

PERCEPTIONS OF SAMOAN PARENTS FROM A SMALL TOWN IN NEW ZEALAND  
ON PARENTING, CHILDHOOD AGGRESSION, AND THE CD-ROM *PLAY NICELY*

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## Abstract

This qualitative study describes the perceptions of 18 parents of Samoan ethnicity from Tokoroa, New Zealand. The aims of the study were to: 1) investigate the perceptions of parents' of Samoan ethnicity in Tokoroa, New Zealand about childhood physical aggression, its origins, and the ways parents managed it; 2) describe parenting practices, the support parents received, the sources of that support, and the values they used in raising their child/children; 3) explore the literature to identify risk and resiliency factors that influence childhood physical aggression; 4) explore the usefulness of a simple multimedia programme (in the form of a CD-ROM) to support Samoan parents management of aggressive behaviour in young children. The study was conducted through 1-1 interviews to establish how the parents defined childhood physical aggression, what they perceived to be the origins of their children's behaviour if deemed to be aggressive, how they responded to the behaviour, and the origins of their response. They discussed their parenting practices, support they received and the sources of that support, as well as the values they used in raising their child/children. The study's participants were recruited after initial referrals through a *talanoaga* process with community elders and others via a snowball technique. An intervention tool, the CD-ROM *Play Nicely*, was trialled with 11 of the parents to see whether the parents found the tool helpful in managing their children's physical aggression. The theoretical approach engaged a combination of Community Participatory Action Research (consultation/participation and dissemination), elements of Grounded Theory, *talanoaga* and *Fa'afaletui*, the latter being a Samoan framework which gives a multi-layered approach to data interpretation using a range of lenses and perspectives. In conducting this investigation, the combination of Western and Samoan frameworks was appropriate given the sensitivities around the topic and the ethnicity of the respondents and the researcher. The parenting aspect of the study affirmed findings from previous research on adaptation and change in Samoan parenting styles. Studies on Samoan childhood physical aggression are noticeably lacking and therefore the findings of this study make a unique contribution. Conclusions drawn from this study show that those parents who initially 'normalised' their children's behaviour prior to viewing the CD-ROM *Play Nicely*, changed their perception of their children's behaviour after viewing

*Play Nicely*, to recognising it as being physically aggressive. The majority of the parents perceived their children's behaviour and their own responses to their behaviour as originating from their home environment, namely from the parents. Grandparents played a significant part in supporting their grandchildren and being the vessels of 'cultural knowledge' for the children. Almost all the parents (17 out of 18) had accessed early childhood education for their children. Culture impacted on how parents thought about and managed children's behaviour, and is significant to this study. A key recommendation is to replicate the study in an urban setting.

## Acknowledgements

**In God all things are possible.**

Rise up, the task is yours, we will support you. Take courage and act.

*(King James Version of The Bible, Ezra, 10:v 4)*

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May God's blessings be with each and every one of you. Fa'afetai, fa'afetai, fa'afetai, tele lava.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Talaia and Oliva Cowley, my husband John Malcolm, and my son Ezra Luke Taylor, each of whom represents the past, the present, and the future.

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## **Chapter one: Introduction, background and overview of thesis**

I kept thinking about what it is that holds families together and keeps them well despite the turbulences of life? How have the values of a Samoan family survived such turbulences? How have we named and captured these values? How do we celebrate the joys of family? How do we cope with its challenges, paradoxes, ironies and riddles? Sometimes the best way to provide an answer to hard questions is by telling a story. (Tui Atua Tupua Efi, 2009, p. 2)

### **1. Introduction**

As Tui Atua states, sometimes hard questions, such as the aetiology of childhood physical aggression, make it easier to just tell or write a story and let the answers unfold to the listener and the reader from all the stories ironies, twists, subtleties, and nuances – and this is the point of this thesis. In recounting stories about the tsunami that struck Samoa in 2009 and the people who were devastated by the tragedy, Tui Atua Efi (2009) emphasised the kinds of values that are firmly established within Samoan traditions. He describes these values as “love affirming, life affirming and faith affirming”, drawing on these values as examples of the love of Samoan parents and grand-parents in the face of turbulence and adversity (Tui Atua Efi, 2009, p. 2). Tui Atua’s stories depict the nuances of courage, bravery, and love experienced by families during the tsunami. He captures the strength, resilience and faith of these families, and how they triumphed over tragedy and upheld each other during their time of suffering and uncertainty – through humour, spirituality, love and compassion. These are what Tui Atua terms as the strength of Samoan families. They are the kinds of values Samoans live and struggle for – the survival of family values and principles, the care and value Samoans place on our elders and grandparents, and in particular, the will and commitment to secure a positive future for our children, their safety and well-being. In the midst of all the uncertainties around issues such as parenting and childhood physical aggression, I strongly believe that it is these same strengths and qualities that Samoan families will draw on to face any challenges that may arise with their children. According to Tui Atua these enduring qualities of love, faith and hope are what make us who we are as Samoans.

The very well-documented place of the family as the major unit in the *fa'aSamoa* was a significant factor in my decision to carry out this research on childhood aggression within Samoan families (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; Masoe & Bush, 2009; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998). Being a child of first generation Samoan migrants also made me very aware of the challenges Samoan parents often face in striving to reconcile child raising and parenting practices they were familiar with in Samoa to the New Zealand situation. Also, as a parent and scholar, I have become concerned in recent times about the increasingly visible evidence of violence in New Zealand. The first concern is about the increasing levels of violence in sports such as rugby, and I would agree with Davies' sentiments about movies such as *Once were Warriors*<sup>1</sup> and plays like *Foreskin's Lament*, both of which depict the New Zealand male as physically aggressive and suggest a certain culture of violence in New Zealand society (Davies, Hammerton, Hassall, Fortune, & Moeller, 2003). My second concern is the relationship between childhood and adult aggression; for instance, longitudinal studies have found that physically aggressive young children aged 1 to 3 years who continue their physical aggression into the primary school age have far higher chances of becoming perpetrators and victims of physical violence during adolescence and adulthood (Broidy, Nagin, Tremblay, Brame, Dodge, Fergusson, & Vitaro, 2003; Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Tremblay, 2002). Other researchers have also found ongoing physically aggressive childhood behaviour to be a major contributor to violence and anti-social behaviour in later life (Olweus, 1979; Peterson & Flanders, 2005; Tremblay et al., 2004). My interest in conducting this research with children aged from 1 to 3 years in Tokoroa, New Zealand, stemmed particularly from Tremblay's research and the relevance of childhood aggression in this age group to aggression in later life.

These and other studies raised a number of questions for me. Firstly, the increasingly visible evidence of violence in New Zealand led me to ask: "Is this the case for Samoan families?" and if so, "Is the integrity of the *fa'aSamoa*, which, as Tui Atua states, is based on the *aiga* being threatened here? More specifically, "What are the perceptions of Samoan people raising their children in New Zealand today about aggressive behaviour, its origins, and manifestations?" Furthermore, "What techniques are parents using to manage their children's aggressive behaviour?" For example, are the parenting

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<sup>1</sup> Once Were Warriors is a movie released in 1994, based on the 1990 novel by Alan Duff depicting extreme violence within a Maori family.



techniques Samoan parents use unique to Samoan parenting practices or are Samoan parents adopting/adapting new/newer practices in New Zealand?

I believed that talking to Samoan parents about childhood aggression would be a good starting point, as it seemed to me that childhood physical aggression was not just a local problem but was of international and national concern because of its poor economic, social, and health related outcomes which impact on communities, society, and individuals' quality of life (Public Health Advisory Committee, 2010). To gain clarity about this situation of childhood aggression, I began to review the national data as a starting point to unravelling some of the intricacies around the issues, including the culture and context of childhood aggression within the *aiga* and *fa'aSamoa*. However, it must also be stated that Western frames of thinking are not entirely conducive, or indeed relevant, to the context in which *Pasefika* and namely, Samoan and other ethnicity/is perceive their children's physical aggression. The behaviour must be contextualised to gain any relevancy or understanding of parents' perceptions.

### **1.1 National and international data**

Statistics New Zealand (2006), crime rates for *Pasefika* people convicted of violent crimes show that *Pasefika* peoples made up 12% of convictions for violent offences and 9% of the total convictions compared to their population percentage in New Zealand of 6.5%. Referrals of *Pasefika* women to women's refuges from 2005/06 to 2006/07 to 2007/08 were 4%, 6% and 5% respectively. However, for *Pasefika* children there has been a steady increase each year from 7% in 2005/06 to 9% in 2007/08, indicating the increasing prevalence of family violence that children may be exposed to in homes. The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS) referrals (CYFS, 2006) also list *Pasefika* referrals (10%) as disproportionate to the *Pasefika* population size. These referrals do not necessarily lead to convictions; however CYFS data also shows *Pasefika* parents came to the attention of CYFS mostly for cases of neglect (Department of CYFS, 2006). Suicide, murder, child neglect, poverty, deprivation, and violence are some of the social indices used to measure how a country is assessed in terms of the health and well-being of its citizens. If these are the measurements for the health and safety of New Zealanders, then it needs to be asked whether New Zealand is failing a large proportion of its population.

It would seem so, when according to OECD (2009), health statistics, New Zealand has an infant mortality rate of 5.6 per 1000 live births. This places New Zealand 5<sup>th</sup> highest among OECD countries, below the USA, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic<sup>1</sup>. The Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) in “Doing better for children” rates New Zealand as 29<sup>th</sup> out of 30 countries for child health and safety (PHAC, 2010). Alarming, New Zealand also has one of the highest rates of child deaths from maltreatment (physical abuse and neglect) among the rich OECD countries and the 5<sup>th</sup> highest murder rate in the OECD (OECD, 2009).

In the 5 years prior to 2003, 38 children in New Zealand died as a result of maltreatment (Ministry of Health, 2002, 2006). The rate for children under the age of five was 1.7 deaths per 100,000, three times the rate for five to 14 year olds (0.5 per 100,000). Mortality rates were highest among children under two years of age, while Maori and *Pasifika* children and those living in the most deprived areas of New Zealand had the most hospital admissions (Ministry of Health, 2006).

Indicators of other areas of vulnerability of families in New Zealand are seen in the high suicide rates – the third highest rates in the OECD. The New Zealand Ministry of Health, (2006) figures show the rate for 15-24 year olds was 16.5 per 100,000 and included 95 deaths. Social researchers Waldegrave and Waldegrave (2009) comment that “While these deaths refer to young people rather than children, one can hypothesise that a number of these deaths may stem from deeply unhappy childhoods” (p. 48). The Dunedin longitudinal study (Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002) indicates there are links with suicide, unhappy childhoods and trauma at a young age with bullying, childhood aggression and harsh discipline, and its association with physical aggression, violence, trauma and depression in young people. Furthermore, findings from The New Zealand Youth Survey indicate that bullying is prevalent in New Zealand schools’ playgrounds, and inter-partner conflict situations (Paterson, Carter, Gao, Cowley-Malcolm, & Iusitini, 2008). These, along with the poor OECD ratings for violent crime, reinforce the grim picture this paints for New Zealand as a seemingly violent and ‘uncaring’ society towards children and young persons. In fact, what these statistics indicate is a correlation between factors associated with childhood physical aggression and poor health and social outcomes (Poulton, Caspi, Milne, Thomson, Taylor, Sears, & Moffitt, 2002). This shows that a significant number of children and young people

experience deprivation and despair in their daily lives in a country which may be regarded by the outside world as a wealthy developed country (PHAC, 2010).

It would seem, taking in these grim statistics, that New Zealand has a long way to go in ensuring the safety of all its citizens through a culture of non-violence and valuing its most vulnerable citizens, and in particular, women and children. What these statistics also show is the importance of ensuring any interventions that build resilience, and wellbeing needs to be implemented from conception (maternal and child health) to avoid the negative effects in later life. Population groups such as *Pasefika* peoples are especially vulnerable because of a lack of income and resource access (Percival, 2011).

A question that needs to be asked is: Is there a need to explore in more depth what childhood physical aggression actually means to Samoan diaspora in New Zealand today so as to understand the social and cultural underpinnings of the topic? How do parents respond to childhood physical aggression, and what are the impacts and origins of both the children's behaviour and how parents respond to it? Because of the multi-faceted nature of parenting, factors that impact regions, urban and rural areas may differ, depending on the local or environmental context. Parenting, according to researchers, is clearly contextual and, according to Karen (1994), "Most instinctual human behaviour has to be learned in a social context" (p. 425).

## **1.2 Perspectives on Samoan parenting**

Historically, in regard to Samoa, Turner (1884) who was a missionary to Samoa, writes that in ancient times, children were given considerable freedom to be children and there were very few restrictions. However, much later in Samoa, Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998) note that although physical aggression was more expected amongst males, this was not appropriate towards older siblings or to adults or people in authority. In a New Zealand study Samoan theologian Vailaau (2005) contends that Samoan children are reared according to the Samoan principles of teaching with words and showing. To emphasise this he uses a Samoan proverb to illustrate Samoan child-rearing values and practices,

*O fanau a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau, a o tama a tagata e fafaga i upu.*

The young ones of birds are fed with nectar; the children of people are fed with words (p. 15).

Vailaau (2005) equates this to children being taught by conversation and discussion alongside the deeds or practices of affection, caring, and nurturing rather than by acts of physical violence. These descriptions have some resonance with other indigenous peoples of the Pacific and New Zealand; for example, Herbert (2001) explains the Maori use of the terms *manaakitanga*, *awhi* and *whanaugatanga* – concepts of nurturing and family in a collective rather than individualistic frame of thinking. While these concepts may not be universally held, they are present in the beliefs and values of other cultures (see Fontes, 2005; Thompson & Massat, 2005; Smith, 2004). These writers emphasise that the most crucial elements of being nurturing and loving human beings begin with the acts of effective parenting.

Findings from a comparative study with the Pacific Islands Families Study (PIF) and a Samoan sample indicate differences in parenting behaviours between Samoan parents living in Samoa and those in New Zealand. Findings showed that Samoan parents in Samoa rated a) significantly more highly in nurturing than the New Zealand (PIFS) longitudinal study cohort and b) lower rates in the harsh disciplining of their two-year-old children (Iusitini, Taylor, Cowley-Malcolm, Kerslake, & Paterson, 2011). During the findings dissemination phase of the comparative Samoan parenting study by the above named authors 3 years ago, Samoan academics at The National University of Samoa who were shown these findings were not surprised. The academics related these kinds of issues to what Samoans have to grapple with living in a New Zealand *Palagi* oriented society. For example, they mentioned factors such as New Zealand's high rates of alcohol consumption, problem gambling, identity and acculturation issues, marginalisation, and the lack of cultural knowledge and language. These findings raise a number of questions such as: Is New Zealand a more stressful and violent society for Samoan diaspora? Do alcohol, gambling, parenting changes, family structures, and stress impact on the lives of Samoan parents in New Zealand? Are the support structures and family cohesion in Samoa stronger than in New Zealand?

Other earlier accounts of child rearing practices in Samoa are provided by Freeman (1983), Meads (1928), and Mageo, (1988). There is a significant contrast in these authors' accounts of Samoan parenting practices, with Freeman depicting Samoans as

violent while Mead's account is of non-restrictive and carefree parenting. Mageo's accounts are of babies being spoilt and children raised to serve and be obedient towards parents and their elders. While some more recent authors, such as Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998) agree with aspects of Freeman's account – for example, the harsh discipline – Ochs (1988) concludes in her research into Samoan language and socialisation practices in a Samoan village that punishment was more likely to comprise oral reprimanding than the harsh physical punishment described by Freeman and Meleisea and Schoeffel.

Other studies indicate that younger, and often more educated Samoans are adapting to new ways of parenting as compared with their parents (McCallum, Paterson, Carter, & Cowley, 2000). This group is taking on many of the so-called *Palagi* ways without losing some of their Samoan values and ways of being Samoan. They are maintaining the cultural values of their elders and discarding some of those values which they view as being contrary to their own beliefs about parenting and managing their children's behaviour (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005). This is particularly so amongst the new generation of New Zealand-born parents. Patterson and her colleagues (2007, 2008) reinforce McCallum et al. (2000) and Cowley-Malcolm's (2005) research which show these inter-generational differences between New Zealand-born and island-born parents.

As I began to consider the research questions, two things became clear. First, in order to understand childhood physical aggression in Samoan families, it would be necessary to explore how parents were defining this phenomenon in their own children. Second, interventions used to address childhood aggression must be based on parents' understanding of physical aggression in their children and how they perceive it as Samoan parents; they could not be based on universal assumptions. It is important to know whether Samoan parents' perceptions of their children's aggression were the same as non-Samoans or different to non-Samoans and in what way/s, and, more importantly, how these differences were addressed.

### **1.3 Perspectives on physical aggression**

Physical aggression has been defined in many ways, but most Western researchers agree that it is the intention to cause upset or injury (Webster-Stratton & Herbert, 1993). Nelson, Mitchell and Yang (2008) and Ostrov, Woods, Jansen, Casas and Crick (2004)

see physical aggression as including physical and relational and being gender specific. All of these describe actions of hurt or pain of some sort and have roots in different settings – genetic dispositions, environment, society, family or culture (Grille, 2005). Tremblay's longitudinal study scale outlines physical aggression as actions: hitting, biting, kicking, fighting, and bullying (Tremblay, 2002). Others note that childhood physically aggressive behaviour is more likely to be multi-faceted, culturally bound, and very rarely, if at all, due to one single factor (Huesmann, Dubow & Boxer, 2000; Jaffe, Caspi & Moffit, 2004; Scholer & Goad, 2003). However it is defined, childhood physical aggression is problematic when it is frequent and consistent (Resnick, Ireland & Borowsky, 2004).

Grille (2005) differentiates between positive aggression based on fear and defence – for example, a parent defending its young when faced with danger – or on competition and the will to win and negative forms which create harm and pain to others. The former may be seen as “healthy” aggression which motivates people to excel. There are also gender differences in physical aggression whereby boys have been found to be more physically aggressive than girls (Nelson, Robinson, & Hart, 2005).

#### **1.4 Physical aggression and its genesis**

Findings are that children who display physically aggressive behaviours have either modelled them from adults (Bandura, 1977) or were born with physically aggressive attributes (Tremblay, 2008a). In other words, this represents a case of genetics versus environmental influences, commonly referred to as the nature versus nurture debate (Rutter, 2006; Tremblay & Nagin, 2005).

Tremblay, Japel, Perusse, McDuff, Boivin, Zoccolillo and Montplaisir (1999), found that the onset of aggression in infants was as young as 7 months. In their view, it is best to start parenting dialogue with the parents of children aged 1 to 3 years as these are the years when non-aggression strategies are best learned and carried out.

Nero (1990) argues that Western influences have a bearing on violent behaviour of minority groups, claiming that this results from the stresses of Western living colliding with traditional lifestyles. This stand is supported by findings from the Pacific Islands Families Study (PIFS) and Borrow, Williams, Schluter, Paterson, and Helu's (2011)

research on acculturation and infant risk factors with a *Pasefika* cohort. Research clearly identifies a link between genetic and environmental factors and childhood physical aggression (Quintana et al., 2006). Addressing childhood physical aggression is important if we are to stop children becoming violent adults (Raine, 2002). Grille (2005) suggests aggression has always been a human factor in safety or competition; when it is manifested as negative aggression and is not well managed it has huge implications for children, their families, communities, and eventually for wider society (Shaw, 2003; Thompson & Massat, 2005). Godenzi and De Puy (as cited in Davies et al., 2003) link violence against women and children with poverty, family violence, family stress, and contexts where violence is fantasised about and normalised as an acceptable part of society.

### **1.5 Relationships**

The concept of relationships is at the core of being Samoan (Anae, 2007; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998; Ngan-woo, 1983). Grille (2005) also speaks of the significance of the kinds of relationships in which families, communities, organisations, cultures and nations relate to each other. He suggests relationships are really what aggression is all about, and that the way to resolve aggression involves societal transformation, beginning with how humans coexist and relate with nature. This concept of the core role of relationships is also emphasised in Guidelines on Pacific Health Research (2005) (HRC Guidelines) which simply state that the core of conducting any research with *Pasefika* peoples, including Samoan, is relationships.

For many indigenous cultures, including Maori and *Pasefika*, what Grille (2005) espouses is familiar. His view is that the interconnection between humans and nature is central to their whole existence as a people. Indigenous Maori scholars, such as Herbert (2001) and Durie (2007), Samoan researchers in New Zealand such as Vailaau (2005), and Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997), and Tongan researcher Hau'ofa (1994), refer to these spiritual interconnections in their writings where the natural and supernatural worlds are depicted as integral parts of their culture and way of life. Like Grille, Vailaau (2005) asserts that the genesis of human existence lies in the teaching of our young about these relationships and interconnections. In the traditions of *fa'aSamoa* (Samoan ways of doing and knowing and being), the concept of *le va* (relationships and

the space between them) is the essence of how Samoans relate to each other in different roles and relational settings (Wendt, 1995). Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998), refer to the relationships between older and younger siblings in terms of the whole household caring for the younger members of the family. For instance, older siblings exercise their rights as senior members of the family to ensure the correct disciplinary practices are meted out to the child who oversteps the mark of “talking too much or being greedy” (Meleisea & Schoeffel, p.164). These relationships determine the place of the child in the hierarchy of *aiga* and ensure that children are taught their roles at a very young age (Mageo, 1988). Tui Atua (2006a, 2006b) states Samoans are relational beings, and that is how Samoans view the world. In effect, it is a Samoan’s relationship with others that makes Samoans significant beings.

Grille (2005), Scholer et al. (2006), and Cole and Cole (2001) hold similar views about how the raising of children influences the kinds of citizens they become. It is, according to Grille, the shaping of people and the way we relate to each other that determines the kind of society that is built. The degree to which people prioritise the needs of children and meet those needs will determine the economic and social prosperity of that society (Grille, 2005). All of this has implications for the kind of society-violent or non-violent-in which children are raised.

### **1.6 The contribution of inequality to violence in societies**

A key point to highlight in this study is the significance of education on the influence of poverty and the unequal distribution of wealth on the health, wellbeing, and peaceful co-existence of people within societies, and especially on young single mothers, families who live on the margins, and those who face difficulties in providing the bare necessities for their children (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). All these factors provide a fertile field for violence and physical aggression to develop (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006). Tremblay et al. (2004) suggest that youth and adult crime attracts the majority of media attention because of its degree of violence. However, there has been little investigation into the cause of these actions by youth and the effect of these relationships.

Epidemiologists Wilkinson and Pickett (2006) have found a correlation between unequal societies and high rates of violence. They found in their analysis of



international data that societies which are more unequal and whose citizens are less fully participatory in the life of these societies, are more likely to experience violence, ill-health, and mental distress than societies which have a 'level playing field' where all the teams have an equal amount of skills, resources and opportunities. In other words, in societies where there is more equitable distribution of resources and power, people are less likely to feel intimidated and vulnerable, and more likely to co-exist in harmonious relationships with each other. Like Wilkinson and Pickett, New Zealand researchers Howden-Chapman and Cram (1988) and Turner and Asher (2008) argue that poverty, education, housing and employment have an impact on the health and well-being of communities. Waterson's (2003) research on health indicators found that societies with structures and systems that create significant inequalities actually demonstrate the highest levels of social distress and dislocation, leading to a very highly toxic society in terms of violent behaviour and illness. This implies that the focus needs to be on helping the most vulnerable of our citizens cope with the societal infrastructures that place them in situations of marginalisation, inequality and powerlessness (Heckman, Stixrud, & Urzua, 2006).

According to Davies, repairing fractured families is insufficient and makes demands on the already stressed and at risk in our society (Davies et al., 2003). Whilst it is important to address violence at the individual and family level, it is also important to ensure "action to redress social inequalities and injustices in order to prevent family violence" (p. 44). Transformational change doesn't just occur at the individual level; it must also occur at the political, institutional and societal levels. In other words, it is not enough to ensure we are teaching individuals about how to change their behaviour, there must be a political will at many different levels to address the issues of violence (Davies et al., 2003).

However this ethnic-specific study is an in-depth exploration of what Samoan diaspora parents in a small New Zealand town perceive to be childhood aggression and how they seek to manage this. I would argue that in order for changes to occur within societies, people within communities need to provide parents with the support and educational resources that will assist them in teaching their children how to resolve conflict situations in a non-violent way.

## 1.7 Management strategies

Prior to this study, I was thinking about how parents might define aggressive behaviours and the strategies they might use to address this, I discovered some information related to a CD-ROM, called *Play Nicely*. The CD-ROM was developed in the USA and introduced to New Zealand by Scholer. Scholer showed the CD-ROM to several *Pasefika* groups in New Zealand and received a very positive response. As a participant in one of those groups I thought it would be useful to trial the CD-ROM with Samoan parents in my PhD study. I was interested in whether a CD-ROM such as this could influence parenting behaviour. I thought it would be valuable in exploring how Samoan parents and communities self-define what constitutes childhood physical aggression, whether they would use a multi-media tool (CD-ROM, *Play Nicely*) and then, if it was seen to be effective for Samoan parents, apply it in its current or adapted form. I envisaged that if it worked in its current form or with modifications relevant to their own ethnic/Samoan/cultural characteristics, it would be transferable to other *Pasefika* groups. After gaining permission from the makers, I used it in this study. How I used it is described in detail in the methods chapter of this thesis.

I feel strongly that research which seeks a change of practice or behaviour should empower the communities that we work alongside. The manner in which I approach my research should leave no doubt in the minds of these communities that the research is mutually beneficial. From the outset it was important to me that I worked closely with and built a respectful relationship with community elders who would provide advice and feedback and ensure that the research was relevant to and grounded in the community.

I am also very aware that research in itself will not address concerns related to the alarming statistics presented above. Rather, my study will show how the participation of this community in the process of dialogue and reflection, from the design to the dissemination and outcomes phases, will produce research that is intended to have a mobilising impact on the lives of *Pasefika* people.

The concerns about violence, especially in the Waikato region, were also kept in mind for this study.

## 1.8 The study site

Tokoroa (the study site) is in the Waikato region. Over the 2005-2009 period, violent offences in the region increased by 23%, anti-social behaviour by 18%, and violence in public places by 18%. Hamilton, the largest city in the Waikato region, observed an increase in family violence of 42% in the same period (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). There is substantial evidence to support the link between alcohol and crime (Martin, 2001). Alcohol consumption in New Zealand is problematic with research showing rates of binge drinking in New Zealand, which poses a significant problem among the youth population of New Zealand (Fergusson, Horwood & Ridder, 2005). The Adolescent Health Research Group's initial findings from the 2007 Youth Survey (2008) reported 34% of young people aged 12-17 years took part in binge drinking (more than five alcoholic drinks in four hours) in the previous month. The report by the Law Commission notes that alcohol consumption associated with binge drinking is a factor in crime and other social ills. It poses a major health and social problem in New Zealand among young people (Miller, Levy, Spicer & Taylor, 2006).

For the town of Tokoroa, which is situated in the Waikato region and the focus of this research, the Ministry of Social Development (2009) reports indicate that the number of children and young people apprehended for violent crime has increased markedly over the last three years. As reported, children as young as 10 years old are being apprehended for violent offences with the majority of these being children aged 14 to 16 years. However, because the law states that children of this age can be convicted only for manslaughter and murder, most of the children apprehended get referred to Family Group conferences. By way of contrast, Awa Tumai of the Tokoroa police told me that in the 2004 to 2009 period there had not been any increase in the numbers of *Pasefika* children and young people apprehended for violent offences by the Tokoroa Police. Furthermore, no females had been apprehended and none were below the age of 14 years. In Tumai's view, the reason for this may have been that *Pasefika* children and their families tend to deal with problems in-house (within the family). Tumai also commented that the church, the extended family and *Pasefika* peoples seem to have a stronger hold in Tokoroa on their cultural values, and these may act as protective factors for their children (Awa Tumai, personal communication, 12.15pm, May 18, 2010). One of the core findings of a 1998 report of the ministerial advisory committee on a Maori perspective for the Department of Social Welfare (Pu Ao Te Ata Tu) authored by John

Rangihau et al. (1988) was that families were the first port of call in finding solutions. New Zealand leads the world in the concept of Family Group conferences, where families gain a sense of empowerment by being engaged in resolving family issues (Connolly, 2006).

This need to empower communities was one of the reasons I chose Tokoroa as the site of the study. I was also, raised in Tokoroa from the age of 2 years, so I viewed this research project as an opportunity to make a reciprocal contribution to a community that has played a huge part in my life. I felt strongly connected to Tokoroa through my parents, and our family was one of the first Samoan families to migrate to Tokoroa.

In my view, Tokoroa provided an ideal setting for this community-based research. The town has a strong sense of community; therefore conducting a community participatory action research project seemed a feasible and workable project. This became more evident as preliminary discussions and *talanoaga* took place prior to the study proper.

Three months before this study began, consultation was carried out with key stakeholders in Tokoroa. They included: people in the early childhood education sector, ministers of religion, church leaders, professionals, and lay people from the community. From the outset, the support from the community was immeasurable. Although Tokoroa has a large migrant population I chose to confine the study to people of Samoan ethnicity because, as earlier outlined, I am Samoan, I come from Tokoroa, Samoans are the largest *Pasefika* population group, and I am strongly connected to the Samoan community of Tokoroa. Additionally, it was important for me to conduct an in-depth, ethnic specific study, hence the qualitative and community participatory action research. It is envisaged that the findings from this research will be used to inform research studies of other ethnic groups.

### **1.9 My reasons for conducting this research**

My reasons for conducting this research are my passion for social justice and children combined with my desire for children to be raised in a non-violent, equitable society; a society where they are enabled and empowered to be whole and healthy human beings socially, culturally, emotionally, spiritually, physically and mentally. For my research I chose one aspect – how aggressive behaviour in Samoan children is perceived by

parents and how these parents manage this behaviour in their own children. Supporting parents to manage their children's aggressive behaviour appropriately and effectively is a major step in resolving conflict non-violently.

This research also builds on some of my previous research. For example, my Master's thesis was entitled *Some Samoans' perceptions, values, and beliefs on the role of parents and children within the context of aiga/family and the influence of fa'aSamoa and the church on Samoan parenting* (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005). This qualitative study described maternal and paternal experiences of 35 Samoans living in Auckland, New Zealand with the view to establishing what, if any, changes to parenting practices have occurred since their families migrated to New Zealand. The study findings were that enculturation following migration spawned a reconstruction of values and associated practices in parenting, whereby previously held core values concerning discipline, the church and the family became altered over time and generations.

I was also a member of the team which carried out a study for The Families Commission and Parenting Council of New Zealand on *The Effectiveness of Parenting Programmes for Pasefika Parents* (Cowley-Malcolm, Nakhid & Helu, 2008). In this study, focus groups and one-to-one interviews were conducted with 35 participants. Findings from that study showed that respondents perceived parenting programmes to be effective in making parents more aware of parenting techniques and tools. Respondents spoke about the changes they had made as a result of what they had been shown at the parenting programmes and subsequently put into practice in their own homes.

These and other studies inspired me to carry out a more in-depth review of just one aspect of parenting – how parents define and manage childhood physical aggression. The trialling of a parenting intervention tool, the CD-ROM, *Play Nicely*, which, according to Scholer and Goad (2003), has proven to be effective with migrant populations in the USA seemed manageable and realistically achievable with parents of Samoan descent.

In my view, addressing and managing childhood physical aggression requires new ways of accessing information, support and training that are relevant to Samoan parents and carried out in a culturally appropriate way. I know Samoan families are more than

capable of taking responsibility for forging a positive future for their children if they have access to appropriate resources and support.

It is my firm belief that new ideas, innovations, and the courage and passion required to address the issues of childhood physical aggression and violence within some Samoan families lie within the hearts and minds of the Samoan communities themselves. Therefore, the participation of the community in the research process, from the design to the mode of dissemination of research outcomes, increases the likelihood of these actions having a positive and mobilising impact on the lives of Samoan people.

### **1.10 Research Rationale**

There has been limited research conducted with Samoan families on Samoan childhood physical aggression, especially pertaining to Samoan families in small town New Zealand. Therefore, interventions used to address Samoan childhood physical aggression are likely to be based on universal assumptions and may not be suitable for Samoan children in “small town New Zealand”.

I would argue that an understanding of Samoan cultural concepts of nurturing and caring for children in the New Zealand context is needed to inform the programmes designed to cater to this population. This thesis will endeavour to identify and discuss the cultural frameworks and concepts that may enhance understanding and provide a more focused approach to responding to and addressing childhood physical aggression and ways of managing it within Samoan diaspora and Samoan/multi-ethnic families. The study will also explore the perceptions of the parents from a small town in New Zealand about childhood physical aggression. It will also explore the international literature and findings to identify and describe risk and resiliency factors including social, economic and cultural factors.

#### **The study aims**

1. To investigate the perceptions of parents of Samoan ethnicity in Tokoroa, New Zealand about childhood physical aggression, its origins, and ways of managing it.
2. To describe parenting practices, the support parents received, the sources of that support, and the values they used in raising their child/children.

3. To explore the literature to identify risk and resiliency factors that influence childhood physical aggression.
4. To explore the usefulness of a simple multimedia programme (in the form of a CD-ROM) to support Samoan parents in managing aggressive behaviour in young children.

## **Assumptions**

My research is premised on the following assumptions:

- That some Samoan parents and caregivers will perceive childhood aggression according to the way they were parented and may manage it using a complex mixture of traditional (Samoan ways) and modern strategies.
- Samoan parents and caregivers in New Zealand are equipped with more parenting resources (such as parenting programmes, literature, media programmes) and tools (such as interactive DVDs, CD-ROMs and computer programmes) to manage their children's aggression than their parents had.
- Contemporary Samoan families are technologically literate and might benefit from using audio visual (AV) tools to learn how to effectively manage their children's aggressive behaviour.

### **1.11 Thesis outline**

This chapter has introduced the thesis and described the aims, objectives, and rationale for the study: analyse how Samoan parents define childhood physical aggression and its origins, and how they respond to and manage physical aggression in their children.

Chapter two begins with a review of the literature on Samoan parenting practices, then draws on *Pasefika* literature for the cultural concepts needed to understand *fa'aSamoa* and its relation to childhood physical aggression. This provides both the context and the cultural underpinnings for this research. Significant findings from the international and national literature related to childhood physical aggression are discussed. The review identifies the paucity of literature on *Pasefika*, and more specifically, Samoan research on childhood physical aggression. The chapter concludes by recognising the gaps in the literature, identifying issues for more in-depth research, and highlights the strong basis for this study in terms of risk factors and resiliency factors.

Chapter three provides an outline of the research design, methodology, and methods. It explains the way in which the research was conducted, and describes the participants, analysis and research methods in this study. It outlines the epistemological, ontological and methodological approaches, including the indigenous and cultural epistemologies. It contextualises the topic within Samoan cultural concepts of *le va*, which are core to Samoan polity and maintains the importance of seeing childhood physical aggression through the cultural lens of Samoan concepts of relationships (*le va*) and Samoan knowledge systems.

Chapter four presents the research findings. These are in the form of narratives depicting the stories of the participants in relation to the parenting of their children.

Chapter five focuses on the parents' perceptions of their children's behaviour. Attention is paid to what parents perceive to be the origins of both the children's behaviour and their own responses.

Chapter six is the result of a critical analysis of the data in which five themes emerged. They are discussed in relation to the Samoan cultural concepts. The five themes are: *O le au o matua o fanau* – the child is the most precious; *Ole ola manuia o le tamaititi e le fa'alagolago atoa ia te ia lava ae o le galuega faitele a le nu'u (aiga) atoa* – it takes a whole village to raise a child; *Le va* – parenting is all about relationships; and *Aua le oke, ae fa'atonu*– teach with words; and *Fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* – Samoa is founded on God (Samoa's motto).

Chapter seven presents the analysis of the responses of the parents to the CD-ROM *Play Nicely*. These responses were collected three months after the viewing of the CD-ROM to see whether, from the parents' perspectives, the CD-ROM was helpful in addressing their children's behaviour.

Chapter eight presents the conclusions and implications of the research. It also recommends ways forward for policy makers and service providers.

## **1.12 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the aims and objectives for this thesis and summarises my reasons for conducting this research. It has also given a brief historical explanation for



why the study site has been chosen, the rationale for the study, and an outline of the thesis chapters. Chapter two will explore the literature.

## Chapter two: Literature review

### 2 Introduction

This chapter explores the national and international literature related to the definitions, theories, and research on childhood physical aggression. This includes literature ranging from the micro (Samoan-specific context) to the macro (international context).

The purpose of this literature review is to focus on the nature, origins, and effects of childhood physical aggression in preschool children and to identify risk and resiliency factors associated with childhood physical aggression and its manifestations. It also explores how parenting programmes contribute to managing childhood aggression outcomes and how relevant these programmes – in particular the CD-ROM *Play Nicely* – may be to Samoan families in the New Zealand context.

This chapter is divided into six sections: a cultural context for Samoan childhood aggression; the nature of childhood physical aggression and influencing factors; child-raising socialisation theories; risk and resiliency factors; youth and adult violence; some New Zealand and *Pasefika* data; and parenting programmes. This review comprises a range of macro and micro level materials: global, regional, and national materials; and New Zealand, *Pasefika*, and Samoan research materials.

Exploring this range of literature is consistent with both a three dimensional or triangulated perspective and with Tamasese et al. (1997) *fa'afaletui* approach of different *fales* (houses) of knowledge; in effect, knowledge does not solely exist on the foundations of one *fale*; rather it is multi-dimensional and seen through many lenses (Tamasese, Peteru & Waldegrave, 1997). In this case, the literature incorporates the views of those in the canoe 'closest' to the fish (the knowledge holders/parents); those further from the fish watching from the treetops (the researcher); and those farthest from the fish, that is, on the hill (the key stakeholders). This analogy is a Samoan view of how one analyses and interprets data and information; that there are multiple perspectives. For example, from those who are closest to the information or data (fish), those who have given the information, those who will critique/analyse and interpret the

data and those who will make use of the information/data. All three of these perspectives are important and each will decipher, analyse, and critique the information according to their paradigm.

The chapter also demonstrates that while there are differing views about how childhood physical aggression is defined, and on its origins (nature, nurture) and intervention strategies, there is general agreement on two points. First, the relationship between childhood physical aggression and later violent behaviour in youth and adulthood (see for example, longitudinal studies conducted in Christchurch and Dunedin by Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Fergusson & Gariepy, 1989; Fergusson, Horwood & Ridder, 2005a). Secondly, childhood physical aggression has negative economic, social and health-related outcomes, not only for individuals but for families, communities and nations, as indicated in the abundance of literature on these effects (Attar, Guerra & Tolan, 1994; Broidy et al., 2003; Cairns, Leung, Buchanan & Cairns, 1995; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Davies et al., 2003; Gluckman, Low & Franko, 2011, Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000; Loeber, Lacourse & Homosh, 2005; Vitaro, Gendreau, Tremblay & Oliny, 1998).

Two points overarch this review. First, while research relating to the influence of nature on childhood physical aggression is presented, the main focus is on nurture – the parenting-socialising behaviours associated with childhood physical aggression. Second, most of the available research on childhood physical aggression is ethnocentric, based on Western assumptions of child raising patterns, and acknowledged as such by many researchers of the last decade (French, Kim & Pillado, 2006; Gordon & Brown, 2008; Yelland, 2005).

There are several reasons why this literature is relevant to this thesis. Firstly, the Samoan population in New Zealand is a diasporic population and in the context of this thesis, I refer to diaspora as people who have scattered all over the world from Samoa. Secondly, diaspora (or migrant groups) are a very important and growing sector of New Zealand society. The offspring of the first wave of *Pasefika* migrants make up the largest group aged less than 10 years, and are projected to comprise the majority of the future workforce of New Zealand. This will be evident in the statistics and when discussing the literature relevant to risk factors further on in the chapter. Thirdly, this

thesis argues the importance of exploring the influence of cultural values and beliefs on parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression and interventions. It will use the parents of Samoan ethnicity living in the small town, Tokoroa, New Zealand as an example of a diaspora group.

## **2.1 A cultural context for Samoan childhood aggression**

It is envisaged this research will reflect a new understanding of cultural factors that may have an influence on parents' child raising methods and expectations, including the ways Samoan parents and children respond and relate to each other within the family context. However, before we can explore the views around childhood aggression, the value of children and family and the relationships within the *fa'aSamoa* need to be known and understood from a Samoan perspective. While acknowledging that not all Samoans think, feel and act the same way, there are some common values and beliefs which most Samoans will recognise as belonging to them or having some relevance to them as Samoans, regardless of whether they were born in New Zealand or in Samoa. However, it is important within the *fa'aSamoa* to know who you are in terms of your lineage (*gafa*) and identity (*fa'asinomaga*). According to Tui Atua (2006) a Samoan person's identity is in their connection to the past, present and future and denotes their connection to where they come from (village of origin) their family and their sense of belonging. Aiono's (1997) description of the *fa'aSamoa* is made up of a tri-partite structure: *matai* (chief), *fanua or eleele* (land), and *gagana Samoa* (Samoan language).

### **2.1.1 Matai**

The matai is the chief of the Samoan extended family and is chosen by the family to be the head. This is in line with the *fa'amatai* system, a traditional form of governance and leadership which remains the fundamental system of polity in Samoan society (Silipa, 2008). Matai are given the responsibility of caring for the extended family and ensuring the family lands are maintained and equitably distributed to members of the family (Meleisea, 1996).

### 2.1.2 Aiga

The *aiga*/family is core to the life of Samoans. It is the first place where children are taught and learn the customs and protocols of *fa'asamoa*. The socialisation process of children is a shared effort between all members of the community, and it is within the *aiga* that the values of love, respect and humility are taught (Silipa, 2008).

The polity of Samoan life is rigidly hierarchical. Samoan society is highly structured and built on core beliefs and values which are immersed in everyday life (Meleisea, 1996). These core principles form the basis of *fa'aSamoa* and are the foundations on which *aiga* is built. It is relationships and how one is related to other people and their environment that transcends *fa'aSamoa* and life within the village (Tui Atua, 2009). Every member of the village from children to youth-male and female to elderly have a role they dutifully perform within the *aiga*. Each *aiga* has its *matai* and chiefs, who are given the due reverence and respect considered appropriate for them as leaders (Meleisea, 2000; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998). All Samoans originate from two families: their maternal and paternal families (Ngan-Woo, 1983). According to Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) the “family is the principle focus of identity and social location” (p. 54). Writers including Meleisea (1996) and Ngan Woo (1983) concur that the *aiga* is where one's *mana* and status is derived. It is where one is encouraged and taught about the values of the *fa'aSamoa*. These core principles form the basis of *fa'asamoa*, and in every *aiga* these are the foundations on which *aiga* is built. How these remain strong and stable are in the construct of relationships (Meleisea, 1996).

Therefore, in the *fa'aSamoa* the main organisational unit is the family/*aiga*, and the main idea of the connectedness of families is to maintain the well-being of the family, and to protect the name and honour of the family in whichever way is significant – economically, socially, politically (Meleisea, 2000). It is the duty of the *matai* or chiefs of the village to maintain the dignity and honour of the family by ensuring all these three “forms” are taken care of by each family unit and their contributions to these are performed with dignity and purpose under the village structures. The *matai* ensure this by gathering the families together to meet and discuss and decide via consensus what the contributions of each family will be towards the events that will take place. Within

these village structures each member of the *aiga* has a place and a role to play, and these expectations are set at a very early age. The children are not only seen to be a gift from God but are the future for the smooth running of the *aiga* and the *fa'aSamoa*.

### 2.1.3 Relationships

Core to Samoan life is *le va* (relationships) and how one relates to other people and their environment, which transcends *fa'aSamoa* and life within the village. The whole essence of Samoan culture revolves around respectful human relationships and hospitality (Tui Atua, 2009; MacPherson et al., 2001; Mulitalo, 1998; Schoeffel-Meleisea, 1995 & 1979).

When a member of a Samoan family is successful in any endeavour, whether it is sport, academia, or the ministry, his/her family take great pride in that individual's achievement as it is seen to be an achievement for the whole *aiga*. Equally, when one member of the *aiga* commits a crime or wrongdoing, the *aiga* feel as if they have all suffered the shame and indignation of that transgression. Pride and shame are big influences in Samoan life. This is a manifestation of the way in which Samoans value collectivity over individualism. In the *fa'aSamoa* the 'self' is the 'relational self', a duality – never single or individual. Being in an *aiga* and participating fully in the life of the *aiga* has a very strong bearing on a person's sense of identity, connectedness, and relationship to the whole system of *fa'aSamoa* (Tui Atua, 2009). To be a part of a family with strong social connections is a goal for many Samoans, and to be part of a strong well-connected family with social standing within their communities is important to many Samoans (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998).

How then do we teach Samoan children who are being raised in Samoan families to become adults with a good sense of self-worth, a strong sense of pride, to feel valued and also learn to value others? Children and young people in Samoan society have specific roles to play in the close and extended family settings. The relational self described in the concept of *fa'afaletui* (Tamasese et al., 1997) is a concept that describes the Samoan view of self as being physical, mental and spiritual. The Samoan self is an organisational process and the view of the self underlies that process. Unlike Western contexts, where addressing the spiritual may be seen as an imposition on

people, Samoans are likely to be offended if it is not addressed. The concept of spirit and self is indivisible in the constitution of the Samoan self (Tui Atua, 2009).

Samoan parenting in Samoa was a very open (spatial) concept with many people sharing the responsibility. There was a sense of an open society where extended family households lived and worked and knew what was going on in each family, and where families were able to witness and intervene where appropriate. According to Silipa (2008), the open nature of the Samoan *fale* (or house itself) cannot be underestimated in a child's development. As he states the open *fale* fostered the close supervision and guided participation of children by all family members. In terms of discipline, "it was impossible to participate in inappropriate behaviour without drawing the attention of others which meant that from an early age we learnt what was not acceptable" (p.16). These teachings described by Silipa are important and it is the spiritual values which are even more important to Samoan parents (Tui Atua, 2009; Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009).

#### **2.1.4 Children – a gift from God**

Macpherson (1991) states that there are two factors which help Samoans counter adversity. They are: supportive families and their faith or religion. This is not surprising when you consider the most recent New Zealand census in which Samoans remain keen church-goers and religion still plays a large and important part in the lives of Samoan people in New Zealand (Statistics NZ, 2006; Vailaau, 2005) The church has in many ways replaced the village as a place where people gather for worship and cultural events. Samoans acknowledge a strong alignment to the Christian faith (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). In Samoa according to the World Council of Churches (2006), it is even stronger because it is believed that Samoa is founded on God, which indicates what impact the early missionaries have made on the lives of Samoan people. Tuisuga-le-taua, (2009) illustrates this by stating:

All Samoans are religious people in one way or another and they do have some sort of religious affiliation, where they worship and gather in fellowship under the banner of spiritual nurture, formation and transformation. *Tapuaiga* was fundamental to the life of the Samoans in the past. It played an integral part in

shaping and conditioning people's behavioural patterns, attitudes, values, ethics, aspirations, visions and future life expectations. (p. 96)

In relation to children I have often heard the phrase, "Children are a gift from God" expressed by different Samoans in varying cultural contexts. For example, I heard it when my mother said it to a friend whose daughter was pregnant as a teenager and again when another member of the family got pregnant and the father was not present at the birth. Sometimes the expression was offered as a way of consoling the grandparents or relatives if the child was born to an unmarried couple or as a blessing at church when the minister was giving a sermon or thanking God, the parents, and children during *lotu tamaiti*. As the phrase indicates, it is often associated with Christian theology, where the birth of any child, able or disabled, is seen as a miracle performed by God. It is a phrase that denotes the value of children and their place in the *aiga* and their environment.

The relationship between parent and child in *fa'asamoa* is fundamental – core to how the child develops and forms her/his own views of the world (Silipa, 2008). The child's environment – the *fa'asamoa*, the cultural concepts, values and beliefs – are social constructs. These are important contributing factors which influence Samoan children's behaviour and how they interact with their peers. For example, the concept of *fa'alavelave* is a Samoan concept Samoan children learned from a very early age. It is bound up within the concept of *le va* and the child's relationship within its *aiga*, and the roles each member has to the greater good of the *aiga*. Each member, through his/her specific ties to the giver and the receiver, has an obligation to provide *mealofa*, and the *mealofa* is given and received according to the ranking of the relationship which defines who receives and who gives, what they receive, and how much.

Each child is raised to know their place under the teachings and principles of *le va*. Silipa (2008), in his writings speaks of this watchfulness:

Within the *aiga* there is always a conscious awareness that we are under the watchful gaze of our adult kin. This conscious awareness lies behind the silence of the child in the presence of adults and people in authority at home and in public. (p.15)



Children are raised to know their roles, to act on them diligently in the ‘service’ or *tautua* to their *aiga*. They know when to speak and not to speak, how to look and not to look, who to speak to and not to speak to, how to address and not address; their actions are always guided and directed by the knowledge they have been given by the adults about their ancestors (this is how it was for your mother/father/grandparents), and this knowledge acquisition is always under the perusal of the parents and in the first institution of learning, our *aiga* (Silipa, 2008). These teachings described by Silipa are important and it is the spiritual values which are even more important to Samoan parents. In the *fa’aSamoa* the values of *alofa*, respect and honour are seen as being core in the polity of Samoan life. They are also integral to the principles I will be using to conduct this research.

Vailaau (2005) a Samoan Christian theologian who is based in New Zealand, has researched children from a theological perspective, and writes of this faith and spirituality in relation to the child and their relationship with their parents. He refers to pregnancy and childbirth having strong connections to the spiritual realm of Samoa before the advent of Christianity, where *tapu* governed the daily rituals of traditional life (Vailaau, 2005). In this cosmology, it was believed that the outcomes of giving birth were dependent on whether the protocols associated with *tapu* (sacredness) had been observed. According to Vailaau the word *fanau* means to give birth and also denotes children. He notes also the multiple meanings of the word *fanua* which, although associated with land, also means placenta and umbilical cord. In Vailaau’s view, these two terms *tapu* (sacred) and *fanua* (land), indicate and symbolise the interconnection between people, the cosmos, and the land; these terms underpin a Samoan individuals’ identity and sense of belonging.

In other words, in the epistemology of Samoan indigeneity, the *tapu* of giving birth and being pregnant is recognition of the covenant of the relationships of mother/child/land and the cosmos. This sacredness (*tapu*) is also in the child’s relationship with their parents and the child (Vailaau, 2005). Vailaau explains that these relationships are primarily based on the values of *fa’aloalo* (respect) and *ava* (honouring the human dignity and integrity of the other party), regardless of age or gender. He further explains *ava* in terms of *va fealoa’i* (literally meaning the ‘space for face to face’). According to

Vailaau (2005), “Without this mutual acceptance of reciprocal honour and respect, human relationships will sever, even between parents and children” (p. 14).

Although the topic of childhood aggression has been written about at length, there is little research on *Pasefika* parental parenting practices, the values underlying these, or parents’ perceptions of childhood aggression. Many migrant children’s parents brought with them parts of their culture and tradition to their country of adoption. However, immigration to a new country brings with it a host of challenges for the new immigrants who struggle to contend with a vast array of values and modes of conduct that are different to the familiar, traditional ways in their countries of origin (Lauvi-Anae, 2009). In order to understand these cultural ways of doing and knowing Samoan parenting practices must be set against the values and beliefs of the *fa’aSamoa*. For example Lauvi-Anae (2009) describes the values and experiences which were instrumental in grounding her for later life in New Zealand. Although life in New Zealand was different, the values her parents taught her as a child served her well in her struggles and challenges as a new migrant to New Zealand.

Growing up in a village context, my parents taught me to carry the (*ato*) basket at every *fono* (meeting) for a *matai* (men’s chiefly council or for the *fono a tina* (women’s council). Performing these roles provided me with considerable ‘food’ of knowledge. This knowledge and these experiences helped me to establish foundational values, principles, and practices of *alofa* (love) and respect for parents, *aiga* and the *ekalesia* (church) (p. 59).

## **2.2 Parenting practices**

### **2.2.1 Traditional practices - Fagogo**

Based on traditional practices the *fagogo* (story telling by elders) and similarly the ‘*mama*’ described by Tui Atua (2006) and Vailaau (2005) was key in the raising of Samoan children. It was seen not only as a physical or psychological dimension but was encompassed in the spiritual and cultural etiquettes and protocols of *fa’aSamoa*.

Masoe and Bush (2009) explain the simplicity of storytelling by Tui Atua (2002) of *fagogo* in traditional times. These storytelling sessions by the elders to the young were to help them sleep or settle down for the night. These were family times where moral behaviours were reinforced; because they had a parable type meaning, they were not just for entertainment (Masoe & Bush, 2009). As explained by Masoe and Bush, although simple in its telling, *fagogo* involved a complex weaving of Samoan values and beliefs and expectations and processes in which children were weaned, parented, and taught about rituals and cultural practices. The authors also described it as the substance and maintenance of the closeness, the *va* between adult and child.

In telling Tui Atua's stories, Masoe and Bush (2009) explain the passing on of the knowledge of culture, songs, chants and etiquette activities such as the *fagogo*, where children were literally fed it from the *mama* (masticated food) which was lovingly lined along the arm of the *matua* (elders). Hence the Samoan saying, "*ai lava le tagata i le mama a lona matua*" (you derive sustenance and direction from the *mama* of your *matua*); *matua* in this context usually referring to the grandparents or the elderly members of the family. In re-telling Tui Atua's story Masoe and Bush (2009) state:

The role of the *matua* was to nurture the young so that the young would inherit from them the stories of their struggles and survival, their values, their *alofa*, and their vision for the future. Hence *mama* was literally and symbolically specific food for the young. The elderly chewed the food in order to soften it and then they rolled this chewed substance into dumplings and placed it in formation along the palm of the hand to the inside of the elbow whereby the young would then feed on these dumplings. Traditionally this was how the young were weaned from their mother's milk (p. 148)

The authors continue to describe Tui Atua's story about (*mama*) having spiritual sustenance as well as physical, and that it is in the act of food mastication that the spiritual *mana* is derived from the *agaga* or spirit of the masticator. Masoe and Bush compare this act to *ava* drinkers who imbue spiritual sustenance into the *ava*. *Mama* therefore imparts spiritual, emotional, physical, mental and cultural nurturance. Both *mama* and *fagogo* tell of the passing on of physical and cultural life from generation to generation in closeness and *alofa* (love). It is an image of intimacy of sharing, of love,

of connection and communication. It imparts *mana* and shares the *feau* (message) between generations Tui Atua, (2002), as cited in Masoe & Bush, (2009), p. 148).

### **2.2.2 Traditional to contemporary**

In the main, Samoan parenting practices have been depicted by various authors as being authoritarian (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998) and that Samoan children in Samoa and New Zealand are brought up with a strong focus on family, church, and respect for authority and elders. This has been recorded by numerous *Pasefika* researchers (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001). In many cases authoritarianism is linked to physical punishment (Paterson et al., 2007). However, recent research has noted inter-generational differences and differences between Samoan parents born in New Zealand and those born in Samoa (Cowley-Malcolm, Paterson & Williams, 2004; Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; McCallum et al., 2000). These changes have also been noted by other researchers; for example, while Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998) claim that Samoan parents in Samoa have a high capacity for harsh discipline and shame punishment, McCallum et al. (2000) found that New Zealand-born Samoan parents in her study had a more nurturing approach, were less inclined to hit their children or punish them severely, and spoke of the differences between their own parenting and their parents' style of parenting. In similar vein, Cowley-Malcolm (2005) found that, as a result of their own education and experiences in New Zealand, Samoan parents were changing the way they parented but maintained the same kinds of values and beliefs as their own parents, adapting them to suit their lifestyle in New Zealand. However, contrary to what Meleisea and Schoeffel found in their study, the comparative (PIF) study found that the 200 Samoan parents in Samoa scored highly as nurturers and less in terms of discipline than their Samoan counterparts in the New Zealand PIF study (Iusitini et al., 2011). In a dissemination of the initial findings to academic staff at the National University of Samoa they surmised it may be due to the high drug and alcohol influence and breakdown in traditional family structures in New Zealand among Samoan families. Needless to say, more research is needed in this area to substantiate the anecdotal evidence that appears to have emanated from the study findings.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001) found that Samoan parents in Samoa disciplined their children physically because they saw this to be the correct way according to Samoan protocol;

the absence of this form of discipline was seen to be spoiling the child. These findings can be contrasted with the indulgent and gentle parenting observed in Samoa by Turner a missionary in Samoa in the 1800's. This suggests that Victorian parenting methods introduced by missionaries, who may have espoused this as the Christian way, were adopted and may be described as Samoan in Samoa today. Moreover, Fairbairn-Dunlop's research, conducted with women from two villages in Samoa, showed that the majority of the participants hit their children for acts of disobedience. According to many of the parents, hitting the children was an act of parental love and care. Fairbairn-Dunlop's research found that, following an intervention programme, many of the participants declared that they had changed their attitudes towards hitting their children and would not consider this to be a discipline option for the future. McCallum et al. (2000) found similar changes in the New Zealand-born Samoan participants in their study. Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2001) findings included teaching children how to behave and what constitutes good behaviour and bad behaviour. Defining these behaviours may vary from family to family.

With regard to effective parenting strategies, attention must also be drawn to potential differences between strategies that have been tested and trialled in Samoa and their applicability to the New Zealand context. For example, Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2001) work in Samoa, which involved teaching positive parenting strategies to villagers, may need adapting for application to New Zealand-born Samoans. Hurting children is unacceptable in most societies and most Samoan families know that in the New Zealand context this is not considered appropriate behaviour (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001).

### **2.2.3 Integrating traditional and contemporary parenting practices**

Changing demographics and place contribute to considerable changes in how people think, feel and act. Cowley-Malcolm (2005) found that New Zealand-born Samoan peoples were likely to change their parenting practices from how their parents raised them to a more communicative and child-focused approach. Several of the participants who were severely punished as children reported becoming very angry and violent themselves as teenagers and adults. However, with some self-analysis, supportive partners and learning of new parenting skills, they were able to change their behaviour over time. The majority did not agree with harsh physical discipline and they did not

wish to repeat the same methods with their own children. McCallum et al. (2000) also found that New Zealand-born Samoan parents were likely not to raise their children the same way as their parents, especially when it came to managing their children's behaviour.

Mulitalo-Lauta (1998) argues that any research or interactions with Samoan people must consider the tangible and intangible aspects of Samoan protocols and customs of *fa'a Samoa*. These involve values, ideas, beliefs, and practices which are Samoan-such as *ava* (respect), *fa'aaloalo* (reverence), *alofa* (love, compassion, and concern), *fa'amagalo* (forgiveness), *fa'alavelave* (problem solving), *lotonu'u* (maintaining/restoring pride), *tapu* (sacred bonds), and *tautua* (service) - as well as understanding the need to include the *fono* (the village council), which is comprised of *matai*, the heads of the various *aiga*, and the church.

However, as with all cultures there is a dynamism involved whereby certain aspects of the culture may remain static but others will be constantly changing and evolving (Berry, 1980). This is applicable in the New Zealand-born situation whereby generations of Samoans influenced by Western thoughts and practice have adapted and moved from the more traditional ways in which their parents or grandparents viewed their world to adopting ways that are more suitable to their current environment and way of life (McCallum et al., 2000). An example is the practice of *fa'alavelave* or gift giving; for many second generation New Zealand Samoans, *fa'alavelave* is restricted to close family and involves a more pragmatic approach of affordability (Cowley, 2005). According to Borrows, et al. (2011) such cultural adaptations and shifts are an inevitable process of acculturation. One of these traditional practices is the spiritual sense of relationship between parent and child and community, as illustrated in the more traditional cultural practice of *fagogo*.

### **2.3 The Nature of childhood physical aggression**

Childhood physical aggression has been defined in many different ways and strategies identified to address childhood physical aggression reflect these differences. For example, Tremblay (2008) identifies kicking as one of the earliest signs of physical aggression in children. He also notes that some babies show aggression by loud crying,

and as they get older, these children resort to biting and hitting. At the toddler stage this behaviour is regarded as normal and part of the child's development (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). Sharing their toys, playing harmoniously with other children, and wanting things that other children have which they consider theirs is part of the life stages of child development (Gordon & Brown, 2008). However, all of these things – sharing, playing nicely, interacting with other children pleasantly, and asking rather than grabbing what they want – are learned behaviours taught to the children by adults and moderated by the parents (Gordon & Brown, 2008). This is actually the crux of what Tremblay's research concludes: what adults need to do is intervene early in the child's life by teaching the child how not to be aggressive because being aggressive is a natural part of a child's cycle of development. Tremblay suggests childhood aggression has an early onset age with some children demonstrating it as early as 7 months and others at 12 months (Tremblay, 2000; Tremblay et al., 2004; Tremblay, 2008a, 2008b). Other researchers (Broidy et al., 2003; Cole & Cole, 2001; Webster-Stratton & Herbert, 1993; Webster-Stratton et al., 2001) attribute these aggressive actions to frustration and anger. These same sorts of actions resulting from anger and frustration are also regarded by other behavioural theorists as being applicable to adults too, and when children observe these behaviours in adults they will emulate them as they get older (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963). Overall, the research suggests that in a number of children where there is intensity and frequency of childhood physical aggression this may be an early sign of more problematic behaviours later in the child's life especially if family and psycho-social risk factors are evident (Garbarino & Bedford, 2001).

Bailargeon, Zoccolio and Keenan (2007), Cairns et al. (1989), and Crick, Ostrov, Burr, Jansen, Cullerton-Sen and Ralston, (2006), describe childhood aggression in terms of behaviours, both relational and physical, which are different for male and female. Crick et al's. (2006) findings are that boys are more likely than girls to be physically aggressive, with girls more prone to showing relational aggression. For example, girls are much more likely to use exclusionary tactics such as "you are not coming to my party" or "you aren't playing with us", whereas boys are more likely to be physically aggressive and act out by hitting, kicking, or pushing.

Webster-Stratton and Reid's research (2003) suggests childhood physical aggression is due to a multiplicity of factors, including child temperament, critical and abusive

parenting, single parenthood and inter-partner violence. In cases where children's aggressive behaviour becomes chronically severe they are diagnosed with chronic conduct disorder (Frick, Barry & Kamphaus, 2006). These children have physical aggression which has continued since they were toddlers and has spiralled into recurrent, violent, oppositional behaviour, and interventions either have not been carried out or acted on or there have been severe mental health problems and dysfunction within the family or specifically with the child (Farrell & Flannery, 2005).

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003) points out that interaction with children who have behavioural problems at a very young age becomes very difficult for both adults and other children. As other children begin to avoid them because of their behaviour these children feel more and more isolated. This can escalate the aggressive behaviour, especially when a multiplicity of risk factors is involved. Sometimes younger children who have not been taught the skills to resolve conflict become very frustrated and angry, unlike older children who have been taught how to manage their anger. Younger ones have not learned how to channel their aggression into more peaceful ways of reacting or responding (Tremblay et al., 2004).

Tremblay et al.'s. (2004) research on aggression in pre-school children is highlighted in this review because of its relevance in terms of origins, trajectories, predictions, risk factors, and implications. This research shows comprehensively the trajectories and predictors of physical childhood aggression. The findings show that most children initiate the use of physical aggression from 1-2 years of age and that this subsides prior to the age of 3 years and that most will have learned to use alternatives before they enter primary school.

Over the period 1977 to 1988, Tremblay et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal randomised population study in Canada by tracking 572 families, each of whom had a 5 month old baby. The purpose of the study was to identify the trajectories of physically aggressive behaviour in the child and identify the antecedents of physical aggression early on in a child's life. The researchers followed the children from 5-42 months of age to gauge the developmental pathways physical aggression took (Tremblay et al., 2004). The research team carried out four interviews with each of the mothers in their homes when the child was aged 5, 17, 30, and 42 months. Questions posed to the mothers were



about frequency and nature of physical aggression, and parental behaviour and practices. Analysis of data involved a special tool for the identification of patterns of growth and trajectories – a semi-parametric model and a multi-variety logistic regression. At 17 months, 30 months and 42 months after birth, Tremblay and his colleagues found evidence of physical aggression at those ages, and as early as five months after birth. They also looked at the relationship between aggressive behaviour and factors such as child temperament, quality of mother's parenting, parental background, and family characteristics. The researchers concluded that the combination of poverty and single parenthood remained a significant predictor of physical childhood aggression, and that family dysfunctions and coercive parenting were the best five month predictors of a high physical aggression trajectory. These 2 factors were confirmed as typical predictors of anti-social behaviours in adolescents and older children as well. At the 5 month milestone also, an association was found between difficult temperament and coercive parenting.

Tremblay's study suggests that children learned from their parents and caregivers to regulate the use of physical aggression during the pre-school years. He proposed that those who had not learned to do so would be at highest risk of serious violent behaviour during adolescence and adulthood (Tremblay et al., 2004). Furthermore Tremblay proposed that intervention programmes should target families 'at risk' and when the child is of pre-school age. He reasoned that if the age of onset of aggression is during the pre-school years, then teaching children not to be aggressive at that age will be far more beneficial than waiting until the aggression had got to a chronic stage and become, for those children, a way of life (Tremblay et al., 2004). Furthermore, Tremblay identified the age of abatement as around 7 years, but held that by the age of 3 years most children's aggressiveness should have significantly abated. These findings have influenced my decision to focus this study on 1-3 year-olds. In my view Tremblay describes the abatement process as akin to coming down a mountain – a gradual decline, rather than a sudden cessation.

Other researchers have replicated Tremblay's studies with similar findings, particularly with regard to the timing of the onset of aggression in pre-school children (Shaw, 2003). Furthermore, Tremblay et al's trajectory findings have been developed extensively by other researchers in terms of further research related to childhood physical aggression

(Ostrov, 2006; Scholer & Goad, 2003, Scholer, Mukherjee, Gibbs, Memon & Jongeward, 2007; Shaw, 2003).

### **2.3.1 Nature and nurture**

Tremblay al's. (2004) findings promulgated much interest in the on-going debate of nature versus nurture, and social learning theory in relation to physically aggressive behaviour in children (Shaw, 2003). Much of the earlier social learning theory had proposed that aggressive children behaved the way they did because they had seen this behaviour modelled by their adult caregivers or others (Bandura, 1977).

According to Tremblay (2008) however, "Contrary to traditional belief, children do not need to observe models of physical aggression to initiate the use of physical aggression" (p. 3). Cairns (1979) observes that animals who have not had any contact with others are more aggressive than those who have not been isolated. Like humans, animals are social beings who depend on contact with others for nurturing and belonging. According to Tremblay et al. (2004) children need to unlearn how to be aggressive, and most do. In fact, results from studies in several countries including New Zealand, Canada and the USA show that between the ages of 2 and 8 years physical aggression is fairly stable and in some children there is a major decrease. This supports research by Olweus (1979) and others that there is a stability of childhood physical aggression which is developmental; the trajectory of physical aggression in children does stabilise with only a small percentage who continue on a trajectory of physical violence into teenage-hood and beyond. Tremblay et al's. (2004) research indicates that it is doubtful that school-age children are impulsively physically aggressive. He suggests that children at that age seldom have an interest in violent interaction. On the contrary, by that stage of their development they will have learned the inappropriateness of that kind of behaviour (Tremblay et al., 2004).

These arguments, then, suggest that the age of onset of aggression in children is too early to simply attribute it to learned behaviours (i.e. nurture); it is more likely to be "natural" and to result from an instinctive or a behavioural, neurologically programmed response than from learned behaviour (see also Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000; Olweus, 1979). This study however is focused on the latter.

## **2.4 Child-raising socialisation theories**

Social learning theorist Bandura et al. (1963) claimed children learn from and model their behaviour, including aggressiveness, on their parents' behaviour, or on the behaviour of the people the child is most likely to interact with on a daily basis. Bandura's (1977) research using Bobo dolls and young children reinforced his theory that young children exposed to violence will act out what they have observed. This research also clearly showed the influence on children of adult modelling behaviour. In addition, certain factors had been shown to have an influence on how receptive the child was to this learning. These include the child's temperament, how conducive their environment is to learning, aspects of health and developmental maturity, and exposure to household trauma (Thompson & Massat, 2005). Factors such as attention and non-attachment can also affect the child's ability to learn from the parent (Bowlby, 1997; Karen, 1994).

Bandura (1977) considered aggression to be behaviour that had social origins. He was of the view that children do not develop the cognitive abilities to observe and model/copy adult behaviour until they are about twelve months old. Like Bandura, other theorists (Vygotsky, 1978; Erickson, 1968) of social learning and development reinforced the importance of the environment on children's learning at this stage of their development, emphasising the importance of the impact of parents' responses to their children's behaviour (positive and negative), including how the parents behaved in the presence of their children. Vygotsky (1978) was more inclined to see development in terms of change and how structures alter and progress life pathways. He theorised that people act and interact within the socio-cultural context they share.

### **2.4.1 Socialisation theories**

While there are many schools of thought on the issue of child development in relation to learning, contemporary child development theory places critical focus on culture and context. Hawaiian researcher Kaomea (2001) stresses that the role culture and context play in the development of a child are equally important.

Pertinent to this thesis are theories espoused by Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1996), who see the attainment of knowledge as being the result of social intercourse with other learners. Vygotsky's theories had a huge emphasis on the social context of learning and what Walsh (2005) describes as contemporary developmental theory. In his book *'The culture of education'* Bruner (1996) builds on a cultural psychology which, like Vygotsky's theory, is based on a framework of historical and social context of learners. He emphasises the relativity of the cultural context to the truths of theories of development, which represents a theoretical shift from the three grand theories (cognitive, psychoanalysis, and learning) all of which describe development in universal terms and which Bruner argues can no longer be seen as applicable to everyone, everywhere, and all the time (Bruner, 1996). He also espouses that there is no theory of development that is either free of human genes or culture:

The truths of theories of development are relative to the cultural context in which they are applied. The plasticity of the human genome is such that there is no unique way in which it is realised, no way that is dependent of opportunities provided by the culture into which an individual is born....man is not free of either his genome or his culture...to say then that a theory of development is 'culture free' is to make not a wrong theory but an absurd one (p. 135).

Schweder et al. (1988) state that culture is not something that envelops the universal child but rather, it is something that is necessary for the child's development and adds to the total picture of children's lived experiences. They say "Culture provides the script for how to be and for how to participate as a member in good standing in one's cultural community and in particular social contexts." (p. 896).

Gordon and Brown (2008), Yelland (2005), and Rourou, Singer, Bekkema, and De Haan (2006) reiterate that the history of child development theory was dominated by an ethno-centric view based on assumptions and notions of universality, and that themes of child development have been extrapolated from Western, mainly British and Euro-American, research literature. The former authors viewed the cultural experiences of the child to be of the greatest significance to the child's development and the way they learn; fundamentally inferring that the child is a product of his/her family and his/her culture. The same three authors emphasise the importance of educators' awareness that

the development of the child is culturally specific and contextual. Other authors such as Choa and Fry concur that many frames of thinking that the child develops can be attributable to the culture and the context in which he or she is raised (Choa, 2001; Fry, 1988).

Cole and Cole (2001) and Rourou et al. (2006) emphasise that children's social and cultural backgrounds have a major influence on their learning (including in regard to aggressive behaviour). In particular cultural backgrounds influence what, why and how children learn (Ferrari, 2002; Rogoff, 2003; Rutter, 2000).

This draws attention to the issue of how aggression is defined or what counts as aggression. For example, studies with Dutch, Moroccan-Dutch, and Antillean-Dutch groups (Rourou et al., 2006), Hawaiian contexts (Kaomea, 2001), Hispanic and African American families (McLoyd & Smith, 2002), and New Zealand (Herbert, 2001), show that not every parent who has a child that behaves "aggressively" (as per Western definitions) will define that behaviour as aggressive. Their perceptions of aggression are influenced by factors such as parenting styles, collectivist and individualist orientations, conflict resolution styles, culture, and context – all of which are important (Tsai, Ying & Lee, 2000). For example, Shaw (2003) observed that African-American parents may use authoritarian parenting and therefore regard physical discipline as being acceptable. Research with Hispanic families found a tendency to accept aggression because of the 'machismo' kind of society that is prevalent among Latinos (De Young & Zigler, 1994). Shaw (2003) highlights the fundamental importance of taking cognisance of the variation of parenting styles between different cultures before making assumptions about appropriateness of parental behaviours and any association with childhood physical aggression. Critical to these parental issues are cultural, socio-economic and health factors (Wilkinson, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006; 2007).

Therefore, in this vein research reinforces the argument that how children are socialised within their home surroundings will have a bearing on the way they socialise outside the home and its close environs (Ferrari, 2002; Flannery, Singer, & Wester, 2001). Research conducted within different ethnic groups shows that cultural and socialisation factors and the views of the community need to be taken into account (Fontes, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008; Quintana et al., 2006). Umemoto et al. (2009) state:

We found this to be important in our work with the native Hawaiian community, who share a distinct epistemology and favour a more interactive relational talk story approach in the oral tradition. Therefore to achieve positive health outcomes among diverse communities, be it in the reduction of violence, or other health problems, researchers must adjust to other ways of thinking organically evolving plans and innovative strategies for research and action. (p. 231)

Socialisation theories suggest that a child is raised as a social being and the manifestations of their social constructs will have a significant influence on how they socialise with their peers and other people (Resnick et al., 2004). Children learn this through cultural role expectations and many years of being socially connected to people close to them, and to assist them in this process there is an array of skills, knowledge, and values which include “contents of culture” that are passed on, maintained, and sustained (Reder, Duncan, & Clare, 2003).

Rourou et al. (2006) found cultural differences in a study of Antilean, Dutch, and Moroccan parents living in Holland. The aim of the research was to identify conflict strategies of pre-school children of the three different ethnicities, differences in pedagogical ideas among the mothers about interventions in peer conflicts, and any differences among the immigrant mothers and Dutch mothers. The study found that the Dutch mothers in the study had very negative views of migrant mothers and families, based mostly on negative media reports. As noted in the report, “migrant parents don’t teach their children good manners, and don’t exercise adequate control; they physically punish their children; are too strict; and don’t talk with their children” (Rourou et al., p. 48). The Dutch mothers also expressed fear of aggressive behaviour in migrant males. The study found that Antillean mothers, in turn, had negative views about Dutch parents: “Dutch children get too much freedom; there is a lack of parental control, and lack of respect for the elderly. Dutch children are even allowed to hit and scold their own mother! And when you slap your child, the mother is accused of child abuse by the child protection service” (Rourou et al., p. 48). Antillean mothers also perceived Dutch mothers to be cold, uninviting, and individualistic.

Rourou and colleagues found Moroccan mothers in the study were more positive. Over 50% of the Moroccan mothers thought the Dutch mothers raised their children with similar values to themselves but just took a different approach in how they applied

them. They felt the freedom Dutch mothers gave to their children was a positive aspect of Dutch parenting. The study (2006) concluded there were no significant differences between the Dutch, Moroccan, and Antillean children in multicultural childcare centres in regard to conflicts and conflict resolution. However, it also clarified that migrant mothers struggle with socialising their children in the context of modern day living in Holland; this struggle is something that many migrants worldwide can relate to, and which many migrant families in New Zealand experience (Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola; 2006). Study researchers found Moroccan mothers were more inclined to keep their children at home with them for longer, even in adulthood, so creating a kind of dependency which, from the parents' perspective, would ensure their children would take care of them in their old age. Research by Keller et al. (2004) emphasises these cultural differences. She suggests that in some ethnic groups parents prefer to see their children as being interdependent and in other ethnic groups as independent. Keller et al's. study (2004) has congruency with (minority) migrant groups in New Zealand who are raising their children in a majority culture; for example, Samoans. It highlights the issues arising from the tension between, for example, collectivism and individualism, and authoritarian parenting and permissive parenting, which are also found in McCallum et al's. (2000) study with *Pasefika* parents.

Neuman (2003) states that we are all raised within the realm of the contexts of social theories. Who we are is largely based on our socialisation experiences. For example, Samoan parents raised in a Samoan context of *fa'alavelave*, *teu le va*, and *sasa* are highly likely to pass these same experiences on to their children who, in turn, will either reject them or pass them on to their own children, depending on the context they find themselves in. These different social and cultural contexts will involve risk and protective factors as discussed in the next section.

## **2.5 Risk and protective factors**

This review is focused on research and theories/explanations of childhood aggression. This section reviews the literature on the risk and protective factors in relation to aggressive behaviour persisting and escalating beyond the early childhood years. The section discusses seven factors: pre-natal risks of childhood aggression; smoking, alcohol, and harmful drugs; inter-partner conflict and family violence; the cycle of abuse/inter-generational transmission; low income/single parenthood and stress factors;

links to poor health outcomes and poverty; and parenting practices. All of these have an influence on the ways parents respond to their children's behaviour.

Much of the literature suggests that while Bandura (1963) and others have emphasised the environmental impact or the socialisation aspect of a child's development, there is none-the-less a significant body of evidence from the literature which suggests that physical aggression is a natural phenomenon, likely to be genetic in origin, and that it develops from as young as five months of age (Tremblay, 2008). Tremblay (2004) argues that there is a strong association between a child's inability to regulate aggression, and violent behaviour in adolescence and adulthood. Most children, however, learn to regulate aggressive responses so that by the time they start school few are physically aggressive (Tremblay, 2000).

There are many risk factors which children encounter that can have major impacts on their education and health. Physical and sexual assault are identified as risks (Tajima, 2002; Tiecher, 2002) and others may include conflict within families, physical and emotional abuse (Asiasiga & Gray, 1998; Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1999), and a violent environment (Osofsky, 1995, 2003). The onset of schooling presents other risks from peers and bullying (Pianta, 1997).

Burger (1994) define a risk factor for aggression as an element that increases the chances of a person acting violently, and a protective factor as an element that decreases the impact of a risk factor. In simple terms, a risk factor is something that puts a person in jeopardy or danger, or increases the possibility of a traumatic event occurring. Williams and Kelly (2005) state that what constitutes a risk factor is not universal but can vary according to an individual's social and environmental constructs as well as contextual factors such as time and place. Research that identifies risk factors almost always looks at protective factors, based on the view that if one is taking into account factors which increase risk, then one must also consider factors that protect the individual from harm (Burger, 1994).

There is also increasing interest in an alternative approach to defining protective factors that focuses on the ability to moderate or reduce the influence of risk factors (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001). For example, Burger (1994), Luthar and McMahon (1996), and Fergus



and Zimmerman (2005), identify resiliency factors which strengthen the victim and make them less vulnerable to long term consequences.

Risk and protective factors are often branded according to the kinds of influences that may prevail, such as an individual's involvement with risk-taking substances (Delaney et al., 2000), their state of mind, and their attitudes and beliefs towards society (Flannery, 2000; Flannery et al., 2001), family-related factors such as the relationships and interactions that occur between parents and siblings (Dubow, Huesmann, & Boxer, 2003), their relationships at school (Attar et al., 1994), academic performance and interaction with peers (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2008), the influences of their peer group, and whether there is gang involvement in their families or communities (French et al., 2006). Lastly, consideration should be given to factors relating to the community; for example, whether it is a neighbourhood that is free of crime and where its members have a genuine concern for their neighbourhood and the people that live in it (Farrell & Flannery 2005; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Flannery, 2000; Resnick et al., 2004).

Research on risk and protective factors is discussed in a number of inter-related ways such as pre-natal risk, smoking, alcohol, and inter-partner conflict. These are discussed.

### **2.5.1 Pre-natal risks of childhood physical aggression**

Research indicates that even before a child is born, what the mother does to care for herself and her emotional demeanour and mental state will have a major effect on the health and well-being of her unborn child. Elements of risk, therefore, occur for children before they are born (Ishikawa & Raine, 2003). To illustrate this, in a rare cross-sectional study during the Second World War of mothers who were severely malnourished and mothers who were not, researchers Neugebauer, Hoek and Susser, (1999) found that male children of mothers who showed nutritional deficiencies had higher incidences of anti-social behaviour than the sons of women who were sufficiently nourished. This research was one of the first which showed the mother's diet and nutritional intake to be important, not only in terms of the health of her unborn child, but also significantly important to her male children and the link with childhood aggression later on in the child's life.

### **2.5.2 Smoking, alcohol, and harmful drugs**

Ishikawa and Raine's (2003) findings are that mothers exposed to drugs, smoking, alcohol, and substance abuse constitute risk factors for childhood aggression. Ishikawa and Raine's (2003) research on the effects of cigarette smoking during pregnancy has shown the harmful effects it has on the part of the brain which controls social abilities, making it difficult for the child to form good social skills and reasoning. A study of pregnant mothers and their offspring found that smoking during pregnancy had a severely negative effect on the behaviour of their child and the child's development (Wakshlag et al., 2002). Many studies, including Ishikawa and Raines' (2003), highlight how harmful smoking is both to the mother and to the healthy development of her unborn child, especially in relation to aggression, leading to conduct disorder and anti-social behaviour (Fergusson, Horwood, Boden & Jenkin, 2007; Fergusson, Woodward, & Horwood, 1998; Wakshlag et al., 2002). The links between cigarette smoking, aggression, behavioural problems and criminal behaviour have been well established in longitudinal studies (Fergusson et al., 2007).

### **2.5.3 Inter-partner conflict and family violence**

A number of researchers emphasise that childhood physical aggression is culturally and socially constructed, with some identifying parenting-related risk factors for childhood physical aggression: for example, single parents, parents with a mental illness, socially inept parents, low income parents, and teenage parents (Cohen, Moffitt, Taylor, Pawlby & Caspi, 2005; Ferrari, 2002; Fontes, 2003; Grille, 2005; Webster-Stratton et al., 2001). Conversely, children who are caught between parents in conflict have been found to manifest signs of stress and aggression with a high likelihood of modelling the behaviour they observe (Strauss, 2000; Strauss & Pascall, 1997). These findings in the literature are important contextually for this study because of the ethnic specific nature of this study and the impact of multiple changes within migrant communities of geographical location, economics and social adaptations.

Exposure to early risk factors, with no intervening protective factors increases the likelihood of negative consequences during the child's life (Poulton et al., 2005). A combination of variables such as mother's age, low socio-economic background,

depression, and marital conflict are also associated with childhood aggression (Odgers et al., 2007; Ostrov, 2006; Ostrov et al., 2004; Strauss & Gelles, 1986, 1990; Tremblay et al., 2004). Keenan & Wakshlag (2000) suggest that if the mother is under stress she is less likely to be patient and less able to effect good parenting interactions with her child which, in turn, impacts on the way the child interacts with the mother. Keenan & Wakshlag (2000) also suggest that “developmental studies of child and parent behaviour over time should start during pregnancy so that environmental factors may be examined individually and interactively over time” (p. 4).

It is well documented that children exposed to parental conflict are open to many risks in their development: sleep disorders, failure to thrive cognitively, childhood physical aggression, depression, and behavioural problems and disorders (Osofsky, 1995, 2003). Much inter-partner violence (IPV) research emphasises the impact IPV has on children’s behaviour and that children who have witnessed violence amongst adults are also likely to act out the behaviour they have observed (Cunradi, Caetano, Clark & Schaeffer, 2000). According to Davies et al. (2003), “Violence against women and children frequently co-occurs with poverty, history of family violence, inter-marital conflict, family stress and pro-violent attitudes” (p. 29).

A number of studies have provided evidence that violence in the home is a risk for children behaving aggressively and the frequency of exposure to family violence and community violence is significantly related to the level of the child’s aggression. (Attar et al., 1994; Osofsky, 1995; Thompson & Massat, 2005). Domestic violence leaves children in a very vulnerable situation in many societies where they are totally dependent on adults and are considered as having lower status than adults (Davies et al., 2003).

A study carried out by Thompson and Massat (2005) with African American children reinforces the findings by other researchers that exposure to family and community violence exacerbates aggressive behaviour in school-age children (Asiasiga & Gray, 1998; Fontes, 2005; Tremblay, 2002; Trickett & Sussman, 1988). Family violence and community violence significantly impact on the academic success and achievement of children. It is difficult for children to learn when they are concerned for the safety of themselves and the parent who is the victim of inter-partner conflict (Harold & Pryor, 2001). Numerous researchers found childhood aggression starts in the home with

parents and family members (Cunradi et al., 2000; Holden, Geffner & Jouriles, 1998; Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000; Tremblay, 2008).

Recent New Zealand literature reinforces the association between harsh disciplining practices (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001) and inter-partner conflict (Asiasiga & Gray, 1998; Counts, Brown & Campbell, 1999; Paterson et al., 2007). In the New Zealand Samoan context harsh discipline may be related to high levels of stress in families who are impacted by unemployment, single parent households, and other socio-economic factors. Taking into account that Samoan families as with other *Pasefika* peoples are significantly economically disadvantaged compared to *Pakeha* New Zealanders, the cultural factor may be viewed as a link to the stress some families may be experiencing. For example, when familial and cultural obligations such as *fa'alavelave* are difficult to fulfil parents become stressed and are less able to engage with their children as well as they would like (Cowley, Paterson & Williams, 2004; Paterson et al., 2008).

New Zealand research concurs with international research that shows parental mental illness and teenage parenthood to be risk factors (Fergusson et al., 2005; Poulton, et al., 2002).

#### **2.5.4 The cycle of abuse: Inter-generational transmission**

A consistent research finding is that parenting is an important factor in the cross-generational transmission of aggressive behaviour (Huesmann et al., 2000). In particular, for families from economically and educationally deprived homes, the pattern of abuse is more likely to continue from generation to generation. Risk factors associated with childhood aggression, such as harsh physical discipline, can be inter-generationally transmitted through both genetic and environmental channels (Quinton & Rutter, 1988). When an aggressive child grows up to be an aggressive adult, the likelihood of that adult continuing the cycle of aggression and violence is increased, especially if the home environment does not change – for example, the educational or economic or health status of the mother. Cross generational research by Dubow et al. (2003) and Huesmann et al. (2000) found a significant and reciprocal effect between harsh parenting practices and childhood aggressive behaviour, which suggests that aggressive behaviour is transmitted from one generation to another.

Research conducted in the USA, Britain, New Zealand, and Australia shows that groups most likely to be affected by adult and youth violence are minority population groups with low socio-economic status (McLoyd & Smith, 2002). These groups may be disenfranchised by mainstream society and are more vulnerable to negative impacts resulting from economic and social policies of past and current governments (Cole & Cole, 2001). As reported by Helfer (1997), in the USA the vast majority of the poor and the unemployed are migrant and indigenous populations – Native American, Hispanic, and African-American – who have less access than majority groups to health services (Helfer, 1997). When factors such as single parenthood, alcohol, drugs, and mental illness are also present the risk factors become even more significant (Dahlberg & Potter, 2001).

*Pasefika* researchers in New Zealand, including Duituturanga (1988), found that the parent's attitude was that if they did not hit their children it showed a lack of love. The respondents felt that if the parent intended to injure the child, then it was an act of violence, but if the intent to injure was absent then it was an act of love. Minor grades of bruising were reminders of misbehaviour whereas blue bruises and fractures were seen as the result of violence.

The importance of this literature to the thesis is significant in several ways. Firstly, the Samoan population in New Zealand is a diaspora – they have moved from the islands to New Zealand and are continually adapting and changing to fit into their new environment. Secondly, Samoans in New Zealand feature significantly at the lower end of the socio-economic strata of New Zealand society. Thirdly, all of these socio-economic and health indices continue to have a negative impact on Samoan children and families. Lastly, the literature has illustrated a multiplicity of factors which influence the potential risk to children and families of childhood aggression if parents do not intervene in the early years of a child's life.

#### **2.5.5 Low income and single parenthood and stress factors**

Factors such as single parenthood and poverty/low income have proven to be associated with stressed parenting and poor child health and education outcomes (Olweus, 1979; Strauss & Gelles, 1986, 1990; Teicher, 2002; Tremblay, 2005). Poor single parents who

are stressed will be less effective in teaching their children, especially if the child is in an environment where the adults themselves are modelling physical aggression (Strauss, 2000; Strauss & Gelles 1986, 1990). Poor and single mothers who are stressed are less likely to exercise control over their own behaviours and their children's, and this can result in mothers using retaliatory harsh punishment (Strauss & Gelles, 1990). Thus, their children's physical aggression emerges in a context of social risk factors (Garbarino & Bedford, 2001; Tajima, 2002).

In New Zealand, change is occurring within *Pasefika* families as they make rapid adjustments to their lives in response to changing economic and social times. More *Pasefika* people are divorcing, becoming single parents, and many are becoming part of blended families (Statistics New Zealand, 2006a). These changes have major implications for Samoan families, as discussed in the next chapter.

New Zealand and global research reports show a significant relationship between level of income and level of wellbeing of children (Ministry of Health, 2006; Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC), 2010; UNICEF, 2007). Furthermore, economists Pickett and Wilkinson (2007), Waterson (2003), and Wilkinson and Pickett (2006) who have researched the topic of socio-economic determinants of health, are in agreement that low socio-economic status has a significant bearing on the health and wellbeing of children. This is relevant to this study because, along with Maori and *Pasefika*, single mothers are among the most deprived on the social and economic indices in New Zealand (PHAC, 2010). Furthermore *Pasefika* people are also significantly over-represented in the lowest decile of the New Zealand deprivation scale (Statistics NZ, 2006). Pickett and Wilkinson (2007), examined the association between child wellbeing and material living standards (average income), the scale of differentiation in social status (income inequality), and social exclusion (children in relative poverty) in rich developed societies and found:

Measures of child well-being are associated with socio-economic status. Ill health and social problems associated with low socio-economic status tend to be more common in societies with bigger differences in income between rich and poor. In a recent study, we found that it was those age and cause specific death

rates with steeper social gradients that tended to be higher in more unequal societies. (p. 1)

Wilkinson & Pickett (2006) view a person's sense of wellbeing as being a reflection of how respected and valued that person feels themselves to be in terms of their social relationships and status within their society. Wilkinson and Pickett infer that people who feel undervalued or not respected are likely to feel marginalised and unworthy, which potentially can result in significant psychological ill health. The inequality and lack of worth felt by those who live on the margins is manifested in the rate of homicide and other crimes which, according to Wilkinson and Pickett (2005) and WHO (2008) merely track a country's level of inequality, not its overall wealth. Wilkinson and Pickett's research reinforces the notion that those countries that have the fairest distribution of wealth also have the highest levels of social capital, cohesion, and trust and, that in order for people to live happy and meaningful lives, wellbeing and social status are significant indicators. A WHO report on health equity (2008) states "the conditions in which people live and die are in turn shaped by political, social and economic forces" (p. 1).

### **2.5.6 Links to poor health outcomes and poverty**

Further evidence of links between poor health, poverty, and aggression have been found by researchers in longitudinal studies conducted in Dunedin and Christchurch, New Zealand (Fergusson et al., 2005; Poulton et al., 2002). Studies by Broidy et al. (2003), Fergusson et al. (2005), Odgers et al. (2007), Ostrov, (2006), Ostrov et al. (2004), and Poulton et al. (2005), into childhood aggression have found a link between social misconduct and aggression in early childhood and physical health.

Similarly, other research has also found low childhood socio-economic status to be significantly related to poor adult health outcomes (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2007; Turner & Asher, 2008). However, Scott, O'Connor, and Futh (2006) subscribe to the notion that, even with adversity (not necessarily poverty), parents who are warm, loving, firm and encouraging find answers to difficult conditions:

Ensuring that a child is brought up experiencing warmth, love and encouragement within safe boundaries is far harder for parents who live in the stressful conditions found in poor neighbourhoods. Children raised in poverty do less well than children raised in more favourable circumstances on a range of measures of attainment and quality of life. Yet if children are brought up with warm, firm encouraging parenting, the evidence is clear that they can succeed even in these more adverse circumstances. (p. 1)

In relation to children living in poverty some of the variables that contributed to positive outcomes for the child included high standards of good quality childcare, child temperament, improved financial resources, high IQ of the child, and pro-active and sensitive parenting by mothers (Dearing, McCartney & Taylor, 2001; Denham et al., 2001; Votruba-Drzal, Coley, & Chase-Lansdale, 2004).



### **2.5.7 Parenting practices which impact on children's aggressive behaviour**

New Zealand social science researchers Waldegrave & Waldegrave (2009) note that children's early experiences have a major impact on their physical, mental, and neurological pathways and that their experiences in the early years (0-3years) are crucial to how they will respond to the challenges they face as they grow up. The authors suggest that at the infant stage there is a time of neurological maturation when significant myelination occurs, speeding up some nerves, making new branches, forming connections to other nerves and later pruning (Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009). This, in effect, is when very rapid brain growth occurs – in the first years of a child's life – hence, the importance of literally feeding the child's brain early with positive messages, healthy nurturing, and learning experiences (Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009). Based on these arguments and the scientific evidence, it makes sense to implement parenting programmes when physical childhood aggression begins; that is, when children are at the pre-school age. The wiring of the child's brain makes it conducive to learning and responding to parental input – both negative and positive. Child health and development scientists concur that this stage is vital to the child's later development as healthy well-adjusted youth and adults. As Waldegrave and Waldegrave (2009) indicate, at these early stages, when the child's brain is undergoing very rapid growth, the child's vulnerability is very much dependent on the care the child receives from the adults in their environment. Simply put, children's early environment and their experiences within that environment will shape them for the future (Rutter, 2000). The fundamental influences in their early lives include the kind of care they receive from their main caregiver (Cole & Cole, 2001). Keenan and Wakshlag (2000) states that the biggest risk factor of the child developing aggressive behaviour comes from under-developed and inappropriate responses by the care-giver, and that this presents a greater problem if the child is of a temperamental nature.

Research indicates that the parent or caregiver who is nurturing and has formed a close bond with the child, who models non-violent behaviour, is authoritative, has formal qualifications, a good income, and a good sense of health and well-being is more likely

to raise a non-violent child (Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000; Marmot, 2004; Nelson et al., 2008; Osofsky, 1995; 2003; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2007).

Research suggests that if the child is exposed to a household that condones violence then, the child will be more likely to accept it as normal behaviour and learn to behave in a violent manner (Bandura, 1977; Ferrari, 2002; Fontes, 2005; Quinton & Rutter, 1988; Raine, 2002; Strauss, 2000). There is a body of research which documents the association between aggression and poor parenting which, according to Frick et al. (2006), “are more likely to come from families with high rates of dysfunction” (p. 10). Studies such as those conducted by Frick et al. (2003) have found that family functioning – especially the quality of parent-child relationships, and conflict and abuse in the home – has a major bearing on health outcomes for the child, including the likelihood of the child becoming a violent adolescent, among other consequences (Quinton & Rutter, 1988; Raine, 2002; Resnick et al., 2004; Smith, 2004; Strauss & Donnelly, 2001).

Poor parenting practices such as neglect, harsh discipline and authoritarianism have been shown by numerous researchers to be the most significant contribution to the development of physically aggressive children, especially when parenting involves any abuse (Ferrari, 2002; Fontes, 2005; Garbarino & Bedford, 2001). Such situations of child neglect have been found in New Zealand and amongst the *Pasefika* community. A Department of Child Youth and Family Services (DCYFS), (2006) study of clients found 20% of Pasefika parents referred to DCYFS were referred for failure to provide conditions that are essential for the healthy, physical, and emotional development of a child; in other words, child neglect (DCYFS, 2006). However, this must be seen in the context of all the other social and economic factors which influence the lives of these children and parents. Poor housing, unemployment, lack of transport, and low accessibility to health education and support systems can have a detrimental effect on low income families.

Having a new-born baby can also be stressful for new parents, and how they manage their stress is crucial to the new-born’s development (Nelson et al., 2008). If the parent is confident, their interactions with their new-born will influence the health outcomes for the child in the future (Jaffe et al., 2004).

Harsh disciplinary methods have been identified as specific parenting risk factors associated with childhood physical aggression (Strauss & Donnelly, 2001; Strauss & Paschall, 1997; Susman, Trickett, Ianoti, Hollenbeck, & Zahn-Waxler, 1985; Tajima, 2002; Teicher, 2002). The research also points to coercive parenting techniques as predictors of anti-social behaviour in older children and adolescents.

As noted, for the small percentage of children who continue to be physically aggressive after 7 years of age, the evidence is fairly compelling that these children will be the minority who become violent young people and adults (Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Tremblay, 2008). In addition, for these children, the behaviour of the adults within their homes and environment may be posing greater risk to the continuation of the child's aggressive behaviour (French et al., 2006). Some of the risk factors displayed by children who show high levels of physical aggression as primary school aged and adolescent children are hyperactivity, impulsiveness, lack of empathy, and being very averse to showing fear (Rutter, 2006). Having mothers who started childbearing very young – that is, in their teenage years – or parents who are anti-social, lack positive parenting skills, and are aggressive to each other, can be very detrimental for children and increase the likelihood of childhood oppositional behaviour and adolescent conduct problems emerging (De Bord, 2000; Kavapulu, 1993; Maxfield & Windom, 1996; Tremblay, 2002; 2008).

Evidence suggests that children who exhibit instrumental and hostile forms of aggression during the pre-school years have been exposed to adults who encourage, model, or condone aggression by using discipline techniques that are punitive, rigid, and authoritarian; ignore or permit aggressive actions by the child and other children; provide or tolerate aggressive toys or aggressive images from television, movies, and books in the child's surroundings; or model aggression in their own inter-personal interactions (Katz & McClellan, 1991; Strauss & Gelles, 1990; Strauss & Paschall, 1997; Tajima, 2002; Teicher, 2002; Webster-Stratton, et al., 2001; Webster-Stratton & Herbert, 1993).

## **2.6 Childhood physical aggression and Youth Violence**

Tremblay's (2008) view is that it is rare to find adults who commit acts of physical aggression to others who were not physically aggressive in childhood at primary school age. Persistent physically aggressive children, according to findings by Farrell and Flannery (2005) are very likely to become aggressive youths and adults. The researchers refer to a number of risk factors prominent in a young person's life. These risk factors sit in what is termed the domains of major influence: the individual him/herself, the family and the host of influences which abound in that domain, peers, school, and community.

There is compelling evidence that without intervention, early childhood aggression is likely to persist with a long term risk of youth and adult violence. Not only that, but childhood physical aggression is an antecedent for individuals in terms of physical and mental factors, which has significant implications for heart disease, alcohol and drug abuse, inter-partner violence, a cycle of poor parenting leading to child abuse and neglect, and serious mental disorders (Fergusson, Horwood, & Ridder, 2005; Fontes, 2005; Odgers, et al., 2008; Paterson, Feehan, Butler, Williams, & Cowley-Malcolm, 2007; Poulton et al., 2002; Strauss & Gelles, 1986).

Studies by Farrell and Flannery (2005) and Dahlberg and Potter (2001), highlight the move towards considering youth and violence within an ecological model, taking into consideration the relevance of social and cultural context, the community, the home environment, and the risk and protective factors which affect the child's development. These considerations are becoming more commonplace. For example, neighbourhoods that have a close sense of cohesion and organisation are seen as providing protective factors for children who may contribute to moderating and ameliorating risk (Resnick et al., 2004). Dahlberg and Potter (2001) emphasise the importance of placing all the experiences of the child together and seeing the totality with all its complexities, including risk and protective factors. In order to identify the predictors for violent behaviour it is necessary to study not just the individual but his/her context (Farrell & Flannery, 2005). This ecological model of the wider environment and society as a

whole, and systems and structures which impact communities, is becoming more of a focus for violence prevention strategies for young people (Loeber et al., 2005).

Numerous reviews have identified risk factors related to family dysfunction and neighbourhoods (Attar et al., 1994; Flannery, 2000; Flannery et al., 2001; Loeber & Farrington, 2000; Raine, 2002). These highlight not only the social contexts of the youth but also character traits such as temperament, mood and personality.

Evidence from longitudinal studies and critical parenting programme reviews Sanders, Turner & Markie-Dadds (2002), show that childhood aggression impacts long term on the physical and mental wellbeing of youth and adults (Fergusson et al., 2005; Olweus, 1979; Poulton et al., 2002; Rutter, 2000; Tremblay et al., 2004; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). While much attention is paid by the media to incidences of youth and adult violence, these studies have found that, far from being 'out of the blue,' most perpetrators will have had a profile which steered him/her clearly in that direction as a young person or adult.

## **2.7 New Zealand and Pasefika research/data**

### **2.7.1 New Zealand research**

New Zealand clearly has a considerable way to go in ensuring that the health and well-being of our children is a priority or that "every child counts" as the lobby group of the same name suggests (Ministry of Health, 2006). According to the Ministry of Health reports, New Zealand does not have an enviable record of child mortality rates. Of 27 OECD countries, New Zealand has the sixth highest rate of child maltreatment deaths (UNICEF, 2007). Pacific children mortality rates remain at above 6 per 1000 live births compared with less than four for non-Pacific-non-Māori (PHAC, 2010).

In a comparative study (UNICEF, 2007) of 15 year old deaths from maltreatment in 27 industrialised countries, the rate was 1 per million children in the age group for Spain and Portugal. The New Zealand rate was 13 per million. Davies et al. (2003) report that while most rich countries had reduced their rate of child maltreatment deaths between 1971-5 and the late 1990s, there was an increase in New Zealand from 9 to 13 per million children per year and New Zealand fell from 9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in ranking within the 23 OECD countries. Two reports put out by international agencies ranked New Zealand

very low in child safety because of its high infant mortality rate (OECD, 2006, 2009; and UNICEF, 2007).

Blaicklock<sup>2</sup> et al. (2002) along with other public health specialists in New Zealand such as Asher<sup>3</sup> (Turner & Asher, 2008) and Hassall<sup>4</sup> are members of child poverty action group, and argue that massive social and economic policy changes in New Zealand society over the last two decades has an association with the worsening wellbeing indicators for children especially those most vulnerable in New Zealand single parent beneficiaries, Maori and Pacific children, and their families. In terms of Pacific children, Percival<sup>5</sup> (2011) states:

The Children's Social Health Monitor, (2009) states that Pacific children have continuing disparate health and social outcomes compared with other New Zealand children. Pacific people are particularly vulnerable economically due to lower educational levels, a labour force predominantly in 'blue collar' low-paid jobs, low-median household incomes, and high unemployment. The effect of welfare reforms and market rents in the 1980's and 90's was to push more Pacific families and children into poverty (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). The recent global economic recession has also impacted on Pacific children both with measures of poverty and hardship and health. (p. 29)

Durrant (2000) notes that in countries such as Sweden, where legislation has been enacted which are child focused and led by social shifts within Swedish society, women are positioned on a more equal footing with men. Sweden's adoption of non-violent resolution to problems, including less punitive measures and more discussion, bodes well for children and families (Durrant, 1999a, 1999b, 2000).

New Zealand has made some attempts since 2002 to address family violence. These include various parenting strategies to address the issue of poor parenting practices for example, Strategy for Kids/Information for Parents (SKIP) (2006), by the Ministry of

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<sup>2</sup> Alison Blaicklock – Paediatrician, Researcher and Child advocate.

<sup>3</sup> Innes Asher, Paediatrician, Head of Paediatrics Department, Auckland Medical School, Researcher and Child advocate.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Hassall, Paediatrician, Researcher, former Childrens Commissioner of New Zealand and child advocate.

<sup>5</sup> Teuila Percival- Samoan Paediatrician, KIDZFirst Middlemore Hospital and also a Child advocate and Head of Pacific health at University of Auckland, NZ. All are members of The Child Poverty Action group (CPAG).

Social Development and a more concerted effort to co-ordinate activities to combat domestic violence was made in 2002 by the Government at the time. This was in the form of the Te Rito strategy (NZ family violence strategy) to combat both domestic violence and youth violence by sharing of information between different Government departments and community agencies (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). This strategy has now grown to include a New Zealand Pāsefika strategy to combat family violence.

While children all over the world are exposed to these risks, New Zealand, even though not considered a ‘poor’ country, has a record which shows an undervaluing of its children (PHAC, 2010). The evidence of poor health, is apparent in many parts of New Zealand, especially among Māori and *Pāsefika* populations. Many diseases seen in New Zealand are considered to be ‘third world’ diseases and significant numbers of children are living in low socio-economic families with limited access to good healthcare (PHAC, 2010).

Furthermore, New Zealand’s rates of infant mortality and hospitalisation of children injured due to maltreatment is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the OECD (WHO, 2008). Added to this, the proportion of Māori and *Pāsefika* children who come to the notice of the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Services, (New Zealand's Welfare system), is high compared to their percentage in the New Zealand total population (DCYFS, 2006). There is also an over-representation of *Pāsefika* people in New Zealand violence statistics (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2002). For example, in the 2004 financial year, 8.25% of Youth Justice Clients were *Pāsefika* compared to their being 6.5% of the overall population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). In a more recent report from the OECD (2009), New Zealand ranked 29<sup>th</sup> out of 30 countries in child health and safety; children of very low income families, single parents, and prison inmates had the worst health status; and Māori and *Pāsefika* children were 2 to 3 times worse off than non-Māori and non-*Pāsefika* in terms of health (PHAC, 2010).

These poor ratings signal that more investment in early childhood health and developmental issues is urgently needed. According to the PHAC report (2010) there are fairly close interconnections between early childhood health and development and behavioural issues.

Childhood aggression is an international issue. As established, the phenomenon of violence, in New Zealand as elsewhere, is of particular concern in migrant and indigenous communities. If, as numerous researchers attest, its genesis is in childhood, (see Broidy et al, 2003; Dahlberg & Potter, 2001; Davies et al., 2003; Fergusson et al., 2005; Grille, 2005; Ostrov et al., 2004; Poulton et al., 2002; Tremblay, 2008) it is important to establish if there are differences of understanding among different ethnic groups as to what childhood physical aggression is. And if so, would intervention geared towards those different understandings be helpful? Would it work with *Pasefika* people/Samoan people?

### **2.7.2 Research with Pasefika<sup>6</sup> peoples**

New Zealand's *Pasefika* population is characterised by rapid population increase, mainly due to high fertility rates (Cook, Didham, & Khawaja, 1999, 2001; Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The population is also diverse, comprised of many different ethnicities, cultural values and languages (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). They are likely to have different views and interpretations of social issues such as child rearing and child discipline, and also feature in the lowest socio-economic groupings in New Zealand, which has implications for educational, health and social outcomes (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). A Ministry of Health (2006) report shows that 40% of Pacific children are growing up in poverty. Benefit cuts, increased housing costs and high unemployment rates have contributed to this continuing poverty since 1990 (Dale, O'Brien & St John, 2011; Statistics NZ, 2006; Percival, 2011; PHAC, 2010; Sualii-Sauni, 2009).

International research has also found that economically poor communities have poor outcomes, educationally and developmentally, for children (Pickett, Mookherjee, & Wilkinson, 2007; WHO, 2008a, 2008 b). Jacobsen et al. (2002) state that "failure to provide a supportive environment for child development can generate very large costs in later life for government and society as a whole" (p. 15). *Pasefika* people are subject

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<sup>6</sup> Pasefika: Generic collective term given to Pacific Island groups in New Zealand. A term used by the majority Samoan population for people from the Pacific Islands. Usually referred to as people from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Niue, Cook Islands, Hawaii, Tahiti, Tokelau and others. It is not exclusive to the named groups. There is an understanding among these groups that although this term is used as a collective term in New Zealand each individual island grouping have their own unique languages, cultures, belief systems, protocols, and ways of doing and acting.



to vacillating public opinion and comment about their talents and rates of participation and representation in high level sports teams. Notwithstanding this, it is a reality that *Pasefika* peoples born in New Zealand currently make up 60% of the *Pasefika* population in New Zealand and are more likely to be in professional employment and better qualified than earlier generations of parents and grandparents (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Percival (2011) states, “Given that education plays a critical role as a determinant of health and socio-economic success this gives us some room for optimism” (p. 15).

On the other hand, the New Zealand Youth 2000 survey, see Mila-Schaaf, Robinson, Schaaf, Denny & Watson, (2008) reported 16% of secondary school students had witnessed adult physical assaults in their home. Students who witnessed these occurrences suffered significant physical, mental and emotional problems. These students also have a higher rate of behavioural issues, substance abuse and difficulties with relationships compared to children who had not suffered these kinds of trauma. The report also found (51%) of males and 40% of females had been victims of violence once or twice in the year prior to the report, and it had occurred on a daily basis and by people known to them. These findings are consistent with other studies of young people where similar links between experiencing violence and demonstrating higher rates of symptoms of depression, anxiety, suicide, substance abuse and aggressive behaviour have been found (Flannery et al., 2001; Frick, Barry & Kamphaus, 2006).

Most of the research that has been conducted with *Pasefika* children and young people, particularly Samoan, has not specifically focused on childhood physical aggression but rather on discipline methods, parenting, parenting programmes, Samoan young people, and Samoan families (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; Cowley-Malcolm, Nakhid, & Helu, 2008; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; Fairbairn-Dunlop, Paterson & Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; McCallum, et al., 2000; Paterson et al., 2007; Thomsen-Inder, Toalepai & Lafaele, 2006; Tiatia, 1998; Vailaau, 2005).

The report by ‘*The Government Working Group on Conduct Problems in New Zealand*’ (Blissett, et al. 1999), highlighted the lack of data on *Pasefika* children with aggressive behavioural problems which if untreated can become clinically diagnosed as conduct disorder. Percival, who authored the Pacific section of the report, confirms the “strong

correlation between socio-economic disparity and disadvantage” (p.45). Failure to respond to these concerns will, as noted by Percival, have far reaching consequences for the well-being of *Pasefika* peoples and their communities. Percival reinforces the notion that without intervention in the early stages of the child’s life the small percentage of *Pasefika* children who manifest the signs and symptoms of ‘conduct disorder’, which includes childhood physical aggression, will continue to have problems well into their primary school age. Hence the importance of the 1 to 3 year old age group that this dissertation focuses on. This report also clearly reinforces the global research by indigenous and *Pasefika* peoples which indicate that due attention be given to the importance of culture in policy and service delivery – otherwise we continue to enforce barriers and inefficiencies that create poor health outcomes for *Pasefika* peoples. Percival’s clear message from the report states an adherence to the value of cultural competence to how *Pasefika* communities “express and report their concerns, how they seek help, what they develop in terms of coping styles and social supports and the degree to which they attach stigma to behaviour problems” (p. 45). It reinforces what many researchers, both indigenous and non-indigenous, and *Pasefika* have been saying for generations; see for example, the works of Thaman (2003), Pasikale (1996), and Hawke, Cowley-Malcolm, Hill, and Sutherland, (2002) and the importance of cultural understandings and competencies in the delivery of education and services to *Pasefika* peoples. Percival also states the importance of being culturally competent in delivering services to *Pasefika* peoples. Her work with the New Zealand government working group on conduct problems in New Zealand, seeks to prevent chronic aggressive behaviours in young children by working with all ethnic communities on a multi-ethnic strategy (Blissett et al., 2009).

Longitudinal studies such as the Pacific Islands Families Study (PIFS), which began in 2000, are also providing valuable data on *Pasefika* parenting and child raising practice, including tracking the behaviour of children at risk for aggressive behaviour, inter-partner conflict, and parenting (Cowley-Malcolm, Fairbairn-Dunlop, & Paterson, 2009; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2005; Iusitini et al., 2011; Paterson et al., 2007). The PIFS is relevant to this dissertation in a number of ways. Firstly, the inter-partner conflict data and child behaviour data can identify families for future risk impact. Second, the epidemiological cohort study also has the power of numbers to make it generalisable to population groups relevant to this study, specifically Samoan. Third, trajectories of

aggressive behaviour in the cohort children can also be identified. Fourth, patterns of behaviour can be tracked in longitudinal studies of this kind and lastly, comparative studies with diasporic Samoan groups throughout the world can be conducted based on this data.

There is an abundance of data from PIFS, now in its 12th year, which is pertinent to this thesis. Paterson et al. (2007) found a high rate of inter-partner violence among the study families with considerable overlap between perpetration and victimisation. In a sample of 1000 mothers, 41% percent were classified as victims and/or perpetrators of violence. This presupposes that children from this study, are exposed to parental conflict in these households and are, therefore, likely to become aggressive themselves (Paterson et al., 2007, 2008). These phenomena of violence towards and from women, which constitute a risk factor in childhood physical aggression, are not only prevalent in Pacific families but, unfortunately, are also widespread in New Zealand (DCYFS, 2006). The Pacific Islands Families study currently holds the most relevant data base information specific to Samoans. The most important aspect of this study is the longitudinal data which can extrapolate on trajectories of childhood aggression and associations over a long time.

The PIFS has been most valuable in its quantitative, longitudinal aspect of research with *Pasefika* peoples, but what is also needed, and is lacking, is more interaction with *Pasefika* peoples to study what they specifically want and how to go about collecting the information in a way that is far more conducive to a *Pasefika* approach.

Needless to say, while rigorously applying validated instruments from Western psychological clinical practices, I believe there is high importance in applying *Pasefika* paradigms, ontological, and methodological approaches/views of being seen, heard, and acted upon. It is imperative that studies such as the PIFS ensure that *Pasefika* ways of seeing the world are implemented in the research methodologies and methods. Without this, in the eyes of *Pasefika* peoples the integrity of such studies will be minimal and their purpose and credibility seriously eroded among those who have contributed information for the purpose of benefitting *Pasefika* communities.

Another longitudinal study with a *Pasefika*/Samoan cohort, *Growing up in New Zealand*, conducted by the University of Auckland, is a relatively new study, hence

findings in the 1-3 year age group have yet to be released, but findings pre-birth and up to the 9 months of age of the babies are about to be released. It is expected that the findings from this and the PIFS will go some way to addressing the gaps in the literature as there are significant numbers of Samoan children and their families participating in these studies.

## **2.8 Parenting programmes**

Most of the parenting programmes in New Zealand are mainstream programmes that target the general population (Kerslake, Hendriks & Balakrishnan, 2005). However, Maori Parenting programmes and *Pasefika* – including Samoan – parenting programmes have been developed in cities and towns in New Zealand where the need has been identified by the specific ethnic communities. The following are brief descriptions of these programmes and basically highlight the paucity of parenting programmes which are specifically catering to the needs of Samoan diasporic communities. Many of these programmes originate from overseas programmes - for example Early Start, HIPPY and PAFT. The relevance to *Pasefika* including Samoan and other communities has not been ascertained although HIPPY does have Pacific mothers who have been trained in the programme to deliver the programme in homes. SKIP is a government initiative and also has programme deliverers who are Pacific. Plunket, a long established organisation in New Zealand, delivers parenting programmes and advice to new mothers, including *Pasefika* women.

### **2.8.1 Samoan parenting programmes**

The Samoan parenting programmes are mostly implemented in combination with *aoga amata* (Samoan language schools) which, in turn, are run by the church or attached to schools. The parenting programmes are mostly for the purpose of early childhood education, including cultural and language acquisition and language and cultural maintenance and support. They provide information to the parents on various topics such as: the nutritional needs of children and babies according to their age, advice on teenage problems, the law, and appropriate discipline techniques for children and parenting advice for parents (Cowley-Malcolm, Nakhid & Helu, 2008). These programmes have also come to serve as places where Samoan parents can get support

and advice from different people in the community skilled in particular areas, and where parents can feel comfortable in sharing their problems with other parents who understand their language and culture. In 2005 Gravitas Research and Strategy undertook research commissioned by the Ministry of Social Development to inform the government on a positive parenting approach (SKIP). Their research found that with *Pasifika* and Maori families in particular, there was a desire to learn from others through informal groups where people come together to talk about their experiences. They found the informal setting and sharing of information was influential for them in terms of parenting.

Herbert (2001) identified the importance of considering socio-cultural factors when conducting a parenting programme for Maori. She stressed the importance of culture, language, and *whanau* concepts in visioning these programmes. According to Herbert, the concepts of *whanaungatanga*, *manaakitanga*, and *aroha* are symbolic of what constitute *whanau* beyond its literal translation, family. *Whanau* also incorporates what is best in terms of values and beliefs of caring for each other. These are qualities and characteristics of a collective ethnic grouping who respect and nurture relationships. Samoan parents also stated the importance of these kinds of concepts around nurturing and relationships exhibiting an environment where children felt valued and respected and where they could relate to their teachers/facilitators (Cowley et al., 2008). This is the kind of concept that denotes “the space between” in terms of respectful relationships as explained by the Samoan concept of *le va* (chapt 2).

The optimum time for parenting programmes to address aggressive behaviour in children is deemed to be when the child is at preschool age, which is often when the behaviour first manifests itself (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). In her extensive evaluation research of parenting programmes in the USA, Webster-Stratton concludes that it is better to a) address multiple areas of risk when dealing with aggressive behaviours in families, and b) target those areas of most need – low income and disadvantaged individuals and communities. She regards the problems of aggressive children as being more prevalent in neighbourhoods that are poor and where parents are unemployed, single, and/or lack educational qualifications. This research has significance for families such as Samoan families living in New Zealand who are at the lower socio-economic strata and therefore more vulnerable. Scholer and Goad (2003),

Tremblay et al. (2004), Tremblay (2002 & 2008), Webster-Stratton & Reid (2003) concur that parents who have intervened in their children's aggressive behaviour (at the outset and) prior to the age of 7 years are more likely to have success in managing these behaviours. These researchers, too, see the pre-school years as the best time to help children to manage their aggression as this is both the time when children are more likely to start the behaviour and to be receptive to learning how to manage it, given the right parental modelling and teaching. Much of the research is clear that preventing negative outcomes early in life is far more cost effective in the long term socially, economically, and personally. In effect, intervening early prevents the multiple effects incurred later in life.

NZ researcher Schulruf (2005), conducted a systemic review of national and international evaluation studies to see what the most positive outcome of parent support was. His report showed that parenting programmes are of benefit to parents, children and families, especially in terms of positive behavioural changes for the participants. He also reported that a more communicative approach, where parents approach parenting in a more authoritative manner, was seen to improve social and cognitive skills of the children.

Parenting programmes have been offered in New Zealand for over 100 years. Some of these are funded by Government agencies and others by community and church groups. The more commonly known parenting programmes are run by The Royal New Zealand Plunket Society (better known in New Zealand as Plunket) and others such as Home Interaction Programme for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), Parent to Parent, and Strategies for Kids–Information for Parents (SKIP).

### **2.8.2 Parent to Parent**

Programmes such as Parent to Parent were formed to support parents with children of disabilities and special needs. They provide services that assist parents in meeting the needs of their children. For example, they provide training for parents, give support to parents in terms of advice, information, and linking parents to other support networks throughout New Zealand and internationally. Parent to Parent is a registered Charitable Trust and has a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Board of Trustees.

### **2.8.3 Plunket**

The Royal New Zealand Plunket Society (Plunket) is a long established organisation in New Zealand, which was primarily established to give advice and support to mothers of new babies. A Plunket nurse was assigned to mothers of new born babies and the child's development was carefully monitored to ensure the child received the best possible maternal care. Due to government cuts in budget, the Plunket service no longer provides as extensive a service to mothers as it did in the past. Although mothers still receive home-based care, this is now via contracted services of health delivery in line with the 'Well Child' strategy. Although much has changed over the last 100 years, the primary mission of Plunket remains to support the development of healthy families. In 2011 Plunket ran over 1500 courses for parents called PEPE (Parenting Education Programme) to assist new mothers in providing a positive relationship with their child (Plunket Annual Report, 2010-2011). The PEPE programmes are designed to cover needs and developmental stages of the child at various levels from 6 weeks to 2-3 years of age. All members of the family are welcome to attend PEPE classes.

### **2.8.4 Home interaction programme for parents and youngsters (HIPPY)**

HIPPY, another parenting programme well established in New Zealand, has been successfully evaluated both in New Zealand and elsewhere with positive results. Children in HIPPY were found to be well prepared for school and had higher reading and maths levels compared to non-HIPPY children (Barhava-Monteith, Harre, & Field, 1999). The programme also has had success with developing the parental workforce into higher education and training as pre-school teachers/advisors. Kerslake et al. (2005) state that it is a "home-based programme that helps parents create experiences for their children that lay the foundation for success in school and later in life" (p. 27). The HIPPY programme has its National Office in Auckland with CEO and staff and also has a Board of Trustees. It is a registered Charitable Trust.

### 2.8.5 Early Start

Early Start, another programme established in New Zealand and adapted from overseas, has been rigorously evaluated and found to have benefits for children and families. Early Start developed out of the Christchurch longitudinal study (Fergusson et al., 2005). The programme was funded by the Ministry of Social Development and The Health Research Council of New Zealand. A random control trial was conducted by Fergusson et al. (2005c) with 220 families who were involved in Early Start and 223 families who were not. Interviewers not involved with the study were selected to conduct 1-1 interviews with the parents. Assessments were made at six, 12, 24, and 36 months after trial entry. Both groups were studied and followed up over a 36-month period. The results of the study by Fergusson and his colleagues found that parenting was more positive and non-punitive, had low rates for severe and low rates for very severe assault, and behaviour problems were lower, both internally and externally. However, there was not much difference found in family functioning (Fergusson et al., 2005c). According to the findings there were small benefits in the areas of child health, pre-school education, parenting, child abuse and neglect, and changes in child behaviour (Fergusson et al., 2005c), but no association was found between maternal and family outcomes and group membership. There were also no significant differences between the Early Start and control series in any comparisons.

In light of broader concerns in New Zealand about delivery of culturally appropriate programmes, Early Start conducted a client satisfaction survey with those who received the programme and found the majority of the clients were satisfied with the service and 95% found the programme respectful of the cultural values of Maori. The benefits derived from the programme were similar for Maori and non-Maori. The authors also stated that compared to other trials and intervention studies conducted overseas the results were comparable, if not better than, what was reported in the literature. However, the literature does not give information in regard to having *Pasefika* clients in the study. The evaluation of Early Start shows this type of programme can benefit children and their families in New Zealand especially those in the lower socio-economic groups (Fergusson et al., 2005c).



Although there are many programmes to assist parents in the parenting of their children the *Report by the Families Commission on The review of parenting programmes* asserts the reviews are not even, and in some cases are disappointing (Kerslake et al., 2005) and unlike Early Start, were not random control trials.

Most of the parenting programmes in New Zealand are intended to help disadvantaged families that are at risk socially and economically. Although problematic in some cases regarding their evaluations these programmes do, on the whole, offer skills and networks for parents to link into and provide a safety net for some families at risk. However, Davies et al. (2003) state that what is “often not referred to in evaluations and meta-analyses is the failure to access, retain or distinguish the higher risk families” (Davies et al., 2003, p. 51). Parents who have the means to access and utilise childcare centre-based programmes are more likely to do so than parents who struggle to find the means for transport and childcare. Although home-based programmes may be more convenient for the more at risk families who are poor there is still no guarantee that the parents will attend (Davies et al., 2003).

## **2.9 Multi-media tool (CD-ROM *Play Nicely*)**

The CD-ROM, *Play Nicely* is a multi-media, interactive tool used to teach parents how to teach their children to play harmoniously with other children. It is a tool which acts out scenarios with teachers and children and incorporates different strategies which parents/caregivers and early childhood teachers can use. The tool has been used with various ethnic groups in the USA and has also been shown to *Pasefika* mothers in New Zealand. Scholer and his colleagues (Scholer & Goad 2003; Scholer, Murjherjee, Gibbs, Memon, & Jongeward, 2007; Scholer, Gerrard, Gerrard, Gupta, Mace, & Greely, 2006) have researched the tool extensively among childcare workers and parents, and medical students evaluated its use and received mostly positive feedback. The evaluations showed the CD-ROM was helpful in teaching parents about giving children guidance on playing harmoniously and resolving conflict non-violently.

While sharing of information in a group setting is important in terms of the CD-ROM the learning can be in a group or individual setting, but for this thesis the research focus is on a home/family setting.

## **2.10 Concluding statements on the literature**

This review has presented works by researchers, both in New Zealand and elsewhere, in the areas of child development, theories of attachment and social construction, social learning theory, inter-partner conflict, child neglect, poverty, single mothers, harsh physical discipline and its effects on children, and other variables, all of which have an effect on childhood physical aggression and its outcomes.

The literature review reveals the paucity of information on Samoan childhood aggression and Samoan families. However, some research findings about childhood aggression in other ethnic groups may have relevance to Samoan families and children, especially those who are part of diasporic populations.

The literature review also shows that although similarities exist on different aspects of risks and protective factors for migrant population groups, a greater understanding is needed for the specific cultural and contextual underpinnings for Samoan childhood aggression – an understanding that is more relevant to Samoan concepts of child rearing in all its spiritual and physical dimensions. The identification of risk factors and cultural and protective factors add to the understanding of social and economic stress factors on families and how these impact on a predisposition for violence and illness in adult years. The purpose of this study is both to research Samoan children's aggressive behaviour from the parents' perspectives and to encourage parents to act as early as possible to eliminate any future problems arising. The literature review clearly indicates the importance of researching childhood aggression in the early years – specifically the 1-3 year age group as indicated by numerous and exemplary researchers in the field – because of the concerns about the stability of aggression from early to later childhood and the importance of ensuring children are taught at a very early age about non-violent behaviour.

The nature-nurture debate is overly simplistic, with people taking opposing views when, in fact, it is clear that both are important, and that 'nurture' involves many factors. However, what has become increasingly evident is that childhood aggression cannot be studied without exploring the widest range of risk factors, and socio-economic and cultural factors. Positive parenting is a skilled activity, and accessing knowledge,

understanding, resources, and tools to acquire and refine these skills can be difficult for marginalised communities—to the point of raising questions of equity. Much of the evidence covered in this review suggests that investing in early interventions at the pre-school age for disadvantaged pre-schoolers has been proven to be more effective than waiting until they are older.

The literature review has reinforced the fundamental importance of culture and context in exploring childhood physical aggression. What has also been extrapolated from the literature is the fundamental importance of taking account of the theory of culture and context and its importance in contemporary developmental theories:

Given the increase in mobilisation inherent in globalisation, the field of child development needs to recognise that cultural practices may have evolved in contexts different from the contexts in which they are being applied. For example immigrant parents adopt socialisation practices from their home culture but apply them in a different cultural context. (Yelland, 2005, p. 14)

It is proposed that Samoan children are raised with a set of principles, values and beliefs pertaining to their cultural contexts and, as Yelland (2005) infers, to not take cognisance of the importance of culture and context is detrimental to acknowledging the child's fundamental significance as a whole person.

As evidenced, the beliefs of Samoans on church-based Christian theology were related to their formed beliefs that every child was a gift from God because of the Christian dogma associated with miracle and birth and the traditional beliefs of *tapu* (sacredness). The combinations of these also promoted the belief that there was a parental duty of care and respect for what God has provided (a child), and that duty of care was about responsibilities in ensuring that children were endowed with the knowledge of the *fa'aSamoa* set within the *fa'amatai* for their roles in their *aiga's* future. This chapter has depicted what the traditional practices were in traditional times and the values and beliefs which form the underpinning for these child rearing practises.

The implications of these *fa'aSamoa* values and beliefs for the research process is discussed in Chapter three which presents all aspects of the research design including,

methodology, methods and cultural approach taken to conduct this research and where I position myself as an insider researcher. Having described and explained the Samoan cultural concepts which underpin this thesis, it is imperative that the methods used to conduct this study are applied in a way which aligns with the ways of doing and knowing from a Samoan perspective. The approach, therefore, incorporates the different concepts described in this chapter.

### **Chapter three: Research design**

A paradigm shift and a search for multiple perspectives and alternative ways of looking at the world will enrich and enhance our understanding of Pacific studies not diminish or degrade it.

(Thaman, 2003, p. 10)

### **3 Introduction**

Chapter three explains the way the research was conducted and describes the participants in the study, the analysis and research approaches utilised. It outlines the epistemological, ontological and methodological frameworks, including the indigenous and cultural epistemologies. It contextualises the topic within Samoan cultural concepts as outlined in the literature review, which are core to Samoan polity, and maintains the importance of seeing childhood physical aggression through the cultural lens of Samoan concepts of relationships (*le va*) and Samoan knowledge systems. The participants in this study are predominantly Samoan, so their views are framed around their thinking and seeing the world through a Samoan lens with all its different complexities and explains the research design including methodology, research aims, and the specific cultural approaches I have taken to conduct this research, including the methods and analysis. Cultural factors relevant to this study are identified and highlighted, along with insights into prospective epistemological understandings pertaining to particular ethnic groups relevant to this study. Rather than identify cultural factors per se that are associated with Samoan childhood aggression, I will show how *understandings* of particular cultural factors can be enhanced through epistemological insights into the thinking of indigenous and *Pasefika* peoples. In order to gauge an understanding of the cultural frameworks relevant to childhood aggression in Samoan children, Samoan epistemological and ontological insights are highlighted.

### **3.1 Epistemology, ontology, and methodology**

Hofer and Pinrichin (2002) describe the study of epistemology as an exploration of the origin, nature, limits, methods, and justification of human knowledge – In accordance with this research how Samoan parents' perceptions of childhood aggression and their responses are defined, constructed, acknowledged, valued, and evaluated.

Renowned Tongan researcher Thaman (2003, p. 1) writes on the domination of Western constructs on research as: “generally described as the process of controlling, investigating and predicting phenomena”. She encourages *Pasefika* researchers to question the way Western science puts such emphasis on objectivity, rationality, and predictability. Thaman asserts that *Pasefika* peoples need to espouse the values of *Pasefika*-ness which include: hospitality, sharing, spirituality, and to find strength and power in the sharing of their own stories.

As a Samoan, a teacher, a researcher, a member of a minority group and a woman, I agree with Thaman. Hence, I have chosen to conduct this research within the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm as this paradigm allows me to uncover the meanings that the parents in this study bring to their life experiences through their stories and accounts of what they did and why. It also takes into account the existence of the multiple realities by which individuals and groups, including Samoans, view the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The constructivist-interpretivist paradigm accepts the existence of a variety of world views which are different, but not of greater or lesser value (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The age of value-free inquiry for the human disciplines is no longer valid (Rosaldo, 1989).

#### **3.1.1 Methodology**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) the fundamental nature of qualitative methodology involves capturing the meanings of life through a system of questions and answers. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that the nature of qualitative methodology is much more than a means of discovery; rather it is a philosophical and political orientation to the world of knowledge. Qualitative researchers stress the socially

constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Kuhn, 1999). They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. They see phenomena in their natural settings and interpret them or try to make sense of them through the meanings people bring to them (Kuhn & Weinstock, 2002). Qualitative researchers bring into their study a wide array of pragmatic materials: case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interviews and artefacts (Hofer & Pinrich, 2002). All of these help the qualitative researcher to describe routine or problematic areas of a person's life. Qualitative research can be seen as a montage or, as Nelson et al. (1992) describe it, a "bricolage", with the researcher being a "bricoleur" who gathers whatever tools or equipment are needed, moulding and shaping it all to ensure all the pieces fit together (p. 4). Akin to this is grounded theory where one examines and reviews what has emerged from the data-coding and contextualising and constantly asking the question: "What is happening here?"

### **3.1.2 Grounded theory**

I have chosen grounded theory to conduct this research in combination with a community participatory action research approach. Methodologically, these fit well with the *fa'afaletui* approach. My rationale for choosing grounded theory was based on several factors. Firstly, I had previous experience and familiarity with grounded theory in other research projects, including my Masters studies. Secondly, there was a huge paucity of information, including any cultural understandings related to the topic and the context of the phenomenon – childhood physical aggression in Samoan children – hence no other theories or beginnings of theories had been developed. Thirdly, the purpose of grounded theory "is to discover or generate a theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2) and may be seen as the "discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2).

Overall, as the researcher, I was looking for a theme that integrated the context of Samoan families and the issue of childhood physical aggression, and explored the main concern or problem for the parents in the study in their particular settings. Ideally, as the study progresses, the problem/s emerge and, as the theorists say, the background factors are usually complex, so it can become difficult to clearly identify the problem in terms

of “what is actually happening here” – a question grounded theory researchers are constantly asking as they analyse their data (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) that is based on symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1989; Silverman, 2000). Blumer (1989) argues that there are three central principles: first, people act towards situations according to the *meanings* that these situations have for them; second, this attribution of meaning to objects through symbols is a *continuous process*; third, meaning attribution is a product of *social interaction* in society and is handled and modified through the process of *interpretation* that occurs in social encounters (p.2). These meanings are sorted and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the problem (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allows the researcher to discover the underlying social forces that shape human behaviour (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Furthermore, it provides the researcher with an understanding of social change and problems in light of participants’ social interaction within their social contexts (Becker, 1996).

For these reasons grounded theory allows me to get beneath the surface of what the participants are actually articulating. It also allows me to interpret the data, as what Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to as a “passionate participant”: one who reflects, re-examines, and re-analyses his/her personal points of view and feelings as part of the process of studying the respondents in the field (p. 115). These characteristics all tie in well with community participatory action research which emphasises reflection, collaboration, and co-operation at every stage of the research process (Stringer, 1996).

### **3.1.3 Community participatory action research**

As suggested by its name, community participatory action research is seen by some researchers as more of an approach to conducting research with communities that empower communities to be involved in the research at whatever stage they feel is appropriate to them (Fletcher, 2003). Fletcher emphasises the importance of participation, co-operation, and social justice agendas and requires community participation and involvement in research activity. One of its key elements is to ensure community ownership of the research process (Bryman, 2001). Stringer (1996)



describes community participatory action research as an approach that suits local circumstances and increases the likelihood of sustainable outcomes. In New Zealand, disenfranchised and marginal populations – the most inequitable in terms of health, social, and economic indicators – are easily identified in government statistics as being migrant (for example, *Pasefika*) and indigenous (Maori) groups (Ministry of Health, 2006). In this context, community participatory action research is particularly appropriate for communities who politically, socially and economically are located more on the margins than in the centre. Although not used in its entirety it was appropriate to use community participatory action research at the beginning, in terms of consultation with the communities and in the relationship development; and what the community felt were processes I had to undergo in a Samoan cultural context to conduct research of this kind and disseminate findings back to the community. These elements of consultation consisted of whom to dialogue with, whom to approach in terms of leadership, and who may be suitable to participate in meaningful dialogue within the community.

Tokoroa, a small town in the South Waikato, has a diverse ethnic population as well as strong community networks of people. Taking factors of resilience and risk into consideration, Tokoroa emerged as an appropriate site to carry out this research. The design involved a process of engagement with the Tokoroa Samoan community at critical phases of the research process and continual dialogue with the community and participants about access to the findings.

Although, there is now emphasis, as noted by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (2005), Ministry of Social development (SPEaR), (2008), and Anae et al.'s (2001) work with the Ministry of education on the importance of researchers conducting research in ethnic-specific communities to follow through with appropriate consultation and dissemination of information, these are beginning and end processes. Engagement with the community in terms of a mutually beneficial on-going relationship is not always guaranteed unless the research is designed to emphasise this kind of relationship. This study was designed to have just that – a relationship that is on-going and in consultation with an informal group of community-based people to ensure that the actions and recommendations have the commitment of both the researcher and the

community. Crucial to this is the continuation of the relationship once the research has been completed.

Community participatory action research combined with an approach incorporating *Pasefika* research frameworks and the *fa'afaletui* was, therefore, in my view, the most suitable approach for this study. These approaches involve principles that combine beliefs about ontology (What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the enquirer and the known?), and methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?) (Guba, 1990).

### **3.2 Indigenous epistemology**

Samoans who have migrated to New Zealand are indigenous to Samoa. The story of *Pasefika* migration to New Zealand began with the indigenous peoples of the Pacific who sought opportunities for their children in countries such as New Zealand and Australia. Education was a major motivation for these early migrants. As with many migration stories, the *Pasefika* diaspora struggle to understand themselves as their identity is being moulded and shaped by not only how they themselves see the world but how the world sees them (Thaman, 2003).

*Pasifeka* people now resident in New Zealand are labelled migrants by the dominant culture. For centuries, indigenous peoples have been the subjects of Western researchers who have theorised the indigenous experience and realities from their Western perspectives. The imposition of Western frameworks without consideration of indigenous epistemologies and indigenous critical praxis for (re) constructing and applying knowledge has been common practice throughout the world (Brant Castellano, 2004) including in the Pacific (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Thaman, 2003; Smith, 2005). Now however, there is a worldwide movement by indigenous communities to salvage their knowledge production and cosmology (Anae, 2007; Durie, 2007; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Helu-Thaman, 1993). The voice of indigenous research has gathered momentum as more and more indigenous scholars choose to speak out rather than to remain silent. As Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) notes:

The Western academy which claims theory as thoroughly Western...has constructed all the rules by which the indigenous world has been theorised ... [as a result] indigenous voices has been overwhelmingly silenced. The act, let alone the art and science of theorizing our own existence and realities, is not something which many indigenous people assume is possible. (p. 29)

For indigenous peoples, therefore, decolonising research methods include deconstructing and externalising the myth of the intellectually inferior indigene while also shifting indigenous worldviews and knowledge from the margins and placing them in the centre to uphold and rejuvenate indigenous epistemologies, methodologies and research outcomes that will benefit the health and well-being of indigenous peoples. Canadian indigenous researcher, Battiste (1998), argues that:

Indigenous researchers cannot rely on colonial languages and thought to define our reality. If we continue to define our reality in the terms and constructs drawn from Eurocentric diffusionism, we continue the pillage of our own selves. (p. 27)

Durie (2008) addresses what constitutes beneficial research to indigenous groups by illustrating a framework of ethical principles which reflect indigenous values and worldviews. He adds this is a process of empowerment which can “lead to secure guardianship of data samples, and research processes, research partnerships, increased research capability and ultimately discernible benefits from the research” (HRC, 2009 p. 1) .

Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001), situating themselves alongside feminist researchers whose ideas are angled towards epistemologies being more “socially situational” (p.3) than widespread, add that knowledge is created in a particular situation by a particular group of people. It may or may not be universalistic in nature but is always created in context. Other indigenous researchers such as Durie (2009), Thaman (2003), and Smith (2005) hold similar views to Gegeo’s in terms of how knowledge is created and formulated through traditional discourses and modes of communication. According to these writers, knowledge truths are solidified in ethnic dialogue or discourse. It is in the *talanoaga* / conversation or dialogue that the knowledge is created.

Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) describe an example of a project with the Kwara'ae people in the Solomon Islands that ultimately failed because Western epistemologies were allowed to take precedence over indigenous knowledge. The 'Community development' project was aimed at developing the village to become 'self sustainable' through village ownership and operation. This project was also aimed at providing employment for the young people, which would keep them on the island and prevent them from migrating offshore. The project, which began with the local people, was successful for 10 years until a retired government official who was educated, trained and experienced in working with outside development agencies assumed control of the project and imposed a framework that valued Anglo-European methodology over indigenous methodology. There was no consultation with the community and a complete undervaluing and over-riding of their ideas and input into the project. A simple example of this indigenous knowledge is the way in which Kwara'ae's indigenous epistemological strategies are worked out in relation to the discourse around holding meetings, conflict resolution and classroom teaching. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) argue that if the government official had taken the time to understand and value 'the indigenous strategies and methods of operation' rather than imposing an Anglo-European epistemology, the project may have continued to succeed.

Too often, ethnographers researching indigenous communities have developed theories and accounts of indigenous peoples that have no resemblance to how indigenous people see themselves. Carr & Kemmis (1986) argues that it is not feasible to comprehend either our concepts or ourselves without also understanding something of the social and cultural contexts in which each is entrenched. It is this understanding that makes me who I am, what I am, where I am from, and where I am going. The same could be said of many other indigenous groups such as Maori who have a similar understanding of self-identity based on where I come from, (the past), who I am (the present), and where I am going (the future). This world view holds the importance of linking the past to the present and to the future. The concept of self-identity, drawing on the past and linking to the present and the future, is also linked with knowledge and the question "where does that knowledge come from?"

Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) draw our attention to the metaphorical distinctions between indigenous knowledge and introduced knowledge:

Introduced knowledge is knowledge from the shore reaching out to the ocean (knowledge that comes to the shore from the sea); and indigenous knowledge is knowledge from the shore to the mountains. (p. 19)

In other words, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo are relating to knowledge as “knowledge within”. Each *Pasefika* nation will have its own metaphors and images that it will draw on to illustrate the origin of its knowledge. The idea that Western knowledge is the only knowledge that holds credence in the world of science has also held indigenous knowledge to be of lesser importance. Research and science has been captured by Western trained researchers using Western techniques and tools with Western frames of thinking (Frankel, 1993).

In her book *Decolonising Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) asserts that these kinds of practices have, over the last century, trampled on the *mana* of her people. According to her, Maori were fearful and suspicious of researchers who came into Maori communities, took their knowledge, and were never seen or heard from again. The Maori informants received nothing in return for their generosity; the knowledge was used to benefit the academic credentials of the researchers rather than the communities who were the research participants.

In response to this, New Zealand Maori researchers have created their own methodologies and ways of conducting research with their people. These involve values of *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face to face interaction); *aroha ki te tangata* (respect for people); *titiro, whakarongo, korero*, (look, listen and speak); *manaaki ki te tangata* (sharing and hospitality, generosity); *kia tupato* (be cautious); *kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata* (do not trample the *mana* of people); and *kaua e mahaki* (don't flaunt your knowledge) (Smith, 2005)

Like the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa-New Zealand, *Pasefika* diaspora have taken the knowledge and ways of the homelands and adapted these to fit their new environment, effectively constructing new ways and knowledge. In doing this they discard what is redundant and hold on to what they consider to be of value, constantly adapting to suit their new environment.

### 3.3 Conducting research with Pasefika peoples

*Pasefika* researchers have developed *Pasefika* cultural frameworks to give guidance to those who choose to conduct research with *Pasefika* communities. Examples include the *SPEAR Good practice Guidelines* (SPEAR, Ministry of Social Development, 2008); the Ministry of Education's *Development of Guidelines for Research in Pasefika Education* (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001); and the *Guidelines on Pasefika Health Research* produced by The Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC), (2005). These frameworks present researchers with principles such as reciprocity, utility and respect, and abide by them when working with *Pasefika* peoples in order to add credence and integrity to the research process. They also draw on analogies and metaphors to enhance understanding of such concepts as relationships, identity, and cultural values of hospitality. These are embedded in the cultural notions of self and relatedness to family and others – a key concept to understanding *Pasefika* epistemology.

Similarly, Suaali'i-Sauni (2009) refers to a Pacific peoples for Pacific peoples care approach that is based on philosophical value systems such as values of respect and spirituality which are similar throughout the Pacific Island nations. The values referred to by Suaali'i-Sauni and colleagues are privileged interpersonal relations that build trust and rapport between consumers of health and their families. Suaali'i-Sauni (2009) and her colleagues uses examples of metaphorical sayings which encapsulate these health care approaches throughout the Pacific such as *vae manava* (p. 23) (sharing the womb/sharing breath), similar to the Maori notion of breath of life or *tihei Mauriora*. However, she also emphasises that what is shared and what makes people unique is what provides balance and idiosyncrasy. This implies that the physical and metaphysical worlds provide a balance which can be shared by others even though expressed in a uniquely *Pasefika* way.

The very existence of Pacific research guidelines in three government sectors (MOE, MSD, MOH) highlights the growth of awareness and acceptance by the research community throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand that *Pasefika* people's approaches to research have established respectability and credibility. Furthermore, they indicate the contribution of both *Pasefika* approaches and the growing numbers of *Pasefika*

researchers to building researcher capacity and capability. These, in turn, indicate the sense of empowerment for *Pasefika* peoples in conducting and viewing research using a ‘*Pasefika* lens’. The use of these frameworks and approaches is becoming more and more prevalent among *Pasefika* researchers as they acknowledge their relevance to research involving *Pasefika* peoples. Embedded in these methods are the principles by which we investigate, participate, and co-operate with our communities of *Pasefika* knowledge. New Zealand-born *Pasefika* scholars such as Tupuola (2006), Anae (2001), and Mila-Schaaf (2008) have highlighted the importance of identity in framing the methods used for research with *Pasefika* communities. In their writings these authors highlight the similarities and differences between New Zealand-born and Island-born *Pasefika* people and the kinds of issues these present for both groups such as issues of identity, cultural misunderstandings between generations, and lack of language and cultural knowledge.

Karlo Mila-Schaaf, a poet as well as a researcher, highlights some of these issues of identity in her poetry. One poem in particular, written for the first *Pasefika*/Samoan to be appointed as a judge in New Zealand, gives an indication of some of these themes: the migrant dream and passing the vision for education and success and Samoan values onto the next generation, our children. Just as earlier generations made sacrifices, so too does the next generation, but the opportunities we offer to our children will prepare them for those challenges.

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For Ida

Once I wrote that we are the seeds of the migrant dream  
The daughters supposed to fill the promise  
Hope heavy on our shoulders  
We stand on the broken back of physical labour  
Knowing the new dawn has been raided  
But we are the seeds of a much greater dream  
That goes back across oceans of memory  
A vision still held in the hands  
Of humble men buried in humble villages  
Who chant clear our paths  
With every lost breath.

Ida you have spoken of the sacrifice of language lost, and the cost,  
 Of success in the Palagi world  
 And you have wrapped your son safely  
 In fa'asamoa  
 He rests in a nest of language  
 Learning to tame words  
 Far beyond our understanding  
 "This is the sacrifice of my generation" you said  
 "but it will not be his, this is where the sacrifice stops".  
 Gulls circle  
 And nest  
 That flew like wild gulls  
 And our sense of selves  
 Rest.  
 You touch a vision  
 Clasped to the breast  
 Of humble women buried in humble villages  
 Who still sing  
 Across oceans of memory  
 In words that our children will be able to hear.  
 (Mila-Schaaf, 2008, p. 140)

### 3.4 Samoan approach – using Samoan metaphorical concepts

#### 3.4.1 Fa'afaletui – knowledge houses

*Fa'afaletui* is a concept proposed by writers Tamasese et al. (1997) and adapted for this particular study. *Fa'afaletui* clearly outlines the thinking by Samoan researchers on indigeneity and empowerment of communities. It holds relevance to this study and poses questions such as: Who benefits from conducting this research? In what ways do they benefit? What happens to the knowledge, and whose knowledge is it? What do we, as researchers, do with the knowledge? How do we use it for the betterment of the people who have willingly given it?



The concept of *fa'afaletui* comprises an interweaving of various collective frames of knowledge to enhance the Samoan world view. These frames (or poles of a *fale*) of knowledge are not static forms but comprise different houses of thought and knowledge, all interconnected with each individual frame depicting its own “knowledge piece”. The concept of collective frames of knowledge can be likened to different metaphors which speak of linking, weaving, and viewing from different angles each with its own specific value making up the whole, the complete frame.

As a research tool, *fa'afaletui* has often been linked metaphorically to a story which some Samoans tell about the respective views of the fisherman, the tree climber, and the man at the top of the hill. Each perspective provides an important position from which to view the fish (data). The closer you are to the fish, the better the view of the details of the fish; however, to encapsulate the data (fish) in its environment, another view, that of the tree climber, is necessary; and to get the complete picture, one may have to climb even further (to the top of the hill). This can be analogous to looking at the data from multiple perspectives – the parents – the researcher (through all the research tools) and from conversations with supervisors and cultural advisors to the research project and other Samoan people, once again asking the question: “What is happening here?”

One can also liken *fa'afaletui* to the weaving of the fine mat – the *Ie toga* – with its many patterns and strands all linked and woven to ensure the finished product is “fine” in its form and in the process by which it was made. This process involves co-operation, delegation, knowledge of materials, people, resources, and the qualities of patience and perseverance. Each weaver is endowed with a multiplicity of skills to get the finished product to its finest form. It becomes an article of beauty to be displayed and presented in a way that is fitting for the occasion and brings *mana* to the weaver and the family. We compare this to the research process and how it is conducted.

*Fa'afaletui*, therefore, can be likened to any of these metaphors. It is a methodological approach that involves determining the relationships between the individuals and the groups, which shape our thinking and ways of doing (Tamasese, et al., 1997). To understand these relationships and the constructions of individuals' cultural identity, we have to gain insight into their perspectives, as Samoans are not all the same (Silipa, 2008).

### 3.4.2 Le va

Tamasese et al. (1997) emphasise that the holistic (spiritual, psychological, physical) wellbeing and nature of a Samoan person exists within relationships that define the purpose, roles and responsibilities of individuals within a collective. There is a sacredness of the space between people which both brings them together and separates them; Anae (2007) and Wendt (1995) speak of this space as the concept of *va*. Within this concept there is also *le va fealoaloa'i* that incorporates the mutual respect in socio-political and spiritual arrangements (Vailaau, 2005). Here one learns to respect the space between landmarks and monuments, sacred sites and cemeteries, and those within *aiga* regarding the sacred relationships and space of *va tapua'i* significant in terms of the 'sister-brother' relationship, which speaks of a covenant or *feagaiga* relationship (Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1995).

In the *feagaiga* the brothers are the guardians, the protectors, of their sisters. Of all the taboos around relationships this is the most major one (Schoeffel & Meleisea, 1995). In traditional times, and in some cases even today, brothers and sisters could not be in the same room together, and they certainly never socialised or frequented the same places. The sister's honour was always upheld by the brother and her male cousins (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009). The sacredness of this *va tapua'i* is such that the pastor, representative of God, has been bestowed with the title of *feagaiga* (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009). It is in having this title that the minister is placed in an important position alongside the *matai* or chiefs of the village (Meleisea, 2000; Silipa, 2008; Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009;) and these roles *va tapua'i*, *feagaiga*, *va fealoaloa'i* and *va* depict the sacredness of these relationships between humans and God (Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009).

These cultural concepts of *va* has its roots in relationships (Wendt, 1995). Community engagement and consultation, essential elements in the research process to ensure cultural reciprocity, are familiar to me as a Samoan researcher. The engagement was integral to the relationship of knowing who in the community would be the most influential people to guide me through the process of consultation. The depth of the conversations reflected the quality of the relationships existing between myself as insider researcher and the people of the community – including those people from the community who had passed on. Such relationships are often referred to by Samoan

writers as that space in time which connects people and embellishes and strengthens relationship – a sacred covenant which Anae (2007) refers to as fundamentally significant to the ways in which Samoan people relate to each other. This space is known as *le va*. *Le va* is normally defined as the space ‘in between’ the ‘between-ness’ - not the space that separates but space that relates and holds separate entities together in the space that is context and gives meaning to things. In the *fa’aSamoa*, *le va* encompasses the way to talk, the way to listen, the way to defer, and the way to delegate (Silipa, 2008). Each of these actions has its own reasons: why, how, when, what, and who? It is about the space between and taking care of it, nurturing it, and being respectfully careful of it. According to Anae, *le va* is mutually reciprocal and interactive. If peace and equilibrium are to be maintained, then the mutual reciprocity must be acted out. It provides a significant contribution to highlighting the need to tidy up the physical, spiritual, cultural, social, psychological, and *tapu* spaces of human relationships in research praxis. If the value of good mutual relationships is not recognised and respected, then much is to be lost in the translation (Anae, 2007).

### 3.4.3 Talanoaga

*Talanoaga* is a Samoan term that refers to communication with study participants and involves various aspects of Samoan protocols and etiquette and ways of conversing that connects and links participants, researcher, and the community to make it easier for the dialogue and stories to unfold. It encompasses a concept of relatedness that writers Tui Atua (2006b) and Vailaau (2005) refer to as ‘*va*’ (relationships).

It is important to make a distinction between *talanoaga* and the Tongan methodology, *talanoa*, described by Vaioleti (2007). The significant difference between *talanoaga* (Durranti, 1981) and *talanoa* (Vaioleti, 2007) is that *talanoa* is taken from a Tongan conceptual framework that highlights Tongan language and Tongan concepts, whereas *talanoaga* is adapted from the Samoan concept of a meeting conducted in a way in which questions and responses from beginning to end respect and value Samoan cultural protocols and etiquette. Durranti (1981) also refers to the concept of “truth finding” in *talanoaga* where questions and responses are focused on getting to the truth or, as grounded theory experts Glaser & Strauss highlight, getting to the crux of the matter. It was therefore fitting for this specific study with Samoan diaspora that the

*talanoaga* approach with *fa'afaletui* and grounded theory was used as a research tool for engagement with my participants.

In this study *talanoaga* was used to describe the dialogue and discussion employed at the stages of consultation, the interviewing process, and of writing. When I finally decided on the topic for this study, and where I wanted to conduct my research, I approached several members of my extended family in Tokoroa to see whether they thought it was a good idea and to ask for their backup and support. Even before the *talanoaga* began it was important to identify the people with whom I was to engage with in a *talanoaga*. Was it the parents, the youth, or the elders? My family suggested key people in the community to contact beginning with the elders because for this study, the entry into the community was through *talanoaga* with the elders who are, according to Samoan customs and traditions, the first port of call. This was in line with the Samoan way.

Therefore the first specific use of *talanoaga* in this study was the *fono* or meetings where I met with elders and leaders of the Tokoroa community prior to and during this study. The main focus of the *talanoaga* with the community (community leaders, professionals, ministers of religion, parents, and early childcare workers) that took place over a period of three months prior to the research study was to gauge the level of community support for, and interest in, the research topic and its purpose, including whether they perceived the research to be of benefit to the community. Several of the elders responded by connecting me with people who they knew worked with children and who were interested in the topic. All the elders and leaders of the community gave me their blessing to conduct the study.

The *talanoaga* process was also evident in the interviews with parents where the *talanoaga* opened up the conversation to a discussion and questions and responses to get to the truth (Duranti, 1981) or to delve deeper to get to an understanding of the topic phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Although 'interview' is sometimes used as the term to describe the process used for conducting the conversations with the participants, at other times I have used the term *talanoaga* to illustrate that the interview process was conducted with the formality of cultural protocols and etiquette. I am convinced that bringing this Samoan element into the process, including employing appropriate

humour, brought out deeper responses from most of the participants than would have been the case without it.

*Talanoaga* was also used in the writing up of the findings, by the use of parents' vignettes and stories about their children's behaviour and their own (parents') responses to it (see Findings, Chapters 4 & 5).

Approximately 55 people became links in a chain of events which brought people together for the *talanoaga*. In doing so, I had to take into consideration many factors which may have had an influence on the responses of the parents. Although my family are well-known in the town they have had a diversity of life experiences similar to the participants in this study. Like the study parents they vary in terms of blended families, religious affiliations, income, employment and range of the number of children in the family. Given the diversity therefore of the families in this study they are less likely to respond to preconceived notions or expectations. The nature of my introduction to them and the way the questions were framed also intended for them to feel there was no expectation on my part for them to respond in a certain way other than to give their honest response to the questions.

### **3.5 From Indigenous to *Pasefika* to Samoan: Positioning as a researcher-reflections**

Where then do I, as a researcher, place myself in terms of this research? Where does this research place me in terms of my biases and frames of thinking, especially around my analysis and interpretation of the data? The following is an aid to deciphering who I am and what I bring in terms of my biases, underpinned by the cultural framework and approaches I have taken in the context of this research and more significantly, to the analysis and interpretations of the research data. These are important considerations, not just for me as the researcher, but also for those who will be informed by this dissertation.

Anae, (1998), a writer of Samoan ethnicity, states that our ethnic identity is situated historically, socially, politically, culturally, but more importantly, emotionally. As a researcher she claims to be insider and native. Anae is a New Zealand-born Samoan

woman who holds multiple roles within New Zealand and Samoa. Like Anae, other *Pasefika* peoples are forming their own identities and adaptations created as a result of their own special circumstances, whilst retaining universal familiarity as a kind of global indigeneity that co-exists with local indigeneity and the global diaspora of *Pasefika* migrants (Kiste, 2001, cited in Thaman, 2003).

Anae (2007) asserts that Samoans of mixed ethnicity need to make the choice about whether they are Samoan or not. I disagree with this position as, in my view, people of mixed ethnicity have a multitude of ethnicities they can affiliate to and do not need to make a choice about 'one' specifically. Individuals will have their own reasons for identifying more with their '*Palagi*' or 'Maori' or 'Samoan' or 'other' ethnicity according to the context in which they were raised.

### **3.5.1 Reflections on my own positioning**

I hope my reflections provide some insights into where I place myself in the context of this thesis; outsider, insider, outsider within, or insider without? What makes me a Samoan? My parents are both Samoan but my surname is an obvious giveaway in terms of *Palagi* ancestry of our *gafa*. I definitely feel more Samoan than *Palagi*, but when I am among a group of elders and they are speaking high Samoan do I feel like an insider or an outsider? Is there such a thing as a 'real' Samoan or are we such a conglomerate of ethnicities (as are those in this research study) that we can only see ourselves as 'New Zealanders', or can I be a New Zealand-Samoan? Does being a Samoan-New Zealander make me more of an insider or does it mean I am an outsider? When I am outside New Zealand, do I see myself more as an outsider in terms of being New Zealander or an outsider in terms of being Samoan, and when I am in Samoa sitting cross-legged in a Samoan fale among my matai peers, am I an insider or outsider, or more importantly, as Anae suggests do I feel 'emotionally' as an insider or an outsider?

When I am sitting in a café drinking chai latte, with my Samoan diaspora peers of similar interests and levels of Samoan language knowledge and culture, do I feel more an insider or an outsider, Samoan-New Zealander, Samoan, or just me – Esther – with many hats? There are so many questions about this issue of insider, outsider, which reflect identity and belonging. I am also a Quaker and there are some very strong

Quaker principles that influence my thinking. In the context of this thesis, does this reflect any biases or does it provide more insights to who I am – insider researcher?

These are the realities of Samoan diaspora in Aotearoa-New Zealand. The emi-etic phenomenon is something I have struggled with and explored in terms of my own analysis and understandings. However, my PhD journal, where I wrote everything down in terms of who I am as a Samoan, allowed me to reflect and indeed re-think these phenomena of identity and the positioning of myself in my research.

The basic set of beliefs that guide me as an insider Samoan researcher are largely due to my upbringing. I am Samoan. I was born in Samoa and raised in a traditional Samoan immigrant family context in Tokoroa, New Zealand. My links to Samoa through my parents connect me to the villages of Pata, Solosolo, Vaigaga and Vaiusu.

Tokoroa is my hometown. I grew up there, attended school there, and I still have family there. Like many other migrants in a similar context, the future for their children was the paramount reason for my parents leaving their families in Samoa and moving to New Zealand. Life in New Zealand was not easy for my parents, especially for my mother, who spoke only Samoan and whose first teachers of English were her children. She came from a small village in Samoa and moving to a new country unable to speak English and unfamiliar with the customs and cultural norms as well as having to endure one of the coldest places in New Zealand was very difficult. Nevertheless, the dream for my parents of a life that would mean a higher standard of living and opportunities for a good education for their children made the adaptations to a new country worth the sacrifices. It is the stuff of every migrant's dream: to leave the home country to get a good job, buy their own house, and make the most of opportunities for wealth and good education, all the while maintaining a love for their *aiga* so they can help to provide them with the same opportunities. For my parents this dream did, eventually, after much hard work, become a reality. My father supported the family for many years on his own, and then, as other siblings and family members were brought to New Zealand, they, in turn, were able to send money home to their families in Samoa and so support, not just their families in New Zealand, but also their families back home in Samoa.

*Fa'alavelave*, a concept my parents adhered to religiously, was not known to me until I was much older. It was never forced upon us by our parents, but something we witnessed them conducting in their own unselfish and humble ways. We observed the ritual of *fa'alavelave* at both their funerals, and for our family *fa'alavelave* continues in the form of money and tangible support when it is appropriate, relevant and affordable. It is something we choose to do, and we ensure the act of giving does not mean sacrificing the needs of our children. Thus the ritual remains according to the principles of *fa'aSamoa* in its most traditional sense.

Samoa culture allows me to think logically about a whole system of words, thoughts, and deeds. It also allows me to have dialogical intercourse of meanings which give rise to political, indigenous and cultural worldviews. Like the fine mats of Samoa, they are interwoven to highlight a knowledge tradition which has an epistemological and ontological purpose. The fact that I have not lived in Samoa for a very long time and am now domiciled in New Zealand shifts me from the 'indigenous' to the 'diaspora' context. Although different, these contexts nonetheless inter-relate philosophically. There are points at which commonalities and differences lie but knowing about them allows us as researchers, and as migrant and indigenous people, to explore indigenous, *Pasefika* and Samoan epistemological and ontological functions further, and to understand them better.

Alongside these understandings of global dispersion, a number of writers recognise the influence diasporic *Pasefika* populations are having on emerging epistemologies (Thaman, 2003; Vaioleti 2007). 'Epeli Hau'ofa (1994) refers to the constant movement of Oceanic people across the globe as being similar to the journeys their ancestors made across different islands of the Pacific. These journeys no longer place boundaries or are limited to the islands of the Pacific, but now locate *Pasefika* diaspora wherever they take up residence in cities such as Auckland, Sydney, London, and Los Angeles. According to Macpherson et al. (2001) these diasporic *Pasefika* populations provide an international diversity within their adopted countries. Gershon (2007) suggests that ethnographers of the Pacific have always known that the Pacific was not just a sea of islands, but also a sea of families, and that diaspora only exist because of the culturally specific ways through which families circulate knowledge and resources. The entanglements that families and diaspora find themselves in are actually non-existent



without families sustaining them (Gershon, 2007). Gershon also extrapolates by stating “diaspora are conduits for distributing knowledge and resources in a culturally specific network” (2007, p. 491).

Therefore it follows, that, throughout my life as a student, I have approached my studies with a steadfast commitment to valuing and highlighting, wherever possible, valid frameworks and paradigms which encapsulated the best of Pacific (in this case specifically Samoan). In the context of this dissertation and the approach taken, these reflections of who I am, and my own and my parents’ journeys, are intended to provide some insight to my positioning as an insider researcher. I am in no doubt that I am an insider – an insider within the community of Tokoroa and the Samoan community of Tokoroa, an insider in terms of who I am in my own confidence of being and feeling Samoan and in my knowledge and understanding of the ways and means by which I wanted to conduct this research with the values and principles that are the underpinning for this research project. I know who I am, where I am positioned and the understanding of how I wish to proceed epidemiologically, ontologically and methodologically. Therefore, it is from this standpoint that I totally agree with Meyer.

What a fascinating thing life is! I have survived the many, many stories of how I think, what I know, and who I am—all told by those who are well meaning, well dressed, and well ignorant of the deeper sides of my cultural epistemology.

(Manulani Aluli Meyer, 2001, p. 124)

Having determined then what my methodological approach was to be, I set out to apply the methods accordingly.

### **3.6 Methods**

#### **3.6.1 Introduction**

This section describes the methods used to conduct this research. First, I began with a consultation phase with the Tokoroa Samoan community where we engaged in *talanoaga* (see *Talanoaga*, page 85). This *talanoaga* with key people in the community took place over a period of three months and in accordance with Samoan protocol involved the elders. Second, from these *talanoaga* with the elders an advisory group of

Samoan community elders was established and participants were identified. Thirdly, one-to-one interviews were conducted with 18 parents, some of whom who were recruited into the study through a snowball technique (Browne, 2005). Lastly, from these 18 parents, 15 viewed the CD-ROM *Play Nicely* and, of those 15, 11 were interviewed for their responses to it.

### **3.6.2 Ethical Approval**

Before proceeding with this research I applied to the University of Victoria Human Ethics Committee for approval to conduct this study. Ethics approval was granted on condition that consent was obtained from all participants (see Appendix 2, p. 260). Consent was obtained from all participants (see appendix 3, p. 261). Furthermore, in the context of indigenous and *Pasefika* research; the cultural requirements, the *fa'afaletui* ensure one's sanctioned entry into the community allowing *talanoaga* (meaningful dialogue) with participants to take place. This was achieved, in accordance with Samoan protocol, through *talanoaga* with community elders. According to the HRC Framework (2005) the most important element of the research process in *Pasefika* contexts is the nature and quality of relationships. The nature and quality of relationships guide researchers, both *Pasefika* and non-*Pasefika*, in how to conduct research in *Pasefika* communities. This ensures that the research is carried out within a framework of ethical relationships between researcher and participants. Ethical aspects are established and included in the way researchers gain informed consent, build rapport, provide accurate information about the study, and the explanations as to what will occur once the study begins and concludes (HRC, 2005). Once consent was received (see appendix 3) I proceeded with my research.

### **3.6.3 Talanoaga with the community**

The *talanoaga* phase with the community and elders identified specific people who I approached to discuss a) whether this study was something that would be of benefit to the community, and b) how we could carry out this study with community support. The elders were very helpful in providing me with some leads to prospective participants for the study and the names of various people who were considered the leaders in the community. They also assured me that if I had the support of these leaders the

community would be more forthcoming in their support for the study. Their assurances proved to be accurate. I chose four elders from the community to be my advisors. Two of the advisors were male and two were female. All were strong leaders within their churches and in the community and known to me through my parents. One was a lay preacher, another a grandmother and a health advocate for *Pasefika* people in the community, the third was a church elder and a respected teacher in the community, and the fourth was a matai and a church elder. Unfortunately, one member of the group passed away prior to the completion of this study and another has returned to Samoa. However, because of the established links and connections with *Pasefika* people in Tokoroa my relationship with them and their families have endured and will continue to do so long after I complete this study. The *talanoaga* phase, therefore, identified elders who were able to advise me on matters of a cultural nature; and provide feedback to me on process issues, consultation and ways in which the dissemination of findings back to the community could be done at the end of the study. For example, dissemination processes they suggested were through the church notices, local newspaper, and community *fono*. However, most importantly for this study was their total support for conducting this research in their community.

NOTE ONE: When I initially began this study, 1-1 interviews with 5 community elders and focus groups of 21 people from the community were conducted. However, consultation with my supervisors resulted in the data not being included in this study as we concurred there was an enormous amount of rich data already collected from the 1-1 interviews with participants, pre-and post- CD-ROM. I returned to the community to inform them of this and they were very understanding and appreciated the way in which I had gone about letting them know; adhering to the protocols of respect and reciprocity in terms of the *fa'afaletui* and the *talanoaga* process.

### **3.6.4 Recruitment Procedure**

Most of the parents were recruited through a snowball technique whereby referrals were received from the participants; others were recruited via pre-school centres and a few through the community via *talanoaga* with the elders and key community people (Browne, 2005). Criteria for selection included being a parent of Samoan ethnicity with a child aged 1 to 3 years, and either having lived in Tokoroa or currently living in Tokoroa and connected to Tokoroa through family or residency.

### **3.6.5 Summary of Parent's Profile**

All the parents had either Samoan (5) or Samoan and other ethnicities (13); for example, Samoan/Palagi; Samoan/Palagi/Cook-Island; Samoan/Maori/Cook Island; Samoan/Chinese; and Samoan/Palagi/Cook Island and Tokelauan. The number of children parents had ranged from 1-6. Almost all of the children in the study were the youngest members of the family. Only one of the parents spoke Samoan fluently, and all except for one parent was born and raised in New Zealand. Eleven of the parents were born in Tokoroa and have lived in the town for most of their lives.

Most of the families lived in nuclear unit households of parents and children but were in constant contact with extended family members in the community. Four of the parents lived in an extended family setting with grandparent/s and other extended family members.

Full-time employment was a significant feature of this group, with only one part-time worker. She was a single mother working a total of 10 hours a week. At the time of this research, one father was in full-time study and one married mother chose to stay home full-time with her children. Three of the mothers were single and on a benefit, including the mother who was working part-time. Most of the participants were older parents in the 40-50 age range (three of whom were in blended families – children from previous relationships), and several aged between 20 and 29 and 30 to 39 years of age. Almost all of the married parents earned from \$NZ 60,000- \$80,000 per year and several had a combined income of over \$NZ 80,000 per year. The average New Zealand household income in 2008/2009 was \$78,019 and in 2010 was \$76,584 (Statistics New Zealand,

2010). All of these incomes were personally given to the interviewer after parents were given a range of income over the year. The interviewer did not question them further about the amount they declared.

Not surprisingly, the 3 single mothers were in the lowest income bracket, along with the most recent migrant family from Samoa who also had the largest number of children and the 2 youngest couples who were also on low incomes. All the parents placed considerable value on education, especially pre-schooling, hence all except for 1 child was attending early childhood education<sup>7</sup>. These were the children (except for 1) of parents who had migrated from the Pacific islands, that most were of mixed heritage and that all but one was not fluent in Samoan.

**Table 1. Parents Profiles:**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Qualifications/ training</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Relationship status</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Income range: \$000 of dollars per year</b>
Mike	40-50	Diploma	Professional	Married	F/T	60-79
Andy	40-50	OJT	Tradesman	Married	F/T	Over 80
Clarissa	40-50	OJT	Manager	Married	F/T	Over 80
Mandy	40-50	Nil	Housewife	Partner	P	10-19
Ruth	40-50	Dip Tchg	Teacher	Married	F/T	Over 80
Harry	40-50	Trade Cert	Tradesman	Married	F/T	Over 80
Debbie <sup>8</sup>	40-50	Diploma	Single mum	Single	B	10-19
Tasi	40-50	Nil	Supervisor	Married	F/T	40-59
Semi	20-30	Nil	Labourer	Partner	F/T	20-39
Sina	30-40	Nil	Housewife	Married	F/T	60-79
Peter	30-40	Nil	Labourer	Married	F/T	60-79
Tavita	40-50	Diploma	Businessman	Married	F/T	Over 80

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<sup>7</sup> The reason the mother gave for her child not attending pre-school was that she wished to have her child at home with her because when her other children were pre-schoolers she had no choice but to go to work.

Mafa <sup>9</sup>	20-30	Nil	Picker	Single	B	10-19
Naomi	40-50	Dip Tchg	Teacher	Married	F/T	Over 80
Bill	40-50	Degree	F/T student	Married	F/T	60-79
Mele	20-30	Nil	Waitress	Partner	P/T	40-59
Colin	20-30	Trade Cert	Tradesman	Partner	F/T	40-59
Mary	30-30	Nil	F/T mother	Separated	B	10-19

Pseudonyms have been used to preserve the anonymity of participants

Key: B=beneficiary, P=full-time parent, F/T = full-time, P/T = part-time, PG=F/T post grad studies, OJT = on the job training.

### 3.7 Interview procedure

This section discusses the use of interviewing using a *talanoaga* approach as a means of gathering in-depth information. The questionnaire schedule designed for the study is discussed, followed by a description of the three phases of participant interviews.

#### 3.7.1 Gaining consent

After identifying prospective parents, each parent was contacted by phone to arrange a time and appropriate interview venue. The parents were informed of the approximate length of the interview and an appointment was made for their first interview. Samoan protocols of hospitality and reciprocity were followed, allowing for rapport building and reciprocal giving in terms of a *mealofa* and relationship building. This was crucial to the study as parents were expected to be interviewed again, after viewing the CD-ROM.

At the beginning of each interview, verbal and written explanations of the study, including its purpose, procedures and expectations, were given to the parents (Appendix no 1). Consent was given only after the study information was explained and parents confirmed that they understood it. They were assured of their right to anonymity, to withdraw any information up to the analysis phase, and their right to ask any questions

or make further enquiries regarding the study. All the interviews were conducted in English. Parents were also assured that their confidentiality would be respected and, because of sensitivity to the study topic, if they felt after the interview they required professional counselling, information regarding these services could be provided.

### **3.7.2 Audio recording**

All the interviews with the study parents were recorded with their prior consent. Prior to signing the consent form the participants were given the information sheet and any questions about the study were explained. The consent form was signed only after the participants had affirmed they understood the information they had read and were satisfied with the information and the explanation given of the study. They were also given the assurance their confidentiality was paramount and would be respected, not compromised. Audio recordings were used to capture the essence and the accuracy of the *talanoaga*. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed by myself as the researcher, and as a backup, notes were also taken during the interviews.

### **3.7.3 Interviews with parents**

One-to-one interviews were conducted individually with 18 parents. This type of interview was chosen for this study for several reasons: a) its suitability for the in-depth qualitative nature of the research and the specific ethnic group being interviewed; b) it is a reliable technique for sourcing detailed information on peoples' thoughts and behaviours; c) it is an appropriate method to use with a small sample of participants; d) is reliable as a way of triangulating with other methods and e) I have used this method on several other research projects I have been involved in, hence a familiarity and comfort in using both methods for this research study (Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

All but 2 of the interviews were conducted in the homes of the parents. The other 2 were conducted in the home of the paternal grandparents. In a few cases, I called the participants 2 or 3 times before we were able to conduct an interview. Each of the 2 interviews with parents took about 1 hour. For the post CD-ROM interview, 4 of the parents were not interviewed because they had either forgotten or had prioritised other

events, for example family funerals and a doctor's visit for a sick child. It was also important with a study of this kind that techniques used with specific groups of people adhered to specific protocols of hospitality and respectfulness and relationship building which are fundamental before beginning the interview with the parents.

Building rapport with most of the parents in this study whose families I had known since childhood was not as difficult as building rapport with those parents I did not know. Nevertheless, with the small group of three or four people who were not known to me, there was ease and comfort as the snowball technique connected the parents with the person who had referred them, and associations and connections were very easily made (Browne, 2005). These kinds of linkages and connections to people, through family ties and *gafa* (or genealogical links), are valuable in the Samoan context as it smoothes the entry into and work with members from the community (Tamasese et al., 1997)

The flexible, loosely structured interview schedule developed for this study comprised of specifically framed questions but allowed for interview prompts for more detail and elaboration on parents' responses if needed, which allowed for flexibility. In this sense, then, the questionnaires were semi-structured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) (see Appendix 5, p. 275). This allowed for an exploration of specific areas of interest about parental perceptions of childhood aggression, its origins and management by the use of both open-ended and closed questions. This technique allowed the interview to specifically explore any manifestations of childhood aggression and parental responses to managing it. If needed, during the interview parents could be probed to engage even deeper in discussion with further questions if the opportunity presented itself. Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to the semi-structured, flexible interviews that produce data that was deeper, richer and of better quality than data from closed questions which leave no room for broadening of participant response. In this study, the interviews were generally cordial and friendly and as per the Samoan research approaches, *talanoaga* and *fa'afaletui* adherence to Samoan etiquette, humour, connecting through relationships (*le va*), reciprocity and hospitality was conducted with respect for those taking part in the research study. There were times when parents showed emotions when responding to some questions and other times where there was an atmosphere of fun and laughter. As



a researcher of Samoan ethnicity it was important to ensure an atmosphere of trust and confidence in my ability to keep matters confidential was paramount.

#### **3.7.4 First, second and third phase interviews**

The first phase interviews were conducted with parents of Samoan ethnicity who had 1 to 3-year-old children. Each parent who fitted the criteria was asked to respond to demographic and parenting questions (see Appendix no 4).

In the second phase of interviews with parents, the questions were related to their children's behaviour, the origins of their children's behaviour, how the parents responded to the behaviours, and the genesis of these responses. Each parent was asked if they responded differently in relation to whether their child was a boy or girl or their position within the family: first, second or third child. Parents were also asked whether they had ever sought help with their children's behaviour or for themselves in terms of their responses to the behaviour, with parenting in general. In this phase the parents were also asked if they wished to view *Play Nicely* (CD-ROM) which contains non-violent conflict resolution strategies relevant to young children. Those who consented were given an appointment to view the CD-ROM at another visit followed by an interview to gauge their responses to the CD-ROM.

The third interview phase was conducted with eleven parents who had viewed the CD-ROM and were available for a post-CD-ROM interview. Eighteen parents in total were interviewed in the first phase, 15 were shown the tool, and 11 were interviewed post CD-ROM viewing.

**Table 2. Viewing of CD-ROM**

<b>Parents</b>	<b>Viewed</b>	<b>Post interview</b>	<b>Not viewed</b>
Mike	Y	Y	
Andy	Y	Y	
Clarissa	Y	Y	
Mandy	Y	X	3 visits no-one home
Ruth	Y	Y	
Harry	Y	Y	
Debbie	Y	Y	
Tasi	Y	Y	
Semi	X	X	3 visits no-one home
Sina	Y	Y	
Peter	Y	Y	
Tavita	Y	X	3 visits no-one home
Mafa	X	X	3 visits no-one home.
Naomi	Y	Y	
Bill	Y	Y	
Mele	Y	X	3 visits no-one home
Colin	Y	X	3 visits no-one home
Mary	X	X	3 visits no-one home.

Total who viewed CD-ROM = 15

Total who were interviewed 3 months after viewing CD-ROM = 11

During the time of my fieldwork I attended many funerals in a very short time and many of the parents were also involved in the bereavements. This was not unusual because of the size of the community and the relationships between people from a small town. These occurrences and the time span between viewing the CD-ROM and the interviews unfortunately resulted in 4 of the parents not being able to be interviewed. Three had said they would be available after the 3 months had lapsed.

### **3.7.5 Mealofa**

As an accepted cultural and customary practice of hospitality and respect, a gift of petrol vouchers was made to participants for their time and *alofa* contributed to the research. Parents were not notified of *mealofa* prior to the interviews as the researcher was aware this may be perceived as an enticement.

## **3.8 Analysis**

### **3.8.1 Grounded Theory**

In grounded theory there are three important modes: categories, codes and coding. These give direction to core categories, abstract constructs and theory development. As codes and categories are processed and extended through line by line analysis the constant question raised is: “What is happening here?” Needless to say, ongoing observations (if applicable), discussion and interviewing of parents will clarify significant issues as the research progresses. It is expected in grounded theory that the analysis will highlight any gaps in the data once coding begins. For example, in the first set of data (demographics) it became clear that there was a lack of single mothers and more parents of a younger age were also required. The context and intervening conditions for parents’ perceptions became clearer as the analysis identified the categories and labelled them as context, intervening conditions and effects. Once the new data no longer showed new or emerging themes or theoretical elements but reinforced what had already emerged from the first set of data, it was clear saturation of the data had occurred. For example, by the eighteenth set of parents it became clear that the data had become saturated as no more *new* information was emerging. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) state: “Saturation means that no new additional data are being found” (p. 61). In other words, there was a consistency taking place. The process or technique of constant comparison, as described by Glaser (1978), is where all data relevant to each category is identified and examined (Glaser, 1978). This process became apparent in this study with the word ‘support’. Parents were using similar terms and referring to four distinct placements of support-grandparents-other family members, friends and community. What emerged from the analysis were the distinctive elements

of ‘support’ that they gained strength from and were identified in the – *fa’aSamoa* cultural concepts. This is discussed further in Chapter (6).

Categorising is very general in the beginning. This is guided by theoretical sampling which is critical (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This means that the researcher simultaneously collects, codifies and analyses data, and then decides where to move next to gather information about emerging codes and concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I also utilised ‘memo writing’ as a way of explaining the emerging theory to determine if the findings were relevant, whether they actually fitted the field of study and the naturalistic environment of the parents, and if they would be ‘transferable’ to other settings. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) it is at this stage where concepts and theories are developed, and these are discussed in Chapter 6. Selective sampling of the literature also takes place. In this study revising and reviewing of the literature was a constant necessity, taking into account the lack of *Pasefika* literature and rapid speed of publications on this topic internationally.

The final sample size and composition is only known when the data is saturated and no new codes emerge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this study, data saturation was reached at 18 parents. Participants were chosen as they were needed rather than before the research began. New parents were added as initial analysis showed where the gaps were in terms of particular demographics, such as single parents. I therefore increased the number from one to three with one mother recently separated from her husband. Although this one mother was recently separated, it can be assumed that many single parents start off in this ‘recently separated’ category. It was therefore reasonable for this study to have at least one recently separated mother.

In grounded theory, close following of the analysis process ensures trustworthiness (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The main ways for obtaining verification of the study results are embedded in the data analysis process through the triangulation of different sources of data and the use of literature as a supplement verifier after writing the theoretical propositions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These processes are also critical to keeping researcher bias in check. Triangulation requires the researcher to consider the data from several different aspects in order to enrich, confirm, or refute the data (Neuman, 2003). This process provides a triangulated lens through which to interpret the data where the outputs of one aspect (literature or fieldwork) feed into the others (1-1 interviews, focus

groups or advisory group), providing added credibility to the analysis process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Neuman, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1992).

In the case of this study, triangulation at the analytical stage was provided by the use of data management tools (NVIVO), manual coding and human expertise (supervisors and community support advisory group). The latter who were invaluable in their advice and clarification of cultural concepts and meanings. Further triangulation occurred prior to analysis and was ensured both by the methods selected (see methods) and cultural frameworks in relation to the interview tools used for example, the *fa'afaletui* method of three different views of the data as taken from the cultural perspective of Samoans (Tamasese et al., 1997). Here I drew on the adjectival description of close, closer, closest to the data; if we can imagine a fisherman in his canoe and the data as the fish (see earlier description of this analogy), the concept of perceptions becomes more cultural as we triangulate the data and confirm or refute findings. This was especially applicable to the themes which emerged from the data where the constant reviewing of the data, the literature and opinions of cultural advisors were considered.

### ***3.8.2 Theory in practice***

In grounded theory, all of the raw data is scrutinised by the researcher through reading and re-reading line by line and paragraph by paragraph (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This paves the way for open coding to be initiated, which enables the researcher to use and categorise and code an immense amount of data. All the transcripts from this study were fed into NVIVO for management of data. NVIVO is a management data tool and assists the researcher by providing another way of checking and rechecking that data analysis is robust and rigorous. NVIVO was also utilised to apply thematic approaches, which assists in identifying correlations and concurrencies with manual coding. For example, when checking data for themes NVIVO can quickly identify and highlight the number of times particular words and phrases appear throughout the transcripts. In this research it identified conversation pieces of repetitive or similar words featured in the transcripts and in what context. These were matched with conversation pieces in all transcripts which had been coded for example, to the word 'support'. The Initial analysis of the demographic data was conducted and presented succinctly in tables. Axial coding of the

pre-CD-ROM interview data was undertaken next, and the cultural themes extrapolated from colour coding and line by line analysis.

### **3.8.3 Trustworthiness of data and analysis**

Qualitative research using grounded theory relies on characteristics described by Strauss and Corbin as credibility, transferability, dependability, and reliability.

Credibility refers to the confidence a researcher has in the truth of the findings. In this study I ensured credibility by triangulation, member checking, and negative case analysis to check for accuracy, verify data, to discount discrepancies, and to affirm concurrences in data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The transcribing of the data, the analysis, and the returning of transcripts to participants for member checking (accuracy and comments) were carried out. A free flow of communication between researcher and participants occurred until both parties were satisfied the words accurately reflected the participants' responses to the questions. For example, one father noted that the way I had described an incident in which he was involved with his son (see findings chapter) not only recorded the event accurately, but that I was sensitive to his comment. He did not want to sound "like I was blaming my son" for the incident that made him angry. In my Journal I recorded the usefulness of "checking back" for my own self-awareness and reflexivity.

In reference to triangulation: data for this study came from several sources of which 1-1 interviews or *talanoga* with participants was the most significant. In addition sources of data also came from reports and articles taken from the literature in line with my second study aims (see chapter 1) – such multiple sources of data constitute triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I also had an observer role, albeit informal, but none-the-less of value to this study as it gave contextual credence to the phenomenon of CPA within Samoan families in Tokoroa.

Member checking involved confirmation of reliability of the data with participants and using other tools of analysis for cross checking reliability. The manual analysis of the data was conducted then confirmed by qualitative analysis management tools such as

NVIVO (see analysis section p.102). Furthermore, member checking with participants to check transcripts, clarify meaning, tone, facts, and observations was conducted face-to-face and via telephone. After the initial writing up of summaries of preliminary findings, I returned to the participants for their comments and feedback and to ensure for myself that I had captured their stories and responses to the questions accurately – “peer checking” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some participants sought me out to ensure I had accurately got a “sense” of what they had “really” meant.

I also used what Strauss and Corbin (1990) term “negative case study”: where a re-examination of every participant’s story was done repeatedly to see whether in this case the cultural themes that had emerged from the data were applicable to all the cases. Completion of the analysis occurred only after a thorough examination and when I was satisfied there was congruency throughout and positive affirmation of “disconfirming evidence”. This was very significant to this study and I spent considerable time and effort debating, discussing with key people and repeatedly checking and reviewing the data to ensure “disconfirming evidence”.

In relation to transferability of this research study to another diasporic community or another *Pasefika* community, this was affirmed as the findings provided thick descriptions of the parents perceptions of childhood aggression and along with the CD-ROM findings, replication of the study with either one or all of the methods chosen can be conducted with other *Pasefika* communities or similar communities. There was also an ‘internal coherence’ of the data in relation to the findings and interpretations that in my view has a stability and dependability over time (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Over the course of this study from beginning to completion I was actively engaged with a person who had been a post graduate student. She debated the issues of research processes, methodology and methods with me sometimes heatedly but none-the-less productively. We had differences of opinion at various points but after following my research study from beginning to completion and after many debates, she understood my research process including the analysis process. These discussions and debates with someone who was not Samoan but was able to question and debate with me on the research study gave me enormous satisfaction, especially in unexpected ways - such as the cultural elements and themes that emerged. As a result of these processes I was

satisfied that my study was sound with respect to the reliability and dependability of my research findings and conclusions.

### **3.9 The writing up of findings**

The first part of the findings was written up in narrative text, which is a form of writing that accentuates the storytelling process. For many tribal peoples, stories are an important aspect of their culture. Australian Aborigines have their ‘Dreamtime’, Maori have *whakapapa* and *moteatea* (chants) and Samoans have *fagogo*, as earlier noted in the literature chapter (Tui Atua, 2002). Stories were how Samoan elders, namely grandparents, nurtured and cared for their grandchildren – through story telling. They shared cultural knowledge and values and how cultural ideas were transformed and passed on to the next generation (refer to chapter 2). Narrative text can also be likened to another Samoan approach called *talanoaga* – conversation, dialogue between two or more people where each explores, expands upon, and relates their experience (Durranti, 1981). As explained above (page 86) *talanoaga* is not to be confused with *Talanoa* a Tongan methodology (Vaioloti, 2007). Because I am not Tongan and have no knowledge of the Tongan language my preference in the context of this specific study with Samoan diaspora was the epistemological and ontological fit of *talanoaga* rather than *talanoa*.

The second part of the findings is written up in terms of the themes that have been extrapolated from the data and analysed using the Pasefika *fa’afaletui* approach, whereby the Samoan cultural concepts were woven into the analysis framework and interspersed and discussed with the voices of the parents. *Pasefika* people, as Helu-Thaman explains, “love to tell stories – it is what propels them to produce, create and maintain their cultures” (2003, p. 5). In telling their stories the participants in this research study are sharing their real life experiences and what propels them to be who they are as Samoan parents with their Samoan children. It is, therefore, an appropriate way for me to approach this chapter of findings.



### 3.10 Summary

This chapter has presented the research design, including methodology, Samoan cultural approach – the *fa’afaletui*, and the methods chosen to conduct this research including why I chose to use the *talanoaga* method and not the *talanoa* method to conduct this research study. The cultural underpinnings for the study have been explained using analogies within a Samoan cultural context, *Pasefika* historical data, and literature. It explains my reflections and rethinking of my positioning within the study. The design of the study has taken into account the epistemology and ontology of conducting a research project of this kind that explores the perceptions and behaviours of a specific ethnic group in Tokoroa, New Zealand. The chapter also describes the research community, the field work site, the theoretical processes involved in the analysis of the data using grounded theory, and gives examples of how these were used practically in this study.

Chapter four presents the first of the study findings, which are focused on parenting, parents’ reflections on their parenting, and support people who assist parents in caring for their children.

## Chapter four: Findings – Parenting

### 4 Introduction

This chapter presents the perceptions on parenting of the 18 parents in this study, captured through a process of *talanoaga*. Three points are worthy of being highlighted here as they had an impact on the shape of this study. Firstly, the raw data was so rich that the decision was made to present the findings as narrative; that is, as far as possible in the parent's own words. These were the experiences of the parents as recorded and transcribed from their interviews and peer checked for accuracy and reliability according to the four characteristics of qualitative research and the methodological principles adhered to under research guidelines for research with *Pasefika* peoples (see methodology and methods).

A second point is that, while the intention was to focus on the parenting of children in the 1 to 3 year age groups, it was found that the parents inevitably viewed their parenting behaviours in relation to the whole *aiga*. For example, when they talked about their 3 year old, parents would often include comments about their other children. Parents could not speak of one child in isolation.

Thirdly, there were 18 individual interviews conducted, however some flexibility was required to take into account the reality of family life. The participants determined how they wanted the interviews to be carried out, including who would be present. Eight of the 'individual' interviews were conducted with the participant's husband or wife present, although only 3 couples were both eligible as a couple to be interviewed. In some cases there were also other family members present, not taking part in the interview, but in close proximity carrying out household tasks or keeping the children occupied so the parent/s could focus on the interview. These factors may have influenced the dynamics of the responses - but, as one parent said, "In our family there's no such thing as privacy unless you hide. It's open slather in our house with people everywhere – that's just the way it is for us".

This chapter is in four sections: 1) parents' reflections about parenting; 2) what parents liked best and least about parenting and changes they would make; 3) the place of grandparents within the family and in supporting parenting practice; and 4) participation in parenting courses and early childhood education.

To protect the identity of the parents, pseudonyms are used in this and the next chapter. Rather than using specific numbers, responses are grouped in terms such as "a few" "some", "several", "most", and "almost all"<sup>10</sup>.

Note. See Table no 1, p. 73 for study parent profile summary and table in methods section.

#### **4.1 Parents' reflections about parenting**

Two themes regarding parenting in these Samoan families emerged from the *talanoaga*. These were: 1) the importance of setting the tone for parenting, and 2) the significance of religion, pre-school education and culture on family life and parenting. Within these themes, key issues were identified from the data. These were extended family support, changing the way they discipline their children, values and beliefs including culture, church and education.

#### **4.2 Setting the tone for parenting**

The notion of 'setting the tone for parenting' was regarded as important among all respondents. When asking the question, "who sets the tone for parenting?" I would qualify this by adding for clarity, "how do you go about setting the standards?" or "how do you raise your children in terms of values and principles?" This question was key to my thesis. Why? Because we can effect a child's potential through setting the tone. The manner in which parents interpret life events for their children is crucial to the way the child will interpret life for themselves. For example the fact that Samoans live in a house crowded with relatives does not necessarily mean they live in 'crowded conditions'. They may very well interpret the event in "setting the tone with their child" as being surrounded by family so they are never alone and giving a lesson about sharing resources and co-operative living. As one of the parents said, privacy is a notion that is non-existent in their house with so many people living together. The 'open slather' appears to give their home a sense of open-ness where everything is exposed and nothing is hidden.

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<sup>10</sup> The terminology used for few is 1-2; 3-5 participants is "several"; between 6 and 9 as "some"; 10- 15 as "most"; and 16-18 as "almost all".

Although most of the parents, with the exception of the three single parents, stated that the role of parenting children is a partnership, several of the fathers referred to their wives as being equal partners in setting the tone. One father suggested he was the *tone setter* of the family and another said that it was his wife who set the tone because she spends most time with the children as a stay-at-home mum and is therefore the main caregiver. For a single mother who shared parenting with her ex-partner, the shared parenting responsibilities included setting the tone for parenting. This parent said that when her two daughters go to their father's house, their father and his wife set the tone for the two daughter's behaviour. She said she believes that the same kinds of values around respect and what is regarded as acceptable and not acceptable behaviour are maintained in both households. However, she said she sets the tone for her youngest son.

For Clarissa, setting the tone means "modelling family values to our children, like respect, and it is these values that we hope our children will retain throughout their lives. This is a shared responsibility between me and my husband". Being the role model to her children was important to her. It was something that she and her husband were committed to doing together. These were values that she learnt from her parents and she was keen that her daughter also learned these same values from her and her husband. Her husband, who like Clarissa grew up in a very *fa'aSamoa* household, shared the same values.

Clarissa said she and her husband discuss any issues about their children's behaviour. She was very clear on setting the boundaries around behaviour with her young daughter. "When it comes to setting standards and the tone for child rearing in the family, we talk about these things together, like any behaviour problems. If problems come up, we sit down and discuss it together".

The *talanoaga* showed a concerted effort on the part of the parents who were couples to make themselves available to discuss and find solutions to any problems together, and, like Clarissa and her husband, other couples said they discussed family matters together especially in relation to raising their children and decisions involving behaviour. It was clear that this was the *modus operandus* among the families I spoke to. Underpinning this commitment was a parental desire to ensure their children witnessed them working

together on issues and also realise their parents can not be divided by their children when making decisions:

It is such an important area and if you don't agree on it, it can all just blow up in your face. Kids know when their parents are a bit hesitant and so they play on it. Yeah, it's important for them and us that we talk about it with each other and decide what to do together. (Clarissa)

Mike comes from a family where his mother is the matriarch. She migrated to New Zealand from Samoa in the 1960s and is a known leader in their church and in the Samoan community. Mike spoke of his mum as being the authority in their family and said that his style of parenting was modelled on his mother. He felt he had to parent "with a stern voice" because the stern voice helped him to set the tone for his children. He suggested this was something his mother did and he did it "like mum but in a lighter sense". However, he added, "I don't hit them as vigorously as my mum used to hit me". Mike also added that there was an expectation from him and his wife that his parents and his brothers and sisters were also involved in 'setting the tone' for his children's behaviour. He said, in the end,

we can't be there 24/7 for our kids so yeah we expect mum and dad to do what we do and make sure they are also setting the tone when our kids are with them'...it's for all of us to do'...the whole family, even her (the child's) older brother's and sister's...

In Andy's case, his tone and standards for raising his youngest daughter was done in partnership with his wife. He has two children from his previous relationship and he applied the same kinds of standards for behaviour to them as he did for his two-year-old. Their daughter also spent a lot of time with the grandmother and aunt and like Mike, Andy and his wife expected the aunt and grandmother to set the tone with their daughter when she was with them. Andy said:

We want her to understand that her aunty and grandmother can discipline her just as we do and that whatever tone they use when we are not around has our blessing because we know they want the best for her too, so she knows exactly what to expect when she is with them.

Mandy, on the other hand, who is Samoan-born, was raising six children with her Samoan partner. She said she tended to indulge in *talanoaga* with her daughter about her own childhood and upbringing in Samoa and used lots of examples of how she was

raised in Samoa as a way of teaching her children, especially about the values and ways of behaving:

There were things I did as a kid that I learned from and I pass these things on so that my kids can learn from my experience. I want them to do something really nice for themselves and learn how to grow up to be a “good girl” and to behave like a good girl. (Mandy)

Mandy’s experiences in Samoa included a firm understanding of gender roles and the sacred relationships between brother and sister (*feagaiga*) and the ‘*vā*’. Mandy explained there were certain ways of behaving around your brothers and other male members of the close and extended *aiga*. Strict boundaries applied when interacting with the male members of your household, especially your cousins and brothers. She further elaborated on *vā* in terms of the brothers’ and male cousins’ relationships with females, and the girls’ and female cousins’ relationships with males, and their behaviour towards the older and younger siblings. She had a more relaxed attitude towards her two-year-old child where she said she was more “lax” with her, “She is still very young but I try to teach her to be a good girl too and to listen to her older sisters.”

Mandy also spoke about being surrounded by her family when growing up in Samoa and how her parents and her aunties and uncles set the tone for her behaviour. She said:

We were expected to go and see if our aunties and uncles needed help with anything and to do work for them as well as our parents. Our parents made us do that. They saw it as part of their role as parents to teach us to help all our family not just them. That was the *fa’aSamoa*. And I think that is what I hope I am also teaching my kids, but in a more relaxed sort of way that you don’t just do things for me and their dad but also the whole *aiga*, and the whole *aiga* can also teach them.

Ruth said, she and her husband tried to communicate with their children as often as possible, and to teach and explain without talking too much themselves. But also important was making time to listen to what their children had to say: “If we try and voices get too high, we tone each other down and we try not to smack, not saying we haven’t smacked...we try to reason with them...that’s not to say we haven’t smacked them.”

Most of this group of parents valued consistency in terms of their parenting regardless of whether the children were with them, or with others, as in the case of the parent who

was in a new relationship. There was a uniform view that parenting was a responsibility for both parents and not just one. For example, Harry said that he and his wife shared the responsibility of setting the tone and standards for their children's behaviour: "My wife really does most of it as she is the expert really, but all in all I think we probably share it most of the time and that's all cool...yeah as far as I'm concerned...that's not a problem".

In Debbie's case, it was different because her girls lived with her for the majority of the time so she mostly set the tone. But when they went to their father's house they followed his standards because it was his house. Despite the different houses, Debbie believed there was a consistency and persistency in the co-parenting:

We set the same kinds of values, respect, caring for each other, all of that...so that way we aren't giving them mixed messages. We are pretty much in tune with each other, so it's all good.

Semi, Tasi, Peter, Tavita, and Colin all said that because of the amount of time their wives spent caring for the children was far greater than theirs as fathers, they were happy to entrust the responsibility for setting the tone for their children's behaviour to their wives. Tasi, for example, said it was his wife who set the tone for raising their child and children, "because she is the one with her most of the time and these are based mostly on the values of obedience and respect."

For Sina and her husband, "being brought up with Samoan mothers, the values of respect are instilled in us, manners, being polite and not being too serious and having a good sense of humour". Their children also went to the grandparents frequently and the parents affirmed that the grandparents 'set the tone' and maintained the same rules for their children when they were with them. Sina said, "Our kids are expected to listen and obey their grandparents when they are with them. We expect the same standard of behaviour we set at home as when they are with their grandparents".

By way of contrast, Naomi and her husband agreed that she had basically set the tone for the two oldest girls, but for the three younger ones the role of setting the tone had become more of a partnership. "We are more mature parents now...we have learned a lot of lessons from the older two".

However, for Mary, who was separated, raising her children and setting the tone was now her responsibility until such time as access arrangements and other issues were sorted out with her husband. “Until such time as that’s sorted, the role of raising my children at least at the moment...is left to me... and my extended family I guess. It’s not easy but...you just have to get on and do what has to be done eh? I am just pleased I live with my parents now because my kids get more attention from their grandparents who just love them to bits’.

Bill was a full-time student and found that he now had more time with his youngest child. Although he now spent a lot of time with his son he, and his wife shared equal responsibility for the raising of their children:

I am at home more because of my studies and yeah we spend a lot of time together but I think, or I would like to think anyway, that both of us...me and the wife are equal partners when it comes to bringing up our kids, but I think I probably have more say because I am the head of the house...even though that’s probably in name only. Our mum though lives with us too and she also helps to keep our kids on track.

When asked what he meant by “keep our kids on track”, Bill elaborated by saying, “she helps us by teaching him and keeping him ‘toned’ down when he gets a bit naughty...”

#### **4.3 Summary of ‘setting the tone’ for parenting**

Findings from the *talanoaga* with the parents indicated that setting the tone for their children was done more between the couples than by one parent, although some of the fathers happily deferred this task to their wives who they said spent more time with the children. The parents of children who spent a lot of time with their grandparents and extended family, were also happy to have these family members set the tone for their children’s behaviour. It was also evident from the *talanoaga* that parents valued consistency, particularly when their children were with another member of the family, it was deemed important that the same standards or ‘tone’ were applied to their behaviour.



It was clear from these findings that the village concept of parenting had been retained by this group of parents. The parents did not seem to be parenting in isolation, and the extended family had a key role to play. Tokoroa is a unique town - very close knit with a strong sense of community. It would appear that these Samoan families have retained attitudes and behaviours from their own parents with some adaptations.

#### **4.4 Christianity and parenting**

The parents in this study identified with a number of different Christian faiths; the Catholic Church, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, Samoan Assembly of God, and Presbyterian. Even though most of the parents said they were not regular church goers, they did believe in God, and for those who did not attend church themselves, they allowed their children to attend church with their grandparents. It can be seen here that traditional religious values had an impact on attitudes to parenting among the study group, regardless of whether the parents possessed an active faith or not. It was as if these parents thought of religion as culture and culture as religion. It seemed that among some of these parents culture and religion were very much intertwined.

Andy said that religion was a very significant part of his child's life. He and his wife ensured their daughter went to church with them every Sunday. They also sent her to a school where she had biblical instruction and religious teachings. For them religion and Christian faith were a priority in their lives. "Religion's at the top of the list. We believe our kids should have a faith and that's why we go to church every week".

Mandy and her partner also placed a very strong emphasis on church and religion. She taught the children to read from the Bible, pray and worship God. "I take the kids to church on Sunday and to Sunday school. We have family prayers at home. I was brought up that way and that's what I do with my own kids". According to Mandy, her children were brought up in line with "staunchly Christian values" and "with different aspects of their cultural side". She used the example of, teaching them to say "*tulou*" when they walked in front of their nana or anyone for that matter".

Mike believed in setting a spiritual tone for his family. This included family prayers each evening, prayers before eating, and learning a bed-time prayer before they went to sleep. The values Mike placed on spirituality extended to Christian principles and values about the importance of close and extended family. Mike came from an active

Christian family. His parents were deacons in their church. He placed a high value on Christianity in his home and on *fa'aSamoa* values of respect, obedience, and honour.

Ruth said she enjoyed taking her children to her church. She said that even though her husband did not attend, he supported her going with the children: "We go to church regularly once a week and the kids also go to Sunday school. My husband doesn't come with us but he supports me taking them".

Naomi said her children got a lot of biblical content from school, so she and her husband did not have to do this at home. However, she also said that there was a strong spiritual belief system in their home, perpetuated through the grandmother who lived with them, and who were influential in teaching about culture and language in the family:

We aren't very good at setting an example in going to church and that, and taking them to Sunday school...like we are just too lazy...but mama does...she goes every Sunday...no matter what the weather is...rain, hail or sunshine...arthritis up or not...but we don't...and we don't do that like...we are quite lazy. She (grandmother) is a good teacher for all of them - us.

The consistent response from parents who did not attend church was that they did follow Christian principles and values in their home. Sina and Peter said that their non-attendance at church did not detract them from observing Christian values and principles. They said they taught these values in their home and that their children went to church with the grandmother.

Husband and wife Andy and Clarissa had two major themes in their household, Christianity and cultural values. Andy said:

We do raise them in a Christian way. My older children go to different churches. Loving one another, not hurting other people, and to try and respect each other. There are two major themes in our household; the spiritual and cultural...We are pretty strong on Christian and Island values.

Debbie said that her late parents were very religious and they had brought her up in the church. She had carried this commitment to her religion to all her children. Debbie said

the whole family were all active church goers and participated in many of the church activities:

I encourage my children to take part in our church activities and right down to my son...we go to church and they learn about God and how important he is in our lives...I think it is important for our kids to have something to believe in like God...yeah it is really important to us.

Mafa was not an active church-goer but she allowed her mother to take her son to church with her. Mafa believed in God, but said she did not really enjoy going to church:

I think it's ok to, yeah, believe in God and that but I s'pose I got an overdose of it when I was young so just haven't really wanted to go to church...maybe when I'm older who knows...but yeah it's not really something I go overboard on...and I don't really teach it like... to my son..

Sina did not go to church but said this did not stop her and her husband from having principles which were influenced by the Bible. "We are not church-going people but we do know that the Ten Commandments make sense...we don't push them onto our kids because we don't go to church but we do see the value in them".

#### **4.5 Summary – Christianity and parenting**

The *talanoaga* with parents on this topic showed how important religion, or the spiritual aspect of their children's lives, were to the parents. Even though several of the parents interviewed did not attend church themselves, they were happy for their children to attend with grandparents. These parents had a belief that Christian values and principles were important for their children to learn and know about and a few spoke of cultural and Christian values as if they were the same. It was as if parenting and religion intersected with culture and they had a sense that religion was part of being Samoan. It seemed as if religion was not a separate entity but part and parcel of their 'culture', their *fa'aSamoa*. Similarly, Wendt (2005) speaks of this interconnection of the spiritual and cultural as if it were one and the same.

#### 4.6 Other values

Apart from the values of Christianity and Samoan culture, parents also wanted their children to be respectful and obedient. However, this was not the traditional notion of 'obedience' where a child was not expected to answer back or have a question. Tasi said, "we want her to listen to us but we also don't mind her asking questions. We think it is important that she feels she can do that, but that she also understands how to speak respectfully to adults". Almost all of the respondents spoke a lot about respect, with listening and obedience being particularly important. As one parent remarked, "sometimes they will have a say and sometimes they won't depending on what it is they are asked to do. At these times we just want them to obey us".

Obedience was also considered a key factor in keeping children safe, "and so having rules for crossing the road and being at other people's places was one of the reasons why we say they need to be obedient because if they don't then the consequences for them can be danger or they might get hurt". (Tasi).

Respect and obedience were seen as two important 'other values' to these parents. But what was interesting was that counter to traditional notions of obedience in Samoan culture, these parents encouraged their children to ask questions. This was in stark contrast to their own upbringing whereby they were expected to obey their own parents without question. This element was pertinent to childhood aggression in terms of shifting and adapting what was seen by some Samoans as counter to the culture. Samoan society was hierarchical and children were valuable in the bigger scheme of Samoan aiga but in the hierarchy were seen to be the servers of the parents and in order to *tautua* or serve it was also appropriate for them to obey their elders.

Almost all of the children in the study who attended childcare centres at the time of the study, were of pre-school age and both parents worked. With one exception, the children attended either *kohanga reo*<sup>11</sup>, *aoga amata*<sup>12</sup>, kindergarten or the *punanga reo*<sup>13</sup>.

The one child who didn't attend ECE stayed home with his mum. His mother explained that she enjoyed the time with him at home because she was unable to do this with her

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<sup>11</sup> Kohanga reo is a Maori language nest where children of pre-school age attend and are taught in Maori and Maori tikanga-ways of knowing and doing.

<sup>12</sup> Aoga amata is the Samoan equivalent of Kohanga reo where pre-school children attend and learn the Samoan language and culture and are taught in Samoan. Some are bi-lingual –English and Samoan.

<sup>13</sup> Punanga reo is an early childhood centre based on Cook Island language learning. Children from other ethnicities also attend including Samoan-Cook Island children.

other children as she had to return to work. There were two other mothers who chose to be “stay at home mums”.

#### **4.7 The role of early childhood education**

As noted previously, Tokoroa is a small town in the South Waikato with a *Pasefika* population made up of mostly Cook Island and Samoan migrant families. Early childhood education has enjoyed a relatively high profile in Tokoroa since the Bernard Van Leer Foundation (a Dutch philanthropical organisation) funded a pre-school programme called *Anau Ako Pasefika*. Some of the very first (1980s) childhood *Pasefika* educators were trained through this programme. With this major financial support, almost all of the children in the study are able to attend an affordable pre-school that was either mainstream or ethnic specific such as a Cook Island *Punanga reo* or the Samoan *aoga amata*.

The uptake of early childhood education for these parents’ children has not only benefitted the children but the parents. The children are learning a Pacific language and the customs and etiquette taught in the *aoga*. The parents are also learning from their children. Here too the children learn about the different aspects of the culture, sharing, looking after the younger /older ones, saying prayers and learning simple terms like ‘*tulou*’ and other Samoan protocols.

Most parents reported that they stayed with their children when they first began pre-school, gradually leaving as the child got used to going to the centre. Once children were familiar with their surroundings they ran freely from the parents to the pre-school staff. One dad described his experience:

Yes, I take her to *aoga amata*. I try not to stay or linger. I say to my wife like...I see other parents struggle at letting go with their child when they are there. We went there the first day and we did it in stages so that by the third day she was comfortable at being left on her own...so it was kinda like in steps...we did it in steps...yeah before we got to the stage where we just...like...that we were comfortable in dropping her off. (Mike)

Ruth explained how her child was upset at first when she was dropped off but that had now changed since her child gained the confidence to manage without her mum being around. “Yes, I do when I drop her off. I try and stay with her at least for 10-15 minutes. I know she won’t cry for long but she has done. She’s now used to the place so I don’t have to worry about her getting upset anymore”.

A number of parents said they also used this as an opportunity to speak with the teachers and get a progress report on how their children were doing. Some parents were actively involved in the governance of their children’s education centres.

Yes, the youngest goes to *Aoga*. I have stayed with her and I make an effort to talk to her teachers and ask about some of the things she has done at aoga...you know ...how she is doing and what progress she is making....any problems...I am also on the centre committee so I have a real interest in what is going on from different angles. (Clarissa)

As noted almost all of the children in the study were of mixed heritage, namely Samoan, Maori, Cook Island, and *Palagi*. Despite English being the predominant language spoken among the parents, several were keen to ensure their children received the opportunity to learn a second language, namely a *Pasefika* language and preferably their own. There was a sense of pride among parents about their Samoan heritage and having their children being confident in their language and culture gave them a strong sense of identity and confidence. Parents considered a good all round education which included Samoan language and culture was of benefit to their children.

Andy and his wife both had family members who had achieved exceptional grades at tertiary level and they were keen for their daughter to follow the same pathway. Andy attended kindergarten when he was a pre-schooler. He and his wife not only wanted their daughter to experience an early childhood education for academic reasons, but because they wanted her to learn Samoan too. As such, they decided to send her to an *aoga amata*. Andy said:

My parents sent me to kindergarten when I was little and I think sending our child to kindy was also important. It just gives her a good start in terms of

reading and writing and social skills before they go to school. It's really important that your kids have a good education...that is very important to us too. We want her to get a good education. As her parents we have an obligation to give her the best possible chance to get a good education. That's what our parents did.

Not only was education important but so too was the preservation of language and culture for most of the parents, demonstrated in a comment from Clarissa:

We want her to be well educated and are prepared to pay for her to get the education she needs to help her in the future, but we also think education in terms of her culture and language is important too and that's why we send her to *aoga amata* and so far we are happy with her progress.

Clarissa and Andy were among several parents who sent their children to *aoga amata*. They believed the values of *fa'aSamoa*, language and culture were best taught by professionals in a well-established learning environment.

#### **4.8 Education summary**

These parents placed a very high value on education and having their children attend pre-school was considered a vital step not only in their children's educational pathway, but as a means of exposing them to the Samoan language and culture. Repeatedly, parents said they sent their children to *aoga amata* in order for them to learn Samoan and the *fa'aSamoa* culture. This differed from Samoa where language and culture was experiential and children were exposed to it in every facet of life there but in New Zealand parents were having to rely on the education system to deliver language and culture programmes to their children. Hence the resurgence in New Zealand of early childhood centres where children could learn their languages. Macpherson et al. (2001) and other's found parents may see their children being strong in their culture as a protective factor against other acculturation elements in New Zealand and to give their children a stronger sense of belonging in their ethnic identity.

Although few parents in this study held a formal tertiary qualification, most were motivated to ensure their children got the best possible chance of a good formal education. Educational opportunities were seen as a major reason for many Samoans to migrate to New Zealand (Anae, 1998; Ngan-Woo, 1983). These parents also considered education as playing a key role in their parenting. Even though the *talanoaga* focus was on their 1-3 year olds, almost all of these parents spoke about the value of early childhood education for their children. They saw early childhood education as a good start in life and an important stepping stone for their children to their formal education.

#### **4.9 Reflections of parents on parenting**

Parents contemplated how they had been raised themselves as children and how this differed in raising their own children. In summary their responses are in three categories: valuing being a parent; what they enjoy most about being a parent; and what they enjoy the least.

##### **4.9.1 Parents valuing being a parent**

The group of parents interviewed for this study placed great value on the role of parenting. Most considered their role as central to the health and well-being of their children. Clarissa was so overcome when reflecting on her experience of being a mother, that she was teary when discussing her experience. She spoke about not really knowing what it felt like to be a parent ‘until you are actually one yourself’. She said, “you can think about it, talk about it and have all sorts of views on children and think you know about them, but unless you actually have a child yourself you don’t really know what it feels like”. Clarissa recalled that for her the best thing about being a parent was the depth of love she felt for her husband and child when she became a mother. This experience left her feeling deeply emotional:

You can never know what it is like ...[to] have that feeling until you actually become one ...as much as you think you know about children when you haven’t had any you never know...until you have had one...that unconditional love...it’s overwhelming...to create something from love and you have brought that little child into the world and then to actually have that person totally dependent on you and now the focus is off yourself and on your family...that feeling is so overwhelming and I believe you understand now that it is actually a privilege to



be a parent...from there... it is on setting things up so that your children can have the best for their future.

Mafa who spoke about her child being quite difficult said she loved her son and valued being his mother:

He can be a real handful sometimes but he can also make me really laugh and be happy. I only have the one and can't see me having another one.

#### **4.9.2 What they enjoy the most about parenting**

The most enjoyable thing for Tasi was “watching my children grow and get to the next level. I enjoy teaching my children and watching them learn and grow. Just being a normal healthy kid really”.

Other fathers echoed Tasi's sentiments, such as, Semi, who enjoyed seeing his daughter growing up, and Mike, who enjoyed watching his girls grow. Mike had no sons, only daughters whom he called “angels”. He also enjoyed passing on to them their Samoan culture, the *fa'aSamoa*, and the teachings of their church.

From the *talanoaga*, parents talked about the fact that although they were tired, they still put their children's happiness and wellbeing first.

For Mandy, everything about her children made her a happy parent. Mandy was brought up in Samoa and for her, obedience was a quality she valued highly. She placed great emphasis on supporting them:

For me the best thing about being a parent is everything (laughs). I enjoy seeing my children growing up, like sit when they listen and obey their parents. I love being with them, supporting them when they play their sports and their church activities. I love being a mother to my six children. I love supporting them in what they do. I drive them to their sports and church activities.

The fact that Harry's child was developing into a strong and healthy child made he and his wife happy:

The main thing for me is that I know she is learning and growing and is happy and healthy. That's what makes me and my wife happy, just knowing she is growing up healthy and strong.

Similarly Andy's focus was on healthy, happy children. For him the emphasis was on the simple things, the importance of his relationship with them, and his close and extended family being together.

For me it's just watching my children grow, progress, having that special bond with them...doing things with the kids...sitting at the table eating together, going on holidays together, laughing together, being sad together. Watching your children grow into healthy happy children, seeing them experience things for the first time...and just sharing with them about their lives...that's what is important to me and what I really enjoy about being a parent.

#### **4.9.3 What they enjoy the least**

The parents were unanimous about what they enjoyed the least about parenting. None of the parents liked seeing their kids unhappy or sick, and the financial responsibilities were overwhelming at times.

Tasi shared how hard it was for him coping with sick children He said:

I don't know how anyone can get used to seeing their kids sick...but I suppose some parents do especially if something is wrong with their kids like they get cancer or have asthma. I hate seeing my kids sick and I hate seeing them miserable or not happy. If I can fix that I will, but then sometimes they are going to be 'cos you have growled them or they have done something wrong and you have to punish them, so yeah I suppose they can't be happy all the time eh?

Debbie felt the same way, "for me the worse thing is seeing your kids sick or hurt. That's the pits. It is not nice for a parent to have to see their kids suffer".

The responsibility of fatherhood at a young age had taken a toll on one young father who said "the responsibilities, the work sucks, but it has to be done, too much work not enough time to play". Elaborating further, he mentioned that being a young dad is 'not easy, it sucks sometimes'...but he is glad his 'Mrs is good with her' (their child). When prompted as to what exactly he meant by 'it sucks sometimes'...he said:

oh you just can't do the things you used to be able to do ...you haven't got the money thing to do it because you have to get all the baby gears and just a whole lot of things we didn't have to do before... yeah... it sucks (Semi)

A number of parents struggled with discipline and managing tricky behaviour, such as Ruth. For her, "the worst thing was discipline and challenging behaviour. Just the

conflicts my other two children have with each other, sibling rivalry which seems to be constant when they are together. I don't know why".

Some parents also looked back at the changes their older children had been through in life and what they did not like about those changes. This was especially pointed out by two fathers Mike and Andy, who both had daughters. Mike had five daughters, the youngest of whom was the focus for this study. In his response to the question about what he liked the least about parenting, he referred to his older daughters as he tried to explain what he found difficult. This related to the age of his younger daughter and that in time, she would develop into a teenager like her older sisters. He said, "I have had daughters who have gone from 'a cuddly child' to an 'aggressive adolescent'". For Mike this transition is "one of the things I like least about being a parent". He said, "It is a bit like being a mirror of myself when I was a teenager but the only difference is that they are female not male". He used the example of the emergence of mobile phones and texting, claiming he's "too old to do this" in terms of figuring out what his teenagers were up to... "you know all those beautiful things where you just scratch your head and say 'did I do this when I was young'?... well, I didn't have a mobile phone and I didn't have friends on the phone till all hours of the night...I guess it would have been different if I had a mobile phone".

Mike was not looking forward to seeing his two-year-old daughter make that transition but also realised it was inevitable and as he puts it, "I will have to watch and see them leave and lead their own lives".

Andy also spoke about his daughter's development and the adjustments he had to make watching her growing up into a young woman. Like Mike, Andy said he will miss the age his youngest daughter is now (two years old) and knowing she will grow up soon like her older sister, already, in a sense, he was missing her:

I'm not sure there is anything now but as they get older...as my oldest daughter is now thirteen years old, I can see changes in her and I can see that I have to make changes too because she is not the same child. She is physically and mentally older now and I am trying to adapt to that at the moment, and yeah, I will probably have to make changes as they get older but will probably have the same principles as when they were younger. Those don't change. The principles of respect, being honest, looking after each other and just make sure we just love

them. But, yeah, I can see the same thing will happen to my younger one and, yeah, those changes will happen with her too.

Mandy, who was born in Samoa and came to New Zealand as an adult, said the thing she liked least was, “when the children don’t obey...when they don’t listen. Not really much... *pau a le mea oute le fiafia iai o le taimi e le usita’i*<sup>14</sup>. But the bottom line is that everything is o.k. Most of the time they do”.

Parents on low incomes, including three single mothers, spoke of how the lack of money was a very real challenge:

Money...the lack of it...never getting your head above water when you have kids...just never having enough to do anything or buy everything you need...not being able to afford anything even like basics ...like food sometimes...be nice just to be able to get steak instead of mince sometimes or sausages...it makes you sick to think about it sometimes. (Mele)

Mary, recently separated, said that now she had sole responsibility for her children, she had noticed the difference economically:

I am much more wary about how I spend my money because there isn’t much to go around now and if it weren’t for my parents and my siblings ...well...without their support my stress levels would be a lot higher than they are...I know they are... still assessing my benefit so I know it won’t always be like this but it is still hard ...for me ...for my kids especially...

Other parents were concerned about having to take a day off work if their children got sick, especially if they had used up all their sick leave. Tasi was especially concerned about this, with another baby on the way:

I worry when they get sick and you have to take time off work and then you have to think ‘ooh man, have I got enough sick leave or do I have to take a day off without pay?’...that’s a worry...yeah I hate it when they get sick...and sometimes it is not just one or two days they are sick...it can be a whole week so that’s a whole weeks pay...gone. (Tasi)

Mafa like Tasi had financial concerns too. She wanted to take her child to different places like MacDonald’s or to just “hang out” but for her it was a case of not having enough money to do many of the things her son wanted. She said,

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<sup>14</sup> The only thing I am not happy about is the time when they don’t obey.

I'd like to take him to a place where they can entertain the kids and the kids would just play for hours and have fun and I could just sit and watch him...like Lolly land...but that's like a dream...I could never afford it...so we just hang out 'el cheapo' at home and watch TV or take him to his cousins place so he can play with them. Once he gets there he is fine.

She added, 'it all boils down to money in the end eh? What do you choose - food or entertainment?

#### **4.10 Summary of parents reflections on parenting**

There was concurrence among parents that what was least enjoyable about parenting their child/ren was seeing them sick, hurt and unhappy and the parents who were single and on a lower income found buying even the basic necessities such as food very difficult. Disciplining and managing their children's behaviour was also something they least enjoyed. However, when parents spoke about what they enjoyed the most about parenting there was a concurrence among them that they placed significant value on being a parent and that what they did had an impact on the health and wellbeing of their children. Seeing their children grow into healthy, happy human beings was what these parents enjoyed the most about parenting their child/ren.

#### **4.11 Changes parents would make in their parenting**

Three themes emerged as parents reflected on aspects of their parenting they would like to change. They said they would like to modify their disciplining behaviours, increase their knowledge of the *fa'aSamoa* language and culture and, increase the time they spend with their children.

When talking about their parenting styles in terms of how they responded to their children's behaviour, parents described feelings of frustration (3), anger (3), and impatience (4). Others described their behaviours towards their children in terms of strictness (4), firmness (3), aggression (5), and smacking (3).

#### **4.11.1 Discipline**

Most parents indicated that they wanted to change the way they disciplined their children. Some identified the need for consistency in their discipline styles, and others acknowledged the need to learn other strategies. Bill described his (non-Samoan) wife's explanation for the differences in their styles:

I think she is good...she explains to the children what they have done wrong, whereas I will just come in and give them the punishment without even talking to them, but I am learning...I have learned ...My wife said it's the Samoan in me. Yeah... my blood boils over...yeah... the Samoan way!

Mike, however, preferred the "old" way of being disciplined. When asked what he would change he said:

Discipline. I look at discipline the way mum brought me up. You know, today you get all these alternatives, sent to your room, grounded. I thought, well you know you get a smack, a whack over the head and that was it...you know, like it was over and done with, but this grounding and go to your room, it just takes too long... I liked not having options, like you get a smack and it is over then you send them to their room. But this grounding and sending them to their rooms involves too much talking and discussion. I prefer the old way giving them a good quick smack and then it's over.

Tasi would like to change the tone he used to discipline his children, "it's probably how I speak to them. The tone...using the correct tone. It tends to be on the angry side...I don't like it".

Mafa, acknowledged the frustration of parenthood and said the changes she would make would be in the area of discipline:

Discipline, just gradually...you get frustrated, especially this one at this stage...just trying to explain to him... what's right and what's wrong, what you can do and what you can't do...and if my boy doesn't listen... as much as you try not to get frustrated, you do and when you do get frustrated you just wanna smack them and try and put them down somewhere (as in pick them up and

place them somewhere) and say you're not allowed to play with that...sort of thing.

Colin, too would like to change his approach to discipline, "Yeah, but discipline wise, yeah...you know I'm not blaming anyone, but because I am a male and my partner is a female....I do get more angry at my kids and I get...I blow up...before her and I do smack my kids...yeah I do".

Tavita said, " Probably the one thing I would change as far as parenting is...to probably delete any aggression in parenting 100%...that would probably be the one thing...in a perfect world ...that would be the one thing I would do". Tavita does not think that parents should be "aggressive or loud in their parenting" but rather "use discipline that was more of a teaching nature".

Clarissa recalled her mother's patience and her desire to have that patience for herself:

I wish I was more patient like my mother – she had all the patience in the world and when I think about it now...like when she is here and we are trying to put "T" to sleep and she is getting upset and ma gets upset herself and she said "you know I never let you kids cry", and when I think about it she didn't, there were very few times when we did cry, she just kept working with it...She had that patience...be it that she was teaching us and doing things with us she had that patience to just keep going with us even though she had things she had to do for herself.

For many of the parents in this study harsh discipline was something they had experienced in their own upbringing but it was not something they wished to continue doing with their own children. At times parents had smacked their children usually in the context of being tired or frustrated but they did not like it and preferred to use other ways of disciplining. It was clear from some of the parents that they did not want to continue the cycle of harsh discipline and that this was the main aspect of their parenting they wanted to change.

#### **4.11.2 Samoan language and culture**

These parents' knowledge of Samoan language and culture in their view was very limited compared to their parents. For some of the parents it was a 'loss' not knowing

their language therefore their children were given every opportunity to learn the language and the culture.

Sina spoke about her lack of knowledge of the Samoan language and her desire to have her sons speak it. It was clear from her response of not knowing Samoan herself, that it was something she wished she had acquired:

What I would love to be able to change is my knowledge of my Samoan, but you just try and get as much information as possible to do the best you can. I love it when I take them to M's mum and when we take them to different functions where people talk to them in Samoan. I'd love to be able to talk to them in Samoan, to do it myself.

Although Sina was the only parent who referred to language and culture in relation to the question of what they would do differently as a parent, other respondents referred to language and culture in the context of other questions, such as; the role of grandparents in the families, children's behaviour, parents' responses to their children's behaviour, and the origins of parents' responses to their children's behaviour. These points are discussed in more detail elsewhere in this and the next chapter.

#### **4.11.3 Time with their children**

Ruth would have liked to change the amount of time she was available to be at home with her children:

I just feel I would like to be home when they are sick, when they go to school and when they come home from school, and especially her (the youngest) they are just not getting what I got with my mum, like with my mum she was a full-time mum...but in saying that, A is home more than me, but I would rather it be me. It makes me feel a lot better when I am here.

Several fathers also wished they had more time with their children. Two fathers, whose jobs involved shift work of 12 hour days, four times a week, said that this enabled them to have more time with their children, especially as their wives were working 9am-5pm five days a week. Their availability during the day gave these fathers more time to care for their children. Harry said:



I suppose being a shift worker, it's not too bad at the moment, but before I would come home and they would be asleep and I would go to work and they would be asleep...but being a shift worker I actually spend more time at home with them because of the roster; rather than K who is at work from nine till five...being a shift worker actually gives me more time with her (his two-year-old daughter) and the other kids than a lot of the other guys around that I know.

Semi said he would change being a 'needy' dad, because he relied so much on his family for support. But he also added he would not have been able to manage without that support from his extended family.

Only one parent, Mele, remarked that she would change "nothing" about her children or her parenting.

#### **4.12 Summary of changes parents would make in their parenting**

Most of the parents in this study chose discipline as one of the main aspects of parenting they would like to change. Their choice of discipline focused mainly on changing their tone and the way they spoke to their children, having more patience and being more consistent in how they applied the discipline. Some of the parents also described how they saw the loss of the language and culture within their own families as an aspect they would like to change. Some have been steadfast in ensuring their children are given the opportunity hence sending them to aoga amata to learn. Parents also wanted more time to spend with their children. Fathers who were millworkers and worked in shifts appeared to have the capacity to spend more time with their children than the mothers who worked 9 am to 5pm. These couples were in the majority of those who worked.

#### **4.13 Support – Grandparents**

There was strong evidence of the central role that grandparents played in child rearing among this study group. This reinforced the significance of these family members as caregivers, role models, and authority figures in these families.

#### 4.13.1 Grandparents as caregivers

While, the care of their children was chiefly the role of the parents, it was evident that parents were supported in this role predominantly by grandparents. This was despite the fact that many of the grandparents were struggling to meet the economic demands within their own households, and had their own commitments with church and community activities. However they did make themselves available to their families when needed.

Three families had “live-in” grandmothers. Nine had grandparents living close to them who were involved in caring for the grandchildren. Five families had grandparents who lived in another town away from the family. The majority of respondents had their parents (either mother or father) either living with or close to them.

These grandparents were the main caregivers after the parents, followed by aunties, older siblings, uncles, and cousins. One young couple had great grandparents involved in caring for their child. This was evident when conducting the interview with the mother. The house was cold and the child was clearly unwell. At one point the interview was stopped as the child became very ill during the interview. The great grandparents were on hand at a time when the mother needed help and support, although their presence was unplanned. I terminated the interview but left feeling comfortable knowing my respondent had two people with her who were giving her and her child the support she needed.

Those respondents whose grandparents lived in close proximity acknowledged that they would have been more reliant on external child minders and day-care centres if their parents had not been available to collect their children from day-care or take care of them when they needed babysitters:

At the moment, I am breast feeding my baby and my pre-schooler goes to *Aoga* and I have to rely on my mum to pick him up, or my dad sometimes, or my brothers. I have other children at school too. It can be a real juggle depending on what is going down at the time. I am a single mum and I don't have a car either (Mary).

Although some families did not rely on the grandparents to care for their children during the day because the mothers were at home, the grandparents still supported them

in other ways. For five of the respondents whose parents lived close by, grandparents sometimes helped out by taking a child or all the children for a day or two so that the parents could have free time together in the weekends. Grandparents also took the children to Sunday school and church, or out with them doing certain activities around the home or community. Some also helped their children out financially. Naomi believed that her parents' willingness to provide financial support for their children was setting an example for Naomi and her siblings about transferring values. She said:

Mum and Dad live out of town and I always say to my friends you know...you are so lucky you can see your family all the time. You shouldn't take them for granted, you know, and then always if someone needs any money or something like that or like with my oldest brother he's quite irresponsible but Mum and Dad always help him out and I say to my little brother ...well I think Mum and Dad do that because that's what they want him to do for his son and us to do for our children. They don't say that but that's what they are getting at ...the message is that you look after your children and they'll look after you...not necessarily that they'll look after you. But they have that expectation that that is what you'll do.

It was evident that some of the parents who both worked would have found their circumstances challenging if their parents were not around to support them. Mike said, "just sharing the load among the family especially when you are both working just makes it a whole lot easier... Dunno what I'd do without my mum, me and my wife would struggle without my mum....yeah it would be a real struggle for us".

For some parents, downtime with their partners would not have been possible without the help of grandparents. Sina said, "we actually have good grandparents who live very close by. They take our kids and I get to have two to three hours per week of quality down time with my husband".

For just one respondent there was a sense that his parents did not spend as much time with their two children as he and his partner would have liked. Colin expressed hurt and disappointment that his parents constantly put him off bringing the children to their home because, in his words, "Dad was a shift worker and Mum would always say, 'well your dad needs his sleep and the kids will only make too much noise'". He said that rather than pursue any further dialogue with his mother, his response was often to stay away with the children more than he would have liked. Colin says:

I'd come and say "Oh Mum can you look after the kids?" What I wanna hear is "Oh sure. Yeah, bring them"...but it's like, "oh how long"? You know, and then that's when I go, "Oh don't worry about it", or they say "And when are you gonna pick them up?"

Colin's facial expressions and tear-filled eyes conveyed his disappointment and hurt by his parents' responses. However, even with these feelings, Colin and his partner continued to take their children to visit the grandparents because, to Colin, this contact was important for the relationship between himself, his children, his wife, and his parents. According to Colin the relationship was sacrosanct:

They are my parents and I should still respect them, but what they say makes me feel angry...but they are my parents and my children's grandparents and, yeah, that's just the way it is...it's like, you know in the *fa'aSamoa* thing your parents are your parents and that's it...end of story...I dunno what would be worse ...feeling angry now or if anything happens to them or me ....heck how would I feel then?...probably worse.

The *talanoaga* with these parents indicated just how much the Samoan community still relied on grandparents to help with different aspects of their lives. The families who did not have grandparents living nearby – where contact was limited to family occasions and special family events – relied on members of the community, their church, and their friends for the type of support that other families acquired from grandparents and extended family.

#### **4.13.2 Grandparents as teachers of Samoan language and culture**

The *talanoaga* revealed that grandparents also have a pivotal role as teachers of the Samoan language, values, and culture.

Several of the women interviewed showed a warm appreciation of the input of the mother-in-law and parents in terms of upholding Samoan culture and familial obligations, such as the value of reciprocity and giving to family:

I don't have to be told to do that or be told to give someone something or to be expected to give someone something 'cos I am obliged to do that myself, so there is a sense of mutual understanding especially when there is a *fa'alavelave* and at funerals. (Naomi)

Sina revealed that she was always happy when her sons went to her mother-in-law's place because "she speaks fluent Samoan and teaches them Samoan" – something this mother acknowledged she really wished she could do herself. There was a genuine sense of pride in her manner of speaking and body language when Sina talked about the Samoan language and culture and having an extended family was something she really valued. She said:

I love it when I take them to my husband's mum...and she talks to them in Samoan and teaches them words, and when we take them to different functions where people talk to them in Samoan. I'd love to be able to talk to them in Samoan...to do it myself.

Tasi considered his parents were role models, who demonstrated a high work ethic and sound financial management, as well as fulfilling obligations to provide for family "back home". He said:

I thought I had an awesome childhood and I think it was because Mum and Dad worked really hard, not just for us, but to send money back home and they worked hard to build a house over there while they were here looking after us...it was always getting enough money to go back.

Bill spoke about his love of Samoan culture, music, and dance:

Ah, the *fa'aSamoa* way... I definitely think it's that staunch Christian values and definitely cultural because we just love our culture, which is why our son is at the *aoga amata*. We have always identified as being Samoan; for example we put our boy into the Samoan *aoga amata* plus because I have always also been involved in the cultural dancing as well, so the music, the dancing...yeah, all of that.

Others also spoke about the importance of their relationships with family and how their parents had always instilled in them to value their relationships with each other as family members. Tasi shared, "I just knew from a very early age that being Samoan was important. My parents didn't need to drum it into us, you just saw it ... and I treated my parents and elders with the utmost respect because my parent's role modelled that with their parents and my uncles and aunts".

Mike shared this view on respect:

We were brought up to respect our parents and our elders and you just did it because you knew it was what you did as a Samoan. I also have sisters and my parents constantly made it clear that I had to look out for them and treat them with respect.

Naomi spoke of how her child's paternal grandmother had also been responsible for her youngest grandson with whom she had spent a lot of time, whereas his older sisters spent a lot of time with their maternal grandmother. Both grandmothers were influential in the teaching and raising of her children. Naomi said:

She (paternal grandmother) helps out with the children every now and again...and with the youngest he spends a lot of time with her. The oldest two girls spent more time being brought up by the maternal grandmother. She is responsible really for the youngest three but she also has a lot of time with her great granddaughter now as well, who is about a year old.

Naomi explained that one of the main things her parents taught her was that "people rather than things" were more important. Her parents showed how they cared for her brother and his son in the hope that their children would follow their example. For her parents, it was always about looking out for each other and the value of family relationships and obligations as family. Naomi said:

I guess the main thing about my parents...was...it's about teaching our children that people are more important than stuff...they just kind of did it themselves and expected us to follow suit... But also that sense of obligation I've always heard him (her father) say to people 'you know the best thing you could do is look after your children', and so my brother is in a broken relationship and has a son called E and my parents just bend over backwards to make him part of the family.

#### **4.13.3 Grandparents as role models**

For many of these families, grandparents were role models for their grandchildren. Several parents mentioned that they held the grandparents up to their children as role models. This was highlighted by Mike, who had four daughters. Mike clearly revered his mother and expressed the hope that his daughters will one day grow up to model themselves on her as he saw her as a strong, proud Samoan woman. He said:

I like my daughters to see what Nana does so that when they have a partner they can follow her, like not to be kicked around but be strong, and that they stand up for themselves, hold their head up, 'cos my mum does that and so does my wife.

Many of the parents spoke of their parents as having strong *fa'aSamoa* values some of which they were keen to pass on to their children. One father spoke of his father as a very respected man in the community and how he wanted his son to emulate those values. Bill said:

He might be a bit too young yet, but I want him to gain that knowledge to learn about how his grandfather...acts and to act like him. He's a very humble man and very respectful...he used to tell us that respect for people and the way you act and speak towards other people is very important. He is a good role model for us...for him my boy.

Family get-togethers and functions were also considered an important way for children to learn about their families. As Sina explained, "Family functions, both close and extended, were common happenings and we got to as many of them as possible so that our children got full exposure to their relatives and got to know them". But where do parents who are having issues managing their children's behaviour and who don't get support from loved ones go to get the help they need?

#### **4.14 Summary of Grandparents' role**

It was evident from the *talanoaga* with the parents that many of the parents were reliant on grandparents for moral, financial and physical support when it came to taking care of their children. Most of the parents in the study worked full-time and the grandparents were relied on to collect children from school and to mind the children to allow parents to have time away from their children. The grandparents had multiple roles in these families as caregivers, transporters, language and culture educators and spiritual guiders. They were also strong role models for the grandchildren and the reinforcers of parental discipline and behaviour management. Parents who did not have grandparents living close by found it very difficult, especially if they were young and single parents.

#### **4.15 Parenting courses and parent support**

Parenting education was an option that the majority of families sought to gain more knowledge about child rearing and parenting. Six of the eighteen parents interviewed had participated in a parenting course in addition to Plunket and antenatal classes, of which almost all mothers attended at some point either in their pregnancy or during their post natal period. Two parents attended Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) programmes, one attended a Family Start class, and one attended an anger management course.

Ruth, who was an early childhood educator, had attended a child developmental course. These were extension courses funded by her employer – an Early Childhood Education group. She said:

It was a parenting course run by TCOSS. I think it's Tokoroa Community Social Services. It was a few years ago. It was about how to deal with different behaviours in children. It was a mixed group of people, professionals, some solo parents etcetera and it was ...one of the ladies from Plunket [who] liked the idea of having a naughty chair and how to deal with conflict, budgeting etc. I found it helpful and networking with other parents. I went because I was at work and they chose me to go... it was like a training thing.

Andy remembers he and his wife enrolling their child in the Parents as First Teachers programme (PAFT). In this programme, an educator had come to their home and facilitated learning sessions with them and their child. Andy described the programme as a “fantastic” experience for him and his wife and believed it gave their child a great start to her education. As well as attending the PAFT programme, Andy had accompanied his wife to birthing classes. “Our child enrolled with PAFT and I went to ante-natal classes with my wife and I also took the time to read up on a lot of things about kids in books”.

Clarissa who had enrolled with PAFT also attended Plunket ante-natal classes and found both very helpful. She said:



I found it really helpful... and it was nice to see all the different stages of baby development. It was with PAFT that we were able to see and understand all her stages of development.

#### **4.16 Summary of Parenting programme and support**

Parents in this study took the opportunities available for them to access parenting courses in their community to assist them in parenting their children. Several parents participated in courses such as Parents as First Teachers, Plunket, Family Start and one parent said she attended a TECOSS course which she described as a Tokoroa Community course in relation to Social services. The parents who attended these courses felt they were helpful and that the courses provided them with their first lessons on child development. All the courses except for TCOSS were able to be accessed on-line through the New Zealand Ministry of Development's family services website; <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz> and Plunket <http://www.plunket.org.nz>

#### **4.17 Other support**

For the few respondents whose families did not live close by, support was sourced from their church or professional agencies. In their view, there was no need to venture outside these networks for parenting support, although assistance with finance and health related matters was sometimes required.

Significant to the study were 3 single parents and all said they were struggling with trying to make ends meet and to effectively parent their children. The exception to the three single mothers was a young father, and a mother of six children and her partner on a very low income and whose family did not live in Tokoroa. In lieu of family, this respondent indicated that she had built up a good relationship with her pastor and a young Samoan male working at a service agency office:

The only people I go and see for support is the Samoan man at X<sup>15</sup>. He helps me a lot when I need to see someone about my house or how much money I need.

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<sup>15</sup> X used as identifier removed

Sometimes I will also go and see my minister. If my family were here it would be different...I would go and see them but my minister...he understands me and I feel comfortable talking to him and to X. He is Samoan and he knows my situation. I only see him...no-one else because he is the one I know there (Mandy).

#### **4.18 Summary of other support.**

Most of the other support systems available to parents besides their families and parenting programmes are people in the community who work in government agencies and provide assistance to those who need financial assistance. The church was also another mode of support. This was not so common among the participants in this study, with the exception of one parent who lived most of her life in Samoa and still perceived the church as being an extension of the Samoan village.

#### **4.19 Overall Summary of Chapter four.**

While the parents interviewed were the primary caregivers of their children, they saw parenting as a collective family based responsibility involving close and extended family. In the families whose grandparents either lived with them or lived close by, the grandparents were important role models. They were the elders, caregivers, and teachers of the Samoan language and culture to their grandchildren, passing on religious, spiritual and family values.

The parents interviewed for this study also placed significant value on early childhood education. With one exception, all parents sent their children to Pacific-influenced Early Childhood Education Centres. These Centres not only offered the children a good start to formal learning, but also helped in the maintenance of language and culture.

Almost all of the parents agreed that both parents played an equal role in setting the tone for parenting. However, in some cases, mothers played a bigger role because they spent more time with the children than the fathers. Furthermore when children went with grandparents and other extended family members they too were responsible for setting the tone. Parents perceived that good parenting was achieved through being firm, having good family values and good role modeling, and both parents being consistent in

giving their children the same message. All participants emphasised both the joys of parenting and the responsibilities this brings.

Discipline in terms of hitting, was the aspect of parenting behavior they would most like to change, including their desire to be more patient with their children. Parents also said they would most like to increase the time spent with their children.

## **Chapter five: Findings: parents' perceptions of physically aggressive behaviour in their children, and their responses to the behaviour**

### **5 Introduction**

In Chapter four, the *talanoaga* showed the extent to which first and second generation Samoan parents depended on family first and foremost, and Pacific-centred early childhood education providers for the teaching of the Pacific languages and culture. In this chapter I explore the parents' perceptions about the physically aggressive behaviours of their children, their responses to these behaviours, the origins of their responses and whether parents have sought support or advice in managing their child's behaviour.

This section is written in vignettes. Simply put the use of "vignettes" in this section was to give a very clear and succinct picture of the context, mood, and tone of this very important part of the whole story with the parent/s in each vignette being 'the central character' in the story. In most cases, one parent was interviewed. In four cases, two parents (a couple) were present, but each were interviewed individually. The parents told their stories on the basis of the following:

- Behaviour of child and context
- Parent's perception as to origin of child's behaviour
- Parent's perception of child's behaviour
- Parent's response to child's behaviour
- Origin of parent's response
- Differences in behaviour taking into account gender and sibling placement
- Parent's knowledge of the stages of child development

#### **5.1 Mike**

Mike was the father to four girls. The youngest was two years old. Mike had witnessed his young daughter hitting her older siblings. He explained that her behaviour comes from being frustrated at not getting what she wants, such that she will demand things by whining, hitting, and grabbing. He described these incidents, which can happen every

day, as being typical of what she does when she wants something and when she does not get it. He described a common scenario in which he returned home from work and she became very clingy with him. He said she pestered him until he gave in and carried her or let her up onto his lap. He said:

She is the youngest in the family and tends to rule the roost. We think she is the bully ...the little one, when she wants something she grabs it and wants it now. From my perspective...it's all part of growing up...she is the youngest and tends to rule the roost....and I have had three girls and she is an angel of a bully.

Mike said that often when his daughter played with her cousins, he witnessed them pushing and pulling at each other. He described his nieces and nephews as aggressive, but not his daughter. He explained that their parents (sister and her husband) fought with each other in front of the children, whereas he and his wife settled their disagreements with each other out of earshot of their children.

My nephew and my niece are quite aggressive ...like they push and pull anyone littler than them... when me and my wife are angry at each other, we swear but we do that outside not in front of our kids...

Mike said that once or twice he had witnessed his daughter hitting other children but suggested this was due to the other children having something which belonged to his daughter and her not being happy with this. He also described this kind of behaviour as being acceptable behaviour with family members at home, but he viewed it as unacceptable outside the home. He explained, "If she pulled people and grabbed things outside the family or at her nana's and pulled and punched, then I would growl at her".

Mike believed the origins of his daughter's behaviour came from the home and visual stimuli. He said, "Origins of their behaviour, it definitely comes from the parents, TV, the movies they watch, everything they are exposed to". Mike stated that he would certainly call it aggressive if she were to bite and if she did this to her cousins it would very much depend on what toy of hers they had.

Biting's not acceptable...if they did that they would get a slap on the hand, but if she is just trying to get my attention and hits me to get my attention say on the leg or something, that would be quite acceptable...I would not accept it if she does it to other kids although she does it with her cousins but it depends on which toy they have

Mike clearly doted on his youngest child and acknowledged that his responses to her behaviour were those of a protective father. Generally he did not see her behaviour as aggressive, but rather described it as "naughty and normal for her age" but with limits to what was acceptable:

When she is with the other kids, once or twice I have noticed she hits other children...I feel concern for her and I get a bit protective and I am concerned that they do play properly no matter what age. And it is more that they have a toy of hers and she is not happy with that.... It happens when there are other children her age she is playing with.... if she does I just see it as normal two-year-old behaviour...if it went on longer for 30 seconds and you can tell a vicious hit rather than I just want my toy back...if they are trying to pull each other's hair out or if they are going at each other's eyes it would not be acceptable.

Mike's response to his daughter's behaviour was to either dismiss what she said with humor, or reprimand her by a smack on the hand. He said:

I use a lot of humor. I try not to pinpoint one child. If I am not happy with one child I tell everyone, so they feel like I am not just telling one but telling them all off.

Mike appeared to defend his daughter's behaviour, suggesting that she was asserting herself because she was the youngest and everyone else was bigger and stronger:

I just see it as one of the family doing the same thing as the others do...she is not big enough and strong enough to get things herself and so she just demands it because she is the youngest.

Mike believed the origins of his responses to his daughter's behaviour came from "my own upbringing and the way my parents brought me up". He described his upbringing as "harsh" but noted that it "didn't take a long discussion", whereas "today's parents seem to spend a lot of time discussing their children's punishment rather than just doing it, and it is quick and over in no time". From Mike's perspective, this style of parenting shaped his thinking about the way children tended to be disciplined today, as well as what he saw and read in the media.

Mike had no sons, so in terms of gender he had nothing to compare to in relation to his own children and was therefore unable to give a view about whether he felt boys were any different from girls in terms of physical aggression. He thought all his children were treated equally. However, Mike's older daughters had commented to him that he treated the younger one different from the way he treated them, in that he allowed the younger one to "get away with murder". However Mike said his older girls "should know better anyway because they are older". He said:

I was specifically told by my older daughters they are treated differently to the younger one when it comes to discipline...they say I let her get away with murder compared to them, and my tone with them is a lot harsher and to the younger one softer..It might be that my expectations are higher with them because they are older.

In response to whether he had contemplated seeking support or advice from anyone in regards to his daughter's behaviour, Mike said, "No I haven't considered it," although he revealed that he and his wife did consider there might be reasons for her clinginess and had sought advice from a colleague :

No we haven't sought support from anywhere...probably because my wife and I are in the health field and we have access to all the information, resources etcetera. The Well Health nurse.. said it could be growth spurts or teeth and we found it was her tooth...it's loose...so we have got the solution...and made an appointment to see the dentist.

When asked who he might seek help from if he needed it, Mike said:

It would depend on what the problem is but in terms of health it would be the Doctor. I suppose if it is about my child's behaviour and it impacts on her health and development then I guess that falls to the Doctor as well, although we really don't need to I don't think. She is doing okay in terms of her development...

Mike considered his daughter's development as something he was very familiar with as she was the youngest in the family and he had 'lots of know-how' from raising his older daughters. He said he knew about stages of development and believed her "naughty behaviour" was a passing phase:

I am pretty familiar with the stages of my girl's development. I think she is just going through a phase and will grow out of it like her big sisters. I'm not worried. Compared to some kids I have seen... she is an angel...a bully of an angel but still an angel. Do I accept her behaviour or find it unacceptable? Oh I think it is unacceptable but like I said if she does it outside our home...I think if she behaves like that in other peoples home or with my parents it would upset me more...and I think that's just because I was raised in the *fa'aSamoa* and you just don't be cheeky to your older brothers and sisters and your elders...it's about respect...and like I said I want her to model herself on my mum...she has a lot of respect...holds a lot of *mana* in our community.

## **5.2 Andy (wife present at interview)**

Andy and his wife have a two-year-old daughter who attends *aoga amata*. Andy described an incident where his daughter's behaviour was of concern: "She was yelling at her grandmother...and when she was asked to do something, she didn't listen or follow our instructions". Andy explained to his daughter that what she had done to her grandmother was not good but she ignored him and continued to do what she was doing.

As with Mike, Andy believed both the origins of his daughter's behaviour and his responses to her behaviour stemmed from home and the parents... Andy did not define his daughter's behaviour as aggressive, rather he saw it as testing the boundaries:



I think she was just experimenting. She knows she isn't allowed to hit and scratch etcetera and I think she was testing our reaction... that was what was happening at *aoga*, when other kids were doing that to her... we taught her to say "stop, don't do that" we tried to be consistent in telling her and telling the teachers about our reaction to it. I think it's not acceptable, but I think it is all part of growing up and teaching them what is good and what is bad. I wouldn't accept anything if it hurts somebody.

Andy took quick action when his daughter bit him and put her on the "naughty mat". However he had also on rare occasions responded to "poor" behaviour as he called it, with a smack on the hand or bottom. He said, "this is not to punish her but to make her to stop" and that a smack made his daughter really know she had done something wrong because was such a rare response from him:

She has done it to her mum and to me...the biting...and she has got a smack...and our reaction was to hit her to stop (the behaviour)...rather than hitting her to punish her...and she realised she had done something really wrong because she doesn't really get hit.

Andy did not enjoy hitting his daughter. He said he had a very happy childhood being the youngest of many siblings. He also emphasised that hitting was not his preferred form of discipline and that it did not leave him with a good feeling:

It is not nice to hit. I felt stink after I had hit her, when she bit me. I got a fright...it really hurt. I smacked her and I regretted it afterwards and she hasn't done it to me again. I explained to her why she had to do it and that didn't work, and I just used the disciplinary action of putting her on the naughty floor. We explained to her what she did wrong, and why she was there, and then after to apologise to us and her grandmother, and tell us why she was there, and we give her a hug and a kiss.

Andy said that when he disciplined her he also tested her understanding by asking her to repeat back to him why she was on the naughty mat. The parenting strategies he

employed were learnt through parenting his older children and from participating in Parents as First Teachers (PAFT), a home based programme for parents. He had educated himself through reading and watching programmes such as “The Nanny”, and sought advice from family members who had children themselves. His family was made up of several professionals and Andy said if he needed to get support he would refer to them first for help, but only after he and his wife had exhausted all their own ways in-house first. He would not hesitate to ask for help because “after all it is our child’s welfare at stake and she is very precious to our family”.

When asked whether he thought his child’s behaviour was physically aggressive, Andy responded that in his view his child was not physically aggressive but “naughty” and testing the boundaries:

I think it is naughty but not naughty...just kind of she has this energy and she asks “why” all the time. I think she is so curious and inquisitive and just wants to know everything and she just wants to explore. I am not sure she is aggressive with other children but she can be aggressive with her family members like her brothers and sisters... and with her auntie and her ma... but I haven’t seen her like that with other children because we have taught her not to be like that...and she knows that if someone physically hits her then she has been told to say “stop, I don’t like that” and report it to her teacher at the *aoga*, but with us she can be aggressive in a cheeky way, in a testing way, especially with her brothers and sisters...and they are not as hard as we are like the parents...and sometimes I think she thinks it is a game you know like baiting them and teasing them.

Andy also had older children. His response to whether there were differences in his parenting based on their gender and placement in the family was that he treated his children the same. He believed he was consistent and fair. He said:

I think they know now where the boundaries are, and they know where we are at now...I think with the girls it has all been the same...there is a consistency, but the older ones know more than the younger ones...we don’t let any of them get away with behaviour like that. In regards to boys and girls as far as I am concerned it is fair to be consistent.

Although Andy had older children and said he was familiar with the developmental stages of his daughter's life, he said this did not make him an expert and he would not hesitate to get professional or familial advice if he needed to. Andy and his wife appeared committed to making parenting as easy as possible and acknowledged that one of the ways to do this was to access as many resources as possible.

### **5.3 Clarissa (husband present at interview)**

Clarissa was of mixed Palagi and Samoan heritage. She had a two-year-old daughter and older stepchildren. Her daughter attended *aoga amata*. Clarissa worked full-time. Her daughter on two occasions bit Clarissa and her husband. When her daughter bit Clarissa she was "shocked" as this was not her daughter's usual behaviour. She felt her daughter was testing her and wondered whether she had picked up this behaviour from her *aoga*.

One episode was she bit me because she could not get her way and her reaction was to bite. It is unusual and I think she was just testing me, trying to get my attention.

Clarissa attributed her daughter's behaviour to defending her own space:

Well, it all depends on the situation as well...It depends...if she was defending her patch or whatever she is doing and somebody tried to come in when she wasn't ready to let them come in...and she would snatch rather than use her words and say "please stop" or "wait till I am ready"...like the children at school I have not seen any aggressiveness, like with "I", they draw to her {apparently meaning "they are drawn/ attracted to her"}and if she has had enough of them... she will just walk away.

She was of the opinion that her daughter rarely displayed acts of physical aggression.

The children when they play...I haven't seen any aggressiveness when they play...yes biting...sometimes when she has a tantrum...sometimes she will come

and push me and I will say “stop that’s the last warning” and she will back up...it isn’t daily...and it depends on when she is tired and she’ll get grizzly...and of course she is going to be looking for that attention more and she’ll put her hand up.

Clarissa said a particular look at her daughter would be enough to stop any behaviour that was unacceptable. She claimed this ‘look’ was something all Samoans have which is something Clarissa has learned from her own childhood. She also gave her child options and said that everything she did in response to her child’s behaviour was because she wanted to keep her safe, something that had been ‘embedded’ in her since she was crawling.

...and I will just look at her and she’ll put the hand down and I’m thinking, “oh that’s good she knows the ‘look’ now’...you know, all Samoans have that look, eh (laughs)... good you’re picking it up at two years old. We give her other options too like ‘use your words’ encourage her to use her words if she doesn’t like what the other person is doing...or to move away from her and always try and be safe and play safe...

Clarissa responded this way to her daughter’s behaviour through the skills and teachings she had learned from PAFT as well as her own access to educational and parenting resources.

When asked about the origins of her daughter’s behaviour, Clarissa said: “I think it starts with the parents because you are the role model for your children...you are the one that the child is around all the time but when they go outside the family they can also pick up on things...but the main people are the parents”.

Clarissa has a sister-in-law who is an experienced Early Childhood Educator and she relied on her a lot for advice about her child. She would have no hesitation in seeking her help and support within her own family if she needed it, and as in the past, it has always been forthcoming. She said, “I have asked XX certain things like when she was younger and XX came in and she wasn’t really sharing...and XX said no, not at that stage. When she is ready she will and she allayed my concerns”.

With regard to older/younger siblings and whether she set the same standard of behaviour, Clarissa said she always tried “to be fair” and to teach her youngest daughter that her “siblings were older and she was to respect them and listen to them because they knew better than her”. She said:

I try to be fair across the board, I pull her back and remind her...“you have to listen to what they (older siblings) are saying and not just demand...I want this and I want that”...so there are definitely boundaries the girls know that they aren’t getting mixed messages and it’s the same with her older brother.

When asked about whether she perceives her child’s behaviour as acceptable or unacceptable Clarissa responded:

Definitely, if is disrespectful...what you are trying to teach your children...it’s about the principles that you are trying to give them, and if any of that is compromised and they are showing disrespect or ignoring what you are saying to them and you pull them into line; it is not acceptable...especially if you have already spoken to them before and they have not taken it into consideration...You see little bits coming out of them as you have guided them through at family functions.

Clarissa and her husband are in a blended family household. Her husband has 4 children including their two year old daughter. She believed she was familiar with the developmental stages of her children but it was not always easy for her being a first time mother.

Yes I am familiar with all my children’s stages of development. There are things I would like to become more familiar with...and it’s because...this is my own personal thing ...because I don’t feel I have that maternal instinct...you know how some people say “when you have your child you have this instant bond”...I just didn’t have it...but as she has gotten older I think this is it. I am more comfortable with her at this age... I think she has a really curious mind.

## 5.4 Mandy

Mandy shared a recent example of her 24 month old child's behaviour of hitting and fighting. She described these actions as normal for a child and in some instances she would laugh at what her child did. At the beginning of the interview she explained her daughter hit her older sisters and later in the interview said she did not see them hitting and biting, 'but they fight by yelling'...

Sometimes she hits the older ones and I teach her not to do that because the younger ones need to listen to the older ones. They yell at each other and fight with each other but that's normal child behaviour. Sometimes she hits her older sisters and I just laugh and tell her to stop it. I haven't seen anything that upsets me...Just normal behaviour...I don't see hitting or biting as aggressive. I can stop it if that happens. I tell them they have to respect each other. I don't see them hitting and biting each other...but they fight by yelling at each other. When she is angry she will just hit her big sisters and it is when they tease her...Yes, I have seen her hitting her older sisters.

Mandy was of the view that her youngest child behaved the way she did because she did not know better, however she expected something different for the older children. She said, "With the little one because she doesn't know any better I can ignore her behaviour, but the big girls when they fight I tell them to stop and they do".

Mandy viewed her youngest daughter's behaviour as not acceptable. On the one hand she dismissed her younger daughter's behaviour with a laugh, but on the other hand she thought the youngest should listen to her older sisters, because she considered this to be the 'Samoan way'. She believed the origin of her daughter's behaviour came from:

... the home...because if they don't get it from the parents...My children are always here...it's probably from TV especially the way they talk...maybe from school...and friends...but other behaviours that's from home.

Mandy's response was to instil in her daughter the notion that younger children needed to listen to the older ones. She said "I laugh at her when she does it, and I just tell her to stop and she listens".

In Mandy's family, her older daughters were called on to help her with the younger children which also included the disciplining of her son.

Mandy believed her responses to her two-year-old child's behaviour came from her own parents and the way they brought her up. At that time it was acceptable for parents to hit their children and for children to be disciplined by older siblings and other members of the family. Mandy encouraged these beliefs within her own family, instructing her older daughters to discipline their brother - a behaviour that was acceptable to her and her values. Mandy believed the older sisters were performing their proper role as older siblings. She said, 'it is their responsibility to also discipline their younger siblings because they are older...that's the way I was raised in the *fa'aSamoa*'.

In response to sibling placement, 'the little one doesn't know any better but the older ones do'. Mandy's perception of gender was strongly connected to how she was raised in Samoa and that there were specific gender roles for females and males, for example the relationship between brother and sister was taboo. She spoke of this in terms of her relationship with her brothers and male cousins and how they behaved in front of her. When she spoke about gender differences in terms of aggression, she perceived boys as being 'rougher' and requiring a "harder line", and that boys really needed someone to be the more "stricter figure, like the father".

My son can be really naughty and I tell his older sisters to control him'. When his father is around he doesn't play up but when it is just me and his sisters ....oh...he really plays up... He does whatever he wants to do...

Mandy said she had not studied child development or read anything about it but she was familiar with the stages of her children's development "through bringing up my own family and the way my parents brought me up". Mandy's perception was that her child's development was 'fine as once she goes to school she will grow out of this sort of behaviour just like her sisters'.

I am not worried about her because she knows what I teach her and she will learn these things. Her sisters are good with her and they teach her too. I know she will be ok if I leave her with her sisters because they are old enough (teenagers) to look after her and teach her about what she should do and everything. Once she goes to school she will be okay just like her sisters.

## **5.5 Ruth**

Ruth's eighteen-month-old daughter often smacked her older sister. Ruth put this down to "her sister crowding her space" and was not concerned that the behaviour was aggressive at that point:

It is usual 'cos I think she is just being assertive and just telling her sister to go away and get out of her face...I know she does things like smacks and sometimes she throws herself down if she doesn't get what she wants but I just leave her as long as she isn't hurt...until she calms down... yeah I do think it's naughty, being naughty in the way of smacking but being assertive in telling her sister to get out of her space...but I wouldn't say it was aggressive...not yet.

Ruth believed that their child's behaviour was within the acceptable limits of a young child interacting with family from whom she wanted something. She believed the origin of her child's behaviour "originates from me...just from us I suppose...yeah...It comes from the home". She then contemplated the behaviour of her older son and described how he reacted when his cousin wanted something of his. Many parents referred back to their other children when they contextualised their youngest child's behaviour:

...we don't allow them to play, play station. They can get very aggressive from playing with it. The aggression gets really bad when they have the play-station...they watch TV, but I don't know where they get their behaviour from...school, home...yeah, dunno really? Play station?

Ruth did not consider her eighteen month old daughter's behaviour as problematic... "it is not aggressive' ...yet!" When she elaborated on this she spoke about her son's behaviour as if comparing her daughter and son all the time. She said, he is "older, male



and very physical” while her daughter is “only 18 months old” and was only learning to make her way in the family household. She referred to this as ‘just being assertive’ and by slapping her older sister; Ruth said her younger daughter was protecting her own space. Her perception of her daughter’s behaviour was not one of aggression, but her son she perceived as “definitely aggressive”.

Ruth is an early childhood educator. Prior to being a teacher, the techniques she employed for disciplining her older children she now deemed as unsuitable. She is much more ‘clued up’ she said about what to expect and what to do when her children ‘misbehave’. She had been on several courses which had helped her gain more knowledge. This was her third child and she had several step children which she said had helped her to be more positive about her own children growing out of their current development stages. In terms of her son she said:

I hope he will grow out of it, he is at school now and I am a bit worried about him but his reports from school say he is good so maybe it is only at home he is like that. I often wonder whether it is because I am at work all day as well and we don’t get to share enough time together and I am so tired by the time I get home.

Ruth’s response to her son’s behaviour was initially anger, precipitated by embarrassment and shame as he appeared to behave aggressively when there were other people around. She believed he intentionally behaved aggressively in the company of others because he knew that it would make her angry and embarrassed. She said, “when he does it in front of people I think, wait till this person goes and then you are going to get it...it makes me really angry...cos I know... it’s only when other people are around.” When Ruth reflected on her responses she said she was more tolerant than previously in terms of how she responded to her children’s behaviour. She said she learned from other people’s experiences and from her training as an early childhood educator.

Before her training her usual response was to physically punish her children, but this response depended on her level of tiredness. She explained “I would smack them both, it also depends on how tired I am at the time”. “Before it was ‘bang’ for my boy (gestures with her hand as in a slap) all the time”. Ruth had not done this for a while; as

an early childhood educator, she had learned this was not appropriate. Ruth's parents were religious and she said she had a happy childhood. Her parents doted on her and were not strict disciplinarians. She did not see herself as a strict disciplinarian and tended to use other ways of disciplining her children now, such as time out, explanations and naughty chair without the need for resorting to physical punishment

Ruth had great difficulty with her son in terms of managing his behaviour. He was older than his sister and attended primary school. Ruth interspersed our *talanoaga* with a comparison between her daughter's and son's behaviour. She spoke of her daughter on the one hand as not aggressive, but her son on the other hand as aggressive:

He retaliates by kicking and smacking and he will hit me if I say 'no'. He will just hit, and hit, and hit, and yeah...I guess that's defined as aggressive. He is older and should know better but he's a boy and far more rougher. My daughter though is very quiet compared to her brother.

## **5.6 Harry**

Harry had older children and was also a grandfather. Harry's 18 month old daughter hit out at her older siblings and, in Harry's own words, "She gets mad at her mum sometimes. She doesn't do that with me and I don't know why; maybe because I just kind of flick it off as nothing. It seems to bother other people but not me".

Harry and his wife attend church. His wife is more of a regular attender than Harry. Their daughter also accompanies them to church and church related activities. The daughter also attends an early childcare centre. When Harry spoke about his child's behaviour he also included other members of his family. When he referred to the origins of his children's behaviour, Harry said, "I think it is from the parents, the children they play with and what's actually going on around them". He also said for his daughter it 'probably comes from us here at home. She is at home with her sisters and brothers and us most of the time so she probably gets it from all of us".

Harry doted on his daughter and he claimed he did not have any issues with her behaviour. He did not see her as being aggressive, but tended to think her assertive

behaviour was about wanting some attention. According to Harry, her wanting more attention was more of a 'problem for other people' than it was for him:

"I don't have a problem with her behaviour. I don't see it as aggressive. She is just asserting herself and being forceful about what she wants and how she gets it...as far as I'm concerned that's fine. I think if she behaved like that outside the home I might get a bit worried but I have never seen her do that...just seems to happen when she is around us".

Like Harry, several respondents commented on differing levels of acceptability around behaviour depending on whether it occurred inside or outside the family home. This points to cultural attitudes in Samoa of public versus private behaviour, and the shame that is attached. Samoans on the whole are a collective society and any behaviour by an individual outside of the home that is considered shameful is felt by the whole family. When a child misbehaves outside the family household the element of shame is far greater on the parents and the family as it is in the public arena (Mulitalo, 1998).

Harry's responses to parenting had a clear difference along gender lines. Unreservedly, Harry labelled his son 'aggressive', and noted that he treated his son with a "male firmness" that he withheld with his daughters. Conversely his wife interacted with their son less harshly. He said, "I'm a lot firmer with him than his mother (is). He doesn't get away with it if I am around".

With his eighteen month old daughter he was much calmer and viewed her behaviour as "nothing to get too concerned about". However he said it was much harder for her mother when the daughter behaved the way she did. His response was that, "It is more hurtful for the other person, her mother...I sort of flick it off as nothing but it irritates the hell out of other people".

Harry thought his responses to his son's behaviour came from his own experiences and from how he responded to his parents' style of parenting. He learned:

not to push it and just back off...It's worlds apart from when I grew up. It was normal to get a hiding and although it wasn't all that fun...and I am not saying

everyone should do that or go back to those days but there was a lot of good that came out of it...and although we all got bad hidings we can laugh about it now...but back then it wasn't funny and we don't want to do that with our kids...they have no idea what it was like for us.

Harry acknowledged that his response to his children's behaviour differed markedly from how he was raised. He smacked his older children but on a markedly lesser scale than his own parents. However, his response to his youngest child's behaviour was quite passive and even dismissive. It was apparent that Harry's wife had a mediating influence on his behaviour when it came to disciplining his children.

I was a bit harder on my older kids. If they played up they got a smack. Overall I would like to think that I treat them all the same...of course I favour the younger ones, the babies, but when they are altogether I try to share the love around. I also have a grandchild. I get a bit frustrated at times because when I act on it I look at my wife and she looks at me as if to say "don't even go there". So I tend to just yell at them or send them to their rooms until things calm down. When it's my little girl I just talk to her calmly.

He was very confident about his knowledge of his children's stages of development:

I have had a lot of experience parenting and I think I am familiar enough with my kids development stages although my wife probably knows more than me being a teacher of little kids.

## **5.7 Debbie**

Debbie was a single parent and lived with her four children. She shared custody arrangements with two of the fathers of three of her children. After the birth of her youngest child she decided not to go back to work and be a full-time mother. She described a recent example of her eighteen-month-old child's behaviour:

Just before you came he flipped a wobbly because J wouldn't pick him up and take him in the car...he pushed things on the floor and cried...It made me feel

“oh you little...” I was too busy to notice...I just ignored him and it stopped ...I picked him up and reassured him that J would be back.

Debbie wondered whether her child's behaviour originated from other family members: “Maybe from the male role models in the family? I don't really know”. When asked how she would define his behaviour, Debbie had no qualms about describing her son's behaviour as aggressive. Debbie said she remained “pretty calm” when he behaved that way but said she had also felt “angry, usually when I am tired”. She said:

It's aggressive! He turns angry and just wants what he wants...by crying, screaming, yelling, running away, and hiding. He also kicks his legs up in the air. He doesn't hit or punch and throw toys. He just throws Wobblies.

When her son behaved this way she said” I normally pick him up and hold him and tell him what he is doing is not good and he normally stops...other times I will ignore it and he stops...sometimes... It really depends on how I am feeling at the time, calm or angry... in terms of how I respond to him”.

She said her responses were the same with all her children. It was no different when her older children were younger. She also believed that male children behaved this way more than females. She asked the question:

Is it in their genes or is it the way we treat them? I wished I knew...my dad wasn't that aggressive but when we were children he was pretty strict. We were usually smacked and you knew what the boundaries were.

Debbie thought she responded the way she did because of her parents. “I tend to think it is from my upbringing. It could also be from what I have learned bringing up my older kids, from my own personal experience of that”.

In terms of her knowledge of child development she said:

I don't have any formal knowledge but I do have experience of bringing up my older kids and seeing the stages they go through. Yeah I think I am pretty familiar with the stages of development.

## **5.8 Tasi**

Tasi described his daughter aged three years as “very adorable with a bit of a listening problem”. A behaviour he had observed in his child was “hitting her cousins”. Tasi had no hesitation in describing his child's hitting as ‘violent’ and said he did not tolerate it in their home.

It's a definite “no no” in our house and she is sent to her room for time out and a good talking to (growling). Hitting other people is violent and I would define it as violent and it is violent ... Hitting her cousins doesn't happen all the time but it happens. It is normally when they are playing and she wants something the other one has got.

Like some of the other respondents, Tasi included his other children in the *talanaoga*. His view was that the origin of the child's behaviour came from the parents:

It's all learned from other people. You see what they have done and you think, ‘oh that's what I should do cos, you know, Mum or Dad does it’. Playing aggressively is all good, but when you hurt someone or make them cry then that's not acceptable. I see it a lot when kids can get quite cruel to other kids and it can get out of hand.

As with some of the other parents, tiredness was a factor in how Tasi responded to his child's behaviour. He said his wife acts as a moderator in that situation making him feel calmer and more controlled. She spent the most time with the children being a stay-at-home mum. Tasi preferred to use strategies that do not involve physical discipline. Rather he liked to talk, and encouraged his children to understand consequences, and also helped them build a sense of empathy with others:

Talking, growling, time out, try and build a close relationship with my kids by teaching them about empathy. When they hit and be nasty to each other I try and show them how it feels.

Tasi used these strategies with his daughter as well. He said:

Normally I talk to them. I try to give time for each child and tell them to be nice to their younger sisters and treat them nicely...Sometimes I am tired at the time and other times I get angry but my wife normally puts me right. She's the cool one. Never gets uptight...yeah, she is the one that keeps everything on an even keel.

Tasi described his childhood and the methods of discipline his parents used and how he had no inclination to repeat with his children how his parents disciplined him:

I was brought up in a violent household and I know what it is like...and hitting other people is not good...and when you hit your kids to make them listen you are actually scaring the crap out of them. But then if you know when you are older and you didn't like what your parents did then you need to say "oh I am going to do it different ....you know what I mean?" Don't go the same way and use a different way. That's what I chose to do.

Tasi did not have any sons. He said that he did not really know if he would act differently with boys, but then added:

I do have nephews and I think boys are more aggressive, but I do think the discipline should be the same for boys as for girls and I would apply the same discipline methods. That's...you know...telling them what they are doing is wrong and ask them what they would do next time. Give them some choices and teach them about good choices and bad choices you know. I think I am probably a lot more lenient on the younger one. The older ones...yeah I tend to think they should know better cos' they are older.

Tasi said he learned about the stages of child development through experience rather than any formal education:

I think I know their stages now. I have kinda gone through it all with my other kids so pretty much familiar now. I suppose you never stop learning though eh?

## **5.9 Semi**

Semi was extremely shy and conversation was stilted. He was a shy person. The interview took less time than the other parents as his answers were short. In his interview Semi talked about his daughter aged one and a half years hitting herself. Apparently she did this when she was growled at by the parents. He had no idea where this behaviour came from. He said sometimes she stayed with other family members and speculated that she might have learned the behaviour there. He had not witnessed any other kind of behaviour with her that involved hitting or pushing or pulling.

She doesn't hit or bite...I haven't seen that sort of behaviour...like hitting and biting..the most my daughter has ever done is hit herself...if you growl her really loud she will think something is wrong and she will start hitting herself and we tell her to stop it...

He perceived these behaviours as physically aggressive even though his daughter was just hitting herself.

I don't think she is aggressive physically...except when she hits herself. I just tell her to stop. My Mrs said "no" and she (the child) talks in her own (child) language and knows something is wrong.

The origins of his daughter's behaviour mystified Semi:

At first I wondered where she got it from. She does go on holiday with her Nan and comes back with funny habits...so I dunno, maybe she gets it from other places but it's not from us.



He said he did not hit his daughter nor was he aggressive towards her. He believed his responses as a parent originated from his dad, “I think I just get it from my Dad”.

Semi only had one child and he said child rearing had been a big learning curve for him.

I only have the one so I’m just learning really. Don’t really know that much about it but yeah all new to me but still learning about it.

Semi said he was not familiar “yet” with anything to do with child development. He said, “I leave it to my Mrs, she does all those kinds of things for our baby...I don’t really know”. He had not attended any parenting courses and did not intend to go to one. He preferred to leave it to his partner, saying, “She’s good at those things”.

#### **5.10 Sina (husband present at interview)**

Sina had two boys aged two and three years old and was expecting a third child. She said her youngest had a very different personality from the oldest and tended to use his hands to express how he felt rather than his words which his older brother who had more of a placid personality tended to do:

S punched me last night and I was not very happy. I was too tired to move and he was tired...it was my fault I feel ‘cos he should not have been awake. It was an hour past his bedtime and he is so used to routine...

On that night Sina had allowed her child to stay up late but on reflection she said she should have put him to bed as it was past his usual bed time. She was of the view that his behaviour was triggered by tiredness with elements of showing off at times. Sina and her husband did not allow violence in their home either in the way people behaved or the kinds of games they played and media they watched. She believed aggressive behaviour could also be precipitated through sibling rivalry. Both parents agreed the child’s behaviour was age related, “this is their age as well, and they are behaving according to their age”. There was also concurrence with a “show-off” element because his older cousin was present at the time. His parents also attributed his behaviour to a result of frustration at not being able to express his feelings as well as his older brother.

Sina believed that any behaviour that hurt people was not acceptable. She said her son behaved aggressively:

About 4-5 times a day, but he is definitely getting better as he gets older and better as my discipline becomes more consistent and he is so onto it. We aren't violent, or hitters or things like that and we wonder where the heck he gets this from...we don't watch violent videos, so yeah, and Day-care said he is fine there.

Sina made a link between her son's tiredness and frustration as reasons for his physically aggressive behaviour. Her response was to have her husband manage it. However, in hindsight she realised that she should have dealt with it as she and her husband agreed it just makes the kids scared of him, being seen as the one that "deals with that kind of behaviour". Sina and her husband are eagerly waiting for the two-year-old to turn the corner with his behaviour, which they believed will eventuate with more effective communication.

Both Sina and her husband applied the "naughty mat strategy which we saw on television" in response to their son's behaviour: "We do the super nanny naughty mat...it's been very helpful...We have also been a bit naughty and it depends how we are feeling as well, when we are tired we are slacker".

Sina and her husband always talked together about their children's behaviour:

We always discuss it after...there is never any blame or anything. We know that there is always a reason, and we want to be able to be on the same page because we know that kids are very good at 'divide and conquer' and we can see that now, they are combining their brains to get at us and we have to be even more staunch.

Sina said the origin of their response to their son's behaviour came from "experience, reading books, internet, nanny programme. I mean the instinctive thing (father) to do is ...you know (gestures/smack with his hands) but...laughs...(Sina) we know from experience that it doesn't work".

Sina only has sons. She felt she was very fair with her two boys and treated them the same. She tried to teach the younger one to respect his older brother as she too was taught those principles by her parents.

Sina was having her third child and she felt she was a more experienced parent after having two children. She read avidly when she had her two other children but as she got more experienced at parenting she felt less inclined to read up on parenting books. She said she may very well change when her sons reach teenage hood.

### **5.11 Peter (Sina's husband)**

Peter has two sons with Sina. He described an incident where he witnessed his wife getting punched by their two year old:

He was extremely tired and we let him stay up but it was nearly 10 pm, way past his bedtime. His mother instead of dealing with it herself put it onto me. We both realised after talking it out with each other that she had not done the right thing. It makes me look like the “punisher” and we decided not to respond in that way again. Next time that won't happen. He should have gone to bed as he was really tired and he started playing up and that is when he hit his mother to get her attention, and she was tired as well so her response of putting it onto me was not good either ...but he used to bite...only his brother though...he used to bite a lot but he is actually really good now.

Peter thought his son behaved aggressively because he competes with his older brother for attention. His older son was more placid whereas the younger one was much more physically aggressive. According to Peter his younger son used to bite but was getting much better. Peter thought the change might be age related.

When his son behaved aggressively Peter's response was to growl and send his son to the naughty mat. He said he tended to be a bit harder on his son when he got home from work as he was also tired. The instinctive thing to do, according to Peter was to hit – which he illustrated with his hand – however he and his wife were aware that it did not work and it was not acceptable to hurt people.

Peter said there were so many different opinions about the genesis of childhood aggression. However, he was clear that his response to his child's behaviour came from what he had read in books, watched on television, and from his own experiences of the way he was raised by his Samoan mother.

### **5.12 Tavita**

When asked about his perception of childhood physical aggression, Tavita described an incident he observed with his son aged two years:

An example of his behaviour that may be termed by others as aggressive was probably shouting at his brother this morning and throwing his breakfast spoon at him. We defined (it) as pushing the boundaries really...it was not the correct thing to do and we don't allow that in our household.

Tavita thought the origins of his son's behaviour came from a variety of factors, both internally (within the home) and externally (from outside the home):

It's probably when they are tired and they are ignored but most of the time I think this behaviour arises when we are trying to have one-on-one interaction with each child and one is wanting attention...tiredness and attention seeking. Probably from myself and my wife...it is learned behaviour generally. I think also from other children at school and children learn themselves what is acceptable and not acceptable...morally and socially...I think they definitely have their own groups at school...and I think absolutely from movies and video games as well.

Tavita described his child's behaviour as learned behaviour from different media/such as television and movies. However, he did not discount the possibility that it may have also originated from home:

It is seen as aggressive behaviour but I don't think it will get any worse. I think like our older child, he will get mellow as he gets older and know that that kind of behaviour is unacceptable to most people and he can't get away with it.

Tavita's response to his son's behaviour included taking away privileges and sending him to his room.

Well, obviously he got into trouble and he got taken to his room and he had to sit there for five minutes until he stopped crying and playing the victim and had to say sorry to his brother. Yes, well I mean having two young boys...it is quite often that that sort of thing does arise from day to day that generally by diffusing the situation...splitting the two children up and they have been separated and they lose any advantages or benefits the other child may get...be it ice-cream or to being able to ride their bike and that's generally how we deal with it. Well, sometimes I feel a bit guilty you know the child is obviously looking for a bit of attention and maybe I am not giving them enough attention.

Tavita believed his responses were determined from his own parents and the way he was raised as a child.

When asked if he could discern any differences in the way he treated his children with regard to gender and age, he responded:

I think we definitely disperse our affection for our children pretty evenly...I possibly think that the oldest...between my wife and I ...probably does bear the brunt of the discipline...more so because we think he should have learned earlier...or maybe that's wrong, I am not sure...I've been told it's kinda common with people that girls are much easier to parent at the younger stages and that they are not as aggressive as boys...but now that my two children are at different schooling levels... I have seen them do exactly the same thing... so I don't really think it is a gender thing...nah not at all...Definitely in our household...non-acceptable behaviour is hurting people physically and emotionally and also where other people's belongings are taken or broken – that is unacceptable.

Tavita had no experience with parenting girls. He said he had some knowledge of child development in terms of boys but not girls. “Probably not in relation to girls but I think having two boys I am pretty clued up”.

### 5.13 Mafa

Mafa was a single parent and when asked about her perceptions of her three year old son’s behaviour, she described her son as “having a hissy fit”; he shouts and screams at her and throws himself on the floor, and throws things around the room and hits her. Mafa said this often occurred when he did not want to do as he was told:

Sometimes it does involve violence. I get a bit hoha (*Maori term for upset annoyed*) with him because I don’t like to see that sort of behaviour. It didn’t involve other children. I guess he was wanting attention and I just wasn’t up to it at the time. That would’ve been a good time to have my mum or my sister around...It’s quite normal...he does it all the time. It’s like the only way he can get my attention sometimes.

Mafa was of the view that the child’s behaviour probably as she puts it “comes from me”. Maybe it’s the way I discipline him...I don’t know...do you?” Mafa appeared to be struggling with her child. She appeared to find parenting him exhausting and got quite emotional during the *talanoaga* about her child’s behaviour and how she was coping with managing the behaviour:

I think it is aggressive especially when he hits and throws things because someone could get hurt or he could hurt himself and I don’t think that’s acceptable behaviour but he doesn’t seem to listen. And he normally does this when he wants to watch what he wants on TV, when he doesn’t want to go somewhere ...when he doesn’t get his way basically. That can happen three or four times a day...gets pretty tiring.

My response to it is to just ignore him or I get really mad and frustrated and whack him, or I just pick him up and put him in the other room by himself. Sometimes I just want to get him by the neck and strangle him...nah.. You feel

like it but you know not to even start otherwise...you may not stop eh? You read about it all the time eh? ... how some parents don't stop. I get to a point where I know I just have to walk out of the room and leave him to throw his hissy fit. I think it probably comes from my parents and the way they disciplined me. They were really strict. I don't think I am strict with my son but I dunno...could be from the kids at his pre-school.

When asked if she thought whether his behaviour was about his gender, Mafa said, I don't really know because I only have the one child and don't know how girls are or whether it's because they are the younger or older.

Mafa was visibly tired and her child was frustrated with having to share her with me when it was quite clear he wanted his mother's attention. When I asked if she wished to finish the interview and reschedule, she insisted on finishing it though clearly she wanted to complete it as soon as possible. She said she did not know much about child development but she said if she needed she would 'just look on the net' and get the information. She was 'just happy he seems to be doing ok'.

#### **5.14 Naomi**

Naomi described a scene where her child aged two years upset another child by taking the child's puzzle which resulted with the two children screaming and yelling at each other.

At kindy he does a bit of screaming. Like a really good example is his cousin goes to kindy with him and he does puzzles, and he can do it and he will just come along and take it off him...and then they start screaming and yelling at each other.

Naomi believed her child's behaviour comes from not getting his own way with other children and adults. She said when her son was with other children and he got frustrated he would lash out at them. Her view was that her son behaved in a physically aggressive manner because in her words it was "Born out of sheer frustration I think..."

Although Naomi was a trained kindy teacher. She said she still found it difficult managing her son's behaviour especially if he was at her kindy with other children. She saw his behaviour as something that came out of frustration with not having his own way. He would then lash out by hitting other children and in one incident he hit a child over the head with a book.

Naomi believed she was better at managing other children's behaviour than her own son's. She said her response to her own son's behaviour was not the same as the response she would give to another child:

He takes things off people and hits them on the head I would try and ignore it but I can't really because he is hurting people and I talk to him, and I feel like I can't talk to him like other children, because he is my son and then I listen to other people deal with him...I think because if it is someone else's son I would respond in a different way but with my son because he is my son I tend to be very direct...I would want to drag him out of there and get him in a corner...I mean that's what I am feeling ...angry.

Naomi said her response to her son's behaviour came from her mum:

It comes from my mum...that real quick...don't last long...response. I don't get angry with other peoples kids but if it's your own eh? It's different... like I don't have very much time to spend with you (her child) whereas with other children you work through it and just seem more patient - negotiate with them...that's my kindy training coming out (Laughs out loud). Yeah probably comes from my parents and the way they disciplined me.

Naomi's child was the youngest in the family and his older siblings were all girls. His sisters were very tolerant of him and normally bore the brunt of his anger and frustration especially the sibling closest to him in age. Her son was more physical than his sisters and at every opportunity would give him plenty of time to play outside and kick a ball.

I think because he is the youngest he is more likely to get his way and I think his sisters are very good with him really...because he is a boy his grandmother



dotes on him as well and there might be an element of being spoiled. I definitely think he... as a boy he needs more physical play and it is rougher and seems like the rougher the better...but when he doesn't get his own way he resorts to physical tactics too.

As a trained kindy teacher Naomi had a lot of knowledge about children's stages of development but in her view this did not help her when she was trying to deal with her own son's behaviour. What it does do she said is... 'it gives me an understanding of why and also some of the ways I can address it'.

### **5.15 Bill (wife present at interview)**

Bill had a two-year-old son who he described as "very active". This child was the youngest in the family and Bill and his wife believed their son was very physical and an "always on the go" child. They were also of the view that their son was physically aggressive, unlike his older brother who they say was different. They described a consistent behaviour they perceived as attention seeking:

He always turns the TV off and like in the middle of the All Blacks game he goes and turns the TV off and everyone's like aaargh....he has done that heaps of times...he knows both of us and sometimes he will do it and we will just let it ride and then other times it is "no J". .we have been consistent in smacking him on the hand, but I think he has turned it into a game now but I think it might be that he wants attention.

Bill described an incident at his son's play centre where his son fought to get back something he wanted from another child. Bill's perception of the origins of his child's behaviour was that it came from three different areas: Play centre, himself (the father), and his environment and genetics.

With J it would be "give it back" and I have seen him...he has learned to defend himself...if he wants something he will get it... when he has got something and someone takes it he will fight back to get it.... it's when he gets grumpy and tired.

My wife thinks it is definitely from me. I don't know where he gets it from but it is very different from having the two (sons). I honestly think the second one (the youngest) is a lot like me. I think it's also part genetics and the environment that polishes it as to what they are going to be like... I think also its the timing...like as in the time of the day like they have gotta know when there is a time to be quiet and that...times when we are having our family counsel and that's part of the environment that he is growing up in.

Bill thought his son needed to be active. He spent a lot of time with him in physical activities so his son "can let off steam". He thought his son was physically aggressive but did not see this as a problem for his son or the family.

Yes, he can be very aggressive with his brother but it doesn't mean to say he is a problem. He is just a very physically active little boy who needs lots of physical activity to keep him on the go...otherwise he will tutu with this and that and just won't keep still...

According to Bill his son was a very bright child who loved being physical but he was also a child who would fight for what he wanted with his older brother and resorted to aggressive means to get what he wanted. On reflection Bill thought his responses to his child's behaviour came from himself. He spoke of a very violent upbringing and a father who disciplined him harshly. His mother was the moderating force in their home. He feared his father and never talked back to him. He did smack his son but was an option her preferred not to take. He was adamant he did not want to inflict the hidings he received from his father onto his own child:

Yeah I reflect...wonder where it all comes from...I think I have gotten more better...with this boy just from experience...one thing I remember was I did not want to hit my kids like the way I got hidings but I couldn't remember those times....we had no fear of Mum but with Dad it was a different story.

Bill perceived his son as being very different from his other children (sisters) and his older brother. He was, according to both Bill and his wife, 'constantly on the go'. Bill thought his son's physical aggression may be related to being male and because his son

was the youngest. He said people in the household tend to let him get away with his behaviour more so than the older siblings.

Bill and his wife also have older children and believed they were familiar with the development stages of their child.

I think having the practice with the others helps. At least we know what to expect from this one, even though he is nothing like his brother. We know that they grow out of it if you keep with the programme...it's that consistency and persistency with kids...

#### **5.16 Mele (partner present at interview)**

Mele lived with the father of her children. She was of mixed *Pasefika* descent including Samoan. Mele and her partner had two young children, a boy and girl aged two and three respectively. Mele described her son as being involved in a "lot of fighting" and being "very aggressive" with other children. This occurred mostly at Punanga (Cook Island language nest).

Because they are all about the same age at Punanga. Yeah...there's plenty of fighting and aggression. They have their moments when they will play nice and someone will come across something and then someone said "I don't want that...I want that"...it does get a bit full on...with the fighting...over what he, they, want and someone else has something he wants.

Mele and her partner lived together with her mother and her brother and his wife and children. Their living arrangements were difficult for Mele and her partner as the house was over-crowded. Disciplining her son was also difficult due to the children constantly fighting over toys and in particular things her son wanted that his cousins had and vice versa. She said her son often cried for the toys first:

and if he hasn't hit them already he will come and ask us and cries...and then I say to his cousin, "Can T have a look?" sort of thing and then it's alright...but

then sometimes my son just takes it in both hands and runs away with it...and then I respond with “well he had it first so you need to give it back”.

Mele said the origin of her son’s behaviour may have come from the Punanga, the early childhood education centre he attended. However, she also highlighted that she and her partner often clashed about the way they raised their children, especially in relation to the way they disciplined them, “Like right now we are still fighting over who is...like which way is best...the right way to bring up the kids...oh not so much fighting but we have some really big disagreements”.

Mele’s view of aggression was that it involved hitting and hurting other people. She thought her son was physically aggressive and she responded to his aggression in different ways.

Mele said the physically aggressive behaviour - fighting and hitting - was an everyday occurrence in their household with a house full of children. “They are all boys (he and his cousins) which makes it even harder and it’s also the age”. Her son and his cousins were about the same age (3). Even though they were slightly older than her son they were very similar in build. When her son behaved aggressively she sent him to his room or into a corner and “he has to stay there till my husband and I tell him to come back”. She was not sure how long he stayed in the corner but said “probably a couple of minutes”. She also responded to his behaviour by talking it through with him. She thought the “talking through” occurred at least 8-10 times a day. She admitted to getting “quite frustrated” with her son and has resorted to other measures such as smacking him. She said her husband had “a very Samoan upbringing, you want to try and break the cycle...but yeah...you know like I smack T...but like I just smack him to a point in trying to help...to teach him.”

Mele believed her response to her child’s behaviour came from her own experience and added:

probably from what I have learned from my own mother. There comes a point though where you have to draw the line and this is probably better before they hit or hurt someone and show them that it is not alright by telling them.

When asked whether they had sought support for their child's behaviour, Mele laughed:

Well recently...he's quite a handful sometimes but he is a really good kid but sometimes he can be a real handful...oh my gosh. But we haven't and if we did we would probably see a professional...but our family are always around and so they see it...so if we were going to get help...yeah it would be to get a professional perspective.

Mele said the way they brought up their daughter was different... She believed that her husband was much softer on their daughter than their son although she has a tendency to treat them both the same way. Her daughter would be growled at just like her brother:

I growl her you know...she knows she is doing wrong...as young as she is she knows...two years old...they know, they're not dumb. I think it is more a younger older thing rather than gender but that's me...I think it is different for my partner. I think we expect better behaviour from the older one because they are older...but other than that I think I tend to think they should all be treated the same way.

Mele said she understands her children's development stages and was committed to teaching her children how to *Play Nicely* with other children.

### **5.17 Colin (partner present at interview)**

Colin is Mele's partner and as noted above, they have a son aged two and a daughter aged three. Colin described the context in which his son resorted to physical aggression. He said, "he has had his toy grabbed off him and he does it for that reason". Colin also said "there is a lot of fighting in our household with these boys (two families live within one household)...what I think my son does when he is aggressive is he pushes other kids, he yells and looks at them and yells".

Colin is clear that one of the things he would like to change about his parenting is the way he disciplines his kids, especially his son:

Yeah, discipline wise...you know, I'm not blaming anyone, but because I am a male and my partner is a female... I do get more angry at my kids...and I get...yeah, I blow up...before her...and I do smack my kids...yeah. And I feel kinda bummed out about it yeah...bummed out really just like...when I look at the situation...it just wasn't worth it...yeah....but I am getting better with my kids, a lot better.

When Colin was asked where he thought the origin of his responses to his son's aggression came from he commented:

Ah looking at his Mum and Dad...you know when we argue...we fight.. Maybe there is something there. I dunno. Like for example last night, because I usually bath the kids when I get home...that's my job and (names his partner) will change them...and I left them in the bath because I came out and caught an ad on TV and went back to the bathroom and somehow I had the kids soap out and well.... he put half of it on J's head and put water on her head and I had already bathed them and it made me really upset because there was water all in her eyes and I couldn't handle washing that all off with her screaming because the soap was in her eyes and I walked out and told "(names his wife) nah you know...you %^\*\*\*## go and do that I have had enough"...like I was really screaming at her because I was feeling sorry for my daughter with her having all this stinging pain in her eyes and I just couldn't handle it and I sat down and thought about it later and thought it was actually my fault because I left them in the bath and he reached the soap and yeah...I learned from that...like tonight we had a shower and I left T in the shower by himself and I made sure the soap and shampoo was out of his reach...but, yeah, I suppose they see us fighting and me screaming at their mother. My partner's mother also tells me off the way I talk to my kids and you know...I don't like it and I don't accept it.

Colin said his son's aggression was pushing and yelling at other kids. Colin saw these acts as physically aggressive behaviour, and more male than female behaviour. He saw his own behaviour as being aggressive and wondered about his role modelling of this behaviour to his son. At that point of the *talanoaga*, Colin became emotional.

When asked where he thought the origin of his responses to his son's aggression Came from. Colin said:

I'm not sure where it comes from but, yeah...I have got anger problems and we have talked about counselling...I just haven't got there yet...I dunno...it just builds up from I don't think it is...it might be work...it could be just you know....family problems...I think .We are all in the same household...and aahm...that's stressful...I do take it out on my kids ahm.. I think the origin of the way we do that goes back further...like to my own parents...like I remember when my dad used to beat me and all that kind of stuff... For my kids it's different...it is more trying to teach him not in anger...'cos that's the way I was taught...

Colin said he usually got upset if anyone else hit his children. He did not like hearing his children cry when someone else had hurt them.

Colin perceived boys were more physical than girls. He was of the view that they liked to play rough-fighting, wrestling and taking part in physical activities that involved them "letting off steam". He said of his son:

he is noisier and plays louder than his sister. It's like he just wants to go round kicking, and playing in a kind of rough way...I think it's good when he is let outside to play because he just seems to let off a whole lot of steam and just goes and goes...you know kicking, shouting, pretend fighting with his cousins...his sister is much quieter even though she is just two and he is three –they are really different.

Colin was aware of the developmental stages of his children. He said he had a talk with his wife and a Plunket lady who "took them through the stages". He hopes his son will grow out of this stage of development so he can "stop being aggressive".

## 5.18 Mary

Mary was a recently separated single mother with four children including one child aged three. Her perspective of childhood aggression was that this was about children asserting themselves in relation to what they needed. Mary had observed her own children being assertive and described it in the following way:

It's like being assertive and just going for what you want...I mean you might get the ones that are physically aggressive...who push and shove and reach out and grab...I think they are kids who are confident and know what they want and are more vocal about it and doing something about it, not just waiting for it...I think at that age it is positive but it is adult people around them who can make it negative...rather than shoot them down for it they should encourage them to go for it...kinda point out to them that there are ways of doing it like the ones that are physically aggressive and tell them how physical you can get and encourage them to be vocal about what they want rather than being aggressive.

Mary found it challenging as a single mother trying to keep all her children, as she put it “under control”:

There are things that I do that I don't want them to do and I think some parents can get really frustrated in the house and you think you have it all under control but you haven't and you, like, every day...try to keep it altogether, and the kids might do something and the noise level rises to a certain decibel and you think I just wanna screw their necks and...you know...but as a parent you love your kids...you can't just lose it...you just have to do it... and be in control and not lose it.

The instances when Mary had found managing her son's behaviour particularly difficult was when he was fighting with his sister, hitting and yelling at her. She believed her son was more physically aggressive than her other children.

Mary perceived the origin of this aggressiveness stemmed from frustration and not getting what he wanted. The fact that he had older siblings and a younger one she



believed may have resulted in his need to compete for her attention. She was somewhat tearful when she contemplated this. I got a sense from Mary that she blamed herself and perhaps it was also her own upbringing that had triggered her responses to her children's behaviour and impacted the way they behaved. She looked sad when she talked about her childhood experiences. At one point she spoke about her son, but then used the pronoun 'you'... "and sometimes you prefer the beating rather than the words which can be really more hurtful".

Mary also observed that her own mother's behaviour changed considerably since Mary has had children. Her mother had attained an educational qualification that allowed her to see life differently as a grandmother than when she was a parent. Mary's mother now discussed things with Mary whereas as a young woman Mary was hit and hurtful things were said to her:

She is different now, she has been different with us older ones over the years...she is more inclined now to talk to us and I think it is because she is now educated and she has more knowledge, whereas if that was the only way you know, that is what you stick to...but she knows a lot more now and yeah she is very supportive and helps me a lot with the kids.

Mary was mindful that the more she learned, the bigger the potential improvement in her son's behaviour. She used strategies like positive affirmations and giving her son lots of affection and reassurance that she loved them (all her children) all very much.

Like when we do talk, like when we have calmed down, we can talk about it...tell me how you feel?...How would you feel if someone did that to you?...things that his friend has said....and then he has repeated it with his younger brothers and sisters...and if we talk about it, it is good...reassuring him with hugs and positive affection and reassuring all my kids that they are loved kinda helps.... and I think sometimes people act out their aggression because of their insecurities and if you find security within yourself , you are not going to feel threatened by anyone else.

Mary had recently separated from her husband and the separation and returning to her parent's home was still full of challenges but she believed she was in the best place with her children. She felt her parents' love for her and her children "is unconditional". They are very supportive of her and her children. Two younger siblings attend university out of town and were also helpful and supportive.

Mary's saw that there was a difference between positive and negative aggression. She was of the opinion that children like he's who wanted something from somebody and asserted themselves to get it had "positive aggression". She thought that too often adults "don't walk the talk". They tended to say one thing to children but behaved in a completely opposite way to what they were telling the children:

Like telling the kids not to fight and yell at each other...but yet they do it to each other and their kids...I think the problem is maybe a lack of the positive aggression and doing nothing about the negative aggression among themselves.

Mary said that although she felt overwhelmed at times by her children and the task of caring for them, moving in with her parents had made a difference. She said she normally responded to her son's aggression by removing him from her presence:

Yeah there is that feeling, eh, of whacking it out of him...Like, when I am in that state of frustration I just kinda, like, when I go there I try and avoid it...I just get outa the room because it is something I don't want to do, and so if I can avoid it by just getting the hell out of there or getting him outa there then I think that is the best for both of us.

Another response to her son's behaviour was to raise her voice and resort to smacking:

My reaction, more often than not is to yell...like I yell or I will tell them "get outa my sight right now"...otherwise I will resort to the old...traditional way of just smacking them...so getting them out is good...and sometimes I take ages to calm down and he will come and say "sorry" and I have to say "look, you just have to go because right now I can't have you here in the same room as me"..

When Mary had everything under control she was able to talk and explain things to her son:

If I have everything under control then I talk to them straightaway and say “that wasn’t good, what you did” and explain why, rather than getting to a point where I start losing it and yell at him.

Mary did not like “to lose it”. She does not enjoy being harsh with her children. She feels pressured at times with four children but now with the help and support of extended family, the pressure was being eased a little.

It’s not good to get to that point... I don’t want to destroy his spirit and I want him to go while I am watching the others and I would like to go for a drive and calm down but when you have other kids you can’t do that...at least now I am with family and when I want time out at least they are around to do that for me (get’s tearful).

Mary believed the way she responded to her children’s behaviour was partly influenced by the way her parents brought her up and also by what she had seen via TV parenting programmes, books, and her own learning.

Mary considered boys to be more aggressive than girls as they were more physical and had a tendency to want to play games that involved physical aggression like kicking and hitting the ball. In her experience, girls were inclined to be more passive. She said she treated them all the same except for her three-year-old whom she thought was influenced a lot by his peers who played “very roughly” and tended to yell and were more boisterous.

I just notice when he is playing with other kids it’s all noise and yelling and karate kicks and action. They always seem to be copying someone or thing that involves action or fighting. It’s a different kind of play to the girls...well to mine anyway. She’d be happy for me to sit with her and read her a story...but my boy...it’s almost like he has to be the character in the story (laughs).

Mary was aware of her child's development stages. Like many of the other parents in the study she envisaged her son would grow out of his aggression. She believed she ought to give more time to him and his needs. She said "I know that most times he just wants to spend time with me".

## **5.19 Summary**

### **5.19.1 Parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression**

There was a moderate level of awareness among respondents about what constitutes physical aggression in children. Parents described aggression as hitting, smacking, pulling hair, punching, kicking, screaming, throwing objects, biting, punching and yelling.

Eight of the respondents described their child's behavior as physically aggressive, with one father stating that his daughter's behaviour was "violent" and a "no-no" in his home.

The remaining respondents however did not identify these acts as aggressive in their children. Responses ranged from perceiving these behaviours as 'normal' and 'not aggressive', as in the case of two parents who had attended a parenting course, to another who believed that unless the daughter "drew blood" it wasn't aggressive behaviour. One father even described his daughter in affectionate terms as "an angel of a bully". Other respondents were inclined to justify their child's behaviour by contextualising it. For example, hitting a peer was fine if the peer refused to return the child's toy. Another common delineation between acceptable behaviour and unacceptable behaviour was the public versus private context, that is, if the behaviour occurred within the home it was deemed not aggressive, but outside the home it was deemed aggressive and therefore unacceptable.

Possessing an understanding of the reasons why the child may be exerting some physically aggressive behaviour was also a determining factor in whether the parents considered the behaviour acceptable or not. Examples given understood that:

- the child wanted something another child had
- the child had feelings of frustration
- the child was tired
- the child sought attention
- another child was in their space
- the child was defending her own patch
- the child was testing and pushing the boundaries
- they may be competing with siblings for parent's attention
- the child felt angry towards the person they were behaving badly towards.

#### **5.19.2 Parents perceptions of Gender, older and younger differences**

The willingness to contextualise behaviour was also seen in the accommodation of gender and age factors.

In most cases, parents held strongly to the belief that girls are 'softer' and 'placid', while boys are more boisterous and prefer physical activities like kicking and hitting balls. This perception concurs with Crick et al. (2006) whose research showed girls show more relational aggression and boys physical (see Chapter 2). Parents tended to be more tolerant of the youngest members in the family especially if they were daughters reinforcing the perception that girls were soft, hence needing softer management of their behaviour. Parents consistently expressed expectations that older children 'should know better'. Tremblay, et al. (2004) states that younger children are more aggressive towards older siblings because they are more likely to have grown out of the aggressive pre-school age whereas the younger pre-school child have yet to learn from their parents how to behave non-aggressively. What these findings also show is that positive parenting is a skilled activity and accessing resources, tools and knowledge is crucial for effective and appropriate responses to combat childhood physical aggression (Raine, 2002; Resnick et al., 2004; Smith, 2004).

### **5.19.3 Methods of managing child's behaviour**

Parents used various strategies to respond to their child's behaviour: for example humor, smacking, holding the child, giving the child time out, sending them to the naughty mat, to their room or in a corner, physically removing themselves from the child, talking to the child calmly, giving the child a look of disapproval, communicating with stern words, giving the child positive reinforcement, and growling at the child. One father indicated he would prefer punishment meted out to children to be similar to what was meted out to him in his childhood. His suggestion was that "getting a hiding" was less time-consuming and quicker and, therefore, a better approach than a lengthy discussion with the child. This father was the only parent to have attended an anger management course.

Hitting was more commonly used as a response than other pacifist techniques such as time out and explaining. This was not a surprise as the majority of parents who did so stated they were under pressure from the child and/or tired. Both older and younger parents hit their children, and single parents seemed more stressed when responding to their children's behaviour by hitting or yelling. The parents on higher incomes and who had tertiary education and access to parenting programmes, were more confident in talking about their children's behaviour and their responses to their children's behaviour.

### **5.19.4 Influence of culture**

The findings among this group indicate a strong influence of, and interplay between, childhood physical aggression and culture. This was to be expected to some extent, for example, Samoan concepts of what is acceptable inside the home versus outside the home (Silipa, 2008). The importance of context in childhood aggression found in this study further supports the literature which shows the importance of culture in a child's development (Choa, 2001; Cole & Cole, 2001; Yelland, 2005).

However, what most surprised me was how deeply Samoan cultural influences still impacted the lives of these respondents. This caught me somewhat unawares as I had

expected that among second and third generations, traditional cultural influences would be much less influential in these diaspora.

These findings also suggest, as other research has (McCallum et al., 2000) that there are changing patterns of behaviour from Samoan diaspora communities and communities of origin. Contemporary lifestyle choices are intersecting more with traditional values and practices. Also evident was a pattern of younger children behaving aggressively towards older siblings which has connotations for shifts in contemporary New Zealand influences on Samoan diaspora communities - for example the relationship between older/younger people denotes respect for elders and hitting one's older siblings is considered disrespectful.

#### **5.19.5 The findings - risk and resiliency factors, in relation to the literature**

It was apparent from the findings that parents' understanding of childhood aggression was very limited and this lack of understanding made it difficult for parents to teach their children conflict resolution strategies. I concur with the argument by other researchers (in light of these findings) that childhood physical aggression cannot be studied without the widest range of risk factors and protective factors (including socio-cultural and socio-economic factors) being taken into account. Simply focusing on the individuals is not enough. An ecological model where the environment and wider society, systems and structures which impact on the lives of families such as these needs to be taken into consideration (Loeber et al., 2005) and how these "domains of influence" (Farrell & Flannery, 2005) of family, school (ECE), the child's home environment and parental responses to their child's behaviour are strong influencing factors in childhood aggression (Webster-Stratton, 2004).

The literature states that most children go through the pre-school years without any harmful long term effects but it is estimated that approximately 5% have more likelihood of passing through this stage of development with negative long term effects (Scholer et al., 2008; Tremblay et al., 2004). Resiliency factors were evident when managing their children's aggressive behaviour. Extended families, cultural factors and a combination of cultural and religious factors emerged as protective factors (see risk and resiliency factors section 2.6, p. 42). As Tremblay states, if we can intervene at the

early childhood aggression stage of 1-3 years then there is less likelihood the child's behaviour will continue to the school age years (Tremblay, 2000a & 2000b).

The table below is a snapshot of the parents' perceptions of, and responses to, childhood physical aggression. As seen from the table, physical aggression occurred mostly in the child's home or within the context of the child's family, rather than outside of the home in a public space. Most of the parents did not deem their child to be aggressive if they behaved aggressively within the family, but when the aggressive behaviour occurred outside the family they considered it to be aggressive.



**Table 3. Summary of parents' perceptions of, and responses to, childhood aggression in 1-3 year olds**

Signs of aggressive behaviour	Context of child's behaviour	Origin of child's behaviour	Parent's response	Origin of parent's response
<b><u>Non-physical</u></b> Not listening to parent's instructions Yelling Screaming Whining <b><u>Physical</u></b> Grabbing Biting Pushing Hits older siblings Pulls hair Throws himself on the floor Hits her cousins Hits herself when parent growls Punches mother Shouting and throwing spoon at older brother Scratched a girl at <i>Aoga</i> Punched brother Fighting	Wanting something they can't have Feeling frustrated Testing/competing for parent's attention Experimenting Wanting parent's attention Tired Having her space crowded Defending himself	Behaviour learned from inside the home From children at <i>Aoga Amata</i> From TV, school and friends Genetic, born with aggression Other children they play with and the child's environment Males who model aggressive behaviour From the parents From child's peers From being frustrated From grandparent's home	Growls Smacks Uses humour Naughty mat Look of disapproval Stern communication Words Laugh it off Said 'stop it' Leaves until calms down Ignores, and leaves child alone Hold him until he calms down Time-out/negotiate Teach about empathy Giving them good choices Naughty mat /sent to room/ apologise	From own parents and upbringing. From what he/she sees and reads from different media Learned from other people's experiences Training as an ECE Nanny programme

These findings warranted further analysis of Samoan cultural influences on parent's responses to childhood physical aggression. This is explored in Chapter Six.

## Chapter six: Discussion and cultural themes

Our elders' stories were our earliest maps and fictions; they were a view of the dimensions, geography, values, morality and aspirations of the world and way of life we were born into. It was a world in which everything was one process; the web that was the individual person was inseparable from the web of 'aiga/village/tribe which was inseparable from the web of Atua and the elements and the universe. And in that process everything was endowed with the sacred or mana.

(Wendt, 1995, p. 21)

### 5 Introduction

This chapter was important to include as I believe I would not be honouring the parents' *talanoaga* if it was not included. Although as noted in chapt 1, I had assumed that culture may have an influence on parents' perceptions, I did not realise until the data analysis how strongly an influence *fa'aSamoa* actually did have on parents' perceptions. It was as Wendt says, "a web of life that became inseparable from the "web" of *aiga/village/tribe/extended family* which was inseparable from the web of Atua and the elements and the universe" (Wendt, 1995, p. 21).

Findings were that Samoan cultural understandings were important to the health and wellbeing of these parents and families. Parents' perceptions of parenting and what constituted aggressive behaviour was grounded in Samoan values and beliefs, suggesting that interventions must be addressed within the *fa'aSamoa* socio-cultural framework. For example, there will be differences between the experiences of New Zealand born and Samoa born parents and between those raised in urban Auckland and those raised in rural/small town Tokoroa. Cultural understandings have been revealed in this research and will be used to explore Samoan parenting strengths and to identify ways of assisting parents to increase their capacity to identify and manage childhood physical aggression.

This chapter is organised and presented as follows. First, the findings related to parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression are presented and discussed. Second, factors influencing childhood physical aggression are identified and discussed. Third, this is followed by a discussion of cultural themes that emerged from the study and lastly a summary of this chapter is presented.

## **6.1 Findings related to Parents' Perceptions of Childhood Physical Aggression**

The findings from this study showed parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression were varied. However, over half of the participant parents normalised their children's physical aggression; in their view their child was acting like any other child of the same age. For example, almost all of the parents described actions such as kicking, hitting, biting, pulling hair, fighting with siblings and other physically aggressive interactions (Chapter 5) as "normal", "assertive", "typical behaviour for their age", or "merely testing the limits and boundaries". These views are in accord with Webster-Stratton (2005) who argues that most young children behave in this manner; it is not unusual for this age group. However, even though the parents spoke of their child exhibiting these behaviours, generally, they intervened. Most parents were managing their children's behaviour sufficiently and therefore they did not perceive their child's behaviour to be a severe problem within the family. Most of the parents were getting additional support from grandparents and extended family members and this in many cases ameliorated the issue to a greater degree because everyone in the home was monitoring the child's behaviour.

It is possible that the term childhood physical aggression has connotations for the parents that make it difficult to apply to their children's behaviour. So, it was for many of them easier to minimize, rationalise or contextualise their child's behaviour rather than show their child in a negative light. Their responses showed they wanted to give their child the best possible chance in life by instilling them with principles and values they had learned from their own parents, many of which were based on "Christian" principles which often appeared to be a blend of *fa'aSamoa* values and Christian values. Although most of the parents did not speak Samoan, they none-the-less demonstrated

*fa'aSamoa* values and beliefs about culture and families were very important to them and their children.

Most parents confirmed that they believed their children's behaviour originated from their homes - the parents - and, that their own responses to their children's behaviour originated from themselves (the parents) and their home environment, first and foremost. This response is compatible with Yelland's (2005) theories of socialisation which state that the development of the child is culturally specific and contextual. Other authors such as Choa and Fry concur that how a child develops can be attributable to the culture and the context in which he or she is raised (Choa, 2001; Fry, 1988).

The study also highlights the lack of Western knowledge these Samoan diaspora parents have about the concept of childhood physical aggression. The importance of parents being well informed cannot be over stated as information and support are important factors in the empowerment of parents and parenting (Webster-Stratton, 2005).

## **6.2 Influencing factors on childhood physical aggression**

There is a multiplicity of risk factors which influence childhood physical aggression (Tremblay, 2008a). Three found in this study are low income (financial poverty), single parenthood, and the presence of violence in the home in the form of harsh discipline or conflict. Often, these were found to co-exist.

### **6.2.1 Socio-economic factors**

In this study, it was the single, young parents in particular who encountered many difficulties; lack of support, lack of qualifications, and low income. These are all factors which have concurrence with several research findings in New Zealand and internationally (Crick et al., 2006; Poulton et al., 2005; Tremblay et al., 2004).

Turner and Asher (2008), Percival (2011) and many other health researchers argue that poverty, lack of education, inadequate housing, and unemployment have a major impact on the health and well-being of indigenous and *Pasefika* communities in New Zealand. Others would argue that a more strategic focus is needed for helping those most

vulnerable who are placed in situations of marginalisation, inequality, and powerlessness (Heckman, Stixrud and Urzua, 2006). Researcher observations were that families on higher incomes had larger, warmer homes that were more adequately furnished. The children of these families also appeared better resourced in terms of toys and books and electronic equipment. In contrast, parents who were young and single and on lower incomes lived in homes that were more sparsely furnished, lacked heating, and were very run-down. Child resources such as books, toys and games did not have an obvious presence in these low income homes. Furthermore, Chapter 5 findings showed that parents who were younger, had lesser educational qualifications and were on a low income appeared to have more difficulty with managing their children's behaviour and, as noted earlier, parental responses to incidents of aggressive behaviour, involved hitting. However, Shaw (2003) highlights taking cognisance of the variation of parenting styles between different ethnic groups before making assumptions about appropriateness of parental behaviours and any association with CPA. He states African-American parents who may use authoritarian parenting are more likely to regard physical discipline as being acceptable and research with Hispanic families found a tendency to accept aggression because of the 'machismo' kind of society that is prevalent among Latino's (De Yong and Zigler, 1994).

As noted in the literature review (Chapter 2), research shows that when parents are stressed because of lack of income, support, mental illness, emotional trauma and for many other reasons they are more likely to lash out at their children without thinking about their actions (Webster Stratton, 2005). This was the case with some of the study parents, as shown in Chapter 5, but afterwards, parents explained they felt regret and remorse and did not like reacting the way they did. Russell, Harris & Gockel (2008), explain that stress can add even more difficulties to the lives of parents trying to manage their children: "In some instances the multiple vulnerabilities or risks may place parents in situations where providing sufficient care and protection of their children becomes virtually impossible" (p. 83).

Parents stated their form of discipline was the major change they would like to make in their parenting techniques. Most stated especially in the form of hitting, which has implications for childhood physical aggression. Whilst it was important for the parents to signal this as something they would like to change, it is important that parents know

how they can change and why change is crucial especially in relation to managing their child's behavior in their early childhood years.

A key finding to come out of this study was that the parents' perceptions and practices have been shaped by their own history and cultural influences and moderated by their socio-economic circumstances. Generally, those parents with greater financial resources, combined with other factors, such as qualifications, and strong family support had more coping strategies than those who did not. However, as explained in Chapter 5, most parents, had support from different family members (siblings and grandparents) which, in many ways ameliorated to some extent the level of stress for these parents. Within these contexts, the parents' perceptions about childhood physical aggression were evident in the deliberate choices they made regarding teaching their children, the people they (and their children) associated with, the places where they sent their children to learn to "do the right thing" – such as the church with the grandparents, cultural and community events, and in the teachings by grandparents of the spiritual and cultural values. These findings resound with parenting literature which identifies risk factors to be more pronounced in families where parents are young, single, lack qualifications and support, and have a low income (Ferrari, 2002; Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001).

### **6.3 Cultural factors influencing childhood physical aggression**

In this study parents tended to blend familiar Samoan concepts with Western concepts of child management. Western psychological theories were often accepted by parents when they were congruent with Samoan practices (Webster-Stratton et al., 2003). For example, giving your children an explanation for their behaviour and showing them how it was for the other person (empathy) has congruency with the biblical teachings parents spoke about and the Samoan concept of *fa'atonu ae aua le oke*.

With the exception of one, the parents in this study were all born in New Zealand. Their children, apart from one family, are the descendants of Samoans who came with a certain set of beliefs and ways of doing which, not only cannot be separated from the way in which the parents in this study behave, but which have had a profound influence on the parents' beliefs about parenting and, specifically to this study, the management

of their children's behaviour, and their (the parents') perceptions of their behaviour. Whilst these perceptions have been influenced by contemporary lifestyles of diasporic communities, the *talanoaga* revealed the presence of Samoan cultural factors that significantly influenced these study parents lives including their parenting practices and perceptions.

The five key cultural concepts that emerged unexpectedly from the analysis of the *talanoaga* with the parents are presented and discussed as five themes, below. I decided to include these themes as I believe I would not have done justice to my participants or my methodological approach if I did not as they emerged very strongly from the data. Taking account of these cultural influences in combination with the socio-economic factors discussed has the potential to strengthen the cultural competencies and knowledge base for future planning for policy and services for Samoan diasporic communities.

#### **Theme one: *O le au o matua o fanau*/Children are precious**

As noted in Chapter two (Vailaau, 2005) Samoan children are regarded as very valuable – they are regarded as a blessing from God. They are the next generation – the carriers of the family name (*gafa*) and identity (Silipa, 2008). It was clear that the parents in this study valued their children and were committed to them having the very best opportunities parents could provide. Of paramount importance to these parents was the way they cared for their children, their children's happiness, and their health and wellbeing. This was clearly evident as shown in Chapter 4.

Just as Turner's observations in Samoa in the 1800s showed that children were lavished with love and spoilt as infants, most parents in this study as shown in the verbatim chapter 4 and 5, doted on their children, especially if they were girls and the youngest in the family. They worked hard for their families. For example, all but one father was in full-time employment and those who worked shift work said this enabled them to spend more time with their child. These parents saw co-operative parenting as important with both parents working together to set the tone and standards for their children's behaviour, as shown in Chapter 4.

All of the participants, except for one Samoan-born and raised mother, spoke English as their main language and English was the language spoken at most family events. Nevertheless, most of the parents spoke about the importance of the Samoan language and the importance of maintaining this. Several chose to send their children to *aoga Samoa* to learn the Samoan language and culture.

Parents had the desire to see their children receive a good education and, to them, this incorporated learning Samoan. The *talanoaga* showed parents were keen to create homes that were happy and conflict free for their children. Seeing their children feeling sick and sad was what study parents disliked the most about parenting.

Parents in this study clearly doted on their children - a few to the point of spoiling them but seeing them, as one parent described 'as an angel of a bully'. All the parents valued their children and gave their children the best of the opportunities they had to offer, to the best of their ability. It is clear from these examples that *o le au o matua o fanau* retains its significance in this context.

**Theme two: *Ole ola manuia o le tamaititi e le fa'alagolago atoa ia te ia lava ae o le galuega faitele a le nu'u (aiga) atoa/It takes a whole village to raise a child***

Theme two discusses the benefits of having good support networks in helping parents manage their children's behaviour and their responses to their children's behaviour. The proverb of the title of this section originates from an African village setting. In relation to this study, the proverb highlights a sense of connectivity within the community in which a child is raised alongside members of their close and extended family.

This proverb also explains that parents would see it as neglectful if extended family members did not support or intervene in the upbringing of their children. Extended family members are expected to support parents to teach the children and manage their behaviour. This contrasts to the more common New Zealand nuclear family experience where parenting is the responsibility of either mother or father or both. As Tui Atua Efi (2002) explains:

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share my tofi (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong



to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my belonging. (p. 2)

Just as in traditional Samoan society, child raising was seen by the parents in this study to be the responsibility of all members of the village/community, not only the family. For example, older children took responsibility for their younger siblings. In traditional families older brothers and male cousins looked out for the safety and well-being of their female family members.

Although study participants were not living in a traditional Samoan *fale* in a village, and responsibility for child rearing and setting standards for their children fell mostly on parents' shoulders, many had family members living close by. As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, grandparents spent considerable time with grandchildren, which enabled parents more freedom than if they had been living in a nuclear family. In addition, the presence of many family members meant interventions could take place sooner, as in the example given in Chapter 4 where a child took ill suddenly and the great grandparents were able to care for children. The presence of additional supportive adults in these homes contributed to good outcomes in ways that would be less possible in a nuclear family. Most parents commented that without grandparent and other familial support they would have found parenting very difficult.

In terms of support in meeting their immediate needs parents were more likely to stay within their family networks, which were extensive. By maintaining widespread connections with extended family members, parents knew whom they could call on should support be needed. The participant who was not New Zealand-born said she went to the pastor for support; this is not surprising considering the data that the majority of Samoans living New Zealand recognised an affiliation with a church (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Some parents valued family support for 'time out' such as having a break from their children, while others sought grandparents' support in reinforcing their own parental monitoring of child behaviour. There were also grandparents who assisted their children financially, and others who acted as a moral compass to guide and give direction to parents.

Grandparents also played a major role in terms of transference of Samoan language and knowledge to the children in these families. Most parents said they were not fluent in Samoan or spoke this in conversation rarely. They said the only exposure some of their children got to the language was through the grandparents who spoke it.

One parent expressed a desire for his daughters to emulate his mother's authority and *mana*. He saw his mother as being a good role model for his daughters. While he had "normalised" his mother's physical disciplining of him, he stated he preferred this to the "long discussions" commonly involved in disciplining today. Furthermore, due to his own knowledge and education he was making changes and adapting his parenting practices to less punitive measures. He was open to learning how he could do this.

As noted, three families were living with grandparents at the time of the study. One theory of multi-generational co-residence holds multi-generational living to be a protective factor; the single or low income parents are helped both socially and economically by the grandparents caring for children while the mother returns to work or furthers her education (Kahlil, 2000). In this study, returning to her parent's home meant a recently separated mother had her parents close by to support her in caring for her children and for financial viability. Even for one mother who was on a higher income, support from the grandparents was significant. She said having her mother-in-law living with her (and her family – her husband, and children) meant she got support for her children's education as well as spiritual, moral, and cultural learning for herself and her family. In another household, the parents have moved into the grandmother's home following the death of the grandfather and the grandmother is now the teacher, carer, and babysitter. The concept of 'it takes a whole village to raise a child' was strongly apparent in these families who have maintained the ideal of having 'lots of parents to look out for them' even in a new society where this is not the norm. Furthermore, the data showed practices similar to a traditional Samoan village where the family would act as moderators in parenting.

### **Theme three: *Teu le va*/relationships**

As explained in Chapter 2, *Teu le va* is about protecting and guarding the space ‘in Between’. *Le va* highlights the importance of the relationships of members of the *aiga*—parent-child, parent-grandchildren, parent-siblings, and grandparent-grandchildren.

As noted in Chapter 4 almost all of the parents, whether in two-parent families or solo-headed families, valued their relationship with their children and the time they spent with them. As noted from the findings (Chapter 4) they shared the care of their children as well as the decision making that needed to be made about their children’s wellbeing. There was an understanding among the parents that the role was important and therefore both had to make a commitment to ensure their children were raised with the best of intentions and models of behaviour.

One parent acknowledged that *le va* between himself and his parents remains an issue for him today. However, the strong cultural concepts of *aiga* and *fa’aSamoa* and the values and beliefs entwined in *le va* which he had been brought up with remained a strong influence. The conflicts he had had with his father did not stop him from maintaining the relationship with his father and his family, and so, the *aiga* remained intact. For almost all of the parents it is at the grandparent’s home that they still gather and where they take their grandchildren, and, as noted, a few live with the grandparents. Hence *le va* with their children and their parents continued to be purposely maintained as the grandparents provided them with the support they needed in bringing up their children as in the concept of ‘village parenting’.

The significance of maintaining *le va* was evident time and again. It was clear from the use of words and phrases used in association with relationships, such as “*fa’aSamoa*”, “sacred”, “don’t mess with it”. One parent described the importance of his relationship with his mother as a “relationship you don’t mess with”. Elaborating on this, he used words such as “sacred” and “spiritual” and “just the way it is in the *fa’aSamoa*”. Another parent used the word “sacrosanct” to signify the importance and value of his relationship with his parents; another described her parents as “*mana* from heaven”. Other words were “respect” and “*mana*”. At the same time, the relationship with

parents was bounded by culturally imposed behavioural norms, such as how they spoke to their parents and their siblings. The nature of these relationships clearly outlined their positioning within their families. Several participants' parents held *matai* titles and there were certain behaviours and protocols these parents were expected to observe and to teach their children. These cultural protocols of respect and obedience to elders, which their parents had taught them, they were now passing on to their children.

*Teu le va* is about giving respect to the space between individuals and building the spiritual dimension that is part of valuing people and relationships, especially with the parents and children in the context of *aiga* as in this study. The symbolism and sacredness of *le va* was applied to all members of the *aiga* in *fa'aSamoa* and, as was evidenced in this study, in the relationships between parents and the grandparents, and between parents and their children. In relation to valuing this space between themselves and their children, parents in this study have made a conscious decision to teach and discipline their children with words - *fa'atonu*. This cultural concept *Aua le oke ae fa'atonu le fanau* is theme four.

#### **Theme four: *Aua le oke ae fa'atonu le fanau*/ Teach without using harsh words**

This Samoan saying means instruct and teach your children without harsh words being spoken.

Many parents spoke frankly about how they manage their children's behaviour. They described many different scenarios of parenting their children, as well as reflections on their challenges and concerns for their children's behaviours. Many said that the way they were responding to their children was in reaction to the way they had been parented themselves. They said they hoped they were not repeating the way they had been disciplined.

These study parents did not hold physical discipline as having a high moral purpose but as a default option when fatigued. On the whole, parents in this study did not like physically disciplining their children. Some spoke about the difficulty of the harsh discipline they had experienced as children and they did not wish to pass this on to their own children. Most indicated that they were inclined to shift their thinking and actions

to a more child-focused approach, as in the theme “teach with words” whereby the children were disciplined in an explanatory way. Parents preferred a peaceful and structured approach to discipline that did not involve physical discipline: *Fa’atonu* rather than *oke/* teach rather than shout. Several parents said they did not feel good about smacking their child. For example, as noted in Chapter 4 an older parent admitted to hitting his daughter when she bit him. He said that when he hit his daughter it was instinctive and it hurt him to do what he did, especially as he had done it without thinking. He said that after he had hit her, “I felt stink”. He clearly did not like what he had done and stated he preferred to punish her by putting her on the naughty chair and talking to her. He said this was a more effective way of managing her behaviour which he and his wife had learned in PAFT courses they had attended. His preferred approach to parenting involved explaining and teaching his daughter: this worked most of the time, but he described one instance when she was misbehaving towards her grandmother. He did not tolerate this and put her on the “naughty chair”. Having been brought up in a family where *fa’aSamoa* was strong, he felt his daughter’s behaviour towards her grandmother, an elder of the family, warranted more severe punishment than if she had simply acted in this way towards him. This was a further example of the influence of Samoan cultural considerations on the parenting practices of this group.

Silipa’s (2008) account of values being taught is similar to what the study parents described: parents taught their children about the customs and culture, the protocols of being polite, being respectful, and taking pride in what they could learn of the language from their grandparents.

Based on my study findings, it would appear that the concept of parents as the first teachers of their children is as applicable today as it was in traditional Samoan settings. The few parents who had taken part in PAFT classes said they have applied these teachings to their parenting. It can be argued that PAFT is so congruent with traditional teaching that it was easily incorporated into the family home and became part of the repertoire for these families – in essence the PAFT programme fitted into a pre-existing framework and world view for these parents.

Generally, parents said they were inclined to adopt practices that instilled within their children a mixture of spiritual and cultural concepts of respect, honour, love, and

humility. However, some acknowledged that when they were tired, angry, or feeling frustrated they were less likely to show patience and a few acted instinctively to their children's behaviour rather than thinking before reacting and consequently felt remorse afterwards.

Many parents managed their children's behaviour as a co-operative venture between themselves and often one of them, usually the mother, ameliorated the behaviour of the partner. For example, one of the parents who had a low income lived with his partner and extended family in an overcrowded, cold, rundown, three bedroom house. Their circumstances contributed to the parent feeling very stressed and this was manifested with bursts of anger towards his wife and children. However, this father who was also reflective and insightful recognised what was happening and had removed himself from what could have become a volatile situation. He had commented, "I often wonder whether it is my behaviour that is making my son aggressive?"

Several of the parents spoke about their younger child hitting and being aggressive towards their older siblings. One child had been admonished and physically disciplined by the father for this behaviour, but the father said he did not like administering this kind of discipline and was more inclined "to let her get away with it". Another parent considered his daughter to be non-aggressive even though she hit her sisters. In this case, the father alluded to spoiling his youngest child and letting her get away with some of her behaviour. According to Tremblay (2000), this behaviour of young children hitting their older siblings is not unusual as it is highly likely that the older children have already learned that hitting is not acceptable. However, this behaviour would not be acceptable behaviour in the traditional Samoan setting, as respect for the older would take precedence – family members would admonish the child for this (Silipa, 2008). This case suggests that the participant's response is less aligned with Samoan practice but in line with acculturation into the wider New Zealand society (Berry, 1980).

My observations were that, consistent with other Samoan parenting research (Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; McCallum et al., 2000), the study parents were largely practicing the concept of conscious parenting, as advocated by SKIP – a government strategy for positive parenting practice.

### **Theme Five: *Fa'avae I le Atua Samoa*/Samoa is founded on God (Samoa's motto)**

As noted by Macpherson (1991), the church and *aiga* are protective factors for Samoan families in New Zealand, and Utting (2005) found religion – Christian, Islam, Judaism, Hindu – to be a resiliency factor for parents and families. Vailaau (2005) also refers to the inter-connectedness of family, God, and the land. Most participants in this study said they believed in God even if they did not go to church, a concept Davie (1994) (cited in Voas & Crockett, 2005) refer to as “believing without belonging”.

For most participants church played a significant part in their lives. For one, the pastor was someone she could rely on for personal counselling and support when she needed it. Church was also a place where parents were happy for their children to accompany their grandparents as it was a place they felt connected to and it helped to socialise their children.

Despite their non-attendance at church, two parents said they continued to teach the values of the Ten Commandments to their children. Other parents were happy to let their children attend Sunday school and church with the grandparents because they believed in God and valued their children being taught Christian values. Several parents looked to the church for guidance either themselves, or for their children through the grandparents.

It was clear the Christian teachings they had learned from their parents were remembered, adhered to, and spoken about in the terms they used. As illustrated throughout the findings and the analysis, Christian/spiritual teachings from their parents influenced study participants' behaviour, language, deeds, and more especially their relationships. This research, then, confirmed that, for these New Zealand based parents, traditional Samoan cultural factors remain strongly influential – the *aiga* is the foundation, *Le va* is the relationships, God is who Samoa is founded on and, therefore, everything Samoans do is in relation to God, family, and relationships (Tui Atua, et al., 2007; Wendt, 1995). Furthermore, Wendt (1995) states that these elements of family, village, and the spiritual are inseparable and what strengthens Samoan families.

When I began this thesis I thought that these and other cultural factors might have a bearing on parents' perceptions of childhood aggression, their actions, and responses to their children; that is, to the way Samoans live their lives. However the extent to which they were influencing the parents was a surprise. It was as if Colin and others who returned back to the sanctity of their parents homes were heeding Tui Atua's advice: "You must go back, your family needs you and you can only find haven in your spiritual home by restoring relationships with the land and the seas, ancestors and Gods" (2002, p 2). Tui Atua's (2002) wise counsel that everything – the spirit, the family, the past and the present – impacts on the way Samoans live appears to be relevant even in this diasporic context.

#### 6.4 Summary

This study has shown *fa'aSamoa* values and beliefs continue to influence the way Samoan families perceive the concept of physically aggressive behaviour. At times *auala oke ae fa'atonu* (teach, don't growl) has been portrayed as a contrast between parenting in New Zealand and in Samoa, but the methods that the parents in this study are now describing as their preferred style have their genesis in pre-Christian times (Vailaau, 2005). Other methods have been maintained through many generations of Samoans including some, such as *mama and fagogo* which have been adapted. These nurturing practices resonate with the *aiga* values of *o le au o matua o fanau* and *Ole ola manuia o le tamaititi e le faalagolago atoa ia te ia lava ae o le galuega faitele a le nu'u (aiga) atoa* – children are precious and seen as a blessing and that it takes a whole village to raise a child. Maintenance of the *fa'aSamoa* values of *alofa*, respect and honour of elders was a core value and grandparents maintained their role as teachers of the language and culture and "spiritual nurturers" for their grandchildren. These cultural elements had a bearing on the way some parents responded to their child's physically aggressive behaviour- the absence or erosion of support systems of extended family leaves children and parents extremely vulnerable ( Cowley-Malcolm, 2005; Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009).

Hence, as highlighted also in McCallum et al's. research the old values are maintained in a modern context (McCallum, et al., 2000). All of these concepts, ideas, values, and beliefs have helped shape these parents' perceptions about childhood physical



aggression, its origins, and their responses to it. These findings suggest that culture is not stagnant; it is a dynamic force (Berry, 1980). Changes and adaptations and perceptions of diasporic people everywhere inevitably shift and adapt over time (Gershon, 2007).

It is important to be mindful of the ages of the parents in this study and the environments in which these parents have been raised. The cultural elements identified by this study may not be applicable to the older generation of Samoan parents in New Zealand, for example. Referring to mental health issues, Suaali'i-Sauni (2009) stated:

There are key differences between Pacific youth and Pacific adults. The Pacific mental health sector must 'come of age'. With an increasing New Zealand born Pacific population-Pacific born values and world views must find some accommodation with New Zealand – Pacific born values. (p. 24)

Suaali'i-Sauni is cautioning that what may have been important to the grandparents' generation and their upbringing may not necessarily have any relevance or applicability to the New Zealand-born generation.

For this group, then, parenting beliefs, perceptions, and behaviour management strategies were influenced by both cultural and environmental factors and a continual interplay of these two influences was seen in the data. All the elements which make up these two components must be taken account of as they will have implications for policy and service support. Despite the many positive parenting practices shown by most of the study parents, there were influences which clearly negatively impacted on the way they parent; for example, low financial status and lack of knowledge in regards to managing childhood aggression. These warrant further investigation and have implications for policy to improve service provision for families such as the parents in this study.

The next chapter, chapter seven, highlights parents' responses to viewing a CD-ROM *Play Nicely*, which presents strategies to use with parents and professionals to help young children use non-violence in their interactions with their peers, parents, and other adults.

## **Chapter seven: CD-ROM *Play Nicely***

### **7. Introduction**

The fourth objective of my research was to explore the usefulness of a multimedia conflict resolution tool *Play Nicely* as a way to support Samoan parents to manage their children's aggressive behaviour. Parents responded to questions about the 40-minute multimedia CD-ROM of strategies on how to manage physical aggression in young children.

#### **7.1 Background to *Play Nicely***

The CD-ROM *Play Nicely* was designed to provide information for carers on managing hurtful or aggressive behaviour in pre-school children; the crucial years where research shows that childhood aggression at this stage is more likely to have an impact later on (Tremblay, 2008a). *Play Nicely* originated from Vanderbilt University and was underpinned by Tremblay et al's. (1999) research on childhood aggression, which identified that nearly all young children behave aggressively, and highlighted the importance of self-regulation in young children to curb aggressive tendencies. For this to happen, children need to learn what is unacceptable and what is appropriate. Tremblay, et al's. research suggests that it is easier for pre-school children to be taught to regulate their behaviour than to teach older children to do so. Though parents and other carers need to be able to effectively manage aggression in young children, they do not always have the knowledge and strategies to do so.

The CD-ROM was developed to be a simple tool to teach effective strategies for managing aggressive behaviour. The content came from diverse sources and was developed in consultation with lay and professional people. *Play Nicely* differs from programmes focused on behavioural change taught over time in a series of teaching sessions, in that it is brief, is an interactive multi-media programme, and it may be viewed independently or in a group. There are tailored versions for parents, teachers, and health professionals and its developers have researched its effectiveness and found it to be beneficial for all these groups (Scholer & Goad, 2003; Scholer et al., 2006, 2007).

It consists of multimedia content, including narration and video clips. It contains five main recommendations: Teach children to not be a victim, learn how to respond to hurtful behaviour, decrease exposure to violence, show love, and be consistent (Scholer et al., 2007, p. 892).

The interactive CD-ROM presents the viewers (e.g. parents) with various scenarios such as one child hitting another, then presents an appropriate response for the viewers. Viewers are also presented with different strategies which they can click on and it is presented with an explanation of the effectiveness of this strategy. Effective strategies are modelled by adult and child actors. Ideally the viewer would explore four strategies and this would take five minutes. These strategies include: time out, empathy, redirecting, ignoring the behaviour, spanking a child, holding the child, yelling at your child, praising your child, taking away a privilege, ignoring the behaviour, saying no and setting the rule.

## **7.2     *Play Nicely in New Zealand***

Approximately 8 years ago, *Play Nicely* was shown to a number of *Pasefika* groups in New Zealand – early childhood educators from central Auckland *Aoga Amata*, a west Auckland women’s group exploring issues of violence in Pacific communities, and the P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A.<sup>16</sup> Auckland Central branch of which I was President at the time. The west Auckland group programme was facilitated by Elaine Dyer, renowned for her work in conflict resolution in New Zealand. She had personally invited [Seth] Scholer to show the CD-ROM to her group. According to personal communication between Scholer and Elaine Dyer (passed on to me with Elaine’s permission), the CD-ROM was received favourably by this group and lively discussions took place afterwards with the participants. None of these groups were involved in a research project as such, but members commented positively about the CD-ROM and expressed an interest in getting copies and showing it to people in their networks.

After viewing it with P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. members of the Auckland central branch, I became interested in the potential of the CD-ROM, for widespread use by Pacific parents in New Zealand. I found it compelling because it provided parents with a visual

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<sup>16</sup> P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A Is a national organisation of Pacific women in New Zealand. The acronym stands for **Pacific Allied Council of Women Inspiring Faith and Ideals Concerning all**. There are several hundred branches through-out New Zealand and Auckland Central Branch is the largest.

demonstration of strategies for teaching children to play harmoniously, and it promoted non-violence, something I am passionate about.

### **7.3 Learning style preferences**

According to Pacific educational researchers, Thaman (2003) and Pasikale (1996), Pacific students (both in the Pacific Islands and in New Zealand) enjoy learning that actively draws on visual and “showing and doing” rather than talking only. Therefore according to Pacific pedagogy, using a multimedia tool is most conducive to Pacific ways of learning. I reasoned that the majority of young *Pasefika* parents are New Zealand-born and, therefore, likely to be comfortable with technology, as well as being tactile, visual and action-oriented learners. I believed *Play Nicely* would be a fairly easy tool for them to navigate and use.

Another reason I believed that this tool was worthy of testing, was that Scholer and his colleagues found that parents who “embraced the program were from diverse backgrounds” and that “the content does cross socio-demographic boundaries” (Scholer et al., 2007, p. 733). I was keen to see whether the socio-demographic boundaries extended to New Zealand, and particularly to Samoan parents in a small rural town.

I anticipated that the parents in my study might lack knowledge and understanding about early childhood aggression and how to effectively manage it. The aim therefore of this particular aspect of the study was to gauge whether a tool such as *Play Nicely* would be advantageous for parents in helping them manage their child’s aggressive behaviour. The response from the 11 parents who viewed the CD-ROM was very positive.

### **7.4 Viewers and non-viewers of CD-ROM**

Fifteen out of the 18 parents interviewed for this study watched the CD-ROM, and 11 out of this group were then interviewed again 3 months after initially viewing. Did they consent to watch the CD-ROM out of obligation? I do not believe so. I think the majority of respondents wanted something that might help them with their child’s behaviour. For a few it may have been another thing to add to their already busy lives, but for most it was perceived as a benefit.

Three parents consented to view the CD-ROM, but did not end up watching it. One was a shy young father, who needed more prompting in his interview than most of the other respondents. His partner, who had organised the interview with me, was not home when I arrived. This may have led to him feeling awkward, but after we talked and made connections over people we both knew, he became more at ease, and after reading the information about the study, he willingly consented to take part. Nevertheless, I noted in my journal a certain apprehension as to whether he would present for the CD-ROM showing, not because I felt he did not want to support the study, but because of his age and his priorities with sporting activities, to which he was clearly committed.

The second participant who did not show for the viewing at the agreed time, was a young single parent who was sharing a flat with a family member. During our initial interview, her young son was aggressive towards her, kicking her to get attention (see Chapters 4 and 5). The mother appeared tired and embarrassed by her son's behaviour in front of me (an older Samoan woman). Shame among Samoans and the issue of respect is still entrenched and I left that interview wondering whether her sense of shame would impact on her commitment to view the CD-ROM.

The third 'non-viewer who consented to view' was a recently separated woman who did not keep the appointment time. A family funeral and a doctor's appointment for her baby were the reasons given and when she offered another time it was considerably outside the three-month time period for the interviews.

These three participants who consented to view the CD-ROM but did not eventuate in doing so, had two things in common. They were on low incomes and were in the younger age group; two in their early twenties and the other in her early thirties. Two of the three were single parents, albeit one recently separated.

Altogether 11 of the 15 parents who viewed the CD-ROM consented to be interviewed 3 months later. Of the 4 parents who were not interviewed, 2 were a young couple dealing with family issues, another was unavailable for business reasons and the fourth was moving house which had become a major issue for her and her family. The third time I had called in to see her, the family had moved.

On reflection I realised that these parents dealt with many issues that took up a great deal of time. Amidst their busy lives, I was grateful they took some time out to take part

in different aspects of the study, and I acknowledge that to take part in every aspect was a push for them. I acknowledge their generosity in being willing to see the CD-ROM, and especially grateful to those who viewed it being open to another interview afterwards.

That said, full participation in all aspects of this research in a short space of time was asking a great deal, given the shift work, children, family events and issues that may pose a barrier to participation. That so many took part in all phases is testimony to their goodwill and active endorsement for the study.

### **7.5 Viewing the CD-ROM**

There were three phases to this research study. The first was an interview to meet the parents and build rapport and to ask the first set of interview questions (see appendix five). At the end of this interview parents were asked if they were interested in viewing *Play Nicely*. They were given a brief explanation about the CD-ROM, and if they consented to view the CD-ROM an appointment was made to view the CD-ROM with me. Initially, all the parents consented to viewing the CD-ROM and an appointment date was made with each of them. I explained to them that after three months I would return for a third visit to interview them about their views of the CD-ROM (see introduction). The second phase was viewing the CD-ROM. The third phase was a post CD-ROM interview which took place approximately 3 months after viewing the CD-ROM. Each of the parents was shown the CD-ROM via my lap top, and I was able to provide explanations and answer questions. The interactivity of the CD-ROM worked well to prompt discussion with the parents. For instance, when parents were presented with a list of options on screen as to strategies they might use, each had a tick box which the parents could select as one they might use and each time they selected a strategy a verbal explanation for that strategy and whether it was effective or not was presented.

After each parent had viewed the CD-ROM with me they were given a copy which they could view at any time. All were au fait with using computers and had access to a computer either at home or as one parent said they accessed one through the local library. Several parents had the technology to view the CD-ROM on their television screen.

At the post viewing interview, most reported seeing the CD-ROM just once at the time they saw it with me. However, two parents (Clarissa and Andy) replayed and discussed different scenarios and strategies several times. Another participant, Harry, said “I viewed it three times...I wanted to make sure I knew what I was doing, to gauge a really good understanding of it”.

The parents engaged in a *talanoaga* about the CD-ROM. The *talanoaga* focused on whether overall the parents learned new information that they could use and whether they perceived the CD-ROM as helpful and in what way. As I had previously viewed the CD-Rom with the parents this helped in having a further dialogue about the helpfulness of the CD-ROM /or not and their confidence in using a tool of this kind.

In addition to focus on strategies to manage aggressive behaviour, *Play Nicely* suggests the value in other actions to decrease children’s exposure to violence. In the *talanoaga* we explored how parents were working on making the home environment non-violent. Their responses to the latter are discussed later in the chapter.

### **7.5.1 Changes in the family**

I was conscious that a number of factors might impact on whether or not parents learned to effectively manage physical aggression in their young children. Notwithstanding, that most children between the ages of one and three will naturally develop and mature without being physically aggressive if intervened effectively by care givers. There was a three months time frame from when the parents first viewed the CD-ROM and their third interview. I began our *talanoaga* by asking them if there was anything that had happened recently in the family that, from their perspective, may have triggered a change in their child’s behaviour. Several participants indicated that nothing had really happened that would influence their child’s behaviour, but others commented that some events had occurred during those three months. Debbie commented that two family members had died; Ruth had had several deaths in the family; and Bill reported that they had two new family members move in which had impacted the family financially and had also changed the family dynamics. By this he meant that there was now a change of foci within the family where other considerations had to be made to cater to the needs of young people as well as young children and prioritising their finances.

All of the parents were of the view that although these were events that may have been seen to be disruptive they themselves did not think that their children's behaviour had been impacted as a result. They had not noticed any dramatic change at the time of these events occurring except Tasi did remark a time of disruptive sleep patterns for his daughter who had had recent surgery but the disruptive sleep pattern lasted only a few days. The possibility that the tiredness may have made her less tolerant of siblings did occur to him. Tasi reported, that his daughter, "had just had grommets in her ears and she is still struggling with that. She has had ear drops for them and, yeah, slowly recovering and the grommets are working to drain the fluid." Tasi revealed, "we have decided to move overseas so we are on the verge of leaving soon."

## **7.6 CD-ROM Findings**

Parents gave varied responses to the question regarding any changes about how they viewed childhood aggression after seeing the CD-ROM. Several who before viewing the CD-ROM had perceived their children's behaviour as "normal", "naughty", "just wanting attention", "competing with other children", or "just testing" rather than as aggressive had changed their views after viewing the CD-ROM. Whether viewing the CD-ROM would lead to such change requires more in-depth research but in the *talanoaga* all the parents reported finding the information from the CD-ROM helpful.

The interactive design of the CD-ROM gave parents the choice of affirming which strategies they used and also giving them information about the strategies effectiveness or ineffectiveness. The CD-ROM included role modelling of different effective strategies so parents could see how to act on the strategy. There was a segment of *Play Nicely* with parents asking questions about childhood aggression and a professional responding in a clear, concise and simple to understand way. The scenarios and explanations on the CD-ROM helped the parents understand childhood physical aggression and also their child's behaviour. Mike, who in common with Harry treated his young daughter differently from his other children and who excused her behaviour as context driven, at the initial interview described his daughter's behaviour not as aggressive but 'just normal'. However, having viewed the CD-ROM, Mike felt he understood enough to identify his daughter's behaviour as aggressive. He said:



I think I agree with the CD-ROM about the aggression and what it is, now. It is about hitting and kicking. Action things that kids do that are hurtful. I think I said before that my little girl's behaviour wasn't aggressive, just normal, like naughty...but, nah, I think she is being aggressive and it is very serious. As the CD-ROM says, it can lead to worse behaviour when they get older so, yep, better to stop it now.

Before viewing the CD-ROM Clarissa and Andy felt their daughter was not behaving aggressively but was just testing them and wanting attention. After the CD-ROM they recognised the importance of curbing this behaviour before it got out of hand. Clarissa said:

Since seeing the CD-ROM...It's like how important it is to stop it when they are very young otherwise it can escalate into something bigger and then it makes it harder to stop. There's no doubt that her behaviour is aggressive according to what she does and what the people on the CD-ROM say. I can see that now.

In the analysis what had occurred with these two parents was an exploration of the CD-ROM where in the interactive way it was done they were firstly able to identify the strategies and pinpoint for themselves what they were doing and then click onto information about the strategy they were using and understand clearly from the professional explanations whether their child's behaviour was childhood physical aggression.

Both Bill and Peter classified their children's behaviour as aggressive before watching *Play Nicely* and had their impressions confirmed through watching it. Bill said, "No different, my perceptions in relation to my son are still the same as before, I said he was aggressive and from what I heard and saw...he is!" It seemed that for Bill the CD-ROM also triggered an interest in childhood physical aggression that was not evident before viewing it. Bill said:

I never really thought about it a lot in respect to my kids, but since this research I certainly am more interested. Since the CD-ROM, it has basically reinforced

for me what I thought about it, before, that my kid is aggressive, not just naughty.

Other fathers, such as Harry suggested that the CD-ROM improved understanding.

“I have a better idea about childhood aggression and what to do about it now.”

In our *talanoaga* Harry said he was harder on his son than on his youngest daughter and he realised that if he was to learn to respond effectively to his daughter's behaviour he had to learn about childhood physical aggression. He viewed the CD-ROM three times.

### **7.6.1 Strategies**

Participants said they had used many strategies before they viewed the CD-ROM; for example, smacking, time out, using a loud voice, and having a quiet mat where they would send their child to sit. Some parents were very persistent in ensuring their child did what they were told to do: “Usually whatever she was doing we would stop when we sent her there, even though she would kick up a fuss when we told her we had to...we just insisted she did and she did.”

When parents were asked if they gained any new ideas or ways of managing childhood aggression from the CD-ROM, most said there were no new ideas as such, but that some questions were raised which were answered as they went through the CD-ROM. The questions included the best length of time to put their child in “time-out”, and why some strategies, such as hitting, are not useful or helpful or don't work; and why others, like time-out, do work. Parents felt they gained new knowledge and understanding about childhood aggression. Comments made by participants show both the variation and similarity of responses:

I am not sure whether they are new ideas...some of the strategies I already use like time out and that...but I think it reinforced what I was already doing and the questions for me were from things like...I wonder why they do it like that and...is that really aggressive behaviour...you know when my child was doing it but otherwise...all good (Andy).

Clarissa was particularly keen to see some of her questions answered about time out and what the CD-ROM did was to give clarification to some of her queries related to time out. She said:

I think for me there were questions like how often you should do the strategy and when and how long they stay in time out...and I think seeing the CD-ROM made it clear for me". (Clarissa)

For participants Ruth and Naomi the strategies were not new, because their professional roles required them to know about how to respond to aggressive children. Naomi, a parent and early childhood educator said it was not new to her entirely. In our *talanoaga* she said as an early childhood educator she was prepared for the different behaviours children manifest so she did have some understanding along with some of the strategies, "some were new to me and others weren't". She was familiar with the reasons given on the CD-ROM in terms of managing childhood aggression.

However, for Ruth who was an experienced early childhood educator, the strategies she used with her son seemed "to have far more success with someone else's child." Ruth found managing her child's behaviour at her workplace difficult because of her professional role in the educational centre he attended. A possible reason for this may have been the difficulty Ruth had in disciplining her son in front of the children she teaches because she was disciplining him in a place where normally she would have control, but her child knew how to trigger certain responses from his mother. From earlier *talanoaga* (see Chapter 5-findings) with Ruth her frustration came from knowing her son was bright and that he had shown more peaceful means of responding to conflict with other children as she had witnessed, but at her workplace he would often revert to physical aggression such as hitting another child on the head with a book. When talking about the strategies she said:

Probably familiar with most of those ways and being with children and studying for years and years. I found myself at kindy trying to do some of those strategies with my son, but I seem to have far more success with someone else's child.

Unlike the two early childhood educators, Tasi, was not familiar with the strategies seen in the CD. Many were new to him and the strategies that he had been using were ineffective. It was encouraging that Tasi spoke firmly and wanted to teach his children about empathy but the way he went about doing it was not appropriate or indeed effective. However, he did have insights into his responses and a willingness to change which is why he wanted to see the CD-ROM in the first instance. He said:

Definitely new ways for me. Speaking firmly, yeah, I used to do that, but it was kinda loud and like a lecture...and I also smacked them...gave them too many warnings without acting on it. I learned you can't do that; you have to be firm but calm, and speak to them at eye level. I also learned to be consistent and to teach them about empathy in a much better way than hitting them and saying "How would you like it if I hit you?" which was stupid because I was hurting them and I was bigger and it just didn't seem right...well I know after seeing the CD it wasn't right to do that but I did...and I liked all the choices it gave you and the reason why one was better than the other.

After viewing the CD-ROM most parents indicated a heightened rather than a different understanding of childhood aggression, and of strategies to manage it. One parent said "Yes, using a firm voice. I tended to be too soft and just said things too often without looking at her (in other words talk and keep doing what I am doing without actually facing her directly when speaking to her) but now I look at her and just say it" (Ruth).

Another parent commented that her understanding is both different and better:

More different but both really...I think that there are lots of different ways and better ways to deal with children's aggressive behaviour...just punishing them is not a good thing...I think you can talk to them and communicate with them and help them to understand that there are ways of making them understand how to deal with their aggressive behaviour. (Sina)

In terms of modifying previous practice, parents' responses indicate that from the CD- ROM they gained a new understanding of the meaning of firmness and communicating it; "state once what you want the child to do" (rather than repeating

yourself) using appropriate voice and body language and carry through. The parents who used the explanation technique learned the importance of keeping it short and to the point. One parent acknowledged that his “explanations” used to be like a long lecture which didn’t work for his three year old who just wanted to go and play. Parents revealed that they had not previously understood age appropriate behaviour and, for many, the CD-ROM was able to show them age appropriate techniques. For some empathy was another new strategy used to teach children about what it feels like to be in someone else’s shoes:

One parent emphasised the importance of understanding why parents do what they do with their children especially when it comes to childhood aggression. She now understands the importance of intervening when they are young rather than waiting until they are teenagers:

Better. More awareness. Makes you think as a parent sometimes we just do things without really understanding why, but the DVD makes you understand that there are reasons why these things, like childhood aggression, is important to stop earlier and not later when it’s too late and the kid is a teenager and why a strategy like smacking isn’t a good strategy. (Debbie)

Almost all the parents had more confidence in responding to children’s behaviour after viewing the CD-ROM. Some felt more confident about continuing to apply the strategies they had been using and another felt affirmed in what she knew before, but appreciated having more knowledge to back her up (Ruth). Clarissa felt her confidence had grown because she now knew the reasons for using particular strategies and which ones are effective for her child’s age. Another parent, Sina, reports that she and her husband were never “hitters” but having viewed the CD-ROM are more confident about not using smacking to manage their children’s behaviour:

Yeah much more confidence. It kind of reinforced all the good things that we were doing. We aren’t really hitters and we don’t really like doing it and the CD-ROM reinforced for us that it was not a good option to take ...that there are better ways of managing childhood aggression. (Sina)

In terms of modifying previous practice, parents' responses indicate that from the CD- ROM they gained a new understanding of the meaning of firmness and communicating it; "state once what you want the child to do" (rather than repeating yourself) using appropriate voice and body language and carry through. The parents who used the explanation technique learned the importance of keeping it short and to the point.

Debbie, a single mother with a two-year child felt that the explanations about the different strategies gave her new ways of managing her child's behaviour: "It was really the explaining what to do about no hitting and no kicking and telling them what they could do with their feet and hands and the sense that a short simple explanation for the child was good."

Most of the parents smacked their children and those parents who acknowledged smacking their child said they did not feel good about doing this, and knew it did not work to stop the behaviour in the long term: This was highlighted in much of the *talanoaga* with Ruth. Even though Ruth and her husband did smack their children they also resorted to other strategies such as time out.

Yes, with my older kids it was time out in their rooms. And yes, we did resort to smacks as well, more my husband than me, but if we had a choice we wouldn't smack because we can see it really doesn't stop their behaviour in the long term. Maybe at the time, but they'll do it again. No, it really didn't work.

Another parent who felt she previously was constantly saying , "No" to her toddler but who had never explained why or what she was saying no to. It was either "No, that's bad" or "not nice" or "No that's naughty". She elaborates, "Yes, I talked to him and repeated saying 'no' if he did anything wrong or aggressive whereas now after watching the CD and saying 'no hitting' and then I explain why." (Debbie).

Other parents reported that they had not previously explained to their children that what they were doing was wrong. Some said it was because they were either too tired or didn't feel they needed to; or that whatever the child was doing warranted their parent telling them off. Andy didn't think it was entirely the CD-ROM that taught him this as

he is also involved in PAFT and, as the father of older children, has a lot of experience. Nonetheless he, like others, had utilised information from the CD-ROM that was useful.

I wasn't really into sitting down and explaining to my kids, whereas now I do quite a bit, constantly, everyday, rather than growl. I'd rather talk to her and explain that when she pulls my hair it hurts and when she screams and yells there are consequences. (Andy)

Some parents were quite animated in their responses and were able to articulate the new strategies by name. One parent said she used a distraction technique, another affirming and complimenting on what the child does well, and redirection. Bill said, "Yes, the distraction strategy. Positively affirming them/complimenting them on what they do well...and yes, we found they liked that and responded well to it. Hold him, calm him down and re-direct." Bill's responses indicated that he was using the strategies on more than one child. When asked about this he confirmed this was the case; "them" refers to the two youngest of his children whereas "hold him", "calm him down" and "re-direct" is in reference to his two year old son.

There were several strategies in the CD-ROM that parents said they did not use before that they were now using. The most common ones were explaining to children about kicking and hitting and that they needed to use their hands and feet for positive actions rather than negative ones, and parents being firm and making eye contact including getting down to the child's physical level.

Yeah, definitely "the hands are for stroking and feet are for kicking" one...and the part that is trying to show the child about caring for other children and seeing how they feel. I didn't use the words regarding kicking and touching but I did used to say to her to use her words rather than resort to any physical contact. Now I know not just to say "no", but "no hitting" and why. (Clarissa)

Some parents were challenged by the strategies on the CD. For example, in relation to getting down to the child's level and making direct eye contact, Tasi said was not easy to him. He had been brought up to listen and obey his parents in an environment of "one word, then action". For him then to have to actually get down to his child's level was

quite alien to him. He had not done it with his older children nor, in fact, with his younger one either. He maintained it was a new way of approaching his father/child relationship:

I had been brought up in a very male dominated household where Dad was boss and whatever he said goes. And my memory growing up was that he never looked us in the eye or got down to our level<sup>17</sup>. So it wasn't something that came easy to me...not because of my relationship with my child but because it wasn't something I had ever done...but you just do it if you know it's going to help your kid eh? And, yeah, it's all good. (Tasi)

Like Tasi, Harry was brought up by very *fa'aSamoa* parents and he, too, spoke about eye contact and how "no" was commonly said, but adds that after seeing the CD he now follows up his "no" with an explanation.

Yes the eye contact, getting down to their level and using a firm voice...I used to say "no" a lot before, but know now from the CD that it is better to say "no" and the action you want them to stop or not do again, and follow that with an explanation and what you should use your hands and feet for.

Bill found there were some strategies that particularly suited his son because of his physical abilities<sup>18</sup>. His son loved to be outdoors playing and participating in activities that required a lot of running and kicking and throwing. It made sense to the father to apply the strategies that were congruent with physical activities. For his son especially they were the easiest ones to apply:

When a situation arose, we just thought straightaway of applying one of the strategies...the most suitable for his behaviour...that part about kicking and hitting and using your hands and feet, and explaining it to him and showing him...they are easy ones to apply because he is always kicking the ball and hitting things. (Bill).

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<sup>17</sup> Bringing you down to the child's height level.

<sup>18</sup> His father spoke about his son's great kicking and ball handling skills and how he loves to play outside kicking the ball and playing with a bat and 'whacking the ball'.



In our *talanoaga* Harry was harder on his son than on his youngest daughter something that several fathers had in common with Harry. That he viewed the CD-ROM three times may have stemmed from his desire to be more effective with his daughter's behaviour than what he was in response to his son's behaviour which he earlier suggested was not appropriate.

In the *talanoaga* with parents they described the context and then they described the strategy they used. An example given by Mike was, "when she was with her siblings and they were fighting over something and when we were in the shop and told her she couldn't have what she wanted and she had a tantrum. I ignored her and was very firm with not giving in to her and she eventually calmed down."

Debbie said she used various strategies with her child – diverting his attention, firmness, eye contact and time-out – probably 5-6 times a day. Another parent, Ruth, said that when her child was shouting, throwing her toys around instead of tidying them up, or if daughter not getting her way she would shout and cry and hit. Ruth used the strategies of time-out and holding her daughter till she calmed down. This occurred 3-4 times a day. The *talanoaga* with parents showed parents used the new strategies from the CD-ROM very frequently. Debbie said, holding her son firmly until he finished his tantrum calmed him down after she had gone to get him to change his nappy and 'he threw a tantrum.' Normally, she said, "it was a real 'agro' time for both of us". To the question about the frequency and context the parents responses were varied but had some common themes. For example, Harry, the father of an eighteen month old daughter said the daily frequency with which his daughter pulled his hair and yelled and screamed would have resulted in a growling from him, but since viewing the CD-ROM his tendency to do so had diminished and his tendency now was to talk and explain to his daughter about her actions the way he was shown on the CD-ROM. Tasi on the other hand has a two year old who frequents her older sister's bedroom when her sister's do not want her in there and they end up fighting. Similarly Bill has a very active little two year old and when he wants something from his brother and does not get it, he ends up fighting with him.

The fighting with siblings as seen from the analysis was a common occurrence. Peter said his child fought with his brother "nearly every day 3/4/5 times a day." Naomi said

of her son that “one time he was pulling his cousin’s hair out in wrestling and I had to hold him and console him and he stopped”. For Debbie the frequency of her son’s behaviour was 6-7 times a day. She implied that the strategy not only worked for her son, but it had a calming effect on the rest of the family seeing the impact it had on him.

These quotes show the calming effects these strategies had on the children and that there were other gains in terms of alternative strategies that were utilised for example a short simple explanation as shown on the CD-ROM. In Debbie’s case the fact that the strategy in calming her son had a calming influence on the family may have been as a result of the modelling and that mother and child had both reached a state of calmness.

Parents found these strategies effective but they had to use them frequently. The younger and more stressed parents will more likely do it less frequently. For some of the more challenged parents they may not be able to apply it with this frequency but for the older parents, less stressed and more experienced they are describing what works for them and what works for them is the frequent reinforcement. That is why some parents give up on the psychological programmes because they are intensive but they are more effective (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003).

When asked what strategies from the CD-ROM they used in response to the behaviours they described, most (Sina, Tasi, Clarissa, Andy, Ruth, Harry, Peter, Andy, Debbie, Mike) said they used a firm voice, made eye contact, and gave the child an explanation about their behaviour. However, Sina, Tasi, and Clarissa used the words “no hitting”, “time out”, and held the child firmly until he calmed down. The *talanoaga* with parents discussed fighting and hitting occurrences with both genders with no indication that there was any link with the strategies being more useful with a specific gender group. However, there were indications that the aggressive behaviour was towards parents as well as siblings. For example Harry has a daughter who frequently pulls his hair. He used to growl her but now talks and explains with firmness and said to her “No pulling my hair” and puts his daughter on the floor as a form of time-out. “I also say things like ‘gentle hands’ to her and she goes from aggressive to placid”. On the other hand Tasi’s daughter fights with her sisters. He said he uses a firm voice to “explain why she can’t go into her sister’s room” and tells his daughter to use her hands and feet for “other things, good things – not hitting your sister or kicking her.” Similarly Bill has a son who

fights with his sibling and Bill said he used the distraction technique when his younger son and his brother fought over a toy: “He couldn’t have what he wanted and wasn’t playing nicely with him so, like I said, it was distracting him to other things and focusing him on being clear as to why he couldn’t have what he wanted and getting something else that he could play with”. These responses indicate that parents were open to new ideas and willing to consider aggression and its management in an exploratory way and utilised a variety of strategies from the CD-ROM.

Overall, the eleven parents report that the strategies they used for the kinds of behaviours they defined as aggressive were helpful. Clarissa said, “I think they did help because she took notice and stopped”. In Bill’s case with his son he was “pretty surprised how quickly he did calm down”.

Parents demonstrated awareness that these strategies require constant reinforcement and that it is important to be consistent and to persevere. Ruth says, “Just explaining and talking to her quietly but firmly and the more I have done it the more it seems to have sunk in...but I think we have to keep at it to get rid of it completely”. Mike was open to trying out the new strategies but wondered whether they would work initially. He persisted nonetheless and even though he has carried out the strategy several times a day he still wonders whether it will work, but he knows whether through his own experience or others that persisting at something may produce good results and in Mike’s case a certain sense of optimism.

Well, it stopped her and made her listen when I got down to her size and sat her down on my knee and held her firmly till she calmed down and then she listened...I think I have probably done it about every day 5 or 6 times a day...do I give up? Well, the CD said to be consistent, so I hope we’ll turn a corner soon.  
(Mike)

One parent spoke about perseverance and how the strategy has a calming effect on both the child and parent. “Yes I think so, and it was also about being persistent, that every time he did behave aggressively you acted on it and didn’t ignore it. Yes, it did, like I said it had a calming effect.” (Bill)

When asked to explain a bit more why they found a technique they used helpful, there was a general theme about it having a calming influence on the child which stopped the child from continuing the aggressive action, and that the child reacted to the parent's voice and expression as being good distracters for the behaviour. For example Ruth said,

I just used a firm voice instead of being soft and I also used the 'hands are for ...not hitting and feet are for kicking a ball', also used the distraction one and that worked when she kept insisting she have this jolly toy her brother had.

Tasi on the other hand said the strategies had a calming effect but in addition to that said, "rather than me yelling or growling it is like sucking it in and saying ok, think straight and get down and get with it... like talk to her and tell her what is not acceptable behaviour and show her what she can do instead".

Several themes flowed from the *talanoaga* in terms of the CD-ROM being helpful overall. These were the easiness of the intervention in terms of language, clarity of the messages, the visual impact and the modelling of these messages by the actors. For example Mike said, "I think it was good to see all the different options and know which one was good and not so good and watching the actors say things correctly and seeing the actions was good." Clarissa like Mike liked the visuals and the simplicity of the messages as did Andy adding he liked the fact the CD-ROM was not too long and it was a tool he could work and use himself from home.

Tasi talked about his other children who were now using the same techniques to monitor their sister's behaviour having picked up on what the parents were saying to their little sister and therefore copying their parents behaviour and saying to their sister 'stop hitting' and saying 'feet are for....and hands are for.....' which the father was quite amazed at. He was very happy this was having an impact on other family members who were along with him, now monitoring his daughter's behaviour. He explained this in our *talanoaga* by saying:

I dunno just guessing here but I think it has probably helped me calm down and be more patient when it happens and I do do more of the get down you know eye contact and explain things more...and I think that has helped my daughter too....I notice she is not doing the kicking and hitting so much now and looks at me

when she goes to do it and her sisters have picked up on no hitting ...use your hands for catching a ball ...which is kinda cute...because they are reinforcing with her what you have said. So she has all these little monitors around her now which is good cos it is about everyone in the family taking responsibility.

This links to the cultural concept shared earlier in the study where Samoan parenting aligns to the concept of ‘it takes a whole village to parent a child’ and where older siblings take responsibility for teaching and monitoring the behaviour of the younger children. Tasi benefitted in terms of more understanding of Childhood Physical Aggression and the age appropriateness of the strategies.

I think the teaching aspect gave me a better understanding of the topic and the child’s level of development in terms of dealing with it like you know how long they should be in time out for their age.

Parents spoke of the easy accessibility to the CD as each were given a copy and as long as they had a home computer or access to a computer they could watch the CD-ROM anytime. Parents all responded they would recommend the tool to other parents, friends, family and professionals such as teachers and health professionals. Many of the comments affirmed the CD-ROM and a commitment to not only viewing the CD-ROM but to actually carrying out the strategies and persisting with it. In the *talanoaga* with Clarissa she reinforced this by saying, “you have more to gain from doing it and if you care about whether what you are doing is the right thing in terms of your kids you will.” (Clarissa).

### **7.6.2 Creating peaceful homes**

*Play Nicely* promoted the idea of reducing children’s exposure to violence and working on making the home environment non-violent. The parents were committed to trying to make their homes as free of conflict as possible. Most were conscious of the effects exposure to violence can have on children and were setting up strategies within their homes to combat this. There was a growing awareness of the role-modelling provided by parents and siblings.

Most of the parents reported that they maintained a household that does not condone violence by the way they model behaviour and by restricting television programmes, videos and video games. In terms of the actions, parents tried to encourage non-violent behaviour and used various resources such as parenting books to aid them in this.

Mike said he and his wife chose not to have arguments in front of their children. As well as not displaying 'inter-partner conflict' in front of their children they restricted their children's television viewing.

One of the things my wife and I do is we never fight in front of our kids. We take it out of sight and earshot of them. It is too upsetting for kids to hear their parents go at it hammer and tongs, especially if you swear at each other and say things that are bad enough between yourselves, let alone kids hearing it. So, yeah! We do that, and we have limits on what they can watch on TV as well.

Parents spoke about maintaining a peaceful home with children was not easy especially in households with several children and parents who were tired and stressed. However, the message from these parents were that they were trying their best and role modelling behaviour to their children appeared to be a common thread for all of them even though it was difficult to maintain at all times. In our *talanoaga* Andy said,

Trying to have a home that is conflict free is not a reality but if we can model behaviour that focuses more on solving the problem in a non-violent way that is more the kind of home-life I prefer to have with my children. You can't get rid of conflict altogether when you have kids but you can try and model to your kids the way to handle it without resorting to scratching each other's eyes out (laughs). X and Y (identifiers removed) choose to model that to our kids and it's not always easy but we try....because that's the kind of home we want for them...not one where everyone is yelling at each other....we know those kinds of homes and we don't like it....

Many parents expressed the belief that television and games children play and watch have a bearing on how they interact with their siblings and friends. Parents restricted these items in the home with one or two parents completely banning them. One parent restricted her child to watching only the children's programme before she went to pre-school. She said,

I limit my children's TV viewing so they do not see programmes that are not suitable for them and my husband and I try to be a good example to our kids by the way we speak and act with each other. No use teaching your children to be non-violent if you aren't yourself, eh? (Clarissa).

Siblings were seen to be a big help in the home when it came to modelling good behaviour. “He has older sisters and brothers and they set an example for him, and role model good behaviour and basically reinforce what I say. We model good behaviour in our home.” (Bill)

The sense of family and having quality time with their children was another way that parents used to maintain a non-violent household along with modelling behaviour they wished their children to follow.

I think having family ....quality family time and having activities that are good for their learning and supporting them in their activities... and my wife kind of pulls my head in and sometimes I get angry but the strategies...I use for our child she sort of uses on me ...mellows me out and calms and explains things . I guess it is about role modelling the behaviour we want our children to follow...not always easy but we try. (Bill)

Parents described the difficulty of maintaining a non-violent home despite their busy lives and the number of children they have.

We try and create a loving, caring family home where our kids speak nicely to each other and interact in a way that shows they care about each other...we try and model that, my wife and I, and I think we do pretty well at it considering the number of children we have and the lives we lead...which is pretty full on. (Harry)

Along with monitoring what their children watch these parents try and lead a stress free life and have made a commitment not to buy violent toys for their boys.

We have a non-violent home. We monitor our children’s TV viewing for content. We try and lead a stress-free life. We try and get a balance so we are not tired out and we help each other with everything-chores around the house and caring for our boys. I don’t do swords and guns for my boys that kind of paraphernalia. I would rate the CD-ROM as 8 out of 10 for new parents. It would be very helpful for new parents (Sina)

Like many of the other parents Peter’s *talanoaga* with me involved the importance of ensuring the interactions in their home gave positive messages to his children of a happy home environment where all violent medium was disallowed.

Interaction in our home and we hope that is the message our kids will get when they grow up. We don't let them watch violent movies and have inappropriate games and books etcetra. We try and create a happy home environment for them so they feel they don't have to yell and scream for what they want. We don't let them get away with bad behaviour (Peter).

A parent with strong Christian beliefs recounted talking together and discussing things together as a family in the hope that their children will see this as a good thing to do. "We have our Christian beliefs. We talk together as a family. We have family discussions. We hope we are good role models to him (son) as to how to behave." (Bill)

In response to whether there was anything they did not like about the CD-ROM. All of the participants were in consensus that there was nothing. This gave a strong indication for these parents that they liked the messages on the CD-ROM and they were prepared to utilise what they saw. Earlier *talanoaga* showed what those messages were and how they were used with their children.

## **7.7 Summary of Chapter**

This CD-ROM was shown to 15 participants of whom 11 were interviewed 3 months after viewing to gauge their responses to the CD-ROM. There was a general sense that the CD-ROM had been helpful to parents. This was evidenced in a number of ways. Many found the CD-ROM helpful in explaining to them why the strategies some of them had used, such as 'time out' were viable options. Parents said they had gained new knowledge from the 'explanations' about the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of using such strategies for preventing childhood aggression. This new knowledge graphically demonstrated, in effect, shifted their original definitions of their children's behaviour. Parents saw these scenarios role-played by actors. They described these to be extremely valuable. Their explanations about the CD strategies usefulness and how to carry out the techniques properly were also found to be very useful. Furthermore, parents who had initially perceived their children's behaviour as 'not aggressive' now saw after viewing the CD-ROM a clear explanation that their child's behaviour might in effect be defined as physically aggressive.



Parents affirmed that viewing the CD had increased their confidence and given them more understanding about childhood aggression. They said their confidence at managing their child's behaviour had grown as had their understanding of childhood aggression after viewing the CD-ROM.

Parents shared the context and frequency in which they had used the following strategies in the three months since receiving the CD-ROM: diverting attention away from the behaviour, holding the child, making direct eye contact and being firm, giving the child an explanation, and getting down to the child's height level. In addition, while the strategies they used from the CD-ROM seemed to work they now recognised the importance of persistency and consistency in the application of new techniques.

The two early childhood educators in the study attested to the CD being a useful tool for them to use. The other parents described the CD as easy to understand and something anyone can use from home if they have a computer. None of the parents said anything negative about the CD-ROM and they all said they would recommend the CD-ROM as suitable to be viewed by family, friends and professionals.

The most salient messages to come from parents was the ease of use, the convenience, the explanations for the strategies, the simplicity of language, the visual component and that they gained confidence about childhood aggression and they found the tool useful. Parents' responses may be classified as short-term effect and the influence of researcher or CD effect cannot be determined. However the fact that these parents said they found the tool useful including the two parents who were early childhood educators indicates the usefulness of the CD if only as a short-term intervention. Alongside the other aspects of this study the 'interest' gained by parents on the topic of childhood aggression and their willingness to participate in viewing this intervention is in itself a positive step to increasing parents understanding of ways to prevent aggression.

The research design and the small number of participants who were interviewed 3 months after the first viewing of the CD-ROM prevents generalisation beyond this study. Nevertheless, the richness of the information from parents can be used as a platform for further study and may be of use to other similar population groups.

In terms of future use of this tool, a follow-up over a longer period to investigate the longer term effects is strongly recommended. Samoan and *Pasefika* communities may want to adapt this tool into their own languages with their own people acting out scenarios developed for specific cultures as has been the case for Spanish speaking migrant communities in the USA (Scholer et al., 2007).

This chapter reviewed responses by parents from the *talanoaga*, to the conflict resolution tool *Play Nicely*. The parents reported that the tool helped them with understanding and managing their children's behaviour and provided ample evidence of parents who had become au fait with the language of the CD-ROM. It helped parents to understand what were effective techniques and what were not, and being confident in describing strategies and how they were using them.

The final chapter will present on the whole thesis and brings together what I had set out to do, what I had found and how this may be of use to the communities of interest. I have also included in the conclusion what may warrant further study and the implications and ways forward for policy and service providers.

## Chapter eight: Conclusion, implications, and recommendations

Parenting education is not just about ensuring that parents are able to fulfil their responsibilities; it is about equipping them with sufficient knowledge to ensure that practitioners and policy makers fulfil theirs.

(Newman and Roberts, 1999, p. 63)

### 8 Overview

This study arose out of the recognition that violence was a problem in New Zealand, with *Pasefika* people being over-represented on the various indicators of violent behaviours including violence against women and children. I wanted to make a contribution to changing these indicators. My previous research and the literature suggested that aggression in adults begins in childhood, and that there was growing evidence that children could be taught to self-regulate aggressive tendencies (Keenan & Wakshlag, 2000). The evidence suggested that it was easier for children to learn to self-regulate a tendency to aggression in the early childhood years, than in the school years when behaviours may have become entrenched (Tremblay & Nagin, 2005). I have a strong belief that intervention programmes need to take into account the social and cultural practices and values of the people for whom they are designed. As a Samoan who grew up in New Zealand I was particularly interested in the practices and values of Samoan parents in relation to recognising and managing physical aggression in young children. Before interventions were designed for parents, it was important to know what parents were currently thinking and doing in relation to their children's behaviour.

The aims of the study were:

1. To investigate the perceptions of parents of Samoan ethnicity in Tokoroa, New Zealand, about childhood physical aggression, the origins of the behaviour and the ways parents managed it.
2. To describe parenting practices, support parents received, sources of that support and the values they used in raising their child/children.

3. To explore the literature to identify and describe risk and resiliency factors that influence childhood physical aggression.
4. To explore the usefulness of a simple multimedia programme (in the form of a CD-ROM) to support Samoan parents in managing childhood aggressive behaviour in young children.

This research adds to the knowledge base on Samoan parenting practices and in particular to that of Samoan parents' perceptions of physical aggression in early childhood as noted in the following key findings:

- Traditional cultural concepts and values were evidenced in the perceptions held by the Samoan parents in the study
- Risks and resiliency factors were identified and described by parents and were congruent with the literature
- A short simple intervention was viewed as helpful by the parents in this study, and may have potential for wider use

This concluding chapter draws on the findings from the *talanoaga* with parents, including those before and after the parents viewed the CD-ROM. A brief summary of the methodology and the literature is provided, and these are related to the key findings. Second, the chapter explains and suggests recommendations in terms of policies and interventions that will assist parents in learning how to minimise the risk of harm to children with childhood physical aggression. Finally the chapter takes cognisance of the cultural underpinnings which have informed this study including the literature.

### **8.1 The importance of the study**

*Talanoaga* with parents provided insights into parents' perceptions of early childhood physical aggression and of the cultural values that influenced their management of their children's behaviour. While there were values and behaviours from their migrant parents which they chose not to emulate, there were other aspects of their culture which they changed and adapted. These changes and adaptations provide new understandings and explanations in relation to the parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression. I would argue strongly that the nature of the findings (particularly the cultural aspects) was due to the methodological approach.

## 8.2 Methodology and analysis

A qualitative methodology incorporating Community Participatory Action Research, Grounded Theory, and a Samoan approach called *fa'afaletui* and *talanoaga* was used to conduct this study. My belief that the *fa'afaletui* approach was the best way to do this was supported right from the consultation phase, when the Samoan community affirmed their support for the study. This was important because of the cultural specificity of the study and the values within the Samoan milieu that are key to establishing respectful relationships. The methodology enabled an in-depth exploration of how parents from this small community responded to their children's behaviour and how they perceived their children's physical aggression. What emerged was a combination of factors, not least of which were elements of *fa'aSamoa*, which, on analysis, were shown to significantly influence their perception of childhood physical aggression as in the fisherman's analogy, which gave him three views of the data-close, closer, closest.

Finally, would the findings have come out any different if I had not used this methodology? In my view the depth of the *talanoaga* and the appropriateness of the methodology to conducting research with a specific community such as the parents in this study adds significance to the cultural elements being uncovered and, hence, the emergence of the five cultural themes.

## 8.3 Findings and their implications

The key findings as noted in chapter 4, 5 and 7 were:

- Traditional cultural concepts and values were evidenced in the perceptions held by the Samoan parents in the study.
- A short simple intervention was viewed as helpful by the parents in this study, and may have potential for wider use.

From these two broad findings I have highlighted four implications. These are 1) the parents' perceptions about physical aggression, origins of the behaviour and ways of managing it, 2) role of loss of major support systems, 3) lack of economic means and 4) loss of language and culture.

#### **8.4 *Parents' perceptions of child's behaviour, its origins, and ways of managing the behaviour.***

The parents in this study described aggression as hitting, smacking, pulling hair, punching, licking, screaming, throwing objects, biting, punching, and yelling, the origins of which almost all of the parents stated came from their homes. This is clearly understandable from Tremblay et al.'s. (2004) research which states that a child's physical aggression may occur as early as 7 months and that the crucial ages are 12 months to 3 years. This is a time when most children are in the care of a parent/s and at the toddler stage more likely to be with the mother as in the case of the children in this study. Even though most of the children attended early childhood education centres and spent time with grandparents and other members of the extended family, almost all of the parents stated that the child's behaviour originated primarily from their home environment. Given that some parents did smack their children, raise their voices, and were very stressed at times it is highly likely their children will have observed this behaviour in the home from the parents and emulated it. Many researchers have found the home environment and children's exposure to how parents respond to the child's behaviour has a significant influence on the child/s behaviour (Bandura, et al., 1997). However, as the findings showed there were multiple factors influencing the way parents raised their child/ren, not least of which were cultural, educational, and religious. According to the parents, the context determined the justification for their child's behaviour; for example, in the case of another child having something the child wanted or that belonged to them. This concurs with the literature that at this stage of development children are more likely to get into conflict in such situations (Gordon & Browne, 2008; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). However, what this study also showed was that parents did intervene in their child's behaviour and that smacking as an intervention strategy was not a preferred option but rather as a last resort. For parents, the preferred option was to show and teach their child that what they were doing was not acceptable behaviour. For those with grandparents and extended family living close by the support they received alleviated much of the stress for parents.

#### **8.4.1     *The protective role of major support systems***

The families in this study who had the support of a grandparent and other support systems had greater ease in managing their children's behaviour. Those that did not have this support were faced with situations that placed them and their children in considerable stress. Without the active involvement of grandparents living close by parents would have found caring for their children difficult and as expressed by several parents, would not have been able to manage without their parents.

#### **8.4.2     *Risk – Socio-economic factors.***

It was evident that a lack of income, combined with demographic factors such as single parenthood and low socio-economic status had a major bearing on these families' abilities to cope with the stresses of family life. This was particularly so for those who were single and younger parents with limited educational qualifications and who had less support. (Percival, 2011; Strauss, 2000; Strauss & Donnelly, 2001; Tremblay et al., 2004).

These findings were congruent with the literature on the relationship between economic impacts, parenting styles, and childhood physical aggression (Waldegrave & Waldegrave, 2009; Waterson, 2003; Yelland, 2005). The quality of child-parent family functioning has a major bearing on health outcomes and hence intervention at the 1-3 year age group is important, as it is easier to manage at this age than when the child is older (Tremblay et al, 2004). Other *Pasefika* researchers have also found elements of Samoan parenting - for example hitting that has involved a major shift in attitude especially in relation to younger New Zealand born parents (McCallum et al, 2001; Iusitini et al, 2011). Similarly, like the parents in this study hitting as a mode of discipline is becoming less acceptable. This may be because of education, and resources available in New Zealand. However, living in New Zealand may also have other factors that have a negative effect such as the increasing use of alcohol and drugs, single parenthood and lack of support where distances of travel have become far more costly for parents on low incomes. Travel incurs costs which makes visiting families and healthcare specialists difficult for these families (Percival, 2011).

#### 8.4.3 *Risk – Loss of language and culture*

In this study grandparents were found to be the mainstay in families for many reasons, not least as carriers of the knowledge and traditions of Samoa. They had the fluency of the language and knowledge of the *fa'aSamoa*. Knowing the language and having the cultural knowledge brings pride and a strong sense of identity to many Samoans especially young people (Anae, 2007). How will the language and culture survive without the traditional speakers and holders of that knowledge when they are gone? This loss of language and identity has major implications for the *fa'aSamoa* in New Zealand and is all tied in with issues of identity which is crucial to the health and well-being of young Samoans (Tiatia, 1998).

It was clear from the *talanoaga* that the grandparents and *aoga* were two of the main sources of learning for their children about the *fa'aSamoa*. Parents recognized their own lack of fluency and deeper knowledge of Samoan culture and therefore sent their children to *aoga* to learn Samoan language and culture. Partnership between parents and educational institutions in the delivery of these programmes is important. Furthermore, the broader issue of continued funding and resourcing by agencies needs urgent consideration by the community and Government.



## **8.5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made from the findings of this study and specifically focus on targeted parenting programmes, a brief intervention tool and support systems.

### **8.5.1 Specifically targeted parenting programmes**

Parents in this study used a combination of traditional and contemporary ways of managing their child's aggression and these ways were derived from a variety of sources – education, health, parenting programmes, and via family members with knowledge, skills and experience. The literature shows that parenting programmes are an effective means of helping parents parent effectively (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). Parents did not have a sound knowledge of childhood physical aggression and even though most remarked that they were knowledgeable about their child's development stages, it was clear that for some this did not match their strategies, which were not age appropriate.

The church and church ministers have significant influence in Samoan communities. They also play an important role in pre-school programmes such as *aoga amata*. Given the seriousness of childhood physical aggression, it would make sense for these agencies (church, education, and health) to collaborate in designing programmes to help parents manage childhood aggression. Such programmes need to be delivered in a culturally competent way with teaching methods that attract the participation of young, diaspora communities. The programmes may be provided by the church and funded through education and health agencies who would work with the church to evaluate the programmes and provide training for facilitators. Clear, concise, action oriented, interactive programmes which generate fun and laughter work best for *Pasefika* diaspora parents. Numerous research points to early intervention as more cost effective and beneficial in the long term.

### 8.5.2 A brief intervention

In this study parents showed they were open to new ways of learning about parenting and changing their behaviours and responses to their children's behaviour. Their understanding of the concept of childhood physical aggression was evident after they had viewed the CD-ROM and parents were unanimous in saying the CD-ROM was helpful to them. It helped them to understand how to apply the techniques that were effective and to understand why others were not effective.

This kind of programme may very well be useful for young people who find computer technology easier to access and use the information rather than attending a lecture or a programme on parenting. The mode of delivery is simple and the messages are clear and concise. These kinds of programmes have potential not only for parents but for health workers and educationalists who work with children.

I would recommend further research into how *Play Nicely* can impact change for parents in the long term, particularly if it was adapted into a multi-media programme that has local people acting out the scenarios along with the commentaries. Uniquely Samoan ways of saying and doing may be adopted into the scenarios as has been done with other messages on television which target *Pasefika* people including Samoans; for example, the cervical screening programmes in which an important message is portrayed in a *Pasefika* way with humor by *Pasefika* women which most *Pasefika* people including Samoans can relate to. Policies around the delivery of programmes need to ensure that cultural competencies are producing programmes of high cultural calibre which diaspora communities can relate to and build upon. More research is warranted in this area. However, I also think it is imperative that programmes not only focus on the parents at risk per se', but are mindful that there are also societal risks which, on a much bigger level, also need to be addressed: these include equity of income, support services, and access to healthcare, for example (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006).

### **8.5.3 Support systems**

Grandparents provided support for families with young children and they were also the transferers and vessels of traditional knowledge and the Samoan language. My recommendation is in the likelihood that families may not have access to this support a network of voluntary Samoan grandparents is initiated to bring them into the homes of vulnerable parents to act as surrogate grandparents and role models of the *fa'aSamoa* concepts of respect (*fa'aaloalo*), humility, and love (*alofa*). Tui Atua, (2009) states these principles are what keeps Samoans strong and resilient and minimises risk. Although all the parents in this study did not live in inter-generational families on the whole, there were a few who did who found it helpful and supportive. More emphasis on building a strong sense of identity and pride in being Pacific/Samoan needs to be made more available to parents of young children and in schools and other settings where language and culture is resourced and supported. The surrogate grandparents will also help and support parents in this cultural maintenance by engaging parents in *talanoaga* about language and culture and help build their sense of being Samoan.

Culture, language and church according to many researchers are strength based factors (Suaali'i-Sauni, 2009). All of which lead to having a strong sense of identity (Tuisuga-le-taui, 2009) and well-being.

### **8.5.4 Socio-economically vulnerable parents**

The most vulnerable parents in the study (3) were those who were young, unqualified and single parents. Then there were those (4) who were on lower incomes who economically would have found it more difficult living on their own. They chose to live in extended family units including with elderly parents, which, apart from one couple was a more positive arrangement socially, economically and culturally. Policy directed at fair and equitable distribution of economic means for vulnerable parents needs to be seriously considered to allow them to provide a healthy start to life for their young children. Without this the children as shown in the research are at risk and the consequences will also show later in life when the social and economic costs will escalate (Percival, 2011; Public Health Advisory Committee, 2010).

### 8.5.5 Contribution to the field

This is the first such study on this topic of Samoan perceptions of childhood physical aggression and trialling a brief intervention tool with a group of Samoan parents. What this study adds is in-depth data on Samoan perceptions of childhood physical aggression and its origins from the parents' perspective. This is a significant finding in itself.

While there is an abundance of Western literature on childhood aggression, early childhood development, risk and resiliency factors, I have added to the body of knowledge about Samoan perceptions of childhood physical aggression. Evidence from this study in small town New Zealand has shown that both cultural and environmental factors have an influence on parent's perceptions and management of childhood physical aggression.

The importance of cultural understandings and insights of parents in relation to origins and perceptions of childhood aggression should not be underestimated. These have been presented in this thesis. Fundamentally significant within this study are the cultural imperatives which provide an understanding of how Samoan parents are constantly evolving to meet the demands of parenting in today's society and, as in the case of these study parents, positively impacting the next generation. Especially evident were the cultural underpinnings of: *teu le va*, (guarding and caring for the space of relationships between peoples), *ole ola manuia o le tamaititi e le fa'alagolago atoa ia te ia ae o le galuega faitele o le nu'u (aiga) atoa* (it takes a whole village to raise a child), *O le au o matua o fanau*, (children are highly valued), *fa'atonu ae aua le oke* (teach but don't growl), *fa'avae i le Atua Samoa* (trust in God) (see Chapter 6). This study has shown that traditional values and beliefs continue to have an influence on the way diaspora communities, such as the Tokoroa families, perceive their children's behaviour and their own responses through the constant interplay of *fa'aSamoa* and *Palagi* ways of managing childhood physical aggression.

This study also shows that other key influences on parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression comprise a combination of environmental and cultural factors. Key factors within the environment such as employment, level of income, education support from both inside and outside the family sphere, and parents own insights and

reflections, had an influence on the way parents in this study managed their children's behaviour (Heckman & Masterov, 2007).

Finally, this study shows the value of the intervention tool. Significantly the CD-ROM has been shown to be an effective short-term intervention which can be applied in a Samoan diaspora community and used successfully without modification: viewing this CD-ROM in their home can make a difference to parental perceptions of childhood physical aggression and how parents manage their child's behaviour. Those parents who had perceived their children's behaviour as not aggressive changed their perceptions after viewing the CD-ROM. The ease with which the parents utilised the *Play Nicely* CD-ROM showed both their technical skills in regards to utilising such learning media and the potential for future multi-media programmes. The confidence and knowledge participants gained from the programme, in combination with their willingness to adapt their parenting techniques, their own insights about the raising of their children, and their desires to see their children happy and healthy shows promise for these parents and children in the future.

#### **8.5.6 Further study**

This study has the potential to provide information for service deliverers which may assist in the delivery of ethnic specific programmes for managing children's behaviour and reduce the capacity for future negative impacts. Despite the many positive parenting practices shown by most of the parents in this study there were influences which clearly impacted the way they parent. In order to improve the way parents like those in this study parent, key factors warrant further investigation. These are: economic impacts on parenting practices especially for single and low income families, the decreasing use of the Samoan language and cultural maintenance for future generations, the impact of grandparent support, and the lack of parenting tools specifically for Samoan families in managing childhood aggression. In order for parents to effectively assist children in learning to self-regulate aggressive tendencies, they need a knowledge and understanding of childhood physical aggression and its consequences for future behaviour (Tremblay et al., 2004).

## **8.6 Reflections on Limitations**

A number of potential limitations to this study are acknowledged. These are largely associated with an unanticipated large reduction in the numbers of participants. The original intention was to have up to 50 participants participating in a series of focus groups and one-to-one interviews. Following discussion with my supervisors this number was culled significantly. The decision was made to not include the focus groups data because of the large collection of rich data from the 1-1 *talanoaga* sessions with the parents. I envisage writing up the focus group interviews for publication in the future. The final number of 18 impacted the study in a number of ways.

### **8.6.1 Generalisability**

The small number of participants (18) and the context-specific location clearly limit the study's generalisability. However, it also allows for the possibility of the study being replicated elsewhere.

### **8.6.2 The methodological approach**

This was impacted in a number of ways. First, the study was designed to cover a broader focus. While this may ultimately not have made any difference to the findings, it may have made a difference to the depth of focus of my research. Furthermore, in retrospect, it is possible that mixing the trialling of the CD-ROM and the information gathered in interviews made it more difficult and involved a great deal more work than anticipated. These two aspects may have been better served with quite separate studies with two different methodological approaches. Nevertheless, having included both has had its benefits. For example, seeing how the CD-ROM made a difference to the parents who did view it and how it changed their perceptions of childhood aggression has been very useful and, as evidenced by the findings, it gathered rich data.

## 8.7 Concluding statement

Findings from this small Tokoroa study may not hold true for all Samoans, nor for all times and places; this study does not suggest that all Samoans act and behave the same way. However, there are similar populations in New Zealand to which the study findings might apply. Key to any recommendations in terms of policy and interventions is the assurance that people concerned have a stake in what is being proposed. Those who have an influence on policy and provision of services to Samoan peoples need to have clear understanding and recognition that each person has a world of influence from their own cultural, familial, social, spiritual, and economic backgrounds.

If you seriously want better outcomes for Pacific young people and their families, then policy settings that influence them need to be congruent with this world (the world Samoans live in, understand and take their meaning from). It is a world that has some similarities with the *Palagi* or *Pakeha* world, but it is also at the same time very different. People should draw on the strengths, understandings and meanings of their worlds and have their own role models leading. That will require engaging many more Pacific policy makers, researchers, evaluators and practitioners who are accorded the space to develop their own paradigms around that which is meaningful. (Tui Atua Efi, 2002, p. 13)

*E pele i upu, pele i ai, pele i aiga, pele i foliga*/Nurture fondly in word, nurture fondly in feeding, nurture fondly in gesture, nurture fondly in body language (Samoan proverb).

***Fa'afetai, soifua, ma ia manuia***

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## Appendix 1



### Participant Information sheet

**Research topic:** An exploration of Samoan parents' perceptions on childhood physical aggression and an intervention CD-ROM - *Play Nicely*

Warm Pacific greetings!

### Brief description of this research project.

This project aims to explore childhood aggression and ways of addressing it and managing it from a Samoan perspective. It will also explore Samoan parents perspectives of a CD-ROM - *Play Nicely*.

### Criteria

If you fit the following criteria then you are eligible to participate in the research.

- You are Samoan/Samoan ethnicity
- Your child is 1- 3 yrs of age at the time of the interview
- You are a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- You live in Tokoroa or are from Tokoroa (have lived there for 10 or more years)
- You are literate in English and speak English fluently
- You have access to a computer

### What sorts of questions will be asked?

The 1-1 interviews will require some short and some long answers. There will be questions pertaining to the topic and about yourself, for example your contact details. You will also be asked if you are interested in being shown a CD-ROM - *Play Nicely* which will be shown at the second visit. This is a resource which contains information



for managing childhood aggression. We will conduct a second interview with you three months after watching the CD-ROM. This will focus on questions about the CD-ROM and your views about the CD-ROM.

Both interviews will take about an hour.

### **What will happen to the information from the interview?**

All interviews will be audio-taped and information transcribed. These will be sent back to the participants to check for accuracy. The information will then be collated and analysed and a summary report of the findings will be sent to all participants. A report will also be disseminated to the Samoan communities, social agencies, and universities. It is important that the findings are known so that they can be translated into meaningful outcomes for parents and communities.

### **What use will this information be to myself, my child or my community?**

This kind of research has never been done before with Samoan families. Childhood aggression is a problem many parents face with their children. Access to information that can help parents manage it effectively at a young age is important. We hope the information from the study findings will be of benefit to participants and their families and the wider community in addressing childhood aggression with Samoan children.

### **How do I know I will not be identified by anyone else other than the interviewer?**

Your identity will be known only to myself as the researcher. All the information will be coded along with your name so you can not be identified. The information is stored in a locked cupboard in my office at the university.

### **Your rights**

You have the right to decline to take part in this study at any time or decline to answer any specific questions. You have the right to ask any questions and to discuss any aspects of this study with me or my supervisor.

### **Discomfort during or after the interview**

Should you experience any discomfort during or after the interview please do not hesitate to call off the interview or if your discomfort arises after the interview, call me

and discuss this with me. Your comfort is very much a priority. If you have anything you would like to discuss with my supervisor please see contact details on this form.

Thank you so much for your time and attention.

Warm regards

Esther Tumama Cowley-Malcolm

Contact details

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021 364457

Home: 07 3125720

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Supervisor: Associate Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

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## Appendix 2

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



**VICTORIA**  
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

### MEMORANDUM

Phone 0-4-463 5676  
Fax 0-4-463 5209  
Email [Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz)

TO	Esther Cowley-Malcolm
COPY TO	Associate Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
FROM	Dr Allison Kirkman, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	January 1, 2008
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	<b>Ethics Approval: No 15350, Managing childhood aggression in Samoan children using multimedia.</b>

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 31 December 2009. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Allison Kirkman  
Convener

## Appendix 3

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



**VICTORIA**  
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

### Consent to participate in research (individual)

#### Title of project:

**Samoan parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression and trialling an intervention tool - CD-ROM *Play Nicely*.**

Supervisors : 1. Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

2. Dr Stephanie Doyle

Researcher: Esther Cowley-Malcolm

- I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself (or any information I have provided for this project (before data collection and analysis is complete) without having to give reasons or without penalty of any sort.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and transcribed and that I will be able to check the information for accuracy.
- If I withdraw I understand all relevant tapes and transcripts or parts thereof, will be destroyed
- I agree to take part in this research
- I agree to receive a summary of the research findings
- My identity will be known only to the researcher and any information I give will not be able to identify me.

Signed:.....

.....

Name of participant (Please print clearly)

Participant contact details\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewers signature

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



Title of project: Samoan parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression and trialling a CD ROM - *Play Nicely*.

<b><i>Demographic Information</i></b>
<b><i>Name of parents (code)</i></b>
<b>Employment</b>
<b>Salary range</b>
<b>Marital status- single, married, in a relationship</b>
<b>Education – schooling/ primary/secondary/tertiary</b>
<b>Parents Age</b>
<b>How many children</b>
<b>Ages of children</b>
<b>Born or lived in Tokoroa and how many years.</b>
<b>Qualifications/trade /professional or school/institution.</b>

## Appendix 5

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



**Study title: Samoan parents' perceptions of childhood physical aggression and trialling a CD-ROM- *Play Nicely*.**

### **Questions: Post CD-ROM viewing.**

- a. How do you view childhood aggression (now) after viewing the CD-ROM?
- b. How many times did you view the CD-ROM?
- c. Are there any new ideas or ways of managing aggression in your child that you were not aware of before? Did it raise questions for you? What were they?
- d. After viewing the CD were there any strategies you recognized from the CD that you used? If so, were they successful?
- e. After viewing the CD do you think you have a better or different understanding of childhood aggression?
- f. After viewing the CD do you think you have confidence/more confidence in applying previous or new strategies.

#### **1.1.1. After viewing the CD were there any strategies in the CD you did not use before that you are now using?**

- g. How often and in what context did you use these in the last 3 months?
- h. Which strategies did you use from the CD?
- i. Did you think those strategies helped you and your child?  
In what way did they help?
- j. Overall, what was it about the CD that you found helpful/unhelpful?
- k. Would you recommend other parents and professionals view the CD? Why?
- l. What else have you done (other resources/people) in your home that encourages non-violent behavior?

\*Parents can call me if they need to in regards to the CD-ROM. These questions are a guideline and parents can elaborate and expand on their answers as much as they like given the time available for the interview. Parents may also be prompted to provide more detail to their responses if necessary.

## Appendix 6

TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI



**VICTORIA**  
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

### **Samoan parents' perceptions of Childhood aggression and trialling an intervention tool - CD-ROM - *Play Nicely***

#### **Pre CD-ROM Interview questions**

Explain to parents: the questions are a guideline and parents can elaborate and expand on their answers as much as they like given the time available for the interview. Parents may also be prompted to provide more detail to their responses if necessary.

<b>FAMILY</b>	<b>BEHAVIOUR</b>	<b>SUPPORT</b>
Tell me about your family...	Tell me about your child's behaviour and how you respond to it.....be as expansive as you like with your response.	Tell me about any support for your child's behaviour you have received
How many children are you raising?	Tell me how you define childhood physical aggression and explain to me whether you see any of these behaviours in your children?	Have you ever felt a need to speak to anyone about your child's behaviour?
Who are the caregivers in your family? How do they care for your children ?	Prompts... how often/context?	If you haven't tell me why you think you haven't and if you have what made you decide to do that?
Who spends the most time with your child? How do you spend time with your children?	Tell me how you respond when he/she does these things (behaviours) and how you are feeling at the time?	If you needed support who would you seek it from/friends/family? Tell me why these particular people?

---

Who sets the tone for parenting? What are the main themes of your tone setting /parenting?	Tell me where you think your child's behaviour comes from?
Does your child attend an early childhood education centre?	Tell me where you think your response to her/his behaviour comes from?
Do you stay with your child at the ECE Centre (how long) or are they comfortable being there without you?	Are you familiar with your child's development and how he /she should be behaving according to their age?
What are the things you enjoy the most and the least about parenting and what things would you change about your parenting.	If you are not familiar with your child's development would you find the information helpful to you? /in what way?

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## **Appendix 7**

### **Piloting the questions and CD-ROM**

Five parents, three female and two male, were recruited from the community to pilot the questions which included the demographics, and the pre- and post- CD-ROM questions. The parents were aged between 18 and 35, two were single mothers. The pilot took place at the homes of the piloters. The pilot parents were provided with the consent forms and information sheet about the study and a verbal explanation of the study was given. Consent was granted for the piloting of the questions. The piloters were asked the demographic questions then the pre-CD-ROM questions. They were shown the CD-ROM then asked the post-CD-ROM questions to gauge understanding, simplicity, and length of time of interview. Piloters indicated that their comfort level with the instrument was satisfactory, as was the length of time required to view the CD-ROM and the length of time given for the interviews before and after viewing the CD-ROM. (see appendices for questions). Each interview took about an hour and the piloters' responses were recorded:

- All said they enjoyed the interview.
- All responded that the questions were simple and easy to understand.
- All felt that the questions were relevant to the topic.
- All five piloters said the number of questions were “about right”
- While the questions were generally regarded as satisfactory they suggested adding two more questions. One was to add people's age in the demographics; the other was about whether parents should keep a journal of their children's behaviour.

## Appendix 8

**Table 4. Comments from piloters**

Parent A	Perhaps add age to the demographic questions
Parent B	Length of time good, questions simple and able to understand.
Parent C	All good – nothing to add.
Parent D	Ask parents to keep a journal and what techniques they used and how often
Parent E	All good – nothing to add.

Following the piloting, and taking their comments into consideration, the questions were then reviewed in consultation with my supervisors.

## **Glossary of Samoan words**

Agaga - the essence and spirit of a Samoan person

Aiga - family

Alofa - love, compassion, and concern

Aoga - school/place of learning

Ava - honouring the human dignity and integrity of the other party

Fa'afaletui - In the context of this thesis - houses of knowledge – a methodological approach.

Fa'alavelave - an event/occasion that rallies support from families to contribute and take part in.

Fa'alavelave - trouble/event requiring family assistance/support.

Fa'aloalo - respect

Fa'amagalo - forgiveness

Fa'aSamoa - the culture, language and etiquette of Samoa. Samoan ways of doing and knowing, traditions, stories, dress and food of Samoa. A way of life.

Fa'asinomaga - identity

Fagogo - traditional story telling/ a way of nurturing the young by the elderly normally the grandparents.

Fale - house

Fanau - children

Fanua - land

Feagaiga - minister and also referred to the spiritual tapu/sacred relationship between brother and sister.

Feau – a chore/task/a job to do

Gafa - geneology

Le va - relationships guarding the space/nurturing /protecting the space between peoples.

Le va fealoaloa'i - relational space.

Le va tapua'i - sacred/prayerful/spiritual/ relationship

Lotonu'u - maintaining/restoring pride

Matai - chief/head of the extended family

Matua - parents

Palagi - white person

Talanoaga - conversation/engagement in dialogue - where questions may be asked and responses given and a discussion may ensue.

Tapu - sacred

Tapuainga – worship/prayer/spiritual meditation

Tautua - service

Vae vae manava - sharing the womb/sharing breath

## **Samoan sayings**

O fanau a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau, a o tama a tagata e fafaga i upu. -*The young ones of birds are fed with nectar; the children of people are fed with words.*

O le au o matua o fanau -*The child is likened to a precious organ of the body. It denotes the value of the child.*

Ole ola manuia o le tamaititi e le faalagolago atoa ia te ia lava ae o le galuega faitele a le nu'u (aiga) atoa' - *It takes a whole village to raise a child.*

Fa'avae i le Atua - *Samoa is founded on God –in the context of this thesis – it is used as the valuing of Christian beliefs by study parents- that God and Christian values are important.*

ai lava le tagata i le mama a lona matua-you derive sustenance and direction from the mama (masticated food) of your elders.

Aua le oke, ae fa'atonu- *Teach with words, discipline by teaching and showing not by yelling or shouting or growling.*

**Referred to: A simplified Dictionary of Modern Samoa R.W Allardice**

## Glossary of Maori words

Aroha ki te tangata	respect for people
Awhi	help, assistance, support
Kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face interaction
Kaua e mahaki	<i>don't flaunt your knowledge</i>
Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata	<i>do not trample the mana of people</i>
Kia tüpato	be cautious
Manaaki ki te tangata	sharing and hospitality, generosity
Manaakitanga	assistance.
Mana	prestige, authority, status
Tapu	sacred
Tihei Mauriora	breath of life
Titiro, whakarongo, korero	look, listen, and speak
Whanaungatanga	relationship, kinship

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

DCYFS	Department of Child, youth and family services
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
MOPIA	Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs
MSD	Ministry of Social Development
MOE	Ministry of Education
PIFS	Pacific Island Families study
MOE	Ministry of Education
HIPPY	Home Interaction program for parents and youngsters
PAFT	Parents as First Teachers