

**An examination of the complex web of influences on the  
educational achievement of Samoan and Tongan male  
students in Auckland secondary schools**

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## ABSTRACT

The literature review for this study raised a serious concern that Pasifika males had poor achievement levels in New Zealand secondary schools. Although there was an improvement in the past decade, male Pasifika secondary students as a group, still lagged far behind their Pakeha or Asian counterparts. This research investigated the gap that still exists for Pasifika secondary school males.

The aims of this study led to the four research questions that investigated the influences leading to positive educational outcomes for Samoan and Tongan males in New Zealand secondary education.

An interpretive paradigm was adopted with a qualitative methodology. Multiple methods of interviews, focus groups and talanoa interviews provided the most appropriate research design to collect data related to the phenomenon of influences on Pasifika male secondary students. These three methods allowed the researcher to investigate a range of different perspectives with three cohorts (recent male Pasifika secondary school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and Pasifika parents) to provide triangulation.

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital was used as a relevant theoretical framework to explore the influences on the academic achievement of male Pasifika secondary students. These students operate within a number of different fields, including church, family, school and friends which all have the potential to provide positive influences during their secondary school education. It is the relationship between these different fields that can support male Pasifika secondary students to succeed academically.

The findings showed that male Pasifika secondary students who had achieved academic success understood the sacrifice their families had made by migrating to New Zealand. For the participants of this study, strong influencing role models were provided by peers, school and family, while high expectations from home and school were seen as a positive motivating force. It was perceived as important for parents to understand the time commitment required to achieve at the highest levels of achievement and for families to allow their boys the space and time to study.

*A fai e te fia alu vave, alu naó oe, afai e te fia alu mamao o faátasi*

If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together  
(Samoan Proverb)

*‘Oua lau e kafo kae lau e lava*

Stay positive and count your blessings. Do not let negative energies stop you from succeeding.

(Tongan Proverb)

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I am deeply grateful to the people of Safotu who planted the seed of this thesis. I was invited to the village of Safotu on Savai'i Island, Samoa, for a week long family reunion. I was the humble guest of close friends whose sons I had previously taught. I had also coached the village team of Safotu in the Auckland Samoan Village rugby competition.

During my stay I saw and experienced Samoan village life; I also realised how many of the young people in the village would be soon travelling home to New Zealand to face NCEA external exams. These experiences led me to consider the different worlds in which these students lived and the unique influences on their educational journeys – it was this realisation that inspired this thesis and so my first thanks and blessings are offered to the people of Safotu.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIMHI</b>	Achievement Initiative in Multicultural High Schools
<b>ERO</b>	Educational Review Office.
<b>MOE</b>	The Ministry of Education.
<b>NCEA</b>	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
<b>NZQA</b>	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
<b>OECD</b>	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PEP</b>	Pasifika Education Plan
<b>UE</b>	University Entrance
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## GLOSSARY

<b>aiga</b>	Family (Samoan)
<b>decile</b>	All New Zealand schools socio-economic position is ranked on a decile scale of one to ten.
<b>fa'a Samoa</b>	The Samoan way
<b>fale</b>	Samoan house with open sides and a thatched roof
<b>faka-Tonga</b>	According to the Tongan way
<b>famili</b>	Family (Tongan)
<b>fonofale</b>	Pasifika model of health and wellbeing
<b>hauora</b>	Māori philosophy of health and well-being
<b>komiti</b>	Committee
<b>mo'ui fakatolahi</b>	Living together in a cooperative lifestyle, maintaining positive relationships with others and strong communities
<b>ngaue tae 'aonga</b>	Worthless work/wasted effort
<b>Pacific</b>	This word is sometimes used instead of the words 'Pacific Islanders' or 'Pacific Islands'.
<b>Pakeha</b>	New Zealand born European.
<b>Palagi</b>	Pakeha/New Zealander or European
<b>Talanoa</b>	To talk



## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Chapter One provides an introduction to the context, rationale, aims, research questions and methodology that are the foundation of this research study.

### **1.1 Introduction**

The New Zealand Ministry of Education refers to Pasifika students as 'priority students' as a large number of them are still underachieving against national averages for all students. Within this is a sub group of Pasifika boys whose achievement is lower again. As a teacher, deputy principal and principal who has been in three schools where Pasifika students made up a large proportion of the student population, I have often grappled with how as educators we can best raise achievement for Pasifika students. I have been fortunate enough to work with highly motivated staff who have made outstanding progress in raising Pasifika student achievement. However, the fact remains that the academic gap between Pasifika and other ethnicities still exists. Currently, there are a limited number of studies that have focused particularly on Pasifika. With my background, experiences and passion for these students, I was drawn to researching how successful student learning outcomes can be achieved. Having seen considerable success in raising achievement, I believe there is still room for more improvement until there is no gap between students of different ethnic backgrounds.

When considering the appropriate research methodology for this study I was conscious of being a European/palagi collecting information amongst Pasifika people and a need for cultural competency. I had to consider very carefully the process and understanding of Pasifika culture, language and traditions. I understood that I may be considered very much as an outsider and I had to ensure I could establish open and honest lines of dialogue and discussion.

It became evident early in the research process that I would need to find a relevant research methodology that would provide the most appropriate approach in order to explore the study's research questions. Talanoa, provided this approach because it is a methodology based on face to face conversations that require trust and engagement. Although talanoa provided a methodological approach appropriate to the research questions, I had to ensure as a palagi that when implementing this approach participants felt comfortable and were able to trust me as the primary researcher. I

believe I was extremely blessed to have the backing of many in the Pasifika community who supported this work and believed only good could come of it for Pasifika students at secondary school.

The context of the research was also very important in developing open discussion. The nature of the research questions showed that as a researcher I was interested in hearing the stories of successful Pasifika students and what were their major influences. The study aims resonated with the participants as they felt comfortable knowing this research was about exploring influences on Pasifika success, rather than stories of underachievement and failure.

## **1.2 Personal context**

As a palagi researching in a Pasifika context, I worked hard to establish relational trust with the participants by clearly communicating that I am passionate about improving outcomes for Pasifika students. I made it clear that my expertise lay in educational achievement and I shared my successes with the participants so they could see my passion to create further success and close the gaps between other ethnic groups in terms of National Certificate of Educational Achievement results. I also made it clear that I didn't see myself as an expert on Pasifika culture and tradition and would be relying very much on their lead, advice and direction during our conversations. I also drew on my experiences and success as a secondary school principal in three high achieving lower decile Pasifika secondary schools. I used the high academic results I had supported students to achieve in schools with many Pasifika students as evidence that I had a genuine desire for future improvements. Furthermore, I also drew on my reputation as a sports coach. My coaching background had extended as far as coaching a team in the Auckland Samoan Village rugby competition for many years. My team was Safotu Village Team, a village where in many ways this journey started. Each time that I returned to Safotu Village I listened to the stories that the families shared about their sons' achievements in New Zealand and within me grew a desire to capture and share these stories of success.

There is still much to learn and discuss about Pasifika boys achievement. Fa'avae (2018) notes there are still many unheard voices and experiences that are missing from this educational debate. Reynolds (2016) also supports this thinking, that while current research links Pasifika educational achievement to a large extent solely to

quality of relationships between teachers and Pasifika students, it is yet to explore the issue through a deeper lens. This research is to further this discussion and address the educational gaps that still exist.

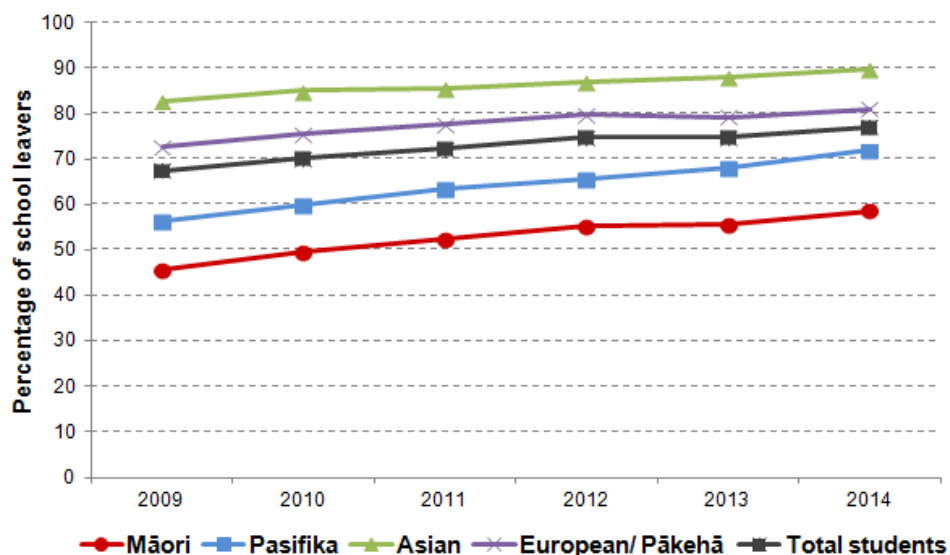
### **1.3 New Zealand secondary school qualifications**

New Zealand students must attend school until they are 16 years old as it is compulsory by law. They begin secondary schooling at the age of 12 or 13 and most students will stay for four or five years up to Year 13 (primary schooling starts at age 5 in what is called Year 1 and schooling runs through to Year 14). Most New Zealand schools are state-owned although there are private schools available.

New Zealand secondary schools typically assess students in subjects against The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Students study a number of courses or subjects and in each subject, skills and knowledge are assessed against a number of standards. Schools will use a range of internal and external assessments to assess students against these standards. When a student achieves a standard they gain a number of credits. Students must achieve a certain number of credits to gain an NCEA certificate. Students will generally work through NCEA levels 1 to 3 in years 11 to 13 at school, ages are approximately 15 to 18 year's old. NCEA Level 2 (L2) is considered the minimum qualification that a student would require to successfully enter the work force.

The other qualification that is considered important is University Entrance (UE). University Entrance is the minimum qualification required to attend a New Zealand University and is typically acquired in Year 13 of secondary schooling. To Achieve UE students must meet specific requirements across a number of approved subjects and obtain a level of reading, writing and numeracy credits.

Figure 1.1 below indicates there is still a gap in the overall achievements rates for Pasifika students when measured against other ethnicities. The graph is solely based on NCEA L2.



**Figure 1.1 Percentage of school leavers with at least an NCEA Level 2 qualification or equivalent by ethnic group (2009 to 2014)**

Source: New Zealand Qualification Authority web site 2015

The graph shows that the largest percentage point increase in those attaining at least NCEA Level 2 or equivalent has been in Pasifika school leavers, with an increase of 15.5 percentage points between 2009 (56.4%) and 2014 (71.9%). However, there still remains a significant difference between the overall achievement rates of Pasifika school leavers with L2 NCEA and European/Pākehā school leavers or Asian students.

It is also important to analyse specific data that relates to the participants of this research, namely Pasifika males at secondary school. There is still a disparity that exists between Pasifika boys and other boys in terms of overall achievement. Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu, & Mara, (2008) note this is magnified again when comparing Pasifika boys to Palagi boys.

Table 1.1 (below) highlights the gap that exist between Pasifika boys and the overall academic results for boys that are New Zealand European. The results tabled are drawn from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) website and focus specifically on what is considered the two most important school qualifications for New Zealand students which are University Entrance and Level 2 NCEA.

**Table 1.1 Percentage of NZ European and Pasifika boys who passed NCEA L2 and UE (2009 to 2014)**

Year	Qualification	NZ European	Pasifika
2014	L2	81	72
	UE	49	22
2013	L2	77	63
	UE	54	28
2012	L2	75	56
	UE	51	25
2011	L2	73	53
	UE	52	22
2010	L2	72	50
	UE	51	21
2009	L2	70	47
	UE	52	21

Source: New Zealand Qualification Authority web site 2017

These statistics are presented as a percentage of the number of students who attain NCEA qualifications out of the total number of students on school rolls. This reflects students who achieve NCEA L2 in Year 12 and UE in Year 13. This measurement is the format most commonly used by secondary schools to review achievement data. The data provides evidence of two things. Firstly, there has been an improvement for Pasifika boys in achieving success in NCEA L2. The second point is more alarming in that success is still behind that of New Zealand European boys in NCEA L2 and improvement in UE has been virtually non-existent.

#### **1.4 Research context**

According to the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2013), Pacific people make up 7.4 percent of the population of New Zealand. The term 'Pacific people' refers to New Zealand residents, both born here or in the islands. The terms 'Pasifika people' and 'Pasifika education' that the Samoan and Tongan demography are situated within, includes a vast range of cultures, demography, communities and educational institutions. It is important to define the term 'Pasifika Peoples' as there are many diverse cultures and communities that make up this group. According to the Pasifika

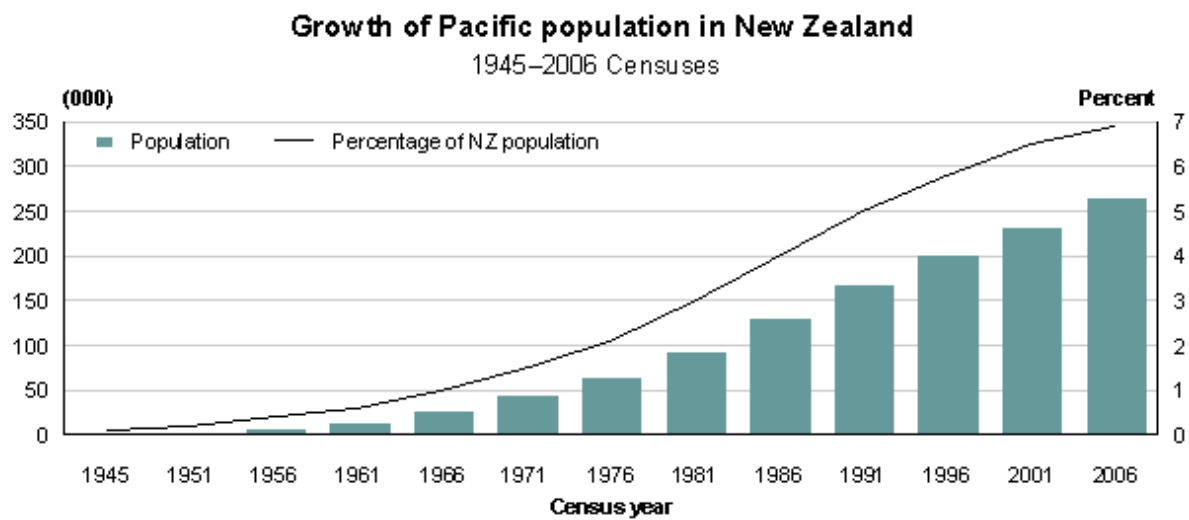
Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2008), Pasifika peoples made up 6.9 percent of the population of New Zealand. The term 'Pasifika Peoples' covers New Zealand residents, both born here or in the islands, who originate from the six Pacific nations of Tonga, Samoa, Tokelau, Niue, Fiji and the Cook Islands. However, the Ministry of Education (2008) also acknowledges that a wider group of students and their families may also be incorporated under the umbrella of 'Pasifika Peoples', this wider group includes the smaller communities of the Pacific, such as the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, French Polynesia and Kiribati.

It should be noted from the start of this study that the term 'Pasifika' for the purpose of this research refers only to Tongan and Samoan participants. As the study was developed it was clear that investigating all Pasifika cultures was not possible, therefore a decision was made to focus on the two most populace Pasifika cultures in the New Zealand secondary school system. Samoan and Tongan cultures make up the largest percentage of Pasifika people in New Zealand and therefore provide an acceptable but manageable sample size for one researcher to work with. The term 'Pacific' or Pacific People may be used in this research only when it has been drawn from another source.

New Zealand has witnessed distinct phases of immigration from the initial waves of British and Irish from the 1840s through to the present day. Nationalism was focused on being a 'satellite' of Britain although through that period there was growth of a local identity through events such as the 1905 All Black rugby team and the ANZACs in Gallipoli in 1915. Nevertheless, until the 1970s New Zealanders were very much described as subjects of Britain and the New Zealand society and culture reflected this (Young 1972). However, Poole (1991) suggests that New Zealand's association with Pasifika peoples had existed long before the 1970s, but in lesser numbers. The New Zealand censuses from 1874 to 1901 showed a small but diverse number of people who had been born in the Pacific Islands. This population was largely due to the fact that outside of Tonga many Pacific nations became colonies of European powers, including the Cook Islands and Niue that who became part of New Zealand's empire in 1901. Samoa was later to become a New Zealand dependency in 1925. Therefore, the numbers of Pasifika peoples continued to rise very slowly as a result of this colonial influence. In 1936 numbers claiming Pasifika ethnicity were 988 (Bedford & Gibson, 1986) and by the 1940s there was a growing group of the Pasifika ethnic population

that were New Zealand born. In terms of the Pasifika groups this research is focused upon - Samoans and Tongans, while Fairburn-Dunlop (1981) noted there was a relaxed policy around regulation and monitoring of Pasifika immigration during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Figure 1.2 (below) displays the significant growth of post war migration to New Zealand. A major labour shortage following the war and the demand for unskilled workers saw the numbers of Pasifika people coming to New Zealand grow rapidly.



**Figure 1.2 The growth of Pacific population in New Zealand**

Source: New Zealand Statistics (2006)

In terms of this study’s context, there are further important considerations when considering this multi-ethnic group. Whilst literature and research currently centred around the term ‘Pasifika peoples’, ultimately when presenting outcomes and recommendations care must be given to tailor presentation and implementation to each sub-group. It is also important to be clear about key terminology as Pasifika learners are not a homogeneous group, they can have very different cultures, language and experiences (Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa’afoi, Taleni & O’Regan, 2009). The New Zealand Ministry of Education’s Pasifika Education Plan (2008), uses the following nationalities so that students are not reported in only one group. The groups are defined as Tokelauan, Fijian, Niuean, Tongan, Cook Island Maori, Samoan and Other Pacific Islands.

Although this list covers a wide variety of ethnic groups it is important to acknowledge that by no means all of the ethnicities and cultures evident in the Pacific are represented in this list. In this way, although much of the current literature and research is focused on the term 'Pacific peoples', ultimately when presenting outcomes and recommendations care must be given to consider individual groups. Pasikale's (1999) research categorises different types of young Pasifika people. She summarised Pasifika youth as traditional, New Zealand blend and New Zealand made. This refers to Pasifika students who were either born in New Zealand or born in the Islands. This 'rating', was based on the levels of identity that the youth in question had with their culture, their affinity to it and the value they would place on it. It was made clear in the findings of this study that the responses and behaviours of second or third generation New Zealand-born Pasifika learners was different from those of students brought up outside New Zealand.

A second focus of this study is the concept of 'success'. This research focuses on determining the factors which influence Samoan and Tongan males to achieve success. 'Success' in the context of this study is deemed to be firstly academic success and secondly holistic elements of schooling such as success in sports, arts, extra curricula activity and leadership. Therefore the research is based on exploring influences of success, as opposed to questioning what causes failure.

### **1.5 Rationale**

Recent data highlights a remaining issue with the overall achievement of Pasifika at secondary school. Rubie-Davies (2015) suggests that New Zealand has the greatest school wide achievement disparity of any country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Lower achievement rates of Pasifika students are highlighted as an example of this disparity. Although, there has been improvement when compared to non-Pasifika students there is still a clear problem in New Zealand in terms of equitable academic achievement.

This study aims to support the Ministry of Education and school leaders to understand the issues, barriers and facilitating factors that schools may face when working to raise Pasifika boys' achievement. Furthermore, it may also be of use to schools which are specifically designing teaching initiatives to support their Samoan and Tongan male students. By focusing on these study aims this research intends to provide new knowledge in relation to influences upon Samoan and Tongan male learners and



inform educators of the impact of external factors on the learning journey of these students.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education Pasifika Education Plan (2013 – 2017) contained a target to increase Pasifika pass rates for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level 2 assessment to 85 percent. However, the Education Review Office (ERO) (2008) has also identified that only 14 percent of New Zealand secondary schools are effective at supporting Pasifika students to achieve their academic goals. Therefore, in order for all secondary schools in New Zealand to achieve an 85 percent achievement rate for Pasifika students there needs to be a greater understanding of how schools can support and influence their Pasifika students to be academically successful. The intention of this study is to contribute to this process of understanding how schools, families and the wider community can support their Pasifika male students to be successful.

The Education Review Office in 2009 presented data that suggested boys are not achieving as well as girls. Driessen (2005), cites that for some boys educational underachievement is a significant factor in the rates of unemployment for young men. This data presents a disparity that currently exists between boys and girls and this is magnified to a greater extent when New Zealand European and Pasifika boys are compared. Despite a focus by the Education Review Office (2009) and the Ministry of Education (2008) on issues relating to Pasifika boys' education, there are still critical disparities and issues in relation to the teaching, learning, and retention of Pasifika boys in New Zealand secondary schools. Ongoing review and improvement is required to ensure change is implemented and educational success is achieved irrespective of a student's cultural or social origins. Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu & Mara (2008) noted there is also a significant gap in the literature relating to effective teaching and learning for Pasifika boys and it has been suggested that research in this area could lead to increased educational achievement for Pasifika males.

In previous decades there has been an endeavour by many to improve achievement statistics for Pasifika and there has been upward movement of results. Some of the literature highlights these efforts. There has been a curriculum statement (Ministry of Education, 2007) that requires secondary schools to include the Pacific, as a setting as part of a learning experience in Year 9 or 10 Social Studies. Similarly, Samu (1998)

suggested the need to develop a Pasifika learning programme that is simplistic and idealistic. McCutcheon (1997) has indicated that better results could be achieved if strategies or concepts were designed to engage the Pasifika cohort. This could involve such practice as allowing students to verbalise an answer rather than write it down. This approach is in line with the current New Zealand curriculum and the concepts of teaching as inquiry and encouraging teachers to find the most appropriate tools to teach with. Reynolds (2017) research notes the understanding that the teacher is also a learner and that concept is complementary to Pasifika success in terms of being a relational process. Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi & Taleni. (2006) stressed the importance of home-school relationships, the role of the church and high expectations from the school, as key success factors for many Pasifika students. My hope for this research is that it builds on the foundation of these previous studies and inquires in-depth into questions that need to be asked about Pasifika students and in particular Pasifika boys.

### **1.6 Research aims**

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors which can positively influence outcomes for male Pasifika students in New Zealand secondary schools. The overall aim of this study was to fill the gap of knowledge and understanding regarding how we as educators can support this cohort of students to be as academically successful as students from other ethnic groups.

Research aims:

- To explore how the values and traditions of Samoan and Tongan parents influence their children's attitudes towards education;
- To analyse how key aspects of fa'asamoa (the Samoan way), faka-Tonga (the Tongan way) knowledge, processes and theories may influence achievement of secondary Samoan and Tongan males in Auckland, New Zealand; and
- To explore and analyse the relationship between Samoan and Tongan parents' aspirations and the aspirations of male Samoan and Tongan high school students.

### **1.7 Research questions**

These aims led to four research questions that formed the basis of this study which was focused on exploring what factors and strategies can positively influence

outcomes for Samoan and Tongan males in the New Zealand secondary education system:

1. What key values and strategies do Samoan and Tongan parents identify as supporting educational achievement for their children, with specific reference to boys?
2. What factors external to schools do Samoan and Tongan male students describe as influences on their academic achievement in secondary education?
3. In what ways do these external factors impact on academic and longer-term achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?
4. How can these factors be utilised to increase their impact on academic achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?

### **1.8 Thesis Organisation**

This study is organised into eight chapters:

*Chapter One* – provides an introduction, the rationale, personal context, research questions and aims and thesis organisation. It outlines the benefit of this research to stakeholders and how it will benefit Pasifika boys' achievement. This chapter outlines my personal background and the structure of this research.

*Chapter Two* – is an overview of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and the place of habitus, field and practice in this study. These concepts provide a theoretical foundation to examine and analyse the data collected from the interviews and focus groups.

*Chapter Three* – is a review of the literature pertaining to Pasifika education and the education of boys. This chapter contextualises this study within the literature regarding Pasifika education and boys' education. It identifies what is known about this topic and what gaps may exist in the research thus far. The studies that are explored provide a range of educational factors that also influence Pasifika students' academic success; family, church, culture, methods of supporting Pasifika students; understanding the student teacher community relationships; teaching boys; role models and culturally responsive pedagogy.

*Chapter Four* – justifies the methodology and research methods used in the study. The selected epistemology and rationale for the selected methodology and methods

are discussed. Each section provides a rationale of the research design decisions and justifies why this overall design provides the most valid approach to investigating the research questions. The focus groups and interview methods with a talanoa approach are outlined. The collection and analysis of data is explained. The crucial ethical considerations central to this research are documented and issues around reliability and validity are discussed.

*Chapter Five* – The findings are presented under the eight themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews as influences on male Pasifika students' achievement, the eight themes are: migration; negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement; family; cultural identity; peer relationships; role models; church; and school environment and culture.

*Chapter Six* – presents a transcript of full talanoa with two participants who are from the recent graduate group. This talanoa provides a rich and in depth story which communicates their personal educational journey as Pasifika students in New Zealand schools. They highlight clearly their challenges and the influences that caused academic success.

*Chapter Seven:* – the key findings from the collection and analysis of the data are interpreted and discussed. The findings are discussed in relation to the original research project aims and questions and also Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, habitus, field and practice.

*Chapter Eight* – significant findings and recommendations for the future are presented. Limitations and a conclusion to this study are outlined.

## CHAPTER 2:

### BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF CULTURAL CAPITAL: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

#### 2.1 Introduction

The literature presents three challenges faced by Pasifika students when operating within the New Zealand education system: cultural expectations differing between Pasifika parents and a school's culture (Weiss, Kreider, Lopez & Chatman, 2005); language barriers and respect for the school authority prohibiting engagement for some Pasifika families with their child's school (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006); and school's inability to integrate teaching and learning practices that are based on and give value to Pasifika values and experiences (Bourdieu, 1977; Koloto, Katoanga & Tatila, 2006). This chapter explores these challenges using the theory of cultural capital presented by Bourdieu (1977). The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Bourdieusian concepts can provide an understanding of the influences upon Pasifika boys' achievement.

Bourdieu's theory was chosen to explore the challenges and influences on Pasifika boys' achievement because Bourdieu's (1977) three forms of capital - economic, social and cultural provide a set of lenses through which to understand some of the factors that have influenced Pasifika boys' educational success. Bourdieu's concepts suggest that the success of Pasifika children in the New Zealand education system is influenced by the neighborhood and school in which their parents can afford to live and their parent's ability to engage with and support their child's educational journey. Factors that could be particularly challenging for immigrant families who are economically poor, do not have previous experience of the New Zealand education system and do not speak English as their first language. Consequently, Bourdieu's theory (1977) suggests that responsibility for the gap between Pasifika male achievement and other ethnicities in the New Zealand secondary school system lies with an education establishment that has not engaged with the cultural capital of Pasifika students and their families.

The Bourdieusian theory (1977) that provides a link between educational achievement and cultural capital is at the heart of this research. Bourdieu's work with regards to cultural capital begets the question whether understanding cultural capital of Samoan

and Tongan males at school has failed to be embraced by the New Zealand education system as a way of increasing academic achievement. The question is whose failure is this overall lack of achievement and what can be addressed to seek improvement?

## **2.2 Bourdieu and the Theory of Social and Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu (1997) described three forms of capital - economic, social and cultural. Economic capital is tied to the acquisition of money, assets and property. Gough (2006) suggests that the overwhelming personal driver for Pasifika migrants is the perception that they will achieve a better quality of life in another country. However, changes to the New Zealand economy and the reality of being an immigrant in New Zealand has changed this perception over time. Tupuola (1996) notes Pasifika migrants have experienced unemployment and a lack of quality jobs that has negatively affected their economic capital and created issues such as intergenerational poverty that was largely unknown for the first Pasifika migrants to New Zealand. Consequently, many immigrant Pasifika families have been drawn together in specific areas such as Otara, Mangere, Porirua, and Newtown, which according to Tupuola (1996) are low socio-economic suburbs of their host cities.

The potential to build and utilise cultural capital in such settings has not created educational success to date that matches other ethnic groups in the New Zealand education system. Pasifika students' educational achievement can be negatively affected because they are living in poor quality housing and their parents do not have the means to support their children's school. The relationship between economic capital and education was presented in a Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2015), that concluded 58 million children around the world have no schooling at all and 100 million will not go beyond primary school (UNESCO, 2015). The poorest children are the ones missing out on education. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), stated that in New Zealand "students from a low socio-economic background are twice as likely to be low performers, implying that personal or social circumstances are obstacles to achieving their educational potential (indicating lack of fairness)" (2012, p.9).

Bourdieu (1977) suggests that social capital describes the sense of belonging to a certain group in society and connections with others in that group. Membership of any

particular social group is based on mutual acquaintance and recognition. Membership of a social group could occur through factors such as shared family names, attendance at the same school or participating in the same church. The influence of the social capital is dependent on the size of the group and how easy it is to access the group itself. Lareau (2001) notes that Bourdieu's idea of social capital maintains that these relationships and networks are active and developed so people can regularly access the resources open to them as part of that particular group.

In terms of social capital and influence on education Coleman (1998) describes this as the way in which parents might engage in their children's education and achievement by their involvement with the school. This could come in the form of visiting the school for parent teacher meetings, gathering information from the school or being involved as a volunteer at the school. These factors develop the relationship between families and a school and consequently also develop the social capital.

A further dimension of education related to social capital comes in the form of parents being in a position to provide resources to a school through different aspects of social networking. Coleman (1998) suggests that social networking can come in the form of fund raising, donations or actively playing a part in the maintenance of the school. Furthermore, Lareau (2001) perceived that parents who are active in a school network of this nature tend to be better connected to a school and can provide support at home, which also benefits their children's educational achievement. In this instance educational social capital is a means to improve positive educational outcomes.

Bourdieu (1997) describes cultural capital as cultural competence or the social assets of a person that will include education, dress and language. There is a social mobility linked to someone's cultural capital, a set of expectations that includes the accumulation of cultural knowledge that creates a sense of power and status in society. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that cultural capital can be either advantageous or disadvantageous, he states that it is "a person's education (knowledge and intellectual skills) that provides an advantage in achieving higher social-statuses in society" (p. 46). Subsequently, Grenfall and James (1998) suggests that the greater a parent's cultural capital the greater chance there is for their children to be successful within the education system.

Lareau (2001) affirms that a student with a reduced amount of cultural capital has less of a chance of succeeding within an education system. Parents with poor education, little understanding of the education system and a lack of financial resource can result in a low level of both social and cultural capital. In an educational setting cultural capital can be viewed as skills required to achieve at school – reading, writing, ability in Maths, and also behavioral and analytical skills. Farkas, (2003) suggests there are also ideals such as motivation to achieve and the skills to negotiate one’s way through the levels of academia.

Schools play a central part in the role of societies in many countries and social and cultural capital influences educational settings from primary schools to tertiary institutions. DiMaggio (1982) presents the relationship between cultural capital and educational success. In his work he defined social and cultural capital as the “distinctive cultural traits, tastes and styles of a community, a common sense of honor based upon and reinforced by shared conventions” (DiMaggio, 1982, p.199). DiMaggio concluded that the common ground found in a community’s cultural capital is then reflected in the way teachers will interact with students they perceive as from the dominant culture. Furthermore, teachers will perceive these students as successful and will give them more recognition and assistance in the classroom as they see them as more likely to succeed.

In relation to this study Bourdieu’s (1997) three forms of capital - economic, social and cultural provide a set of lenses through which to understand some of the factors that have influenced Pasifika boys’ educational success. Bourdieu’s concepts suggest that the success of these children in the New Zealand education system may be influenced by the neighborhood and school in which their parents can afford to live when they arrive in New Zealand and their parent’s ability to engage with and support their child’s educational journey. These factors could be particularly challenging for families that are economically poor, do not have previous experience of the New Zealand education system and do not speak English as their first language.

### **2.3 Habitus, field and practice**

The term habitus (Bourdieu, 1997) refers to a learned behavior that has its foundations in the family. A person’s socialisation is influenced by family and their family environment. The habitus of a person is with them throughout life as they grow and



enter different fields that may be like or unlike their family setting, such as attending school or university. Habitus can explain why people behave in certain ways due to their experiences and influences.

The term field refers to a separate social universe where individuals and groups exist who have differing sets of experiences and influences from their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1997). Field is an environment which may frequent and can include institutions such as schools, tertiary education settings, political organisations and cultural events as places of social activity.

Practice is the actions or ways of behaving in any given field due to the influences of cultural capital and habitus. Practice in the context of this study is the school and the teaching pedagogy in relation to male Pasifika students. Spiller (2012) suggests that current practices in the New Zealand education system are positioned in order to support the strengths of the dominant European cultural capital and there is little effective pedagogy for Pasifika learners.

### **2.3.1 Habitus as influence**

Bourdieu's concept of habitus is particularly relevant to the first two research questions of this study:

1. What key values and strategies do Samoan and Tongan parents identify as supporting educational achievement for their children, with specific reference to boys?
2. What factors external to schools do Samoan and Tongan male students describe as influences on their academic achievement in secondary education?

Owing to their parent's or sibling's habitus and cultural capital success in education is more readily available to those students whose own families have previously experienced education. These families may have had more exposure to institutional settings and success than families who have not previously experienced further education. Lareau's (2002) research presents these differences by suggesting that middle class parents who nurture in their children's skills such as negotiating and questioning provide them with the necessary tools to participate and succeed in an

educational setting. Working class families can be more directive and encourage less reasoning. Dumais (2002) supports these notions by suggesting that middle class parents will often have a deeper knowledge and understanding of schools, whilst working class parents may have had limited personal interactions or even success within these institutions and subsequently this capital culture is passed down through families.

One of the challenges that immigrant Pasifika students face when adapting to the New Zealand education systems are the differences between their own experiences in their habitus and the established culture of the New Zealand education system. Bourdieu (1974) suggests that when educational power is held by a dominant system then it is established on existing cultural norms, which in New Zealand is a system established by European immigrants and geared towards Pakeha cultural norms. Bourdieu (1974) notes that such inequalities are made legitimate by this positioning yet the education system itself has a major part to play in ensuring that this mismatch of opportunity is continued, and states:

Education is in fact one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one. (Bourdieu, 1974, p. 12)

Aschaffenburg and Maas (1997) and Dumais (2002) support these beliefs in studies that conclude the dominant cultural codes which tend to see advantages in educational achievement. They found cultural capital is typically linked to the more economically advantaged compared to those from a lower socio-economic range. This concept is further supported by Reay (1998) in her study of mothers with children at school in London. She defined cultural capital in the education setting as parents having the ability to be able to support their children to understand the education system and the confidence to get teachers to respond to their queries when seeking assistance if their children had difficulties. These circumstances were also explored by Blackledge (2001) who described how Bangladeshi families in England largely spoke Bengali at home and could struggle to assist their children with homework in the English language. Her study found that although these mothers were passionate about their child's education these families were often perceived by their schools as not being

supportive of their children's education. In New Zealand this understanding of habitus of Pasifika students and their families as an influence upon their learning is a major factor in interpreting how the educational achievement gap can be closed between different ethnic groups of students in New Zealand schools

Further examples demonstrate how conflict between a 'dominant' and 'non-dominant' culture influence cultural capital in education and can have an adverse impact on student outcomes. Lareau and Horvat (1999) studied the influence of habitus on parents' and students' engagement with school and how this influenced academic achievement. They conducted a study in an American school in the Mid-West. The school, like most schools, placed an importance on parental involvement with the school and saw this as a critical factor to support their children's educational success. However, this particular town had a history of racial discrimination and many African-Americans parents had experienced bullying and failure at school themselves, subsequently they found it difficult to engage with their child's school. In turn the school and teachers perceived the parent's lack of engagement with the school as unhelpful and a signal these parents were not interested in their children's education.

These issues regarding habitus, cultural capital, field and practice are relevant to the education of Pasifika children in New Zealand. Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) concluded in her study of Pasifika parent and school relationships that many Pasifika parents, particularly those of current secondary school students, have experienced being a non-dominant culture within a neo-european culture and sometimes had little understanding of the New Zealand education system. Furthermore, Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) also found that cultural capital was influenced by factors such as the economic circumstances of families who were working long hours and a language barrier existed for families where English is a second language.

The importance of Pasikale's (1999) findings in the educational setting is that educators can make radical assumptions about Pasifika learners and their learning styles. Pasikale (1999) makes clear the potential for damage to Pasifika achievement clear when she states:

The images, information and stereotypes about Pasifika Island people are rooted in assumptions based on the images of 'recent island migrants' which has led to the displacement of the majority of Pasifika learners, especially in the formal educational establishments. By this I mean the assumptions (mostly bad) educators make about New Zealand born Pasifika Island learners, who either fail to meet expectations or worse still, float by without any expectations or demands on them. (1999, p. 22)

These assumptions can make it harder for Pasifika families to interact with their child's school and ask questions pertaining to their children due to a fear of not understanding the education system. For example a teacher participant in a study conducted by Kritesh (2014) stated "some Pasifika families are very reluctant to attend school parent teacher meetings because they are less interested about their children's learning" (p. 40). However, Kritesh (2014) also discovered that a variety of other issues, such as work and church commitments were in fact barriers to these parents attending such meetings. Family engagement with a school needs to blossom through incorporating and valuing the cultural capital of Pasifika and ensuring they feel comfortable when entering the school and knowing their culture will be respected (Fairburn-Dunlop, 2010; Kritesh, 2014). Milne (2010) believes this lack of respected cultural capital for Pasifika has helped create an educational divide in New Zealand as the system is based on a Pakeha model with Pakeha students at the forefront of its strategy. There is little thought given to the education of Pasifika and other immigrant groups.

Pasifika students are rich in their own cultural capital in terms of language, values and experiences based within their own culture. However as the statistics in Chapter One of this research show they often experience failure at school and do not achieve at the same levels as their fellow Pakeha students. While New Zealand has an increasingly large number of Pasifika students the assessment statistics provide evidence that shows high numbers are struggling to engage with a system that has marginalised them (Civil & Hunter, 2015).

### **2.3.2 Field as influence**

The term field refers to the context in which individuals and groups exist who have differing sets of experiences and influences from their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1997).

Field is an environment which one may frequent and can include institutions such as schools. The concept of field is particularly relevant in this study to research question 3:

3. In what ways do these external factors impact on academic and longer-term achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?

Civil & Hunter, (2015) note often Pasifika students are rich in their own language, experiences and culture yet they struggle to achieve in the field of the New Zealand education system. In New Zealand a disproportionate number of Pasifika students attend decile 1 – 5 schools which suggests that many Pasifika students are residing in lower socio economic neighbourhoods. School leaders in New Zealand are faced with a diverse and changing student population which includes a large number of Pasifika students. However, the academic achievement statistics for this group are not equal to other ethnic groups of students studying in New Zealand's schools (Civil & Hunter, 2015). For schools and teachers alike the aim is to provide positive, engaging and inclusive learning environments, however, this goal is set against a back drop of intrinsic and significant social and cultural capital differences.

Ladson-Billings (2006) perceives that teaching students in New Zealand from cultural backgrounds such as Samoan and Tongan requires schools and teachers to become familiar with these cultures. Vygotsky (1978) notes our own social and cultural identities impact how we teach and also how we learn. Findings by Carmichael (2008) supported this by stating that students will feel valued and accepted if they are recognised as Pasifika learners and their cultural backgrounds are affirmed throughout their school. Carmichael suggests that for many Samoans, culture plays a huge part in shaping their approach to life, education and career choices. Three key factors that inter-relate and are of utmost importance to Samoans are, family, church and economic well-being. Culture is central to Samoan decision making that is based on the welfare of the family as opposed to individual preferences.

In many cultures family is seen as the basis and foundation of human life and is also important for keeping social order. For example, Tongans perceive the family as a support mechanism for all its members (Carmichael, 2008). The support and importance of *famili* for Tongans in New Zealand is best illustrated by where the main

numbers of the Tongan community reside. Over 95% live in the North Island and of that 80% live in the Auckland region (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

A key value for Tongans is *mo'ui fakatolahi* – living together in a cooperative lifestyle and maintaining positive relationships with others and strong communities. Fua (2009), suggests that extended family ties play a pivotal role in looking after family members by way of household work, cooking, repairs and gardening. Pasifika values and culture particularly around collectivism include respect and loyalty for family, those in authority and the elderly. This could manifest itself within students at school through preferring to work together in groups. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2013) a lack of family support can be of particular stress for Pasifika students.

Overall, male Pasifika students in New Zealand secondary schools are operating within and being influenced by a number of different fields, including: family, social groups, church groups, friendship groups and school. By the time Pasifika students reach secondary school their cultural capital and habitus has been established. Their secondary school is then a new field where dominant practices exist in the form of an education system developed by the dominant culture. It can become a challenge for these students to succeed in this new field, as in order to be successful they are required to give up or adapt fundamental beliefs or practices from their cultural background. The extent to which Pasifika student's habitus is different or similar to the new field will influence how easy or challenging this process might be. The challenge for New Zealand schools is to produce a bridge that links the different fields in which Pasifika students operate and to blend the supportive aspects of each field in order to positively influence the academic achievement of these students.

Keeping Bourdieu's cultural capital in mind, developing conditions to ensure cultural capital can be utilised in the field of the school setting requires educational leaders to play a crucial role. In the New Zealand context Alton-Lee (2015) concluded that if school leaders and teachers adopt culturally responsive pedagogy there can be significant improvement for Maori students. Bishop, O'Sullivan and Berryman (2010) believe the key to developing such a culturally responsive approach is challenging the status quo and having the willingness to adopt teaching practices that prevents deficit theorising about students and their culture

### **2.3.3 Practice as influence**

Practice is the actions or ways of behaving in any given field due to the influences of cultural capital and habitus. The idea of adapting pedagogy into practice to positively influence the cultural capital of learners was presented by Civil & Hunter (2015) who cited the importance of “learning from and building on students’ cultural ways of being” (p. 296). Subsequently, in order to support Pasifika students to achieve their academic best the influence of the social and cultural capital of Pasifika communities should not be underestimated and needs to be considered in equal measure as those cultural norms established by the dominant culture. One of the objectives of this study is to identify what are some of the positive practices of Pasifika social and cultural capital that influence Pasifika boys to achieve in the New Zealand education system. Consequently the Bourdieusian concept of practice is pertinent to research question 4: How can these factors be utilised to increase their impact on academic achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?

Dimmock and Walker (2005) believe that for many students from minority backgrounds, such as Samoans and Tongans in the New Zealand school system, being at school can feel uncomfortable which then puts these students at an immediate disadvantage. Nakhid (2002) suggests that students such as this will often search for their real identity within the education system and as a result of not finding themselves represented within this system, they will disengage quickly from the academic learning process, or even worse leave school. Rubie-Davies (2015) perceives that a teacher’s job is to break the cycle of under-achievement by challenging their own expectations and using the prior knowledge that exists in the student’s cultural capital.

Pasikale’s (1999) suggests that it is important for teachers to work towards ways of understanding and incorporating Pasifika learners’ identities and developing teaching practices that will engage these students. Lei (2006) believes a possible starting point for most teachers, particularly non-Pasifika teachers, is to reflect on their own identity and their own personal social and economic position within wider society. By doing so a non-Pasifika or Palagi teacher could be in a better position to appreciate and support the identity development of their Pasifika learners.

In terms of teachers and their practice, they can look for ways to build upon students' own cultural capital. The work of Mara and Marsters (2009) and Penn (2010) identifies the importance of cultural capital and its links to language and understanding of Pasifika culture. Both these studies suggest that culturally responsive teaching practices that develop positive relationships can lead to positive influences on outcomes for Pasifika school students. Nakhid (2002) noted the recognition of cultural capital can extend to looking at cultural differences of the students in a school and reflecting how these differences might affect motivation and work habits. Gabel (1999) supported these findings and stated assessment could be used to gain an understanding of the students and then also be considered as an integral part of developing curriculum, pathways and teaching pedagogy. Schools could for example make use of the play 'Niu Sila' in drama, create a social studies unit on Samoan or Tongan migration, use art work that represents a Pasifika background, or the science department could support Pasifika students to access university scholarships. These initiatives and programmes that may reflect a Pasifika student's culture and contextualise it into real life learning may be a particularly powerful positive influence on the educational success of boys.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented a summary of Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital, habitus, field and practice, which have provided a theoretical lens through which to understand and explore the four research questions. The chapter has presented literature that suggests male Pasifika students arrive at secondary school with a developed social and cultural capital based on their economic situation and previous social and cultural experiences. Furthermore, these students will be operating in a number of different fields with competing features and influences. Based on Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital a possible way to support Pasifika male students in the secondary school field is for school leaders and teachers to develop practices that draw on the student's social and cultural capital and endeavor to build on the positive aspects of their different fields. Subsequently, schools can be positive enablers of Pasifika male students and their educational outcomes. In the next chapter a literature review will explore wide ranging influences on Pasifika male achievement in the secondary school sector.



## CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Introduction

Although the research questions of this study focus on the influences that lead to academic success specifically for Samoan and Tongan boys within New Zealand secondary schools, there currently exists only a small body of literature relating to the topic of Pasifika boys and educational achievement. Therefore, this literature review chapter focuses on wider aspects of educational achievement and it will be the objective of this study to use this more generalised literature base as a springboard for an exploration of how these concepts could relate specifically to Pasifika boys and the factors that may influence their ability to achieve academic success.

### 3.2 Research and Policy

Although this study focusses on Samoan and Tongan males at secondary school this section provides an overview of the research regarding the wider topic of Pasifika research and policy education in New Zealand. In order to understand factors that influence Pasifika males' academic achievement it is first important to understand the policy and academic research context within which this topic is grounded. However, before exploring the topics of Pasifika research and policy, it is important to understand common definitions of the term 'Pasifika'.

There is a diversity of Pasifika students in New Zealand that is only partially explained by the nationalities evident on lists provided by government agencies. Pasifika learners cannot be considered a homogenous group and there is only a limited amount of research on each particular ethnic group in terms of educational research. For example, Manu'atu (2000) suggests that voices of Tongan secondary students are not always separated from the 'Pasifika' group and therefore often their specific viewpoints can be drowned out. Nakhid (2003) summarises this notion as:

It is as important to Pasifika students, as it is to any of us, to be able to look and to find ourselves in the places where we are located. If the capacity to do this is missing, or the opportunity to create that feeling of belonging is absent, then it is a signal that our (Pasifika students) presence is not wanted or valued. (p.316)

In this way Nakhid (2003) suggests the personal educational needs of individual students' cannot be generalised as being from a Pasifika viewpoint and instead there is a need to understand each student's language, values and culture. Subsequently, this study will aim to identify the ethnicities of individual participants when reporting the findings.

The literature that enquires into Pasifika education in New Zealand secondary schools predominantly includes academic thesis dissertations and articles published in academic journals. Both of these forms of academic research regarding this topic are produced by the same small group of Pasifika and non-Pasifika researchers. Researchers such as Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009), Ng Shiu (2009) and Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) indicate there has been a shift in the research literature regarding Pasifika education, which has been influenced by three key factors:

1. The issues raised by the ERO report on South Auckland schools in 1995, this was in fact termed an 'educational crisis'
2. The initiatives that fell out of this report led to availability of further research on Pasifika Education
3. An increase in discussions and media coverage relating to general Pasifika issues and Pasifika Education issues (Ministry of Education, 2008, p.1)

Horrocks, Ballantyne, Silao, Manueli and Fairbrother (2012) note that a significant number of educational institutes have recently produced research that highlights the differences for Pasifika students in terms of academic outcomes and this is a significant step forward in improving Pasifika students' academic outcomes. Findings presented by Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) show that the culture of a student and their educational performance go hand in hand and that educators are only just beginning to understand the importance of this relationship. An example from the literature that shows how a students' culture can influence their academic achievement is the work of Davidson-Toumu'a and Dunbar (2009) that suggests Pasifika students, and in particular boys, can be shy about approaching palagi teachers for assistance in class because of language concerns and a feeling that they are disrespecting someone in a position of authority.

Earlier work of Helu-Thaman (1996) is still relevant in today's context as it describes the differences that exist between a Pasifika outlook on education and the New Zealand perspective. These contrasts can create challenges for Pasifika learners, either in the Pacific or here in New Zealand, who are having to work in the framework of a western style education whilst retaining their own values and beliefs. Helu-Thaman (1996) found that Samoan and Tongan cultural values are inextricably linked to behaviour and performance so that the impact of these values on student learning within an educational setting cannot be underestimated. Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) noted the inextricable link between performance and behaviour can at times lead to real, often difficult problems and issues for the Pasifika student in New Zealand classrooms and ultimately problems in their learning and achievement. Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) also argues that the New Zealand education system needs to be reviewed with a 'Pasifika lens' to fully understand how these students perceive the education world they live in.

Significantly, before these researchers began to study specific cultural outlooks towards education, in a multi-ethnic society, little had been discussed about the relationship between Pasifika students and their experiences in education. By beginning these conversations, Pasifika and non-Pasifika peoples, have taken the first steps towards acknowledging and understanding the differences that exist in learning styles and other challenges for Pasifika students. Consequently, this literature has therefore enabled the development of strategies that could begin to acknowledge Pasifika learners and assist them in the achievement of successful learning. This study aims to further this journey of understanding by inquiring into factors that influence Pasifika male educational achievement with a particular focus on Samoan and Tongan boys.

Before considering the effect of policy changes upon the education and achievement of Pasifika students it is worthwhile to consider the purpose and objectives of education. Collins and O'Brien (2003) describe education as the sense of fostering the holistic development of individuals and groups, including their physical, social, cognitive and emotional growth. Thaman (1998) discusses education in the formal sense, suggesting that it is the organised and institutionalised process of learning through early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary environments and involves worthwhile learning beyond mere skill acquisition and includes development of cultural

norms and values. Thaman's (1998) perception of education also explains why Bourdieu's theory was chosen to explore the challenges and influences on Pasifika boys' achievement. Bourdieu's (1977) three forms of capital - economic, social and cultural provide a foundation to understand factors that have influenced Pasifika boys' educational success.

Introductory comments in the *New Zealand Curriculum* pronounce "The New Zealand Curriculum is a clear statement of what we deem important in education. The vision for students is that they can identify with their particular heritages and are positive in their own identity" (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.4). These concepts regarding education are particularly important in the discussion of 'Pasifika' education in the context of the New Zealand education system and the ongoing process and understanding of how teaching and learning evolves in our secondary schools, because they show how education is much more than the transfer of knowledge but also involves the development of emotions, values and culture. Yet, many of the changes that have occurred in recent decades within the policy environment of the New Zealand education system have not focused on developing an education system that encourages the holistic development of values and culture. This concurs with an earlier study by Watson, Hughes, Lauder, Strathdee & Simiyu (1997) that found the policy focus has been on competition and measuring academic achievement rather than the development of a coherent set of values and school culture.

Gemici and Lu (2014) state that a school's influence over student engagement and the link to academic success is understood to be a crucial part of overall educational success. Schmidt, Burroughs, Zoido and Houang (2015) perceive that school leadership teams attempt to seek out the optimal learning opportunities for students and there is a constant challenge for these teams to reflect and change or adapt their practice. Students' learning can also be attributed to a number of factors including parental, home, socio-economic and peer influences. The quality of a school's leadership team, teachers, resourcing and environment can be critical factors that influence student engagement, learning and achievement (Schmidt et al., 2015).

In the New Zealand education environment the 'School Evaluation Indicators' are used by the Education Review Office (2016) to determine effective practices that influence student outcomes and are used to ensure that excellence and equity is achieved. The

most significant influences are described as, “educationally powerful connections, a responsive curriculum, effective teaching and opportunities to learn” (p.12). Furthermore, Education Review Office (2008) suggest the key strengths of high performing schools are “high quality staff and student leadership; a positive school culture with a strong focus on positive image; relevant teaching and learning contexts; and constructive relationships” (p.1). The relevance of this is that New Zealand teachers are working in an education system where on the surface diversity is acknowledged through government rhetoric and valued in curriculum documents.

Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo and Hargreaves (2015) suggest schools that have policies focused on continuous improvement in teaching and learning will have a direct influence and effect on student achievement. Ishimaru and Galloway (2014) define this principle in greater depth when they describe effective teaching as ensuring student outcomes are equitable and at the standard of excellence. Consequently, school leadership teams exercise considerable influence over student academic success (Ishimaru & Galloway, 2014). These influences come in various forms, including: the interpretation of student data; review and implementation of curriculum; ensuring quality teaching practice; and the allocation of resources to best meet the needs of students. Grissom and Loeb (2011) suggest that the goal for school leaders is to create and implement policies that support students to succeed. The absence of such guiding principles can result in a school that has little influence upon or evidence of student improvement and success.

Schmidt et al. (2015) perceive the design and delivery of a school’s curriculum can also influence the achievement outcomes of students. A curriculum is defined by Scott (2008) as an educational system with aims, content matter, delivery methods and assessment strategies. Whilst, Ross (2000) defines curriculum simply as what is to be learnt. Adams, Clark, Codd, O’Neill, Openshaw, and Waitere-Ang (2000) concluded that the definition of curriculum should be the one that seems most relevant to the student body or the learners that you are catering for. In this way the choices made by a school when designing a school curriculum is presented as an important influence on students’ engagement with education the outcome of their learning.

Literature relating to national educational policy and Pasifika communities is centred upon the impact of the changes caused by the implementation of the Education Act

(1989) and the Education Amendment Act (1991). According to Watson, Hughes, Lauder, Strathdee & Simiyu (1997) many of the changes that occurred led to competition between schools and competition for students to attend a school in order to attract greater funding. The debate about the rights and wrongs of these changes are part of a debate outside of this study, however the impact of the changes have a significant bearing on the objectives of this study.

The impact of the national educational policy in the early 1990s in New Zealand filters down to what happens on the ground in schools. Mara (1998) suggests that the monitoring of changes in educational policies that may influence Pasifika communities are an important responsibility for Pasifika educators including those who educate the teachers. Policy changes are based on the belief that the provision of education will improve and therefore educational standards and student achievement will likewise improve. However, the concept of 'improved' provision of education is subjective and is a concept created by the dominant political powers of the time. Watson et al. (1997) note that schools can differ in how some changes in policy are actually implemented and that policy changes typically do not take into account the individual nature and make up of a school, students and its community.

Helu-Thaman's (1996) studies from the 1990s provide an important backdrop to New Zealand's current education system. As far back as 1996 Helu-Thaman (1996) presented the view that New Zealand's western style of education had norms that were culturally specific and education had a dual role in creating a bridge between the established way of 'doing things' as well as creating a safe place for students from different ethnic minority groups to grow and learn in their own unique way. Helu-Thaman (1996) notes that schools of large Pasifika student numbers are trying to achieve an interface that creates a relationship around 'western' or traditional school processes and systems that can relate to Pasifika cultures and ways of doing things. However, there is not necessarily a good fit between the intentions of schools who want to provide a holistic education that encourages cultural development and an education policy that measures academic achievement and encourages inter-school competition. Watson et al. (1997) suggest the holistic development of students can be diminished or even ignored in the relentless pressure to achieve high academic results in order to attract more students.

One of the key changes created by the introduction of the 1989 and 1991 Education Acts was the introduction of de-zoning, which in essence meant students could effectively attend, or apply to attend, the school of their choice, regardless of where they lived or where the school was. For some schools this meant they were immediately over-subscribed and could set up 'enrolment schemes' meaning that they could use a selective criteria for the selection of students. Subsequently, schools that were considered to be traditionally successful were in a position to be highly selective about the students that they could enrol. This move in turn led to a competitiveness not seen before in New Zealand education and a situation where schools could 'market' themselves should they so choose. De Bruin (2000) describes the potential result of this market situation of schools to be "the outflow of students from schools that were perceived to have a lower reputation" (p.46).

One outcome of this competitiveness for some schools was the inability to compete with the marketing of other schools due to a lack of financial resources. This situation tended to be the case in economically disadvantaged areas, most of which included disproportionately higher numbers of Maori and Pasifika peoples. Peters (1996), a school principal from one of these communities, provided a detailed account of the impact of the new government policy on his South Auckland secondary school where 80% of students were Pasifika. He described that the school quickly became a school in crisis as families who could get into schools elsewhere did so because they believed, rightly or wrongly, that these schools could offer their children more in terms of academic achievement. De Bruin (2000) noted the impact of this in simple terms in that the best students were often sucked out of local schools in areas such as South Auckland, which resulted in achievement levels remaining low as the 'cream' that would have helped raised these figures had been taken away.

Watson et al. (1997) conducted one of the first studies in New Zealand to examine Pasifika people and why they made particular choices for schools after de-zoning. This research, based on both quantitative and qualitative data and a large sample size, argued that Pasifika students and their communities were disadvantaged by the new zoning policies which were directed at increasing parental choice, and that the "schools which serve these students have been hardest hit by the competitive mechanisms introduced into educational provision" (Watson et al., 1997, p.95). Consequently, due to the government policies described above, some schools with

high numbers of Pasifika and Maori students on their rolls declined in overall numbers and resources throughout the 1990s. Harker (2006) claims that the equality of educational opportunity that was to be a cornerstone of 'Tomorrows Schools' did not offer equity at all, he states, "our system now seems to be well down the track toward a dual system – one set of schools for the, mostly Pakeha, middle-class, and another set for the (mostly Maori and Pasifika) poorer classes" (p. 54). The policy changes of the late eighties and early nineties appear to have ignored holistic and cultural development and instead of asking where do Pasifika learners sit in these changes, has focused solely on fostering competition. Nevertheless, within these turbulent times for many schools with a high percentage of Pasifika students, academic success was achieved by some Pasifika students. Therefore, it is the aim of this study to uncover what were some of the influences that encouraged these students to be academically successful.

### **3.3 Factors influencing Pasifika educational achievement**

In the literature six key factors can be identified that have an influence on Pasifika educational achievement: immigration; culture; parental aspirations; curriculum design and pedagogy; church; and sport. In this section each of these influences are explored and considered in relation to Pasifika student academic achievement.

New Zealand is referred to by the OECD as a traditional settlement country (Keeley, 2009) along with the USA, Australia, Canada and Israel. In each of these countries governments and policy have at times encouraged immigration as part of building their nations. Population was increased by recruiting immigrants and society was influenced and developed by the values and practices of the settling peoples. British and Irish settlers were one of the main immigrant sources for all these countries and initially they dominated New Zealand migration until the 1970s. Poole (1991) noted there were immigrants from other countries such as the Chinese however their numbers never exceeded those from the UK and Ireland.

There is also a specific Pasifika perspective described by Rice (1995) which shows that Pasifika people have always felt open to travel and migrate as it has been part of their way of life for many years. Rice (1995) suggests that even before the arrival of Europeans, Pacific Islanders understood migration and had been doing this for decades in order to seek improvements to their lifestyle.



The numbers of Pasifika people migrating to New Zealand grew particularly in the 1960s (Bedford & Gibson 1986). These communities were the first large numbers of non-British migrants and part of the post-war labour migration. Spoonley and Bedford (2012) describe this period as a time when the concept of a largely British and white nation was being altered by recognition of Maori rights and the growing impact of Pasifika migration. Fleras and Spoonley (1999) present the argument that the period between the 1960s and the 1980s saw changes to the way New Zealand viewed its approach to immigration. The initial world order that owed much of its shape to a colonial past was challenged. This challenge was led firstly by Maori who argued for their rights under the Treaty of Waitangi and secondly from the new labor migration from the Pacific Islands.

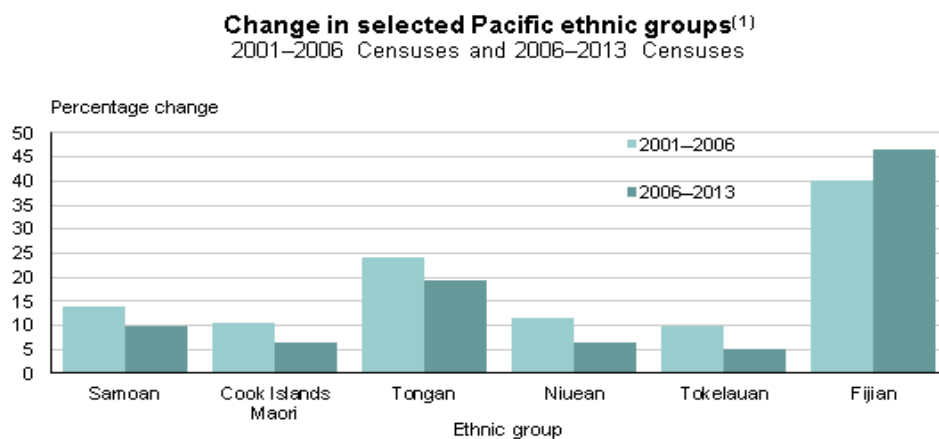
Hau'ofa (1993) suggests that although Pasifika people are travelers, they have also maintained a connection to their lands and ocean as part of their identity. Tupuola (1996) perceives this link in terms of Pasifika people in New Zealand to be expressed through their strong family ties, their connection to church and the influence of their community culture. These links will be explored in this study, in terms of how these factors interrelate and how they influence the educational achievement of male Pasifika students.

Throughout the last 50 years, Samoan and Tongans experienced little difficulty getting into New Zealand and then remaining here. Although they technically required work and residence approval, the demand for labour at the time far outweighed the supply that was currently available in New Zealand. The 'Treaty of Friendship' signed between New Zealand and Samoan governments when Samoa became independent in 1962 allowed for an annual quota of 1,000 Samoans entry and permanent residency into New Zealand. This number eventually became 1,100.

Fairburn-Dunlop (1981) suggests that Tongans also became an important source of labor between the late 1950s and early 60s. Although there were no formal government ties between the two nations, there was an existing and well established culture of co-operation. In the mid-1950s New Zealand became a destination for Tongans seeking work and the proximity meant it was accessible while still being close enough to return home.

Between 1945 and 1986 the numbers of Pasifika people migrating into the country and also the New Zealand born component grew rapidly, and the core majority of this increase was Samoan and Tongan people. For example, in the 1945 census only 28% of Pasifika people had been born in New Zealand. By 1966 42% of the 26,271 Pasifika peoples were New Zealand born and by 1986 this had increased to 49% of 125,853. New Zealand had become home to a large number of Polynesians and in particular Auckland has become home to a large Pasifika population.

Statistics New Zealand 2013 shows a considerable growth in the Pasifika population. By 2013 the number of Pasifika people in New Zealand was 295,941. Samoans made up 144,138 of this number (48.7%) and Tongans 60,333 (20.4%). Of this total population two thirds of these people were born here, 62.3% or 181,791 people. Of that 62.7% of Samoans and 59.8% of Tongans were born in New Zealand.



1. People were able to identify with more than one ethnic group.

Note: The gap between this census and the last one is seven years. The change in data between 2006 and 2013 may be greater than in the usual five-year gap between censuses. Be careful when comparing trends.

Source: Statistics New Zealand

**Figure 3.1 Percentage change of Pacific ethnic groups resident in New Zealand between 2001 and 2013.**

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2014)

Spoonley and Bedford (2012) suggest that until the 1970s immigration for Pasifika people had been largely uncomplicated, but with economic difficulties in the 70s the outlook of the good times and demand for labor changed. Suddenly Pasifika people faced challenges when immigrating to New Zealand including: stereotyping, racism and even violence. Grainger (2006) reports that it was during the recession of the 1970s when Pacific Islanders started to feel public resentment in New Zealand.

Samoan and Tongan immigrants were accused of abusing the welfare system and they were also accused of picking up jobs that many Kiwis coveted. This led to some immigrants being perceived as 'over stayers', a term that grew in use within New Zealand in the 1970s.

James and Rodriguez (2009) perceive that as new immigrants to New Zealand in the 1970, Pasifika families also experienced changes in their Pasifika identity. Many Pasifika people were people who traditionally worked the land and often owned their land as a place on which they both lived and worked. However, moving into a completely different economy and community structure caused a blending of cultures and experiences which had new influences on the very core of many immigrant families. Many of these new influences had positive effects on the success of Pasifika students in New Zealand schools and a focus of this study is to identify these positive educational and societal influences.

### **3.4 Factors influencing educational achievement: Culture**

Cultural identity is described by Cross, Bazron, Dennis and Isaacs (1989) as "the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs and values" (p.13). Weiss, Kreider, Lopez and Chatman (2005) define culture as "a set of values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society, are shared by and transmitted across members of that society and dictate behavioral transactions within that society" (p.137). Within the idea of culture are embedded values and a socialisation process that is distinct to the group based on what Cowling (2005) describes is developed through cultural learning processes. Values become deeply held beliefs and practices that are manifested through the way people think and carry themselves in life. Researchers have long recognised that cultural values, worldviews, norms and behaviors that define one group of people will not always be applicable let alone acceptable to another group. Culture is also dynamic and changeable as society and influences move over time and settings such as family, schools and locations become fluid (Mara, 1998).

Having a better understanding of others' cultures has led to changes in pedagogy and instruction which have seen improvements in educational outcomes for students (Harris, 1990; Hughes & More, 1993, Partington, 1998). All of these authors studied Aboriginal communities in Australia and uncovered how their culture and values

differed from what people had previously presumed, they then suggested how these traditions could be best integrated to be useful in educational settings.

In New Zealand, similar studies have been carried out. Macpherson, Spoonley and Anae (2001) explored the lifestyle of Samoans and other Pasifika people in New Zealand. They found that some younger people had difficulty interpreting their culture and living between the worlds of their parents and a largely mono-cultural school environment. Furthermore, a number of studies spanning two decades (Aiono, 1996; Kinloch, 1976; Levine, 2003; O'Meara, 1990; Podmore & Wendt, 2006; Schoeffel and Meleisea, 1996; Singh & Sinclair, 2001) have explored the concept of *fa'asamoa* and found similar trends, that *fa'asamoa* was an important part of young people's lives, but also that it needed to be developed and refined so as to have clarity in a new age. How these cultural voices influence Pasifika male students and may be harnessed to support their educational achievement is one of the objectives of this study.

Bennett (2004) suggests that cultural or ethnic identity can also describe how people are connected to a particular culture or ethnicity. Phinney (1996) refers to cultural identity as a complex number of factors including a sense of belonging, preferences for an ethnic group that implies the same interests and knowledge and involvement with that group.

Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau's (2002) study on Pasifika education notes the importance of understanding how culture can influence the success of Pasifika students in New Zealand and how on the other hand the process of acculturation can cause difficulties in schools. Acculturation is described by Moreno and Lopez (1999) as the internalising of the dominant culture's values and identity. One of the key issues with acculturation is it often places the problem of educational underachievement, in this case of Pasifika students, with the students themselves. Bishop, (2003), Airini, (1992), Gorinski, (2005) and Podmore, Sauvao & Mara (2003) have all documented the problems with acculturation and the underachievement of Pasifika youth. How acculturation can influence the success or otherwise of Pasifika male students will also be explored in this study.

Pasifika parents can often see themselves and the home as the first teachers of their children, providing the initial opportunities to learn their specific language, religion and

values (Coxon et al. 2002; Education Review Office 2008). Pasifika children can then find the culture of their school is quite different from their home and for some this can make it harder to understand the expectations and responses required (Meade, PuhīPuhī & Foster-Cohen, 2003). Bourdieusian concepts of habitus and field are central to their parent's or sibling's success in education when exposure to educational institutional settings are increased.

Weiss et al. (2005) believe that the cultural expectations of some Pasifika parents may also differ from a school's culture and this may cause situations to occur within schools when a families values conflict with the dominant culture. Consequently, students or family members display what would be appropriate behaviours at home but not appropriate at school. For example, research by Garcia, Akiba, Palacios, Bailey, Silver and DiMartino (2002) that focused upon Cambodian immigrant families found that they firmly believed that school was strictly a place where teachers were the experts and knew best for all students. Therefore, they felt to communicate and to be involved with the school was interfering and disrespectful. Garcia et al. (2002) noted that as a result, many Cambodian parents and families were considered disinterested in the education of their children when they themselves believed they were doing the right thing.

Mose (2012) has shown how cultural difference can lead to problems for ethnic minority learners in New Zealand and in particular a pattern of non-engagement for Pasifika learners. The literature presents some basic examples of schools failing to recognise and value Pasifika student's culture. For example in Pasifika Island culture it is considered disrespectful to question the authority of the elders, and children are taught not to ask questions. The face-to-face communication that takes place between the students and those in academic authority conflicts with what is commonly regarded as the 'Pasifika way' (Latu & Young, 2004). Similarly, Fairburn-Dunlop's (1981) study looked at a large secondary school that had introduced a 'Samoan Club' that sought to engage students through engaging them with their culture. A large number of students and families were interviewed and their progress was monitored. The findings described the beliefs of Samoan parents in the New Zealand schooling system as having utmost faith in the school and this faith meant they never would question the school.

Macpherson (2001) concluded that the New Zealand education system is set up to reward students for individual brilliance and favors those that challenge and question their teachers, but that these values are contrary to the belief system of most Pasifika Island communities. Bishop & Glynn (1999) and Museus (2010) noted Pasifika students in New Zealand may experience conflict between the culture of their parents and the educational culture in which they are expected to achieve. This supports Bourdieu's theory in that in New Zealand secondary schools, Pasifika students are often influenced by habitus and fields including: family, social groups, church groups, friendship groups and school.

### **3.5 Factors influencing educational achievement: Parental and family aspirations**

Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph (2003) presented findings that establish the importance of positive parental: attitudes, support, expectations and involvement in the life of an academically successful student. Sanders and Epstein (1998) identified parents as an important and ongoing influence on the school life and learning of their children. They concluded that if schools are to achieve the goal of improving outcomes for students then they are required to seek ways to co-construct student education with the home (Sanders & Epstein, 1998). Alton-Lee, Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) believe that educational institutes such as secondary schools which recognise and work hard to create a relationship with a student's home and family, develop a relational trust between school and home. This bond creates educationally powerful connections within which the communication between home, school and family is strong, clear and supportive of student academic success. Subsequently, schools that find appropriate ways to engage families and their community positively influence student outcomes and achievement. In contrast, studies by Ladson-Billings (2006) and Martinez and Velazquez (2000) suggest that a lack of parental support and involvement in a child's schooling and academic life may be a reason why some students can fail. These findings support Bourdieu (1997) who suggests cultural capital can be disadvantageous if not fully understood in a new field such as a secondary school.

Educational institutes such as primary and secondary schools recognise and work hard to create a relationship with student's homes and families. This network is often extended beyond just the family as schools will often seek to include the community

or church of their student body. Benseman, Coxon, Anderson and Anae (2006) perceive these connections as ways to recognise the student's world and support their academic growth alongside the family. Lipene (2010) conducted an in-depth study of success in education for secondary school Samoans. He interviewed six groups of up to six students and also used follow up interviews. His findings concurred that the importance of communication and engagement of families was crucial to academic success. Alton-Lee (2003) supported the link between close relationships with parents, the school and the community as a factor that can lead to academic achievement for students when there is an alignment of expectations.

The home and school link is reflected in Pasifika research which is positive about the aspirations and expectations of parents and families towards education. The work of Amituanai-Toloa, McNaughton, Lai and Airini (2009) noted that many parents are keen to support their children, receive guidance and be informed of their children's progress. Amituanai et al. (2009) reports that schools which have worked at building a relationship with their Pasifika families and have enabled them to participate fully in school life, have seen benefits in terms of student educational outcomes. Statistics New Zealand and the Ministry of Pasifika Affairs (2010) support this perspective in the following statement:

The greatest influences on success at school are the relationship between children and their parents, and in schools, effective teaching and leadership. Partnerships focused on learning between parents and teachers can also greatly enhance children's achievement. While Pasifika parents want to help their children at school, they sometimes don't know how. Similarly, many teachers and schools do not know how to engage effectively with Pasifika parents. (p.11)

The Ministry of Pasifika Affairs (2010) note the importance of schools and teachers understanding these issues and suggest how they can use them as a way to develop strategies for home-school partnerships that bring the community, family and school together. If the correct cultural frameworks are implemented Pasifika parents will engage and support their children's education and the educational decision making process. This is further supported by Manu'atu and Kepa (2002) who report that ultimately this support and engagement has proved to be a factor in Pasifika students achieving higher levels of academic success.

Whilst it was completed nearly two decades ago, the AIMHI project (1996) is still relevant to today's Pasifika students. It was the first comprehensive study researching eight secondary schools of low decile and largely Pasifika rolls. Principals, senior leaders, Board members and several focus groups of 5 to 6 students from varying year levels at each school were interviewed as well as school documents and resources reviewed, ensuring a sound level of validity. The AIMHI project report (1996) noted, "Pasifika parents, many of whom were born in the islands, have minimal understanding of the New Zealand education system. They do not understand the recent changes to the curriculum and qualifications structures, or the ways that the schools organise themselves" (p.23). This outlines the difficulties schools may face in establishing good home school partnerships with Pasifika families, even though there may be a direct impact for these families as a consequence of their understanding of what is happening at school. Furthermore, the AIMHI Project (1996) suggests that as the parents themselves are unsure about the education processes, they are also unsure about how to assist their children, or what is important to be asking the school and teachers about. For many Pasifika parents and families, their experience of schools will be based in many cases on their own schooling in the Islands, which they fear with some reason, would be outdated and not relevant to what their children are experiencing. This will have undoubtedly been heightened at the turn of this century with the introduction of NCEA and following that the revised New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Engagement with Pasifika families and communities is identified as one of the most influential factors "contributing to improved Pasifika student engagement and achievement" (Education Review Office, 2009, p.32). Fergusson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu and Mara (2008) cited this as a crucial fact in the drive to raise Pasifika achievement as many Pasifika parents believe that by coming to New Zealand they are providing their children with a better chance for a quality education. Therefore, there is an existing foundation for educators to work from in terms of engaging their Pasifika communities as there appears to be little doubt from researchers that parents share the common goal of increasing student achievement. This idea is also supported by an assumption reported by Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'aoi and Taleni (2006) that many Pasifika parents perceive schools are doing their best for students and education is still seen as the key to a better way of life. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) suggest that if these existing ideas held by some Pasifika parents and families can be captured in the



form of a partnership, then they will positively impact on Pasifika students' motivation and educational outcomes. Furthermore, Gorinski and Fraser (2006) also suggest that Pasifika families may find it easier to support and engage with schools when the sharing of knowledge and ideas is two way. So that Pasifika families can share their own views and issues about what occurs within their homes and communities and how that could contribute to their son's learning and success. The research of Thaman (1998) which focused on Samoan and Tongan students, highlighted that if this partnership is reciprocal and culturally responsive, then the behavior and performance of these students is improved and can assist with students' success and learning within an educational setting.

The AIMHI Project (1996) also examined the role of family and community in the lives of Pasifika students. Its findings presented the conflicting 'worlds' that many of these students lived in. They had involvement in several significant 'worlds' – their families, school, church, peers and possibly even the involvement of part-time work. These worlds could all be very influential, particularly their families and churches, but often those with the influence, such as their parents, had little experience, knowledge or understanding of the 'world' their children were living in (AIMHI, 1996).

Building robust connections with Pasifika families and including them in school decision-making processes and ultimately the education of their children has long been a goal of the Ministry of Education in New Zealand. However, the depth and breadth of school communication with many Pasifika Island communities can be poor or non – existent. Fletcher et al. (2006) suggests that in particular, the communication about subject choice, NCEA, achievement levels and educational pathways is at times quite unclear for many Pasifika families. There can be a reluctance for them to seek further advice on some of these issues and it can also be difficult to find agencies outside of the school gate that can assist in any way. This study shows that without being armed with this important information and advice, many of the families do not feel adequately equipped to partake in the education of their children.

Harker (2006) suggests the intention of 'Tomorrows Schools' was to promote a positive vision that was designed to lead to greater involvement of parents in schools and also provide accountability from the schools in terms of what they were delivering to the community. However, Foliaki (1993) believes that for many Pasifika families this

vision did not pan out as hoped. For example, some Tongan parents wanted to be involved in their children's schools but did not have the language skills to feel comfortable enough coming forward. Harker (2006) agreed that this barrier is not only confined to the Tongan community, but throughout many decile one and two schools in South Auckland, a language barrier has denied valuable information being passed from parents to teachers for many Pasifika families. The New Zealand Ministry of Education this noted in the Pasifika Education Plan (2008) that this situation is definitely improving and communities are providing the vital cog to overcome language barriers in order to increase Pasifika student achievement

An example of how home school partnerships can make a difference for Pasifika students was presented in a study by Henderson (1996) who carried out a study based on a group of Tokelau students. The study concluded that strong home-school interaction and contact resulted in students achieving higher levels of academic success. Parents were required to come into school on a regular basis, a tutor was provided, student progress was monitored closely and homes contacted early if there were any signs of inhibited progress. Furthermore, teachers worked on new strategies and approaches to support the students. The net result was that these Pasifika students achieved above the national average in external exams. It is influences of this nature that this study aims to capture in relation to Samoan and Tongan boys.

There is a body of research that highlights that there can be a mismatch between parents and school if clear effort is not made to establish these connections. Cahill (2006) explains that misunderstandings and the complexity of the NCEA system, curriculum choices and the New Zealand education system can be a barrier for community and family involvement. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) also noted that for some Pasifika families, language barriers and respect for the school authority might also prohibit engagement Cahill's 2006 study with Samoan families raised these issues and highlighted the gap that could exist between home and school which could limit the relationship from both sides.

Another aspect of the 'cultural mismatch' can occur in what Gorinski and Fraser (2006) described as the "unquestioned parental obedience and respect for authority that precludes their engagement in inquiry focused dialogue with teachers and school

personnel” (p. 11). Their evidence also suggests that at worst this can be perceived by schools as a lack of interest from Pasifika parent’s families.

A further mismatch of expectation may be found between the parents and their child. Mose (2012) describes the notion of education being prized within the Pasifika community. In her research she uses the concepts of the ‘blessing and the burden’ that comes with expectations from Samoan and Tongan parents in their desires for their children to do well in school and succeed in life.

These studies are also supported by Tupuola (1998) who interviewed students whose parents made very forthright expressions about what sort of careers and jobs would be suitable for their offspring to follow. Often this pressure to enter certain professions, take up particular jobs or pick up tertiary study, such as university, was reflective of the pressure that parents placed on their children to make more of the opportunities that the parents believed were not previously available to them.

### **3.6 Factors influencing educational achievement: Curriculum design and pedagogy**

Bourdieu (1977) supports the idea of matching students’ cultural capital to the school life of students. For Pasifika the notion of cultural capital within the educational setting is often referred to as “Pasifika pedagogy”. Kalavite (2010) and Manu’atu (2000) define this as the integration of teaching and learning practices that are based on and give value to Pasifika values and experiences. Koloto, Katoanga and Tatila (2006) found that a number of studies have shown that if this ‘Pasifika pedagogy’ is used to direct teaching and learning there have been improved results in academic achievement.

While there is limited Pasifika specific curriculum focused research, there are some existing subject based studies such as Koloto (1995) and Bakalevu (2011) that addresses the theme of aligning Western curricula and Pasifika learners. Helu-Thaman (1996) contends that formal schooling and Pasifika learners are in fact a difficult dynamic to marry up and educators need a degree of cultural knowledge if they are to develop a curriculum that will be successful. Bakalevu (2000) supports this notion through her research into mathematics that concluded educators could create success if they applied teaching practices that included culturally relevant pedagogy.

In another Pasifika focused educational study, Lauaki (1996) explored mathematics and its cultural contexts in education. The study included questions that focused on the idea that Pasifika learners may bring existing culturally based knowledge around certain topics to the classroom. For example it may be easier for Samoan learners to understand Maths if a Samoan-centric paradigm is used as a teaching practice. More effective learning and engagement could take place within this subject area if existing knowledge and practices are taken into account.

A curriculum ideology is described by Eisner (2001) as beliefs that schools have about what they teach and why. These ideologies can run deep into the way curriculum can be presented from school to school. Within this ideology there is an opportunity to ensure schools are aligning the curriculum to their student community. Subsequently, if the community is Pasifika then the curriculum should reflect this. This may not be literally in terms of what is taught, but the delivery and strategies used to teach should meet the audience. A simple example of this ideology may be reflected in how schools organise assessments. Many NCEA Unit Standards do not have a set date for completion of assessment tasks, or they may have to be completed throughout a school year, often as homework. In this way, if it is a portfolio style assessment, teachers can revisit and reassess the tasks on an ongoing basis. This provides students with multiple opportunities to achieve. The idea of letting students have several opportunities to complete tasks is a quite foreign when compared to what was done just over ten years ago, before NCEA.

However, consider the idea of the portfolio NCEA assessment in view of a study by Fletcher et al. (2006) that reported for many Pasifika students doing homework was out of the question, when they were required to look after younger brothers and sisters or cousins. In this way, Fletcher et al.'s (2006) study shows how a school chooses to organise its senior NCEA assessments may influence Pasifika students' ongoing opportunity to achieve. Therefore, schools must choose the most appropriate option for the students that they serve, which should then be supported by the teachers in that school.

A further issue regarding curriculum choice in the context of Pasifika education, is the fact that teachers could be at times unaware they are teaching to the so called 'hidden curriculum'. The 'hidden curriculum' is described by McCutcheon (1997) as curriculum

that has two main characteristics. Firstly, that it is not intended and secondly it would seem to be part and parcel of every day teaching at many schools. Put simply, all curriculum is taught by and affected by the way teachers perceive it and this can have a huge impact on student learning.

Language is another important facet of culture. Downes (1998) suggests that we cannot appreciate a culture without having an understanding of the language. Barry (2008) believes that language is not just a form of communication; it is a powerful vehicle of preserving cultural features and values over vast periods of time. Language is at the core of social interaction and is central to a community's identity, "the loss of a language may do serious harm to the community's identity and culture" (Ferguson, p.78).

One subject that clearly uses the backgrounds of Pasifika students is the provision of Pasifika languages at secondary school level. Samoan and Tongan have been senior secondary and NCEA level subjects for several years now. The inclusion of these languages is not just important for the students' academic progress, it is also seen as important for "the self-esteem, confidence and identity, making them appreciative and aware of their cultural heritage" (Fetui & Malakai-Williams, 1996, p.234). These findings are also supported by a study on Pasifika languages in Manukau, Auckland by Davis, Bell and Starks (2001), where interviewees, "emphasised the importance of their language in relation to their identity as members of Pasifika communities" (p.12). Participants believed that learning these languages also supported them in maintaining their specific cultural values and beliefs. They saw the use and understanding of their language as an important part of keeping their ethnicity alive and providing a better understanding of their culture, giving them a sense of pride and engagement in this subject at school. Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) supports this notion through their study that clearly indicates that languages can have clear advantages to students that go beyond the realms of academic success and can provide students with contextualised benefits that can aide them in their wider studies.

Bourdieu (1997) describes cultural capital as inclusive of cultural competence such as language. Pasifika languages in schools may provide a bridge to a cultural divide that may exist for Pasifika learners. Schools by their very nature are culturally Western in their orientation and Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) suggests that the general delivery of

the curriculum might be ethnocentric. Understanding that language is a key value of any culture and then teaching Pasifika languages can improve the academic achievement of Pasifika learners and act as an advocate for the importance of that culture, whilst also creating a sense of wellbeing and belonging for those students where that language is spoken at home. Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) studied Pasifika bilingual education in New Zealand schools and found that well delivered programmes supported the students' sense of identity and created a link between this factor and their overall academic progress.

Hawk and Hill (1996) concluded that the implementation of best practice in terms of teaching pedagogy, plus the establishment of good classroom relationships with students can be a positive influencing factor that leads to high achievement for Pasifika students which matches that of any other ethnic group. The work of Blum, McNeely and Nonnemaker (2002) also found that Pasifika students who are engaged or connected interpersonally and institutionally have a greater chance of achieving higher grades and success in schools.

Pasikale (1999) presented a number of factors that positively influenced Pasifika students' educational achievement. One of her key findings was that Pasifika students identified with teachers who displayed empathy or those that showed they 'cared'. These findings corroborated with Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'aoi and Taleni (2006) who compiled data on Pasifika students and their learning preferences particularly in terms of literacy development. Their findings included comments from students about not being confident to read aloud, wanting to read and write about their own culture, the desire for positive feedback from their teachers and their preference for quiet classrooms because they were easier to learn in.

Hawk and Hill's (1996) study of Pasifika achievement in high schools focused on feedback from what students saw as important in their learning. Some of the key findings were that students acknowledged that some teachers made the effort to speak to them one on one and made effort to notice them. They appreciated having someone who had made it clear that they would be approachable if a student needed help. The students believed when teachers knew them and acknowledged them their teacher had a genuine interest in them. This could range from acknowledgement in a greeting or asking after them. Students appreciated this greatly and noticed quickly when

teachers ignored them; this was taken to mean teachers did not care or were not interested in knowing their students. These statements give a clear indication from student voice of what is important to them both in and outside of the classroom and how teachers influence their learning. This would be considered good practice for all teachers but Hawk and Hill (1996) noted this was a very high priority for Pasifika students.

Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) examined pedagogy in the context of interactions in a homework centre for Tongan students. They found that students saw definite learning advantages for themselves because of the fact the tutors at the centre were also Tongan and their bilingualism made it easier for students to interact and ultimately learn more effectively. This study also found the Tongan parents saw benefit in that the Tongan tutors could provide values and expectations in terms of behaviour that they felt maybe missing from mainstream schools. Similarly, Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) explored pedagogy in the context of interactions between tutors and students and their findings also support the argument that specific learning plans catering for Pasifika students are more likely to lead to educational success.

Overall, Pasifika educational achievement is not only influenced by teaching practices but also by a choice of curriculum that suits particular students. These findings underpin this research as they suggest that practices which lead to success for Pasifika boys is influenced by a range of factors and not just those being played out in the confines of the classroom. Alton-Lee (2003) in her Best Evidence Synthesis found teachers and school systems can make a 59% difference to all student achievement. With teachers and schools having such a large influence on students' success, then it would appear important for educators to develop the factors both in and outside the classroom which have a positive effect on Pasifika students' educational achievement.

In a broader sense, some Pasifika research reflects a feeling that Pasifika peoples have endured years of research around educational underachievement that in fact adds little of a positive nature and instead uses the lack of improvement in their education as a barometer of 'their' failure (Nakhid, 2003). This approach has created a culture of failure attached to Pasifika educational achievement in New Zealand. Hattie (2002), reports OECD statistics of 80% of New Zealand's students achieving in a world class education system. However, Vaioleti (2001) believes the fact remains

that New Zealand has wide disparity in outcomes for students and when this achievement is put under the microscope it shows the majority of Pasifika students are overrepresented at the bottom end of these statistics. This statistic is viewed by some researchers as what has been described as *ngaue tae 'aonga* (worthless work/wasted effort) (Vaioleti & Vaioleti, 2003).

Silipa (1998) presented a study called 'Cracking the coconut mentality', which examined an apparent inferiority complex or culture that he observed had developed in a group of secondary school Samoan students. He found that with developed specific and targeted teaching strategies, students were able to achieve academically and rise above the perception of the inferiority complex. The findings point to the benefits of a teaching method that challenges a culture of expected failure and instead recognises and places value on the students' cultural capital and positive influences outside of the school. This is supported by a study by Pasikale (1999) that concludes that Pasifika learners have a range of preferences when it comes to learning processes. Teachers interviewed in this research, regardless of their own or the learners' ethnic background, believed that learning processes linked to external cultural values needed to be used when teaching Pasifika boys, as opposed to being trapped into preconceived ideas about how the students would best learn. Pasikale's (1999) study concluded that teacher empathy towards individual students' needs and cultural identity were the key to success in comparison within other ethnicities in New Zealand schools.

Samu (1998) found that while schools are open to developing some specific learning programmes for Pasifika learners, typically they are simplistic and stereotyped developments that only use surface knowledge as their basis. Samu's (1998) study was based on a review of the New Zealand Social Studies curriculum that included a critique of the location of Pasifika knowledge and experiences within the curriculum for this subject. The New Zealand Ministry of Education Social Studies curriculum statement is explicit in its requirement that students must do some learning using the Pacific as a setting at some point during their course. As Australia is also included within this requirement there is a possibility that for many Pasifika students there is a limited opportunity to really experience specific studies around their cultures within this curriculum area.



### **3.7 Factors influencing educational achievement: Church**

Taulealeausumai (1997) suggests that for many Pasifika families the church is central and relevant to family life and they can be greatly influenced by the policies and teachings of the church. For example in 2006, 99.2% of Samoans (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) were affiliated with a church. In the Tongan homeland, 98% of the population belong to a Christian church (Department of Statistics, 2008). Fairburn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003) found that respect for God is woven into many aspects of life which include attitudes towards how education should be perceived and emphasised. The importance of this factor is critical and recognised now by the fact that education leaders in New Zealand often conduct seminars or pass key information through the church forum where they believe they will have more chance of impact. This may suggest that the audience that may be captured by using the church as the vehicle to drive discussion or engage the community is greater than just by schools contacting families directly.

Religious belief is a very important part of the lives of Tongans. This is reflected in the Tongan flag which has a red cross against a white background, the red symbolising the blood of Christ and the white cross standing for purity (Guile, 2005). Howard (2004) reports that the main churches in Tonga are Catholic, Free Wesleyan of Tonga, Church of the Latter Day Saints, Seventh Day Adventists, Gospel Churches, Free Church of Tonga and the Baha’l faith. The influences of these churches extends to many parts of Tongan life, with events and activities throughout the year based around the church and education being also largely influenced by the church and religious beliefs.

Airini (1998) suggests one of the key acknowledgements schools need to make for Pasifika students is the recognition of the spiritual dimension that is apparent for many of them. This literature is supported by Puloto-Endemann, Annandale and Instone (2004) who describe the elements of a holistic education that includes a learning environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually grounded as a key ingredient in the success and achievement of Pasifika students.

The influence of the church can also be extended to influencing the thinking of individual students. According to Vialle, Lysaght and Verenikina (2005) the role and significance of spirituality in education is a central influence for many young Pasifika students. Their study related spirituality to personal beliefs and mind-set and indicated

that for Pasifika students spiritual life and education can go hand in hand. This is an important point for educators to understand and use when developing educational approaches that will support the educational achievement of Pasifika students. Furthermore the relationship between church and education reflects Bourdieu's concept of habitus in terms of the church influencing Pasifika students and their families and consequently becoming a factor that can improve educational achievement equality between different ethnic groups of students in New Zealand schools.

McCaffery and Tuafuti (2003) suggest that many Pasifika students grow up reading and learning the bible at home and are taught from an early age that questioning the bible is inappropriate and seen as challenging traditional ways. This can create a conflict between this acceptance in the family setting where the expectation is for children to listen and not question and the open discussion that is typically encouraged in New Zealand schools. Fletcher et al. (2006) present this issue as a challenge for some Pasifika students that can cause confusion between students' traditional family beliefs and those experienced at school and can therefore impact their success in today's classrooms.

In understanding influences on academic achievement, the role of the church in the lives of Pasifika students should not be underestimated. Duranti, Ochs and Ta'ase (2004) suggest that "educational research needs to reconfigure the relation between home and school and between home and community" (p.12), a statement that recognises that for many Pasifika students learning extends beyond the school gates and is influenced significantly by factors such as the church which can play an enormous part in students' lives.

Both the work of Cahill (2006) and Tupuola (1998) identified that a central aspect of Pasifika life, that is evident across different Pasifika communities in New Zealand, is the strong beliefs and morality of Christian influence that exist. Religion has the potential to affect what they deem to be appropriate content to learn at school and what behaviour is acceptable at school. Tupuola (1998) stated that some in the Pasifika community, will view certain material raised at school, particularly around topics such as sex education and health, as completely unacceptable. Indeed, the term itself was deemed to be problematic in Samoan contexts. Cahill (2006) and

Tupuola (1998) note the impact for the Pasifika learner can be that at home they are not encouraged or possibly even discouraged in advancing their learning in some subject areas.

The importance of the church in the lives of Pasifika learners and the tensions they may face can go further than just disdain around sensitive topics such as sex education or health. There were findings in studies carried out by early Pasifika researchers such as Fairburn-Dunlop (1981) and Jones (1991) who found while time at school could be relaxed and enjoyable, Pasifika parents often made sure that a young person's time outside of school was taken up with various family duties, such as church meetings. Therefore, a Pasifika student may not have the same freedom that palagi students had to socialise outside of school hours. Hawk and Hill (1996) report that Pasifika children may spend large amounts of time dedicated to the church, often quite late into the evenings. This practice may impede educational success when parents may not understand the importance of their children's homework, particularly when they are at NCEA level and assignments are due. This tension can place pressure on students who have grown up in an environment when church and family come first and it is deemed disrespectful to speak out. Subsequently, Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital can provide insights into the part habitus, in terms of the role the church plays, in developing conditions where cultural capital can be utilised in determining such outcomes for Pasifika students.

### **3.8 Factors influencing educational achievement: Sport**

Sports can be a highly successful form of motivation and a key factor in academic achievement for some students. Kukahiko (2017) noted in his research on Pasifika football players in the USA, that there was a strong link to success in higher education when transition, a sense of belonging and aspirational thinking was clearly laid out for the athletes rather than just a simple focus of their sports. Sport cannot just simply be seen in terms of physical fitness and a source of pride, as according to Chester and Cave (1981) sport also provides the possibility that students could apply the learning skills they use in sports to academic learning. Huitt (2001) reports that some teachers already mirror some of their teaching practices used in sports in their other classes and have found great success in this pedagogy. Huitt (2001) also points out that for many students there is a strong link between their passion and desire on the sports field and their personal self-esteem, which can lead to excellent educational outcomes.

However, in contrast Taylor (1999) argued that sports can also have a negative effect if it is not seen as a part in the student's holistic development and they end up with a focus too centred on sports as opposed to their academic education. His findings were focused on Black Americans in college who were largely focusing on their roles as college basketball players and not committing the same level of dedication to their academic studies.

Sport in many New Zealand schools is held in a very important place. In fact since the days of the 1905 All Blacks sport has played a critical role in what Spoonley and Bedford (2012) define as 'New Zealandness'. They note that in addition to war, sport and especially rugby has been embraced by the nation as a way of creating a sense of nationhood. Spoonley and Bedford (2012) believe the All Blacks mythology and rugby would appear to have been an important part of developing New Zealand's psyche.

Spoonley and Bedford (2012) report that by the late 1980s and 1990s Samoan and Tongan sports people were not only key players in many sports but also key contributors to leadership and success within these sports. People such as Bernice Mene (netball), Michael Jones (rugby), Beatrice Faumuina (athletics) Jonah Lomu (rugby) Inga Tuigamala (rugby and league) and David Tua (boxing) became sporting household names in the 1980s and 1990s.

The rise of Pasifika athletes has come more common and exposure by the media to the changing nature of the face of New Zealand sport. Young secondary school Samoan and Tongan boys have their heroes in front of them every week and all year. However, Hyde (1992) reports that this has not been without negative connotations either around the domination of Polynesians in sport, particularly in Auckland. Later in 2001 another article captured the mood of the time asking why there were so few white players in New Zealand rugby (Matheson, 2001). This article went on to claim that young white athletes were intimidated by Polynesian players. Despite some negative commentary five players of Samoan descent have captained the All Blacks through this period, namely, Tana Umaga, Rodney So'oialo, Mills Muliana, Keven Mealamu and Jerry Collins. The numbers of Samoan and Tongan players particularly in rugby and rugby league has also continued to grow through the 2000s. For example in

Auckland rugby alone a New Zealand Rugby Union paper (2012) reported that 47% of playing numbers were made up of Pasifika people.

The popularity of rugby, rugby league and kilikiti in many boys schools can provide a focal point and their importance to the Pasifika students cannot be underestimated. In recent years the proliferation of Pasifika sports players particularly in rugby and rugby league has led to some concerns that students may be placing a sports career above their education. Lipine (2010) suggests that many Samoan students are willing to put a lot of time into sports rather than their academic studies and found that many of the young men influenced by the lure of sporting dreams also faced academic failure due to the time they spent chasing their sporting goals; even though there are few opportunities in professional sport within New Zealand to reach the top and to build a career.

Recently in many secondary schools there has been a move to temper the sporting goals of young Pasifika boys with a more balanced outlook that suggests that academic achievement is a worthy pursuit alongside the efforts of becoming top sports men. Perhaps the best way of harnessing the influence of sport is to connect it to academic success. Gardner (1993) sees it as an educator's responsibility to identify the students' strengths and use this to develop them holistically and notes the key is broadening these strengths into other areas of life and transferring their desire for success in one facet to overall academic success. Bandura (1997) reports that there is a growing use of sports training approaches as a way of assisting sports-minded students to achieve within the classroom setting.

Fairburn-Dunlop (2010) reported findings in her study that focused on the implementation of a 'Polynesian Club' at a male secondary school that was established to teach, reinforce and showcase Pasifika cultures in order to improve educational outcomes. She found the Pasifika secondary students enjoyed the sporting influence generated by older role models and this was a key area that could be successfully used as motivation for younger boys. In her study she also found that regular visits by Pasifika All Blacks and representative players, who were old boys of a school or college, encouraged the younger students to study harder as opposed to solely placing their efforts into sport. Furthermore, Chester (1981) reported that any students who may struggle academically in the classroom can learn much from their

approach to sport if educators are willing to provide a means for them to understand how to apply their passion from one sphere to another.

### **3.9 Boys' education**

As the introduction to this literature review proposed there currently exists only a small body of literature relating to the topic of Pasifika boys and educational achievement. It is established that Pasifika boys can at times face particular and unique challenges at school. Fa'avae (2018) sights the difficulty of navigating the through life as a New Zealand-raised Tongan male of which time at school is a big part of that journey. Therefore, this section of the literature review chapter focuses on wider aspects of boys' education. The objectives of this study is to then use this more generalised literature base as a foundation to consider the influences on Pasifika boys' secondary school education.

When considering the literature that explores influences on student outcomes and achievement there is a small body of work that focuses specifically on boys' education. Driessen (2015) perceives that a focus on boys' education has developed over the past decade and that schools are now challenging the idea that only boys from certain socio-economic backgrounds or cultures were underachieving. A national ERO report (2008) presented data that confirmed there was an achievement gap between boys and girls in New Zealand. Whilst, Wilson, Madjar and McNaughton (2016) reported that teaching practices and assessment practices in New Zealand schools were typically better suited to girls and therefore may not be suitable for some student groups such as boys.

Carr-Greg and Shale (2002) suggest that male teenagers find there are several hurdles facing them throughout their formative years that can also have an effect on learning outcomes. Hormonal changes are dramatically increasing during these adolescent years when secondary educators are hoping their male students will focus on all important school work. Carr-Greg and Shale (2002) note, when going through such dramatic changes to body and mind, many boys, of all ethnic backgrounds, are grappling with the simple but all consuming question of whether they are normal or not.

The current debate around boys' education has its roots in the 1990s based on texts such as Warren Farrell's (1992) *The Myth of Male Power* and Robert Bly's (1991) *Iron John*. It was texts such as these that were influential in sparking debate about boys' education in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and the USA. Gurian (1999) offered further critique to this debate which has at times had fairly robust media interest. The discussion gathered momentum through the 1990s which led to arguments that positioned boys as victims of schooling (Gurian, 1999) and debate regarding how boys experience being boys. Over the past 20 years there have been complex and detailed accounts of the experience of being a boy in the education system, for example Mac an Ghail (1994); Skelton (2001); Archer (2003); Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) have all presented studies that have inquired into boys who are largely disaffected in their schooling and those boys who are engaged and successful.

As time has progressed and researchers such as Mac an Ghail (1994) and Skelton, (2001) have presented findings on how boys learn and achieve, there has become a developed understanding of the ways in which boys experience their school life. Furthermore, Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) presented teaching pedagogies that use subjects and activities based around the engagement of boys that include a contextualised learning process and strong relationships. Lashlie (2005) completed a significant study on males in New Zealand, in which she presents teenage boys as disappearing into another world and needing time at this age to think and process their ideas. Lashlie (2005) suggests that these observations about teenage boys are also central to the development of educating young men, Pasifika or not. The importance of teaching pedagogies that are best suited for boys' learning cannot be underestimated as the starting point for the academic success of young men.

When defining and responding to male learners, school staff cannot simply create broad strategies or approaches to improve male student achievement. Hawk and Hill (1996) suggest that teachers need to be able to work with individual learners to develop meaningful curricula and specific strategies. Understanding the diverse interests and needs of male Pasifika learners or otherwise, must underpin any move to address underachievement.

Weinstein (1998) argues that motivation for boys is a key factor when determining the quality of their learning outcomes at school. Although their motivation maybe intrinsic and developed by parental expectations, home or external factors, motivation can also be influenced by a student's immediate school setting. Consequently, Younger and Warrington (2002) suggests that for many boys their motivation depends on the school, teachers and their learning environment. A context that can be summarised as the 'culture' of the school which can include the school values and organisation and the way the school engages with its student body.

Irwin (2009), Ruddock and Flutter (2004) and Slade (2002) have also identified factors that relate to motivation and the academic success of boys. Their research showed boys' motivation and academic achievement is related to their relationship with a particular teacher and how that teacher teaches the subject. The studies of Irwin (2009), Ruddock and Flutter (2004) and Slade (2002) show that boys will be more successful if they feel their teacher believes they can achieve and the teachers uses a variety of methods to deliver the subject. There is also a suggestion from these studies that teaching approaches which provide a more active and hands on approach will positively motivate boys and increase their academic achievement. Finally, they found that boys preferred not to be writing for long periods of time and enjoyed interacting with others and learning together in groups.

In New Zealand the Te Kotahitanga Project (Bishop 2003) reported how Maori boys enjoyed their learning more and made increased academic progress when they were in cooperative learning environments. Bishop (2003) also found that when Maori boys worked together in groups with their friends it increased their motivation and made them more willing to share experiences and help each other each with their work. Furthermore, the students perceived that working in groups encouraged competitiveness in relation to their academic work which helped them push themselves to greater success (Bishop 2003).

Irwin (2009) found in his research on boys education that every boy in his study valued the idea of being with their mates/friends as one of the key aspects of enjoying school. It was evident that boys saw their mates as central to their schooling life and also their time away from school and as part of their social development. Chu (2005) argued



that boys considered their mates/friends as a crucial part of their growing up and the influence of friends was typically a positive part of most boy's development.

Noble and Bradford (2002) concluded that schools with a curriculum that was focused on boys' interests increased the motivation of their students and heightened their chances of success. In New Zealand the introduction of the revised New Zealand Curriculum (2007) and the introduction of NCEA has broadened the curriculum and courses that schools can offer. Consequently, schools have begun to offer new vocational pathways which involve subjects linked to the trades, such as construction, automotive and engineering are subjects that have proven popular with boys. Brophy (2004) supports this idea that some boys are motivated by actively 'doing' rather than listening, writing and making notes. Brophy (2004) found that boys' were motivated by subjects which allowed them to be hands on.

Martin (2003) and Noble and Bradford (2002) suggest that opportunities for boys to have a range of curriculum experiences is important in increasing the overall motivation of boys at school. Their studies showed that if boys are not engaged with their learning, they can underachieve and with that can be seen the development of negative behaviors that will exacerbate their situation. These negative behaviors include disrupting others during lessons, disrespect for students and teachers and ultimately poor learning outcomes. In this way boys' academic success needs to be supported by a broad curriculum and teachers that champion boys' achievements and the students themselves need to recognise what it looks like and feels like to achieve in the classroom.

Hortacsu, (1995) suggests that male students' academic achievement is influenced by the level of parental involvement in school life. This study measured sample groups and their involvement in traditional school activities such as information events, parent teacher meetings and general engagement with the school of their children. Hortacsu (1995) concluded that male students with high levels of parental involvement were more likely to succeed academically. West (2002) found that male students perform better academically with the presence and influence of a positive male role model.

Steele (1997) notes that without positive male role models at home boys can fear judgement from their peers for not knowing the answers or worry about being ridiculed

for failure as without strong academic role models, boys can “proactively dis-identify with achievement in school” (p. 797). This notion is also supported by James (2007) who states that without strong academic role models boys, can decide that academic achievement is not something to be considered as important.

James (2007) concluded that male students who lacked positive family and home influences could be engaged by teachers who were able to encourage these students to achieve academic success. He also perceived that even though a students’ home life could be challenging schools could still provide “the opportunity for all students to develop personal aims and goals by encouraging their interaction with a wide variety of successful adults who can serve as role models and resources” (p. 179). Without this kind of role modelling, male students can have very little to model themselves on and are thus not able to conceive high academic goals. While Lashlie (2005) suggests that for adolescent young boys, a key part of growing to be a man is the need to feel part of something bigger and feeling a connection to others. As boys make their way through their adolescent years at school into manhood there are a number of negative external influences that can have an influence on their success. Lashlie (2005) noted that drugs, alcohol, and girls are some of the exertions that can be part of their growing up and can impede their educational outcomes.

James (2007) suggests that boys are at higher risk of being involved with activities such as drinking, drug taking, sex and driving under the influence of either alcohol or drugs. Whereas West (2002) believes that boy’s behaviour is often based on what they perceive as normal for them within society and they are seeking acceptance from their peers. This behaviour is also encapsulated by the traditional saying of ‘boys will be boys’ although this saying can cover a multitude of potential dangerous activities generally not aligned to achieving academic success. Neall (2002), describes the ‘boys will be boys’ mantra as being physical, active, placing value on courage and being accepted and admired by their peers.

A central issue to the improvement in teaching Pasifika students and improving learning outcomes is that of engagement of Pasifika boys’ in the classroom. According to the Pasifika Education Plan (2013 – 2017) only 2 percent of teachers in New Zealand are of Pasifika heritage, so how do the rest of the teachers at the ‘chalk face’ manage to understand and meet Pasifika students in their world? Meyer, Weir,

McClure, Walkey and McKenzie (2009) found that success for Pasifika has so far largely been attributed to the influence of family, friends, church and community.

Hawk and Hill's (1996) AIMHI research twenty years ago was the first detailed study that identified many issues faced by Pasifika students, particularly boys, and explored the issues that impacted on their learning. It was an extensive and widely respected study that encompassed 9 secondary schools with large numbers of Pasifika male students. It involved interviews with over 1,000 students and over 100 full lesson observations and detailed review of school policy and data. At the crux of their findings was that teachers needed to apply their skills in a way that matched the backgrounds and experiences of the individual students in front of them.

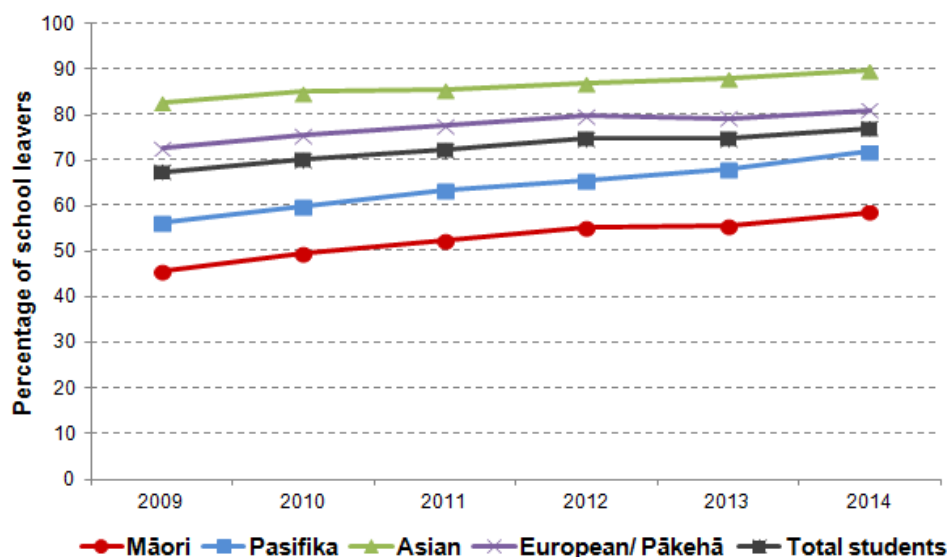
Hawk and Hill (1996) updated their research focusing on teaching practices. The basis of their research was in depth interviews and surveys that provided teachers of Pasifika male students with clear recommendations for effective teaching, key features of good practices and how schools were putting these practices into place. Again, a key theme was the 'engagement' of these students by trying to understand their world view. These ideas become central to setting up this research project in terms of the data collection outlined in chapter three – quality data from Pasifika boys will also only be forthcoming if the 'connection' or engagement is established.

Learning styles are an important consideration in any teaching situation and Pasikale (1999) presented defined preferences of male Pasifika learners in terms of their learning processes. Her key message was that Pasifika students in her study identified teachers who created relational connections and acted with empathy or those that showed they 'cared' were more likely to connect with the students. While this may seem obvious and applicable to all students she also noted that for male Pasifika students this empathy was a value placed above the ethnicity of the teacher. Fa'avae (2017) shared how adopting some cultural knowledge and practices valued by Tongan *kāinga* (extended families), may assist teachers in how they approach teaching if they understand more about how Tongan males learn in New Zealand schools. Ross (2000) also reported that well planned strategies with Pasifika boys can succeed with the right approach and buy-in from staff. Some of these strategies went against suggested best practice research and included the grouping of 'at risk' students in one class, limitation on the numbers of teachers in front of the boys and

keeping them in a homeroom type situation rather than breaking them into different option groups throughout the day. The results were measured in terms of student attendance and pass rates at NCEA level and the study found that the boys were engaged, had progressed and were proud of their achievements.

Level 2 NCEA is seen as the minimum of academic achievement for school leavers and for educational success beyond school. The Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017) also sees the key role secondary schools play in meeting the development needs and aspirations of Pasifika people if academic targets are to be achieved.

Since 2003, all ethnic groups have seen an increase in the percentage of school leavers who achieve NCEA Level 2 or above. The gap between the proportion of Pasifika students leaving school with NCEA Level 2 or above and non-Pasifika students has decreased over the past year. The forecast position set by the Pasifika Education Plan (2013-2017) is 85 percent of year 1-10 Pasifika learners will meet literacy and numeracy expectations and 85 percent of Pasifika 18 year olds to achieve NCEA Level 2 or equivalent qualifications in 2017. There has been steady progress over the previous 5 years, highlighted in figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.9 Percentage of school leavers with at least an NCEA Level 2 qualification or equivalent by ethnic group (2009 to 2014)**

Source: New Zealand Qualification Authority web site (2015)

Figure 3.9 shows that the largest percentage point increase in those attaining at least NCEA Level 2 or equivalent has been in Pasifika school leavers, with an increase of

15.5 percentage points between 2009 (56.4%) and 2014 (71.9%). However there still remains a significant gap compared to the European/Pākehā school leavers, who had an 8.2 percentage point increase between 2009 (72.8%) and 2014 (81.0%). Asian students (89.7%) had an increase of 6.9 percentage points over the same time period.

### **3.10 Summary**

Overall, this literature review has explored the literature relating to Pasifika students and education. It has also presented how policy changes have affected education for Pasifika students. The review has provided an in-depth inquiry in to a range of influences on Pasifika students in the New Zealand education system and has concluded by considering education for boys. It will endeavour to explore whether many of the influences highlighted in this literature review are perceived by successful Tongan and Samoan students to have positively influence their academic achievements.

## CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the rationale for adopting the research methodology is presented. It begins with an explanation of the paradigm and methods used for this study and then presents data analysis techniques. Finally, the approach to maintaining high ethical standards is described, together with an explanation of how validity and trustworthiness were achieved.

### 4.2 Overview of methodology

The methodological approach refers to the choice of philosophical basis, information gathering and analysis used in order to complete a research study. Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) state, “the term methodology refers to the way in which we approach problems and seek answers. In the social sciences, the term applies to how research is conducted” (p.14).

A paradigm gives a conceptual framework within which to make sense of the world. Paradigms support how we perceive the world and this perception is supported by a community of practitioners. Hughes (1990) suggests that a paradigm is the frame or way that a research project is approached and viewed by the researcher and states that “what we learn about the world will depend on how we see it; and how we see it depends on our choice of paradigm” (p. 32).

The two main paradigms are positivist and interpretive. An interpretive paradigm suggests that humans make their own lives the object of continuous meaning-making. In this way individuals will reflect, interpret and reinterpret the world around them, consequently making them a unique focus for research inquiry. Bryman (2012), describes interpretivism as “the view that a strategy is required that represents the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences” (p. 30). The research questions of this study explore the perspectives of male Pasifika recent school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and Pasifika parents, subsequently an interpretive approach was considered the most appropriate. The aim of this research project was to collect data, derived from conversations with these three different cohorts. Dunkin (1996) describes an interpretive synthesis as not designed

to predict outcomes but more to provide a better understanding of the proposed research problem.

The choice of an interpretive research approach was based on this being the most suitable to meet the aims of the study to cater for the identified sample. The interpretive conception of social reality has a philosophical basis that the world exists but people perceive it in different ways and therefore organisations such as schools are an invented social reality. Interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality, including the domain of human action, is a social construction by human actors and that this applies equally to researchers (Walsham, 1993). An interpretive approach to research aims to discover how individuals interpret the world in which they live and what meaning they place upon their actions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). For this reason, an interpretive approach was the most appropriate because the nature of the social phenomenon being investigated in the study is created by the perceptions of the recent school leavers, university graduates and parents. Furthermore, the research questions led the researcher to complete the study within Pasifika communities and the basis of knowledge corresponding to the social reality of any community is one that is created by the perceptions of those that reside in the identified environment (Dash, 2005). Consequently, social realities, such as Pasifika communities, are perceived by an individual according to their own ideological position as stated by Dash, “therefore, knowledge is personally experienced rather than acquired from or imposed from outside” (Dash, 2005, p. 1).

An interpretive approach also suggests that social realities are multi-layered and complex, leading to a single phenomenon having multiple interpretations (Cohen et al., 2007). In this way, the interpretive approach made sense in the case of this study because it sought individuals’ opinions regarding the phenomenon of Pasifika students’ success, which suggested that because there were a number of different people and influences involved that there was a variety of experiences, perceptions and interpretations (Hult & Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, the research questions focused primarily on the opinions of Pasifika participants and this led to the adoption of a talanoa methodology and methods being adopted as the most appropriate (Fairburn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014).

Qualitative methods were used in this research to gather text and data sources that were then analysed. According to Bryman, (2012), qualitative data provide detailed reasons to support a trend. Although, Bear-Lehman (2002) found that a quantitative approach has been considered the more dominant methodology, Creswell (2014) notes there has been a trend towards qualitative research methods with the role of the researcher becoming more central to the research. Bryman (2012), explains that there are still specific attributes within qualitative and quantitative data that reflect a particular position of research overall. For instance Bear-Lehman (2002) suggests the main concern of qualitative research is the quality and depth of data collected rather than vast amounts of quantity collected to support a topic. Therefore a qualitative researcher's work is predominantly in the interpretive paradigm.

The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (Ministry of Education, 2001) were adopted by this study in order to guide the methodological design. The Pasifika Education Research Guidelines (2001) provide a valuable research framework for those embarking on research focused on Pasifika participants and issues. The guidelines were developed to assist Pasifika and non-Pasifika researchers when conducting research in a Pasifika context. The guidelines are designed to empower both the researcher and those involved in the research so that the diverse and unique cultures of Pasifika people can be explored in a respectful manner.

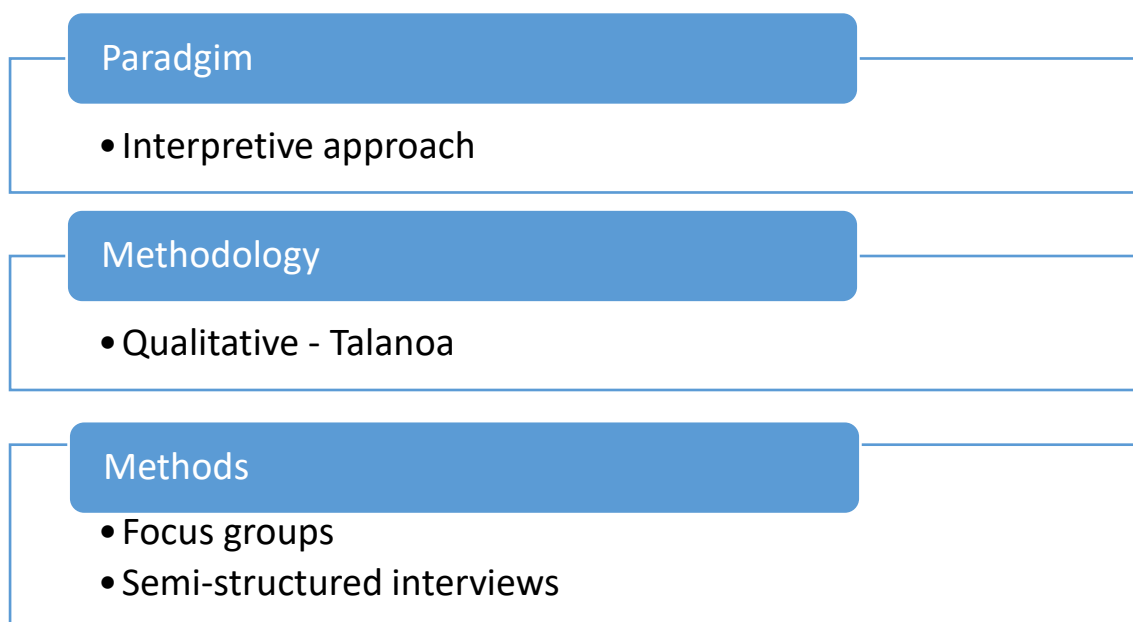
Talanoa is an oral interactive research methodology (Vaiotei, 2006) that was adopted as the most appropriate research approach for this study. Talanoa is seen as a culturally appropriate approach for studies that engage primarily with participants from the Pacific region or that explore Pacific cultures or contexts. The participants of this study were known to the researcher, which in conventional research may be considered a cause for concern in relation to trustworthiness and reliability. However, in the context of the Pacific Island research approach of Talanoa (Vaiotei, 2006), knowing and having a relationship with the participants is deemed crucial in order to provide relational trust and openness.

Throughout the research process the researcher consulted with advisors from Pasifika communities and Unitec's Pacific Centre in order to diminish the risk of making errors of judgment in relation to ethical issues. Organisations such as the Fofola e Fala Ministry of Education Pasifika Advisory Group have provided important points of



reference and continued discussion which has directed this study. The researcher also enlisted the support of a personal Pasifika Research Advisory group from the Pacific community which included: Ezra Schuster, Ministry of Education; Linda Aumua, then Director of the Unitec Pacific Centre; George Gavet, Ministry of Education; Daniel Samuela, Head of Social Sciences at Kelston Boys High School and Siua Pole, Head of Mathematics at Wesley College. Tana Umaga, ex- All Black captain and Selio Solomon, CEO Martin Hautius Pacific Peoples' Learning Centre also provided advice and guidance at various times.

Figure 4.1 below provides a summary of the methodological approach used in this research.



**Figure 4.1 Overview of the methodology**

#### ***4.2.1 Talanoa as research methodology***

Vaioleti (2013) describes talanoa as a research concept in which the participants' cultural land, personal values, previous experiences and issues of culture, gender, power, class, and family status all should be considered and respected. He continues that talanoa has become a popular Pasifika research methodology that has been described as narrative interviews and open and informal conversations where participants share their thoughts and opinions.

Talanoa is a concept and tradition that exists in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Solomon Islands and Hawaii (Fairburn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014; Prescott, 2008). The word 'talanoa' in Tongan is derived from 'tala' which means to talk, inform and

relate, while 'noa' refers to anything or nothing in particular (Otunuku, 2011). It is particularly relevant to Tongan and Samoan oratory tradition and therefore appropriate to this research as participants are drawn from these ethnic groups.

Johansson Fua (2014) describes talanoa as having four principles central to Pasifika research which are respect, humility, love and generosity. In Samoa the tradition is described as a free, multi-layered conversation (Vaioleti, Morrison & Vermeulen, 2002). Talanoa allows people to discuss and engage in conversations that will enable rich data to be drawn out around the given topic (Fairburn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014).

In order to integrate both the concepts presented by Anae (1998) and Vaioleti (2013) into the methodological design of this study, there were some important epistemological practices presented in the Pasifika Education Guidelines (2001) that were adopted. These included: sensitivity to Pasifika contexts; embracing Pasifika notions of collective ownership; understanding the notion of collective shame; and understanding how the authoritarian structures in Pasifika communities work. The researcher used these epistemological concepts as the foundation to build the research upon, allowing the researcher to achieve an understanding of Pasifika cultures and to also conduct the research in a respectful way.

In terms of Pasifika specific research there has been much debate about the idea of particular rationales applicable to the Pasifika research context. There is a growing body of research about Pasifika cultural paradigms (Fairburn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). The Teu Le Va report (Airini, Mila-Schaaf, Coxon, Mara & Sanga, 2010) recognised the critical role of Pasifika philosophical and methodological research approaches in order to support understanding of the different stakeholders involved in the education of Pasifika students. Both Anae (1998) and Mara (1998) suggest that to engage the concerns of Pasifika peoples, epistemological ideas need to be carefully considered. Bryman (2012) agrees that epistemological questions regarding the nature of research are central before research methodology is considered. In this study, it was therefore important to consider the impact of Pasifika epistemologies on the chosen methodological approach of talanoa.

One of the crucial considerations when undertaking Pasifika focused research is the description of collective responsibilities and ownership principles that are common to

Pasifika people. Anae (1998) presents the importance of understanding Pasifika ideas regarding: values; individual and group behavior; gender; age relations; and notions of time when Pasifika people are involved in research studies. To effectively engage Pasifika peoples, it is clear that these epistemological realities must be at the core of the research in order to truly reflect and address the concerns that may be drawn out of the data gathered.

#### ***4.2.2 Qualitative data within the context of talanoa***

Talanoa as a methodological approach leads to the collection of qualitative data that can give the reader an understanding of the human world via a compelling narrative of what has been experienced and perceived (Vaioleti, 2013). Talanoa as a research methodology allows people to identify issues and co-create knowledge together. Prescott (2008) described talanoa in his research on Tongan business as “a means of appropriately collecting data” (p. 28). This describes talanoa as collecting qualitative data that enables participants to share not only time and information but emotions and empathy that the researcher intended to capture.

Talanoa research is expected to encourage the participants to draw out detailed contributions and is aligned to theories of qualitative methodology. According to Bear-Lehman (2002), qualitative researchers seek to discover, describe and understand human experiences. The data collected should be rich and exhaustive. The data should be analysed and understood from a holistic point of view (Damico & Simmons-Mackie, 2003). Yin, (2009), suggests that the data is collected and then analysed without any preconceived theoretical propositions and can be worked through from the ‘ground up’. With this richness and depth of data collection and analysis patterns can be shaped and uncovered. In this way qualitative researchers seek to understand the phenomenon in the way it appears within its natural context (Cheek, Onslow, & Cream, 2009).

In terms of this study, in order to further understand Pasifika cultures, the choice of collecting qualitative data using talanoa was most appropriate because it is focused upon the collection and analysis of words rather than the collection and analysis of numerical data. This study is concerned with gathering views from recent school leavers, university graduates and parents in a Pasifika setting and then making meaning from their experiences and opinions (Mason, 2000).

The collection of qualitative data of this nature can also provide a voice to those whose views are not always heard, which in the context of this project refers to the recent school leavers, university graduates and parents voices (Husen, 1997). Mara, (1998), suggests that qualitative methods such as interviews can be an empowering process for those involved by allowing the conversations in this context to be responsive, dynamic and semi structured but at the same time highly focussed on what the participants wish to share.

#### ***4.2.3 The role of the qualitative researcher using talanoa***

Bryman (2012) describes the role of a researcher in a qualitative study as immersing themselves into the social setting to listen. This fits credibly with the epistemological concepts of Pasifika research outlined by Vaioleti (2013) with regards to the concept of talanoa. By adopting the talanoa approach, in depth analysis can lead to what Vaioleti (2013) describes as authentic consensus. In the context of this study, with the researcher using a qualitative approach and interview methods this enabled them to listen and engage in conversations with participants and gather data from the various groups. This study was designed to explore positive achievement levels and to encourage participants with the use of talanoa, to see the role of the researcher as central and visible in the research process.

Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson (2000) refer to the idea of researchers conveying messages in relation to how the world works through their choice of research methodology. The researcher's own value system and beliefs can be conveyed through the choice of research topic, the way in which it is approached and the conclusions they draw from it. In the context of this study, the formation of ongoing relationships between the participants and the researcher is central to the success of the project. In this study it was important for the researcher to ensure open and engaging conversations with the participants so that quality dialogue could take place. An engaging conversation would be described as one where the participants feel they can articulate their thoughts freely and show interest.

#### ***4.2.4 A Palagi researcher in a Pasifika context – personal reflection***

When identifying the most appropriate research methodology in relation to this study I was conscious of being a European/palagi endeavouring to collect information amongst Pasifika people where there was a need for cultural awareness. There were

questions to be asked about my process and consideration of what real knowledge I had of their culture, language and traditions. I had to understand that I may be seen very much as an outsider and I had to ensure I could establish open and honest lines of discussion. It was evident from early on in the research process that a talanoa research methodology would be the most appropriate in order to explore the study's research questions. Talanoa, as an approach to academic research requires the distance between researcher and participant to be removed and face-to-face conversations are encouraged that require trust and engagement. I had the opportunity to probe and establish robust discussion that would result in meaningful data.

In order to counter these perceptions presented in the literature it took great courage and many conversations with people from the Pasifika community to ensure I had a clear understanding of the principles and protocols of talanoa. It was clear to me that as a palagi, I had to establish integrity and honesty between myself and the participants was evident and secondly that the research would be of benefit to Pasifika people. I achieved this through making sure my participant information sheets were very clear about the purpose of the research but more importantly at each focus group and interview I articulated that my passion and drive was to improve and grow Pasifika achievement.

Subsequently, I worked hard to establish open communication with participants by clearly communicating the aims and goals of the research and how the information would be used. I also drew on my experiences and success as a high school Principal and the results I had achieved in schools with Pasifika students as a way of showing that I had a genuine desire for future improvements. The context of the research was also very important in developing open discussion. The nature of the research questions showed that as a researcher, I was interested in hearing the stories of successful Pasifika recent school leavers and university graduates and what they believed had been influential in their success. The study aims resonated with the participants as they felt comfortable knowing this research was about exploring influences on Pasifika success, rather than stories of underachievement and failure. I made it clear that my expertise lay in educational achievement and I shared my successes with the participants so they could see my passion to create further success and close the gaps between other ethnic groups in terms of NCEA results. I also made

it clear I didn't see myself as an expert on Pasifika culture and tradition and would be relying very much on their lead, advice and direction during our conversations.

Finally, but of utmost importance, was the informal group I met with most weeks for an hour or so – the Kava Club. This group of mentors was quite different from the formal Pasifika advisory group mentioned earlier in this chapter. This was a group of Pasifika friends I regularly met with around the kava bowl. The importance of this for me as a palagi researcher in the Pasifika context cannot be underestimated. They acted as my unofficial advisors, sounding board and supporters for the duration of the research. Questions that may have seemed obvious to them could be asked and principles around cultural aspects of the research could be clarified. They were in fact an enormous source of inspiration when I had self-doubt about my own positioning in this research.

#### ***4.2.5 Purposive sampling***

Recent male Pasifika school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and parents of successful male Pasifika students were recruited. Choosing these three cohorts ensured a triangulation of responses which Bryman (2012) recommends as a method of ensuring validity of data by cross referencing the findings of each activity. Bryman (2012) describes triangulation as being “the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that the findings may be cross-checked” (p. 700).

The selection of participants was based on purposive sampling. In essence purposive sampling allows the researcher to identify participants most suitable to reveal the phenomenon under study (Glaser, 1992). Purposive sampling is sampling with the purpose of enlisting specific and strategic participants for the research (Strauss, 1996). The three target groups of this research were male Pasifika recent school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and parents of successful Pasifika males. Subsequently, it was clear who the participants for the focus groups and interviews needed to be and therefore purposive sampling was the most suitable approach. In this study, purposeful sampling meant that participants who were respected as experienced, qualified and successful Pasifika people could be identified, invited to participate and interviewed.

#### **4.2.6 Use of multiple methods**

A range of methods (interview, focus group, talanoa) were adopted in this research in order to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of influences on Pasifika boy's education and to provide triangulation between the perspectives of three different cohorts interviewed.

The data collection methods used a talanoa approach with a focus groups and interviews with successful male Pasifika recent school leavers; a focus group and interviews with male Pasifika university graduates; and a focus group and interviews with Pasifika parents of successful male school leavers, and finally an in depth interview and talanoa with two university graduates.

Using multiple methods of data collection is described by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) as "research in which more than one method or more than one worldview is used" (p.11). The objective of this research was to then triangulate results from each perspective. Multi-method approaches lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being researched and an increase in the knowledge gained as it allows the researcher to build on existing data from one method to the next. For example in the context of this research initial findings and themes from the focus groups could be examined in greater depth in the interviews. Owing to the fact that all the focus groups were completed first the following interviews became an opportunity to develop particular themes and ideas in order to create a richer understanding of the multiple perspectives provided by the different participants.

Another benefit of adopting a multi method approach was the opportunity to increase the validity of the data (Hammond, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The use of multiple methods and multiple perspectives as adopted in this research can expand the understanding of the themes extracted from the data. The engagement with the participants from different perspectives through a prolonged process that led from focus groups to a more intimate setting of semi-formal interviews to lengthy talanoa sessions increased the likelihood of credible findings and observations from the researcher.

Multiple methods is also a culturally sensitive and appropriate way to undertake research in the Pasifika setting. I was aware through my reading that through years of

research with Pasifika people, that they could be perceived as reluctant participants. A Pasifika researcher, Mo'ungatonga (2003) suggested that Pasifika people grew tired of surveys and research questions that could appear invasive. Hattie (2002) and Vaioleti (2006) also claimed Pasifika communities had been participants in Western research for years that had done little to improve their social standing. Therefore the use of an initial focus group assisted in creating a relationship with participants that could then be built on for the individual interviews. This relationship is deemed central to creating an environment where high level of trust was established and therefore the quality of data was credible.

Focus Groups were conducted first with each group of participants as a way of gathering initial data and to build a relationship with the participants. It allowed a deeper understanding of the issues at hand and from the responses the interview questions could be developed based on the data that came out of the focus groups. The two longer talanoa interviews took place at the end of the data collection with 2 University graduates.

Below in table 4.1 is a summary of the participants and methods used across the research:

**Table 4.1 Research Activity**

<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
1	Successful male Pasifika recent secondary school leavers	1 Focus Group Interviews (5)	7 attendees 5 interviewees
2	Male Pasifika University graduates	1 Focus Group Interviews (4)	6 attendees 4 interviewees
3	Parents of successful male Pasifika recent secondary school leavers	1 Focus group Interviews (5)	6 attendees 5 interviewees
4	Male Pasifika University graduates	Extended talanoa	2 interviews



The interpretive qualitative multi-method approach adopted for this research study provided a robust methodological structure within which to explore the phenomena of influences on the educational success of male Pasifika students. Focus groups followed by semi-structured interviews and in-depth talanoa interviews allowed the researcher to triangulate findings across three different perspectives of Pasifika male recent school leavers, Pasifika male university graduates and Pasifika parents. Consequently, triangulation was provided by three different methods of data collection, from three different perspectives which also provided two different generational perspectives in order to increase the validity and the richness of the findings.

#### ***4.2.7 Multiple perspectives***

The participants of this research were drawn from three groups made up of successful male Pasifika recent school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and parents of successful male Pasifika recent school leavers. The use of these three perspectives provided a structure that enable comparisons at different levels. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe this as merging the different perspective together with the aspiration to see if the evidence collected strengthens or supports the findings from the groups. Ultimately an overall interpretation of the influence of cultural capital on Pasifika males education can be created. The data was enriched by using these specific groups and using the focus groups first, to then elaborate with individuals at a deeper level during the interviews.

Multiple perspectives could elaborate on their views and opinions of the influences of cultural capital through a generational lens. Successful male Pasifika recent school leavers were chosen as they had immediate experience and understanding of what may have influenced their success at school. They had left school the previous year and their success was defined academic achievement in terms of and also a wider sense of success including prominence in school sports teams, leadership roles such as prefects, or involvement in extra curricular activities such as Polyfest.

Male Pasifika university graduates were chosen who had been successful at school, studied at university and now have successful careers. Their involvement was to investigate if they had similar beliefs as recent school leavers as to the influences for their success and to establish if these influences had continued as they progressed through university.

The final group were parents of male Pasifika recent school leavers who were perceived to be high achievers at school. These participants were selected to gain a perspective from parents of successful Pasifika male secondary school students

### **4.3 Triangulation**

Triangulation is used in qualitative research processes to ensure validity which will result in a greater confidence that data analysis is accurate. Denzin (1978) agrees utilising more than one method of data collection can assist the researcher in creating a more in depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The process of triangulation used in this research increased the validity of the data. The gathering of data from three different cohorts enhances the findings to a deeper level that enabled an opportunity to compare and refine the thinking from each perspective (Bamberger, 2012).

The data that was collected during this research created themes and findings from multiple methods and from three perspectives created an understanding of the influences of cultural capital on Pasifika male secondary school education success.

Patton (1999) suggests that triangulation is the use of multiple methods in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Triangulation also has been viewed as a research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). Within studies that have adopted an interpretive world view and qualitative data collection methods, triangulation can be used an approach to improve the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. McMurray, Pace and Scott (2004) describe triangulation as:

The use of several research techniques in the study to confirm and verify data gathered in several different ways. That is, a researcher attempts to pinpoint an outcome by making several assessments from different perspectives, with a view to finding an outcome that is supported by each of the approaches. (p. 1)

In terms of this study, owing to the fact that data was being collected from three different sample groups, using three methods, then triangulation of these different perspectives allowed for the researcher to analyse the data from the different groups in order to produce complementary data. The research questions of this study demanded the collection of data from three different participant groups, which in turn encouraged a multi-method approach.

In its essence triangulation involves checking the consistency of information collected by comparing it to other data that has been collected at a different time, in a different way or by a different person. Patton (1999) identified four types of triangulation, “(a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation, and (d) data source triangulation” (p.193).

This study drew on both data source and method triangulation. With method triangulation being provided by comparing the different data collected in the focus groups and the interviews and then exploring ideas in greater detail in the talanoa sessions. Whilst data source triangulation was provided by analysing the perspectives of the three different participant groups. Thurmond (2001) suggests that three types of data source are “time, space and person” (p.254). In this study the three different participant groups provided data source triangulation in relation to people. Thurmond (2001) states that by collecting data from a range of different participant groups “adds to the study because of the possibility of revealing atypical data or the potential of identifying similar patterns, thus increasing the confidence in the findings” (p.254). In relation to method triangulation, Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest that “methodologic triangulation has the potential of exposing unique differences or meaningful information that may have remained undiscovered with the use of only one approach or data collection technique in the study” (p.165). In terms of this study, this suggests that drawing on the perceptions of the three participant groups and by collecting data using both interviews and focus groups allows a greater depth and validity of findings than otherwise would have been achieved with only one method or one participant group. Subsequently, themes that emerged from one cohort were not only analysed in relation to each other, but also contrasted and compared with the perspectives and themes emerging from the other cohorts. Furthermore, using a multi-method approach offered a culturally robust process in order to establish common themes that could be verified by the three different participant groups. The data was enriched from

the focus groups to the interviews and finally the two talanoa stories at the conclusion of the data collection. In this way, findings that are presented are those that have emerged from one cohort and method, but have then been confirmed by others in different cohorts and collected using a different method.

The selection of participants invited to be interviewed was made after the focus groups had occurred. In the first instance all those that had participated in the focus groups were invited to be interviewed. However not all those that were invited were available to be interviewed. Consequently, no new participants were used and all those interviewed had participated in one of the focus groups. This provided continuity and a culturally responsive methodological approach as relationships that were established in focus group sessions provided a trusting basis on which to proceed with the one on one interviews. This structure enabled comparisons and contrasts between the three distinct perspectives. The data was consolidated at the end of each stage, findings from the focus groups were used to structure the interviews and deepen the questioning and allowing themes to be elaborated upon. The final two talanoa interviews were then held, allowing themes that had emerged from the earlier methods to be explored in greater depth. Overall, this provided consolidated findings that were triangulated and allow a deep understanding of the phenomenon of influences on male Pasifika students' success.

Some concerns have been raised about the use of data source triangulation and methodologic triangulation which were monitored when collecting data for this study. Porter (1989) suggests that one of the dangers of employing data triangulation is the huge amount of data that can be generated which can lead to false interpretations. This was of particular concern in this study owing to the fact that there was only one researcher. However, the researcher ensured that in order to collect only a manageable amount of data the number of participants were limited. Polit and Hungler (1995) listed the prevalent problems and possible barriers relating to methodologic triangulation, which included: the increased expense; a lack of researcher expertise in one of the methods; and the challenge of meshing two or more types of data. Once again, by maintaining a small participant group in the same catchment zone then the concerns regarding time were not relevant to this study. Similarly, the researcher had experience in both methods that were employed and used a thematic data analysis approach that was able to blend the data from the focus groups, the interviews and

the talanoa. Overall, this meant that the positive aspects of triangulation were more relevant to this study than the concerns and the multiple opportunities for triangulation to occur increased the credibility of the study.

#### **4.4 Talanoa and Focus Groups**

Focus groups involve a discussion around the research questions with a group of people at one time. Lichtman (2013) suggests that focus groups provide a chance for interaction amongst people which may have the added benefit of stimulating the discussion. Krueger and Casey (2014) describe a focus group as “a social experience, and conversational questions help create and maintain an informal environment” (p. 41). While they tended in the past to be used extensively in marketing research, focus groups have become commonly used in educational research, in particular when dealing with primary and secondary students (Bryman, 2008).

By using talanoa in the focus group setting, Pasifika participants may be more willing to offer up opinions with the support of their peers. Bryman (2012) noted one of the advantages of a focus group is that it has the real potential for those involved to develop themes together. Talanoa can enable participants to talk freely and from the heart and subsequently lead to an in-depth sharing (Farrelly, 2014). Using a talanoa approach allows discussions to be relaxed, free of timeframes and informal. A possible negative of this methodological approach is that those involved may not offer up their true personal experiences or ideas as they may be influenced by the group perspective, particularly if there is a dominant spokesperson in the group.

When conducting talanoa focus groups, the role of the researcher is crucial in ensuring that the topic under discussion is guided, but at the same time all the participants feel comfortable so that they can fully engage (McLachlan, 2005). When conducting focus groups there is a risk that the data simply reflects the views of the group rather than that of the individuals involved. It is vital that the researcher ensures that all participants are equally participating and this can be a delicate act of keeping things moving while hearing the voice of all (McLachlan, 2005). The real purpose of the researcher in the focus group is to get participants interacting with each other without the researcher taking a lead or central role.

Cultural sensitivity is a key aspect of running focus groups with Pasifika peoples. The interviewer should maintain a 'balanced rapport' while remaining direct and impersonal (Fontana & Frey, 2005). It has been suggested that the face-to-face interview with Pasifika peoples is extremely effective because it offers an opportunity to build familiarity and relationships with the interviewees (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, and Coxon, 2002).

In relation to this study, consideration was given to whether or not it may be prudent to enlist the services of an appropriate interviewer. It was considered that in the context of the epistemological outlook of Pasifika peoples the concepts of trust and rapport may be better supported by using an interviewer known by the interviewees to ensure that they felt secure (Hawk and Hill, 1996). Selection of an interviewer is important, it must be someone with the relevant life experiences and skills to carry out the interviews. While the interviewer may be involved from the interview to the analysis of data stage, Hawk and Hill (1996) suggest it could be worthwhile merely using this person to facilitate the initial stages of the interview and ensure the roles and definitions are clearly defined. Nevertheless, after discussion with the participants who acted as advisors, it was decided that the researcher was well known by the participants and had significant respect and trust from those involved in order to facilitate the focus groups.

An information sheet and consent form was prepared to explain the process and to ensure confidentiality, see Appendices 1 and 2. The format of the group meeting began with an explanation about the research project and how the focus group would be organised. An individual question schedule that was specific for each cohort was used for the recent school leavers, university graduates and parents, (see Appendices 3, 4 and 5). The researcher then proceeded to introductory questions which led to key questions that were designed to be specific and provide some in depth scrutiny. The same format was used with all focus groups.

The three focus groups ranged from six to seven participants and were formed by inviting participants via a personal approach or phone contact. All the participants were volunteers, who were given an assurance that no names would be used in the findings. Participants meetings were held on site after school for no longer than two hours. Participants were offered light refreshments.

A 'semi-structured' group interview technique was used as it was considered the most relevant approach and had been validated by the advice of the Pasifika research support group. The semi-structured interview uses a list of questions or topics but is flexible in how the interview proceeds; the questions provide a guide but are not a prescriptive format for the interview (Bryman, 2012). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that participants tend to be more open than structured interviews about their view of the world (Bryman, 2012). It could be observed in the focus groups of this study that the informal group approach had some real benefits, as it straddled the line between formal and informal interviewing. Therefore, the focus groups involved humour and food and participants stated that they felt relaxed and able to share personal accounts.

#### **4.4.1 Talanoa and interviews**

The term 'interview' can be interchanged with the term talanoa in this research. Lichtman (2013) describes the interview as a method that permits the researcher to conduct a "conversation with a purpose" (p. 189). The interview method was selected for this study as a means to collect specific, in-depth information from selected individuals in relation to what they believed were positive influences on successful achievement with Pasifika males. The interview method is particularly useful as the researcher is able to go back to the participants to seek further details or expand on particular themes (Brinkman & Kvale, 2014).

Interviewing for research can be summarised as seeking to elicit information from respondents. The most common form of interview is the structured interview where interviewees are given the same set of questions. Questions should be very specific and should hopefully lead to responses that can be aggregated after analysis (Bryman, 2012). However, the semi-structured interview method was selected for this study as it complimented the talanoa approach.

An interview schedule based on a semi structured format was prepared and used in all interviews and the two longer talanoa interviews, (see Appendix 6). Given the semi-formal approach adopted in these interview and talanoa sessions, a selection of questions from the focus groups were used as an initial opening point. However the conversations were designed to be open ended to explore themes and discussions that had begun in the focus groups. Each interview included similar questions but they

had the potential to be expanded upon depending on the participants' desire or expertise. The researcher sought to use the interview structure to generate knowledge and understanding from the participants due to their experiences as recent school leavers, university graduates or parents. The questions were designed to be open-ended as according to De Vaus (1990) this style of interview tends to ensure that the participants are more comfortable and subsequently supply responses that are a more accurate expression of their thoughts, as opposed to a pre-empted or closed response. In this way, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions allow participants to be more open about their view of the world (Bryman, 2008; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015).

The semi-structured interview method was the most appropriate method for the research questions of this study that required the collection of rich qualitative data. The selection of participants invited to be interviewed was made after the focus groups had occurred. In the first instance all those that had participated in the focus groups were invited to be interviewed, however not all those that were invited were available to be interviewed. Consequently, no new participants were used and all those interviewed had participated in one of the focus groups. This provided continuity and a culturally responsive methodological approach as relationships that were established in focus group sessions provided a trusting basis on which to proceed with the one on one interviews.

The researcher adopted the 'interviewer-traveller' metaphor as described by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), which has its basis in the original Latin meaning of the concept of conversation as 'wandering together'. The interviewer-traveller seeks to wander along with the local inhabitants asking questions and encouraging them to tell their own stories of their world. This style of research methodology fits seamlessly with Pasifika research and the concept of talanoa. In this study the concepts of talanoa and the interviewer-traveller were drawn upon to form an interview process that allowed stories to unfold for the researcher which provided greater understanding of the participants' knowledge and established a culturally responsive form of interviewing. It also enabled a deeper conversation to take place with individuals that may not have occurred in the focus groups.



All the participants were contacted via a personal approach or phone call inviting them to a one-on-one interview (single), on site or in their homes, for no more than two hours. Participants were informed that they could withdraw their information up to three weeks after the interview took place. Participants were also informed that they would be given a pseudonym and interview data would only be accessed by a single researcher and the supervisor and the information would be stored for 3 years.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

Vaioleti (2013) suggests that researchers using a talanoa methodology become an integral part in the qualitative data analysis process. There are different techniques for analysing qualitative data, however there is no one prescribed way. The choice to analyse data should stem from a combination of factors which include the research questions being asked and the theoretical foundation of the study (Merriam, 1998). Owing to the fact that this study is steeped in the cultural capital of individuals, consideration also needed to be given to data collection and analysis methods that respected relevant cultural protocols (Anae et al., 2002).

LeCompte and Schensul (2010) define the analysis part of the research process as the way a researcher chooses to reduce the data and evidence collected into a story and interpretation that can be understood by the reader. Patton (1990) concurs suggesting that three activities occur during the analysis part of the research process - data is firstly organised, then reduced and finally themes are identified and linked. Merriam (1998) and Bernard (2000) describe several approaches to data analysis including: ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, hermeneutics, interpretive, performance and constant comparative methods. With such a choice available a researcher may feel overwhelmed in the decision making process of which particular method to use. However, Merriam (1998) suggests that there is in fact no prescribed way to address the process and researchers should adopt an approach most relevant to their study. In terms of this study, three stages of analysis were employed. The data from each focus group was analysed, then the data from each interview was analysed and then all the data from these two earlier phases was combined and explored. This structure enabled comparisons and contrasts between the three distinct perspectives. The data was consolidated at the end of each stage, findings from the focus groups were then used to structure the interviews and deepen the questioning and allowing themes to be elaborated upon. The final two talanoa

interviews were then held, allowing themes that had emerged from the earlier methods to be explored in greater depth. Overall, this approach provided consolidated findings that were triangulated and provided a deep understanding of the phenomenon of influences on male Pasifika students' success.

#### **4.5.1 Coding**

Data coding refers to a process of applying codes to collected data that flag and place the data into a recognisable and useful category for the researcher. These codes will be refined as the process moves on during the research and more in depth and rich data is collected (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Strauss (1996) describes coding as much more than simply giving categories to data, it involves regular scrutiny and providing provisional answers about the relationships among and within the data. Coding is an important process in the research methodology as it encompasses a range of approaches to organising the sourced data, in this case, qualitative data (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

Key concepts are drawn from the interview and focus group data through the process of coding. Lichtman (2013) notes that qualitative data typically takes the form of words or texts and then the process of transforming it into meaningful analysis takes place. According to Bernard (2000) when data is collected there is an in-depth analysis process that needs to be undertaken in terms of coding the transcribed data from interviews into workable themes. Merriam (1998) describes this process as being complex and involving going back and forward between the different data sets and sorting them into concepts and categories.

In terms of this study, once the data from each of the methods had been collected the process of collating the information into meaningful data began. The key with qualitative data is managing the vast amount of information gathered from the field. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006) referred to qualitative data often being considered 'attractive nuisance' – attractive in terms of the wealth of information that can be collected, a nuisance because of then having to sift through and decide what is key and what is not.

The data from each focus group and interview transcript was sorted into various categories to make some meaning from it. This process began by looking for themes

and grouping responses from individual questions. The 'coding' of these themes classified the data into information around certain topics, questions or answers and grouped linked responses together. Regular consultation with the Pasifika advisory personnel involved in this study was important at this stage. In order to ensure that cultural concepts which were emerging from the data had been understood correctly.

The desired outcome of coding is to arrange things in a systematic and understandable way. The process can be described as "segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation" (Grbich, 2007, p.21). Bernard (2000) states that coding "is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place" (p.452). In essence this refers to sorting of the data into various categories to make some meaning from it.

There are several approaches to the coding process (Strauss 1996). For example theory driven coding often begins with the researchers own theory about what occurs and then develops indicators from the data that provide evidence to support the theory. Research driven coding derives findings to provide evidence to support prior research. Data driven coding involves code development based on the data collected in the study on which one is working. The key with any chosen process of data coding is the search for patterns and themes. In terms of this study Hatch (2002) provided a useful summary in order to organise the patterns that emerged from the different data sets:

- Similarity (things happen the same way)
- Difference (things happen in different ways)
- Frequency (they seldom happen)
- Sequence (they happen in a certain order)
- Corresponding (they happen in relation to other events)
- Causation (one appears to cause another) (p.155)

This summary provided this study with a structured way to organise the data and allowed themes to emerge from each data set. DeSantos and Ugarriza (2000), describe a theme as "an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole" (p.363). Once coding had

taken place of each data set, the next phase was to explore all of the data sets concurrently in order to uncover overall themes.

#### **4.5.2 Thematic coding**

In the final phase of data analysis in this study a talanoa approach was adopted with the intention of generating definite ideas rather than simply theory. Generating ideas is highlighted as the primary role of Pasifika research which should be to empower the Pasifika communities in New Zealand (Taufe'ulungaki, 2000).

Thematic coding, a tool adopted from grounded theory analysis (Bryman, 2012) was adopted as the most effective form of coding for this phase of the data analysis process in order to explore the data from the interviews and the focus groups. Strauss (1996) outlines the process of thematic coding as a multi-step approach within which themes emerge from the data. The themes will identify issues of importance and areas where further exploration is required. A successful thematic structure will result in a thorough triangulation of data as it is sifted through and key categories are recognised.

In relation to this study, Van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical analysis was adopted. The transcripts from the focus groups, the interviews and the talanoa interviews were analysed in order to explore the meaning of these texts for the Pasifika participants in their context. Meaning was sought from the cultural situation of the participants and their responses in relation to the overall aims of the study (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The data from the focus groups and interviews were organised into similar categories, namely the key influences on Pasifika achievement. Responses from the focus groups and interviews were extracted and placed into categories as they emerged from the data. Sub-categories were also then labelled as they grew out of the data.

Bryman (2012) suggests that all data needs to be analysed in a robust fashion and in consultation with the population. The need to consult with the participants was particularly important for this study, because it was possible that amongst the different participants there could be differing interpretations in relation to certain concepts. For example participants who were Samoan, Tongan or from different age groups may have perceived themes that had emerged from the data differently (Watson et al., 1997).

## 4.6 Validity

Within research studies there are also important issues regarding validity. Cohen et al., (2011) suggest that validity can never be assured completely. However, issues concerning validity need to meet criteria from the research paradigm that is being modelled. Bryman (2012) summarises validity as “the integrity of the conclusions that are presented” (p. 343). An invalid piece of research can be rendered worthless and the impact of this, for instance in this Pasifika context, could lead to further erosion of trust for future research projects. Cultural validity needs to be addressed at all stages of the research from the planning processes to the delivery of the final analysis (Morgan, 2007).

In qualitative research, validity can be regarded as a fit between what is being presented as research data and what actually happens in the real world of the setting that is being researched (Creswell, 2014). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that qualitative studies should be evaluated by analysing trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness is measured by considering: credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability, whilst authenticity uses a criteria of: fairness; ontological authenticity; educative authenticity; and catalytic authenticity. Owing to the focus of this study being concerned with the collection of qualitative data the evaluation of the quality of the research was focused upon Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for measuring trustworthiness, which is seen as an alternative method of establishing and evaluating validity and reliability (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) explains that the criteria of credibility, as a measure of a study’s trustworthiness, is concerned with the “several possible accounts of an aspect of social reality” (p. 377) and how credible is the account of a social situation offered by a researcher. One of the key approaches used in order to achieve trustworthiness when collecting qualitative data for this study was triangulation as discussed previously.

A technique of respondent validation was also employed in order to support the rigorous collection and analysis of the data. Respondent validation involved an explicit attempt to remove any source of bias from the questions used in the interviews and focus groups. This was carried out by clarifying with the participants at each interview if they understood the questions and subsequently providing them with an electronic copy of the transcript to provide an opportunity to comment on any inaccuracies.

Owing to the fact several of the participants in this study were young adults, issues of validity were particularly important. In this research the concern was how to avoid: bias; leading questions; influencing participants; misconceptions and misunderstandings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Carefully considered questions that were extremely clear, together with training for the researcher was used in order to avoid these pitfalls. Leading questions were avoided by rephrasing any questions that appeared to put assumptions into participant's heads and by using phrases such as 'your opinion' as opposed to asking 'how satisfied' participants may be.

In line with the Pasifika concept of respect, feedback and comments were sought at each stage throughout the research process from the participants and also the Pasifika advisory group. Both these groups reviewed and reflected upon the questions and the process before the final document was presented. Throughout the data gathering and analysis stages there was an ongoing display of transparency and proof that the research has no harmful goals or deceptive motives. This was achieved by going back to key stakeholders and relevant participants with up-to-date progress and milestone reports. In the Pasifika context, Tamasese, Peteru and Waldegrave (1997) describe this as a collaborative approach designed to gain support during and an adaption of the Samoan practice of the weaving of the research process and walking together with an advisory group to ensure that cultural and intellectual specifics are drawn into the outcomes.

A final technique employed in this study to improve the integrity of the conclusions was the concept of transparency. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that to ensure that transparency has been met researchers should employ a descriptive and detailed approach to documenting all the stages, decisions and methods used for checking the data collected throughout the inquiry process. Consequently, throughout the different phases of this study the trustworthiness criteria of transparency was strengthened by clearly describing all stages of the research process. In each chapter there is an explanation of how and why decisions were made, which ensures each of the findings and conclusions that have been reached can be tracked back through the data analysis and data collection to show a pathway from the research questions through to the final conclusions.

#### **4.7 Ethical issues**

Particular attention was paid to details concerning ethical issues in order that this research could be seen as a positive contribution to developments in Pasifika education. Protecting the rights of individual participants is at the core of ethical issues in education research. Wilkinson (2001) suggests that ethical issues involve both philosophical and practical factors. Philosophical issues include: personal sacrifice and benefits for the wider community. Practical issues focus on minimizing the harm to participants. Therefore, in this study it was not acceptable to place an unnecessary burden on any of the participants.

Bryman (2012) describes reflexivity as a strategy that researchers can use to ensure good ethical practices. He suggests that researchers should reflect upon the lenses created by their own opinions, values and bias relating to the cultures and contexts which they research. Lincoln and Guba (2000) perceive that reflexivity is a conscious acceptance of our self as both researcher and respondent. In this study the researcher was confronted by the personal challenge of being a palagi researcher within the Pasifika community and context. Taufe'ulungaki (2000) acknowledged the importance of having Pasifika researchers conducting research on Pasifika issues. She argued that outside researchers such as a palagi/pakeha could potentially bring a level of cultural baggage and they may view things through lenses of their own socialisation values and codes. This could enable a distorted perception of what it means to be from the Pacific.

Subsequently, for this researcher it was important to engage Pasifika researchers and mentors. Their understandings and insights into the values, beliefs and cultural activities of the people at the centre of this research were invaluable and crucial to the credibility of the study. It is also important to note the support of the Pasifika participants engaged to guide this research. They were fully supportive of a non-Pasifika person conducting research with Pasifika participants, owing to the fact that they saw it as positive that an 'outsider' was interested enough in them to undertake this study. Their perception was that a Pasifika researcher was not necessarily automatically unbiased. They held the opinion that it did not necessarily matter who conducted the research as long as their world view had an opportunity to be shared.

As the researcher was known to some of the participants and held a position of power in education, it was important to carefully design the study to ensure no potential coercion or power was asserted on students or their families. While it was acknowledged that in order to generate valid and rigorous data, an existing trust based relationship was essential and therefore it was important that the participants were known to the researcher. It was also important to note that the students interviewed had left school and there was no power relationship in terms of schooling, marking assignments or anything that may have had a longer term influence upon the participants' lives.

To ensure participants were fully aware that participation was completely voluntary, the researcher also enlisted the help of an independent Pasifika advisory team to recruit participants by inviting them personally to be involved and the same person was also the point of contact for any withdrawals from the study. The Pasifika advisory team were also involved in all stages of the research process including the data collection phases and the data analysis. Throughout the process changes and adjustments were made to the questions used or interpretations of emerging themes, based on their advice. Regular meetings were held with the group and feedback sought as the research progressed.

Wellington, (2015), stresses the importance of the researcher being aware of necessary ethical requirements being met with participants. At the start of all focus group meetings and interviews, necessary compliance issues were covered to assure the participants clearly understood the research aims, format and structure of the focus groups and interviews. Information sheets and consent forms were passed over to the participants. Detailed information was provided about the background of the research study, the background of the researcher and why they had been chosen to participate.

A key document used in this research project was the 'Pasifika Education Research Guidelines – a report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education' (2001). This document was crucial to the researcher in terms of establishing key protocols and guidelines when undertaking educational research with Pasifika participants. By adhering to these guidelines the researcher was able to ensure research practices undertaken were empathetic and empowering to the Pasifika community.



Although guidelines regarding confidentiality are important for all research, issues regarding respect for confidentiality and anonymity for participants are particularly important for Pasifika participants. Anae et al. (2002) suggest that due to potential family shame, Pasifika people might be reluctant to come forward to participate in some research activities. This is due to the fact that the Pasifika community is small and members can be well known to each other which places them in fear that if they impart information it could be traced back to them. Subsequently, in this study it was important that findings were presented in such a way the individuals' perceptions could not be identified.

Another key ethical principle is that subjects give informed consent. There is a need to ask participants for their permission first before beginning any research or asking any questions. If their answer is no then research cannot take place. In particular when dealing with younger people it is important to consider consent needing to be voluntary rather than coerced. Coercion leaves people with a choice but by agreeing it may ultimately come at a cost – the feeling that if I don't participate then I may be letting myself down or somehow suffer by not doing so (Wilkinson, 2001). All participants in this study were provided with information regarding the study, details of the methods to be used and their acceptance was recorded and stored, see Appendix 1. As part of this process, permission was sought to record the interviews. All participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and that no names would be used in the writing of findings. Transcripts of all collected data were given to the participants and any verifications were sought within a three week time frame.

In terms of this study, the nature and manner of consultation was the initial crucial key in ensuring that this research project would be of value to Pasifika education and would build positive relationships within the Pasifika community. It is agreed there is a need for quality Pasifika education research and the researcher's first step was to ensure stakeholders that this research project would provide useful and empowering results. It was also important that the study would be viewed as culturally sensitive and respectful to cultural property ownership. There are some common values that exist between Pasifika peoples such as respect, communalism, collective responsibility, humility, love, service and spirituality. It was important to recognise these core values not necessarily as uniquely Pasifika, but as principles intertwined with Pasifika groups (Anae et al., 2002). With this in mind an important connection was made with the

Ministry of Education and in particular, the Pasifika Education group. Secondly, the researcher also sought advice and guidance from Pasifika parents, teachers and advisors to implement the study in a way that they deemed as acceptable and meeting with their cultural protocols.

Ultimately this study was based around the human element and at its core are young, male Pasifika boys. Therefore, the need for privacy and cultural sensitivity was paramount. The key was to provide a safe environment for all participants and the researcher alike. At the core of this research is the desire to protect and respect Pasifika values and protocols. The objective in considering ethical issues was to set out a process that looked for a partnership with Pasifika communities who could assist in creating safe and culturally sensitive practices (Ministry of Education, 2008). Careful planning in the initial phases of the consultation process diminished the risk of making errors of judgment around ethical issues. An advisory team made up of personnel from members of the Pasifika community and organisations such as the Pasifika Teachers Association, the Ministry of Education Pasifika Education Group and Komiti Pasifika provided an important and credible cornerstone for consultation. Consultation centred around three major areas:

- Selecting the appropriate wording and framing for the research topic
- Considering the actual research questions
- Selecting the most suitable research method
- Overall, by acknowledging the advice of the literature cited above, I ensured as far as possible that all of the participants had their rights protected and were not harmed in any way.

Consequently, a research process was developed that allowed participants to feel safe and able to share their stories without fear of emotional harm.

#### **4.8 Summary**

Overall, this chapter has shown how the methodological choices for this study were made in order to provide the most relevant approach to meet the study aims and to answer the research questions. Furthermore, it has also been shown how triangulation, participant validation and transparency have been used to strengthen the trustworthiness of this research. Finally, a detailed description has shown the

multiple ways that the researcher has employed to meet ethical considerations and to protect the participant. The next chapter will present the findings through using the methodological approach that has been outlined.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

The findings chapter of this study has been based on research questions one to three. Research question four has not been used in the findings chapter because it enquires into how this study can contribute to providing opportunities for Pasifika males to be successful at secondary school and therefore will be explored in the discussion chapter. The three research questions explored in this findings chapter are:

1. What key values and strategies do Samoan and Tongan parents identify as supporting educational achievement for their children, with specific reference to boys?
2. What factors external to schools do Samoan and Tongan male students describe as influences on their academic achievement in secondary education?
3. In what ways do these external factors impact on academic and longer-term achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?

The findings are presented under the eight themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews as influences on male Pasifika students' achievement, the eight themes are: migration; negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement; family; cultural identity; peer relationships; role models; church; and school environment and culture.

The participants of this research were selected using purposive sampling and were drawn from three groups made up of successful male Pasifika recent school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and parents of successful male Pasifika recent school leavers. These three cohorts were selected to provide a generational overview of the influences on Pasifika boy's achievement. By inviting three different cohorts to participate in this study it allowed triangulation of the data. Subsequently, themes that emerged from one cohort were not only analysed in relation to each other, but also contrasted and compared with the perspectives and themes emerging from the other cohorts. Furthermore, three methods of data collection with a talanoa approach were used: focus groups, interviews and a longer talanoa interview format with two individuals. Using a multi-method approach offered a culturally robust process in order to establish common themes that could be verified by the three different participant

groups. The data was enriched from the focus groups to the interviews and finally the two talanoa stories at the conclusion of the data collection. In this way, findings that are presented in this chapter are those that have emerged from one cohort and method, but have then been confirmed by others in different cohorts and collected using a different method.

The selection of participants invited to be interviewed was made after the focus groups had occurred. In the first instance all those that had participated in the focus groups were invited to be interviewed, however not all those that were invited were available to be interviewed. Consequently, no new participants were used and all those interviewed had participated in one of the focus groups. This provided continuity and a culturally responsive methodological approach as relationships that were established in focus group sessions provided a trusting basis on which to proceed with the one on one interviews. This structure enabled comparisons and contrasts between the three distinct perspectives. The data was consolidated at the end of each stage, findings from the focus groups were used to structure the interviews and deepen the questioning and allowing themes to be elaborated upon. The final two talanoa interviews were then held, allowing themes that had emerged from the earlier methods to be explored in greater depth. Overall, providing consolidated findings that are triangulated and which allow a deep understanding of the phenomenon of influences on male Pasifika students' success.

### ***5.1.1 Participant Profiles***

The first cohort that was invited to participate in this study were successful male Pasifika recent school leavers who had graduated from secondary school the previous year. These ex-students were approximately 17, 18 or 19 years of age. 'Success' was defined as academic achievement in terms of gaining NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 and also University Entrance. However, there was also a wider sense of success for male Pasifika students that was shared by those involved in this research. This included prominence in school sports teams, leadership roles such as prefects, or involvement in extra curricular activities such as Polyfest.

The second cohort of participants were male Pasifika university graduates who had been successful at school, studied at university and currently have successful careers. These university graduate participants had attended secondary school between 1998

and 2007, when statistically Pasifika students' academic achievement was not high compared to other ethnic groups and academic failure had been something of a constant factor for many of their peers. There had been much publicity throughout this time period about addressing the learning needs of the 'tail' – Maori and Pasifika students who had a disproportionate failure rate in comparison to their European and Asian peers. The final cohort were parents of male Pasifika recent school leavers who were perceived to be high achievers at school.

### **5.1.2 Organisation of themes**

Within this findings chapter there are comments presented from the interviews and focus groups conducted with participants in the data collection phases. Table 5.1 below presents the interview and focus groups participants and the coding label used to identify them throughout this findings chapter.

For interview quotes the interview code is used, feedback from the focus groups is noted as FG1, FG2 or FG3 to refer to the three different focus groups held for each group. FG1 is the recent school leavers, FG2 is the university graduates and FG3 is the parent participants.

**Table 5.1 Data code identifiers**

<b>Recent school leavers (RSL)</b>	<b>Focus Group Participant (FG)</b>	<b>Interview Participant</b>	<b>Interview Code</b>	<b>Focus Group Code</b>
RSL	√		RSL1	FG1
RSL	√		RSL2	FG1
RSL	√		RSL3	FG1
RSL	√	√	RSL4	FG1
RSL	√	√	RSL5	FG1
RSL	√	√	RSL6	FG1
RSL	√	√	RSL7	FG1
RSL		√	RSL8	
<b>University Graduate (UG)</b>				
UG	√		UG1	FG2
UG	√		UG2	FG2
UG	√		UG3	FG2
UG	√	√	UG4	FG2
UG	√	√	UG5	FG2
UG	√	√	UG6	FG2
UG		√	UG7	
<b>Parent (P)</b>				
P	√		P1	FG3
P	√		P2	FG3
P	√	√	P3	FG3
P	√	√	P4	FG3
P	√	√	P5	FG3
P	√	√	P6	FG3
P		√	P7	

There are eight key themes that emerged out of the process of data analysis and these have been used to structure the findings chapter.

## 5.2 The influence of migration

All of the recent school leaver participants in FG1 talked about their parents or grandparents, their Pasifika backgrounds and journeys from the Islands and what they had given up and the part this played in motivating them to achieve. For these recent school leavers their parents and grandparents were a deep source of inspiration due to the fact they had often sacrificed life in the islands to live in New Zealand to provide what they believed was better education and opportunity. They felt there was an opportunity to represent their family and this helped shape their attitudes towards learning and success. The recent school leavers drew inspiration from looking back at how their parents or grandparents had lived and they reflected on their difficult circumstances. They were aware of the concept of 'immigrant aspiration' and believed that at the core of the Pasifika story in New Zealand, was the pursuit of education, which was a driver for their own success at schools. Comments from RSL1 characterized the discussion had by these participants:

My dad actually pulled out of school in Form 1, this was back in the islands. So he wasn't really educated much back in the islands so you know, a typical Pacific Island story, moved to New Zealand to get a better future. (FG1 - RSL1)

These perceptions were also supported by comments made in the interview with RSL2 who talked about the impact of his father's journey from the islands to New Zealand, he stated, "personally it did have a big impact on me". He was also aware that because his father didn't finish school and he had emigrated from the islands that everything he had done was for his children to have a better life. By being successful at school this recent school leaver saw this as a way of giving back to dad.

These comments characterise a theme that emerged from the interviews with all the recent school leavers about the importance of recognising what their parents had given up for them. There was a strong sense of gratitude and consciousness about their parent's support and willingness to see them succeed academically. In return, they wanted to give back by achieving as best they could academically and going on to university or a good quality career. RSL4 explained, "from visiting the Island I saw we struggle a lot in the islands and we see people here that are educated and having a nice lifestyle and I think they (our parents) just want that for us". These perceptions



were also supported in FG1, in which another recent school leaver expressed his understanding of what he believed his parents had provided for him:

My parents moved over from the islands in search of a better life and they know that with hard work you receive many blessings and I guess that is why they push us to do the best of our ability because they have witnessed what you get, like degrees. (FG1 - RSL7)

For some recent school leavers interviewed this concept of the sacrifice that had been made by previous generations was something that gave them the determination to succeed. One recent student stated in their interview:

Yes, being second generation New Zealand born my mum didn't have the same mind set as my nana, so for me it's my nana. She is what motivates me. To do well for her, not saying my mum has siblings that are failures, but I just want to make her dreams come true. (RSL5)

For another recent school leaver it was less about the sacrifice made by their family and more about the opportunities that they could see New Zealand provided in comparison to island life. In their interview, one of the university graduates born in the islands explained:

At the end of 1997 my entire family relocated from Tonga so we had the chance to go to a good university. My parents were adamant my brothers and I would go to university and they made a lot of sacrifices to get us there. It was just a given we would go to university once we were here. (UG7)

This perception was also echoed by an interview with another university graduate who had come to New Zealand as a young secondary school student on a scholarship. He said "my parents never came through any education system so I had been aware of the sacrifice they had made to ensure I completed my degree." (UG4) He remembered that his father had given him a letter to read on the plane when he had left Samoa for school on a scholarship in New Zealand, and his expectations were quite clear. He understood his family was very proud of him and the feeling of not wanting to let them down as a family and this became one of his main drivers.

For all of the parent participants in FG3 the journey of either their own parents or grandparents from Samoa or Tonga to New Zealand was a key influence on how their attitudes to education were shaped. All of the parents spoke of their grandparents/parents reasons for leaving the islands and coming to New Zealand. Two of the key ideas that consistently emerged from all the participant groups was that they were coming for a better life and in order to achieve a better life, sacrifices had to be made.

The positive influence of migration in shaping their values regarding education was also a theme supported by the parents in their interviews. All of the parents interviewed had clear reasons why they believed their parents or grandparents had come over from the islands and this was a guiding force in their outlook for their own children. They had often seen their struggles first hand and understood what their own parents or grandparents had sacrificed and consequently why the parent group placed such an importance on education. One parent explained in FG1, “my parents came over from Samoa to better their lives, better their situation, to have better health care” (P1). Another parent in FG1 who had been born in the Islands spoke emotionally of the historical reasons many of the first immigrants came from the Islands and the sacrifices made over generations in pursuit of education:

I was talking to my son and crying because I was talking about what I and what his grandfather used to do as a job and all the things we used to do just so he could go to a top school, catch the bus from Mangere every day, his mates used to call him a poof every day for leaving Mangere and going there but he was amazed that his dad and grandfather who could hardly speak English had wanted this. (P2)

It can be seen that all three participant groups clearly made a connection between the migration of their family or their own migration to New Zealand and their motivation to succeed. Achievement in education was seen as part of this success.

### **5.2.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of migration**

Overall, the recent school leavers, university graduates and parent participants all perceived the history of migration to New Zealand of their family before them as a

factor which motivated them to succeed. All three participant groups were conscious of sacrifices that previous generations had made in order to provide them with better educational opportunities and this also motivated them to achieve. The recent school leavers group and the university graduate group perceived that New Zealand offered greater employment and education opportunities compared to the islands.

### **5.3 The influence of negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement**

This theme was centered upon wanting to correct past academic failings for Pasifika students and in essence 'prove people wrong'. It was about challenging a negative stereotype of Pasifika peoples' academic achievement and their well-documented educational underachievement in comparison to other ethnic groups.

The concept of 'mind-set' of individuals emerged from the focus groups with the graduates and recent school leavers. This was the idea that there was an intrinsic motivation or mind-set that appeared to be a driving force for each of them in striving for success. Much of this was born through negative perceptions of Pasifika students and what they saw as a history of under achievement over previous decades.

The idea of intrinsic motivation was discussed by the participants in FG1. Three of the recent school leaver participants described how they believed that Pasifika students were perceived negatively. However, they had used these negative connotations to drive them to succeed, as a way of representing their culture and proving success was for all:

What I like about succeeding at school is first up being Tongan. My culture is part of my motivation because I believe it is special where we come from. But people can look down on you, have low expectations. I use that as motivation to prove them wrong. They can look down on you but when we grow up I will be their boss. (RSL1)

This perception was supported in an interview with another recent school leaver when they said, "a lot of islanders don't know that they can achieve just as high as the Asians and other ethnic groups so for me that's motivation in itself" (RSL4). Similarly, in their interview one university graduate outlined how proving others wrong served as motivation for himself and his peers in their secondary schooling, he explained:

Talking about what motivated me, it reminds me of the late 90s and early 2000s, I was mindful of a lot of island kids were committing suicide over their School C results and all that kind of pressure to succeed when generally we weren't. For some of us that was hugely motivating, we wanted to set an example and show us PI's could do well at school. (UG3)

This theme was centered upon wanting to correct past academic failings for Pasifika students and in essence 'prove people wrong'. It was about challenging a negative stereotype of Pasifika peoples' academic achievement and their well-documented educational underachievement in comparison to other ethnic groups. One mother interviewed described how this idea of challenging the perception of Pasifika underachievement motivated her to encourage her sons to succeed, she said, "I say to my boys you prove everybody wrong, we are not dumb PI's we can succeed and the sky is the limit" (P2). This parent's perception was supported by parent P7 who proceeded to explain how her thoughts had been shaped by her own school experiences, from a time several decades previously:

When I was growing up in High School I was sick and tired of being told that we were just dumb islanders and that we weren't going to succeed. I got told that a lot and it really rarked me up so I was determined that I was going to prove people wrong and I was going to be the best I could. I have drummed it into my kids heads, I want you to prove society wrong that we are not a bunch of dumb PI's, that we can be the next Prime Minister, a lawyer, a farmer, whatever as long as we put in the hard yards. (P7)

### ***5.3.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement***

All three participant groups had experienced negative perceptions regarding Pasifika students' academic achievement. Participants were aware of academic achievement data published in the media that has shown overall Pasifika students' academic achievement in School C and NCEA to be lower than other ethnic groups. This was supported in the interview data by the participants being aware of these statistics and deeming it part of their motivation to succeed. All three participant groups wanted to

challenge these negative perceptions, which motivated them to achieve academic success and this created a 'mind set' in these groups that served as a motivating factor.

#### **5.4 The influence of family**

The influence of family as a source of inspiration was a theme that emerged from the data collected from all three participant groups. One parent described the strength of family as being "a huge part of our culture" (P3). Particularly the university graduates and recent school leaver groups communicated the parental and family influence upon their educational journeys. All of the parent, university graduate and recent school leavers involved referred to family as a collective, a wider view of family that included those directly in their Aiga or Famili together with others who had a vested interest in their success - this could include extended family, church members or family friends.

For many of the recent student participants in FG1, family was considered the key factor in their drive to succeed. They had no hesitation in recognising this as the single most important thing to them in their desire to achieve academically. They clearly understood the collective impact of their success but didn't feel this was a burden or too high an expectation. In FG1 all the recent school leaver participants were aware of this expectation and were comfortable to be able to represent their families in this way. These ideas were characterized by RSL2 who stated:

Seeing my mum, she is always working and working hard for us and I saw I need to be like that more often. I want to achieve for her, so she can live her dreams and I can thank her for all she has done for me, the sacrifices she has made to ensure I get a good education. (FG1 - RSL2)

This concept was supported in the interview with RSL7 when they explained how wider family had inspired them, "visiting other Pasifika family homes I remember seeing family member's degrees framed and up on the wall (RS7L). His recollection was of the obvious pride in these degrees and the sense that was daunting that your family would feel such a sense of achievement. Once again, this sense of pride was fully understood to be a wider concept, shared not only by immediate family but extended family, often their church too and the wider community, one recent school leaver

explained in their interview, “for a Pacific person, it’s not just your achievement it’s everyone’s achievement. If you have attended a Pacific island graduation where maybe the whole church is invited” (RSL4).

Five of the recent school leavers in FG1 discussed how they had grown up with core values instilled in them from home, such as the importance of faith, family and getting a good education. Family was a huge part of their lives so a lot of effort was put into this aspect of their weekly routines. They explained how they would all band together and support each other as much as possible and believed this to be an automatic response, not something to think about:

Mum was born here, but although she was born here, she was still raised with the same core values that typical Samoan would be raised with. Family, church and culture are highly implemented within the family so it really contributed too. (FG1 - RSL7)

The recent school leavers believed it was possible to live in both worlds and still maintain a high level of achievement. One of the recent school leavers acknowledged this in FG1 when they said:

I think it depends on that person’s mind set if they are fixated on family and then last minute, whoops I am behind on schoolwork so I can’t do it. They need to get rid of that mind set and balance it out. There is a time and place for everything and it is up to you whether you do it or not. (RSL6)

This perception of family was also supported in the recent school leaver interviews in which participants were mindful about the role of family values in their success. In their interview a recent school leaver expressed that strong family values helped to guide them, they said, “parents always say that if you are faithful, if you are honest with the little things you are going to be trusted with big things” (RSL3).

One university graduate explained in his interview what he saw as the key differences in the approach of a Pasifika student to that of a Palagi counterpart:

I would stereotype that palagis are just negatively all about themselves and they don't see the big picture, maybe just their individual families. Looking at the European students when I was at school, they have the support of their friends and stuff but they are not doing it for a whole bunch of people, where Islanders we are in it because we are doing it for a whole bunch of people, family, church and friends. I suppose that is the push. (UG1)

Family support and expectation to succeed was integral to many of the experiences shared by the participants involved in this research. Family provided a meaningful support mechanism for the students at school and it shaped their attitudes and educational experiences. The graduates reflected that they understood the sense of pride and achievement their families displayed through recognition of their success, One graduate stated:

When we succeed our families succeed so that is huge and if an uncle or aunty succeeds or cousin goes to University everybody celebrates at the graduation. Islanders we are in it together as family, we are doing it for a whole bunch of people. (UG1)

For the graduates and recent school leavers there was also a perception of the important role that family had played in their success. It was communicated that there was a high expectation from their families to succeed and several references made that this expectation didn't matter if you were on the sports field or in the classroom. Aiming to do the best you can had been instilled in them by their wider family group whilst growing up, one participant stated "my parents and my older brothers were my main drivers. I always thought I would go to university, even before we moved here my oldest brother was sent from Tonga to come to University" (UG3).

Typically family expectation was not perceived as pressure, but rather a motivating force. In their interview, one university graduate who was born in Samoa and then came over to New Zealand on a scholarship explained:

For me I did it because my dad was the chief of the family, not only the chief of the family he was the president of the village, and also

involved in the government, so when I go to the school already without me saying anything there is expectation and people look at me because I am the son of the chief, mainly from people back in Samoa, it puts pressure on you but that the pressure that helps you raise your expectation, you have to do more because obviously people are looking at you to do things. For me it did. (UG4)

Typically the influence of family were considered a positive motivating force by all of the participants groups. However, amongst the perceptions shared by participants were also comments about the negative influence of family. One university graduate spoke positively of his family support but also suggested at times it could present certain unwanted challenges that he would have preferred not to deal with as a young man, he said, “she took my school results to church to show all the mothers. While it was highly embarrassing it was also huge boost in regards to the value of education for me and how proud my family were” (UG3). Another graduate also spoke of similar circumstance and how he dealt with expectation from his family. His implication was that in a traditional family it wasn’t necessarily easy to talk openly to parents about these things so much was left unsaid, he explained, “maybe in Pasifika families, you don’t hear I love you and I am proud of you, but seeing me achieve at school, it was a big deal for them” (UG4).

There was also feedback that family expectations in terms of time dedicated to family events could be stressful. Families would have the aspiration for their sons to succeed and then go on to university but possibly didn’t fully understand what was required to reach these goals:

It is quite hard when I reflect back, my parents never came through the education system so I think that when I studied they didn’t quite realized the sacrifice that needed to be made in order for me to succeed at school. For example I would try and do some study at night but then if we had a family member over or visitors over I had to put that to the side and cater for them and so I think they didn’t quite realize the amount of sacrifice. (UG1)



One of the graduates also spoke about the divide that can exist between Pasifika family expectations and commitments and those of a Palagi family. He noted his wife was Palagi and at times found it difficult to comprehend how the importance of family events could supersede things planned at short notice and stated:

I want my son to do well but if there is a family funeral, my partner's palagi and she doesn't get that everything has to stop. That we have got something planned but we drop it when someone calls from Samoa and we are expected to be with family. (UG1)

For all of the parent participants in FG3 their own values were shown to be linked to their son's educational achievement. When questioned about the influence of family and expectations, the parents felt strongly about the part this played in their son's success, they explained:

Huge, our expectation is so high it is not funny, we expect our kids to be lawyers and doctors and stuff like that and even if they don't agree we think they better be. (FG3 - P3)

One parent stated, "humbleness can't go wrong, aim for the sky but know your place in our family and that is what I say to the boys – aim for the sky but know your place in our family". (P3) When asked to further explain this the parent responded that it was very important for her sons to remember the importance of family and their support they provided in their educational journey.

Another of the parents supported this idea by adding that his children knew his expectations were very high, however he always added to them "aim high, go straight, have people help you along but always know your place in our family and you can't go wrong" (P7).

However, one parent acknowledged at times the expectations could be too high and the goals unrealistic for some students in the following way:

I think from my experience as a parent, like most island parents we want a doctor, we want a lawyer whatever and that is what our aiga is

going to go and do and that is the subject they are going to take whether they like it or not. (P7)

The parents in FG3 also felt further work by schools with Pasifika parents around the demands of family life and the demands students faced at school still required discussion. They commented that family events, church and community commitments could easily mean students could be waiting until 10 o'clock at night and then they are too tired to do their homework. They saw the need to educate Pasifika parents on how to minimize family commitments in order to support the boys and their education. One parent had a very firm view of the importance of this and said:

Everything else is sacrificed if you need to spend time with family. In the Westernised world everything is pretty structured and we are used to it because we live in the western world, but when it comes to island priorities, I think more of our parents have to understand this without believing they are sacrificing their own values. (FG3 - P2)

One parent interviewee felt strongly that the way forward for Pasifika families was to "single mindedly want all those things that the Palagi culture has". He believed successful Pasifika people in New Zealand had embraced Palagi concepts and values. However, he also believed firmly that the best option for young Pasifika students was to bring the two cultures together:

I try to tell my kids to be smart enough by taking the best of this (Palagi culture) and the best of your culture together. We sometimes criticise the Palagi culture of having all the evils that we don't want but once again we have to look at where we are now and the good things that we do want! (P2)

This perception was endorsed by another parent's view point. He had encouraged his sons to harness their cultural capital and use it as an advantage. He believed that if his children knew their culture first and knew who they were, then they would be confident in stepping into different worlds:

I am trying to do now is try to convince my kids that their culture is an advantage, you don't leave that at the door where ever you are, use that advantage to not only benefit you, but benefit those around you. This is generalised now, if you are thinking about sometimes we talk about the Palagi way of thinking is they have a direction and they go for it generally, whereas with us Pasifika we are more inclined to think about others, family first. But we need to embrace both worlds to be successful and see the longer term benefits for family when we are successful. (P6)

There was also concern from three parents in FG3 who saw that at times keeping Pasifika traditions alive such as the language could also be a hindrance to children in their schooling. The concern was around the 'old ways' or more traditional families holding onto their language could be in fact have a detrimental bearing on their children's education over the long term. One parent explained:

I have seen this happen with my own family and friends and with their kids growing up and having to speak their language and then they get quite confused with having to speak English at school so the struggle was for the child that they had to do both, one at home and one at school and I think the learning was quite low for them and it kept them behind because of having to do that and I still see it. My nephew he is six the same age as my son and he is struggling because his mother won't let him speak English at home so how is he meant to learn, catch up with all the other kids at school when you have to separate the two. I think he should be allowed to speak English at home for him to pick up quicker. (FG3 - P1)

#### **5.4.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of family**

Family was perceived by all three participant groups as having a strong influence on Pasifika males' success. The influence of family was perceived in both a positive and negative way. Family expectations were perceived as motivating, rather than as pressure. For example, values such as hard work were perceived as positive influences instilled in children by their family. However, an expectation to attend family events was seen by some as a distraction from school work.

## 5.5 The influence of cultural identity

All of the recent school leaver participants expressed the recognition of and ability to identify with their culture through opportunities to perform and speak their language at school was a very important part of their success and a theme that emerged from the data collected. One recent school leaver noted:

It's (our culture) an everyday thing, it's a part of who we are and it is just in our habits. You are who you are and if we were at a school that didn't really celebrate or show that our cultures are important otherwise you lose who you are and it offsets your flow. (FG1 - RSL8)

Two recent school leavers interviews echoed these sentiments about the amount of time that is required in order to prepare for the Polyfest event but believed it was still beneficial to them, and in their interview, one recent student said:

It might take up hours but it is still really important to be involved for me. For me it's just balance. When you have to do your school work you just have to do it. Just balance out our life with church, school and extra-curricular, but those things really motivate me. (RSL2)

It was also perceived by all of the recent school leaver in FG1 that if teachers acknowledged cultural capital that students already had outside of the classroom there was increased opportunity for the teacher to engage with students and enhance their learning. Recent school leavers in particular remembered when teachers would take the chance to incorporate some form of material from their Pasifika culture into the curriculum. For example, this could be in the way of some Pasifika texts in English, events that involved Pasifika nations in history or Pasifika designs in art and design. One recent student recalled a teacher assisting a class in a quite imaginative way linking Pasifika culture into his learning. He was clearly inspired by this approach and believed an experience like this was one of the reasons he went on to be successful:

Earlier at school in my year 9 and 10 classes we were struggling in Maths and English, so our teacher did cooking with us. The instructions, the recipe were all written in Samoan and Tongan. Then she started doing the math's part, if you cut a taro like that is a quarter and that is a half etc. So we understood it really clearly as the lesson went on. If we can relate to it in some way we will pick it up much

easier. That was when I really started loving school and wanted to do well. (FG1 - RSL8)

When one recent school leaver was interviewed he believed that their school implementing things like language week and assemblies for Maori, Samoan, or Tongan groups helped him to achieve. He remarked, “these occasions are important for Pasifika students as they provided a chance to show off our culture in front of the whole school” (RSL7). He also mentioned how other extra co-curricular activities like attending seminars that were held by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs encouraged Pasifika students to want to succeed as Pasifika students.

Respect was perceived to be a big part of Samoan and Tongan culture. The recent school leaver participants believed that when coming into a school there was an expectation that when your parents are not there, the people who are your caregivers should be treated with the same respect as your parents. Positions of authority were seen as a natural point of respect. A notable point to make was that for recent school leavers the idea of culture and being respected in a culturally sensitive manner seemed to have more importance to them than it did for the older graduates. One recent student commented:

What it means to be Tongan is that I am very proud of my culture and I want to show this by respecting others. Sometimes not many people know about Tonga and I want to expand the name of Tongans beyond the rugby field, there is a lot of passion in our culture just like all other cultures and being proud of it at school makes me feel good about being here. (RSL1)

All of the University graduates in FG2 noted that there was a clear understanding of how their family and cultural background contributed to their success. There was a belief that engaging with your culture and having opportunities to express your culture, gave a certain level of comfort for the students while at school. This in turn allowed them to focus on their school work. They believed that having the ability to use their parents’ language at school and perform at cultural events were key ingredients to their success. They felt it made them confident, and able to share their values with pride. A recent university graduate stated:

School reflected my culture by having things like the Samoan Group, it was an important part of my success at school, I believe it gave me confidence. Having Samoan language as an option was great and I guess also the ethnic makeup reflected that. (FG2 - UG2)

All of the University graduates in FG2 agreed that respect and acknowledgement from a school in relation to cultural diversity helped them to feel accepted and part of the school community. They also saw their culture as being the key to how they could achieve at school by incorporating the values they learnt at home. In this way, Pasifika culture was perceived as a positive motivating force when incorporated into students' learning. However, the graduate participants also commented on cultural differences that existed in society which were perceived as challenges and needed to be understood if they were to be successful. One important concept that emerged from the data was the idea of 'island time' and how this impacted on their studies. The graduates commented how through their upbringing they felt more relaxed and adaptable and on occasions time restraints and deadlines were difficult for them to adhere to. They recalled needing to understand and learn ways to manage their approach to time and deadlines if they wanted to succeed. One university graduate commented in their interview:

I remember talking to a Tongan teacher and she asked me what do I think about the saying 'Island time' that we are always late! And I was trying to answer it and she wasn't very impressed with my answer so she said that her view of island time is her family just might have something planned and that is her priority but if there is a phone call to pick up your sister at the airport then you need to go and pick her up. And that was from a teacher? But I argued that if we as Pasifika people wanted to succeed we had to find ways of sorting the priority thing that was already planned, like education! I think as part of another generation we learnt how to juggle things and it saw success for us without offending our families. (UG7)

Another university graduate also spoke about the concept of time and how it was important for Pasifika students to adapt if they were to be successful. He indicated there was a real battle of the mind in terms of what he had been used to culturally and

how he had to compromise in order to achieve academically. He also believed that it required teachers to see the Pasifika view of the world:

In the westernised world everything is pretty structured and we are used to it because we live in the western world, we have been through the system, we have been through the schooling but when it comes to island priorities, I think for European teachers, maybe they struggled with what they saw. It may be seen as excuses but really it is some of the core values of who we are as Pasifika, that time is so important to give to your family. But then we had to find the balance if we wanted to get all our work done. (UG6)

Six of the parents in FG3 also saw incorporating Pasifika activities such as Polyfest and celebrating language and diversity as an important key to their son's success. They largely believed that culture was part of their identity and having their sons understand and be part of their culture was important to their overall success. One parent who worked closely with Pasifika youth felt that some reasons for academic failure could be linked to a student's loss of engagement with their culture, they said, "I just feel a lot of our kids are lost and it is because they don't know their culture, they have got no identity" (P3).

Another parent interviewed referred to a time in his life when his parents had migrated to New Zealand in the mid-1950s and a Minister suggested to the parents that they shouldn't speak to their kids in Samoan, this parent stated, "the identity thing is still very big for our kids, they love being Samoan and they should learn the language and more about Samoa" (P4).

The parent participants in FG3 also perceived that opportunities to partake in Pasifika culture at school could have a valuable part to play in helping their sons achieve. Attending and performing at Polyfest for example, was seen as part of developing their son's identity. They saw Polyfest as a way of their sons showcasing their identity to the rest of the world and believed that was another successful part of their journey towards being academically successful. They also believed it was an opportunity for schools to bring the Pasifika communities into the schools and a way to strengthen the relationship between school and the community, one parent stated:

In my family our culture is everything; for my husband and my children it is very strong to the point that we eat, breathe and sleep it, so I want the opportunity for my boys to be involved with it at school, I really think it keeps them grounded, and it helps teach them other skills like discipline and commitment. (FG3 - P5)

Similarly, another parent interviewed noted the importance of his son's performances in the culture groups. He stated "Pasifika performing well on the sports field or on the performing arts stage links to academic success if it is managed well" (P6). He believed his sons had achieved this balance and they were into everything and so he and his wife thought that it was a really good avenue to build on that commitment and link it to success in their academic studies.

Five of the parents in FG3 also believed that while Polyfest and cultural performance were vital for their sons, participation should be linked to academic commitment. For example, it was suggested if students were seniors they would have to be on track to pass NCEA Level 1, 2, 3 and if they were juniors, they had to have a fairly good report, before they could attend a performance or practice.

One parent did have reservations about participation in such events if it took students focus away from school work due to time commitments for practices. She suggested it could be more of a community based exercise as opposed to school:

Polyfest it is great but I think when it comes to their education it is a distraction because of the amount of time that they have outside of class or whatever; late practices that they have after school. It is a bit of a distraction and maybe it should be done from the community not from school if you really want them to succeed. (FG3 - P1)

### **5.5.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of cultural identity**

Recognition of participants' culture through opportunities to perform and speak their language at school was perceived as an important part of their success. Recent school leavers appreciated the integration of Pacific texts and examples in their school curriculum. All participant groups acknowledged the need to balance traditional family commitments with time to study.



## **5.6 The influence of peer relationships**

In the findings of this study the concept of a Pasifika community within the schools emerged as a vital part of creating success for the participants. One of the common findings from both the university graduates and recent school leavers was the idea of 'belonging' and a sense of community that they believed was a major driver in their success at school.

In FG1 recent school leavers had perceptions regarding the importance of a sense of belonging and how this related to why they were successful, one participant commented, "I am close to many students here and the vibe from the brotherhood is strong...it is like a brotherhood to me and I am really proud of that" (RSL5). This sentiment of inclusiveness with other students emerged as more important rather than simply being Pasifika. A sense of belonging was also recognised by a recent student who said:

I personally think it would be boys in general. I wouldn't just stick to Pacific boys because it wasn't just Pacific boys in that handful of boys that I considered big supporters during my school years, there was also other ethnicities. (FG1 - RSL7)

University graduate participants in FG2 also spoke of the importance of peer relationships in the context of 'being brothers' and being part of a group of close friends that were going in the same directions as being hugely supportive, one graduate noted:

Being Samoan wasn't as important as being part of the brotherhood, a group of us striving to be successful as brothers, it was about being part of a community within the school, and being part of a team or your class, we had a real bond and wanted each other to succeed. (FG2 - UG5)

The importance of the concept of belonging was also confirmed in the interviews with recent school leavers. One recent school leaver perceived that this sense of belonging was not specifically about identifying as Samoan or Tongan but being part of a wider group or collective, they explained, "what I take away from school is the bond I have built with all the boys from different ethnic groups, mixing with Palagis, Indians, Fijians and other cultures is something special" (RSL4). It was clear from the data that all of

the recent school leavers perceived that interactions and support gained from their friendships with other students had assisted their learning.

All of the graduate participants supported this viewpoint with regards to the positive influence of their peers. Graduate participants in FG2 had a memory of the importance of their peers, their mates and 'brothers'. They perceived that the collective strength of their friendship group sharing the desire to achieve was a positive influencing factor upon their academic success, one university graduate commented:

In regards to choices that we made a lot of it was driven by our mates, good mates would stick together, it only took one or two to want to do well and we would all be in. Maybe some of the stuff was instilled through what Pasifika people like – hanging out, eating, doing things as a group, it was a strong bond and it was really useful. (FG2 - UG4)

One of the University graduates interviewed also remembered everyone getting along with everyone, and a strong sense of the idea of brotherhood. His recollection was of there being no real divide in regards to ethnicities when at school, just because everyone enjoyed everyone's company and believing it "was a really good atmosphere to grow up in and to be educated in" (UG2).

Four of the university graduates also spoke of the effect of the 'brotherhood' and how it shaped their attitudes towards education at school and beyond to their university years. They perceived that it was a comforting, motivating and inspirational feeling they had gained from a group that worked towards the same goals of success. One university graduate (U7) stated:

Once I started growing up at high school, I met other islanders that were quite determined about their education and I think being exposed to those groups of people actually made me start to think about doing well at school and going to University. I think the support of other guys, brothers or whatever you want to call it, from there is probably where it sort of stemmed about my academic future.

### **5.6.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of peer relationships**

The recent school leavers and university graduates both perceived their friendship group had been a significant influence upon their academic success. Friendship groups were not only with other Pasifika students, but with other students of different ethnic origins. It was perceived that if a friendship group focused on academic success that this would motivate all members of the group for high academic achievement.

### **5.7 The influence of Pasifika role models**

The importance of roles models as a motivating figure was a clear theme that emerged from the data collected by interviewing the graduates and recent school leavers. It was perceived that being able to identify with Pasifika people who had achieved before them had a very big influence on their own success.

A recent school leaver interviewed identified with former wrestler and Samoan born International actor The Rock:

I know it definitely would be “The Rock”. His story of being a troubled young person to someone earning billions of dollars years at a time and the hard work that he puts in and the consistency that he had is what I strive to have. (RSL8)

Role models could include students they had seen go before while at school, old boys who came back to the school after forging successful careers and also family members such as siblings and parents. One university graduate explained:

Just noting prefects or other high profile students of Samoan ethnicity doing different things, like doing well academically and going on to Uni. That is really good that prominence in different areas, not just as sportsmen, that is where I am encouraged. (UG5)

The role models that participants discussed could also include teachers, both Pasifika and non Pasifika. Teachers had created an aspiration for them and shared a belief that they could achieve by encouraging them on to university. UG4 explained:

I think for me just really positive experiences at school just having really good passionate teachers in regards to Year 13 because I had really passionate teachers who made me think outside the box.

The notion of role models also extended to people who had achieved outside the academic forum such as sportsmen or performers. When participants saw other people directly from their community achieving in their chosen field this was a source of inspiration for them. Sportsmen in particular were noted by many graduates and recent school leavers as a particular source of inspiration. The power of seeing Pasifika people from their community representing various codes at the top level was something tangible to the participants. It also created the notion of believing that if others from their community could achieve in their chosen field then they could achieve at school. One university graduate explained:

If you are looking at the big role model All Black Michael Jones was it for me, everyone loved Michael Jones, I suppose in my generation Samoan, humble Christian but I liked the fact that he had a Master's Degree in Geography, that is well balanced. So having those kind of role models especially as he was from our own community out West. (UG1)

Another of the university graduates commented on how he believed local sports coaches had influenced him and many of his peers during their time at school, he said, "our volleyball coach was great because she would always link our performance to our school work, always make sure we had priorities right". Furthermore, for other graduates having successful older brothers who achieved academically as well as on the sports field was a clear inspiration for them:

I think just growing up in Tonga and most of the islands really rugby is massive, played touch, got into the game I think that is probably one of the things I found real helpful was being part of a rugby team. Sports is massive in my family and my brother being successful in rugby was an inspiration. (UG7)

### **5.7.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of Pasifika role models**

The perceptions of recent school leavers and university graduates all supported the notion that Pasifika role models have positively influenced their academic success. Role models were drawn from sports, the arts and family members. Individual school teachers were considered key role models by recent school leavers and graduates

### **5.8 The influence of church**

All three participant groups perceived that their church had a positive impact on their education. All the recent school leaver in FG1 perceived faith as inter linked with their learning and that academic achievement was part of a bigger plan in their lives. There was a sense that their churches gave them an advantage and an understanding that hard work and perseverance would pay off, one recent student explained, "I definitely grew up with faith in my household and I was always surrounded by it and it reassured me that school work was just a part of the bigger plan" (RSL3).

The data collected from the university graduates in FG2 also supported the perceptions of the recent school leavers. The graduates communicated the importance of their church in ensuring that they were grounded and became successful. The graduates perceived that the values taught at church such as hard work and honesty became embedded in them and were helpful to draw on in the school context:

My parents had a strong religious value, dad was always telling us when we were kids to succeed in life you need education and faith. Two things and if you don't have those two, then really you won't succeed. (FG2 - UG6)

Faith comes from the church, the idea of hard work and respect. Those were big values that my parents had and that is the same values that I hold really close to me when I came through this school and it definitely contributed to my education, like it was extra belief in something bigger I was working for. (FG2 - UG7)

The recent school leavers all expressed that they were from strong church going families, two recent school leavers explained:

I am highly involved in my church. I am involved with a lot of the youth stuff. Religion is a big part of my achievement in school, especially learning under our minister. I think it gives me a balanced view on life and as there are a lot of other Pasifika kids in church I feel it is important to be a good role model for them by doing well at school. (RSL4)

The importance of church was also a concept supported in the recent school leaver interviews. One of the recent school leavers described his family as very religious. He believed his faith played a big part in everyday life. He described his mother as being old fashioned and telling him “if you stick to your faith it will help you with your school work” (RSL7). This was an important message for him and he regarded it as central to his success at school. Other comments from two recent school leavers supported this idea that church was an integral part in many of their lives and they perceived benefits from being involved with their church community. They saw their being part of and attending church as something that not only influenced their daily lives but also something that effected their education. Furthermore, they noted the potential negative effects for other students of not being involved with a church:

To me when students drift away from their church, it would disconnect them from their whole culture and they would lose the value and mind set. I think it is that important for a lot of us Islanders. (RSL2)

Without it, I think they would probably lose themselves inside the school because they wouldn't have that cultural base that supports them, our culture and church seem to go together. (RSL6)

These perceptions were also supported by the university graduate interviews. One university graduate reflected that there was a very positive link between their learning and their church life. They believed some of the skills they learnt from a young age at church were contributing factors to their success at secondary school and gave them a belief and confidence they might not have otherwise had:

Church was big for our family, we were involved in everything but it was a training ground. Those times of doing White Sunday practice, Choir practice etc. - I was reflecting on that all those skills - I use them

every day. I can do public speaking no problem, I can harmonise, I can act. All those things that we learnt at church helped me with my education. (UG1)

One university graduate also responded in a similar fashion about getting the balance between time spent on church activities and school work as being crucial for the success of students:

For our generation that really want the best for our kids, we can do it all, we can do culture, we can do church, we can do education and we can have a really functioning family. Our parents sometimes put church first and feared we might drift away from it. As Samoans church and faith is huge, but now for our generation it's just trying to balance it so kids can also achieve their goals at school. (UG1)

Although most of the participants perceived church to be a positive influence on their academic success, it was also perceived to be a challenge to balance school and church commitments. Parents, university graduates and recent school leavers all made comments that while their experience with church was largely important and positive to them, it could at times impede their focus on academic studies. One of the parents characterised how several of the other parents felt about the tension between church and education:

If they are placing church activities, too many church activities ahead of their child's education then you can see where their priorities lie and their priority is them either being spiritual or being a Matai for the family and serving in that way. Therefore where does the education come? So the boys, they should also be able to tell mum and dad I need to do this, I need space to do this in order for me to get where I want to be. (P6)

### **5.8.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of church**

All three participant groups perceived being part of a church community as a positive influence on their academic success. University graduates believed that skills learnt at church had helped them to succeed at school. University graduates and parents

perceived the need to balance church and school commitments if students were to be academically successful.

### **5.9 The influence of school environment and culture**

A final theme that emerged from the data was the influence of a school's environment and culture on the participant's academic success. The graduates and recent school leavers were in agreement that the culture and environment of the schools they went to played a significant part in their success. For them 'culture' within the schools meant an expectation for Pasifika students to succeed and that they could observe the academic success of Pasifika students before them. They described school culture as referring to the traditions, rules and way the school was run on a daily basis. Three recent school leavers in FG1 all agreed that teachers played an extremely important role in their success. They enjoyed teachers who appeared firm, could enjoy some humour and who seemed genuinely interested in student success. They defined their best teachers as caring, who made lessons enjoyable, as easy to understand and who were approachable so that they could ask questions. Teachers who would be known to go out of their way to help students were held in high esteem by the successful recent school leavers. They placed a high value on teachers who showed that they cared:

It's great when you can really relate to your teacher. I found school work hard but if I connected to the teachers who really cared this made the learning so much easier, knowing that the teacher was interested in me and cared about me. (FG1 - RSL4)

This perception was also supported in the interviews with the recent school leavers. One recent school leaver concurred that the culture of their school was a determining factor in their own success:

Your ethnicity wasn't a big factor going through the school, it was being part of the community and being part of either a sports team or being part of your class and actually just moving forward as brothers or as friends. I think once again it is just complimented with what happened at home. The experience I had as a student made me more



positive and really energised me and inspired me to push myself with my education. (RSL5)

The recent school leavers interviewed reported that the teachers who cared about their education and how they got on could be Pasifika or non-Pasifika, they perceived that Pasifika teachers helped indirectly because they saw them as similar. That they had achieved and gone to university and it made it easier for the students to see a bright future for themselves:

I guess it just resonates more if it is a Pasifika role model. It doesn't have to be a Pacific person but I think it's just more normal for people to look up to people from their culture. You see them at prize giving in the academic gowns and you want to be like that, it was quite inspirational, particularly for me when none of my family had been to University. (RSL2)

Several recent school leavers believed that it was also teachers who had encouraged them on to university. Without these teachers they were unsure if their success would have been guaranteed or if they would have even contemplated going to university. These were direct role models who greatly influenced their school life and made them feel inspired and determined to achieve. Their engagement at school was spurred on by positive relationships with teachers and these were a contributing factor in their learning:

The extra work the teachers would put in, mentoring after school and in the holidays really helped me. They didn't have to do it but they did. It was during those times outside of normal lessons that you really connected with the best teachers. (RSL3)

The recent school leavers were also equivocal about what made a poor teacher. They could sense which teachers were fully committed to them and were there to help them out and those teachers that were not, one recent student explained, "we knew the teachers that wanted to help us and support us. We also knew the ones that didn't care, who just said it's up to us whether we achieve or not" (RSL2).

The influence of 'school culture' was an enabler to the students in terms of being positive and encouraged towards their studies, two graduates explained:

I think in regards to culture looking back and even today it was more the culture of the school rather than the actual ethnic culture. I think it really complimented what I had at home in regards to family but also church. All that kind of stuff is what I suppose we would call the wrap around today. (UG1)

Like a lot of the guys my success started at school, we just embraced the school culture and presumed we would do well, we ended up being Prefects and we all kind of led through, we all played 1<sup>st</sup> XV together so it is basically for me once again being really fortunate that a lot of us went through the school and we all became leaders, so just all the different influences in regards to the choices you make and the direction you go. (UG7)

All participants in the university graduate FG2 believed high expectations contributed to their academic success. The graduates and recent school leavers perceived that their schools had explicitly insisted on high standards of academic achievement. They believed this was an extremely important lever in their own success, the fact that they were believed to be capable, expected to pass NCEA and would be going on to university:

I think at school I don't think I really had ambitions of what I wanted to do so I don't think I had the ambition of going to university, I just got my 5<sup>th</sup> form Certificate which was the qualification at that time, then got 6<sup>th</sup> form and then started realising I could go to university. I do think a lot of the academic drive came from some teachers that I had through those years. (FG2 - UG2)

I think for me just really positive experiences at school just having really good teachers in regards to Year 13 because I had really passionate teachers who made me think outside the box, that I could really do what I wanted if I put my mind to it. (FG2 - UG1)

The interviews with the university graduates supported the concept that high expectations were a positive influence upon their success. The university graduates interviewed in this study were acutely aware that their schools had high expectations for them. Being told constantly they were capable students either formally through assessments or informally in conversation in class had a lasting impact on the participants and created a positive mind-set that led them to further successful achievement, one graduate stated:

I think for a lot of Pasifika boys just creating high expectations for them can be really useful. They may not be as confident in their ability so when it is reinforced regularly that they can do it creates a sense of belief within them. My teachers were so important to me. They always encouraged me and got the best out of me, they showed they really cared and that was huge motivation for me in achieving and wanting to go on to University. (UG1)

All of the university graduates interviewed spoke of the importance of teachers being approachable and willing to listen. One graduate explained that he felt many Pasifika students could be shy or struggle to discuss learning with a teacher if they were perceived as not being easy to talk to:

I think a lot of us were scared to ask for advice, we wouldn't go to a teacher or tutor but we will go to the ones we see other PI boys talking to. There was a sense of not being too shamed and comfortable and if you see other people going and the really great teachers kind of make relationships with you as well, they try and be as friendly as possible. (UG3)

The university graduates were aware that there were school expectations that were shared across the teaching staff. They liked it when standards were high and rules were in place. It gave them a sense they were somewhere important, that the school shared in their dreams of achieving. They enjoyed the fact their schools had a reputation of being successful academically and in other areas. This notion of group success and school pride is linked to the other theme in this chapter of peer relationships. The participants were encouraged by the fact that they considered

themselves to be in a 'good school' and their success would be linked to this and therefore continue to set expectations for younger students:

It was important to my friends and I to be successful, the school was pushing us and we saw it as our job to be role models for the brothers coming through, to show them that they could do it. (UG1)

If we did well academically or on the sports field we believed we were continuing to set the bar high, continuing to set high standards the school has given us. A lot of Pasifika students can relate to that. (UG4)

One of the parents interviewees also commented positively about how his son's school had tapped into Pasifika family concepts of togetherness and the boys own notions of 'brotherhood' and turned this into a school cultural message about achievement:

I am thinking about the Leave No Brother Behind ethos my boys school had running through the years. We Islanders like to do things together and the good teams have always done it like this, so this is a good way for the school to recognise the students and bring them together. We like to do things together, it captures how a lot of the boys think. (P2)

Another parent also endorsed how the school culture could have a beneficial effect on the students' educational outcomes. They saw ways in which the school had related curriculum material to suit the backgrounds of the students as being an important aspect of not only recognising cultural diversity but enhancing engagement of the students:

I think the outlook or culture of the school is critical in our boy's education. I know you can maybe improve that engagement if you teach for example the story of the Mau in Samoan history and how that relates. I have heard stories about how that has really pricked the engagement of the child because they can relate to it because their forbearers were in Samoa at the time. I think that if and when that happens there is better engagement for Pasifika. (P5)

Another parent echoed these thoughts and the possibilities that existed to see things through the world of the students:

No disrespect but hearing and learning about 18<sup>th</sup> century Shakespeare is no good, as opposed to what happened on Black Saturday on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December - I know that the boys immediately want to know more about it and it is not just the Samoan boys either, it can be Tongan or whoever because they can relate a lot easier to it. (P3)

In this way the parents perceived that when a school developed a school culture and curriculum that was inclusive of Pasifika students this engaged their sons which supported them to achieve.

The parent participants also perceived that communication played an important role in the relationship between school and families, one parent explained:

Every community connection there has got to be some sort of learning whether it be learning about the systems the school has in place or whether it be learning about the actual content of what the boys are having in their curriculum or whether it be about engaging with them, to consult with them about that learning. I think that is it, rather than having a PI performance tick box. In my view it becomes more about the school if you are just ticking a box to engage the communities. The communities have so much to offer but they can also offer more about and help the school in the learning too. (P7)

Furthermore, many of the participants were committed to success because they were proud of their school and the opportunities they had been given. The school was an important part of who they were and their identity at that stage of their lives.

Another aspect of school culture and environment that was evident in the data from all of the cohorts was the importance of teacher and student relationships. The parent group stressed that this relationship was one of the key influences they had witnessed in their sons achieving academic success:

I think the teacher not just in terms of what they teach but also the relationship that the teacher can have with them. I know for sure that my boys have all said, and that is the four boys, their favorite teacher is the one that they get on with most and for whom they have a mutual respect. The one that treats them as an individual of course that is when they engage better, when that happens they learn better and that is the flow. (P6)

Conversely one parent interviewee noted the difference in attitude when the relationship were not as strong and the connection between teacher and student did not lead to positive learning outcomes.

What is interesting is that a couple of my sons have said that when they were strong at English for example at intermediate but coming to secondary school they fell away. They blamed the English teacher, they said they can't stand that guy, or Maths teacher, and yet they were strong elsewhere. (P2)

There was a strong sense that teachers who could empathise with Pasifika students and understood their culture and more importantly how they learnt best were very respected.

Dialogue with the University graduates regarding the role of friendly and approachable teachers also emerged with the parent participants who stressed the importance of being able to speak openly with their son's teachers. The communication between parents, students and teachers was seen as a crucial component in the overall success for the student. If the parents felt comfortable talking with and listening to a teacher, they were more likely to stay interested and involved in their sons' education and be more able to support them:

Those things are highly valuable, as much as we think that parents are scared here when we as Islanders go into schools, it's really important that we are made to feel less vulnerable and are able to give real visible support to our boys. That has to be beneficial and some

teachers were superb at communicating with me and making me feel part of what was going on. (P6)

Another parent stated that several teachers at her son's school had been highly influential not only for her son but also in her understanding of NCEA and what was required for University Entrance. She believed her son may have missed the opportunity to attend university in the subject that he wanted if it wasn't for the guidance of teachers and their support as he worked towards his goal:

It's really important the teachers encourage them to aim high and set those goals for themselves so that they can achieve them, they need that guidance and support. My son is now at university doing engineering and I'm not sure he would have got there without the help through school. It also helped me understand what he needed to do so I could play my part. (P1)

### ***5.9.1 Key findings: Perspectives on the influence of school environment and culture***

All three participant groups perceived school culture and environment to have an influence on Pasifika male students' academic success. University graduates and recent school leavers perceived a teacher's attitude around expectations and openness as an influence on their success. University graduates and recent school leavers perceived a school culture of high expectations as influencing their success. Parents perceived communication with schools as an influencing factor on their sons' success.

## **5.9 Overarching influences**

The findings of this study have shown that eight themes emerged from the data analysis process, these themes were: the influence of migration; the influence of negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement; the influence of family; the influence of cultural identity; the influence of peer relationships; the influence of Pasifika role models; the influence of church; and the influence of school environment and culture. The presentation of these eight themes in the Findings Chapter has shown that these influences emerged from the three different perspectives and two different methods of data collection. The next stage in the research process was to

explore these emergent themes in-depth through a process of talanoa with two of the participants. The purpose of the talanoa interviews was to allow perceptions evident in the focus group and the individual interviews to be discussed and explored in-depth. The next chapter presents the findings from the two talanoa interviews after which consolidated findings from all three methods and three participant groups are presented.



## **CHAPTER SIX: IN-DEPTH TALANOA – IOANE’S AND TEVITA’S STORY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Talanoa was adopted as the most appropriate research methodology for this study as the research questions required inquiry with participants from the Pacific region and aimed to explore Pacific cultures and contexts. Talanoa is an oral interactive research methodology that draws on narrative interviews and open and informal conversations that allow participants to share their thoughts and opinions.

In the context of this study the talanoa methodology led to a series of interviews and focus groups with the participants. However, as this study was only carried out by one researcher the amount of time spent conducting each interview was limited. As the study developed it became evident to the researcher that restricting the time spent on each interview and focus group was potentially limiting the depth of data that was being collected. Furthermore, the traditional concept of talanoa within the Pacific village setting allows each participant in the conversation to talk unrestricted for as long as necessary. Consequently, the researcher of this study believed that in order to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomena of influences on male Pasifika student’s achievement then some opportunity should be created in order to allow longer more in-depth conversations to occur.

With this in mind, this chapter shares the stories of two participants who were allowed to talk unhindered about their education journey. Both of these participants were University graduates, one of Samoan descent (Ioane), and one of Tongan descent (Tevita). In the spirit of traditional talanoa the conversations have been presented as first-person narratives and with a minimal amount of editing. However, to protect the identity of the participants pseudo names have been used. The chapter concludes by considering how the perspectives of Ioane and Tevita triangulate with the thematic influences evident in the findings from the focus groups and interviews.

### **6.2 Ioane’s story**

I recall many influences growing up and why I succeeded at secondary school. I think most of the influence came from my sisters. Two of my sisters went to university and I remember going to university with them as a young kid and sitting in lectures with them sometimes.

I was recently reflecting that somebody invested in books for me so I remember having books and as a young kid I learnt about science and other stuff that I don't follow so much now. Just having that curiosity in regards to having that access to books, going with my sisters to uni, and I think just having support and encouragement in regards to education. I tended to sway towards English and writing things, maybe it was books at home but also encouragement in regards to when I started to write. Teachers were quite supportive in regards to writing so I tended to go down that link. Role modelling - as the youngest seeing the older ones, the boys in my family would traditionally go and work but I had sisters who are older in age to myself and those examples and what was fostered at a young age.

I don't know where the books came from, I think it was a birthday gift but I just remember drawing in them at quite a young age. Even TV for me, watching mini-series about the civil war, George Washington, Body Line all that kind of stuff really was another part of where I learnt. I suppose history as well in regards to lots of great historical mini-series growing up. There was a season in the late 80s where there were lots of great mini-series. Those are just some of the influences.

I was raised by my grandparents whose English was limited. My grandad worked at an aluminum factory in New Lynn and my grandmother worked in various jobs but by the time we got to intermediate/high school she was a stay at home mum. She was quite elderly in her late 50s. I remember talking with other kids at church and unlike them we didn't have to do chores. That was my grandparents support - we will do all the chores you just need to make sure you study.

I remember doing Year 13 setting aside 2 or 3 hours in our bedroom, I had a twin brother and it was a small bedroom, so he would be in his bed, I would be in my bed. 2 or 3 hours blocked out to practice exams and my grandparents would say we will do everything else. I hear stories about that today in regards to some of the kids and the different type of support that parents can give. Not necessarily being the academic support but every other kind of support in regards to giving their kids the space and time to study.

As a young person, in high school and university days, we weren't that heavily involved in church but I remember one of the greatest motivations was my grandmother being

so over the moon when we got School Certificate and I realised this is important to her and to us.

They would never come to sports stuff; they would never come to parent teacher interviews; they would never come to prize giving. My older siblings who understood because they came through the same system would support me in that regard. I think there may be a dilemma, I am hearing in the community, for lots of kids, church can be too much of a focus in terms of time consuming and it is trying to get the balance right. A lot of Pasifika parents who were brought up in New Zealand understand the importance of it, and whatever works for them, but for me I saw the value of having a good balance. Telling us you focus on this and you don't have to do that, that did free up time. I could see the sacrifice my grandparents made, not just what we hear about moving from the Islands to New Zealand but the visible sacrifice and visible support is vital for Pasifika kids.

I did not grow up with much fa'a Samoa, our grandparents who were limited in English tried to teach us Samoan but again, maybe it was quite liberal, we said we can't learn this language can we just focus on English and again they were fine with that. I think in this day and age a lot of people my age in the 30s and 40s are really reembracing it again, so lots of people are getting the tattoos, but I think for that time and period the late 80s and 90s, parents just wanted their kids to get ahead.

I am learning more in regards to the Tongan culture and how invested they are, like the parents invested in it. I think the whole thing comes down to culture. Culture of the family, culture of those investments in regards to church or finances or older siblings. What is the culture within the family?

Pasifika love honouring, they are humble, but when people deserve to be mentioned that is huge. Again everything focuses on the dream or the educational achievements. Even if it's in a Junior prize giving for some parents and families this is a gold medal! Barriers or challenges at school were balance, so just self-motivation, knowing what the support was like. For me, I think sports participation did create a culture. Again my sporting influence would have come from seeing my older sibling who invested a lot of time in basketball and rugby and stuff like that.

The importance of extra-curricular stuff kept you well rounded and meet different people. Just the culture of success and doing you best in sports, that whole iron sharpens iron or when you get better players they make other people better. In the academic world, I think in the 90s, the success for many of us was having good academics who would push academics and good sports people who would push sports. I think that there wasn't that many barriers it was just finding our lane and where we fit and how we were able to balance. The support from home was awesome, role modelling was awesome.

I still remember my Yr 13 English teacher who was really positive, really empowering. You could sense he invested in the kids and he made King Leah applicable to Island kids. He was a really good teacher, not particularly culturally responsive just responsive to young people, being inspiring and challenging at the same time. As a parent I see the early years being so fundamental but also the culture that kids grow in. If you have really amazing athletes they will sharpen the others, if you have really amazing academic people they will sharpen the others. It is getting those likeminded people together to rub off on each other. Who are the high flyers and who wants to fly with them, they want the result but are not willing to fly with them and work at that level.

When I was at secondary school the roll was quite diverse, probably a third PI, a third European and a Maori. In our year, 1994, we had the top PI Scholar in NZ, who was half Chinese but Niuean. The following year 1995 we had the top Scholar in NZ, if you have a few really influential teachers that can influence others, students and teachers can really shift. If you have really amazing people who can shift the whole culture of a classroom or year level whether it be an adult or strategic kid then yes it is doable.

I don't know about all this cultural pedagogy stuff, I think it comes down to being relational and being really good at what you do. The best teacher for PIs is the best teacher, regardless of ethnicity. My best teacher in Year 13 was a European man who was a bit effeminate. With this whole shift in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning I think the potential is huge in regards to them flying, it is just creating the support network and the guides. Once they know what they are doing they will fly.

With that shift in regards to education potentially it is really big, but I think it will be encompassed. For Pasifika the best teachers will get the best out of the kids so regardless of your ethnicity, even though Pasifika is big within our school, if we have amazing teachers then everyone is going to succeed. Obviously 'priority learners' is still effective because Maori and Pasifika underachieve supposedly in regards to the stats but if we get our school, or the right type of teachers and pedagogical philosophy then everyone will fly. Everyone is a winner regardless of their ethnicity.

For many of us, people 30 and 40, that is really important to them now, but education it wasn't important. A sense of empathy and understanding from the teacher. Fundamental but in this day and age boundaries and expectations on top of that relational stuff and expertise and passion but not so much the ethnic cultural stuff. For me I think culture of the classroom, culture of the school, culture that is way bigger than ethnic culture and sometimes I think socio economics is probably more important than ethnic culture.

### **6.3 Tevita's story**

I was born in Tonga and I did all my primary and intermediate schooling there. We didn't say too much to the teachers and we pretty much did what we were told. Discipline wise it was very different from here. We did all the grassroots type of learning, we had to memorise our times tables and learn the ABC and it was tough. Tongan was the only language we spoke.

In Primary school they teach in Tongan, they don't have Intermediate school but they have High school starting from Year 7 right through to Year 13. When you get to High school you have English subjects, so it is taught in a bit of both. If kids don't really understand then they refer back to Tongan but they try and push English language. I did two years at a College in Tonga, an all-boys school before we moved here. We were given the option to board, you could board during the rugby season, but I went to a predominantly day school. Good memories, obviously a lot of discipline and learning a lot of values, respect was massive too. Everybody learnt to respect your teachers and your elders, it was really enforced by not only the teachers but the Prefects too. The College was a Government school, so we had kids of all different religions coming through – Mormons, Catholics.

I came to New Zealand when I was about to turn 15. Initially I came with my older brothers, mum and dad were still in Tonga. I lived with an uncle, did the rest of that year at College in Auckland before I went to a boarding College. I did three terms at the first College in Auckland, it was a massive change. That year was tough, I was living in Otahuhu and my brothers were already at boarding school when I came over. The equivalent to fa'a Samoa in Tonga is faka Tonga. I was steeped in this growing up. Church orientated, Church Sunday school. Coming here I had a couple of uncles who were Ministers in the church. That sort of helped when I went to school because you were taught those values at home, respect and hard work.

When I came over without my family that way of life still carried on because I lived with my uncle who was a Minister. I would babysit his son who played for Otago this year, I used to raise that kid I was the babysitter. I struggled to try to fit it all in at first in New Zealand, but luckily there were a couple of boys from the local Methodist church that also went to the same College, so I hung out with them initially. It was a massive culture shock as well as having at the back of my mind I am here to work hard, my parents sent me here for a reason. I was in the ESOL class too for the rest of the year. At boarding school I did not improve my language as quickly as I had hoped because you ended up learning all the other languages – Fijian, Samoan. So I had to push and learn how to self-discipline to make sure my English improved. My English improved massively when I was going to the library and reading the Herald sports section. Everyday reading about sports, some sort of reading.

I think that intrinsic thing of being here for a reason was pushed from home. My dad is the oldest of seven kids from his family. It was embedded in us, it was driven to us and I always think back that mum and dad left their good jobs in Tonga to bring us here. Growing up dad always said there are only two things that matter in life – God and education, nothing else. This is what I grew up with.

People I valued the most growing up were my dad and my oldest brother. My eldest brother passed away 7-8 years ago, he went to university and got four degrees. He was working for the Government in New Zealand before he passed away. He got is Masters in Management Studies. All of us younger siblings looked up to him. He had left school by the time I was there. My older brother was at boarding school when I was there, he was the one who was allowed to play a bit of rugby. All of us were

pushed to do School Certificate. When we grew up in Tonga he was exceptional, he was coming through the grades in Tonga. I originally went to College in Tonga because he went there, he was an outstanding athlete. He did athletics, played in all the rugby and sports teams. I said to my dad me and my other brothers are all right at rugby as well, but he said no, you just do school. Dad made a conscious decision that one could do the sport, but the others had to go to uni. He didn't really push us in a career. Some Island parents they want you to be a lawyer, but he said just make it to uni and see what happens. Our oldest brother was driving us, we were quite fortunate.

For all of us, but particularly the younger siblings, we were reminded that we could be living in the Islands most of our lives but we moved here for a reason. Mum and Dad came over with the rest of the kids when I started at boarding school. I boarded for four years. I was there with two older brothers and after my first year they both left.

I think Pasifika students now have come a long way given my experiences when I first arrived, because there are so many role models around. Not only in teaching but also out there in the work place and sports. Personally, I think there are no excuses for them to fail and to strive for some excellence in their lives. It is way different now to when I came over in 1997.

I think there are a lot of options now for Pasifika students from high school, they are quite lucky and their parents are becoming more aware and educated now. More aware of the different pathways they can go, it doesn't have to be all the way to uni. I think parents are more aware now that the kids have to choose their interests.

They still they want them to get their education but to still be steeped in the family and the church, I don't think they have the balance right yet, it is still a work in progress. A lot of parents here still make space for church and culture. Mum was really helpful in that regard for us, if we had an assessment on Sunday we didn't have to go to church, mum would let us do school work. Mum had a lot of understanding around that because she got a degree so she knew, obviously dad listened to what his wife was saying. I think mum and dad with the help of the other brothers were really understanding around that, the church and culture. Their main one was respect and values.

My youngest brother did his degree in Auckland, he was the baby of the family and mum didn't want him to do any housework, chores or anything. He is a civil engineer now, he always says thanks guys for covering my back when I was at uni because it is so true the pressure gets you but coming home and knowing you just have to eat and do school work helped.

#### **6.4 Summary of talanoa with loane and Tevita**

In terms of influences upon their education journey and academic success, both talanoa participants cited their family, church and school culture as being significant influences upon their chosen pathways. Similar, to many of the interview participants loane and Tevita present a key influence upon their academic success to be the positive attitude of their parents and older siblings towards education. However, the academic journey of their respective caregivers was very different and showed that it is the attitude of the families that was important rather than necessarily older family members gaining academic qualifications. For example, a culture of education was created in both participant's homes through access to reading material.

Like those participating in the focus groups, both talanoa participants discussed the concept of their families making a sacrifice by travelling to live in New Zealand and the responsibility which this placed on them to succeed. loane and Tevita both paint a detailed picture of their own journey and the challenges of adapting to a new culture.

Another influence that emerged in the preceding interviews and was confirmed by loane and Tevita was the idea that their families made space both physically and with regards to time so that they could study. In this way their families understood that to be successful at school or university required a time commitment and subsequently the participants could not be called upon to complete household chores or attend all church or family events.

The concept of role models was expressed in both the focus groups and the individual interviews. In loane and Tevita's stories the influence of role models upon their success is supported. Furthermore, their rich descriptions of the positive influence of family members or particular teachers communicates how important these significant adults can be in the success of male Pasifika students.



Church communities and the balance between being a regular member of a church community and completing school work was an emergent theme in the recent school leaver interviews. This concept of balance was also presented in the talanoa interviews and how this balance might look in terms of not always attending church services when assignments were due further supported this idea.

The full talanoa expressed in this chapter reflects the Bourdieusian theories of cultural capital that provide a framework to this study. These insights have shown how the different fields within which Pasifika males operate provide positive influences as they develop and grow into successful adults. It is perceived by these two talanoa participants that it is not the responsibility of any one individual, school, family or church to be responsible for the academic success of male Pasifika students, but instead a web of different community members that are brought together. In order to effectively support New Zealand's male Pasifika students the leaders of the different fields in which they operate – church, school and home - must endeavor to understand each other's cultural capital.

Overall, these two participant's stories triangulated many of the emergent themes evident in the preceding Findings Chapter. However, their talanoa stories provide rich detail that allows a greater depth of understanding, particularly about the influences of family, school and church. Ioane and Tevita's stories show that it was not only one influence that led to their academic success it was a number of intertwined factors that supported them in their academic journey. However, it was clear that both of their journeys were not taken alone, the journeys and influences of these two young people were inseparably linked to those of their family and the wider Pacific communities in which they lived and attended school.

## **6.5 Consolidation of key findings**

The findings of this study provided by the three participant groups and three data collection methods have shown that eight themes emerged from the data analysis process, these themes were: the influence of migration; the influence of negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement; the influence of family; the influence of cultural identity; the influence of peer relationships; the influence of Pasifika role models; the influence of church; and the influence of school environment and culture. The presentation of these eight themes in the Findings and Talanoa Chapters have

shown that these influences emerged from the three different perspectives and three different methods of data collection. Table 5.10 below shows how the different influences evident in these eight themes originally emerged in the focus groups and then were triangulated in the perceptions shared in the interviews and the two talanoa stories.

**Table 5.10 A summary of the key influences which emerged from the data and how these themes were triangulated by method and/or participant perspective**

<b>Perspectives evident in participant group and method</b>	<b>History of migration was motivation for academic success</b>	<b>Motivation came from negative perceptions and increased desire to succeed</b>	<b>Family expectations seen as motivating, although could be seen as a distraction from school work</b>	<b>The need to balance culture/family with study</b>	<b>Peer Relationships</b>	<b>Role Models</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>School environment and culture</b>
Recent school leaver focus group	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
University graduates focus group	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Parent focus group	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Recent school leaver interviews	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
University graduate interviews	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Parent interviews	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2 extended Talanoa interviews	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Many of the influences on male Pasifika students' success that were shared by the participants were interrelated. For example, the theme of migration was intertwined with the theme of family, similarly the themes of negative perceptions of Pasifika student's achievement and the influence of school environment and culture were also aligned. Subsequently, from the eight themes presented in the Findings and Talanoa Chapters three overarching themes emerged: family, school and church.

The findings under the overarching theme of 'family' showed that there were positive and negative aspects associated with this influence and family was considered to include wider family, friends and often a church community. The findings also showed acknowledgment of why Pasifika families had initially migrated from the Islands to New Zealand, which was for better job opportunities and education. All three participant groups were conscious of the sacrifices that had gone before them and this was seen as a motivating factor when approaching their studies. Family was considered by all the participants as one of the most important influences on success for Pasifika males, if not the most important factor. Both Talanoa participants painted a vivid picture about how different family members had encouraged, supported and motivated them to succeed. Values such as hard work were perceived to have been instilled by family. However, recent school leavers, university graduates and the talanoa participants also recognised the challenges of balancing family commitments and expectations alongside completing school work and meeting deadlines.

The findings indicated that school culture and particularly teachers were a significant influence on academic achievement. University graduates and recent school leavers noted that high expectations for student success were key factors in their academic achievement. Whilst in the talanoa interview loane provided a detailed description of how a particular teacher engaged him and influenced him to succeed. Parents perceived quality communication and engagement with the school to be an influencing factor on their sons' success. The findings also indicated that recognition of the participants' cultural identity and opportunity at school to speak their language and perform were perceived to be important influences. The university graduate and recent school leaver cohorts acknowledged the importance of remaining connected to their culture and balancing their traditional family commitments with their school work. In the talanoa interviews this concept of balance was discussed in relation to being provided with both the physical space and the time to study. The findings also showed

that for the graduates and recent school leaver groups their peer relationships and friendship groups had been perceived to be a significant influence on their academic success. They talked regularly of a bond and a brotherhood that had strengthened their desire to succeed. Similarly, in the talanoa interviews both participants cherished the support of family members and their peers.

Roles models were also seen as important influences on their academic success. The role models could be Pasifika but not exclusively and were drawn from a range of backgrounds such as sports, art and family members. Teachers were also mentioned as significant influences.

The influence of church was perceived by the three participant groups as having a positive effect on academic achievement. University graduates and recent school leavers believed that skills they learnt at their churches had been transferable to their schooling and had assisted with their success. The university graduates and parents acknowledged students needed to balance church and school commitments to ensure they would be academically successful.

The findings from these talanoa stories together with the findings from the previous chapter, have clearly identified the metaphor of *A Web Of Influences* on the achievement of Pasifika male secondary students.

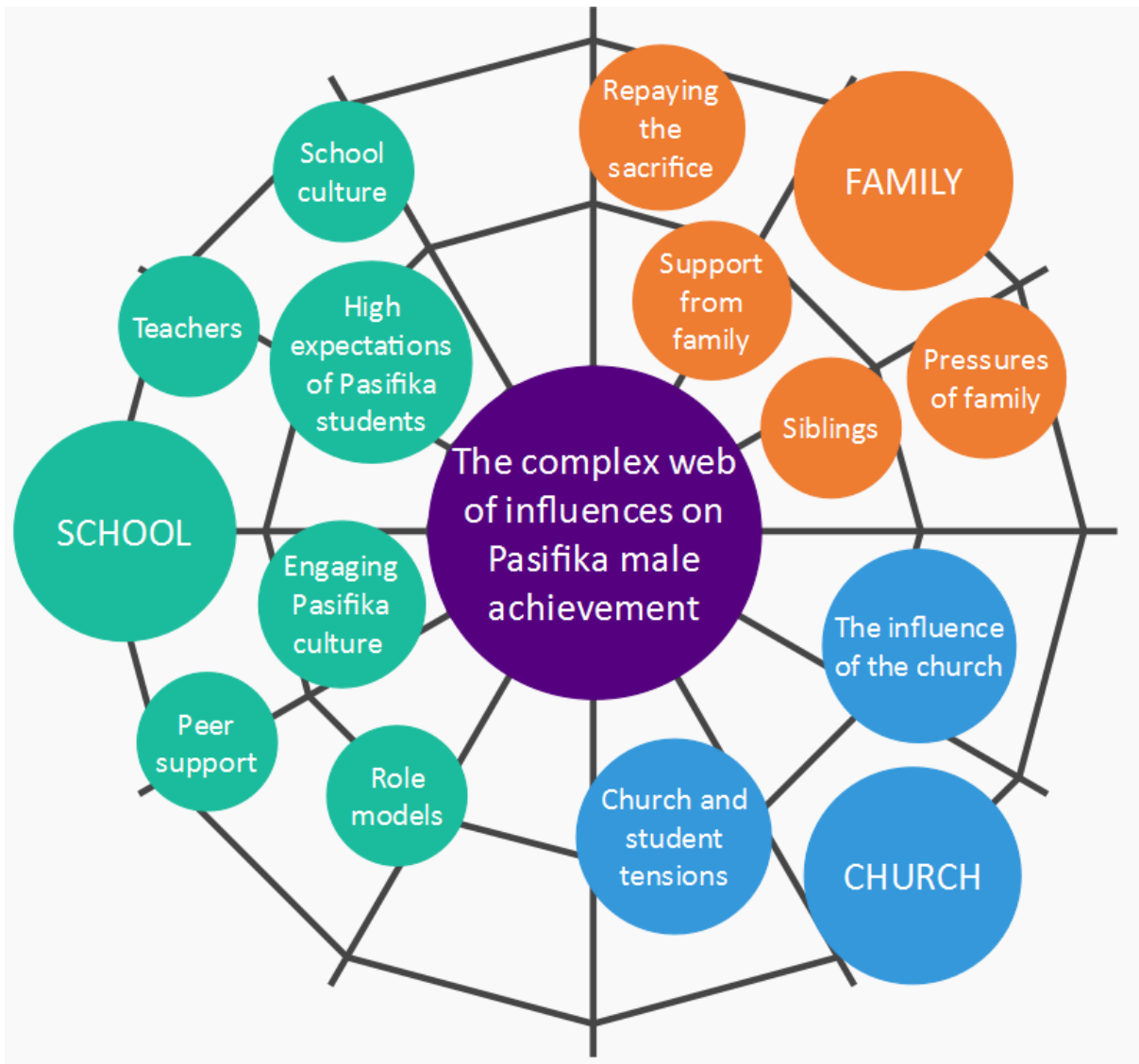
In the next chapter the eight themes presented in this Findings and Talanoa Chapters are explored in relation to the literature presented in the Literature Review Chapter. The literature will be used to critique these eight themes and to present factors that influence the success of male Pasifika students in the New Zealand secondary education context.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and critiques the significant themes of this study with support from the literature reviewed and the Bourdieusian concepts of cultural capital, habitus, field and practice. The objective of this study was to identify influences that have had a positive effect on the academic achievement levels of Pasifika males at secondary school.

Data was collected from three different perspectives; recent successful Pasifika male secondary school leavers, successful Pasifika male university graduates and a parent group of successful Pasifika males. All the participants were interviewed regarding important influences on their lives and how these may have affected their academic results. The data was analysed and coded and then categorised into common patterns and themes. Eight key themes emerged out of the process of data analysis and these were presented in the Findings and Talanoa Chapters, the themes were: the influence of migration; the influence of negative perceptions of Pasifika students' achievement; the influence of family; the influence of cultural identity; the influence of peer relationships; the influence of Pasifika role models; the influence of church; and the influence of school environment and culture. The presentation of findings related to these eight key themes showed that many of the influences raised by the participants were interrelated. Subsequently, from the data presented in the Findings and Talanoa Chapters three overarching main influences emerged that have been used to structure this Discussion Chapter, the three main influences are: family, school and church. Figure 7.1 below highlights the major influences and groups other supporting influences under three headings. The following chapter will then outline the influences in the web in more detail.



**Figure 7.1 The complex web of influences on Pasifika male secondary student achievement**

### **7.2 The influence of family on the achievement of Pasifika males from a Bourdieusian perspective**

Bourdieu (1977) suggests that social capital describes the sense of belonging to a certain group in society and connections with others in that group. Membership of any particular social group is based on mutual acquaintance and recognition. Membership of a social group could occur through factors such as shared family names. For the participants of this study social capital in the form of belonging to a family was perceived to be the most consistent factor of influence. All of the recent school leavers and university graduates believed that their family had significantly influenced their achievement. The range of reasons regarding the impact of this influence were

diverse. First and foremost, the key influence shared by the participants was parents communicating high expectations and supporting their sons in their educational journeys. However, the physical influence of moving to New Zealand in order to secure a better education was also highlighted as a significant influence on the participants' educational outcomes. Furthermore, participants were not only influenced by their parents but also siblings who had journeyed through the educational system before them. Similarly, within the literature there are examples which acknowledge that family support for Pasifika students is a key to educational achievement. For example, in Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2003) text 'Making our place growing up PI in New Zealand' Pasifika stories are shared in which family play a key role. However, this study provides in-depth examples of how family have positively influenced male achievement and presents how families have supported their sons in order that they can be successful.

### **7.2.1 Repaying the 'sacrifice'**

Bourdieu (1997) describes economic capital as being tied to the acquisition of money, assets and property. Gough (2006) suggests that the overwhelming personal driver for Pasifika migrants is they will increase their economic capital and will achieve a better quality of life in another country. However, changes to the New Zealand economy and the reality of being an immigrant in New Zealand, has changed this perception over time. More recently, Pasifika migrants have experienced unemployment and a lack of quality jobs that has negatively affected their economic capital. The participants of this study have reflected the literature of Gough (2006), the parent participants all agreed that they had migrated to New Zealand in search of a better life, which was perceived to be better job opportunities and a higher quality of education. However, the stories reflected by the participants showed how typically these journeys were challenging and involved personal sacrifice and hardship. The parent group perceived that their migration journey was part of their upbringing and it shaped their thoughts and values around education for their own children. Similarly, all of the school leavers and university graduates were aware of the historical reasons as to why their parents or grandparents had come to New Zealand and they drew on this sacrifice as inspiration for their own success. At the outset of this study, the literature reviewed showed that education of their children was a motivating factor for families to migrate to New Zealand from the Pacific Islands (Biddulph, Biddulph and Biddulph, 2003). However, this study has provided a deeper understanding of how a



family's deeply personal journey of migration and sacrifice can be drawn upon as an influence for Pasifika boys and act as a motivating force for their success.

The Pasifika male participants were acutely aware of the reasons for their family's migration and these historical actions played an integral part in their motivation and was typically described by the participants as 'the sacrifice'. There was a clear understanding of what had gone before them and also of the expectation this created for them as students around the importance of education. Gorinski (2005) notes the word 'sacrifice' also referred to the struggles their families had made financially and a sense that they were grateful that their parents had encouraged them so openly to seek the best education they could. Their parents' sacrifice provided inspiration and motivation for many of the university graduates and recent school leavers. There was a sense of silent obligation for many to repay their parents and family for the opportunity they had been given. However, the recent school leavers did not see this as a pressure, rather the concept of 'aspirational migration' motivated them to do well as they felt their parents/family were supportive of them and were contributing to their success. Furthermore, the university graduates and recent school leavers felt that they were representative not only of their immediate family but also of their extended family and community. In this way the university graduates and recent school leavers had embraced any pressure that existed from their family's perceived sacrifice and turned it into a passion and a desire to succeed.

The concept of collectivism is considered in the work of Markus & Kitayama (1991) which focuses on individual construal of self within different cultures. Within this work they suggest that individual's motivation, emotions and cognition can be influenced by their culture. Furthermore, they suggest that within certain cultures individuals can have 'collective' motivation to succeed on the behalf of others. This concept was supported by the participants of this study who were driven to succeed because they were the first in their family to do so and therefore they wanted to achieve for the family. Equally as important was the fact it made their families proud of them and their success was a shared success. The influence of an individual's culture can also provide challenges when they are required to assimilate into a new culture. For example, the participants of this study discussed how they had to change the ways that they approached chores around the house or attendance at family gatherings or church events in order to create enough time to complete school work. James and

Rodriguez (2009) suggest that many of the Pasifika families who come to New Zealand in search of opportunity and the chance for their children to receive a better education experience changes in their Pasifika identity. Pasifika people who traditionally worked the land and often owned their land move into a completely different economy and community structure which has new influences on the very core of their family culture and values. Consequently, Pasifika immigrant families can face a multitude of complex challenges when navigating success in the New Zealand education system. Not only do they have to face the sacrifice of moving to a new country, but they also experience differences between their own experiences in their habitus and the established culture of the New Zealand education system. Some of these new influences can have negative effects on the success of Pasifika students in New Zealand schools. Bourdieu (1974) suggests that when educational power is held by a dominant system then it is established on existing cultural norms, which in New Zealand is a system established by European immigrants and geared towards Pakeha cultural norms. Bourdieu continues that such inequalities are made legitimate by this positioning and the education system itself has a major part to play in ensuring that this mismatch of opportunity is continued. However, the participants of this study did not perceive that it was the role of the New Zealand education system to change for them, but rather they were required to change their family practices in order to adapt to the new system which they found themselves in. Subsequently, this study has revealed the complexities faced by Pasifika males as they navigate the New Zealand education system.

### **7.2.2 Siblings**

The interviews with university graduates and recent school leavers also showed that aside from their parents their siblings had been a source of inspiration and motivation for them. In particular, older siblings that had been through the education system were seen as important figures in their own achievement. These concepts are supported in the literature by Bourdieu's theory of social capital. He suggests that social capital describes the sense of belonging to a certain group in society and connecting with others in that group. Membership of any particular social group is based on mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1977). Membership of a social group could occur through factors such as shared family names. Lareau (2001) notes that Bourdieu's idea of social capital maintains that these relationships and networks are active and developed so people can regularly access the resources open to them as

part of that particular group. In terms of social capital and influence on education, Coleman (1988) describes this as the way in which parents or older siblings might engage in their family's education.

For the university graduates and recent school leavers participating in this study, they were motivated to follow on from brothers or sisters they had witnessed achieving. They discussed the pleasure and pride their siblings felt when they succeeded at school, which was something that they desired to replicate. They also perceived that older family members could be a valuable source of advice and guidance, often acting as mentors throughout their school years. For these participants there was a sense that when they saw older siblings succeed then they became role models, leading the way. However, for other participants it was the notion of being the first member of their family to succeed that was important to them. For three of the recent school leavers it was the fact that their older siblings had not done terribly well at school that provided their motivation. They wanted to succeed so they could provide for their family and prove to other family members that it was possible. They were adamant despite other siblings not having success at school, they still felt supported by family and wanted to achieve for those who had gone before them.

There are concerns raised in the literature (Cahill, 2006) that highlights there can be a mismatch when family members/siblings have an unrealistic expectation of how to achieve success. Cahill (2006) explains that misunderstandings and the complexity of the NCEA system can lead to family not providing the right type of support. This could be in the form of not providing the time to study because of family chores, commitments or time devoted to church. For some Pasifika families who desire academic achievement, language barriers might also prohibit engagement and ultimately success (Gorinsky & Fraser, 2006). Cahill's 2006 study with Samoan families raised these issues and highlighted the gap that could exist between home and school which may lead to limited success.

This study revealed that when siblings and family members role modelled the actual time and commitment required for study the higher the chances were that the participants would achieve academically. Participants acknowledged one of the key aspects of their school work was if their family allowed the opportunity to focus on study when required. The participants were also clear about the importance that

academically successful siblings played in their own achievement. The perceptions of the participants of this study concurred with Bourdieu's notion of the influence of social capital. However their stories also showed that in the case of the male Pasifika participants of this study the link between social capital and success was not a simple cause and effect. The participants presented a more complex picture of the perceived links between siblings and success that was unique to each participant and the relationship between their social capital, their family culture and their own personal experiences.

### ***7.2.3 The support provided by family***

According to both the graduate and recent student perspectives, support from parents and family was considered an important influence on their success. Family support was identified as having high expectations and aspirations for academic success. This support took place in the form of understanding how much time and effort was required to be successful and providing more opportunity and time for their sons to focus on their academic goals. There was a belief from all of the participants that sometimes children who were studying required time and space outside of traditional family commitments. It did not mean relegating family in importance, but the university graduates and recent school leavers were adamant that at times their families had helped by simply letting them focus on their studies. These participants understood their responsibilities to family, family occasions and traditions but also relied on their parents to understand their commitment to school work.

In time, Pasifika families realised the habitus their children had grown up in was disconnected to what was happening in the field of school. From the evidence collected in this study, academic success was more likely to be achieved if families allowed school age students the time and space to devote to school work.

Family involvement in school matters was also shown to be perceived as an important influence upon Pasifika males' success. The parents involved with this study believed that the more they could understand about their son's education and what they needed to get done, the more they could support them to achieve. They believed that once they knew and understood aspects of their sons' course, requirements for their success in NCEA and University Entrance, they could provide meaningful encouragement and guidance. The parents cited the importance of 'academic

counselling' (parent-teacher interviews) as a crucial part of understanding and supporting their sons. They also believed opportunities to learn about the complexities of NCEA were important for them, as it was a system they had not been educated through.

The university graduates and recent school leavers also perceived that when their parents could understand what was involved in their courses and the time commitment required, then they were better able to support them. They believed they had been helped immeasurably by their parents and their support. This might be through attendance at school parent teacher meetings or providing them with the time to dedicate to their studies. They agreed that if for instance their parents attended NCEA information evenings and had a greater understanding of the demands and commitment required they were more likely to give them the necessary time and flexibility outside of family engagements to allow them to study. It was perceived that schools that provided families with clear and concise information about NCEA, career paths and requirements to succeed were doing a valuable service in terms of raising parental awareness. This in turn, enabled parents to be more flexible around cultural and academic expectations.

The perceptions of the participants of this study supports the benefits of positive home-school relationships as one of the keys to ensuring better student achievement (Christenson & Cleary, 1990; Gorinski, 2005; Robinson, 1994). It must however be underpinned by teacher-parent transparency and well developed lines of communication with the Pasifika community (Christenson & Cleary, 1990). Poor communication from the school or teachers can create an adverse effect for parents leaving them uncertain about their child's education or at worst reluctant to participate in school life (Fine, 1990). This discomfort for parents can result in them withdrawing support for their child as they feel they don't understand how they can best support them, it can also lead to the school questioning why parents do not wish to support their child and a barrier between the parties can be created (Fine, 1990). However, the participants in this study believed that it was not so important for parents to have a deep understanding of NCEA or individual subjects, but rather an understanding of the time commitment required in order to achieve University Entrance. Subsequently, the participants of this study provide a new perspective on what needs to be the focus of the home-school partnership. Previously, the literature (Christenson & Cleary,

1990; Gorinski, 2005; Robinson, 1994) have implied that it is enough only to engage Pasifika parents in a relationship with a school. However, the participants of this study perceive that this engagement needs to be more focused than just turning up at school on Talanoa nights. Instead, parents need to be educated in University Entrance requirements and the time commitment that is needed to succeed at this level of NCEA.

#### ***7.2.4 The pressure of family***

The university graduates and recent school leavers at times felt pressure from their extended family to achieve. Mose (2012) described this as 'the blessing and the burden'. The blessing that participants of this study shared was their parents supported them, had high expectations and saw education as highly valued. The burdens described were when the expectations were too high and the collective support was perceived as unreasonable by the students. Examples of burdens that participants shared included parents wanting their children to carry on with studies they did not want to pursue as a career, or a lack of understanding about their ability in a particular subject.

The university graduates and recent school leaver participants communicated the pressure that family expectations of success could create for students. The parents spoke about sometimes having to reconsider what they believed their sons were capable of and allowing the individual child to determine their own pathway. Careers that were considered prestigious such as law and medicine were not necessarily what their sons wanted and parents had to be prepared to change their outlook if their son wanted to follow another pathway. Parents understood they had to be realistic in their expectations and if their sons worked hard they could be successful in whichever field that they chose.

The university graduates and recent school leavers were aware of the 'collective achievement' of which they were a part. They understood that their immediate families, extended families and possibly their church community were part of their success. Having their academic results displayed at church, while slightly embarrassing, was all part of this collective success and they accepted it and used it as a motivating factor to do well. Direct comparisons were made to the palagi world where they perceived

children only represented one entity or immediate family. These participants saw the collective approach as part of who they were and it gave them pride.

Recent school leavers discussed their obligations and responsibilities to family life which could include chores such as baby sitting, church activities or working to help the family financially. Students were expected to complete these obligations in addition to their own commitment to study and school related activities. As successful students they found ways to balance their family and school commitments. They were grateful when families supported them to complete school work without pressurising them with other activities and understood that some of their peers were not as fortunate.

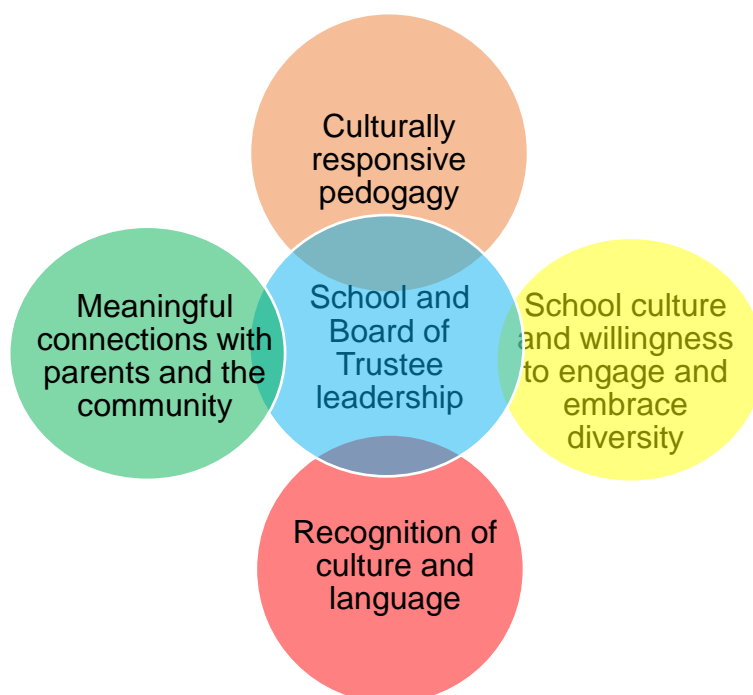
According to Kerpelman, (2004) for students to be supported through education parents must be fully informed in order to assist and respond to their needs. This was endorsed by the parent participants in this research. They saw for themselves that such pressure could lead to tensions between studies and family if not managed openly and could lead to failure for students (Hoyle & Leff, 1997). Parents believed that families could take internal pressure off their sons if they better understood the dynamics and requirements of NCEA. This support could come with simple actions such as understanding when their sons had to be released from family obligations and providing the time to attend fully to their school work.

### **7.3 The influence of school on the achievement of Pasifika males from a Bourdieusian perspective**

The term field refers to the context in which individuals and perspectives exist who have differing sets of experiences and influences from their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1997). Field is an environment where one may frequent and can include institutions such as schools. For the participants of this study two significant fields that they operated within were their lives at home and school. It was perceived by the participants that the more they could create connections between their habitus and the field of school then the better success would be achieved. Creating connections was perceived as a two way process. From the student's and their family's perspective this meant gaining an understanding of University Entrance requirements and the time needed in order to succeed at this level. From the perspective of the school Figure 7.2 below provides a summary of the key capabilities that participants in this study perceived schools need to develop in order to support Pasifika male students to

achieve. In this way, the participants provide new insights into how Pasifika families and schools can support Pasifika male students to connect their habitus and the field of secondary schools in New Zealand.

The visual representation reflects the different components each group identified as being important to them in their educational journeys as either students or parents. The recent student and graduate participants believed that there were many different ways a school could successfully promote and embrace the cultural diversity of Pasifika students. These included: the recognition of culture and language; teaching that was culturally responsive to Pasifika needs; a willingness to recognise Pasifika cultures and ensure that they were visible; and opportunities for students to engage with their culture. For the parent participants, meaningful opportunities for parents to be involved with the school, a clear communication and a feeling of being able to part of the school were crucial. They also believed the school leadership teams and Board of Trustees were central to creating a welcoming and comfortable relationship between the school and the community. The participants perceived that when all of the capabilities displayed in Figure 7.2 are aligned students will benefit directly in terms of positive achievement.



**Figure 7.2 Key capabilities participants perceived schools need to develop to support Pasifika male students to achieve**



The capabilities displayed in Figure 7.2 above are supported in the literature in the work of Jones (1991), Maclean (2005) and Podmore and Wendt (2006) all of whom suggest that understanding the diverse interests and needs of Pasifika learners underpins the challenge of improving academic outcomes for these students. Pasifika learners have very different cultures, language and experience (Jones, 1991). When teaching Pasifika learners, school staff cannot simply create broad strategies or approaches to improve student achievement. Furthermore, there needs to be a whole school approach when devising strategies and approaches that aim to lift Pasifika student achievement (Maclean, 2005). A school culture of understanding student's needs is required to move beyond recognition of language or performance in order to embrace the holistic outlook of the students (Podmore & Wendt, 2006).

Studies by Jones (1991), Maclean (2005) and Podmore and Wendt (2006) showed the importance of recognising Pasifika culture as a key to supporting students with a greater opportunity of succeeding. Jones (1991) noted a lack of understanding of Pasifika culture was one of the most significant reasons why achievement for these students has been historically low. In this way, the previous research of Jones (1991), Maclean (2005) and Podmore and Wendt (2006) have supported the capabilities perceived by participants of this study to be necessary in schools in order for Pasifika students to feel supported. However, the findings of this study show that by using Bourdieu's (1977) theories of social and cultural capital to provide a set of lenses through which to understand the relationship between school and the participants a unique perspective is presented. This perspective that for the first time explores the perceptions of Pasifika males and their families, who perceived that all of the five capabilities identified were significant if Pasifika males were to achieve. Furthermore, the participants also perceived that the relationship between a student's habitus and the field of school was symbiotic. Consequently, it was not only the responsibility of the school to respond to a male Pasifika student's habitus, but they perceived that a student and their family also had an equal responsibility to make an effort to understand new aspects of their host culture.

### ***7.3.1 Pasifika culture and school life***

For the participants of this study, culture at school meant more than the opportunity to speak their language and be involved with Pasifika performances. It was about a sense of belonging and being recognised for their world view. Participants cited

several examples: opportunities to be involved with cultural performance (such as an event like Polyfest); celebration of their culture when an opportunity arose such as their particular national language week (several said their schools held a special performance assembly for this); and a chance to take the language as an NCEA subject if it was provided.

The provision of their language as a curriculum choice at either junior or senior level was considered important, although not all the participants did choose a Pacific language as part of their programme. The chance to use their language both at home and in their schooling was highly valued by six participants who had studied a language at school. Regardless of whether they studied a language or not, all the participants saw it as the opportunity to study a Pasifika language as a positive for Pasifika students in terms of being able to use their cultural capital in a valuable and worthwhile context. This finding is also recognised in previous studies as one key element in reducing conflicts of identity and a motivating factor for Pasifika students in schools (Pasikale 1999, cited in Coxon et al., 2002). Furthermore, Nash, (2004), suggests that student achievement can be negatively affected if a student's culture is not respected or recognised in a school. The connection between underachievement of Pasifika students' achievement in New Zealand and a student's culture has also been linked to a student's experience at home being quite different to what they find at school. A culture clash that can at times make it difficult for students to understand how to respond to expectations at school (Meade, PuhiPuhi & Foster-Cohen, 2003). Pasifika students can feel part of two worlds, the world of their culture at home and then the world of being a student at school. This can create difficulties in relating to their identity which can in turn lead to learning issues at school. Coxon et al., (2002) suggests that, "Identity can mean the difference to continued academic failure and educational success based on the realities of future Pacific Island generations" (p.34). The participants of this study suggested that they had experienced these kinds of cultural challenges. However, they perceived that they could be overcome by schools being culturally responsive and creating positive communication with parents and families.

### ***7.3.2 The importance of peer support***

The concept of collectivism was shared by all of the graduate and recent student participants. A prevalent belief shared in this research was the concept of

'brotherhood'. A term that referred to the important role that peers played in a students' educational success. As Pasifika students they felt more confident, motivated and supported because of the strong relationships they had with their social peers at school. This was perceived as one of the key enablers to all of the participants' success.

Chen, French and Schneider (2006), explore the concept of collectivism versus individualism as a key factor in different cultural approaches to peer relationships. They noted that in western cultures, individual needs and independence were examples of values that were common. Coxon et al., (2002) believe cultures with collective ideology value loyalty to family and have a more interdependent rather than independent outlook on life. Collective ideology was perceived to be important by the participants of this study, who believed that collectivism and working together towards a common goal had positively influenced them to achieve. Both the university graduates and recent school leavers spoke of the confidence they felt by being amongst others who had the same academic drive and desire to succeed. It also helped, owing to the fact that they could discuss various class projects or assignments and they also felt a sense of pride when they saw other Pasifika students wanting to succeed.

An element of competitiveness was also perceived as a positive influence on the participants' success. Previous studies (Jones, 1991) have found that competition can be a motivating factor for boys during their schooling. However, Jones (1991) did not explore any differences between different ethnic perspectives. The concept of competition was perceived by the Pasifika male participants of this study as not only including their peers, but competition also existed if they had had older siblings pass before them. Recent school leavers discussed that knowing how many NCEA credits you had during the year and wanting to keep ahead of their friends, had provided a positive motivating influence.

For the graduate and recent student participants of this study the concept of peer support or 'brotherhood' extended beyond the classroom. It was perceived that the bond existed on the sports field, in performing arts and within other co-curricular perspectives. The parents of successful students also communicated the benefits of their sons being involved with sports and other co-curricular activities at school.

However, all of the participants agreed that balancing time was the key to academic success. This is supported by Bandura (1997) who suggests that sport in particular can be of assistance in learning but only if the time commitment is balanced with academic study. Too much emphasis on sport and too little school work can be detrimental to a student's success. However the right balance, not just in sport but all co-curricular activities can lead to a state of engagement with your school and have academic benefits in the longer term. The graduate and recent student participants concurred with Bandura's (1997) findings, in that they all had been involved in sport and other co-curricular activities as part of their education. Furthermore, they perceived that these activities had added value to their education owing to the fact being part of a team with their friends had provided support and enhanced their success at school.

The concept of brotherhood can also be linked to Liebermann and Hoody's motivation (1998) research that explored the importance of social connections and the need to feel socially connected. This was also a strong theme expressed by the graduate and recent student participants interviewed in this study. Liebermann and Hoody's (1998) has suggested that humans are more likely to be successful and motivated if they have intrinsic motivation and the participants of this study referred to the bond of brotherhood strengthening their intrinsic motivation.

### ***7.3.3 The Importance of role models***

Spoonley and Bedford (2012) reported that by the late 1980s and 1990s Samoan and Tongan sports people were not only key players in many sports but also key contributors to leadership and success within these sports. People such as Bernice Mene (netball), Michael Jones (rugby), Beatice Faumuina (athletics) Jonah Lomu (rugby) Inga Tuigamala (rugby and league) and David Tua (boxing) became sporting household names in the 1980s and 1990s. The participants of this study believed successful Pasifika role models like those presented by Spoonley and Bedford (2012) and role models from their own communities were an influence on their motivation and academic success.

Positive role models, particularly those of Pasifika ethnicity, were cited as a motivating influence to succeed by all of the university graduates and recent school leavers. These two participant groups perceived that role models had a direct positive influence

on them if they could see them at school achieving, not just as academics, but as school leaders and outside of the classroom in forums such as sport and performing arts. In some cases the university graduates had noted these influences were indirect, a realisation later in life that they had been influenced by seeing someone from their community doing well and this had acted as a spur to them, providing a belief that they could also achieve. Participants also spoke of their teachers as role models and appreciated the level of support and encouragement they received. The teachers could be Pasifika but often they were not. For the university graduates it was typically a particular teacher that had encouraged them to go on to university.

The role of sports personalities in the lives of young Pasifika men can be significant, although not all participants in this study concurred it had been important to them. Sports personalities were perceived as a positive influencing factor for a group of the recent school leavers and university graduates who cited examples of sports personalities they believed had been central in their motivation to succeed. Sports men such as Michael Jones (rugby), The Rock (wrestling) were given as examples of Pasifika sports people who influenced their success. There were also examples provided of rugby players and even family sporting prowess that was an inspiration for some of the young men.

### ***7.3.4 The influence of School culture***

The parent participants in this study believed that in order for them to support their sons, a good relationship was needed between home and school. A good home school relationship was perceived to include open and friendly communication from the school and a recognition of student cultural diversity. The parents perceived that to be involved with the school through cultural perspectives or sports teams was a vital enabler of their son's success. However, they believed that these vehicles were only valuable if parents used them to become more involved with other matters at school such as attending academic counselling sessions and getting a better understanding of NCEA.

Effective open partnerships between parents and schools is presented in the literature to have a positive effect on behavior and academic achievement (Biddulph et al., 2003). Schools in Auckland with large numbers of Pasifika families have worked hard to establish good relationships with their parent community. For Pasifika families an

important element of the engagement with school and their child's progress is the connection and relationship that is created between all the stakeholders (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). The parent participants of this study perceived this relationship to be about the school providing a safe, socially responsive and caring environment that supported their son's academic success. As part of this relationship the parents wanted to be informed and welcomed as part of the school community. However, the university graduates perceived that parents did not necessarily need to have a deep understanding of their studies, but only needed to understand the time commitment required in order for them to succeed to a high academic level. Viewing these home school relationships through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital provides a unique insight into how particular influences can support Pasifika males to be successful. The participants of this study suggested that the more bridges that can be built between the two fields of home and school, the greater the success will be achieved by Pasifika male students. Furthermore, if the stakeholders in each field are motivated to understand the social capital of the student and how this can be best nurtured then this can also positively influence the success of Pasifika male students.

### ***7.3.5 Schools and high expectations of Pasifika students***

The graduate and recent school leavers believed knowing your school was transparent and open in its desire to lift Pasifika achievement was an important component in their success. They all perceived that their schools had communicated a collective approach that was inclusive of all students and set an expectation of success for all. The Education Review Office (ERO 2008, 2009) have suggested that schools who are having success in lifting Pasifika achievement, typically have a senior management team that have a clear focus on academic goals, resourcing and a professional development programme that is focused on improving the teaching of Pasifika students. The literature suggests that lifting Pasifika achievement will only be achieved if a school's senior leaders have a clear understanding of pedagogical and assessment best practice. The school leadership needs to focus on achievement goals and outcomes rather than simply operational matters (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Schools which explicitly talk about and promote high Pasifika student achievement outcomes motivate their Pasifika students.

### **7.3.6 The influence of teachers**

For the graduate and recent student participants the influence of teachers was communicated as a significant factor in relation to their achievement. The participants perceived that being an effective teacher was not just about teacher knowledge, delivery or classroom management. They believed great teachers who were pivotal in their success at school, also had a deep understanding and respect of their cultural capital. This understanding of students' cultural capital was perceived as the foundation through which a connection was formed, positive learning relationships created and success achieved. Participants also described teachers who positively influenced their success as: having high expectations of them as learners; using the link between home and school to assist learning; using Pasifika texts or contexts; working with students to create and assist them in their learning goals; recognising individuals' learning styles; and forming strong relationships between the teacher, school and the parents.

In the literature, Bronfenbrenner (1990) describes a theory of teachers understanding students. He believed that the relationship between teacher and student influences student outcomes. Therefore, the perceptions and beliefs teachers have about students will often determine their achievement. This aligns with participant feedback that showed those teachers who believed in them and held expectations that they could be successful were deemed to be their best teachers. For the participants of this study it was highly motivating knowing that your teacher believed in your academic ability. Alton-Lee (2003) suggests that effective teaching is when a teacher has an understanding of all students' needs, values diversity and has high expectations. This includes taking responsibility for every student's achievement. The participants agreed with this summary and felt passionately about the teachers they had experienced which met these descriptors. They believed that these teachers had recognised their potential to succeed and this belief was a significant influence upon their academic success.

The university graduates and recent student participants believed that teacher attitude towards them as individuals was more important than a style or particular teaching pedagogy. For example, the perception that Pasifika students liked 'group work' was supported by participants but only to a certain extent. Two of the university graduates and recent school leavers responded that at times what may be considered 'old school'

teaching such as taking notes from the white board could be just as effective for them as learners. The participants believed the teachers that supported them to achieve were willing to allow 'power sharing' to take place in their classes. Bishop (2003) describe power sharing in the classroom as when students can feel free to initiate interactions and discussion with the teacher, they are not reliant on the teacher to ask them to contribute, they are part of the learning process and are recognised as a collaborative member of the class. This notion suggests that teachers are willing to let students be active participants in their learning, teachers will be open to understanding how their individual students will learn best and they are unafraid to change their approach in order to get the best from individual students. However, the participants conveyed that what was more important than any one particular teaching style or strategy, was a teacher's interaction and care culminating in positive learning outcomes.

University graduates and recent school leavers were aware of the efforts some teachers made to be culturally responsive to them. This could be by understanding parts of their culture, taking time to pronounce their names correctly, taking an interest in cultural performances or simply connecting with them on something outside of the classroom like how the Tongan rugby team were fairing. Having preconceived ideas about their ambitions and career pathways or even their cultural identity and how steeped they may or may not be in it. The participants noted that sometimes in an attempt to be culturally responsive teachers would in fact adopt broad stereotypes. Consequently, teachers actually lowered their expectations of Pasifika learners based on stereotypes such as Pasifika literacy might be lower. This is a blanket statement which they perceived can have a large effect on opportunities for students to be challenged and learn.

The participants communicated that their best teachers represented a diverse range of backgrounds and taught a range of subjects. It was the demonstration of expecting them to pass and then also supporting this expectation with actions such as communicating clearly what they had to do in order to succeed and providing support in the form of extra tuition. There was no particular culture, age or subject specialism cited. In terms of having Pasifika teachers university graduates and recent school leavers did not feel this was a particular advantage to them. ERO (2009), noted that appointing Pasifika teachers does not have any significant advantage in terms of



student engagement or achievement. However they did point out that having Pasifika teachers and staff in a school can assist in promoting and understanding Pasifika communities and students. Several of the participants did note they were inspired by seeing Pasifika teachers in management roles in their schools, even if they were not directly taught by them.

Nine participants from the university graduates and recent school leavers also talked about the positive effect of getting to know teachers and wanted to be in these teachers' classes over a period of years. For instance they might pick a subject because of a teacher known to them and the relationship that already existed. Choosing the teacher might supersede their choice of subject at times. A study by Wylie, Hodgen and Darr (2009), noted that for nearly twice as many Pasifika students as European or Asian students, changing teachers from year to year or even during the year had an adverse effect on their learning. The participants of this study concurred with this. They perceived that there were benefits when they could stay with teachers they knew and trusted. Often even if they were not taught by teachers that they respected then they would still talk with them and use them as sounding boards for advice and guidance.

#### **7.4 The influence of church on the achievement of Pasifika males from a Bourdieusian perspective**

A third field which influenced the participants of this study to achieve was their church. For participants in all three cohorts, much of their habitus was formed through their regular participation in church services and communities. Being part of a church was perceived as a significant influencing factor on the success of the participants. Pasifika people attend church in higher numbers than the rest of New Zealand's population and all of the participants in this research were regular church goers. There was a positive association between church and academic performance. However there were also some tensions identified.

The level of influence of their church varied between the participants. For several it was seen as an important part of their development simply based on the skills they believed the church had helped them develop: public speaking, communication, being organised and working as part of a team were mentioned as key skills they had gained through their involvement in their church which had been of great benefit in their

education. For other participants a sense of faith they felt through their religious beliefs and attendance at church was a source of inspiration for them. They believed through Gods power they were capable of succeeding and God would provide the support for them during difficult times. In the literature Vialle, Lysaght and Verenikina, (2005), noted that spirituality can be an important part of a student's education and teachers should take the opportunity to draw on their faith if it would assist an individual's learning outcomes. They indicated that it was important for teachers to understand a student's spiritual beliefs. They also suggested that in the case of Pasifika students, spirituality was linked to their culture and therefore very much a part of who they are. In this way the literature supported the findings of this study that Pasifika students' involvement in a Church may support them to succeed academically.

The findings of Airini (1998) supports the recognition of student spirituality as one of the keys to academic success for many Pasifika students. Further findings from Puloto-Endemann, Annandale and Instone (2004) suggest that an understanding of each individual will acknowledge the student and their spiritual and emotional well-being and therefore enable the student to be confident and motivated to succeed. The concept of student well being and emotional care is not new in the New Zealand education with hauora (well being) having been considered central to student support for some time. Related to this is the Pasifika concept of Fonofale where emotional well being is seen as part of a person's physical, cultural and spiritual beliefs. Crawley, Polutu-Endemann and Stanley-Findlay, (1997), use the fale or house as a way to describe this:

With the family as its foundation and the roof representing the cultural values and beliefs that shelter the family. The floor represents the genealogy that binds the family together. It also binds them to the land, the sea, the gods of the Pacific as well as to other cultures. (p.1)

For teachers who do not have spiritual beliefs themselves, this is possibly not an easy concept to grasp and requires them to get an understanding of Pasifika students and their association between faith and family. However, the participants of this study suggest that the benefits of attempting such an understanding would create a deeper teacher student relationship and potentially better outcomes for the learner.

#### **7.4.1 Church and student tensions**

The successful university graduates and recent school leavers involved in this research, while acknowledging both the positive and negative influence of the church on their academic well-being, had also found strategies of negotiating these tensions so they supported rather than impacted on their success. In the literature, several studies have suggested that the influence of the Church can also create tensions for Pasifika students (Macpherson et al., 2000; McNaughton, 2002; Parkhill et al., 2005; Tiatia, 2001; Tupuola, 1998). These tensions stem from young adults negotiating their way around church, family and school expectations. As the participants in this study implied, church commitments can be very time consuming and absorb much of their lives, sometimes leaving little time to study. However they also agreed these commitments were manageable if you were organised.

One of the graduate participants acknowledged an issue created by the church was the expectation of respect that is central to Pasifika culture. He felt that they had grown up not to question authority, which was a barrier for many Pasifika students not only at school but also beyond school. His belief, supported by other university graduates, highlighted the dilemma for many Pasifika students, in terms of wanting to be respectful but also being prepared to question teachers in order to understand what they were learning. This issue was raised by Tiatia (2001) who suggested that Pasifika learners struggled between the values of their family, culture and church. There is a tension between respecting authority and the concept that to be successful as a learner you need to question, discuss and even disagree with others' viewpoints. This requires students to find a way to step out of cultural norms and be prepared to ask questions. Consequently, for the participants of this study the field of church and the social capital that the church had built within their communities, was another influencing factor that could be drawn upon to positively influence their development or could provide a tension as experiences and expectations between the different fields clashed. In this way the findings of this study provide a complex picture of how male Pasifika students are required to navigate the different fields within which they operate and develop as young men.

#### **7.5 Summary**

By using Bourdieusian theories of cultural capital in order to provide a framework to this study it has shown how the different fields within which Pasifika males operate

provide positive influences as they develop and grow into successful adults. It is perceived by these participants that it is not the job of any one school, family or individual to adapt to the different perspectives provided by the different fields. Instead, it is the role of the leaders of each church, school and family to support the students so that they are able draw upon the positive aspects of each field in order to provide a unique web of positive influences. In this way, schools can build on the cultural capital of students to develop the teachers; parents can educate themselves in the time commitment of NCEA and the requirements of University entrance; and students can look to look for ways of adapting skills they have learnt in church or on the sports field into academic success.

The participants of this study have shown that the influences on the achievement of Pasifika males are more complex than the original literature review of this topic suggested. The literature presented in this study was each focused on one element of Pasifika people's lives. For example, the Education Review Office (2008) focused on the role of schools; Spoonley and Bedford (2012) presented the influence of role models and Tiatia (2001) on the influence of the church. However, the participants of this study have presented a perspective that suggests no single influence alone is responsible for a Pasifika male's achievement. This identified a complex web of influences that will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the influences which can positively impact on learning outcomes for Samoan and Tongan males in New Zealand secondary schools. The overall aim of this study was to close the gap of knowledge and understanding regarding how school, family and church can support these students to be academically successful.

Four research questions that formed the basis of this study were focused on exploring:

1. What key values and strategies do Samoan and Tongan parents identify as supporting educational achievement for their children, with specific reference to boys?
2. What factors external to schools do Samoan and Tongan male students describe as influences on their academic achievement in secondary education?
3. In what ways do these external factors impact on academic and longer-term achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?
4. How can these factors be utilised to increase their impact on academic achievement of Samoan and Tongan males?

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital was used to provide a framework in order to explore the challenges and influences on Pasifika boys' achievement because Bourdieu's theories of habitus, field and practice provided a set of lenses through which to understand some of the factors that have influenced Pasifika boys' educational success.

This chapter provides significant conclusions that were reached; policy solutions, a complex web of influences and the strength of leadership. It also includes recommendations for policy makers, the Pasifika community (church and family) and secondary school leaders. The strengths and limitations of the study are presented along with recommendations for further research.

## **8.2 Conclusions**

The literature review for this study showed the historically poor achievement levels of Pasifika males at secondary school. Although there have been some improvements in the past decade with regards to achievement in NCEA levels, University Entrance and achievement of Merit and Excellence endorsements, Pasifika males as a group still lag far behind their Pakeha or Asian counterparts. Government initiatives, such as the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2013), have been implemented by the government in order to address this achievement issue. However, the findings of this study suggest that the approach of previous governments to solve the problem of Pasifika under achievement by using broad national policies does not appear to solve or appreciate the complexity of this issue.

### **8.2.1 Policy solutions**

Individual expression of cultural capital was evident in this study. Each talanoa was unique in its outlook and how they perceived the influences that existed within their lives. Consequently, broad national policies are not going to solve the under achievement of Pasifika male students. Students operate within and are influenced by a number of different fields. Influences on the achievement of Pasifika males is a multi-faceted and complex web and policy response needs to anticipate these needs accordingly.

Participants of this study were all unique and what had influenced one student did not affect another. In this way, those in charge of national policies and schools need to develop processes that allow adults to hear the stories of individual students and plan to support each of their individual needs.

For many low decile schools with large numbers of Pasifika students the inability to compete with higher decile schools is restricted by a lack of financial resources. Access to funding streams such as international students, provides high decile schools with more money to provide support for Pasifika students. This support may take the form of smaller class sizes, paid mentors or paid cultural tutors. Lower decile schools, situated in economically disadvantaged areas, typically include disproportionately higher numbers of Maori and Pasifika peoples. Consequently, Ministry of Education funding needs to be targeted in a way that corresponds with the requirements of a community and school, as opposed to a one size fits all response for all Pasifika

leaners. For many decades, funding has targeted Pasifika leaners under the Pacific Education Plan but has not enabled decisions to be made on what is best suited for individual schools and leaners.

### **8.2.2 A complex web of influences**

For the participants of this study there is no one particular influence to increase achievement, but a more complex web of influences that exist between the individual student's cultural capital, of habitus, fields and practices within which they operate. For the male Pasifika student participants of this study the complex interface predominantly exists at two levels - within their habitus that is the focus of their family environment, and also within the field of their school.

For example, for some Pasifika families participating in this study the findings showed that culture, custom and tradition are still a vital and living part of family life and the key was ensuring that a space is made available so their children can achieve academically whilst also celebrating, enjoying and living their cultural heritage. However, this was not the case for all participants, some recent school leavers and university graduates spoke of the importance of family, church and culture but also of the pressures and time that these factors could create.

Many Pasifika families invest in education for their children and this research showed that support of the family is paramount for success. However, there are still many boundaries to be crossed for the Pasifika community in New Zealand. Stating that you want your child to be well educated and being able to actually support this notion were shown to be two different things. Supporting a student towards a successful outcome requires a commitment that may interfere with custom and practice, family gatherings, church commitments or family obligations, all of which can still be a barrier to the learning and achievement of the young male participants in this study.

The participants of this study showed that it is possible for there to be conflict between the values of different cultures and different fields within which male Pasifika students operate. For example, this study has shown a conflict for Pasifika students between the values displayed by family, church and school that can potentially impact upon student learning. These different values are based upon culture, with some Pasifika participants perceiving that their community valued family and community above the

more Palagi concept of individualism. One example of the implications of these cultural conflicts are they can impact on a Pasifika student's timekeeping and ability to meet deadlines at school. Consequently, there is a need for the leaders of the different fields in which male Pasifika students operate to work together in order to encourage greater understanding of each other's world and how the positive influences of each world can be leveraged to support these students.

Another key influence identified within the web of the different influences on male secondary students' achievement lies in the field and practice of school. While the literature review showed that there have been significant steps forward by some schools to lift male Pasifika secondary achievement, there is still a way to go before parity exists with other ethnic groups. This study showed that schools must be better equipped with the teachers, the pedagogy and the aspiration that these students will not simply succeed but also excel at the highest level. There is currently still a disparity that sees male Pasifika students missing out at the top end of achievement such as University Entrance.

### ***8.2.3 Strength of leadership response***

Practice is an explanation of the actions or ways of behaving in any given field due to the influences of cultural capital and habitus. The findings of this study suggest the influence of the social and cultural capital of Pasifika communities should not be underestimated and that in fact cultural capital is a strength of Pasifika male students. Furthermore, the cultural capital of Pasifika communities need to be valued equally to the cultural norms established by the dominant culture of Palagi's in New Zealand. This study provides examples of how Pasifika cultural capital such as Pasifika role models or skills learnt in church roles maybe harnessed in order to support students to be successful in the classroom.

In the past the term deficient thinking applied to the tail of underachievement for Pasifika (and Maori). There is a new deficient thinking now, in that while achievement levels have risen for the underachieving tail (a term to describe Pasifika and Maori underachievement) disparity still exists. The challenge for school leadership is to ensure equality of achievement. Recent improvement in Pasifika male achievement at secondary school should be applauded and seen as a positive step in terms of increased success for a group that had traditionally faced failure. However, the fact



remains that the achievement levels for Pasifika males at secondary school are still below other ethnicities and the quality of their achievement in terms of University Entrance is still poor. Academic success for this group to date should be seen as a stepping stone to higher honours and no more than that. A platform has been laid for future success but unless a strong leadership response is taken up, Pasifika male academic achievement will not see the harnessing of the true potential that exists for these students. School leaders need to rise to this challenge and lead the investigation into how male Pasifika students can be supported to achieve at the highest academic levels.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

It is not the responsibility of one individual or organisation to support students to achieve academically and the following recommendations to policy makers, the Pasifika community, church, families and school leaders reflects the need for a multi-faceted approach.

#### ***8.3.1 Recommendations for policy makers***

The implication for policy makers is that there is a need to understand the individual cultural capital and habitus of male Pasifika students as opposed to a 'Pasifika' collective. For decades Pasifika students from the entire Pacific region have been put under the one generic banner. This defies the unique and very different backgrounds from which they come, which in turn can lead to schools often treating this group with generic solutions without considering individual's cultural capital and what each may bring to the classroom in terms of prior knowledge and learning.

One response to these challenges could be for greater funding to provide more teacher training and targeted programmes in each secondary school where large numbers of Pasifika students exist. Furthermore, access to the best teachers available needs to be made a priority and this will require incentivized allowances to attract teachers to schools that they may not have considered. In particular, literacy and numeracy programmes need to be strengthened and resourced further. If increased understanding of cultural influences can be gained by policy makers there is a significant chance that academic achievement can be raised not only at secondary school level but beyond at university.

### ***8.3.2 Recommendation for the Pasifika Community, church and families***

The implication of these conclusions is that to achieve ongoing academic success a balance needs to be found between student's many different commitments. Creating space within their cultural and family contexts so that academic success can be achieved. To achieve this goal, students' own voices need to be heard. Furthermore, the concept of listening to individual students and creating space for them to achieve must also apply to church as typically church commitments play a significant role in student's lives.

Church pastors and priests need to ensure they are supporting the parents and students to succeed and not creating a barrier in terms of time commitments and expectations. The recent school leavers and university graduates in this study reported the importance of this concept in their success. They noted their parents had to understand that sometimes at times of great pressure such as exams, their children may need to give up church for that week or at least be excused from chores around the house.

To realise the true potential of their children, Pasifika communities, churches and families must understand each other's needs and find a balance between retaining the importance of cultural values and allowing children to succeed at school. To grow this potential, the new knowledge from this study needs to be considered in order to advance educational achievement. Parents, schools and community organisations need to communicate to understand the fields in which our male Pasifika secondary students operate. Solutions need to be drawn from the individual voices of our students and avoiding a broad one size fits for all initiatives.

### ***8.3.3 Recommendation for school leaders***

The participants of this study showed that each individual had a unique pathway to success. Each of these unique pathways were influenced by those adults within their fields of operation understanding their individual needs and developing individual students' strengths. Within the school context, the participants of this study repeatedly described this process as having 'teachers that care and believe in me'. The challenge for school leaders is to leverage this potential in order to support male Pasifika students to achieve at or above the level of other ethnic groups.

The implications of these conclusions are that school leadership needs to continue to look for ways to engage with Pasifika students to ensure further academic achievement is progressed. By recognising the cultural capital of Pasifika families and their sons, it establishes a direct connection between the habitus of home and the field of school, allowing the students to gain a sense of connection between home and school, rather than a feeling of cultural separation. Previously, this connection has been harnessed across schools in New Zealand to increase the NCEA Level 1 and 2 results. However, this is not enough and now families, schools and the wider communities must come together to look for new ways that will support students to achieve University Entrance.

Each individual student brings their own cultural capital to their learning. Suggestions that some participants made that will increase academic achievement included: allowing students to say prayers in their own language; providing opportunities to wear traditional dress; and hearing school leaders articulate their understanding of cultural capital and how that fits into the overall field of school. Schools need to develop processes that hear the voices of individual students and help understand their individual needs created by their cultural capital and the complex web of fields in which they operate.

#### **8.4 Strengths and limitations of this study**

The key strengths in this study were the fact the researcher was a non Pasifika individual who became immersed in the process and adopted the methodology of talanoa. Secondly was the fact that the Pasifika participants supported the research from the outset and made it possible for a palagi researcher to participate in the talanoa. This made the research credible and allowed the process of data collection to develop from the focus groups through to the interviews. This provided a process that was enthusiastically embraced by the participants and one that allowed those involved to develop themes together. Participants enabled other participants to talk from the heart and subsequently this led to an in-depth sharing of perspectives.

A further strength of the interviews was that they allowed more specific and detailed data to be collected from individuals across the three participant groups (recent male Pasifika school leavers, male Pasifika university graduates and Pasifika parents). Two of the university graduates also provided in-depth talanoa allowing them to have the

freedom and time to share their own unique story in extensive detail. Using talanoa as a data collection method strengthened the methodological approach in relation to hearing and collecting the voices of Pasifika participants in a culturally appropriate manner. These three methods allowed cross analysis of the data from different perspectives which gave the findings a richness that would not have been possible using only one method.

The key limitation was the fact the researcher had to narrow the focus of ethnic perspectives gathered. The term Pasifika peoples covers a large group of nationalities, and only Samoan and the Tongan perspectives were sought as these were the dominant cultures represented in Auckland secondary schools. Another limitation was the restricted literature available in relation to the influences of Pasifika cultural capital on male secondary student achievement. Consequently, the literature review was widened to encompass literature regarding influences on other ethnic groups. However, this also proved to be a strength, because the lack of literature challenged the researcher to consider a wider field of literature that led to the adoption of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital which provided a relevant framework within which to review the findings.

In terms of other limitations to the study, some of the features that were considered strengths could also be considered to be limitations. For example, although the focus group method allowed participants to support and build upon each other's perspectives, the group setting may also have impeded individuals to share their true personal experiences or ideas.

Another methodological limitation of this study was the fact that there was only one researcher across 23 participants. In the context of Pasifika focused research, there was the challenge of having a sample group big enough to provide a range of perspectives, but at the same time not too large otherwise, the researcher would have been impeded from building a trusting relationship with the three sample groups. A further limitation of only one researcher was that the sample for the study was limited to the Auckland area therefore restricting the number of perspectives that could be heard. It should be noted though, Auckland is where the largest number of Pasifika families and male secondary students exist in New Zealand.

## **8.5 Recommendations for future researchers**

This study aimed to explore the factors that may have a positive influence on the academic achievement of male Pasifika secondary students and to fill the gap of knowledge regarding how educators can support this cohort of students. This section of the conclusion chapter will consider how the implications of this new knowledge can result in recommendations for future research on this topic.

This study has shown through using talanoa that there is agreement between the three different participant groups regarding how cultural capital can positively influence academic achievement for male Pasifika secondary students. Talanoa as a methodology in future research around this topic will further strengthen the data and outcomes.

Further research could widen the scope of this study. Only males were participants in this study. Pasifika females achieve at slightly higher rates than their male counterparts but still not at the same level as other ethnic groups. Future studies could incorporate the perspectives of Pasifika females to add to the richness of the data. This scope of exploration could also be extended to higher decile schools outside of Auckland to establish if the influences identified in this study were consistent in a wider range of perspectives.

A recommendation for future research could also be including the voice of teachers. Their perspective on cultural capital, habitus and field and the achievement of Pasifika students at secondary school would add a further dimension to the findings. This could include inquiring into the relationship between teachers and their understanding of how cultural capital influences their students.

## **8.6 Final words**

Male Pasifika secondary students have multiple influences that can affect their academic achievement throughout their school career. The findings of this study established that these influences are largely positive. However there is scope for both Pasifika families, schools and the wider community to further harness and understand each other's cultural capital if academic achievement is to continue to rise. Furthermore, this study provides opportunity for further consideration as to how these

positive influences can be used to support a wider group of Pasifika students to succeed.

Pasifika peoples continue to be a growing population in New Zealand. It is paramount further gains are made in closing the academic under achievement gap which still exists at secondary school level and continues at university where there is a low level of Pasifika participation and achievement. Our Pasifika children deserve equity. They also deserve an education system which celebrates their unique cultural capital and harnesses their strengths, so that they are supported to achieve at the highest academic level.

This study has established academic achievement is possible if the right environment and support network is created for our male Pasifika students. The essence of this research reaches out to the Pasifika community and its future in New Zealand. Pasifika people have the potential to create their own future by growing the skills and passion evident in their own communities.

Parents, churches, schools and the wider community must tirelessly seek to understand each other. Together they must explore the pressures that each of these fields place on male Pasifika students, but also understand the positive influences each field can provide. By achieving a deep level of understanding between these different fields, the pressures placed on individual students can be reduced and the positive influences can be harnessed and magnified. Providing male Pasifika students with a network of positive influences which can lift them up to achieve at the highest levels. The successful graduate participants of this study have shown that high academic achievement is possible for young Pasifika men, as a community we now must learn from these Pasifika pioneers so that their success can be replicated across the Pasifika communities of New Zealand in ever increasing numbers.

Fa'afetai lava, Malo aupito

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## APPENDICES



### Appendix 1 - INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Thesis:** Influences in the Educational Achievement of Male Pasifika Secondary Students

My name is Brian Evans. I am currently enrolled in the **PhD (Education) programme** in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

Aims and objectives

The proposed purpose of this study is to evaluate how factors outside the classroom influence Pasifika male students and their achievement in New Zealand secondary schools.

This study aims to:

- To explore how the values and traditions of Pasifika parents influence their attitudes towards education.
- To analyse how key aspects of fa'asamoa (the Samoan way), faka-Tonga (the Tongan way) and other major Pasifika populations' knowledge, processes and theories may influence achievement of secondary Pasifika males in Auckland, New Zealand.

- To explore and analyse the relationship between Pasifika parents' aspirations and the aspirations of male Pasifika high school students.

I request your participation in the following ways (*tick where appropriate*):

- I will be collecting data using a focus group
- I will be collecting data using a semi-structured interview

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is John Bensemen and may be contacted by email or phone.

Phone: 09 815 4321, ext. 8736

Email: [jbenseman@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:jbenseman@unitec.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1019**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 12 May 2014 to 12 May 2017. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**



**Appendix 2 - CONSENT FORM – Focus Groups and Semi-structured interviews**

DATE

TO:

FROM: Brian Evans

**RE: PhD (Education)**

**THESIS TITLE:** Influences in the Educational Achievement of Male Pasifika Secondary Students

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I understand that I will be provided with a transcript for checking before data analysis is started.

I am aware that I may bring a support person with me to the interview and I may be invited to be re-interviewed where required for clarification and elaboration.

I also understand I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

**I agree to take part in this project** (*tick where appropriate*):

- as part of a focus group
- in a semi-structured interview

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2014-1019**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from 12 May 2014 to 12 May 2017. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

### **Appendix 3 - Questions for focus groups – Recent School Leavers**

1. Describe what you believe are the factors that have made you successful with your secondary school education?
2. How would you describe your parents beliefs and values – these might include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
3. How would you describe your parents attitudes towards your education, their expectations and hopes for you?
4. Do you perceive your parent’s beliefs and practices influenced your academic achievement (both positively and negatively)?
5. What are the factors outside school that are important to you yourself, do they include beliefs and values similar to your parents?
6. What are the specific features of family life (e.g., customs, practices, beliefs/religion, language) that have impacted upon your achievement; why are they important and do you feel they contribute to high achievement levels?
7. How would you describe your own main beliefs and values – these might include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
8. As a student, how do you perceive your beliefs and practices influenced your own academic achievement?
9. What are other motivating factors that have helped you; why are they important to you? (Sports stars, mentors?)
10. Were there specific elements of school culture that you feel enhanced Pasifika beliefs and values for learning in your school?
11. Are there any particular activities that you take part in outside of the classroom with other Pasifika students that you felt contributed to your success at school? (Polyfest, Youth groups etc)
12. Do you think family, culture, religion, etc could be used to help other students who are not achieving at school?
13. Is there anything you would like to add or any comments you would like to make?

#### **Appendix 4 - Questions for focus groups – University Graduates**

1. What were the main drivers in your academic success at school?
2. Were you always going to go to university/polytechnic/tertiary institution after leaving school? Why?
3. How would you describe your parents main beliefs and values – these might include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
4. Do you perceive your parents main beliefs and values influenced your academic achievement (both positively and negatively)?
5. What other types of things motivated you to study hard and achieve academically? (any particular role models, mentors?)
6. How would you describe your own main beliefs and values – these might include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
7. As a successful student, how do you perceive your beliefs and practices influenced your own academic achievement?
8. Do you think cultural influences might enhance or hinder the success of other Pasifika students? In what way?
9. Does your Samoan/Tongan culture and western culture combine together in any particular way in your studies in New Zealand tertiary education?
10. Do you see similarities and/or differences between Samoan/ Tongan cultures and New Zealand culture in how they may influence student academic achievement?
11. Were there any specific elements of University culture that you feel enhanced Pasifika beliefs and values for learning in your own education?
12. Is there anything you would like to add or any comments you would like to make?

## **Appendix 5 - Questions for focus groups - Parents**

1. Tell me about yourself and your reasons for coming to New Zealand?
2. Tell me about your own personal values, family, why/if your culture is still strong and important to you, the part religion plays in your family?
3. Tell me about your experiences and understanding of New Zealand education.
4. What are your expectations for your children in terms of education?
5. What are some of the things that you think you have done or other factors that may have supported your son's success at school?
6. What is important to you for your son in terms of successful education (going to University, a good job?)
7. What are your perceptions of external influences on your son's educational success – these influences could include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
8. Do you think there is any particular role for Samoan/ Tongan culture to play in your son's education – or do you see it as a separate entity?
9. Do you think there are any aspects of Samoan/Tongan culture may influence your son's achievement in a negative way?
10. As a parent/caregiver, how do you perceive your beliefs and practices influence the academic achievement of your son's achievement (both positively and negatively)?
11. Do you see similarities and/or differences between Samoan/ Tongan cultures and New Zealand culture in the way they may influence student academic achievement?
12. What specific elements of school culture do you feel enhanced Pasifika beliefs and values for learning at your son's school?
13. Is there anything you would like to add or comment on?



## **Appendix 6 - Questions for Semi-structured interviews**

1. Tell me about your own educational experiences?
2. How would you describe your beliefs and values – these might include religion, culture, family, sports, other?
3. Do you believe these beliefs and values influence Pasifika males achievement in secondary school education?
4. What are the specific features of family life (e.g., customs, practices, beliefs/religion, language) that have impacted upon you (or your son's) achievement; why are they important and do you feel they contribute to high achievement levels?
5. (If a recent student or University Graduate) how do you perceive your parents beliefs and practices influenced your own academic achievement?
6. What are other motivating factors that you think assist Pasifika males to achieve at secondary school? (Sports stars, mentors?)
7. In your experience what are specific elements of school culture that you feel enhance Pasifika beliefs and values for learning at school?
8. Are there any particular activities that you take part in outside of the classroom with other Pasifika students that you feel contribute to success at school? (Polyfest, Youth groups etc)
9. Is there anything you would like to add or any comments you would like to make?