have a few older brothers or sisters engaged in their learning as well, motivating them.

“Quality mentoring” for young Pasifika people, argues T1, should be done by someone Pasifika because:

Pasifika deans who are not Pasifika don’t know what they don’t know. They may not be the best people to nurture effective home-school relationships for Pasifika students.

T1 believes that the kind of out-reach work to engage families which ensures that students receive the kind of mentoring they need is potentially viable:

It is possible to make a positive difference given sufficient time and money.

According to these participants, then, their dream for ideal home-school relationships incorporates mentoring for the students so that they receive the guidance and direction they need.

SECTION 3 – Perceptions of Pacific students

Discovery – Pacific student participants’ perceived strengths

Student participants have conveyed what they perceive to be key beliefs, values, skills and knowledge which they or other students possess that related to home-school relationships. From these perceptions, it is then possible to conclude the perceived strengths students can bring to the relationship-building process between home and school.

“You just have to try and make them proud.”

A number of participants from both colleges emphasise that it is important to do well at school because they know that is what their parents expect of them. SB1 explains how her parents moved from Tonga to New Zealand (when she was young), and why that means she needs to do her best:

To see what my parents went through and for them to come from the islands to here for us to have a better life and stuff, you just have to try to make them proud, for all the hard work that they’ve done for you.

SB2 explains why she has worked particularly hard to complete a Police-run fitness programme called CACTUS (Combined Adolescent Challenge Training Unit Support):

Just seeing your parents and what they go through, and you just got to.

SB3 explains that he strives to succeed academically because:

I just think in my head, I’ve got to do it for my family – make them proud – to get a good future for them.

SB4 expands upon the struggle which her family have gone through by settling in New Zealand:

We started off with getting \$200 a fortnight.

A particular struggle was for her father whose qualification as a ship’s engineer was not recognised in New Zealand. She is, therefore, pleased about:

My dad’s getting a good job, not working on the farm anymore.

Thus, some of the students realise what their parents have undertaken in order to establish a life for the family in New Zealand.

Similar perspectives are shared from students from the other college. SA1 explains:

My parents didn’t have a very good past....The reason they are working their butts off now is for us kids to grow up and have a better future for us and our children and the next children that come along.

SA2, who has come from Samoa to live with his uncle, referred to life in Samoa, saying:

If I have kids, I don't want my kids to really struggle in a poor life.

SA3 does not have any direct experience of life in Samoa but has learnt from her mother:

She said it was the hard life, where it was really difficult for them to go to school, whereas we can have it better.

Students at both colleges have received clear messages from family that they are being given the chance for a prosperous future rather than face hardship which the previous generation has endured. Therefore, they need to work hard, as SA1 affirms:

to make my parents happy.

“I’ve really wanted to be a police officer since I was seven.”

Some students not only maintain the importance of working hard at school but have also thought about future education and goals. Some were aiming for university. For instance, SB5 has firmly established ideas about her future direction:

Next year I want to go to Otago, and do Health Science. I want to be a paediatrician, I think. So, end of this year, I’m looking at scholarships and stuff and, yeah, next year Otago, hopefully.

Likewise, SB4 is considering Otago University because her brother is studying there. She hopes:

to study law and psychology. I’ve always been interested in the law, and how it works, in particular international relations, even though it’s really different from law here. I really like criminal law. I’ve spoken to a couple of lawyers.

Given that her family are migrants to New Zealand, she and her brother appear to be successfully negotiating the education system in order to become qualified for a chosen career path.

SA4 was born in Canada but lived in Tuvalu with grandparents before coming to New Zealand to be with his parents. He plans to go to university because:

I want to do something with engineering when I’m older.

Not all students were looking towards a university education. SA5, Samoan-born but educated in New Zealand, is considering the police force:

I really love travelling, so I really want to do some travelling in the future, but I've also really wanted to be a police officer, since I was seven.

SA6, a New Zealand-born Samoan, is considering a military career:

I am kind of leaning towards going into the Air Force. At the start of the year I went to a Navy Day and then we went to a careers expo two weeks ago and they had the Air Force department set up there.

SA7 is also considering a military career:

Well, by the end of the year, hopefully, I would have got Level 3 – got all my grades and stuff, and done well. From there, I'm signing up for the Army soon, so I want to try and get to the basic training early.

A number, therefore, speak with some confidence about their future direction, illustrating a commitment to their own learning and career goals.

“Mine have been crazy supportive.”

A number of students are also able to credit their families for being able to help them achieve. SB5 states of her parents:

Mine have been crazy supportive.

She credits her mother, in particular, for having a strong connection with the school:

My mum's on the board and that has been really good.

SB4 also credits her parents for being supportive, in particular, for providing specific help when needed:

My English before was horrible, and they've been supporting me in – well English, Maths, and Science were my weakness. Those are the main core subjects of school, so they've helped me a lot with that. It's great.

SB6 also describes receiving help with her learning from parents:

They helped me study at home, subjects that I needed. So, I did the Samoan exam and they really helped me with that.

SA4 also finds the support of his family useful. He appreciates help with difficult subjects. Apart from being able to ask his older cousin, he also mentions:

My brother and my dad. Yeah, my older brother and my dad help me. My dad mainly helps me with my Maths, since it's his main subject, and my brother – he helps me with my Chemistry and Physics which I'm a bit slacking with.

SA6 explains that her mother is very helpful for talking through a possible career in the Air Force, and also for providing assistance with time management:

We [SA6 and her brother] both wrote up a time-table of all his sports there and sports together so we can see what free time we have for study and all that and Mum just keeps on top of that.

SA3 finds her mother is an ally when it comes to organising her work:

It helps my Mum to know what I do at school, so sometimes I can miss Church Youth; she is really big on that and she won't normally let us miss it. If she knows that I am falling behind, she will let me stay home and just study. So, she has got to know what I am doing at school.

SA5 explains that she, too, has to ensure her parents are informed so they understand the demands of her study. She has had to tell them that school work can be more important than attending church and:

Yeah, they understood after we had that conversation.

Talking to her parents means that SA5 could say, in regard to staying on track with her studies:

Biggest support comes from parents actually.

Some students acknowledge that parental support might involve monitoring to help keep them on track.

SA8, explains how his father checks up on him and his siblings:

He doesn't like us ditching class and stuff, and every time we're late, he checks.

SA8 says his father likes to correspond with school by email, adding that:

I think it helps him because, if there's something I'm doing wrong, he just wants to help out at home about that thing.

SA4 speaks about how he is monitored at home:

My mum's always telling me about my homework – how I'm going, and we always have like family chats on Sundays, to see where we're at, at school and stuff – finishing homework, and sometimes if we're not, they'll confiscate our devices or something.

A number of students affirm how families support their studies. They mention specific and informed actions which family members undertake. These actions are aided by parents' subject knowledge or knowledge of the school system, or through dialogue with their children and, possibly, through some correspondence with school. Their comments show a number of strengths which students and their families bring to home-school relationships that aim to support learning.

“Teachers [who] helped me in their spare time to catch up.”

Students also feel that support from teachers has helped them to achieve academically.

SB6 explains how she had been away for almost a whole term. She reports that teachers:

helped me in their spare time to catch me up with all that I needed.

SA3 gives a similar story. Having been away for a family funeral, she needed to catch up on her return:

When I come back the teachers are very helpful and give me extra help if I need it and I can stay back after class or after school and get extra help from them.

SA5 also appreciates the availability of teachers to provide extra support when needed:

The subjects that I struggle in – I try and get lunchtimes with them, and they help me a lot, in terms of what I need to know and what I don't know. That's another support system.

At one college, study groups are favoured by the students because they feel they can receive dedicated support from teachers. For instance, SB7 explains how they have helped him:

We have study groups here on Tuesdays. So, I go to them. It helped me pass the test – the internal one.

Also, Year 13 students have mentioned that they are allotted a dedicated mentor – a particular teacher with whom they can liaise. SB4 appreciates her mentor because:

She's been helping me a lot with scholarships that you don't really see....It's through the school so it's really good and handy.

SB4 emphasises that support from teachers depends upon the quality of the relationship:

I think it's great that we have a good relationship with teachers here at school, because it feels – you're more comfortable....If you hate school, you hate the teachers – no connections, it's a lot harder to focus on success or to do your work at all.

SA5 appreciates the principal at her college because of his encouragement and support:

He's got our backs 100 per cent, and that's real cool....He gets together with the deans, and they have meetings about PIs, and then he'll see us walking around school, and he'll stop and he'll chat to us about how school's going, the balance that we have with poly-fusion and academic.

SA7 also appreciates how he is being encouraged and supported in the Academy:

They've [the tutors] helped me out a lot. They've actually supported me with my integration from mainstream to the academy....A lot of encouragement.

SB1 also focusses on the importance of encouragement:

Mr [Name] – he's sort of my favourite teacher; he's really encouraging. When he teaches, he's encouraging and he always helps out with your internals and stuff.
(SB1)

Students, therefore, feel that support from teachers as well as from family members is valuable. The kind of support they appreciate might involve dedicated, specific help with their learning or it might involve mentoring or encouragement. They appreciate teachers who make an effort to develop a positive relationship with them and, as SB4 suggests, make them feel "comfortable".

"Appreciate the gift of God."

A number of students emphasise that support from their faith helps them stay strong in the face of study and other demands.

SB6 speaks of how she works through her study and commitments at home by:

just praying and hustling.

SB2 talks about her faith this way:

It helps you be strong – just pray a lot and stuff.

SA2 emphasises that:

God will make time for you to do your studies, and you will end up finishing.

SB4 explains it this way:

You just have to appreciate the gift of God. That's all we've always been taught.

She explains how she and her family pray at home regularly, rather than waiting till church:

In terms of praying together as a family [at church], but not in terms of financial support or moral support. It's not really going to come from the church. It's really just family praying. Well that's how I was brought up; praying every day as a family even.

Some students speak specifically about the connection with their Pacific culture as a way of helping them to feel strong and confident.

SA1 explains that:

When we were born here, we've been taught the Tongan way.

She appreciates church as a way of connecting with others:

We just treat everyone as family.

SB1 explains how she asked her parents, after a holiday in Tonga one year, if she could stay on with her grandparents. She was there for nearly two years:

I just wanted to know more about my culture... I sort of enjoy it there more than I enjoy here....You just feel like you fit in....It's your culture.

SA4 has also spent time with his grandparents in Tuvalu and came to New Zealand when he was five. His says:

I don't really remember much, but I reckon it was nice; learned more about my culture and stuff, when I was little.

A number of students, therefore, refer to their culture and cultural practices in a positive way. They link prayer with helping them to feel strong and supported; and some appreciate the opportunity to be immersed in and know about their Pacific culture (whether at church in New Zealand or with family on their island).

“It is really my own responsibility.”

Even though students appreciate the support available, a number affirm that, ultimately, they are responsible for their own learning. As SA3 says,

It is really my own responsibility.

SA2 feels that he has had to manage himself and not be reliant on support:

Manage and look after yourself in the future.

SA9 has had a troubled history at school. However, he also acknowledges that:

It is entirely down to me most of the time.

SA5 demonstrates how she has had to step up and take responsibility for her learning. Not only has she had to tell her parents about study demands (so as not to attend church), she has also had to negotiate parent meetings. Her mother used to work in the evening and could not attend so:

I’d have to rearrange, or either get my older brother. (SA5)

For SA5, taking responsibility means more than just being responsible for herself, it also involves leadership. As a leader of the cultural practices (in preparation for the Poly Fusion event), she has made difficult decisions. She dealt with students who do not regularly attend:

I did cut five people. So, they won’t be at Poly anymore.

The school has recognised her leadership potential by asking her to teach the staff some Samoan at morning briefing:

It was fun. They were all engaged, which was really cool.

SA7, too, has had the chance to develop his leadership skills and have them recognised.

He has gained two awards:

Last year I got the Most Inspiring Award, which is like, for the academy students....The reason why I got that is because one of my staff nominated me for it, and he told me at half year last year that I actually helped out my fellow academy students but sort of helping them focus on their school work a lot more.

This was an internal award for recognising his ability to lead and direct other students.

However, he has received another:

It was Top Student, from the central region services academy induction course that happened, I think two months ago at Waouru where we spent two weeks there to train with the Army....That award usually goes to the student who performed the best out of that academy mostly, and they've showed the most leadership skills. I was given this award by the staff from the Army....So that was a very proud moment. (SA7)

In summary, student perceptions uncover key strengths for academic success: a commitment to do well in their education; a willingness to connect with family and teachers in order to have conversations about their learning and receive support; an ability to draw on faith and culture to build resilience; and an acceptance of responsibility.

Dream – Pacific student participants' perceptions of ideal home-school relationships

Students have considered what makes home-school relationships ideal. In doing so, a number of worries come to the surface, which prompt students to consider solutions.

“Your teachers and parents are there to support you – but you decide whether you want to learn.”

The ideal home-school relationship for some students is to receive support from home and school in order to perform well, but to understand that the support does not abdicate personal responsibility.

SB1 expresses it this way:

Your teachers and parents are there to support you....but you decide whether you want to learn or you want to study, or if you want to go home and sleep.

As she says:

It's basically your job. (SB1)

SA3, who has also emphasised personal responsibility, provides specific details of how all the support could come together so it is possible to take charge of one's own learning. In her case, she likes to receive direction from school on what she needs to aim for:

My dean...tells me where I am with school, my tutors – and my attendance, too – telling me what I need to do to get better to achieve more.

She also has conversations with her mother. For instance, if she is unsure about something, her mother provides encouragement:

She [mother] would tell me to have the courage to tell her [teacher].

SA3 has been able to negotiate taking some Sundays off to undertake a particular course in Māori, having discussed this with her mother, saying:

My mum just plays into what we are interested.

Finally, she affirms that her culture and faith can support her. Going to church and praying is important because:

It contributes to my learning...make[s] you more confident, which I can bring back at school, like being able to give presentations, being able to stand and speak publicly.

Thus, SA3's comments bring together the network of support that can be available to help some students take charge of their learning.

“Have a certain goal to reach.”

Some students further understand that part of their responsibility is to look to their own future. SA2 appreciated the importance of looking ahead:

What I notice is most people my age, they get comfortable as with where they are now, instead of looking forward.

SA2 has in mind his experiences of living in Samoa and knowing that it is his responsibility to find opportunities that are not available back home. Although he has the awareness to look ahead, he could not provide specific details. He comments:

I'm pretty sure my future is secured.

SB4 has this advice to give about planning for the future:

It's probably about knowing what you want to do in future, and it's probably best to start early.

Some students emphasise that finding out what they wanted to do in the future has been a key motivator for them. They started to work much harder once they knew what they wanted to do in the future. SA7 explains that students:

only focus if they want something – they have a certain goal to reach, and there's something at the end that they can get from it. If you're just stuck in there just doing it because you have to, just for the sake of doing it, then it's not...It's pretty much kind of pointless.

SA7 completely changed once he joined the Academy; he has appreciated the mentorship of Academy tutors once he could visualise a career ahead in the Armed Services.

SA6 shares a similar perspective. Once she had determined, with the support of her mother, that she wanted a career with the Air Force, her attitude to study changed:

I actually thought I have to focus on school to do what I want to do because there is no point going to school not knowing and then when you finish you are kind of stuck and I don't want to be stuck. (SA6)

It was her realisation that she needs to take charge of her future, that has motivated her to work hard. Ideally, then, home-school relationships recognise and support students in finding their career and study direction.

“Most of the Pasifika students here don't really have that much confidence.”

Whilst the ideal might be for students to be clear about their future goals (and receive help with learning so as to achieve them), students perceived that this was not necessarily the case. A number of concerns were raised. Some realise that Pacific students are held back by a lack of confidence. SB1 explains:

Like most people would say they're dumb and stuff, when really they're not, and they'll probably go with it, and then they will lose some confidence if they're dumb, so they'll stop trying.

SB1 detects that a lack of confidence might stem from not being able to visualise themselves as the successful student within the college:

It's just their confidence. They don't really have enough confidence to make it show, like getting awards.

SB4 recognised something similar. She said Pacific students are:

scared to approach the teachers and tell them I'm not confident about this. I don't know this. Could you please help me? I'm like that.

She further qualifies her thinking:

They're scared to show their weaknesses in a sense. I definitely was like that.

Some students, therefore, perceive how their peers (and, perhaps, themselves) lack confidence in the school system which deters them from being more motivated to succeed.

A lack of confidence means that some are reticent to ask questions in class. SA9, whose first language is Tuvaluan, does not like to speak up in class. He says:

I feel shy to talk to the teachers, just in case I say something wrong.

For SA10, a lack of confidence affects perceptions of a future career. As English is his second language, he reports finding Science subjects difficult. He has decided that Science-related professions are not an option, saying:

I'm not really good with jobs.

SB8 speaks of her lack of confidence at school:

I'm someone who actually doubts myself...I get scared about what people say...When I'm in class, I get scared to ask questions.

"You do stupid things."

Some students admit that, when they lose direction in class, their behaviour is off-task.

SA7 considers that, from his observations:

When it comes to Pasifika students, there's a minority that actually focusses doing classes, and then there's the majority of them who muck around too much.

SA9 admits to being one such student:

I went off the rails at the end of the year.

SA9 thought that he was influenced by friends:

You do stupid things with your friends, especially the wrong crowd.

SB7 speaks about the influence of his friends, too:

Here we're like off-task sometimes....We've got mates here that we can just talk to.

Students are aware, therefore, that some Pasifika learners lack confidence or direction with their learning. They perceive that this might mean that they are unsure about their future direction, speaking up to teachers, or they engage in off-task behaviour.

“They didn’t really know much.”

SB8 explains that, although she is nervous of talking to teachers, she can turn to her mother for help:

My mum always says, do this so you can show those people who doubt me – show what I actually can do.

However, some students do not speak with family at home, and are aware of tension around this. In the case of SA7, prior to joining the Academy, he did not want to share his low grades:

They [parents] didn’t really know much, because my grades were pretty bad before I joined the academy, so I didn’t really disclose any of my reports or any of my grades to them. So, I just more or less kept it to myself.

SB9 has not wanted to share grades with her parents because:

They’d probably take my phone and everything.

SB10 has limited conversations at home because of his parents’ lack of understanding:

My mum; some stuff she understands, and there’s some other stuff that she’ll ask me about, then I have to explain it to her and then she will understand. My dad; he doesn’t speak English that much.

SA2 has been living with his uncle. He receives general advice from his uncle, such as:

Just keep going and don't give up. That's what my uncle always tells me.

However, he does not mention if he has had any specific conversations about his learning at home. Rather, he appears to manage himself:

Sometimes I get unorganised...but I always manage to put it back in place, and sort things out.

SA1 also does not appear to engage in specific conversations at home:

So, at night time I'll tell my parents, "Oh, I've got an assignment due in. I need to stay up all night." And they let me do my thing and just help throughout the night. They'll say, "[Name], are you ok?" I'll be like, "Oh, yeah. I'm ok. I just need to finish this off." And then they're like, "Oh, ok."

So, SA1's parents seem to be supportive and there appears to be an element of trust from the parents with regard to how she is actually managing.

SA5 explains further why some students are reticent to talk to their parents:

A lot of PI students are afraid to talk to their parents about what they need and what they want. It's only due to the fact that parents make most of the choices. So, what they say; students have to listen to it. So, if they don't sit down with their parents – tell them this, then their parents wouldn't understand until later on they're like, "oh you should have told me".

SB11 appears to be at odds with the way that SA5 indicates. He knows that he needs to do well at school but is unsure of his future direction because:

Mum wants me to go to uni, but I don't really want to go to uni.

There appear to be a number of reasons why learning-related conversations at home are limited. It could be that students do not want to share any negative performance; or that they realise their parents have limited understanding; or that they choose not to engage with the advice or direction parents give them. Students face a number of obstacles, therefore, which deter ideal home-school relationships from being established because families are distanced from the learning process.

“Please help me to work.”

Ideal home-school relationships, therefore, are those which support students with their learning. Although students might not ask for help from family or teachers, some know they would find help beneficial. As SB7 says,

Sometimes we think we can just do it ourselves.

Some students, therefore, explain the importance of being understood. If teachers understood them, then they would know what support to give. For instance, SA9 knows he has been a troublesome student but, at the same time, he is keen to start afresh and gain support to become a successful learner:

I just felt like one of those kids that when I started trying to do work, they didn't help me at all, or just helped other kids that they think they want to work with.

SA9 feels he has been labelled and does not know how to signal his intentions to change:

I know it's still my fault in the end, but they should have still been supporting me....If I want to work, please help me to work.

In contrast, SB5 feels she did receive the support she needed because the teacher, who was responsible for mentoring her, actually knows her well:

My mentor is on the same netball team as my mum. So, they're friends as well. Yeah, they know pretty much everything.

A number of students believe that mentoring in some format is the key to helping Pacific learners be academically successful. SA5 has taken on this role, herself, because:

We have stuff before school, during school and after school. So we try to put everything together, which just doesn't work.

Therefore, she says:

I talk to a lot of PI students here, too about balancing. If they can't handle it, then talk to your parents – cut some things. (SA5)

SB4 also mentors:

I mentor my siblings, and I think it's good because you also get closer to them. You actually have time to hang out with them, instead of always focussing on yourself and your own homework and assessments.

SB4 and SB5, as Year 13 students, both receive mentoring from a teacher. SB5 thinks it is so effective that it should not be limited to their year:

I would have loved it as a Year 9.

Likewise, SB1 thinks mentoring was a good idea:

I reckon having mentors would be good. You know how I said about confidence?...Pasifika students, they need more confidence.

However, mentoring in relation to careers advice is something that SA5 particularly wants. If there is someone to:

help us out in terms of where I should – if I was to volunteer at the fire place. So they could help me out in terms of where I go from there to be a cop.

Students, therefore, recognise that an important element of ideal home-school relationships is that it facilitates encouragement, mentoring and support so that students can feel confident and focussed on their learning and future direction.

“Getting involved in school.”

Some students contemplated how the worlds of home and school would, ideally, come closer together so that family and teacher support can work together to benefit the learner.

SB5 considers that an important message for parents is:

Getting involved, going to the teacher interviews because that's been really helpful.

SB4 considers that parents could help with developing teachers' cultural knowledge so that teachers can strengthen their connections with students:

A student's parent to come to school, or something like that – or someone who speaks English well, to explain things.

SA5 has some very practical advice to give:

We should have like that PI youth space...We can have parents come there with their kids, and they can talk about what they have academically at school, and what they have outside of school, and see if they can balance those....Then we can have some teachers go there, too and help them with those choices – those plans, and where they want to go after school in life.

Thus, SA5 envisions a specific space that brings the worlds of home and school closer together; students could be mentored and supported by teachers and parents, and an exchange of information could be facilitated in this shared environment.

Chapter summary

In order to address the question of how home-school relationships can support students' successful learning outcomes, participants' perceptions have been reported in line with the Discovery and Dream stages of the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle. For Discovery, findings have highlighted strengths which Pacific families, teachers and students bring to the relationship-building process. When dreaming what would be ideal, participants considered not just what was important to them but also what concerned them. This enabled each group of participants to offer ideas as to how ideal relationships could be enacted.

Discovery.

The participant responses clearly indicate that Pacific families want their children to be successful in the New Zealand education system so that they can benefit from further study and employment opportunities in New Zealand. Teachers and students understand this, with students realising that families have struggled to provide an education in New Zealand for them. Parent participants think it is important to be informed about school matters and they are willing to help Pacific students and teachers. They want all Pacific students to be academically successful and to be confident about their culture within school.

Teachers appreciate the commitment of parents; they value positive relationships with students and their families. Not only do they want to see students succeed academically but, like the parents, they connect academic success with confidence about cultural identity.

A number of Pacific students speak of having specific study or career goals in mind. They value the support of family and teachers in achieving these goals. They also think that their faith and culture help with resilience. Some emphasise that personal responsibility for learning is key.

Dream.

Parent participants want to see conversations take place between home and school so that the career goals and learning needs of the student can be supported. Decisions should involve family members, ensuring that the student's needs and interests are at the heart of any decision-making. Parent participants are aware of barriers that prevent family engagement. They want to see opportunities for relationship-building between home and school that establish trust so that information between home and school can be exchanged for the good of the student.

Teacher perceptions match closely those of parents, with a number proposing flexible arrangements to support relationship-building between home and school. They, like parents, are aware of many barriers in the current system that deter family engagement. Both parent and teacher participants realise that many Pacific families respond well to home visits. Like parents, the teachers want fruitful discussion with families that centre around the needs of the students; some teachers express the benefits of mentoring students.

The students emphasised that support from family and school was beneficial, although the student is ultimately to be in charge of his or her learning. Students also emphasise career goals as these could help motivate students to work harder. They are aware that some students lack confidence in school which might inhibit progress, and that some students are reluctant to engage family in conversations about their learning. Like teachers, they consider mentoring is beneficial and could make a positive difference to learners. Some students consider how home and school could come together more closely with one student, in particular, suggesting the use of shared space.

A key thread across all types of participants is that students can benefit from wrap-around support that involves both family and teachers. Involving the student is

paramount so that he or she can work towards a chosen goal, with informed and relevant support from home and school.

Chapter Nine

Findings – Design and Destiny

Change is a “continuous process, ongoing in every conversation we have”
(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 33)

Introduction

As explained in the previous chapter, data gathering followed an Appreciate Inquiry 4-D cycle consisting of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny phases. Discovery and Dream influenced data collection where participants’ positive stories were discovered, and dreams for ideal home-school relationships were envisioned (often stemming from the opportunity to share concerns). An overall finding was that all groups of participants favoured wrap-around support from families and from teachers which would facilitate students working towards chosen goals and successful learning outcomes.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the Design and Destiny phases of the research process. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2000), the intention of the Design phase is to bring about a collective decision where a positive vision for the future is asserted; this then feeds into the Destiny phase where specific and strategic action planning can take place. As a researcher, with no role or responsibility within the colleges or the community, it was not possible to execute these phases in this manner. However, through the consultative process of constructing a report and feeding back to the Pacific community and the schools, I aimed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge. This could then, potentially, support the Pacific community and the schools with any future decisions they might wish to make relating to home-school relationships. These latter stages of the research process involved my direct participation. Drawing on notes from my journal, this chapter:

- explains key relationships which supported fieldwork;
- describes the execution of the Design and Destiny phases, which involved the construction and dissemination of the report;
- reviews these final phases.

Relationships

There have been a number of important relationships formed during the course of the fieldwork and which have helped to secure my progress. The learning opportunities afforded through these relationships have been key in the development of ideas for the Design and Destiny phases of the AI process. Names have been changed for anonymity.

John (PC6).

John, of Tongan descent, was born in New Zealand. Whilst he felt his Tongan father was not very familiar with the education system in New Zealand, John has gained knowledge through his profession as a social worker which involves close connections with the local schools. His own children have been educated locally and have successfully negotiated pathways through to university. At the time I was planning my research proposal, John chaired the Fale Pasifika and was instrumental in introducing me to the schools. As he wanted to support the development of home-school relationships for the Pacific community, he was keen to encourage my research.

I was introduced to John and the committee through a friend who had been a social worker colleague with him. She came to the meeting and introduced me. The pleasantries exchanged between my friend and John suggested that he respected her as a colleague and would likely trust her judgement in recommending me as a researcher. After introductions around the room, it was my turn to speak and I was listened to with the utmost attention and respect. John's swift response was to speak for the committee, affirming his wish that I proceed with the research since it was in the interests of Pacific parents that the profile of home-school relationships was raised. My research, therefore, started well in that I was positioned for collaboration and relationship-building with key individuals within the Pasifika community (Airini et al., 2010). I was also learning what relationship-building looked like in practice. I noticed how, at the committee meeting, a focus on "mutual respect" (Thaman, 2008, p. 465) engendered a warm and comfortable space. Introductions helped establish connections and shared histories ('Otunuku, 2011) and space was given to whoever wished to tell their stories without fear of interruption or time restriction (Vaiotei, 2006). What became apparent to me was that decisions,

like the support to conduct research, arose from relationships that were successfully forged through such face-to-face interactions with careful attention afforded to nurturing the relationship space.

Arihi (PC12).

Arihi, Samoan-born, has children attending one of the colleges. Educated in Samoa, she came to this particular town in New Zealand with her parents and siblings as a young woman. Her father, who passed away during the period of my fieldwork, was a matai (Samoan chief) and well respected within the Samoan community both in Samoa and in New Zealand. I first heard about Arihi when visiting one of the colleges at the start of the investigation. As I toured the teen parent unit, which was attached to the college, the manager of the unit enthused over her. She told me that Arihi was the principal of a kindergarten for Pacific families and had been instrumental in helping to draw in young Pacific children into early education. The manager arranged for me to meet her because she believed that Arihi would be an important link for me with the Pacific community in the town.

I soon learnt that Arihi has strong leadership skills, a commitment to support the Pacific community and apparently boundless energy. In my first meeting, I discovered that she had successfully applied for and received major funding to support the community - \$80,000 per year for three years. She wished to set up an organisation which aimed to help Pacific people access services in the town. Her concern is that many are unsure of the New Zealand system and lack confidence with their English if they are new to the country. They have needs in areas such as health, education, immigration or housing which require addressing. She wishes to help members of the Pacific community become more confident so that, with access to the right kind of support, they can reach their potential and engage productively in New Zealand society. She not only endeavours to strategically plan a positive future for Pacific people (as her successful funding application demonstrated) but she also gives her time willingly to practical, hands-on tasks that might benefit the Pacific community. For instance, at her daughters' school, she has helped prepare students for their cultural performances and was secretary of the parent

committee. She is, I realise, a proactive member of the Pacific community and extremely busy.

I am grateful to have met Arihi at the start of my field work. She considered that the ethos of my research related well to her aspirations for the Pacific community and elected to help me in a number of ways: with participant recruitment; with what she thought I might need to know about the community and its engagement with schools; and with an appreciation of Pacific values from the perspective of her Samoan heritage. Although, later on, I interviewed her as a participant, she was primarily a cultural advisor and supported me through fieldwork. Whilst maintaining participant confidence, Arihi played a vital role in enabling me to check understandings of participants' perspectives. I could relay ideas I had learnt from participants and this helped me exercise reflexivity (Marshall & Rossman, 2016); and our conversations generated an exchange of ideas and new pathways of thinking in the spirit of AI (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004). Furthermore, our shared decision-making on how best to deliver positive outcomes for Pacific learners through home-school relationships was commensurate with the principles of *Teu Le va* – the guidelines for relationships in research on Pasifika education (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2016).

Arihi has a key message for teachers and also for parents. She wants teachers to better understand their students by unpacking “their baggage of knowledge and experience” since she believes this is the basis of relationship-building that forges trust and leads to learning opportunities; and she wants parents to better understand the demands of the curriculum on their children's time. She realises that many students engage in co-curricular activities to the detriment of their academic studies without the parents realising the consequences of these actions. She is, therefore, keen to consider and implement practical strategies which could bring the worlds of home and school closer together and develop mutual understanding for the benefit of the students. Her ideas are in line with recommended good practice for home-school partnerships (such as “two-way communication”) as outlined by Bull, et al. (2008, p. 7). Moreover, her ideas are in line with the recommendations of Milne (2009) for schools to work closely with the community to find out how best to deliver learning that supports cultural identity **and** academic achievement (p. 53). Like Milne (2009), Arihi connects the strengthening of

students' cultural identities with the development of successful learning outcomes; and she believes that family involvement is an essential part of this process.

Arihi was able to assist with the Design and Destiny phases of the AI process by propelling forward decisions and actions relating to home-school relationships. She could do this because she is adept at interacting in different groups. That is, she is a member of the Samoan community and Catholic church, she participates in the wider community, and she has learnt to engage in school practices both as a kindergarten principal and as a parent. These were the communities I knew of and, no doubt, there were others. Arihi is an effective knowledge broker, "creating connections" and "moving knowledge" (Wenger, 2000. p.235). Whilst she is evidently skilled at supporting the cross-fertilisation of ideas and at sharing cultural understandings, it did come at a cost. Toward the end of my fieldwork, she explained how she had had to take a step back from many of her commitments and re-focus on her own family. I realised the pressure that must exist for some Pacific people who are proficient "brokers" between different worlds. Where notions of self are inextricably tied to enhancing relationships with others (see, for example, Anae, 2016), the demands on personal time must be immense. I am grateful to Arihi that she chose to remain committed to me through my fieldwork in the hope that a positive difference to home-school relationships might be achieved.

Alipate.

Alipate had arrived from Tonga with his family in recent years. Although he was used to professional employment in the field of law, he had opted for farm work in New Zealand. He explained that he wanted to have more time and energy for other commitments, such as the choir he ran. A daughter attended one of the colleges; her older sister had just left and was now at university. Alipate had great integrity and a strong commitment towards improving the educational outcomes of Pacific young people. His acceptance of me as a researcher helped to forge links both in the community and in one of the schools.

I met Alipate at a parent meeting for Pacific families, organised by one of the schools at the beginning of the academic year. When the Principal asked for advice on the format of future meetings, Alipate stood up and requested that an Interim Parent Committee be

set up. This committee would discuss important issues and feed back to a larger group of parents. The Principal accepted and, after some banter between Alipate and Arihi, it was decided that he would chair this committee, Arihi would be secretary and another woman treasurer. Alipate introduced himself to me and we arranged to meet later in the week. This initial meeting did not start well. I was waiting at the entrance to the public library while he was sitting in a corner. When I did find him, he evidently considered that I had been late and said he could give me very little time. I hoped to sign him up as a participant but realised its inappropriacy. Instead, I listened politely and attentively. Time then did not seem to matter and, even after we left the library, he continued to chat to me in the car park. I considered, on reflection, that I had been exposed to tauhi vaha'a, the establishing of a "harmonious" relationship (Ka'ili, 2017a, p. 13); harmony in the social space had been restored once attention had been given to rectify a perceived temporal slight. The marking of time is, therefore, a crucial factor in creating conditions for reciprocity and concord in a social space. If the matter of time is inadequately addressed, it may give rise to "asymmetry" in the relationships, leading to perceived issues around inequality and power (Ka'ili, 2017b, p. 36). I appreciated that the management of time might be an important factor in home-school relationships since a strict timetable, although necessary for the smooth running of a school, could inadvertently lead Pasifika families to feel disempowered and unappreciated.

It was through Alipate that I attended a cultural celebration (where I helped serve food) and a Sunday morning church service. Alipate also invited me to attend the Parent Interim Committee meetings. He ran meetings meticulously, following a pre-set agenda and checking that written records were kept. He was very clear about what he considered to be protocol. For instance, when I joined the parents on a fundraising trip, he insisted on a formal letter and school badges with our pictures to ensure we were legitimate. We visited a place of work where his son was married to the owner's daughter but he would not exercise his status as father-in-law to sway the decision of the manager to contribute funds. Sometimes his strong ideas about how to behave were at odds with school practices. He was perturbed by decisions apparently being made between the student and the teacher when families, in his opinion, should be explicitly consulted (such as with course options). He also had to learn why he could not use the

same rights that he had as chair of a parent committee in Tonga when it was acceptable to visit other families with knowledge of their children's grades so as to discuss academic progress.

I attended meetings over the span of four months and witnessed Alipate develop his skills in brokering knowledge between the communities of Pasifika parents and the parent committee. As Wenger (2000) points out, it is a "delicate" role (p. 236) working out how to support connections between groups and interpret interactions. Processes and routines can help to create familiarity and support the negotiation of meaning (ibid). Thus, Alipate's reliance on common practices on how to run a formal meeting brought people closer together and created opportunity for dialogue. He gradually became more familiar with the school practices. As Wenger (2001) argues, it is important to recognise that communities of practice thrive when informal interactions allow mutual learning opportunities without the hindrance of "institutional boundaries" to restrict the direction of dialogue (p. 2340). Perhaps, a sign that Alipate was learning how to engage more "informally" was his surprise use of humour at a meeting dedicated to fundraising. After listening to the plan for organising car washes, he commented that this was not how it would be done in Tonga. He said it was best to turn up at the house and tell the family they could not go out in their car because it had to be cleaned. His humorous remark about cultural difference showed active engagement in dialogue that contrasted from the first meetings where, although chairman, he was on the peripherals of the group in terms of understanding school practices and values. His growing competence as a member (where he had confidence to openly reflect on his own cultural practices) led to his increased participation in meaningful interaction and ability to influence the understanding of others (Wenger, 2000).

I am extremely grateful to Alipate because it meant that I was privileged to witness the growth in relationships and cross-cultural understanding that occurred between the parents of this committee and the two Pasifika deans of the college. The deans, like their principal, showed a willingness to listen and engage in joint decisions with Pacific parents. It was a tremendous strength that the school had afforded such an open space (Flavell, 2017). It meant that face-to-face conversations could operate in talanoa style where control was not exerted by one party over another, making collaborative discussion and

constructive solutions possible (Vaiote, 2006; 2014). The committee, in effect, operated with attention to *va*. One positive outcome of the group was that the students were guided to success in the regional cultural performance, where they came first with their group performance.

Summing up.

I learnt important lessons through the relationships I formed during the course of my fieldwork. Through John, I appreciated the importance of receiving the approval from the Pacific community. I was introduced to the way respectful relationships might unfold within the community, witnessing the importance of listening to others without the issue of time constraints.

Through Arihi, I appreciated how informed some members of the Pacific community were in understanding the needs of Pacific students and their families, and in knowing how to progress home-school relationships. I also appreciated how people like her are skilled at connecting the worlds of home and school but this is energy-demanding and time-consuming work for those who step into it.

Through Alipate, I was able to see how relationships could develop between parents and teachers. I witnessed how cross-cultural learning and collaboration could take place to achieve shared decision-making for the benefit of students.

Without these relationships (as well as the practical and extremely helpful support from the staff contacts at each college), I could not have progressed positively with fieldwork and appreciated the dynamics of relationships for Pacific people.

The planned construction and dissemination of a report

The Design and Destiny phases were planned through the construction and dissemination of a report. I understood that a key principle of AI was that it should be a collaborative, inclusive process which facilitated collective action (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2013). My plan was to draft a report, based on the findings that I had gathered, and open it up for consultation and co-construction, and, after I had obtained feedback on the report from the Pacific community, present it to the

colleges. I intended to incorporate into the school presentations some discussion prompts so that the schools might consider the next move in terms of relationships with Pacific families. This had the potential to be “generative”, where schools might develop some different approaches (Bushe, 2013, p. 91). I also realised that I was taking on the role of a “broker” myself (Wenger, 2000. p. 235), in that I was facilitating connections and the sharing of knowledge through the report process. Mindful that the report had diverse audiences, it was, therefore, important to construct it so that it was readable and informative for Pacific families and teachers alike. Paying attention to how to deliver message to different audiences was in line with *Teu le va* recommended practices (Airini et al., 2010).

I gained first-hand experience of how “delicate” an operation it can be to broker knowledge between different communities of practice (Wenger, 2000, p. 236). Some participants wanted funding for a *so’ataga*, a person to act as a co-ordinator between school and the families. They felt teachers did not have enough time or understanding to reach out to all families. The report was, therefore, a vehicle to promote Pacific voices. However, this was not to be done at the cost of offending teachers, nor appearing to favour one school over another. Otherwise, I would sabotage intentions of being inclusive and could trigger negative reactions. The report was carefully constructed so as to acknowledge strengths, both in the community and in the schools. By celebrating good practice of the schools, I hoped they would feel encouraged to consider the report’s recommendations for further developing home-school relationships.

Report content.

The report contains a number of findings and leads to three, key recommendations.

Findings.

The strengths of Pacific families and the schools are emphasised. For families, the report emphasises parents’ high aspirations and the supportive networks within their communities which aim to help one another. A common desire to see all Pacific young people enjoy successful learning outcomes is noted. The report also notes

that there are a number of committed individuals who are well-informed about the school system. They have a good understanding of how to engage other families in their children's learning, and are willing to work with schools and families to support student achievement.

For teachers, their commitment to relationship-building with Pacific students and families are emphasised, as is students' appreciation of the dedicated support they receive from teachers. The schools' willingness to reach out to families and to engage in ways that might work for them are also reported. Also noted are the services and provision in both schools which cater for the needs of Pacific learners. The report describes how teachers are responsive to opportunities that enhance the learning experiences of Pacific students, for instance, participation in the regional Poly cultural event. Teachers appreciate the services of parents to support with cultural knowledge.

For further consideration, the issue of time is emphasised. Both teachers and families are very busy and time to share understanding of each other's worlds is limited. Time (due to funding constraints) influences the degree to which teachers can reach out to families. However, the report also notes the importance of ensuring families are informed and involved so they can participate in important decisions with their child and the teachers, and provide support as needed.

Recommendations.

The report contains three recommendations. The first is to establish a working party, consisting of representatives from both schools and informed members of the Pacific community. (The effectiveness of collaborative practices between teachers and parents had been modelled by the Interim Parent Committee which Alipate chaired.) Schools can benefit from listening to community voices on how best to engage families and effective strategies could be discussed and shared.

The second recommendation is to implement more professional development to strengthen teachers' cultural competency.

The third is to recommend a so'ataga. A so'ataga is a co-ordinator whose role would be to act as a conduit between home and school with the purpose of lifting achievement for Pacific students. This is what Arihi and other participants wanted to see happen. This co-ordinating role would incorporate mentoring students and working with families to support understanding of the students' learning needs and goals, as well as helping to convey important information between home and school. The co-ordinator might work directly with families, or even support others so that more families could be reached.

The report concludes with a recommendation for this co-ordinating role to be discussed in the working party with a view to accessing joint funding. (I realised that Arihi and members of the Fale Pasifika were keen to find funding for a so'ataga and considered that shared funding would help support equity in relationships.) See Appendix 1 for further information on the report.

The report process.

A process of consultation and co-construction of the report was undertaken before its final delivery to the schools.

Consultation and Co-construction.

I drafted the report after I had undertaken an initial analysis of the data. Mindful of the academic year (2017), I wanted to ensure the schools had feedback before they finished for the summer in order to help planning for the following year. After sharing my first draft with thesis supervisors and a third person whose feedback I valued, I shared it with Arihi. She was very thorough, scrutinising the report carefully to make sure that it reflected what she felt were the perspectives of families. Under her guidance, the report recommendations grew in substance so that professional development for teachers could be included as well as details on the role of the so'ataga.

I contacted other participants who had previously expressed some interest in the contents of the report to see if they wished to comment on its draft content.

Namely, I was keen to hear from the two school contacts (with whom I had liaised), to make sure they were happy for me to proceed with the dissemination of the report to members of the Pasifika community. One contact gave her approval without question. The other wondered if I had placed a negative bias towards schools (by implying that teachers were not willing to put time in to support Pacific learners and their families). Certainly, this was not the intention but I adjusted the language in my report to remedy any such connotation. She also reminded me of further good practice at her college which I had not detailed, so I was able to include that.

Engaging in feedback.

I emailed the report to the secretary of the Fale Pasifika committee and asked for feedback. Subsequently, I was asked to present the report at a meeting, which I did. I received a comment to add more student voice (which I did), and advice to add different languages aside from the Samoan proverbs which Arihi had gifted me. (I accepted but, unfortunately, these did not materialise.) I was surprised by the silence which followed my presentation and lack of engagement about a discussion for where next. As Tuafuti (2010) explains, “Silence is an active and a living component of Pasifika culture” (p. 4). There are, Tuafuti indicates, different interpretations to silence and I tried to fathom out its meaning in this particular context. Perhaps, it meant respect but not necessarily agreement (Tuafuti, 2010).

I was thanked for attending as a signal to leave. John’s closing words helped to clarify the position. The committee had already gone ahead to seek funding for a so’ataga and they were most grateful for my report because it would provide evidence to support their case. I now understood why this was awkward. They were aware that Arihi had been my mentor but they had not included her in the discussions for the so’ataga. When John said, “You have given us a lot to think about”, I imagine that was in reaction to my focus on collaboration. A few days later, I met with Arihi and another (participant PC1.) Their combined enthusiasm for the content of the report and the voice I had given to the Pasifika community was overwhelming. However, it was countered by disappointment that the other committee had proceeded without consultation with them.

This was a steep learning curve for me. I had understood the competitive nature of schools as self-regulating bodies with accountability (Wylie, 2012). However, I had not appreciated the depth of diversity within the Pasifika community which entails many different perspectives. Diversity extends beyond ethnicity to include, “geographic, church, family, school, age/gender-based, youth/elders, island-born/NZ born, occupational lines or a mix of these” (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau, 2001, p. 7). The challenge must exist for schools, then, as to how to engage with their local Pacific community when faced with the complexity of diverse groups and organisations within it.

This proved to be a stumbling block for one of the schools. Arihi accompanied me to both school presentations. At the one college, she and I were quizzed on the recommendations by a frustrated principal who had already been visited by a member of the Fale Pasifika. He said he was very happy to work with the community but he wanted to know who it was he should be working with. The visit to the other college was a more positive experience. My presentation led to a commitment from the principal to engage more readily with different members of the Pacific community. Significantly, the school had been keen to make a Tongan member of staff a Pasifika dean but he had declined. However, in reading the report prior to the meeting, he told senior management that he had changed his mind. According to the assistant principle he had said, “I agree with everything”. The college considered the report most timely and looked ahead to the following year with hope that they might strengthen their connections with Pacific families.

Reviewing the Design and Delivery phases

A positive aspect of the report process was it helped bring into the public domain the strengths within the Pacific community and the strengths of the schools, and offered recommendations for further development. According to Arihi, I had written the report in such an accessible way that parents would be pleased to read it. One clear outcome was that a teacher accepted an appointment as dean in the light of the report contents. The AI process had appeared to influenced thinking even if all four phases did not eventuate, as Grant and Humphries (2006) thought might happen.

The report process also brought tensions to the surface by highlighting conflict rather than collaboration. Conflict rose to the surface between the community organisations as to who “owned” the report; and this spilled over to create conflict in the school so that a principal, who was looking for solutions, was instead presented with community disharmony. Bushe (2010), in reviewing his earlier work and others’, feels that the interpretation of appreciation has been misleading. A focus on the positive (which can disengage people if they feel they unable express doubts and frustrations) is not exactly what Cooperrider had in mind. Cooperrider was more interested in what would bring life and energy to an organisation, and one way to do that was by seeing the potential for good within it (Bushe, 2010). Appreciating any dysfunctionality can be part of this process. That is, by allowing discord to come to the fore as opposed to issues being glossed over and ignored, possibilities for transformation can take shape (Bushe, 2010; Fitzgerald, et al., 2010). Honest discussion can move forward towards a brighter future. Therefore, even though the conflict was disappointing, it brought into focus what might need addressing if relations between the schools and Pacific families are to prosper.

See Table 4 for summary of findings on page 226.

Summary of key findings

Phase	Key findings
Discovery	<p>Pacific families want their children to achieve academically and be culturally confident. Some members of the Pacific community are well informed about educational matters, and willing to help schools in order to benefit Pacific young people.</p> <p>Teachers value relationships with students and their families. Teachers also want students to enjoy academic success and be culturally confident.</p> <p>Students value the support of family, teachers and their faith whilst emphasising personal responsibility.</p>
Dream (including concerns that need to be overcome)	<p>Parent participants dream of conversations with teachers to support learning needs and career goals of students. Important decisions should involve family. They are aware of barriers to parental engagement and are concerned about student achievement. More opportunities to build relationships between home and school are key to overcome concerns.</p> <p>Teachers are also aware of barriers to parental engagement and dream of flexibility in the school system to support relationship-building with families. Support should centre on the needs of the student, and involve mentoring.</p> <p>Students are aware that many Pacific students lack confidence at school, and dream of support in the form of mentoring to help them focus on career goals so they are motivated, responsible learners.</p>
Design and Destiny (facilitated through the report process)	<p>I learnt how members of the Pacific community value relationships through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attentiveness and respect • commitment to others • willingness to engage in cross-cultural learning and collaboration. <p>I also learnt of tension within the Pacific community as individuals endeavoured to find the best way to promote relationship-building between home and school.</p>

Chapter 10: Discussion and conclusion

“Relationships are the essence of humanity.”
(Anae, 2016, p. 128)

Introduction

The aim of the chapter is to present the analysis of findings, and bring this thesis to a close with recommendations and concluding thoughts. To aid the discussion, I draw on research literature and on theoretical frameworks to develop ideas. The collation of frameworks used in this study has provided a unique lens through which to examine relationships between schools and Pacific families. A strength-based approach is afforded through AI which, when combined with CoP, steers the research towards the promotion of inclusion and equity. The inclusion of values that are not always recognised within the education system are afforded through *Teu le va* and TRM; these latter frameworks have helped ensure the execution of a culturally responsive design. Together, these frameworks guide the analysis of findings, valuing and building on participants’ strengths. The frameworks lead to solution-focussed recommendations, offering fresh insight into how relationships between schools and Pacific families can thrive.

The chapter is structured with the 4-D cycle in mind so that a discussion can follow the progression of AI principles, adopting a similar structure to the way findings were reported. It is structured into two main sections.

The first section discusses findings. I cover:

- what was **discovered** about participants’ strengths which positively influenced home-school relationships;
- what were participants’ **dreams** for ideal relationships;
- what **doubts** participants had, since there were a number of concerns which troubled them;
- how participants envisaged **designing** home-school relationships so as to overcome any doubts and achieve ideal conditions.

This discussion does not strictly follow the traditional 4-D cycle of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. This is because Destiny involves the planning stage for bringing about transformation which was not realised in this study. However, I have added Doubts because, although AI is a positively-framed process, participants did need to discuss what they were worried about before they could consider solutions. Therefore, this discussion tracks Discovery, Dream, Doubts, and Design.

The second section brings this thesis to a close with final reflections. It:

- discusses key points and implications;
- considers how the theoretical framework for this study could translate to a school setting;
- considers limitations which may have impacted on the findings;
- finishes with closing thoughts and recommendations for future research.

SECTION 1 Discussion of findings

Discovering participants' strengths which positively influence home-school relationships

Each group of participants' perceptions are discussed in turn.

Pacific parent/community perceptions.

Parent/community participants place a high value on education. This is well supported by existing literature (for example, Flavell, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2008; Samu 2006; 2010).

Participants affirm that it was not so much the education system, itself, that has attracted families to migrate to New Zealand but the opportunities for an economically-secure future that an education in New Zealand might bring to the next generation. Their views align with existing literature which confirms that families have traditionally come to New Zealand from Pacific countries in order to seek a more prosperous way of life (for example, Siope, 2011). Also, in alignment with other literature are their perceptions that families have accepted hardship in the short term through the upheaval of migration in

order that children benefit in the long term (for example, Flavell, 2014; Siope, 2011). Consequently, as validated in the literature (ERO, 2008; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Flavell, 2014), participants are keen to encourage and support their children's education.

Literature has reported how parents like to be informed about their child's progress so that they can provide assistance at home (Amituanai-Toloa, 2009; Flavell, 2014), but they have not always been sure how to give academic support (Flavell, 2014; Fletcher, et al., 2009; Fletcher, et al., 2008; Green & Kearney, 2011, 'Otunuku, 2011). This is similar to the findings of this study in that concern was expressed by a number of Pacific parent/community participants that some parents are unsure how to engage with schools. However, these views came from Pacific participants who are well informed themselves and are keen to find ways to help other families become more confident and connected with the school system. These Pacific participants are knowledgeable about academic matters such as NCEA (National Certificate in Educational Achievement), and are confident at engaging with school, not only in regard to their own children but on behalf of other Pacific families. They offer assistance to teachers in order to liaise with parents or to help with cultural matters (such as cultural performances). They do this because they want to see all Pacific students enjoy successful learning outcomes, not just their own children; and they want to promote and celebrate Pacific identities within the school.

Literature affirms the way that Pacific peoples are supportive and caring of others. Maintaining balance and harmony in relationships through attention to *va* is valued across Pacific cultures with the belief that all beings are spiritually connected; and this entails looking after others' wellbeing (for example, Anae, 2010; Tamasese, 2002;). Paying attention to *va* requires not only the nurturing of relationships with others but also retaining important links to the home land (Ka'ili, 2005; Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009). This is evident in the way Pacific families in New Zealand attend to the welfare of family members who remain on home islands (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009; Spoonley et al., 2003). Preserving cultural heritage, therefore, is valued by many Pacific families. Whilst the role of the church supports cultural continuity for families living in New Zealand, more recently so do Polynesian cultural celebrations (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). Frequently, it is the schools which run the Poly clubs and which, therefore, play a crucial role in helping

cultural performances and celebrations to thrive (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). Therefore, the findings that Pacific parent/community participants are concerned for all students, and that they appreciate the celebration of culture within school both reflect aspects of va. They show that participants value a collective spirit and a desire to support students' cultural identity and their heritage.

Teachers' perceptions.

Teachers express a strong commitment to building relationships with Pacific families and with helping Pacific learners achieve successful learning outcomes. For instance, some teachers engage with Pacific families through their involvement in the local community (like the church); and some engage in co-curricular activities that bring them into contact with families and deepen their connections with students. A number of teachers give extra time willingly in order to provide study support for Pacific students or mentor them with university applications. They appreciate that parents want their children to do well, and they support any opportunities where cultural connections between home and school can be strengthened. Teachers show the kind of commitment that has been encapsulated in recommended good practice from the New Zealand Ministry of Education. For instance, *Tapasā*, a framework to guide the teaching of Pacific learners, recommends that teachers appreciate the high educational aspirations which Pacific parents have for their children, that they connect with students' cultural backgrounds, and that they value relationships with students and their families (Ministry of Education, 2018). One teacher reported on the training that some had received on *Ngāue Fakataha ki he 'a e fānau* (see Chapter Three) which had been conducted at a feeder primary school (Tongati'o et al., 2016a; 2016b). He believes that building relationships with Pacific families to discuss student progress, as recommended by this strategy, had directly resulted in strong academic results.

The schools have also made leadership decisions in order to enhance relationships with Pacific families and support students' learning. For example, one school initiated a Pacific parent/teacher committee, responding to parent advice on its format; both schools have agreed to mentoring programmes for their Pacific senior students delivered by an outside provider; both have participated in *Pasifika PowerUP*, an education programme for

families that is designed to enhance students' learning; both engage in Poly-cultural performances and celebrations. The schools are, thus, responsive to ideas and suggestions that can strengthen their relationships with families and with students' cultural backgrounds. The responsive nature of the schools means they have adopted strategies (such as parent committees) that can be recognised as good practice in Ministry of Education documentation (for instance, Gorinski, 2005; Spee et al, 2014,a; 2014b). Their responsiveness further illustrates a willingness to listen to families (Flavell, 2017; Toumu'a et al., 2014), which was apparent when I was given permission to conduct the research in response to a request from a Pacific community leader.

Students' perceptions

Students' perceptions align closely with existing literature in that they understand the expectations from their families to do well at school in order to secure a more prosperous future than their parents (for example, Mila-Schaff & Robinson, 2009; McDonald & Lipine, 2011; Siope, 2011). Some have developed an idea of a future career and have formed plans for further study. They acknowledge how family encouragement and support has been a positive influence in guiding their studies. This has previously been noted in the literature (Flavell, 2014; Fletcher, Fa'afoi, & Taleni, 2008; McDonald & Lipine, 2010), as has the appreciation of caring and committed teachers which students also acknowledge (McDonald & Lipine, 2010; Siope, 2013). Similarly, students' perceptions that their faith and church life help give them more confidence, focus, and cultural confidence have been recognised in other literature (such as McDonald & Lipine, 2010). Siope (2011) argues there are positive benefits to Pacific students when schools foster a similar sense of belonging and purposeful atmosphere as they gain from their attendances at church. This can be exemplified, for example, in the popularity of the Poly clubs at school which illustrate how Pacific students like to engage in collective and culturally enriching experiences (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014).

When students express a connection to faith and to church life, they are validating the relational values of *va*. They are appreciating a strong sense of acting interconnectedly with others which is endorsed through their spiritual practices. It is understandable that students have credited the role of family, teachers, and church as significant to their

individual studies. However, a number of student participants emphasise that, ultimately, they are responsible for their own learning. Literature on adolescents affirms the importance of acknowledging students' growing autonomy as they progress through the senior years of school, so that their need for independence is taken into account with the type of support and advice given (Catsambis, 2001; Hill & Tyson, 2009). The need to take personal responsibility is not necessarily contrary to an appreciation of help from others. When Pacific students express the importance of taking responsibility for their learning, they are likely showing awareness of their personal obligation to take learning seriously because this is an expectation from family and church. They are appreciating the importance of maintaining *va*, which entails fulfilling obligations to others so that *va* is protected (Ka'ili & Māhina, 2017b; McDonald & Lipine, 2010; Seiuli, 2013; Thaman, 2008; Vaa, 2009).

Concluding comments on participants' strengths

There is a high degree of alignment between participant perceptions and existing literature, suggesting that many of the views expressed by the participants of this study may be typical of Pacific families and secondary teachers in other New Zealand contexts. Teachers demonstrate a willingness to build positive relationships with students and their families, with both schools responding positively to any opportunities that might benefit Pacific students. Pacific students and their families confirm the high value placed on education that is now well reported in research literature. Likewise, their perceptions relate to the concept of *va* in that they demonstrate a worldview which positions themselves as interdependent beings with responsibility to others.

An implication is that, if Pacific students do underachieve in the school system, they are eroding the quality of relationships with their family and members of their community because they are not fulfilling their responsibility to do well with their education. It may be argued, then, that successful learning outcomes potentially contribute to Pacific families maintaining harmonious relationships with one another. In this study, Pacific parent/community participants, who understand the school system, exercise their responsibility to others by engaging with teachers in order to support the cohort of Pacific students at each school. Their efforts mean not only that schools are better

equipped to meet the needs of their Pacific learners, but also that they are contributing to more harmonious relationships in families by helping students fulfil their obligation to succeed at education.

Participants' dreams for ideal home-school relationships

This section brings together the perspectives of parent/community, teacher, and student participants in order to discuss what is important for ideal home-school relationships.

Summarising participants' dreams.

There is a common consensus amongst Pacific parent/community, teacher, and student participants regarding the ideal home-school relationship. All groups of participants see merit in families, teachers, and students working together to support the career goals and learning needs of the students. Parent/community participants, who are informed and experienced at liaising with schools, are clear on the importance of students and parents acting in an informed way that ensured decisions are based on students' interests. Their particular point, however, is wanting teachers to understand the interdependent nature of making decisions because it is essential that family participate in key moments affecting their child's learning. Teachers want the special talents of Pacific students recognised, and to work with the support of family to help secure successful learning outcomes. Similarly, a number of students appreciate the importance of establishing goals that help focus them on where they want to go; it is important to them that any advice and mentoring they receive builds on what they, themselves, want so that support enhances the ability to take ownership of their future direction.

Effective home-school partnerships for Pacific students.

In many ways, these participants' responses align with literature on effective home-school partnerships. Literature affirms participants' views that partnerships should be purposeful and goal-oriented, focussed on supporting students' learning goals and progress. The equitable nature of partnerships is also emphasised in literature, where families have an equally important role to play as teachers in supporting the learning process. Thus, collaborative and reciprocal dialogue are recommended (Bull et al., 2008;

Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Montgomery, 2014; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011). As Epstein (1995) emphasises, care is an important value; and the genuine interest from parent/community and teacher participants to work together to support the interests and talents of the students illustrates a caring approach. Furthermore, literature advises schools to be responsive to the needs of families (for instance, Epstein, 1995). However, when parent/community participants emphasise wanting to be more involved in decisions related to their children's learning, some do wonder if teachers fully appreciate the collective and interdependent way in which families conduct their lives.

An implication is that a school's responsive approach to Pacific families should include an appreciation and an inclusion of Pacific perspectives. Relationships, seen through a Pacific lens, require care and attention since they are underpinned by a belief in the interconnectedness of all aspects of life. Since nothing exists in isolation, the nurturing of relationships facilitates a balanced and harmonious world (for example, Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, 2009; Ka'ili & Mahina, 2017). As emphasised in *Teu le va* (the framework for Pacific educational research and policy making), successful outcomes arise when every step in the process has honoured the principles of collaborative and respectful relationships (Airini et al., 2010). This must also hold true for home-school relationships, in that attention to the quality of relationships formed with students and their families, in all aspects across the school, can lead to positive outcomes for the learner.

Pacific understandings of time (*ta*) help appreciate the importance of valuing relationship space (*va*). The concept of *ta*/time in Pacific cultures is considered to be circular in that reflections on the past guide how to act in the present (Ka'ili & Mahina, 2017b; Mahina, 2008). Nurturing *va* (the relationship space) requires thoughtful attention to *ta* (time). That is, paying attention to the unfolding of relationships in the present, mindful of what has gone before, can lead to successful outcomes in the future. A Western perspective of time tends to be linear (Mahina, 2008), where a singular focus on obtaining results may override any space for processing different perspectives and past experiences because the emphasis is on reaching the future target. A lack of attention to the space where ideas can be shared may mean that hoped-for results are much harder to achieve (Halapua, 2007). The opportunity to meet face-to-face in a *talanoa*-style conversation where thoughts can flow freely are conducive to processing ideas and learning from one

another (Halapua, 2007; Vaioleti, 2006). Face-to-face situations provide opportunity to make personal connections. Ideally, they enable mutual trust and respect to be established so that it is safe to express an idea without fear of repercussions (Halapua, 2007; 'Otunuku, 2011; Vaioleti, 2006; 2014). In this way, different angles can be explored and solutions found.

Supporting mutual understanding through relationships.

A social constructionist lens, which has been applied to this study, adds weight to the idea that successful home-school partnerships are ones where attention is given to the quality of social interaction so as to enrich relationships that facilitate mutual understandings. This thesis has argued that individuals make sense of the world through their interactions with one another. That is, we engage in a continual process of learning as we adapt our thinking in response to others. Our identity is not fixed but subject to the dynamic relationships in which we participate and which influence our thinking (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2013; 2016; Wenger, 1998). Ideally, home-school relationships should include space for families and teachers to dialogue where they can exchange ideas and develop their thinking in a mutually beneficial manner. Whilst good practice recommends collaboration and reciprocity between teachers and families (for example, Bull et al., 2008), attention has to be paid to the processes of how home-school interactions are conducted; well-meaning intentions for collaborative practices do not, necessarily, translate into optimum situations that allow for a genuine exchange of ideas and a development of thinking.

A Communities of Practice lens contributes to this argument with the idea that optimum learning experiences can occur when a common interest draws individuals together to share thoughts, with shared practices (such as shared ways of talking and acting) facilitating the exchange of ideas. In the context of home-school relationships, the more familiar teachers are with the social practices of families, and the more familiar families are with the practices of the school, the easier is the transfer of knowledge and ideas. The ability to align with the practices that are common to others can help an individual to feel confident with expressing and formulating ideas in their company. Subsequently, someone may be able to introduce new ideas which influences others' thinking and this

leads to collective learning opportunities (Wenger, 1998). Ideal home-school relationships, therefore, should facilitate the exchange of ideas that foster both individuals' learning and collective growth. Then students can benefit from support that has resulted from teachers and families participating in informed and informing discussion. Students can also benefit from such opportunities which have helped to draw different worlds together, alleviating possible tensions they might feel when operating in the different social spaces of school and home life (Hunter, 2010; Kubiak et al., 2015).

Summary comments.

In line with existing literature, participants believe that an ideal home-school relationship involves parents, teachers, and students working together to support the career goals, learning needs, and interests of the students. A CoP lens highlights how important it is to create learning opportunities that genuinely facilitate the sharing of knowledge. In order for schools to respond to the needs of Pacific families and work collaboratively with them to support students, an appreciation of Pacific values relating to relationship-building is also important. A valuable way in which schools can appreciate how to prioritise relationships which accord with Pacific peoples is by applying the frameworks *teu le va* and TRM to the school setting. If schools overlook the processes for developing relationships in pursuit of achieving outcomes, the risk is that student success is harder to achieve.

Doubts about how to achieve ideal relationships

A number of doubts and concerns have been raised by participants which, in order to be faithful to their contributions, are now discussed.

Summarising doubts.

Parent/community participants and teacher participants have largely agreed on why some parents are reluctant to engage with school processes. Their comments align closely with existing literature in that a lack of time (due to working hours), of language, of understanding about their children's learning and of confidence with the school system are contributory factors which deter some Pacific families (Fletcher et al., 2008;

Gorinski, 2005; Green & Kearney, 2011). There is an awareness from parent/community and teacher participants that school practices do not always encourage engagement and, of concern to teachers, is finding time to develop more flexible and inclusive practices. All groups of participants were concerned about a lack of confidence in students.

Social and economic barriers to parental engagement.

Social and economic issues are highlighted by parent/community and teacher participants as barriers which means that families focus on more pressing concerns than education. Participant comments align with a national picture for Pacific families in that many experience social and economic disadvantage (for example, Sorensen & Jensen, 2017). Some teachers have shown that they understand the impact of financial hardship on families, explaining, for instance, how families can be affected by the seasonal nature of horticultural work for income. Families may experience a loss of income during winter months. Financial hardship within families can negatively affect the health of children (Duncanson et al., 2018); and it can have a disruptive influence on students' learning and their parents' engagement with school (Wylie, 2013). Successful learning outcomes at school help to establish career paths with the potential for a secure income but success at school may be hard to achieve in low-income families; thus, social disadvantage can become intergenerational (Wylie, 2013). Participants understand that social-economic barriers have a negative impact upon engagement with education, and hope that positive home-school links is one way to help students be successful.

Teacher assumptions.

Some parent/community participants express disappointment over the way the school engages with family. A lack of response from parents to engage with the school can cause teachers to draw negative conclusions about families, such as assume they are uninterested (Spiller, 2012) or that making contact is too problematic (Grant & Sleeter, 1988). Teachers might make conclusions about what is in the best interest of students without understanding the perspectives of the parents (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), nor appreciate how their use of languages and practices run counter to those of the families (Allen et al., 2009; Delpit, 1988). The consequence is that families feel marginalised by

teachers and frustrated by decisions made which exacerbates their uncertainty as to how to engage with school. Parent/community participants provide some specific examples where they have felt troubled by school processes. For instance, two participants (in separate interviews) expressed disappointment over the removal from classes of a particular boy which was a decision they perceived had happened without full consultation with family members. When a meeting was called to discuss the boy's future, so many family members turned up that the room was full to capacity and extra chairs had to be found. The participants perceived that members of staff were surprised but the family did not know how else they could demonstrate their commitment to the child.

If school processes place families on the peripherals of conversations that are related to students' learning, it may negatively impact on teachers' assumptions regarding students' academic progress. That is, teachers may be influenced by the observable role that families play in supporting students' cultural performances rather than the role families play in supporting students' academic learning. Thus, when teachers contemplate how to connect with students' cultural identity, they focus on aspects such as performance and costume rather than on academic achievement. A number of teacher participants did, in fact, make specific references to students' cultural practices in this way when they considered how students' cultural identity might be validated in school. The risk is that students' cultural identities become essentialised into stereotypical traits around musical and dance performances (Gorski, 2016), and teachers remain unaware of their responsibility to strengthen students' cultural and academic identities in the classroom (Milne, 2009). This argument adds further weight to the need to increase families' engagement in the learning process so that family members can positively influence how teachers interact with Pacific learners in the classroom.

Lack of student confidence with academic learning.

A concern expressed by all groups of participants is that some Pacific students lack confidence with learning. Parent/community participants are concerned about a lack of focus and a lack of language skills. Teacher participants connect a lack of skills with off-task behaviour; they also believe a lack of confidence with cultural identity can lead to a

lack direction with learning. Student participants concur that many Pacific students lack confidence and often do not ask for help, even when they know they need it. These findings resonate with existing literature which has highlighted a cultural mismatch between home and school for Pacific families resulting in students' lack of cultural assuredness and academic confidence (Milne, 2009; Nakhid, 2003). This is why Milne (2009) stresses the importance of schools becoming more culturally responsive. When schools make this their priority, academic success for Pacific and Maori learners is more likely guaranteed. Listening and acting on what parents and the community want are positive steps that schools can take to help them deliver a more inclusive approach that effectively supports minority learners (Milne, 2009). Thus, the concern that all groups of participants share with regard to the lack of confidence in Pacific learners is not unique to this context. This issue is something which home-school relationships, in an ideal world, can help address.

Power dynamics in home-school relationships.

One way to understand the possible tension between home and school for Pacific families is to appreciate how power dynamics affects relationships and opportunities to learn. The tension which families and students may feel can be explained as the uncertainty that happens when individuals find it difficult to align with the social practices of the context in which they find themselves (Wenger, 1998). There is always some intrapersonal tension for individuals, Wenger (1998) argues, as they reconcile their experiences of different social practices in order to decide how to act and think in a given situation. Ideally, individuals are able to draw on previous experiences in order to make sense of their current situation, so that they are able to express themselves and explore new ideas (Hunter, 2010; Kubiak et al., 2015). Data indicates that some Pacific students and their families find it difficult to reconcile different practices between home and school, and are then uncertain how to participate in school contexts. This situation can be magnified by a school's use of "reification", a term which refers to particular processes, forms of dialogue or specific artefacts that are employed to support the negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998). Such reification may favour the world of teachers and inhibit students' and families' participation, even though it is not the intention. For example, both parent/community and teacher participants are aware of

aspects of the school system, such as formal parent meetings, which actually hinder families' participation in interactions even though the opposite is intended. The analogy that Elder-Vass (2012a; 2012b) provides of a torch or laser pointer being more powerful than its parts helps to explain how a social structure, such as that within a school, can exert power and influence beyond the sum of each participatory individual. The structures in place can position families on the peripherals of participation and decision-making, although teachers and senior leaders do not intend this to happen.

Summary and concluding comments.

Participants reveal a number of doubts which could make the ideal vision for home-school relationships hard to achieve. These concerns are supported by existing literature, illustrating the social and economic barriers which may prevent families from engaging more fully, students' lack of confidence in the school system, and misunderstandings which can take place between families and teachers. School structures are often biased in favour of the teachers' negotiation of meaning, resulting in families perceiving it is difficult to fully engage in and influence the direction of interaction.

It is worth emphasising that, if families have experienced negative situations, these experiences are likely to influence their perceptions on how future negotiations may unfold. Thus, even if schools adapt how they interact with families, families may continue to be wary about engaging with teachers.

Designing home-school relationships to help deliver ideal conditions

This section draws on the ideas from participants and from the report process which I undertook in order to discuss how ideal home-school relationships can be realised.

Participants' ideas for designing effective partnerships.

The design that appeals to parent/community and teacher participants is of a more flexible system for home-school relationships, with parent/community participants emphasising the importance of trust and of being heard. Teacher and student participants want to incorporate the idea of mentoring students. Students like the idea of mentoring because it can help teachers to better understand them, and enable them

to receive the support they needed. Practical suggestions from participants include: the employment of a co-ordinator to facilitate liaison between teachers and families (whom they called a *so'ataga*); the incorporation of home visits; and the use of physical space where parents, teachers and students can meet. When co-constructing the report with my cultural advisor, she wanted more professional development for teachers; and we both perceived the need for a group to meet regularly in order to share ideas, information, and good practice. This group would consist of representatives from the Pacific community and from each school to encourage a collaborative approach for Pacific learners.

In effect, participants' ideas are in line with existing good practice for effective home-school partnerships (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011).

Participants perceive that the ideal design should encompass values around flexibility, trust and reciprocity. Relationships should also be purposeful so that students receive the advice, guidance, and mentoring that they need, as literature states. Moreover, participants' practical suggestions as to how ideal relationships could be put into effect have been validated in the literature as effective means for strengthening connections with Pacific families. For instance, a co-ordinator's role and the use of home visits are recommended in the PISCPL project (Gorinski, 2005); mentoring for Pacific learners, which could be provided by teachers, the local community or external providers, has also been recommended (ERO, 2013); and the need for professional development for teachers of Pacific learners has been recognised (for example, Nicholas & Fletcher, 2015). In particular, it is noticeable how Pacific parent/community participants, who are informed about the school system, are also informed about solutions to develop relationships. For instance, both my cultural advisor and the Fale Pasifika committee want to see a co-ordinator (*so'ataga*) in place as they are confident such a person would help overcome many of the barriers to parental engagement.

This *so'ataga* would be a "knowledge broker" (Airini & et al., 2010, p.27; Wenger, 1998, 2000). Such individuals play a vital role by crossing boundaries between different communities of people, shifting knowledge to bring new ideas and perspectives; they facilitate both individual and collective growth (Wenger, 1998, 2000). Brokers are successful when they have experience of the worlds that they are interlinking which helps

with sharing diverse views (Hart et al., 2013). Moreover, a broker's ability to influence someone else is catalytic in that knowledge can spread as others become brokers themselves and also engage in the transfer of knowledge (Airini et al., 2010). Thus, the official role of a co-ordinator/so'ataga could help precipitate knowledge exchange that reaches beyond his or her individual efforts, and so create a momentum of change. Change is a key principle of AI in that the momentum of ideas, created through a labyrinth of exchanges, builds collective energy that leads to positive transformation.

Similarly, the recommendation in the report for a working group with school and Pacific community representatives supports the idea that learning opportunities are strengthened by a common purpose (Wenger, 1998). It would be a chance for trust to be established amongst individuals who might not normally interact with one another (Peters & Le Cornu, 2006). It could be a space to share stories and experiences, which aid the negotiation of meaning and encouragement of new ideas (Churchman, 2006; Peters & Le Cornu, 2006; Vaioleti, 2006). Significantly, however, such a group could provide opportunities for voices to be heard that might not normally have the opportunity. It would disrupt knowledge structures which typically influence educational establishments (Hart et al., 2013). As one principal said, the parent-teacher committee at his school was already working in this manner with the committee being run by parents and supported by the teachers. However, my cultural advisor and I had in mind a sharing of practices across the schools so that a collaborative spirit could widen the sharing of knowledge and reach out to more Pacific communities.

Lessons learnt from the report process.

Some of the participants' suggestions for developing home-school relationships were included in a report that I wrote in collaboration with key participants. The compilation of the report was, in itself, a form of reification in that it supported the negotiation of meaning. It was checked and further developed by my cultural advisor, and edited again after feedback from a school contact and from members of the Fale Pasifika. The report process was a useful vehicle for helping share knowledge across the schools and the Pacific community, and it prompted some action. I was informed that the Fale Pasifika intended to incorporate the report in a funding application for a so'ataga, and that it had

encouraged a Pacific teacher to step up as dean. However, one principal remained confused as to who to liaise with within the Pacific community over key decisions such as funding for a so'ataga.

An observation to make from this experience is that it can remain an ongoing challenge for schools to find the best way to work with the Pacific community; conversely, there are challenges for members of the Pacific community, too, as they fathom how to ensure their diverse voices can be heard. As the literature and findings from this study attest, there are many effective strategies which schools can employ to help engage Pacific families. However, this does not mean that transformative practices, which genuinely engage Pacific families in collaborative dialogue, have been embedded into the school system. It does not mean that *va*, the nurturing of relationships, has been integrated into systems across the school in a way that is meaningful to Pacific families. A collection of strategies does not necessarily mean that Pacific families can identify with school processes, that they know that their ways of thinking and acting are valued, and that they know how to influence the decisions of teachers. Possibly, such uncertainty leads to conflict within the Pacific community as they wonder how best to engage with schools and make their views known.

Sometimes, systems, which are intended to help families and the community engage more proactively, do not necessarily work. An example would be Boards of Trustees which were designed to draw parents and community members into management decisions, especially in areas where families have not been traditionally engaged (Fiske & Ladd 2017). Although it was hoped that the Boards would encourage greater family and community involvement, this has not necessarily happened (Robinson & Ward, 2004). Apart from the short supply of Pacific representatives stepping into the role (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, n.d.b), parents have tended not to question the principal (Robinson & Ward, 2004; Wylie, 2009). Parents may perceive they are on the peripherals of the interaction, unsure of what experiences to draw on in order to participate more fully (Wenger, 1998). Pacific parents may be respectfully attending to *va*, and find it inappropriate to ask questions (Tuafuti, 2010). However, even if parents have felt confident to articulate their ideas in this forum, there is no guarantee that these ideas are

representative of other families. There is no way of knowing if there has been any form of consultation with members of the wider community.

Creating opportunities to participate.

International literature demonstrates the possibility of a more inclusive approach whereby school structures can be specifically designed to involve parents in decision-making processes, enabling institutions to run as democratically as possible (Fischman & Gandin, 2016; Flecha, 2015; Gomez et al., 2011). Once the resolution has been made to become more democratic, schools develop practices so that it becomes an embedded policy to consult and engage with parents in a way that they can understand and participate. The European project “Schools as learning communities” illustrates how this could be established. Three phases take teachers, families, and community from being informed about the programme, to sharing experiences, to dreaming what they want. After that, committees are established in order to put into practice what has been envisaged. These phases are very similar to AI in that they encourage wide participation, and a collective vision towards which individuals (or groups of individuals) can work. The advantage of a scaffolding structure like this is that it enables change to occur “bottom up”. That is, a momentum of change can spread through the institution as opposed to a hierarchical “top down” power structure. Parents may sit on boards of trustees but, if decisions are made without involving any interaction with other families, they only provide the illusion of family engagement.

Wenger (1998) champions the power of individuals uniting through a common purpose to learn from one another. If organisations are to thrive, then opportunities to learn from one another and exercise creativity should be factored into its structure (Wenger, 2010). He recommends that organisations include space for communities of individuals to work together where they can make localised decisions, exercising accountability to one another. The parent-teacher committee at one of the schools acted in this manner. Significantly, it grew from the directive of parents and not of teachers, and all decisions were made consensually with the principal being kept informed. Coming together to share learning can occur in informal and spontaneous ways (Churchman, 2006; Stehlik, 2006); or be more structured, particularly if drawing together different worlds (Hart et

al., 2013). They do not need to happen on the school site. Currently, what may be missing in schools is a system that enables the flow of knowledge and ideas to run in different directions, from school out into the Pacific communities and vice versa. An analogy might be to refer to a network of roads where there are no clear routes between home and school so it is easy to get lost on the way. The consequence is that schools hold onto decision-making processes although, as the findings from this study have indicated, there is a strong capacity within the Pacific community to offer solutions that would enhance learning outcomes for Pacific students.

Summary and reflective comments on methodology.

Informed Pacific parent/community participants appreciate the need to bring the worlds of home and school closer together, and hope for funding to provide a so'ataga to act in a co-ordinating role. A so'ataga could be one way to facilitate the transfer of knowledge between home and school. However, as international models suggest, a strategic, whole-school approach can actually transform the way a school operates by engaging families more proactively in school processes and decisions. This kind of approach would mean there is a dedicated commitment to involve families in the exchange of knowledge and ideas, rather than simply relying on the role of a so'ataga.

The bricolage of frameworks used for this study has been an original way of analysing home-school relationships with Pacific families in order to gain insight of what works well and consider how relationships could be further developed. One unique feature is the combination of Appreciative Inquiry with Communities of Practice. Both theories consider the influence individuals have on the direction of an organisation when collective learning opportunities arise. AI highlights the power of positive framing to capture the collective force of individuals' strengths and creative energy; CoP highlights power dynamics in relationships so that attention is given to maximising individuals' contributions. Through AI, the strengths of participants have been recognised. For example, this study has emphasised the capability of members within the Pacific communities to work with schools and families to bring these worlds closer together. Through CoP, the imbalance of power in relationships has been highlighted. For example, Pacific families have sometimes been marginalised in situations where they would have

liked to have had their voices more clearly heard (such as with the boy who was removed from classes). CoP helps explore such tensions and considers how more equitable relationships can be created that permit the sharing of knowledge and decisions. Thus, voices can be heard and strengths recognised, facilitating positive change as advocated in AI.

The inclusion of *Teu le va* and TRM further strengthens this bricolage of frameworks, permitting analysis to consider relational values which resonate with Pacific families. Without attention to Pacific values, there is a danger that an analysis of a school's endeavours to engage with Pacific families is superficial. Such analysis does need to appreciate the interdependent nature of how Pacific peoples relate to one another; when relationships work well it is because *va*, relationship space, has been nurtured. The frameworks, *Teu le va* and TRM, recognise the constant care and attention needed to ensure that *va* is protected so that relationships can respectfully and successfully unfold. *Teu le va* recommends practical measures to help foster successful relationships in the implementation of research or policy. For instance, *Teu le va* recommends the inclusion of relevant stake holders from the beginning and the employment of a flexible and responsive approach depending upon the context. TRM recommends the importance of *talanoa* so that interactions adhere to values such as trust and reciprocity; *talanoa* is important across the whole research process and is not just confined to participant interviews. A significant feature of these frameworks is that they illustrate the wide lens through which to envisage the ongoing process of building and maintaining relationships. These frameworks are, therefore, key in the analysis of home-school relationships for Pacific families because they emphasise the comprehensive way in which to view interactions with Pacific families. They highlight the relevance of a whole-school, strategic approach rather than the review of scattered, siloed practices which may not sufficiently prioritise and protect *va*.

SECTION 2 Reflections and recommendations

Key points and implications

This chapter has so far discussed findings, tracking what was discovered about participants' strengths in home-school relationships, what they dreamed would be ideal relationships, what doubts they had about realising the ideal, and what they would like to see designed (or implemented) in order to achieve the destiny of ideal relationships. It has emphasised the significance of the frameworks. There are a number of important points to summarise and implications to raise.

Attending to relationships which validate knowledge exchange.

These findings draw on established evidence which confirms the reticence of many Pacific families to engage with the education system. However, this study highlights the expertise that exists amongst members of the Pacific community. These individuals are effective knowledge brokers in that they can engage in the worlds of school and their Pacific community, helping to draw the worlds closer together. Moreover, they can offer pragmatic solutions (such as the *so'ataga*) which could help alleviate barriers to family engagement. They are likely to understand how Pacific families' prioritisation of *va*, the relationship space, influences families' interactions with school. Protecting *va* acknowledges interconnectedness to others and to the ancestral land, which manifests in a concern for others' wellbeing and for the promotion of cultural identity. This helps explain why individuals, who identify with a Pacific culture, volunteer at school to support Pacific students' learning experiences. It may also explain why students appreciate the help of others but accept that learning is their responsibility. If the families' expectation is for them to succeed at learning, then they need to take responsibility for their studies in order to preserve harmonious relationships.

An implication for home-school relationships with Pacific families is the need to protect *va* if these relationships are to be culturally responsive. This is likely to involve, for instance, opportunity for *talanoa* where face-to-face interactions afford space to listen to the perspectives of families. Consideration could be given to other locations than the school site. It is likely to involve developing more opportunities for family members to be

involved in the discussion of students' goals and targets with teachers so that informed support can help students take responsibility for their learning. Discussions could well include extended members of the family. Currently, it appears that schools are capitalising on the benefits of va through the support they receive from Pacific parents and community members, whilst finding it hard to reciprocate and manifest it in their school structure. The danger is to overlook the powerful effects of attending to relationships. In doing so, this can make securing successful learning outcomes for students less likely. It is important to emphasise why relationships are so important since they are the medium through which meaning is negotiated. If families find it hard to align to the practices of the school, then it is hard to participate in interactions and freely exchange ideas. Families feel disempowered and mutually-beneficial learning opportunities are lost.

A more participatory structure.

Findings do support, however, the strong commitment of teachers to build relationships with families, to listen to their needs and support Pacific learners. Teachers are aware of the barriers to family engagement, of the negative impact of social-economic factors, of the need to support students' cultural identity; and they are conscious of the lack of time to develop more inclusive practices. An implication, therefore, is that some structural changes are required in the school system in order to create the conditions that can shape more inclusive and equitable relationships between teachers and families.

A more participatory structure would be helpful. For instance, there was confusion within the community over who should lead negotiations for a so'ataga which meant that the principal was confused over who to liaise with. Although members of the Pacific community can be well informed with solutions on how to develop home-school relationships, they may not know the best way to make their views known. Although parents can join the BOTs to participate in school decisions, such decisions are subject to influence from the principal; and the views of these parents may not be representative of the wider community. A school-wide commitment which supports opportunities for knowledge and ideas to be more readily exchanged between teachers and Pacific families is likely to create avenues for more voices to be heard, and a greater confidence from

parents to engage in the school system. If schools are able to resource a so'ataga, this would be one step in a positive direction to adopt a whole-school, strategic approach that prioritises relationships.

Application of theoretical frameworks in a school setting

This study, therefore, recognises the importance of a whole-school approach that opens pathways to knowledge exchange between home and school. The frameworks used in this study have facilitated a thorough exploration of relationships with Pacific families in a specific school setting. These frameworks could be applied to other school settings, offering a new approach for schools as they consider how best to support Pacific learners through home-school partnerships.

Appreciative Inquiry.

AI could be adapted to school contexts in order to facilitate a review and development of home-school practices.

There are a number of strategies that are recommended in the literature for schools wishing to develop their home-school practices (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011). Good practice recommends a whole-school approach with leadership support. It should be inclusive of community strengths and responsive to the needs of families. A needs analysis is also advised so that further developments are built on what has worked well. The 4-D cycle could be used to conduct a needs analysis. It could help discover stories of good practice, allow individuals to share dreams of what would be ideal, draw ideas together to design a collective vision, and undertake planning so as to move relationships towards the ideal destiny. A further D for doubts could be included in the cycle so that there is space to uncover problems before designing what would work better.

If this cycle included teachers, families, and members from the Pacific community in discussions, then it would also show a commitment to inclusiveness. It would provide an opportunity to listen to the needs of families and to benefit from the expertise of knowledgeable members of the community. The European model "Schools as learning

communities”, which has a similar approach, has already been used across schools in Europe with reputed success (Flecha, 2015). This indicates that a framework like the 4-D cycle could be a practical, adaptable, and effective tool for schools wishing to evaluate and develop their home-school relationships.

Communities of Practice.

A Communities of Practice framework has helped understand how relationships support shared learning experiences. It has helped with an appreciation of how organisations can support the transfer of knowledge in various ways, such as through the provision of networking opportunities where parents and teachers come together, or through knowledge brokers, or a mindful awareness of how school practices encourage or hinder participation in interactions.

Recommended good practice for home-school interactions emphasises that they should be collaborative, two-way, purposeful, and focussed on learning (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011). A CoP lens helps with an understanding of why these recommendations are so important, and how they might be achieved. It could help explore how best to open up the routes between home and school so as to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas in both directions, addressing any power imbalances. Professional development on CoP could be useful to schools to help support the development of home-school relationships.

Teu le va.

An appreciation of *teu le va*, upon which the frameworks *Teu le va* and TRM are founded, helps with the understanding of how schools can build successful relationships with Pacific families. Recommended good practice emphasises that values such as care, equity, trust, respect, and reciprocity be embedded in the way that home-school relationships unfold (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011). In order to facilitate interactions with Pacific families, these values need to be seen through a Pacific lens. Thus, TRM promotes the idea of using *talanoa* in home-school interactions; and *Teu le va*, the framework, promotes the idea of nurturing the relationship space when creating policy and strategic decisions related to home-school partnerships. Again,

teachers, who do not identify with a Pacific culture, would benefit from professional development so that home-school practices more readily incorporate Pacific values.

Key considerations.

Literature acknowledges that any development of home-school relationships takes time and commitment. Aside from professional development for teachers, there are implications for resourcing and personnel (Bull et al., 2008; Epstein, 1995; Goodhall & Vorhaus, 2011). For example, the PSCPL project illustrates how effective a co-ordinator can be with building home-school connections but that erratic funding de-stabilises the provision (Gorinski, 2005). Findings from this study highlight the pressure that some teachers feel in order to offer a better service to Pacific learners and families, although they are committed to doing so. Although schools are willing to develop their practices so as to be more inclusive towards Pacific families, time and resourcing implications often restrict what they do. Schools and Pacific communities could benefit from funding that supports a strategic focus on building home-school partnerships where the emphasis is on developing the quality of the relationship. Given the current government's commitment to addressing inequity in the education system that negatively impacts upon Pacific learners, this is an opportune moment to direct funding this way.

Summing up.

When considering recommended good practice for home, school and community partnerships (as illustrated in Figure 2 on page 29), it is possible to see how different elements of this good practice can be supported through the application of the frameworks used in this study. That is, AI can guide a strategic review and development of practices, aided by principles from *Teu le va* to ensure that Pacific values are incorporated; CoP can guide the development of quality interactions, underpinned by TRM to ensure the principles of talanoa are included. See Figure 5 on page 253. The combination of these frameworks provides a unique means for reviewing home-school relationships. If applied to a school context, they could facilitate the opening up of pathways that lead to a genuine sharing of knowledge and ideas between teachers and families.

Figure 5

Frameworks applied to good practice in home-school partnerships

A road map for developing home-school partnerships.

It is, therefore, possible to consider how these frameworks could become a road map for schools to use in order to review and develop home-school partnerships with Pacific families. Schools could operate a 5-D cycle as a systematic way in which to seek the perspectives of teachers, students and families on the formation of these relationships in order to:

- discover people's strengths and existing good practice
- dream of what would be ideal relationships
- permit doubts or uncertainties to be expressed
- design the future vision
- plan and work towards the desired vision or destiny for home-school relationships

The frameworks *Teu le va*, TRM and CoP could influence professional development in order to raise awareness of Pacific relational values and of how to address power dynamics in home-school relations, strengthening the effectiveness of the 5- D cycle. See Figure 6 below. Its cyclical structure might align with a school year.

This is a strength-based and inclusive approach, designed to build relationships across the school and community. Whilst schools may be aware of useful strategies to help build relationships, the application of the 5-D cycle has the potential to create systematic change. It could open pathways for sharing knowledge and decisions that previously may not have existed.

Figure 6

The 5-D cycle

Limitations

Although many of the findings of this study are supported by existing literature, its limitation is its specific context and sample size, meaning it cannot be generalised to a wide population. Also, whilst every effort was made to be inclusive, it did not capture all possible perspectives. In particular, a wide range of Pacific cultures was not represented in the parent and community participants. However, I was guided by a cultural advisor who knew the community well and could offer valuable insight about Pacific families in the area. Furthermore, teachers self-selected in order to participate. Therefore, I interviewed teachers who expressed an interest in the study. The implication is that there may have been teachers who were not committed to developing relationships with Pacific students and their families and who chose not to participate in the study. However, teachers spoke of the commitment of the staff as a whole. As one senior leader said, “We are trying our best!”. Furthermore, this study was reliant upon the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. It is possible that some Pacific participants were deterred from speaking openly because my background was not Pacific. My understanding of Pacific values has been filtered through the lens of someone whose background is European and, therefore, subject to misinterpretation. However, the time I spent in the community enabled me to build strong relationships and show that I was committed. Once trust had been established in a relationship (such as with my cultural advisor), this facilitated connections and trust-building with others.

One limitation was not being previously known to the students which made some reserved when speaking with me. It had helped attending cultural performance practices and church. Nevertheless, I was still concerned that some may have answered compliantly rather than honestly. On reflection, it was noticeable that a number had been able to provide specific detail (about career, study choices and so on), whilst others answered with general statements. When students did talk specifically, relaying actions and decisions in detail, I felt more comfortable that they were speaking openly and honestly to me. Some students did appear very open with me, confiding in sensitive issues; in these cases, I asked their permission to share with a member of staff.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to existing literature

on the nature of home-school relationships for Pacific learners in New Zealand secondary schools. It is anticipated that the findings and discussion will be of relevance to similar contexts in New Zealand where schools are working with Pacific families, offering further insight as to how relationships may be enhanced.

Closing thoughts and recommendations

This study has highlighted the benefits of schools working with Pacific families and the community to support students' learning. It has acknowledged how members of the Pacific community have expert knowledge that can positively influence the quality of home-school relationships. The Appreciative Inquiry lens is a reminder that transformation can come from capturing a collective vision that has engaged different perspectives. Adjusting school systems to be more inclusive of Pacific family and community perspectives can have a positive impact on student learning outcomes, guiding students towards the bright futures that families aspire for them. Sometimes, when we are part of an organisation like a school, there seems safety in hierarchical structures where knowledge is shared and decisions are executed in a linear fashion. However, opening up pathways and avenues to allow for different voices to influence decision-making brings new possibilities and the potential for creative solutions.

This study recommends the application of the methodological frameworks that have been used in its design. These frameworks are an innovative and systematic way in which to view home-school relationships, providing opportunity for a Pacific lens to influence interactions and for genuinely collaborative partnerships which capitalise on people's strengths. This research adds to the existing body of knowledge on relevant research literature by delivering a road map to facilitate positive change and promote inclusivity in relationships between schools and Pacific families.

Further research (such as an action research project) could make use of the frameworks to:

- measure and evaluate home-school relationships for Pacific families;
- develop a whole-school approach for these relationships.

Research could also consider the role of funding and how it might facilitate shared responsibility between schools and communities.

The influence of my cultural advisor comes to the fore. It was her hope that schools and families form strong partnerships so that a united energy makes a positive difference to Pacific young people. Her message was:

E mama le avega
Pe a tatou tausoa fa'atasi

The load will be lighter if we all stand together.

References

- Afamasaga, G. T. (2007). Education in a Pacific context: Enhancing ownership of the processes of education. *Pacific-Asian Education*, 19(2), 7-18.
- Airini, Anae, M., & Mila-Schaaf, K. (2010). *Teu le va-relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education: a collective approach to knowledge generation & policy development for action towards Pasifika education success: report to the Ministry of Education / by Airini, Melani Anae and Karlo Mila-Schaaf with Eve Coxon, Dinae Mara & Kabini Sanga.*
- Allen, P., Taleni, T., & Robertson, J. (2009). "In Order to Teach You, I Must Know You." The Pasifika Initiative: A Professional Development Project for Teachers. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 44(2), 47-62.
- Alton-Lee, A. (2003). *Quality teaching for diverse students in schooling: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Education.
- Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. A. (2000). *Doing Critical Management Research*. United Kingdom: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Amit, V. (2010). Community as good to think with: The productiveness of strategic ambiguities. *Anthropologica*, 52(2), 357-375.
- Amituanai-Toloe, M. (2009). *Ua aoia le manogi o le lolo Pasifika schooling improvement research: summary report / Meaola Amituanai-Toloe ... [et al.]*. Retrieved from Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Education.
- Anae, M. (2010). Research for better Pacific schooling in New Zealand: Teu le va – a Samoan perspective. *MAI review*, 1, 1-24.
- Anae, M. (2016). Teu Le Va: Samoan Relational Ethics. *Knowledge Cultures*, 4(3), 117-130.
- Anae, M., Coxon, E., Mara, D., Wendt-Samu, T., & Finau, C. (2001). *Pasifika education research guidelines*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Andrade, A. D. (2009). Interpretive research aiming at theory building: Adopting and adapting the case study design. *The qualitative report*, 14(1), 42.
- Bamberg, M. (2012). Why narrative? *Narrative Inquiry*, 22(1), 202-210.
- Barcham, M., Scheyvens, R., & Overton, J. (2009). New Polynesian triangle: Rethinking Polynesian migration and development in the Pacific. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 50(3), 322-337.
- Bedford, R., Bedford, C., Wall, J., & Young, M. (2017). Managed Temporary Labour Migration of Pacific Islanders to Australia and New Zealand in the Early Twenty-first Century. *Australian Geographer*, 48(1), 37-57.

- Bennett, J., Brunton, M., Bryant-Tokalau, J., Sopoaga, F., Weaver, N., & Witte, G. (2013). Pacific Research Protocols from the University of Otago. *The Contemporary Pacific* 25(1), 95-124. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Benseman, J., Coxon, E., Anderson, H., & Anae, M. (2006). Retaining non-traditional students: lessons learnt from Pasifika students in New Zealand. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 25(2), 147-162.
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative research*, 15(2), 219-234.
- Bernstein, R. J. (2015). *Pragmatic encounters*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Biddulph, F., Biddulph, J., Biddulph, C., & Counts, E. (2003). *The complexity of community and family influences on children's achievement in New Zealand: Best evidence synthesis*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). The forms of capital. (1986). *Cultural theory: An anthology*, 81-93.
- Bull, A., Brooking, K., & Campbell, R. (2008). *Successful home-school partnerships*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social Constructionism* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Bushe, G. (2010). Commentary on "Appreciative Inquiry as a Shadow Process". *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(3), 234.
- Bushe, G. R. (2013). Generative process, generative outcome: The transformational potential of appreciative inquiry. In *Organizational generativity: The appreciative inquiry summit and a scholarship of transformation* (pp. 89-113). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Bushe, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When Is Appreciative Inquiry Transformational? *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 41(2), 161-181.
- Bruce Ferguson, P. (2008). *Literature review on the experiences of Pasifika learners in the classroom* / P.B. Ferguson ... [et al.]. In R. Gorinski, T. W. Samu, D. L. Mara, E. New Zealand. Ministry of, & R. New Zealand Council for Educational (Eds.). Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Education.
- Catsambis, S. (2001). Expanding knowledge of parental involvement in children's secondary education: Connections with high school seniors' academic success. *Social Psychology of Education*, 5(2), 149-177.
- Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 2(2), 1-13.

- Calabrese, R., Hester, M., Friesen, S., & Burkhalter, K. (2010). Using Appreciative Inquiry to Create a Sustainable Rural School District and Community. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(3), 250-265.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Chu, C., Glasgow, A., Rimoni, F., Hodis, M., & Meyer, L. (2013). *An analysis of recent Pasifika education research literature to inform improved outcomes for Pasifika learners*. Wellington. Jessie Hetherington Centre for Educational Research, Victoria University of Wellington.
- Churchill, S. (2011). Empirical Variations of Relationality and the Question of Ontology: A Comment on Ken Gergen's Relational Being. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 24(4), 297-303.
- Churchman, D. (2006). Safeguarding academic communities: retaining texture and passion in the academy. In T. Stehlik, & P. Carden (Eds.). *Beyond Communities of Practice Theory as Experience* (pp. pp.11- 30). Maleny: eContent Management Pty Ltd.
- Ciabattari, T. (2010). Cultural Capital, Social Capital, and Educational Inequality. *Childhood Education*, 87(2), 119-121.
- Clarke, H. Egan, B., Fletcher, L., & Ryan, C, (2006). Creating case studies of practice through Appreciative Inquiry. *Educational Action Research*, 14(3), 407-422.
- Clayton, K. A. (2013). Looking beneath the surface: a critical reflection on ethical issues and reflexivity in a practitioner inquiry. *Reflective Practice*, 14(4), 506-518.
- Clinton, J., & Hattie, J. (2013). New Zealand students' perceptions of parental involvement in learning and schooling. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 33(3), 324-337.
- Coghlan, A. T., Preskill, H., & Catsambas, T. (2003). An overview of appreciative inquiry in evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2003(100), 5-22.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2001). *Research Methods in Education* (5th ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Cooperrider, D. (1986). *Appreciative Inquiry: toward a methodology for understanding and enhancing organizational innovation*. (PhD), Case Western Reserve University.
- Cooperrider, D. (2012). Three circles of strength revolution. *Leadership Excellence*, 3.
- Cooperrider, D. L., & Avital, M. (2004). *Introduction: Advances in appreciative inquiry—constructive discourse and human organization* *Constructive Discourse and Human Organization* (pp. XI-XXXIV): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Cooperrider, D. L., & Srivastva, S. (2013). A Contemporary Commentary on Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life. *Organizational Generativity: The Appreciative Inquiry Summit and a Scholarship of Transformation* (pp. 3-67).
- Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. (2000). A positive revolution in change: Appreciative Inquiry. In D. Cooperrider, D. Whitney, & T. F. Yaeger (Eds.), *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking human organization toward a positive theory of change*. Champaign, Illinois: Stipes Publishing.
- Cooperrider, D., & Whitney, D. (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change* (first ed.). Berkeley, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Cox, A. (2005). What are communities of practice? A comparative review of four seminal works.: *Journal of Information Science*, 31(6), 527-540.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Corbin Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Cromby, J., & Nightingale, D. J. (1999). What's wrong with social constructionism. *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice*, 1-19.
- Cummins, J. (2009). Pedagogies of choice: challenging coercive relations of power in classrooms and communities. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 12(3), 261-271.
- Davidson-Toumu'a, R., & Dunbar, K. (2009). Understanding the experiences of Pacific students and facilitating socio-cultural adjustment into higher education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *Journal of the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 33, 69 - 88.
- Delpit, L. D. (1988). The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-298.
- Dematteo, D., & Reeves, S. (2011). A critical examination of the role of appreciative inquiry within an interprofessional education initiative. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, 25(3), 203-208.
- Department of Labour (2012). *Return Migration and Earnings of Workers in New Zealand's Recognised Employer Scheme*. Retrieved from www.mbie.govt.nz/publications-research/research/migration/return-migration-and-earnings-of-workers-in-nz-rse.pdf

- Desforges, C., & Abouchaar, A. (2003). *The impact of parental involvement, parental support and family education on pupil achievement and adjustment: A literature review*. Nottingham, UK: DfES Publications.
- Díez, J., Gatt, S., & Racionero, S. (2011). Placing Immigrant and Minority Family and Community Members at the School's Centre: the role of community participation. *European Journal of Education*, 46(2), 184-196.
- Duncanson, M., Oben, G., Wicken, A., Richardson, G., Adams, J., & Pierson, M. (2018). *Child Poverty Monitor 2018: Technical Report* (National Report). New Zealand Child and Youth Epidemiology Service. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10523/8697>
- Durrheim, K. (1997). Social constructionism, discourse, and psychology. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 27(3), 175-182.
- Education Review Office [ERO] (n.d.). Early childhood and school reports. Retrieved from www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports
- Education Review Office [ERO] (2008). *Partners in learning: Parent voices*. Wellington, NZ: Author.
- Education Review Office [ERO] (2013). *Making connections for Pacific Learners' Success*. Education Review Office. Downloaded from: <http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports/Making-Connections-for-Pacific-Learners-Success-November-2013>.
- Education Review Office [ERO] (2015). *Educationally powerful connections with parents and whanau*. Education Review Office. Downloaded from: <https://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/educationally-powerful-connections-with-parents-and-whanau/>
- Education.govt.nz (n.d.a) Ministry funding deciles. Retrieved from <https://parents.education.govt.nz/secondary-school/secondary-schooling-in-nz/deciles/>
- Education.govt.nz (n.d.b) Education Gazette. Retrieved from <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/family-sootaga-programme-encourages-whanau-participation/>.
- Engward, H. (2013). Understanding grounded theory. *Nursing standard* (Royal College of Nursing (Great Britain): (1987), 28(7), 37-41.
- Edley, N. (2001). Unravelling social constructionism. *Theory and Psychology*, 11(3), 433-441.
- Elder-Vass, D. (2012a). *The reality of social construction* / Dave Elder-Vass. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elder-Vass, D. (2012b). Towards a realist social constructionism. *Sociologia* (70), n/a.

- Elder-Vass, D. (2014). Debate: seven ways to be a realist about language. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 44(3), 249-267.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701.
- Fa'avae, D., Jones, A., & Manu'atu, L. (2016). Talanoa'i 'a e talanoa - talking about talanoa: Some dilemmas of a novice researcher. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 12(2), 138-150.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2014). The interface of Pacific and other knowledges in a supplementary education site. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 44(6), 874-894.
- Farnsworth, V., Kleanthous, I., & Wenger-Trayner, E. (2016). Communities of practice as a social theory of learning: A conversation with Etienne Wenger. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(2), 139-160.
- Farrelly, T., & Nabobo-Baba, U. (2014). Talanoa as empathic apprenticeship. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(3), 319-330.
- Finegold, M. A., Holland, B. M., & Lingham, T. (2002). Appreciative Inquiry and Public Dialogue: An `Approach to Community Change.(Author abstract). *Public Organization Review*, 2(3), 235.
- Finlay, L. (2005). Reflexive Embodied Empathy: A Phenomenology of Participant-Researcher Intersubjectivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 33(4), 271-292.
- Fischman, G. E., & Gandin, L. A. (2016). The Pedagogical and Ethical Legacy of a "Successful" Educational Reform: The "Citizen School Project". *International Review of Education*, 62(1), 63-89.
- Fiske, E. B., & Ladd, H. F. (2017). Self-governing schools, parental choice, and the need to protect the public interest. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 99(1), 31-36.
- Fitzgerald, S. P., Oliver, C., & Hoxsey, J. C. (2010). Appreciative inquiry as a shadow process. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 19(3), 220-233.
- Flavell, M. (2014). *Pacific Island families' perceptions of the parental role in the learning process – in a high school setting*. Unpublished master's thesis, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Flavell, M. (2017). Listening to and learning from Pacific families: The art of building home-school relationships at secondary level to support achievement. *Set: Research information for teachers* (2), 42-48.
- Flecha, R. (2015). *Successful educational actions for inclusion and social cohesion in Europe*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & O'Regan, B. (2009). Pasifika students: Teachers and parents voice their perceptions of what provides supports and barriers to Pasifika students' achievement in literacy and learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(1), 24-33.
- Fletcher, J., Parkhill, F., Fa'afoi, A., & Taleni, L. (2008). Influences on Pasifika Students' Achievement in Literacy. *Set 1: Research Information for Teachers*, 4-9.
- Gergen, K. J. (2001). Construction in Contention: Toward consequential resolutions. *Theory & Psychology*, 11(3), 419-432. (Vol. 11, pp. 419-432).
- Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (2011a). Relational Being: A Brief Introduction. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 24(4), 280-282.
- Gergen, K. (2011b). The Self as Social Construction. *Psychological Studies*, 56(1), 108-116.
- Gergen, K. J. (2011c). Relational Being in Question: A Reply to My Colleagues. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 24(4), 314-320.
- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. (2004). *Social construction: Entering the dialogue*. Tsaos Institute.
- Gergen, M. M., Gergen, K. J., & Barrett, F. (2004). Appreciative Inquiry as Dialogue: Generative and Transformative. *Advances in Appreciative Inquiry*, 1, 3-27.
- Gergen, K. J., Josselson, R., & Freeman, M. (2015). The promises of qualitative inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 70(1), 1-9.
- Giles, D., & Alderson, S. (2008). An Appreciative Inquiry into the Transformative Learning Experiences of Students in a Family Literacy Project. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 48(3), 465-478.
- Golembiewski, R. (1998). APPRECIATING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: DIAGNOSIS AND PERSPECTIVES ON HOW TO DO BETTER. *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, 11, 1.
- Goodall, J. (2013). Parental engagement to support children's learning: a six point model. *School Leadership & Management*, 33(2), 133-150.
- Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2014). Parental involvement to parental engagement: a continuum. *Educational Review*, 66(4), 399-410.
- Goodall, J., & Vorhaus, J. (2011). *Review of Best Practice in Parental Engagement*. Department for Education.

- Gómez, A., Puigvert, L., & Flecha, R. (2011). Critical Communicative Methodology: Informing Real Social Transformation Through Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(3), 235-245.
- Gorinski, R. (2005). *Pacific Islands school community parent liaison project case study*: Research Division, Ministry of Education.
- Gorinski, R., & Fraser, C. (2006). Literature review on the effective engagement of Pasifika parents and communities in education: Research Division, Ministry of Education.
- Gorski, P. (2013). As Critical Realism Meets Social Constructionism. Dave Elder-Vass, *The Reality of Social Construction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012). *European Journal of Sociology*, 54(03), 461-465.
- Gorski, P. (2016). Rethinking the Role of "Culture" in Educational Equity: From Cultural Competence to Equity Literacy. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 18(4), 221-226.
- Grant, S., & Humphries, M. (2006). Critical evaluation of appreciative inquiry Bridging an apparent paradox. *Action Research*, 4(4), 401-418.
- Grant, C. A., & Sleeter, C. E. (1988). Race, class, and gender and abandoned dreams. *Teachers College Record*, 90(1), 19-40.
- Green, A. E., & Kearney, J. F. (2011). Participatory action learning and action research for self-sustaining community development: Engaging Pacific Islanders in Southeast Queensland.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), 105.
- Halapua, S. (2007) *Talanoa – Talking from the heart*. Retrieved from https://www.sgi.org/resources/sgi-quarterly-magazine/0701_47.html
- Halaweh, M., Fidler, C., & McRobb, S. (2008). Integrating the Grounded Theory Method and Case Study Research Methodology Within IS Research: A Possible 'Road Map'. *ICIS 2008 Proceedings*, 165.
- Handley, K., Sturdy, A., Fincham, R., & Clark, T. (2006). Within and Beyond Communities of Practice: Making Sense of Learning Through Participation, Identity and Practice. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(3), 641-653.
- Hart, A., Davies, C., Aumann, K., Wenger, E., Aranda, K., Heaver, B., & Wolff, D. (2013). Mobilising knowledge in community–university partnerships: what does a community of practice approach contribute? *Contemporary Social Science*, 8(3), 278-291.
- Harris, C. (2013). From the rubble: Improving community and school engagement. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice* 28(1), 83-94.

- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2007). *Engaging parents in raising achievement: do parents know they matter?: a research project commissioned by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust*. Retrieved from: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/6639/1/DCSF-RW004.pdf>
- Hau'ofa, E. (1999). Our Sea of Islands. In V. Hereniko & R. Wilson (Eds.), *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (pp. 27 - 38). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Hill, J., & Hawk, K. (1998). Aiming for student achievement: How teachers can understand and better meet the needs of Pacific Island and Maori students. *Set: Research information for teachers*. Wellington: Australian and New Zealand Councils for Educational Research.
- Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(3), 740-763.
- Hunter, R. (2010). Changing Roles and Identities in the Construction of a Community of Mathematical Inquiry. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, 13(5), 397-409.
- Ioane, J. (2017). Talanoa with Pasifika youth and their families. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 46(3), 38.
- Ihara, E. S., & Vakalahi, H. F. O. (2011). Spirituality: The Essence of Wellness Among Tongan and Samoan Elders. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 30(4), 405-421.
- Ioane, J. (2017). Talanoa with Pasifika youth and their families. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 46(3), 38.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban Education*, 40(3), 237-269.
- Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The Relationship between Parental Involvement and Urban Secondary School Student Academic Achievement A Meta-Analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82-110.
- Johansson, R. (2007). On case study methodology. *Open House International*, 32(3), 48-54.
- Johansson Fua, S. (2009). Ko hota fa'ungamotu'a ko hota kaha'u - A knowledge system for redesigning Tongan curriculum. In K. Sanga & K. H. Thaman (Eds.), *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific: Challenges and Prospects* (pp. 196 - 221). Wellington: Victoria University
- Ka'ili O, T. (2005). Tauhi vaha'a: Nurturing Tongan Sociospatial Ties in Maui and Beyond. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 17(1), 83-114.

- Ka'ili, T., & Māhina, H. O. (2017a). TALATEU: Introduction. In *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations* (pp. 3-11). TUCSON: University of Arizona Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt1t89kr9.6>
- Ka'ili, T., & Māhina, 'O. (2017b). THEORIZING TĀ-VĀ. In *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations* (pp. 34-47). TUCSON: University of Arizona Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/stable/j.ctt1t89kr9.9>
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2001). Describing the Bricolage: Conceptualizing a New Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 679-692.
- Koya, C. F. (2009). Sustainable living in the Pacific: Exploring the role of multiculturalism in teacher education. In K. Sanga & K. H. Thaman (Eds.), *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific: Challenges and Prospects* (pp. 102 - 123). Wellington: Victoria University.
- Kozik, P. L., Cooney, B., Vinciguerra, S., Gradel, K., & Black, J. (2009). Promoting Inclusion in Secondary Schools through Appreciative Inquiry. *American Secondary Education*, 38(1), 77-91.
- Kubiak, C., Cameron, S., Conole, G., Fenton-O'Creevy, M., Mylrea, P., Rees, E., & Shreeve, A. (2015). Multimembership and identification. In E. Wenger-Trayner, M. Fenton-O'Creevy, S. Hutchinson, C. Kubiak, & B. Wenger-Trayner (Eds.), *Learning in Landscapes of Practice* (pp. 13 - 29). Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Lareau, A. (2015). Cultural knowledge and social inequality. *American Sociological Review*, 80(1), 1-27.
- Lareau, A., & Horvat, E. M. (1999). Moments of social inclusion and exclusion race, class, and cultural capital in family-school relationships. *Sociology of education*, 37-53.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation / Jean Lave, Etienne Wenger*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, J. (2003). Design Issues. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. In (pp.47-76). Sage publications.
- Lilomaiaava-Doktor, S. (2009). Beyond "migration": Samoan population movement (malaga) and the geography of social space (va). *Contemporary Pacific*, 21(1), 1-33,212.
- Lub, V. (2015). Validity in Qualitative Evaluation: Linking Purposes, Paradigms, and Perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 10 December 2015, Vol.14(5).
- Lui, D. (2007). Spiritual Injury: A Samoan Perspective on Spirituality's Impact on Mental Health: Contemporary Challenges in Mental Health for Pacific Peoples. In P.

- Culbertson & M. Nelson Agee (Eds.), *Penina Uliuli* (pp. 66 - 76): University of Hawai'i Press.
- Madjar, I., McKinley, E., Deynzer, M., & Van Der Merwe, A. (2010). *Stumbling blocks or stepping stones? Students' experience of transition from low-mid decile schools to university*. Auckland: Starpath Project, University of Auckland. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/about/research/docs/starpath/Stumbling-blocks-or-stepping-stones-Research-Report-25-March-2010.pdf>
- Māhina, 'O. (2004). Art as tā-vā "time-space" transformation. In T. L. Baba, O. Māhina, N. Williams, & U. Nabobo-Baba (Eds.), *Researching Pacific and Indigenous Peoples: Issues and Perspectives* (pp. 86 - 93). Centre for Pacific Studies: The University of Auckland.
- Māhina, 'O. (2008). From Vale (Ignorance) to 'ILO (Knowledge) to Poto (Skill) the Tongan Theory of Ako (Education): Theorising Old Problems Anew. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 4(1), 67-96.
- Manu'atu, L. (2017). Mālie Conceptualizing: A New Philosophy of Tongan Education. In P. M.A. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2016). *Designing qualitative research*: Sage publications.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). *Designing a qualitative study*. The Sage handbook of applied social research methods, 214-253.
- Merriam, S. (2010). Qualitative case studies. In *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 456-462). Elsevier.
- McDonald, L., & Lipine, T. (2011). Pasifika education policy, research and voices: students on the road to tertiary success. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, (21), 143-164.
- Michael, S. (2005). The promise of appreciative inquiry as an interview tool for field research. *Development in Practice*, 15(2), 222-230.
- Middleton, S. (2013, August 17). *Is the board of trustees model working?* Retrieved from <https://educationcentral.co.nz/is-the-board-of-trustees-model-working-2/>
- Mila, K. (2013). Only One Deck. In M. Rashbrooke (Ed.), *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis* (pp. 91 - 104). Wellington: BWB Texts.
- Mila-Schaaf, K. (2009). Pacific health research guidelines: The cartography of an ethical relationship. *International Social Science Journal*, 60(195), 135-143.
- Mila-Schaaf, K., & Robinson, E. (2010). Polycultural' capital and educational achievement among NZ-born Pacific peoples. *Mai review*, 1, 1-18.

- Milne, A. (2009). *Colouring in the white spaces*. Retrieved from.
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57438b77f699bbfae400bbca/t/5750ead5f850827880ea8e39/1464920802604/Colouring+in+the+White+Spaces+ +Cultural+Identity+and+Learning+in+School.pdf>
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. (n.d.). *Pacific Peoples Labour trend markets*. Retrieved from <https://www.mbie.govt.nz>
- Ministry of Education (2012a) *Pasifika Education Plan 2013 – 2017*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>.
- Ministry of Education (2012b) *Pasifika education research priorities: using research to realise our vision for Pasifika learners*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from
https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/pasifika_education/107996
- Ministry of Education (2013) *Ka Hikitia: Accelerating Success 2013 – 2017*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from:
www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Strategies-and-policies/Ka-Hikitia/KaHikitiaAcceleratingSuccessEnglish.pdf
- Ministry of Education (2018) *Tapasā: Cultural competencies framework for teachers of Pacific learners*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from:
<http://pasifika.tki.org.nz/Tapasa>
- Ministry of Pacific Peoples (2016). *Contemporary Pacific Status Report*. Wellington: New Zealand. Retrieved from:<http://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Contemporary-Report-Web.pdf>
- Nakhid, C. (2003). " Intercultural" Perceptions, Academic Achievement, and the Identifying Process of Pacific Islands Students in New Zealand Schools. *Journal of Negro Education*, 297-317.
- Nabobo-Baba, U. (2009). Fijian Epistemology: Examining aspects of Vugalei cultural pedagogies, processes and possibl futures. In K. sanga & K. H. Thaman (Eds.), *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific: Challenges and Prospects* (pp. 137 - 158). Wellington: Victoria University.
- New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (2013). *Under pressure: a detailed report into insecure work in New Zealand*. Retrieved from: <http://www.union.org.nz>
- Nicholas, K., & Fletcher, J. (2015). What supports 11- to 13-year-old Pasifika students in mathematics learning in New Zealand classrooms? *Education 3-13*, 1-15.
- Nicholas, K., Fletcher, J., & Parkhill, F. (2013). Supporting 11 to 13 year old students' reading: perceptions of parents. *International Journal About Parents in Education*, 7(1).

- Nightingale, D. J., & Cromby, J. (2002). Social Constructionism as Ontology. *Theory & Psychology*, 12(5), 701-713.
- NZQA (n.d.) NCEA. Retrieved from <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/>
- NZQA (2018). *Annual Report on NCEA and New Zealand Scholarship Data and Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Publications/stats-reports/ncea-annual-report-2017.pdf>
- NZSTA (n.d.a). *Understanding the work of the board*. Retrieved from <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/understanding-the-work-of-the-board/>
- NZSTA (n.d.b). *Effective co-governance the key to success and wellbeing for 21st century schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.nzsta.org.nz/assets/Media-Statements/Effective-co-governance-the-key-to-success-and-wellbeing-for-21st-century-schools.pdf>.
- Osberg, D. (2010). Knowledge is Not Made for Understanding; It is Made for Cutting. *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 7(2), iii-viii.
- ‘Otunuku, M. a. (2011). *Tongan conceptions of schooling in New Zealand: Insights and possible solutions to underachievement*. ResearchSpace@ Auckland.
- Otsuka, S. (2005). *Talanoa Research: Culturally Appropriate Research Design in Fiji*. Paper presented at the International Education Research Conference: Creative Dissent-Constructive Solutions [On-line], Melbourne, Australia.
- Paige, C., Peters, R., Parkhurst, M., Beck, L. L., Hui, B., May, V., & Tanjasiri, S. P. (2015). Enhancing Community-Based Participatory Research Partnerships Through Appreciative Inquiry. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action*, 9(3), 457-463.
- Pasifika Futures (2017). *Pasifika People in New Zealand HOW ARE WE DOING?* Auckland: Pasifika Futures. Retrieved from http://pasifikafutures.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/PF_HowAreWeDoing-RD2-WEB2.pdf.
- Patton, M. (2003). Inquiry into Appreciative Evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*(100), 85-98.
- Peters, J., & Le Cornu, R. (2006). Beyond communities of practice: learning circles for transformational school leadership (pp. 107-132). In T. Stehlik, & P. Carden (Eds.). *Beyond Communities of Practice Theory as Exerience* (pp. pp.11- 30). Maleny: eContent Management Pty Ltd.
- Probst, B. (2016). Both/and: researcher as participant in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative research journal*, 16(2), 149-158.
- Rashbrooke, M. (2014). *The inequality debate: an introduction* / Max Rashbrooke: Wellington : BWB Texts.

- Ridley-Duff, R. J., & Duncan, G. (2015). What is critical appreciation? Insights from studying the critical turn in an appreciative inquiry. *Human Relations*, 68(10), 1579-1599.
- Reed, J. (2007). *Appreciative inquiry: Research for change*. Sage.
- Refiti, A. (2002). Making space: Polynesian architecture in Aoteroa/New Zealand. In S. Mallon & P. F. Pereira (Eds.), *Pacific art niu sila: The Pacific dimensions of contemporary New Zealand art* (pp. 209 - 225). Wellington: Te Papa Press.
- Reynolds, Martyn. ""They Always Have My Back: A Strengths-Based Approach to Understanding the Value(s) of Pasifika Brotherhoods in Education in Aotearoa New Zealand." *International Journal of Multicultural Education* 20.2 (2018): 1-23. Web
- Roberts, J. (2006). Limits to communities of practice. *Journal of management studies*, 43(3), 623-639.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68-78.
- Samu, T. W. (2006). The 'Pasifika Umbrella' and Quality Teaching: Understanding and Responding to the Diverse Realities within. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 12, 35-49.
- Samu, T. (2010). Pacific education: An Oceanic perspective. *MAI Review (Online)*, MAI review (Online), 2010, Issue.1.
- Sanga, K. (2004). Making Philosophical Sense of Indigenous Pacific Research. In T. L. Baba, 'O. Māhina, N. Williams, & U. Nabobo-Baba (Eds.), *Researching Pacific and Indigenous Peoples: Issues and Perspectives* (pp. 41 - 52). Centre for Pacific Studies: The University of Auckland.
- Sattin-Bajaj, C. (2014). *Unaccompanied minors: immigrant youth, school choice, and the pursuit of equity* / Carolyn Sattin-Bajaj. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press.
- Savvides, N., Al-Youssef, J., Colin, M., & Garrido, C. (2014). Journeys into Inner/Outer Space: reflections on the methodological challenges of negotiating insider/outsider status in international educational research. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 9(4), 412-425.
- Schwandt, T., Lincoln, Y., Guba, E., & Mathison, S. (2007). Judging interpretations: But is it rigorous? trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 2007(114), 11-25.
- Seiuli, B. M. S. (2013). Uputaua approach: researching Samoan communities. In N. Seve-Williams, M. Taumoepeau, & E. Saafi (Eds.), *Pacific Edge: Transforming knowledge*

into innovative practice. *Research papers from the fourth Health Research Council of New Zealand Pacific Health Research Fono*. (pp. 71-86): Health Research Council New Zealand.

- Sheldon, S. (2002). Parents' social networks and beliefs as predictors of parent involvement. *The Elementary School Journal*, 102(4), 301-316.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, 22(2), 63-75.
- Shotter, J. (1993). *Becoming someone: Identity and belonging*: Sage publications.
- Shotter, J. (1995). A Show of Agency is Enough. *Theory & Psychology*, 5(3), 383-390.
- Shotter, J. (2012). Gergen, Confluence, and his Turbulent, Relational Ontology: The Constitution of Our Forms of Life within Ceaseless, Unrepeatable, Intermingling Movements. *Psychological Studies*, 57(2), 134-141.
- Shotter, J. (2013). Agentive Spaces, the "Background", and Other Not Well Articulated Influences in Shaping our Lives. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 43(2), 133.
- Shotter, J. (2016). Undisciplining Social Science: Wittgenstein and the Art of Creating Situated Practices of Social Inquiry. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 46(1), 60-83.
- Siope, A. (2011). The schooling experiences of Pasifika students. *Set: Research information for teachers*(3), 10.
- Siope, A. (2013). 'A culturally responsive pedagogy of relations': Coming to understand. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 18(2).
- Slife, B., & Richardson, F. (2011). Is Gergen's Relational Being Relational Enough? *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 24(4), 304-313.
- Smith, J. A., Larkin, M., & Flowers, P. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Smith, A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Phenomenology. In J. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 25- 50). London: Sage.
- Sorensen, D., & Jensen, S. (2017). *Pasifika People in New Zealand. How are we doing? 2017*. Retrieved from <http://pasifikafutures.co.nz/wpcontent/uploads/2015/06/PFHowAreWeDoing-RD2-WEB2.pdf>
- Spee, K., Oakden, J., Toumu'a, R., Sauni, P., & Tuagalu, C. (2014a) *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: De La Salle College Case Study*. Ministry of Education: Wellington.

- Spee, K., Toumu'a, R., Oakden, J., Sauni, P. & Tuagalu, C. (2014b). *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: Otahuhu College Case Study*. Ministry of Education: Wellington.
- Spiller, L. (2012). How can we teach them when they won't listen. *How teacher beliefs about Pasifika values and Pasifika ways of learning affect student behaviour and achievement. Set: Research Information for Teachers*, 3, 58–66.
- Spoonley, P., Bedford, R., & Macpherson, C. (2003). Divided loyalties and fractured sovereignty: Transnationalism and the nation-state in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(1), 27-46.
- Stake, R. E. (1994). Case Study: Composition and Performance. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* (122), 31-44.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research / Robert E. Stake*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis / Robert E. Stake*. New York: New York : The Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. New York: Guildford Press.
- Stats NZ (2018). *Living in a crowded house: Exploring the ethnicity and well-being of people in crowded households*. Retrieved from www.stats.govt.nz.
- Statistics New Zealand (n.d.a) 2013 *Census QuickStats about a place*. Retrieved from <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place>)
- Statistics New Zealand (n.d.b) *Subnational Population Estimates*. Retrieved from http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/subnational-population-estimates-info-releases.aspx
- Stehlik, T. (2006). Applying situated learning as a theoretical model to doctoral research: a case study of a Waldorf School as a community of practice. In T. Stehlik, & P. Carden (Eds.). *Beyond Communities of Practice Theory as Experience* (pp. pp.11-30). Maleny: eContent Management Pty Ltd.
- Storberg-Walker, J. (2008). Wenger's Communities of Practice Revisited: A (Failed?) Exercise in Applied Communities of Practice Theory-Building Research. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 10(4), 555-577.
- Suaalii-Sauni, T., & Fulu-Aiolupotea, S. M. (2014). Decolonising Pacific research, building Pacific research communities and developing Pacific research tools: The case of the talanoa and the faafaletui in Samoa. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(3), 331-344.

- Suddaby, R. (2006). From the editors: What grounded theory is not. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(4), 633-642.
- Tamasese, K. (2002). Honouring Samoan Ways and Understandings: Towards Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Services. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, 2002(2), 64-71.
- Tamasese, K., Peteru, C., Waldegrave, C., & Bush, A. (2005). Ole Taeao Afua, the new morning: A qualitative investigation into Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 2005, Vol.39(4), P.300-309, 39(4), 300-309.
- Tamasese Ta'Isi Efi, Tui Atua Tupua. (2009). Bioethics and the Samoan indigenous reference. (Report). *International Social Science Journal*, 60(195), 115-124
- Taufe'ulungaki, 'Ana Maui. (1986). The cradle of Polynesian culture. (Fiji, Samoa, Tonga). *UNESCO Courier*, 15.
- Te Kete Ipurangi (n.d.). *e-asTTle*. Retrieved from <http://e-asttle.tki.org.nz/>
- Thaman, K. H. (2008). Nurturing Relationships and Honouring Responsibilities: A Pacific Perspective. *International Review of Education*, 54(3/4), 459-454, p.459-473. doi:10.1007/s11159-008-9092-1.
- Thaman, K. H. (2009). Introduction: The need to re-think Pacific curriculum. In K. Sanga & K. H. Thaman (Eds.), *Re-thinking Education Curricula in the Pacific: Challenges and Prospects* (pp. 13 - 27). Wellington: Victoria University.
- Thaman, K. H. (2010). Teacher capacities for working towards peace and sustainable development. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, 11(4), 353-364.
- The Taos Institute (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved from <https://www.taosinstitute.net/about>
- Thomas, G. (2011). *The case: generalisation, theory and phronesis in case study*. Oxford Review of Education, 37(1), 21-35.
- Thomas, G., & Myers, K. (2015). *What is case study? The anatomy of the case study* (pp. 5 - 16). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (n.d.a). *Our schooling futures: stronger together*. Retrieved from <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assets/TSR/Tomorrows-Schools-Report-Summary.pdf>
- Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (n.d.b). *Our schooling futures: stronger together*. Retrieved from <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assets/TSR/Tomorrows-Schools-Review-Report-Dec2018.PDF>

- Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (n.d.c). *Our schooling futures: stronger together*. Retrieved from <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/assebts/TSR/Tomorrows-Schools-Report-FAQs.pdf>.
- Tongati'o, L., Mitchell, K., Tuimauga, F., & Kennedy, S. (2016a). *NGĀUE FAKATAHA KI HE AKO 'A E FĀNAU Schools and Parents and Families Working Together to Better Understand and Support Pasifika Students' Progress and Achievement at School (Phase One)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Tongati'o, L., Mitchell, K., & Kennedy, S. (2016b). *NGĀUE FAKATAHA KI HE AKO 'A E FĀNAU Schools and Parents and Families Working Together to Better Understand and Support Pasifika Students' Progress and Achievement at School (Phase Two)*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Toumu'a, R., Oakden, J., & Sauni, P. (2014). *Leadership practices supporting Pasifika student success: McAuley High School Case Study*. Wellington: Ministry of Education: Wellington.
- Tuafuti, P. (2010). Additive bilingual education: Unlocking the culture of silence. *Mai review*, 1, 1-14.
- Tuafuti, P., & McCaffery, J. (2005). Family and Community Empowerment through Bilingual Education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 8(5), 480-503.
- Tunufa'i, L. (2016). Pacific Research: Rethinking the Talanoa 'Methodology'. *New Zealand Sociology*, 31(7), 227 - 239.
- Turner, H., Rubie-Davies, C., & Webber, M. (2015). Teacher Expectations, Ethnicity and the Achievement Gap. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 50(1), 55-69.
- University of the South Pacific (n.d.). *Vaka Pasifiki Education Conference*. Retrieved from <https://www.usp.ac.fj/index.php?id=21451>
- Vaiioleti, T. M. (2006). Talanoa research methodology: a developing position on pacific research. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 12, 21 - 34.
- Vaiioleti, T. M. (2014). Talanoa: differentiating the Talanoa research methodology from phenomenology, narrative, Kaupapa Maori and feminist methodologies. *Te Reo*, 56-57, 191.
- Vaiioleti, T. M. (2017). Talanoa: A Tongan Research Methodology and Method. In P. M.A. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory*. Singapore: Springer.
- Vaa, U. (2009). Samoan Custom and Human Rights: An Indigenous View. *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* /, 40(1), 237-250.

- Vaka, S., Brannelly, T., & Huntington, A. (2016). Getting to the Heart of the Story: Using Talanoa to Explore Pacific Mental Health. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 37(8), 537-544.
- van der Haar, D., & Hosking, D. M. (2004). Evaluating Appreciative Inquiry: A Relational Constructionist Perspective. *Human Relations*, 57(8), 1017-1036.
- van Der Vaart, W., & Masselink, R. (2017). What Makes Educating Worthwhile? Appreciative Inquiry in Education Where Students Learn Collaboratively. *AI Practitioner*, 19(4), 44-54.
- Verschuren, P. (2003). Case study as a research strategy: Some ambiguities and opportunities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 6(2), 121-139.
- Vesper, B. (2016). *South Transformation: Searching for educational success in South Auckland*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Wahlberg, T. H. (2014). Elder-Vass on the Causal Power of Social Structures. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 44(6), 774-791.
- Walkey, F. H., McClure, J., Meyer, L. H., & Weir, K. F. (2013). Low expectations equal no expectations: Aspirations, motivation, and achievement in secondary school. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 38(4), 306-315.
- Wang, B. (2016). The social and historical construction of social constructionism: Prof. KJ Gergen in dialogue. *Culture & Psychology*, 22(4), 565-573.
- Ward, L., & Robinson, V. (2004). Lay governance in New Zealand schools: an educational activity? *Orbit*, 34(3), 34-38.
- Wendt, A. (1999). Tatauing the Postcolonial Body. In V. Hereniko & R. Wilson (Eds.), *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (pp. 399 - 412). Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, Inc.
- Wendt Samu, T. (2015). The 'Pasifika Umbrella' and quality teaching: Understanding and responding to the diverse realities within. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 20(3), Waikato Journal of Education, 11/18/2015, Vol.20(3).
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: learning, meaning, and identity* / Etienne Wenger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization*, 7(2), 225-246.
- Wenger, E. (2001). Communities of Practice A2 - Baltes, Neil J. Smelser Paul B *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (pp. 2339-2342). Oxford: Pergamon

- Wenger, E. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: a guide to managing knowledge* / Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, William Snyder. Boston, Mass.: Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wenger, E. (2010) Communities of practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept. In Blackmore, C. (Editor) *Social Learning Systems and communities of practice*. (pp.179 – 198). Springer, London.
- Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2015). Learning in a landscape: a framework. In E. Wenger-Trayner, M. Fenton-O'Creevy, S. Hutchinson, C. Kubiak, & B. Wenger-Trayner (Eds.), *Learning in Landscapes of Practice* (pp. pp. 13 - 29). Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Whitney, D. (2010). Appreciative inquiry: creating spiritual resonance in the workplace. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 7(1), 73-88.
- Whitney, D. D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2010). *The power of appreciative inquiry: A practical guide to positive change* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from:
<https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/the-power-of/9781605093291/?ar>
- Wittgenstein, L., Anscombe, G., & Wright, G. (1969). *On certainty*, / edited by G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright. Translated by Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Wylie, C. (2009). *Tomorrow's Schools after 20 years: can a system of self-managing schools live up to its initial aims?* (Report). New Zealand Annual Review of Education, 19, 5-29.
- Wylie, C. (2012). *Vital connections: Why we need more than self-managing schools*. Wellington: NZCER press.
- Wylie, C. (2013). Schools and Inequality. In M. Rashbrooke (Ed.), *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis* (pp. 134 - 147). Wellington: BWB Texts.
- Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The qualitative report*, 20(2), 134.
- Yin, R. K. (2015). Case Studies. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences: Second Edition* (pp. 194-201). Elsevier.

Appendix 1

Report for Pacific Community and Schools

Full report available on request.

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TE PUNA AKOPAI
FACULTY OF EDUCATION TE WHĀNAU O AKO PAI
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand

Phone + 64-4-472 1000 Fax +64-4-463 9649

Email education@vuw.ac.nz Web www.victoria.ac.nz/education

***Developing relationships among teachers, Pasifika students, their families
and the community in order to support achievement***

Report prepared by Maggie Flavell, as part of a doctoral study for Victoria University,
Wellington

Supervisors: Dr Cherie Chu and Dr Carolyn Tait

November 2017

Contents

1. Report overview	3
2. Introduction	4

3. Acknowledgements	5
4. Purpose	6
5. Summary of findings	6
5.1 School strengths	6
5.2 Parent and community strengths	7
5.3 For further consideration	7
6. Context	8
7. Research method and frameworks	9
8. Findings	10
8.1 School strengths	10
8.1.1 A commitment to students and their families	10
8.1.2 School strategies, programmes and facilities	11
8.1.3 Notable strengths	13
8.1.4 Conclusion	13
8.2 Parent and community strengths	14
8.2.1 High aspirations	14
8.2.2 Informed and proactive	14
8.2.3 Helping others	14
8.2.4 Providing wrap-around support	15
8.3 For further consideration	16
8.3.1 Concern over achievement	16
8.3.2 More time to work together	16
8.3.3 Funding	17
9. Conclusion	18
10. Recommendations	18
10.1 A working party	18
10.2 Professional development	19
10.3 A so'otaga	20
11. Final words	20
12. References	20

1. Report overview

This report draws on fieldwork conducted between January and June 2017 as part of my PhD study. The aim of the study, which has focussed on [Name] College and [Name] College, is to explore how relationships between home and school can support achievement for Pasifika students. I have not attributed findings to specific colleges since, collectively, their services combine to support the town of [Name].

There are a number of key strengths within the schools. Teachers are committed to building relationships with Pasifika students and their families as a way of supporting achievement; and students feel they have benefitted from the support they receive. The schools have dedicated members of staff and a range of strategies for developing relationships with Pasifika students and their families. They respond to any opportunities that might positively support their Pasifika learners. They work with parents, ex-students and other members of the Pasifika community to assist students' learning and home-school relationships.

There are also key strengths within the Pasifika community. Many parents have high aspirations for their children and want them to be academically successful. Although there are barriers which prevent some parents from engaging with school, others are familiar with the school system and know how to interact with teachers to support their children's learning. Within the Pasifika community, there are organisations and networks which work to serve the needs of the Pasifika people. Within these are a number of individuals who are committed to seeing Pasifika success for all young people; they have a good understanding of the school system and of how to engage with families, and they are willing to work with schools and families to support achievement.

Aside from strengths, the findings also drew out areas that required attention. Some members of the Pasifika community expressed concern that not all young people were fulfilling their potential, and that some families (typically working very long hours) did not have time to support their children's learning. One problem for both teachers and parents, therefore, is the lack of opportunity to work together to support students' learning; and funding constraints affect the amount of time available for teachers to reach out and engage with families.

Nevertheless, a number of Pasifika parents would like to see more opportunities for consultation since they believe that parents should be involved in key decisions relating to their children's learning. In their view, informed and supportive parents, who participate in the decision-making process, can make a positive difference to student achievement.

This report concludes that [Name] College and [Name] College are highly committed to developing relationships with Pasifika students and their families. Relationships do take time to

build but a lack of time and funding restricts opportunities. There are individuals within the Pasifika community who have a good understanding on how to support schools and who are willing to assist both schools and other families. Currently, schools tend to be reactive to the needs of Pasifika learners depending upon opportunities available. It is difficult for them to be proactive when they are reliant on external influences.

There are three key recommendations:

Firstly, establish a working party, comprising of informed members of the Pasifika community and representative of both colleges, to engage in solution-focussed discussion so that good practice can be formulated and shared across the colleges.

Secondly, provide further opportunities for professional development to help teachers continue to develop their cultural competency for working with Pasifika students and their families. This would help to establish school-wide approaches.

Finally, it is recommended that consideration be given to the funding of a co-ordinator (so'otaga) who would act as a conduit between home and school with the overall purpose of lifting Pasifika achievement by creating wrap-around support for the learner. Joint discussion between the schools and the community on how to access funding for the role of a so'otaga could spring from the focus group.

2. Introduction

I am a doctoral student at Victoria University, exploring how best to develop inclusive relationships between home and school so as to positively support Pasifika students' learning. Originally from England, I have been in New Zealand since 2008. Before I launched full-time into my PhD, I was an English teacher at a college in Wellington. While teaching there, I completed a master's degree which investigated home-school relationships for Pasifika families at the school I was teaching in. I am continuing the journey and dearly hope that, through my current study, I can make a useful contribution to supporting Pasifika student success in [Name].

I have spent from January to June 2017 listening to the voices of parents, students and teachers in [Name], and I would like to share what I have been learning.

Appendix 2

Proverb from cultural advisor

Ua malie le papa i ta'u

Ua malie le fagaila'u

Le papa I galagala

Le togafau faitala

It is an honour to share this journey with you all

My research is not complete without your stories

You had but one purpose –

to cherish Pasifika children, families and the community

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Appendix 3 Consent forms

***Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community
in order to support achievement***

CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

If you are able to permit me to conduct this research at
College, please could you sign and date this form.

I,, give permission for Maggie Flavell to proceed with her research project exploring how relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community can strengthen achievement (as outlined in her information sheet).

Signature of Principal

Date

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TE PUNA AKOPAI
FACULTY OF EDUCATION TE WHĀNAU O AKO PAI
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
 Phone +64-4-472 1000 Fax +64-4-463 9649 Email education@vuw.ac.nz Web www.victoria.ac.nz/education

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW (Pacific community)

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio-recorded interview which will last up to an hour at a location and time convenient to me.

I understand that:

- I can choose not to answer any question.
- I can stop the interview at any point, without having to explain.
- Any notes taken during the interview will be checked back with me.
- Transcripts from the meeting will be sent to me if I want to check them.
- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 1 April 2017 without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.
- I will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about my cultural background and educational experiences. I can leave any answers blank if I choose.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor (unless I specifically give consent otherwise). I understand that the results will be used for a PhD report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a copy of the transcript of the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below: Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

[Name] of participant: _____ Date: _____

Contact details: _____

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TE PUNA AKOPAI
 FACULTY OF EDUCATION TE WHĀNAU O AKO PAI
 VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
 Phone +64-4-472 1000 Fax +64-4-463 9649 Email education@vuw.ac.nz Web www.victoria.ac.nz/education

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

CONSENT TO MEETING (Pacific community)

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio-recorded meeting with other individuals who identify with the Pacific community.

I understand that:

- I can choose not to answer any questions.
- I can leave a meeting at any point, without having to explain.
- Any notes taken during the meeting will be checked back with me.
- Transcripts from the meeting will be sent to me if I want to check them.
- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 1 April 2017 without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.
- I will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about my cultural background and educational experiences. I can leave any answers blank if I choose.
- Any information I provide will not be used for any other purpose or released to others without written consent. I understand that the results will be used for a PhD report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a copy of the transcript of the meeting: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of the meeting: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

[Name] of participant: _____ Date: _____

Contact details:

 SCHOOL OF EDUCATION TE PUNA AKOPAI

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW (Schools)

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio-recorded interview which will last fifteen minutes to an hour, at a location and time convenient to me.

I understand that:

- I can choose not to answer any question.
- I can stop the interview at any point, without having to explain.
- Any notes taken during the meeting will be checked back with me.
- Transcripts from the meeting will be sent to me if I want to check them.
- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 31st May without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.
- I will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about my role within the school and my interest in the learning experiences of Pacific students. I can leave any answers blank if I choose.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor (unless I specifically give consent otherwise). I understand that the results will be used for a PhD report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a copy of the transcript of the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of the interview: Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below. Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

[Name] of participant: _____ Date: _____

Contact details: _____

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON, PO Box 600, Wellington 6140, New Zealand
 Phone +64-4-472 1000 Fax +64-4-463 9649 Email education@vuw.ac.nz Web www.victoria.ac.nz/education

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW (Students)

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

- I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.
- I agree to take part in an audio-recorded interview which will last up to an hour, at a location and time convenient to me.

I understand that:

- I can choose not to answer any question.
- I can stop the interview at any point, without having to explain.
- Any notes taken during the meeting will be checked back with me.
- Transcripts from the meeting will be sent to me if I want to check them.
- I may withdraw from this study at any point before 30th June without giving any reason, and any information that I have provided will be destroyed.
- The information I have provided will be destroyed 3 years after the research is finished.
- I will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire about my cultural background and educational experiences. I can leave any answers blank if I choose.
- Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher and the supervisor (unless I specifically give consent otherwise). I understand that the results will be used for a PhD report and a summary of the results may be used in academic reports and/or presented at conferences.
- I consent to information or opinions which I have given being attributed to me in any reports on this research Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a copy of the transcript of the meeting Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a copy of the recording of the meeting Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like a summary of the interview Yes ☐ No ☐
- I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below Yes ☐ No ☐

Signature of participant: _____

Name of participant: _____ Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix 4 Confidentiality Agreement

Supporting achievement through relationships with Pacific students, families and the community

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (cultural advisors)

This confidentiality form will be held for 3 years.

Researcher: Maggie Flavell, Victoria University of Wellington

If you are willing to act as a cultural advisor for this research, please tick any or all of the boxes below. You only need to tick if you agree.

I understand participating in this research could involve:

- ☐ contacting any individuals who may qualify as a participant and asking them if they would be willing to participate
- ☐ advising on protocol to help Maggie show appropriate cultural sensitivity in the conduct of her data
- ☐ advising on cultural interpretation of data to avoid misrepresentation of findings
- ☐ meeting to share ideas and understandings of Pacific educational matters in general

Also, please indicate:

- ☐ I would like to receive a copy of the final report and have added my email address below

Please could you now tick the following boxes, sign and date this form. I also understand that:

- ☐ information discussed with Maggie will be deemed confidential and I will ensure that it is not shared with any third party ☐
- ☐ Maggie will not directly share any raw data with me ☐

I,, will be a cultural advisor to support this research project.

Signature

Date

Please note down your preferred means for contacting you:

Home tel no:

Work no:

Cell no:

Email address:

Home address:

Supporting achievement through relationships with Pacific students, families and the community

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT (transcriber)

This confidentiality form will be held for 3 years.

Principal Investigator: Maggie Flavell

I, _____, agree to ensure that the audiotapes I transcribe will remain confidential to Maggie Flavell and myself. I agree to take the following precautions:

1. I will ensure that no person, other than Maggie Flavell, hears the recording.
2. I will ensure that no other person has access to my PC.
3. I will delete the files from my pc once the transcription has been completed.
4. I will not discuss any aspect of the recording with anyone except Maggie Flavell.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 5

Information Sheets

INFORMATION SHEET (for cultural advisors and participants from the Pacific community)

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

Who am I?

My [Name] is Maggie Flavell and I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Victoria University. I came to New Zealand in 2008 from the United Kingdom to be a teacher at a college in Wellington. An important principle for me is the development of inclusive relationships between home and school to positively support students' learning. In my master's degree, I explored home-school relationships for Pacific families at the school where I was teaching.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to develop an understanding of how relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community can strengthen achievement. I would like to find out how these relationships are working well to support students' learning, and how they might be further developed so as to provide even better support for students. I hope that the results of my research can inform school practices so that teachers and families are better informed about building relationships. I believe this could be beneficial in supporting students' progress at school.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (approval number)

What is my plan?

I would like to meet with a number of Pacific senior students, members of the Pacific community (such as parents or those with particular roles within the community) and school personnel (such as school leaders, teachers and teacher aides) to find out about their perceptions of relationships between home and school.

I would also like to carry out some observations within the school and the community that could help my wider understanding of home-school partnerships. These observations will not be recorded in any way or used as data. Finally, I am interested in reading and copying any written documents which could help me to develop an understanding of the research topic.

How can you help?

I wonder if you can help me, potentially, **either** as a Pacific advisor **or** as a participant.

A Pacific advisor

If you are willing to be a **Pacific advisor**, I would like to meet with you to discuss my project in more detail. For example, you may be able to advise me on protocol so that I can make connections and put people at ease when I meet them; or you may be able to help me develop my understanding of findings (although, when doing this, I will not directly share what participants have told me in confidence).

A participant

Alternatively, as a member of the Pacific community, you may be willing to be a **participant**. For

example, you may be or have been a parent of a senior student; or you may have a particular role within the Pacific community. If you agree to take part as a **participant**, I will invite you to a meeting with about 6-10 members of the Pacific community. I will organise a location and time that is convenient to you. I will ask you how you feel about relationships between home and school which support Pacific students' learning. You may have some positive experiences to share. You may have some ideas about what can make these relationships work at their best. The meeting will last about an hour. I will audio record what is said and write it up later. You can leave the discussion at any time, without giving a reason. I will give you a copy of what has been written and you can make changes to it.

As a **participant**, you may prefer to attend an interview. For instance, you may not be able to attend a meeting, or you would like to discuss matters that are important to individuals. If you agree to take part in an interview, it will take up to one hour. The time and place will be convenient to you. I will audio record the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. I will give you a copy of what has been written and you can make changes to it.

Whether you are a **Pacific advisor** or a **participant**, you may be able to help with the recruitment of participants. You may be able to recommend individuals to me, or even be able to make initial contact on my behalf. (If you are willing to do this, I have an information sheet and consent form which you can hand out.)

You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before 1st April 2017. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information I am given?

Only my University supervisors and I will read notes or transcripts. Any notes, transcripts, summaries and recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 3 years after the research is completed. I will ask participants to sign a form to ensure that all matters related to the data I collect are kept confidential.

I will send you a summary of my findings if you would like this.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my PhD thesis, and may also be used for conferences and publications. I will also use this information in order to report back to the Pacific community and the secondary schools.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Student:

Maggie Flavell

0272168297

Maggie.Flavell@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisors:

Dr Cherie Chu

Senior Lecturer Te Kura Maori

School of Education

04 463 5316

Cherie.Chu@vuw.ac.nz

Dr Carolyn Tait

Senior Lecturer

School of Education

04 4639590

Carolyn.Tait@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (Schools)

Who am I?

My [Name] is Maggie Flavell and I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Victoria University. I came to New Zealand in 2008 from the UK to take up a secondary teaching post at a college in Wellington.

An important principle for me is the development of inclusive relationships between home and school to positively support students' learning. In my master's degree, I explored home-school relationships for Pacific families at the school where I was teaching.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to develop an understanding of how relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community can strengthen achievement. I would like to find out how these relationships are working well to support students' learning, and how they might be further developed so as to provide even better support for students. I hope that the results of my research can inform school practices so that teachers and families are better informed about building relationships. I believe this could be beneficial in supporting students' progress at school.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (approval number 23659).

What is my plan?

I would like to meet with a number of Pacific senior students, members of the Pacific community (such as parents or those with particular roles within the community) and school personnel (such as school leaders, teachers and teacher aides) to find out about their perceptions of relationships between home and school.

I would also like to carry out some observations within the school and the community that could help my understanding of home-school partnerships. These observations will not be recorded in any way or used as data. Finally, I am interested in reading and copying any written documents which could help me to develop an understanding of the research topic.

How can you help?

I would like to meet with you if you are a member of the school community (i.e. a member or representative of the school staff), and are interested in contributing to this study. For example, you may be a leader within your school, teacher or teacher aide; or you may be on the Board of Trustees.

If you agree to take part, I will invite you to a meeting with about 6 - 10 members of the school community. I will organise a location and time that is

convenient to you. I will ask you how you feel about relationships between home and school which support Pacific students' learning. You may have some positive experiences to share and you may have some ideas about what makes these relationships work at their best. The meeting will last about an hour. I will audio record what is said and write it up later. You can leave the discussion at any time, without giving a reason. I will give you a copy of what has been written and you can make changes to it.

Alternatively, you may prefer to attend an interview. For instance, you may not be able to attend a meeting, or you would like to discuss matters that are important to individuals. If you agree to take part in an interview, it will take anything between fifteen minutes and one hour. The timing and place will be convenient to you. I will audio record the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. I will give you a copy of what has been written and you can make changes to it.

You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before 31st July 2017. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information you give?

Only my University supervisors and I will read notes or transcripts. Any transcripts, summaries and recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 3 years after the research ends. I will ask participants to sign a form to ensure that all matters related to the data I collect are kept confidential.

I will send you a summary of my findings if you would like this.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation, and may also be used for conferences and publications. I will also use this information in order to report back to the Pacific community and the secondary schools.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Student:

Maggie Flavell
0272168297
Maggie.Flavell@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisors:

Dr Cherie Chu
Senior Lecturer Te Kura Maori
School of Education
04 463 5316
Cherie.Chu@vuw.ac.nz

Dr Carolyn Tait
Senior Lecturer
School of Education
04 4639590
Carolyn.Tait@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

Developing relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community in order to support achievement

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS (Students' interview)

Who am I?

My [Name] is Maggie Flavell and I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at Victoria University. I came to New Zealand in 2008 from the UK to take up a secondary teaching post at a college in Wellington.

An important principle for me is the development of inclusive relationships between home and school to positively support students' learning. In my master's degree, I explored home-school relationships for Pacific families at the school where I was teaching.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to develop an understanding of how relationships among teachers, Pacific students, their families and the community can strengthen achievement. I would like to find out how these relationships are working well to support students' learning, and how they might be further developed so as to provide even better support for students. I hope that the results of my research can inform school practices so that teachers and families are better informed about building relationships. I believe this could be beneficial in supporting students' progress at school.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee (approval number)

What is my plan?

I would like to meet with a number of Pacific senior students, members of the Pacific community (such as parents or those with particular roles within the community) and school personnel (such as school leaders, teachers and teacher aides) to find out about their perceptions of relationships between home and school.

I would also like to carry out some observations within the school and the community that could help my understanding of home-school partnerships. These observations will not be recorded in any way or used as data. Finally, I am interested in reading and copying any written documents which could help me to develop an understanding of the research topic.

How can you help?

I would like to meet with you if you are a current or recent senior student (Years 12 or 13) and are willing to share some of your positive learning experiences. I would like to ask you

about any significant events or influences which have contributed to successful learning outcomes. If you agree to take part in an interview, it will take up to one hour. The timing and place will be convenient to you. I will audio record the interview and write it up later. You can stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. I will give you a copy of what has been written and you can make changes to it.

You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any point before 30th June 2017. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed.

What will happen to the information you give?

Only my university supervisors and I will read notes or transcripts. Any transcripts, summaries and recordings will be kept securely and destroyed 3 years after the research ends. I will ask participants to sign a form to ensure that all matters related to the data I collect are kept confidential.

I will send you a summary of my findings if you would like this.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my PhD dissertation, and may be used for conferences and publications. I will also use this information in order to report back to the Pacific community and the secondary schools.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact:

Student:

Maggie Flavell
0272168297
Maggie.Flavell@vuw.ac.nz

Supervisors:

Dr Cherie Chu	Dr Carolyn Tait
Senior Lecturer Te Kura	Senior Lecturer
Maori	School of Education
School of Education	04 4639590
04 463 5316	Carolyn.Tait@vuw.ac.nz
Cherie.Chu@vuw.ac.nz	

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convener: Associate Professor Susan Corbett. Email susan.corbett@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 5480.

Appendix 6 Interview questions

PHASE 1 - Questions for Pacific Community meeting and interview

Introduction

Tell me about your interest in Pacific students' learning and academic achievement.

Discovery:

Tell me about any positive relationships you have appreciated with the secondary school which have supported students' learning. (You may feel that some relationships do not directly influence students' learning but may be worth sharing nonetheless.)

For example, you may have appreciated:

- what a teacher has done;
- how a school event has enabled positive relationships;
- how you have initiated or been involved in something that has led to positive relationships.

Tell me about any other positive relationships you have appreciated which have supported students' learning. For example, you may have something to say about what happens at primary / intermediate school or about specific events held within the community (like Powerup).

Dream:

When considering how best to support students' learning **in an ideal world**, what would the perfect relationship between the secondary school, home and the community look like?

In particular, what would it look like for:

- students
- parents
- Pacific community
- teachers?

PHASE 2 - Questions for school meeting and interview

Discovery:

Tell me about any positive relationships you have appreciated with Pacific families or the Pacific community which have supported students' learning. (You may feel that some relationships do not directly influence students' learning but may be worth sharing nonetheless.)

For example, you may be able to share how:

- you have connected with some family /community members to support learning;
- you believe a particular school event has enabled positive relationships;
- you have initiated or been involved in a school activity which builds relationships with Pacific family members;
- you have connected with members of the Pacific community outside of school which, you believe, favours positive relationships.

Dream:

When considering how best to support students' learning **in an ideal world**, what would the perfect relationship between the secondary school, home and the community look like?

In particular, what would it look like for:

- students
- parents
- Pacific community
- teachers?

PHASE 3 - Questions for students' interview

Discovery

What stories can you share about your successful learning experiences at secondary school?

In particular:

- What successful learning outcomes have you had?
- How do you know you did well?
- Whose support was particularly helpful in enabling you to achieve these outcomes? (teachers, family members, friends, others?)
- In what way was this support was helpful?
- What were the circumstances that enabled this support?

Dream

What do you hope to achieve at the end of the year?

What would you like to do in the future?

In an ideal world, what support would be perfect to help you get there?

If you have already left school, what support would have been perfect to enable positive learning outcomes for Pacific students at secondary school?

Appendix 7 Questionnaires

PHASE 1 - Questionnaire for Pacific community

Please could you complete this questionnaire which will be treated confidentially and destroyed on completion of the research. You may leave out any questions if you wish.

1. Full [Name]
2. In which country were you born?
3. What other countries have you lived in apart from New Zealand?
4. Which Pasifika culture(s) do you belong to?
5. Is there a particular island or village with which you closely identify?
6. Do you belong to any other cultures? If so, what?
7. What languages do you speak at home? If you speak more than one language, which is the main language used at home?
8. Do you have children? If so, what ages are they?
9. Which schools do they attend?
10. In which country / countries have you been educated?
11. Up to what age did you receive formal education?
12. Which church do you belong to?
13. Do you have a particular role, commitment or responsibility within the local community?
If so, what?
14. What is your profession / employment?
15. If not currently working, what has your profession / employment been in the past?

PHASE 2 – School survey (available on paper or on SurveyMonkey)

Please could you complete this questionnaire which will be treated confidentially and destroyed on completion of the research. You may leave out any questions if you wish.

1. Full [Name]
2. What is your role within the school?
3. Approximately how long have you been involved/ working at the school?
4. Do you have any specific responsibility for Pacific learners and/or their families? If so, what?
5. Other than a designated responsibility, do you have any special interest or commitment to Pacific learners and / or their families? If so, what?

PHASE 3 - Questionnaire for students

Please could you complete this questionnaire which will be treated confidentially and destroyed on completion of the research. You may leave out any questions if you wish.

1. Full [Name] Age
2. Date of birth In which country were you born?
3. What year are you at school/university? What are you studying?
4. Which Pasifika culture(s) do you belong to? Do you belong to any other cultures? If so, what?
5. What language(s) do you speak at home? If you speak more than one language, which is the main language used at home?
6. Do you have any brothers or sisters? What ages are they?
7. What position in the family are you? (For example, are you the eldest, second eldest etc.?)
8. Have you attended school in another country? If so, where and for how long?
9. Who lives with you in your household? (For example, mum, aunty etc)
10. Which church do you belong to?
11. How often do you attend church?
12. Which groups do / did you belong to at school? Why did you choose this group?
13. Which groups do you belong to which are not connected to school? (For example, church youth group) Why did you choose this group?
14. Do you have a particular role or responsibility in any of these groups or elsewhere?
15. Do you have a job? If so, what?