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The influence of shifting Pacific identities in  
learning: The experience of parents raising  
children of mixed Pacific ethnicities

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the  
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# Abstract

Identity construction for the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand remains a politically and contextually contested arena that shifts according to the socio-cultural interactions within the immediate and external environment of an individual. This study views parents as agents of change and explores ethnic transmission and cultural identity development through the eyes of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities.

This qualitative study employed both Western and Pacific methodologies to collect and analyse data and used the *talanoa* method to engage the insights and experiences of five couples. Social constructionism and Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory provided a framework to explain the dynamics of social interactions and external conditions that influence the constructs of peoples' lived realities. This study found that families, peers, and schools influence interactions that shift and impact the cultural identity development and resiliency of children with mixed Pacific ethnicities. In addition to this, societal perceptions, racism, and stereotypes are external environmental conditions that further impact cultural identity development and resiliency.

The metaphor of a balancing act illustrates the challenges and strategies parents use to manage family and cultural expectations as well as the efforts required to maintain access and opportunities to cultural knowledge, values and practices. The findings suggest that a culturally responsive education can work to minimise intolerance, exclusion, and racism experienced by an individual. Key recommendations include the promotion of identity development education that serves to empower individuals and parents to nurture positive identities and resilience in the mixed Pacific generation.

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## Glossary

<i>Fa’a Samoa</i>	The Samoan way of life (of doing things)
<i>Hui Aranga</i>	Easter gathering – refers to the annual Māori Catholic gathering held during Easter
<i>Kakala</i>	Fragrant flower used in the making of a Tongan garland. The context of <i>kakala</i> used in this research is in the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Kapa Haka</i>	Māori performing arts – refers to a group performing Māori song and dance
<i>Kohanga Reo</i>	Māori language nest for young children (birth to five years of age)
<i>Kura Kaupapa Māori</i>	Māori language immersion school (primary to secondary school)
<i>Lavalava</i>	A printed material worn as a wrap-around garment for both sexes
<i>Luva</i>	Giving away of garland; refers to the presentation of findings stage in the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Mālie</i>	Good, to agree; refers to the relevancy and worthwhileness of a research project
<i>Māfana</i>	Warm; refers to the application and transformation purposes of a research project
<i>Moepī</i>	A slang/derogatory word used by older people to refer to younger people generally when they misbehave
<i>Mokopuna</i>	Grandchildren
<i>Pākehā</i>	Māori term for white/European people
<i>Palagi</i>	Samoan term for white/European people
<i>Poly club</i>	Abbreviation for Polynesian Club – a group performing Pacific song and dance
<i>Talanoa</i>	Discussion; to tell a story
<i>Tapu</i>	Sacred
<i>Tangi</i>	Funeral
<i>Te ao Māori</i>	The Māori world

<i>Te reo Māori</i>	The Māori language
<i>Teu</i>	Refers to the preparation stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework and considers
<i>Teu le va</i>	A directive expression to cherish and look after the space (nurture the relationships)
<i>Tikanga Māori</i>	Māori customs, method, traditions, general behaviour guidelines
<i>Toli</i>	Selection and collection of flowers; Refers to the data collection stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>To'onai</i>	Generally refers to a Sunday lunch/feast considered important in bringing family together
<i>Tui</i>	Weaving of <i>kakala</i> ; refers to the data analysis stage of the <i>Kakala</i> research framework
<i>Urupā</i>	Cemetery
<i>Whakapapa</i>	Family genealogy/bloodlines

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **From Whom do I Descend?**

Adorning the wall in the living room of my home are precious photographs of grandparents from whom my husband and I descend. Photographs of five – not four – sets of grandparents form the centrepiece and pride of my home. My father, who was adopted by close friends of his birth parents, was eventually connected with and remained close to both birth and adopted families, which gave me an extra set of grandparents and even more relatives to form strong bonds with. The photos emanate a legacy of life lived, survival, and endurance, and give me a sense of grounding from where I can draw strength. The display of photos serves as a storytelling board reliving tales to my children, teaching them who they descend from and the value of honouring and respecting the memories of loved ones. Despite the political currents that influence how I perceive my identity and the world around me, the centrepiece of photographs gives me a sense of belonging from which I can continue my journey and mission in life. The centrepiece of photos is my personal place of refuge where despite the opinions of others, or what research findings tell us, my mixed Pacific identity is God-given, absolute and incontestable. My identity is not in a state of confusion, neither here nor there - I belong - and the photos give me comfort in knowing who I am.

This research stems from an on-going personal identity journey of pondering the world and how I fit within it. Being of both Māori and Samoan descent has seemingly placed me in a juxtaposition, where in many instances others have judged and questioned my authenticity as Māori or Samoan, based on my knowledge of cultural values and family connections and my ability to speak either language. My thoughts transcend to the growing New Zealand-born generation of mixed Pacific ethnicities that includes my own children who are of Māori, Samoan, and Tokelauan descent. What must it be like for this generation to negotiate and develop a strong sense of identity that connects them to the ethnic communities to which they truly belong? How do parents

raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities manage the task of maintaining and passing on cultural values, family traditions and languages?

This research relates to my own experiences of being a “half-caste”, “half-Māori and half Samoan” “Māori Fob”, “Hori”, “Bonga” and “Coconut” all labels which I have variously been called, referred to or self-defined. My own life identity story is enriched with both negative encounters and proud milestone achievements that celebrate the beauty of both *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) and *Fa’a Samoa* (Samoa way of life).

It is important to acknowledge that the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand is diverse. Pacific diversity is not confined to the uniqueness of traditional culture, beliefs, values, and languages that define each Pacific nation. It is youthful and intergenerational and characterised by intermarriages and the Pacific migration experience. Statistics indicate that the proportion of the population identifying with more than one ethnic group has steadily increased from 9% in 2001 to 11.2% in 2013, with 37.2% of Pacific peoples identifying with two major ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Pacific peoples have the highest proportion of children and 62.3% are New Zealand-born. Furthermore, younger people in the age group – those between 0-14 - are most likely to identify with more ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

For children of mixed Pacific ethnicities, the notion of shifting identities reflects the reality and challenges of the boundaries that they live, learn and grow within. The challenge of negotiating their identities, how they perceive themselves, and how others see them is often highlighted in literature on New Zealand-born or second generation Pacific peoples (Anae, 2001; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004). For many New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, the challenges are highlighted through stigmatisation whereby they are not seen as being either authentic New Zealanders or Pacific peoples. Others struggle to embrace their cultural identities and Pacific heritage based on their experiences and social interactions.

### **Authenticity – you’re not a real islander.**

Directed by Stallone Vaiaoga-loasa, the movie “Three Wise Cousins” which made its debut to New Zealand cinemas early in 2016 illustrates authenticity issues between New Zealand-born and Island-born Pacific peoples. “Three Wise Cousins” is a modern interpretation of the value and place of culture and identity in society today. It illustrates the power dynamics of societal influences that can impact how individuals/groups internalise both positive and negative experiences. The plot of the movie is centred on Adam, a 22 year old New Zealand-born Samoan, who sets off to Samoa to learn how he can impress his crush Mary. Mary is overheard telling friends that she is only interested in meeting ‘a real Island guy’ and this leads Adam in pursuit of his two Samoan-born and raised cousins to teach him the ‘real ways’ and how to ‘be a real Island guy’. The film brilliantly captures the contrast in the lives of Adam and his cousins – portraying life in Samoa as simple and grounded firmly on church, culture, language and traditions of *Fa’a Samoa*, a world far removed from the hustle and bustle, noisy, technology laden country of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The underlying themes took many Samoan viewers on a nostalgic trip down memory lane and for many other viewers it was an introduction to the Samoan culture. Perhaps another underlying message that the movie portrays is the perception that “Islanders” born and raised in Aotearoa/New Zealand – or anywhere outside the island nations - are ‘plastic’, not ‘real’ where in order to be considered real “Islanders” they need to seek the skills, knowledge and practices only found in the homelands. Yet for an increasing number of the New Zealand-born generation, many have never been to these Pacific homelands and are only connected through stories and memories relived by the older generations.

### **Research objectives.**

The rationale for this research is concerned with the future of the dynamic New Zealand-born Pacific population that is projected to be further diversified through ethnic intermarriage, migration and globalisation. Recognising parents as first teachers and key influencers in their children’s education (MacIntyre, 2008), this research explores the way in which parents manage

and value the cultural identities of their children. If a healthy cultural identity contributes to educational outcomes – what does that mean for the New Zealand-born generation of mixed Pacific ethnicities? What value do they place on their Pacific identities if they themselves are not valued and/or accepted by those within and outside their own cultures? This research also explores the associated challenges as well as the strategies parents' use that influences the transmission of culture and Pacific identity development of their children.

### **Research questions.**

This research seeks to address the following questions to discover the experiences of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities:

- How do parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities value Pacific identity?
- What influences parents' decisions and practice of Pacific identities in their children's learning?
- What are the challenges faced by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities?
- What strategies do parents use to encourage positive Pacific identities for their children's learning?

An example that impacts the decision making process for my own family is deciding which culture to commit to due to an unfortunate clash in the timing of cultural events. The traditional biannual Tokelau Easter tournament brings together Tokelau communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand and across the world to celebrate the culture and language through religious observations and sporting/cultural dance competitions. It is considered to be a pinnacle event that celebrates Tokelau pride and identity particularly for the New Zealand-born generation. Our family also had the privilege to partake in the annual *Hui Aranga* (national Māori Catholic gathering held over Easter) event for the first time in 2015. This is also an annual gathering over Easter for Māori Catholics to celebrate the Catholic faith and being Māori. It is also made up of events throughout the weekend which include *Kapa Haka* (Māori performing arts), a

religious quiz, speech competitions, sports day and a choir competition. Both my husband and I enjoyed and experienced the value of being involved in both events as they enable a rich experience for the whole family of learning, connecting and being Māori and Tokelauan. It is perhaps even more essential for our children to participate as we do not have the cultural capacity to teach our children the language or cultural aspects of the Tokelau and Māori cultures. The dilemma is that we cannot be in two places at the same time and will eventually need to make a choice. What will it come down to? Is one more important than the other? Will it be determined by choosing the 'easiest' option in terms of fewer practices to attend and less fundraising/meetings to commit to? This research explored the perceptions and experiences of parents when addressing such questions related to Pacific identities and learning.

### **Pacific, Pasifika, Pasefika...we are not all the same.**

Given that this research focuses on identity issues, a discussion on the terms used to refer to and classify Pacific peoples follows.

Following the waves of Pacific migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand, several terms have been used by the New Zealand Government to group people from a number of Pacific nations under one umbrella. The terms 'Pacific Islands' 'Pacific Peoples' and 'Pacific Nations' were terms of convenience that blurred the uniqueness and diversity of cultures and languages of peoples from the different regions of Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia. The introduction of the terms 'Pasifika' and 'Pasefika' follows an assertion of power by Pacific peoples to self-determine an identification category, that is inclusive in its representation of the Pacific nations. Samu's 1998 study (as cited in Ferguson et al., 2008) views the term 'Pasifika' as empowering and a mechanism of power stating "the fact that as a term, it 'originated' from us, is of no small consequence because being able to define ourselves is an issue of control" (p. 5).

An article written in the *New Zealand Herald* titled 'Pasifika - Identity or illusion' (Perrott, 2007) draws on the experience and opinions of Pacific people, some of which includes high profile Pacific musicians, actors and leaders on the term "Pasifika". In this article, Tongan academic 'Okusitino Mahina, outlines his concern that the term Pasifika is homogenising, with a tendency to reflect the Samoan culture and values given that Samoans make up the largest contingent of the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Conversely, Mila-Schaaf (2010) prefers Pasifika to capture the experience of the Pacific population born and located within the various contexts of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This example brings to light the multi-layered politics of labels created and perpetuated by both Westerners and Pacific peoples. Despite the efforts of the Ministry of Education to use a term that is inclusive and representative of Pacific peoples, its usage, like all terminologies, will likely be contentious and marred by undertones of power and inequality.

Anae (2010) asserts the need to note the context and the shifts in the demographics of the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand as the development of most Pacific research guidelines and models are targeted at Island-born peoples or communities. She argues that future Pacific research should be inclusive and consider the diverse realities and multi ethnic specificities of New-Zealand born and Island-born Pacific peoples. Moreover, Anae (2010) calls for acknowledgement of the intra-diversities within each Pacific group so that Pacific focussed research, policy and service delivery is not limited in effecting positive change for Pacific peoples. Context, in particular, is identified by Anae as important when undertaking Pacific research noting that "Pacific research in New Zealand should explicitly address the context(s) of the research and research stakeholders when designing research questions, methods and approaches" (2010, p. 4). Furthermore, because labels often impose meanings that are far removed from the realities of those being labelled, the need to specify who is being researched is important as by being explicitly clear acknowledges that Pacific peoples are not homogenous as such terminologies and labels might imply.

As Earth's largest ocean, the Pacific Ocean is a vast, dynamic space that is home to many nations located in the South Pacific. Thus, for the purposes of this research “Pacific” is used; it is a far reaching definition that reflects the complex and varied construct of the mixed Pacific population. It also avoids the tendency to represent and resemble one Pacific nation more than the other as echoed in the concerns of ‘Okusitino Mahina (Perrott, 2007).

The use of the term mixed Pacific ethnicities in this research, refers to an individual or persons who are of two or more ethnicities. This includes a variation of Pacific/non-Pacific, mixed Pacific, and mixed Pacific/non-Pacific.

### **Thesis overview.**

This thesis is organised into six chapters. The introduction chapter sets the scene and contextualises the shifting dynamics and diversity of Pacific identities within the Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape. The research objectives are outlined and the positionality of the researcher (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013) including the motivation for undertaking this study are provided in this chapter. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature and unravels concepts that continue to evolve over time with each emerging generation. The chapter also discusses the role of parents in their children’s learning and identity development. Chapter Three describes the methodological framework and methods used to carry out the research. A discussion on the selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, ethics and research limitations is also presented in this chapter. Chapter Four is an account of the findings from the *talanoa* with parents and identifies the following themes: Identity, Family, Peers, School and Environment as significant factors in the identity development of mixed ethnic children in this study. Chapter Five discusses the findings and highlights the voices of the participating parents. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a summary response to the research questions and offers recommendations to address the research findings and future research opportunities.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Shifting Landscapes and Emerging Identities**

There appears to be a dearth of research examining parents' perspectives on the value of Pacific identity and the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices to their children. In recent decades, literature on Pacific identity has highlighted the political process that the New Zealand-born Pacific population experiences (Anae, 2002; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Taule'ale'ausumai, 1990; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004). There also continues to be an expanding pool of literature that links culture, ethnicity, identity, and learning together, articulating how a strong sense of self and cultural identity enhances educational outcomes (Durie, 2006; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni & O'Regan, 2009; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Nakhid, 2003). This literature review predominantly focuses on identity development within the Aotearoa/New Zealand context and illustrates social interactions and sites of identity construction that influence the shifting identities of the mixed Pacific generation. This chapter discusses how the perceptions of others and structural and contextual factors influence the way individuals or groups maintain their identities. This chapter also considers the role of parents as key to cultural identity development.

#### **The Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape and Pacific peoples.**

The social and economic position of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand continues to depict high unemployment, poverty, and poor health and housing conditions (Education Counts, 2016; Sorenson, Jensen, Rigamoto, & Pritchard, 2015; Statistics New Zealand, 2014) and, as a consequence, Pacific research has focussed on addressing barriers and inequalities in order to raise and improve the standard of living conditions. While for many Pacific families education is important, educational outcomes in terms of participation, retention, and success rates across the education sectors remain at the lower end of the success scale, highlighting the disparity between Pacific peoples and other ethnic groups (Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis, & Meyer, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2014; Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific

Island Affairs, 2010). According to Gorinski and Fraser (2006) the learning behaviours and expectations important in the school environment are vastly different to the cultural values of many Pacific family homes. Furthermore, the gap between the values and expectations of the school and home environments brings to light cultural differences that appear to affect Pacific learners and the value of their personal and cultural identity in the learning environment (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). In her research on New Zealand-born Pacific youth, Pasikale (1999) states that understanding identity issues is critical to paving positive outcomes for the future New Zealand-born Pacific generations, as it can determine the “difference to continued academic failure and educational success” (pp. 11-12). Furthermore, according to Pasikale, identity is central to understanding the correlation of failure and success of Pacific learners based on the idea that a confident sense of self and cultural identity can influence educational outcomes.

### **Identity.**

The literature and research on Pacific identity in Aotearoa/New Zealand has a significant focus on youth identity construction (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Pasikale, 1996; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 1998 & 2004). While this present research has a focus on parents, understanding the literature and research on youth identity construction is useful to comprehend the influences and interactions impacting a generation who are now parents raising children of diverse ethnicities. The issues of inauthenticity (Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Tiatia, 1998) and marginalisation (Webber, 2008) continue to resonate with both parents and children and reflects the dynamics of factors that impact child-rearing decisions.

The common viewpoint emerging from identity theorists is that identity formation and development is dynamic, relational, situational, and constantly evolving depending on the context an individual is situated in (Hereniko, 1994; Keddell, 2006). Identity is an abstract and dynamic concept that is fluid in nature and as is apparent in Mackley-Crump’s research (2015) fluidity is evident when the identity of an individual shifts as their life circumstances change and evolve. From the relational perspective, identity is acquired

through the interaction with others where family is the primary influence on early identity formation (Manuela & Sibley, 2012). Further, “it is within the context of relationship that self-identity is formed and is continually affected” (Mila-Schaaf, 2006, p. 8). Mila-Schaaf (2010) refers to the New Zealand-born/second generation as children of migrants and asserts that relational identity construction is often viewed as counterfeit and opposes traditional notions of what a Pacific person is perceived to be. In her study she identifies the relationship with both Pākehā and Māori as significantly influencing the identity construction of the second generation as it “recognises that the way that we imagine and experience others, impacts upon the way we imagine and experience ourselves. These are on-going relationships, influenced by material conditions, historical trajectories and shaped by power” (2010, p. 154-155).

The identity formation of an individual is commonly considered to be situational (Hereniko, 1994) where identities continue to be created and reshaped as life circumstances change. In her research, Keddell (2006) highlights situational ethnicity and uses the micro, macro, and meso levels of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model to understand how Samoan/Pākehā participants construct their identities. Keddell (2006) posits that for the mixed Samoan/Pākehā participants in her study, situational ethnicity is “intrinsically tied to the social dynamics which force that choice, in particular, that of being seen as legitimate or ‘authentic’” (p. 54). The process of shifting their identity and behaviour according to who they were with and the situation they were in also signals the identity tension that often occurs for the mixed ethnicity cohort, where they perceive they are not seen as an authentic or legitimate Pacific person.

Erikson (1968) has pioneered much of the Western discourse on identity formation, viewing identity as a subjective wholeness achieved through the adolescent stage via the experience of an identity crisis. Adolescence is marked as a tumultuous period for young people where in order to feel wholesome they “must feel a progressive continuity...between that which he conceives himself to be and that which he perceives others to see in him and to expect of him” (Erikson, 1968, p. 91). An identity crisis, according to

Erikson (1968), develops as a result of identity confusion because an individual fails to achieve a secure identity. This makes it difficult to gain a sense of purpose and clarity around what their role is in life. Thus, the identity crisis an individual experiences involves a period of exploration and experiment which then leads the individual to make a decision or commitment to their cultural identity and background.

Tupuola (2004) refers to achieved identity status models to understand and consider how second and third generation youth of Pacific descent in Aotearoa/New Zealand and other locations worldwide achieve their identity status. These are predominantly Western models that “accentuate a universal expectation of youth to reach an ultimate sense of self or single identity” (p. 87). Furthermore, the identity crisis an individual experiences involves a period of exploration and experiment which then leads the individual to make a decision or commitment to their cultural identity and background. She argues that the Pacific youth participants in her study construct their sense of identity by appropriating and adopting global identities and by weaving between both global and local cultures in order to make sense of themselves and the world around them. Tupuola’s (2004) research highlights societal and global influences that not only influence identity construction but demonstrate the complex tasks that parents manage when it comes to the interests of their children. Popular culture and external influences beyond familial and cultural values present additional factors, and at times challenges, that parents manage while nurturing the identity development of children.

In light of Tupuola’s (2004) view of Pacific youth identity construction, the presence of the Pacific diaspora across the globe means that there is a phenomenal diversity of Pacific identities that are uniquely created, developed, and influenced within every corner of the world. What does all this mean for parents raising children of mixed Pacific identities? It could be argued that parents who purposefully teach children to value their cultural identities support them to be resilient against opposed opinions. However, parents do not have the capacity to control negative situations or interactions; nor are they necessarily aware of the turmoil that children process and internalise.

### **Pacific identities in Aotearoa/New Zealand – a blended mix.**

The increasingly diverse Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand signals the necessity for robust discussions around the value of culture and language and what it means to be a Pacific person in Aotearoa/New Zealand today. Tupuola (1998) addresses the issue of labelling and stereotyping of New Zealand-born Samoans as a deficit to positive identity development; expectations of “who is a Samoan” is often a source of conflict between New Zealand-born and Island-born Samoans. The marginalisation of a New Zealand-born individual from the Island-born cohort can be detrimental to the subjective wellbeing of an individual and the way they view themselves as a Pacific person. Tupuola (1998, cited in Tupuola, 2004) found that the participants in her doctoral study rejected the ethnic/cultural identities imposed on them by their peers and elders as labels appear to essentialise Samoan youth in Aotearoa/New Zealand as being the same. In an earlier research, Taule’ale’ausumai (1990) found that marginalisation influences New Zealand-born Samoans to re-evaluate their identity and affinity to the values of *Fa’a Samoa*. This research highlighted the generational differences and identity tensions experienced by the New Zealand-born cohort whose knowledge and experience of *Fa’a Samoa* and values were sometimes in conflict with that of Island-born Samoans.

Macpherson (2001) writes about the emergence of new Pacific identities influenced by social and environmental factors and the gradual dilution of traditional Pacific knowledge, values, and languages across the generations, casting wide open the discourse of redefining what it means to be Pacific. Mila-Schaaf (2010) notes the term “New Zealand-born” is problematic and that identity for the second generation (children of migrants to Aotearoa/New Zealand) is “the intergenerational politics of cultural reproduction in a diasporic context” (p. 256). Identity construction for the second and future generations, then, becomes an experience that is navigated through political terrains where an individual’s identity construct is not viewed in the same way by others around them.

Mackley-Crump (2015) like many others refers to the edgewalking concept (Tupuola, 2004) and polycultural capital (Mila-Schaaf, 2010) to examine the identity tensions and processes experienced by the Pacific diaspora in Aotearoa/New Zealand. His research addresses how Pacific festivals act as a conduit for the healthy negotiation of identity, place, and belonging for the Pacific diasporic population. Mackley-Crump (2015) coined the metaphorical concept of “mooring posts” to describe the notion of identity construction as a fluid and continuously evolving phenomenon for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Like the edgewalking concept, the notion of mooring posts challenges the perceptions of the diasporic identity as a lost, in-between cause unable to find a stable sense of belonging and identity. Rather, mooring posts posit that Pacific diasporic populations have a multilocal sense of belonging attached to multiple moorings that change with the ebb and flow of the contextual currents that one is connected to. Parents then, are navigators who have an impact in guiding and determining which mooring posts shape and influence the identity construction of their children.

### **Ethnicity and culture.**

This section discusses culture and ethnicity as powerful determinants of identity, and also frames the definitions and contexts used for this research. Culture is present in every facet of identity (Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2008) and is often used by people when referring to their heritage or family backgrounds that define who they are. Thaman (1995) describes culture “as a way of life of a discrete group of people. It includes language together with an associated body of accumulated knowledge, understandings, skills, beliefs and values” (p. 723). Mila-Schaaf (2010) describes culture as “a knowledge tradition which has a discursive unity and which is always evolving, always contested involving political struggle over the production of meaning” (p. 95). The context in which Mila-Schaaf describes culture highlights the shift in dynamics and for the mixed Pacific generation; this will continue to evolve through the unique mix of cultural identities distinct to the New Zealand-born experience.

Statistics New Zealand refers to ethnicity as the

ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel they belong to. Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Ethnicity is self-perceived and people can belong to more than one ethnic group. (2015, para 1).

Attention is paid to Statistics New Zealand's interpretation of ethnicity as this Government Department leads and generates the national collection and analysis of data through Census New Zealand. The importance of defining ethnicity and understanding the census ethnic data can help policymakers understand social demographic factors and inequalities across a wide range of sectors. Defining the ethnicity data for Pacific peoples remains important to the understanding of the barriers and issues impacting educational underachievement, poverty, unemployment, and poor health statistics. Such data provides crucial information for policy makers and influences the distribution of funding and resources in areas that call for improved living conditions and equality of opportunities.

Ting-Toomey (2005, cited in Samovar et al., 2008, p. 113) defines ethnicity or ethnic identity as being "derived from a sense of shared heritage, history, traditions, values, similar behaviours, area of origin and in some instances language"; this definition reflects quite closely the features of culture described by Thaman (1995). Gray's (2001) research on Pacific perspectives of ethnicity, reviews the way ethnicity is recorded in the census and official social statistics to reflect the changing nature of people's perception of ethnicity over time. This is reinforced in the research findings of Carter, Hayward, Blakely, and Shaw (2009) that ethnic mobility in Aotearoa/New Zealand is an indication of social change that is evident when people change their ethnic affiliation over time. Carter et al. looked at the proportion of people who changed their ethnic affiliation over three years and analysed the socio demographic factors that influenced them to make the change. The research found that ethnic mobility was common amongst Māori, Pacific, and young people, all whom were more likely to report multiple affiliations with more than one ethnic group. Interestingly, the research results indicate that self-identification with multiple



ethnicities is declining and that this could be caused by respondents “self-prioritising” and survey exhaustion. Factors that influence how people ethnically identify themselves over time include “social stigmatisation or alienation, changes in personal, professional or social groups, or changes in the political or economic society” (Carter et al., 2009, p. 33). Furthermore, Carter et al., (2009) hypothesise the change in ethnic affiliation within the younger population occurs as they reach an age where they can self-identify rather than having this determined or decided by the decisions of, or factors that influence, their parents.

Khawaja, Boddington, and Didham (2007) looked at ethnic data collation and noted that the traditional approach to the gathering of ethnicity data was based on the assumption that ethnicity was fixed and bound at birth. The definition of ethnicity was further extended to account for population growth and change, to acknowledge the ethnic group that an individual *feels* they belong to. In their research findings, Khawaja et al., suggest that cultural affiliation may change over time with variations in the ethnic response. They also point out that as children become more ethnically diverse they are less likely to identify with all ethnicities of their parents.

### **The role of parents in their children’s identity formation and education.**

Parents play a crucial role in the identity and cognitive development of their children. As “enablers” and agents of change, parents determine through both choice and circumstances how children learn and perceive the world around them (Webber, 2008). Child rearing and parental decisions are influenced by parents’ experiences and the presence of significant others (family and community members) which can determine the extent of cultural transmission – that is, how cultural values and Pacific identities are transmitted, perceived, and formed in the minds of their children. Because education starts in the home and is mostly structured on family and cultural values, it is important to acknowledge parents as first teachers. Mara’s (1998) research shows that Pacific students increase their contributions and efforts when they are aware



that parents and schools are both committed to them and believe in their ability to learn.

Schachter and Ventura (2008) discuss the concept of “identity agents”, individuals who are active in engaging with youth to influence positive identity formation. Identity agents are significant others that include parents and teachers who act as guides for the developing individual to transition, develop, and make sense of the surrounding environment. The concept of parental identity agency assumes that parents are dynamic and deliberate in their children’s identity formation. Through the notion of reflexivity, parents reflect on their own experience “sometimes adopting them, sometimes adapting them, and sometimes rejecting them” (Schachter & Ventura, 2008, p. 471).

Schachter & Ventura (2008) call for the need to recognise identity agents as fundamental to positive identity development, stating that identity development theories have predominantly focussed on the individual as the sole reflective agent in the identity formation process. This parallels Vygotsky’s (1978) view that adults are influential in the cognitive development of the child and that cognitive development occurs through interaction and socialisation with significant others in their environment. MacIntyre (2008) reviews Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory to explore factors influencing the contribution of Tongan mothers to their children’s education. The Tongan mothers in MacIntyre’s research are agents of culture, operating from their own cultural values, practices, and beliefs to teach their children. In this sense, the child’s interaction with mothers is cultural and influenced by the mothers own life experiences. Furthermore, MacIntyre states that mothers, as guiding adult figures, are key players in the child’s development and largely determine the teachings, socialisation and interactions with significant others in their environment.

Phinney and Chavira’s (1995) research on ethnic identity among adolescents in immigrant families, found that parents have a crucial role in helping children to prepare and deal with situations of stereotyping and discrimination. The research identified that children whose parents had frank discussions about

culture, ethnic identity, and discrimination were more likely to be conscious of societal issues and better prepared to deal with uncomfortable situations. Further, Phinney and Chavira (1995) found that parents who were explicit in teaching children to live in a diverse society tended to have adolescents with stronger ethnic affiliations. In a later study on ethnic identity among adolescents in immigrant families, Phinney, Romero, Nava, and Huang (2001) found that parents and peers played an integral role in the ethnic identity formation of their offspring. Phinney et al. (2001) identified parental attitude and values towards cultural maintenance as a determining factor of ethnic identity development and that this was significantly achieved via the promotion of speaking ethnic languages in the home.

Memory has been described as being critical to identity formation and is influenced by the constructs of social interactions that shape and define identity and sense of self (Rocha, 2010). Rocha (2010) examined the concept of memory to explore mixed ethnic identity whereby participants drew on contradiction and reconciliation experiences of acceptance, finding that these experiences had a significant impact on personal identity and the sense of belonging to the groups they affiliated with. Webber (2008) talks of marginalisation as a key factor to developing a sense of belonging and positive ethnic development for individuals of mixed Māori/Pākehā heritage. Her research looked to highlight the experiences, challenges, and benefits of being of mixed Māori/Pākehā descent. She found that marginalisation influenced individuals to either reconceptualise their identities in their own terms or to resist the “essentialised conceptions of ethnicity” (p. 111). It could then be argued that for parents raising children of mixed ethnicities, memories that draw on both positive and negative experiences of marginalisation, can determine how a parent chooses to teach and pass on cultural values and practices. Therefore, parents as identity agents have central roles in managing and determining which cultural values, knowledge, languages, and practices will nurture the cultural identities of their children.

### **Ethnic intermarriages.**

A historical account of ethnic intermarriages in Aotearoa/New Zealand illustrates the political and social change of attitudes towards the acceptance of “race-mixing” between Māori and Pākehā. Wanhalla’s (2013) book, *Matters of the Heart*, explores the history of interracial marriages between Māori and Pākehā in Aotearoa/New Zealand during the early colonial period and spans across the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Early historical accounts show the tensions and political turmoil experienced by couples in an environment where interracial relationships were perceived as immoral practice and not widely and openly accepted. Wanhalla (2013) details societal attitude, racism, and the development of racial policies in the early colonial period that set out to intervene and manage racial liaisons that were not socially accepted. However, in light of the racial tensions in the 1970s between Pākehā, Māori, and other minority groups including Pacific peoples, Jock McEwan – the Secretary for Māori and Island Affairs at the time – saw intermarriage as a means of diffusing tension and bringing about acceptance of cultural differences and values (as cited in Wanhalla, 2013, p. 162). Racism remains deeply ingrained in society as it continues to evolve through today’s generations, also evident in New Zealand’s history of race relations between Māori and Pākehā (O’Sullivan, 2007; Wanhalla, 2013).

Research undertaken by Callister, Didham, and Potter (2005) on ethnic intermarriage in Aotearoa/New Zealand found that ethnic combinations were becoming more complex with more intermarriages occurring between Māori and Pacific peoples. Intermarriage has complex outcomes in terms of cultural sharing and ethnic identity and this is reflected in Macpherson’s (2001) views that children of intermarriages will have very different views of their “islandness” than their Island-born parents. Whether this serves as an advantage or disadvantage for the mixed Pacific generation, it is important to note the role of parents in nurturing cultural identity development and facilitating a sense of belonging to the families and cultures their children affiliate to. With over 60% of the New Zealand Pacific population born in Aotearoa/New Zealand, this will potentially see a shift of the next generation,

whose experience of islandness may not be that different to the experience of their own New Zealand-born parents. What would this islandness look like? Will their Pacific identity be laden with connotations of a diluted culture once connected to a Pacific paradise and now only a distant memory? The process of making ethnic choice has been identified by Kukutai and Callister (2009) as being problematic for children of mixed Pacific ethnicity. In addition to parental ethnicities, Kukutai and Callister recognise that ethnic identification is influenced by structural factors like the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood and ethnic group statuses. Other indicators include personal, family, and contextual factors that look at extracting the details of “how, where and why ethnic identification was elicited” (2009, p. 18).

In terms of looking at factors that determine a shift in identities, ethnic intermarriage is commonly referred to as the site or agency of change where individuals/peoples are either assimilated into a dominant culture or acculturated. Acculturation is the process of acquiring a second culture, where assimilation refers to the process of subsuming and replacing one’s culture with another (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). Acculturation and assimilation can be used to understand, but not define, the process of shifting Pacific identities amongst the mixed Pacific ethnicity generation, although greater attention and detail would need to be taken to capture the diversity of this particular cohort. Gorinski and Fraser (2006) argue that under the acculturation process, educational underachievement and failure is due to the ethnic minority groups and Pacific learners possessing inadequate skills and cultural capital. The acculturation and assimilation process as it is exhibited within ethnic intermarriages, would appear to be a potential area for further research to understand the shifting dynamics of Pacific identities and why a particular ethnic identity is valued or preferred by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities.

### **Mixed Pacific ethnicities.**

The lack of multi-ethnic research and literature about mixed Pacific ethnicities is reiterated by Sasao and Sue (1993) who point out a lack of research guidelines in an environment where multi-ethnic diversity has not always been

fully understood by researchers. They call for an astute discussion around the definition of a multi-ethnic community and the adoption of culturally appropriate methods that recognise the inter/intra diversities.

Manuela and Sibley (2014) carried out extensive quantitative research to develop the Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale, which is constructed on a five factor model. Their research found that those with mixed Pacific/non Pacific ethnicity (European) were more likely to experience lower levels of subjective well-being compared to the mono-ethnic Pacific and multi-ethnic Pacific/Pacific participants. Further research findings from Manuela and Sibley's 2014 research found that identity tensions are often created through the familial factor caused by opposing cultural values and beliefs; rejection from either/both sides of the family; inability to speak the language; and family and societal attitudes and stereotypes, all which can make for a tumultuous experience for the mixed Pacific generation. According to the research findings of Manuela and Sibley (2014) identity tension occurs for those with multi-ethnic affiliation because

multi-ethnic affiliation promotes a greater endorsement of the attitudes and stereotypes held by the majority (European) group, which causes Pacific people of mixed ancestry who identify jointly as European to internalize negative affect toward Pacific peoples, and thus toward that aspect of their own identity. (p. 323)

Manuela and Sibley (2014) view their research findings as an emerging social problem and call for a programme that promotes positive in-group perceptions towards Pacific people – that is, promoting a sense of pride and valuing one's "Pacificness" in ways that challenge the negative stereotypes expressed toward Pacific peoples by others in society. Kedell (2014), in her commentary of Sibley and Manuela's Pacific Identity and Wellbeing Scale, suggests that "in the complex world of ethnic identifications, it may well be that both dynamics are operating, that is, the internalisation of negative societal beliefs as well as demands for authenticity from Pacific groups, are combining to lower self-esteem scores". (p. 1292). Programmes that are identity affirming

could also potentially unlock the complexity of managing negative societal perceptions and low levels of subjective wellbeing for parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities, particularly when there are two or more ethnicities. The promotion of identity education or affirmation programmes can only support and encourage parents to value the uniqueness personified in the ethnic makeup of their children.

In measuring Māori wellbeing, Durie (2006) sees there being no single measure of wellbeing and articulates the parameters of wellbeing through three levels; the individual level, collectives level and populations levels, where Māori wellbeing is holistic and influenced by the interactions of others and the dynamics of their surrounding environment. Durie (2006) further states that in order for Māori youth to be global citizens of the world, they need to be able to live as Māori and attain a cultural identity that has been nourished through *te reo Māori*, *tikanga* and resources. He argues that education plays a crucial role in facilitating and enhancing Māori wellbeing and notes that where there has been an absence of interaction of an individual within *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) then educational outcomes are incomplete. While this is framed from a Māori perspective and based on Māori-specific measurements, the validity of cultural identity as a link to positive wellbeing and education is further reaffirmed from a cross-cultural perspective. Durie (2006) proclaims that cultural identity is central to becoming global citizens and achieving academic success.

The recognition of developing students' identities in the New Zealand school curriculum encouraged classroom content that is inclusive and empowering for all students (Siteine, 2010). Siteine (2010) argued that identity affirmation of Pacific students is directly influenced by teachers and the choices they make in regards to the content of classroom programmes. She found that teachers need to be conscious of the influence they pose on identity affirmation opportunities for students, as what they teach in regards to Pacific identity is forced as opposed to affirming an identity. Furthermore, Siteine suggests that "this deserves careful attention, particularly with reference to Pasifika students because ideological understandings of Pasifika identity,

deficit views and the lack of choice about identity can serve to promote fixed, unrealistic, fragmented and singular identities” (2010, p. 9). The research findings of Manuela and Sibley (2014) and Siteine (2010) demonstrate the myriad of internal factors and external conditions impacting the identity development of Pacific peoples. It is clear that programmes that cultivate identity affirmation is necessary to create positive learning conditions and an environment that encourages a strong sense of belonging.

Blank, Houkamau, and Kingi’s (2016) comparative study investigated the impact of unconscious bias in education on Māori and African American students. Unlike stereotypes which are often explicit and based on consciously made assumptions, unconscious bias refers to a bias that individuals are unaware of that occurs automatically when people make quick judgements and assessments of other people and situations. Blank et al., (2016) state that various forms of racism work together to perpetuate Māori disadvantage, regardless of socio-economic factors. This includes personal and interpersonal racism personified in the views, attitudes, and stereotypes of a person; and institutional racism triggered by institutional structures that effect inequitable access to resources. Unconscious bias in education is presumed detrimental to Māori educational performance and outcomes as Māori children are faced with assumptions that limit their true learning capacity and capability. Further, Blank et al., claim that ingrained racist beliefs may impact Māori if they are aware of the negative stereotypes and low expectations placed on them. The study of Blank et al., (2016) recognises that addressing unconscious bias is key to unlocking ingrained stereotypes and assumptions that impact teacher relationships with Māori students. When this is addressed, racism can be confronted and the lifting of Māori educational achievement can be realised.

What then are the impacts of unconscious bias on Pacific educational outcomes? Māori and Pacific educational outcomes are similar yet founded on a different historical journey and experience within Aotearoa/New Zealand (Blank et al., 2016; Education Counts, 2016; Sorenson, Jensen, Rigamoto, & Pritchard, 2015; Statistics New Zealand, 2014; Macpherson et al., 2001). The



process of addressing unconscious bias aims to shift the perceptions of those who are biased and works to the directive of “looking in your own backyard first” before making judgement of others. Using the concept of unconscious bias in education seeks to create self-awareness that can lead to behavioural change once people are aware of their own biasness. While there appears to be little research on the impact of unconscious bias and Pacific people, and more specifically to this research, the mixed Pacific generation, it is clear that parents are instrumental in raising consciousness in their children – that is, to aid the development of a strong sense of self, cultural pride, and an awareness of the unique cultural differences of others they interact with.

### **Mixed Pacific identities, culture, and learning.**

Some significant points to note from this literature review are, firstly, the importance of understanding the diversity of Pacific learners, and, secondly, that educational inequalities cannot be addressed within the educational institutions alone but in collaboration with the family and community to which the learner belongs. A third point to consider is the influence of environmental factors that a learner is immersed and socialised in. Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) human ecology development theory provides a useful framework to understand the environmental layers that influence and shape the development of an individual. Although Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework is underpinned by Western notions of human development, it illustrates the impact of internal and external dynamics in the way parents raise children of mixed Pacific ethnicities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Human development in the context of the ecological environment surrounding an individual is:

the study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life course, between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by the relations between these settings and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p. 107)



Links between the findings of this research and Bronfenbrenner's theory are presented in the discussion chapter.

Increasingly, schools appear to not only be sites of educational learning opportunities, but they also provide opportunities for cultural and language learning. This suggests that, in some cases, outside of families schools are the only means of cultural knowledge learning as parents have minimal access to resources of language and culture. Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2014) study explored the identity construction of male Pacific youth at secondary school through their participation in the school's Polynesian (Poly) Club, seeking to understand the link between being a member of the Poly club, identity and other aspects of their schooling and communities. She argues that the validation of Pacific knowledge is critical to positive educational experiences as identity (language and culture) is central to the construction of learning and knowledge development. In her research she asserts that identity is the cornerstone for Pacific youth to gain a sense of belonging in the spaces that they learn, live, and socialise in. Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2014) research found that Poly club was a significant site for students to reinforce their sense of belonging as a brotherhood. For the Samoan participants in her study, Poly club membership was a mechanism to learn and reinforce the values of *Fa'a Samoa*. Fairbairn-Dunlop notes that the identity construction of these students and the manner in which they learnt about the values of *Fa'a Samoa* was adapted through Poly clubs and grounded within the Aotearoa/New Zealand experience.

The changing demographics of the Pacific population means that ethnicity has taken on new meanings. It spurs a call for research on best practises for improved outcomes for Pacific peoples, service delivery, and future policies to consider the growing diversity. It also calls for the need to understand the social relationships for all stakeholders in Pacific education research. Jones's well-documented research entitled "At school I've got a chance" (1986) outlines the dichotomy that students struggle with in maintaining cultural behaviours and expectations of both the school and home. Pacific students in Jones' research often struggled to work within the Western style and

expectation of learning through asking questions, critiquing work (and work of others), and critical analysis. This was difficult for Pacific learners for whom questioning an elder or person of authority is at odds with Pacific cultural norms of behaviour. Respect, an intrinsic value common to many Pacific nations, cautions one to show regard when dealing with people. For some Pacific learners, to question a teacher is seen as being disrespectful and can consequently impede academic achievement.

The Ethnic Interface model was developed by Samu (2006) as a tool to enhance educators' understanding of the intra-group diversities of Pacific learners and to value the connection between culture and education. The model aims to facilitate quality teaching by helping teachers to develop self-awareness, unpack educational issues and concerns for specific groups, and to consider cultural expectations when teaching diverse students. Samu's (2006) model illustrates the dynamics of power and privilege within the education sectors, demonstrating the power imbalance between the Pasifika cultural capital and European/Pākehā cultural capital. According to Samu (2006), educators need to be critically aware of the power imbalance if equity is to be achieved for minority and diverse students. Educators need to also be aware of the identity issues surrounding the New Zealand-born mixed Pacific generation and to consider how such models are to be effective if the individuals themselves are struggling to fit in or are in conflict with how others imagine them to be.

The development of a culturally responsive education system in Aotearoa/New Zealand would mean that educators would be likely to better engage and respond to the diverse needs of Pacific learners. When cultural values, language and identities are embedded into teaching and learning practices it is likely to enhance the student learning skills and experience (Fletcher et al., 2009). Students do better in education when what and how they learn builds on what is familiar to them and positively reinforces where they come from, what they value, and what they already know.

## **Conclusion.**

A positive identity development can provide an individual with greater self-confidence and feelings of personal worth. In the context of this research, a healthy Pacific identity may contribute to a positive perception of how Pacific peoples value their personal and cultural identities leading to increased confidence as learners. This research seeks to contribute to the gap in the literature by highlighting the central role of parents in the cultural identity development of their children. This chapter has identified social interaction and external factors as influencing cultural identity development and the way in which individuals or groups maintain their identities.

This literature review suggests that Pacific identity formation is relational, situational, and strongly influenced by the environment surrounding an individual. This is important for the generation of mixed Pacific ethnicities who are not only socialised in a predominantly Westernised environment but are ethnically affiliated to more than one ethnic group. The literature draws on the links between culture, identity, ethnicity, and education: a strong cultural identity leads to increased educational outcomes – that is, a strong Pacific identity is fundamental to the wellbeing and confidence of an individual leading to enhanced educational and economic outcomes (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Hunkin-Tuileufuga, 2001; Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010; Pasikale, 1996).

## Chapter Three: Methodology

### A Little Bit of This and a Little Bit of That

This chapter details the approach and methods used to explore the experience of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. This research employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews and incorporates Pacific concepts and research tools that acknowledge indigenous knowledge systems and participants' cultural identities and experiences. The data collected was used to generate themes to consider the implications this has towards future educational prospects and opportunities for the mixed Pacific generation. This chapter draws attention to validating and constructing Pacific values, knowledge, and practices and adopts the *Kakala* Research Framework (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013; Johansson Fua, 2009; MacIntyre, 2008; Thaman, 1997; Vaioleti, 2006) to guide the research process. The concepts of *teu le va* (Airini, Anae, Mila-Schaaf, Coxon, Mara, & Sanga, 2010; Anae, 2010) and *talanoa* (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013; Johansson Fua, 2009; MacIntyre, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006) are also adopted as research tools. The *Kakala* Research Framework is also used to guide the explanation of the research approach and the chapter concludes with a discussion on research ethics.

#### **Portraying an authentic Pacific voice.**

The process of selecting an appropriate methodological framework was one of careful consideration. As the chapter title “A little bit of this and a little bit of that” suggests, this research fits within several qualitative genres and employs both Western and Pacific theories and research tools to collect and analyse data. It is qualitative in nature, uses the *Kakala* framework to approach each research stage, and utilises *teu le va* and *talanoa* for data collection and research conduct. Finding the right “fit” also warrants deep thinking and decision making around the intention of the research and who it benefits. If the overarching intention of Pacific research is to improve outcomes by transforming communities to enhance better life conditions, then it warrants

good practice and quality research that is representative, accurate, relevant, and validates the experience and needs of Pacific peoples.

Tupuola (1993) used Margaret Mead's "Coming of Age" research exploring Samoan adolescent females, as a catalyst to critique culturally insensitive methodologies. The controversy generated from Mead's 1928 research was based on claims, most notably by New Zealand anthropologist Derek Freeman, that her research was flawed as it misrepresented the Samoan culture, and in particular the young participants of Mead's study (Shankman, 2009). Tupuola (1993) noted the need for academics to recognise indigenous scholarship and knowledge in theoretical and methodological research frameworks. Using a research framework grounded in *Fa'a Samoa* values for her own research, Tupuola argued that these alternative methods were sensitive to indigenous world views and avoided exploitation of participants. While Tupuola acknowledged the shift of perceptions towards indigenous research methodologies as being scholarly and valid, she highlighted the frustrations, as a Pacific researcher, of finding ways to restructure her values and the narratives of the participants within a Western framework. For her research to be completely authentic and to avoid exploitation and ethnocentrism, Tupuola had to employ ways of prioritising the cultural needs of the researcher and participants, whereby the research was processed and written within a Samoan context.

Margaret Mead's research is an exemplar of how research data can be misconstrued because the participants' experience is interpreted and perceived according to the world view of the researcher. Although Mead and Tupuola's research was published 89 and 24 years ago respectively, the underlying significance for this study is the importance of utilising research methods that validate the voices and experiences of the participants within a culturally inclusive and sensitive framework. The use of a mixture of Pacific research tools resonates with the nature of the mixed Pacific generation in that it is diverse and varied and is not grounded within a one-way approach – that is, it cannot be confined to one space or one specific way of undertaking

research, as the mixed Pacific generation are diverse in their cultural affiliations and experience.

Anae (2010) calls for future Pacific research to be explicit about its purpose and who it is targeting, noting that the extent of Pacific diversity is not recognised in Pacific research, models, and competencies which are geared towards island-born peoples who make up a small cohort of the total Pacific population. Pacific research in this context is defined as educational research involving Pacific participants (Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001). Furthermore, Pacific research predominantly fails to recognise or differentiate the intra-diversity or variances within ethnic groups where it “glossed over and ignored the cultural complexities of multi-ethnic nature and intra-ethnic nuances” (p. 1). Tupuola (2004) further cautions scholars and educators, Pacific and non-Pacific alike, to avoid conceptualising and categorising Pacific (youth) realities under a single label as it limits the relevance of research to the experience of those being researched.

### **Research paradigm.**

This research is grounded within the social constructionism paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hjelm, 2014) as it aims to explore how parents’ construct their perceptions and practices of Pacific identities. It also seeks to deconstruct the layers of interactions that influence the cultural identities and learning development of children with mixed Pacific ethnicities. With its origins in sociology, social constructionism offers a framework to understand the human world and the sense-making process of what is deemed to be reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) were key influencers in the development of social constructionism claiming that society shapes the way people perceive the world around them and that knowledge construction exists and develops through interaction with others. In this sense, human existence is a socially constructed reality that is defined and determined through the actions of human beings. Furthermore, they posit that the things we take for granted, otherwise understood as “common sense”, are strongly influenced by historical events and social processes within both the immediate surroundings

and external forces of an individual. These in turn affect how individuals perceive themselves and/or how they are perceived by others (Giddens, 2009).

Social constructivists emphasise the importance of everyday interaction between people to understand how knowledge and reality are constructed. Constructionism and constructivism are terms that have been used interchangeably; Hjelm (2014) argues that this has blurred the distinct characteristics of each theoretical construct. Hjelm defines constructionism as a knowledge construction based on a process of social interaction through language and interaction, where the dynamics of social interaction are culturally and politically influenced. The constructivism paradigm is concerned with the cognitive function of knowledge construction where it “is constructed in the individual’s mind” (Hjelm, 2014, p. 6) as opposed to being constructed through the interactions with others.

Given that this research seeks to understand the practices, realities, and experiences of parents’ raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities, social constructionism is deemed an appropriate theoretical framework to explore how parents manage and influence the cultural identity development of their children. Furthermore, because the affiliation to more than two ethnic groups assumes that there are multiple, complex, and unique interactions taking place within the different families of an individual, social constructionism is an appropriate approach to deconstruct the social realities of both the parents and mixed Pacific generation.

### **Qualitative research.**

Qualitative research is descriptive, meaningful, and concerned with how people make sense of their lives (Flick, 2014; Liamputtong, 2013). An argument highlighted in the qualitative vs. quantitative debate is that quantitative data can be depersonalising as it ignores human values, informed opinion, and beliefs. Qualitative research is distinguished by its richness of text with a focus on relationships and personal face-to-face contact. In terms



of eliciting data, qualitative research is more concerned with the process of attaining data than outcomes or products (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). On the premise that qualitative research is exploratory, contextual, and elicits constructed realities which enable us to better understand the lived experience of participants, it is deemed appropriate for this study.

### ***Teu le va.***

Engaging with Pacific peoples in a way that is inclusive, all-informing, and transparent is critical in Pacific research. The *teu le va* concept is a Pacific research methodology concerned with the relational context and space between stakeholders (Anae, 2010). *Teu le va* is a Samoan reference to space (*va*) or, in a more philosophical context, the space which pinpoints reciprocal relationships at the centre of which people need “to value, cherish, nurture and take care of the *va*, the relationship” (Anae, 2010, p. 2). The concept of *teu le va* has been popularised in recent Pacific research (Airini et al., 2010; Anae, 2010) and is useful to define and conceptualise Pacific identity in relation to others.

*Teu le va* in research urges educational researchers to work together. Airini et al. (2010) use *teu le va* to promote and value collaborative relationships that lead to quality and authentic outcomes (p. 9). These relationships need to be mutually empowering and authentically portray Pacific voices, issues, and concerns of learners, families, and communities. *Teu le va* provides a guide for the researcher’s engagement with participants and views reciprocal relationships as a central tenet in the recommendations that evolve from the research findings.

### ***Kakala* research framework.**

Vaiioleti (2006) argues that Western research frameworks and processes are not reciprocal in nature or based on mutual benefits. The *kakala* metaphor (Thaman, 1997) on the other hand is grounded in Tongan values and principles and, as it is culturally inclusive and incorporates Pacific values, has been popularised in Pacific research (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013; Johansson



Fua, 2009; MacIntyre, 2008; Vaioleti; 2006). Thaman's *Kakala* metaphor was developed as a framework for education based on the process of making a garland (*kakala*) of special fragrant flowers. The metaphor symbolises three stages (*Teu*, *Toli*, and *Tui*) applied in the context of teaching and learning and guiding research. The *Kakala* Research Framework (Johansson Fua, 2009) expands on Thaman's *Kakala* educational framework to a six-stage approach that incorporates evaluation and monitoring components (*Luva*, *Mālie*, and *Māfana*). It is also used to guide the processes of engaging with Pacific participants to establish relationships and information development that is culturally meaningful and inclusive. As a research framework, *Kakala* conceptualises teaching and learning of indigenous Pacific worldviews and also reflects the importance of reviewing and monitoring the research process beyond the theory and research outcome process (Johansson Fua, 2009). In this sense, the expanded framework asks the researcher/s to think thoroughly about the processes of each stage so that the research is ethically, culturally, and methodologically sound.

I used the expanded six-stage *Kakala* research framework (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013; Johansson Fua, 2009) to guide the process of this research and have used these stages to structure the methodology chapter in the same way that Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) structured and titled their research report. An explanation of each stage will be given both in the context of making the *kakala* garland and how it is applied to this research. The use of the expanded *kakala* framework incorporates integral Pacific values of respect and reciprocity that is genuine in its intent of engaging in meaningful conversations, as the participant are positioned at the core of the research process.

### ***Teu* (Conceptualisation and Preparation)**

The first stage, *Teu*, refers to the preparation stage. Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) describe this as the conceptualisation stage where the preparation, construction, and gifting of the garland is carefully and strategically thought through. In the making of a *kakala*, careful thought is given to the types of flowers and embellishments to be used, and this depends on who the *kakala* is for and the significance of the occasion.

Likewise, within a research context, careful consideration of the research purpose and how the research is to be carried out is important (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013). In the conceptualisation stage of this research, I, as the researcher deliberated over the research objectives and research questions to clarify who and what the intended focus of the research is – is it concerned with the future of the mixed Pacific generation, or of the parents who, themselves, are of mixed heritage? Is it concerned with the subjective wellbeing of the mixed Pacific generation and how they imagine themselves to be and are imagined by others (Mila-Schaaf, 2010)? I was also guided by my co-supervisors through regular discussions to clarify the research objectives and carrying out of initial tasks. In light of employing a thorough research methodology, the discussion on the role of the researcher and sampling of participants is included in the *Teu* section as it recognises the need for the positionality of the researcher to be explicitly and thoroughly thought through. The discussion on the sampling of the research details the rationale of the participant selection and ethnic identification, all important aspects in the conceptualisation and preparation of this research.

### **The role of the researcher.**

It is imperative that the role of the researcher is made explicitly clear at the outset to avoid conflict of interest, personal bias, and data interference. Chu Abella and Paurini (2013) assert that an insider researcher is able to provide a subjective voice, based on inside knowledge of a subject or group of people. My position as an insider researcher is defined by my role as a mother/parent, the pre-established relationship with participants before the *talanoa* took place, and the shared commonalities of raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. However, while the researcher shares a common connection with the participants as a parent raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities, the assumption should not be made that the parents share the same cultural values, beliefs, and experience as the researcher.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) write that when a researcher shares an aspect of social identity with participants, they need to be cautious about assuming that they understand the participants' experience just because they share a

cultural affiliation. Moreover, sharing a social identity does not mean that the interview will be seamless or that understanding will be shared. The notion of reflexivity is mirrored here; researchers bring their own biasness – which includes their own positions/status and personal perspectives – to the research. This means that any experiences, beliefs, and personal history of the researcher that might influence the research are acknowledged. Reflexivity positions the researcher to consciously reflect on their input to the construction of the data (Flick, 2014) and to consider the limitations of the research. Reflexivity is crucial to establishing the integrity and critical abilities of researchers, which, in turn, ensures that interpretation is valid and grounded within the data. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016) pre-established rapport with participants assumes easy access, reduces time expenditure, and builds trusting relationships, all of which increase the quality of qualitative data. On the one hand, this may facilitate access to inside knowledge and free flowing *talanoa*; on the other hand, participants may not want to divulge or share experiences, preferring to keep mutual boundaries.

MacIntyre (2008) discusses the need for researchers to be transparent and wary of the different hats they wear, particularly when the participants are known to the researcher. In her PhD thesis, MacIntyre describes the shifting perception of Tongan mothers towards her as both an insider and outsider as creating pressure on her role as a researcher. As an insider researcher, she shared similar values as a mother, a Tongan, fluent in the Tongan language and well versed in Tongan culture. On the other hand, her role as an educator, academic, and well respected community leader placed her as an outsider, which at times impacted the response and behaviour of the Tongan mothers to questions asked in the interviews. The wearing of different hats also cautions the researcher to be aware of the perception and assumptions of power associated with the shifting positionality of the researcher. It is, therefore, important to consider the insider position that I hold as a researcher, as the nature of the conversations are not the usual, casual chats; rather they are in-depth “serious” conversation involving analysing, thinking, and reflecting on matters which may in turn distract the parents from participating naturally

and comfortably. To address this, I looked to *teu le va* and chose to engage parents through a series of contacts (described in the data collection section). This created an informal and relaxed environment where participating parents were able to reflect and make sense of their life experiences.

### **Sampling.**

Purposive sampling was used to select five couples raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities (Silverman, 2013). All participants are known to the researcher through personal, family, and professional connections. The variation of ethnic identification given by the parents was noted particularly when referring to the non-Pacific ethnicities. The terms English, British, Pākehā, Kiwi, European, and New Zealand European were used variously, and at times, differently by both the mother and father to describe the non-Pacific ethnicities of their children. Some parents preferred the term New Zealand European as it defined their experience and upbringing in New Zealand. While Pākehā is my preferred term, in this research the terms used are those used by the five interviewed couples to identify their own ethnicities and the ethnic combination of their children: Family one – Samoan, Niuean, Māori, and Pākehā; Family two – Tokelauan, Cook Island, Māori, Samoan, and English; Family three – Māori, Samoan, and New Zealand European; Family four – Tokelauan, Samoan, and New Zealand European; and Family five – Tokelauan, Pākehā, Samoan, and Māori. While it is evident that all the children are part-Samoan, and/or part Māori or Tokelauan, this research is not ethnic specific and is concerned with outlining the key issues/challenges derived from raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. This research does not assume that there is a large mixed ethnic population in the Samoan, Māori, or Tokelauan communities, nor does this research make claim that the mixed ethnic population is a characteristic that affects or defines the local Samoan, Māori, and Tokelauan communities. The following table presents a summary of the participants, their ethnicities, schooling of both parents and children, and the languages used at home. All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

# TABLE OF PARTICIPANT PROFILES

PARENT PARTICIPANTS (Pseudonyms have been used to protect the parents' identities)	ETHNICITY OF PARTICIPANTS (as defined by the participants)	PLACE OF BIRTH	SCHOOLING (Highest Qualification)	SCHOOLING (Participants' children)	MAIN LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME (in order of most commonly spoken language)
<b>Sera Joseph</b>	Samoaan/Tokelauan New Zealand European	New Zealand New Zealand Sera's parents: Samoa/Tokelau Joseph's parents: New Zealand	Secondary Secondary	University Secondary school Primary school	English Samoan
<b>Faith Tikei</b>	New Zealand European Māori/Samoan	New Zealand New Zealand Faith's parents: New Zealand Tikei's parents: New Zealand/Samoa	Tertiary Professional*	Primary school Primary school	English Māori
<b>Ngaire Thomas</b>	Māori/Pākehā Tokelauan/Samoan	New Zealand New Zealand Ngaire's parents: New Zealand Thomas' parents: Tokelau/Samoa	Tertiary Professional*	Secondary school Secondary school Kura kaupapa	English Māori
<b>Teuila Hone</b>	Samoaan/British Māori/Niuean	New Zealand New Zealand Teuila's parents: Samoa/New Zealand Hone's parents: New Zealand	Tertiary Tertiary	University Secondary school Kohanga reo	English Māori/Samoan
<b>Terina Rangi</b>	Cook Islands/Māori Samoan/Tokelauan/English	New Zealand New Zealand Terina's parents: Cook Islands/New Zealand Rangi's parents: New Zealand/Tokelau	Tertiary Secondary	Secondary school Primary school Primary	English Māori

\*Professional includes skills/courses required for employment upskilling

## ***Toli* (Data Collection, Methodology)**

*Toli kakala* is described by MacIntyre (2008) as a delicate process of carefully selecting and hand picking the flowers for the garland. It is important to note the hierarchical aspect of *kakala* making as there are certain flowers and leaves that are used according to the status of the person who is to receive it and what the occasion is for. *Toli* in the research process refers to the data collection and methodological approach. *Talanoa* is included in the *Toli* section to illustrate and detail the data collection process used in this research.

### ***Talanoa.***

As an alternative to the more traditional structured research interview process, *talanoa* is increasingly preferred for data collection in Pacific research. In the traditional context across the Pacific nations of Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji, *talanoa* was central to the process of informing, exchanging, and imparting information concerning the welfare and operationalisation of villages and communities (Vaiotele, 2006). *Talanoa* is defined as a conversation; to tell a story, to inform and announce (Vaiotele, 2006) and it can be formal and informal, complex and flexible, and a channel for the sharing of ideas (Johansson Fua, 2009). Vaiotele argues that *talanoa* is most appropriate to draw out authentic Pacific experiences that lead to relevant outcomes where it “allows contextual interaction with Pacific participants to occur that creates a more authentic knowledge, which may lead to solutions for Pacific issues” (2006, p. 23). Furthermore, “*talanoa* as a tool allows Pacific peoples to identify issues, co-create knowledge and solutions for themselves leading to findings that are trustworthy, relevant and widely supported by Pacific peoples” (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 33).

*Talanoa*, then, culturally validates Pacific values and generates both critical discussions and free flowing conversations between the researcher and participants (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013) and validates the voice and authentic experience of the researched (Vaiotele, 2006). In this sense, outcomes are meaningful and interpreted within their cultural context. Similar to in-depth interviewing, *talanoa* requires the ability to listen attentively and infers a free flowing conversation where the research and participants are not

time bound or controlled by a rigid framework. In an unstructured and informal discussion, *talanoa* is centred on ideas for the participant to reflect upon, critique, and talk about. Thus, this process of creating and initiating unstructured discussions to build relationships and stories between the researcher and participant was used as a tool for data collection.

### **Data Collection.**

All participants were fully briefed on the research before the *talanoa* and given ample time to decide whether they wanted to participate in the research. Time and care are important factors in nurturing a good relationship between the researcher and participants. Acquiring participants' informed consent ensures that participants understand the purpose of the research, the significance of their input, and that they can decline to answer any question. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Throughout the duration of the research project, a series of contacts with the participating parents was made:

- First contact            Parents were informally approached either through email and/or phone call
- Second contact        Background and purpose of research, ethics, and consent form was explained to participants
- Third contact            Consent forms were collected and then the *talanoa* with parents proceeded
- Fourth contact        Parents were sent the transcript to check for accuracy
- Fifth contact            Parents were informed of progress and sent the "Authority to Release transcript" forms
- Sixth contact            Summary of research to be given on completion of thesis

The series of contact encouraged meaningful engagement and worked around the availability and schedule of the parents. The *talanoa* sessions were held with each individual couple and took place in their homes. A list of questions used to semi-structure the *talanoa* (see appendix 5) was offered to participants



to allow them to prepare in advance and seek clarification if need be. Braun and Clarke (2006) point out the importance of distinguishing between the research questions and the questions asked in the interview. In light of this, the *talanoa* questions were carefully aligned with the research questions as a way of keeping the *talanoa* focused and in line with the research objectives. Before the start of each *talanoa*, parents were reminded of their rights to withdraw from participating in the study as stipulated on the signed consent form. All *talanoa* sessions were recorded using a personal smart phone and then transferred to a secure computer directory only accessible by the researcher. The files saved on the personal smart phone was deleted once each *talanoa* was transcribed. All *talanoa* interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The duration of the *talanoa* with parents averaged an hour and a half and as a small token of appreciation food was taken to the families.

During the research process one couple decided to withdraw after the *talanoa*. This request was respectfully acknowledged and an email was sent to thank them. The couple was advised that all material/data generated from their *talanoa* would be removed from the study. As there was sufficient data from the other five couples I continued with writing the findings with no perceived impact on the research themes generated.

### ***Tui* (Data Analysis)**

The *tui* stage is the weaving of the *kakala*, and, in the context of research, the metaphor is applied to the data analysis stage; the synthesising of information, and crafting the research into a coherent report.

#### **Thematic analysis.**

While thematic analysis is closely aligned with the grounded theory approach (Flick, 2014) in that both adopt practices of coding and generating broader data patterns, unlike grounded theory, thematic analysis does not aim to produce theories from the data and offers very practical steps to undertake the analysis. In this research Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis method was used to analyse the data to identify patterns and organise these into themes.



In the first stage, repeated reading of the transcripts enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data. During this stage, the data was first read, followed by writing of minimal notes. Repeated reading became a process of active reading by purposefully highlighting extracts and common words. Towards the end of this stage I used the four central research questions to guide my reading while searching for meanings and patterns.

The second stage involves generating initial codes produced from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that at this stage, the researcher needs to decide whether to use semantic codes and/or latent codes, the latter referring to data that has underlying meanings and is not explicit and obvious. Semantic codes employ surface level data that is explicit and rich in detail.

The third stage is concerned with examining the codes for themes and it was at this stage that I began to collate quotes/data extracts into organised themes.

The fourth stage requires the researcher to review the themes. With the aim of refining the generated themes I used the research questions as a guide to organise themes and sub-themes. During this process the themes and quotes were also re-organised into four categories as defined by the four research questions to identify significant themes.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) fifth stage suggests defining and naming themes. Defining the themes was aided by writing an outline analysis of the themes. This analysis was a detailed account of the key signifiers/characteristics of the themes and how each linked back to the research objectives.

The sixth stage involves the writing up of the findings and this is presented in Chapter Four.

### ***Luva* (Presentation of Findings)**

*Luva*, the pinnacle process of the *kakala*, refers to the proud gifting of the final piece to the honoured recipient. MacIntyre (2008) explains that in the research context, *luva* should be a reciprocal and mutual exchange where the

participants are respectfully informed and gifted with the knowledge and information of the research process they have contributed to. The researcher is also gifted through the shared exchange of lived experiences and realities of the participants. As an imperative follow up in this study, the participants were informed of the research results and given a brief summary of the completed research project. This acknowledged their contribution to the research project as it enabled participants to see how their participation contributed to a body of knowledge that seeks to ensure positive life and learning outcomes for the future Pacific generation.

### ***Mālie* (Relevancy and Worthwhileness)**

Chu, Abella and Paurini (2013) refer to *mālie* as a reflective stage where both the recipient and maker/s reflect on the relevance of the research and whether its objectives and outcomes are worthwhile. As the *Kakala* Research Framework is constructed on a process that is deliberated by carefully thought through actions, it is expected that this is reflected on throughout the research process (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013). The *talanoa* process facilitates the condition for participants to share and contribute in a way that is *mālie* to their own experience. To be authentic in carrying out research that is *mālie*, the Researcher constantly reflected on the purpose of the research throughout the research process; Who will this benefit? Will this make sense to the participants? Has the research and *talanoa* been structured in a way that is *mālie* to the participants? Is the research purpose clear?

### ***Māfana* (Application and Transformation)**

The sixth stage of the expanded *Kakala* framework considers *māfana* – that is the application, transformation, and sustainability of the research and guides the findings section to consider how this data may be applied in future research (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013). *Māfana* (loosely translated as *māhana* in Māori and several Pacific languages) means “warm” and hence the *māfana* stage comes with warm feelings and a sense of achievement which the garland maker – the researcher – is left with about the process that he/she has experienced. In this research, this experience offers both the researcher and participants an opportunity to reflect on child rearing strategies shared through

the *talanoa*. Warm feelings of mutual respect and shared common experiences are exchanged and this process is an experience that will remain within the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

### **Research limitations.**

This section considers the potential limitations of the research, particularly in terms of the sample size and how this may impact validity and reliability.

#### ***Reliability, validity and sample size***

The decision to have a small sample size takes into account the limitation of time, expenses, participant availability, and management of data. However as this was a small scale qualitative research, due care needs to be taken when looking at the results of this study and applying it to the wider population of the mixed Pacific generation. Validity in qualitative research refers to whether the findings can be deemed as trustworthy and if the interpretations are credible (Flick, 2014; Silverman, 2013). Further, respondent validation is concerned with the degree to which participants' worldview and thoughts are accurately understood by the researcher (Maxwell, 2005). This aspect of research is concerned with authenticity and research outcomes that offer a fair, honest, and balanced account of the participants' experience. To address the validity of this research, a copy of the transcript was sent to the parents to read and verify the transcripts. This corroboration ensured the *talanoa* data presented a true and accurate account of the participants' experience before beginning the data analysis stage.

The assessment of research reliability focuses on dependability and credibility and measures whether the same results or research findings can be repeated. Flick (2014) identifies the necessary process of explication to assess reliability in qualitative research; that is, the more detailed a research process is, the greater the reliability. Where possible a researcher needs to be able to check what data is true to the participant and what data is interpreted by the researcher in order to assess research reliability. Neuman (2011) highlights differing perspectives of reliability in qualitative and quantitative research, stating that quantitative research ignores the diversity of data that is collected

in qualitative research. Unlike quantitative researchers whose aim is to seek standard and fixed measures, qualitative researchers acknowledge that distinctive findings are yielded by different researchers who employ different research methods. Further, Neuman (2011) states that

this happens because data collection is an interactive process in which particular researchers operate in an evolving setting whose context dictates using a unique mix of measures that cannot be repeated...the diverse measures and interactions with different researchers are beneficial because they can illuminate different facets or dimensions of a subject matter. (p.218).

The term “mixed Pacific generation” refers to the fact that a unique blend of several cultures and participants were selected on the basis that their children were a mix of three or more ethnicities – the focus being on the number of ethnicities as opposed to the specific ethnic groups that their children were affiliated to. The ethnic mix of the participating families is varied although Māori, Tokelauan, and Samoan did appear to be a common ethnic affiliation. The limitation from using such a broad, “generic” group of mixed ethnic families is that it may not draw out detailed patterns that an ethnic-specific/common ethnic combination study would. This study has a strong focus on the shifting contexts of social and environmental interactions that influence cultural identity development.

Consideration also needs to be taken around the location and region that the subjects live and are located in. Further, common factors that may be identified in this study may be different to a study that is undertaken elsewhere in another region. It is acknowledged that a similar study may generate different findings due to the ethnic combination of the participants in this study and, as Neuman (2011) acknowledges, other research findings may yield different results based on the different research methods and skills used.

In terms of research validity and reliability, generalisability is a perceived limitation as there is potential to formulate assumptions of the mixed Pacific generation based on the findings of this research. Effectively, this is limiting

as the act of generalising assumes a broad “sameness” and employs a broad view rather than recognising unique differences or circumstances. In this situation, context becomes an important element in understanding and distinguishing the rationale and findings of research that are similar in its central area of focus.

### **Ethics.**

Tolich and Davidson (2011) list voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity as core principles of ethical research conduct. These principals seek to ensure an ethically sound research that causes no harm to participants or deceit through the misrepresentation of truth. Adhering to the core principals enables the researcher to act respectfully and appropriately and to carry out research with integrity and genuine intentions that are followed through.

As the participants in this study are known to the researcher it was important to keep the relationship mutual and respectful. This was achieved through conversations gradually leading up to the *talanoa* where participants were informed of the research purpose and background information. The *teu le va* concept of nurturing reciprocal relationships by cherishing the space between the researcher and participants ensured that there was no imbalance of power due to the positional shift in the role of a researcher. With the consent of participants, the *talanoa* discussions were recorded and stored on a private computer that was only accessed by passwords known to the researcher.

The ethical considerations for this research aimed to ensure the confidentiality of the participating parents, as the information gathered is a personal and sensitive account of life experiences and views. Participants’ remained anonymous with the use of pseudonyms in the writing up of the data and research report. Information solicited in the course of this research was only used for the declared purpose based on the consent of all participants. Johansson Fua (2009) states that Pacific research ethics differ from traditional Western approaches because “research ethics have to be lived (speech, dress, code, body language, behaviour). Research ethics are

defined by the culture of the context not by the educational institute/organisations” (2009, p. 206). The process of checking the transcript and obtaining signatures for the Authority to Release transcript allowed further opportunities for the participants to be informed, acknowledged, and reassured that their contributions are valued and kept anonymous.

### **Conclusion.**

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework and methods used to guide and approach this study. This study used social constructionism and the *Kakala* Research Framework to explore the parents’ perceptions and experiences of raising children with mixed Pacific ethnicities. To establish a methodologically and ethically sound research process, a varied approach was taken incorporating Western constructs of knowledge development and validating Pacific cultural values, knowledge, and practices. *Talanoa* formed the central means of data collection and the concept of *teu le va* was utilised to model engagement conduct and free flowing conversations that were guided by the researcher. The data was analysed using the thematic analysis method. Limitations and ethical considerations around the role and conduct of the researcher were acknowledged and discussed. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

## Chapter Four: Findings

### Where is my Place in the World?

This chapter draws on the rich *talanoa* to gain an understanding of parents' experiences, challenges, and strategies when negotiating, managing, maintaining, and nurturing the cultural identities of their children. The *talanoa* was designed to address the four central research questions:

- How do parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities value Pacific identity?
- What influences parents' decisions and practice of Pacific identities in their children's learning?
- What are the challenges faced by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities?
- What strategies do parents use to encourage positive Pacific identity for their children's learning?

The following themes were identified from the findings: Identity, Family, Peers, School, and Environment. The themes address the research questions by illustrating the layers of interactions that impact the decision making of parents' and their influence in the cultural identity development of their children.

#### **Identity – Pacific identity construction.**

The first theme that emerged was Identity. The main elements of this theme are Pacific identity construction; access and exposure to culture and language; cultural differences; language, and generational dilution. These are discussed below.

In the *talanoa* interviews it became clear that participants did not differentiate between the terms identity and culture – these concepts were used interchangeably when talking about the ethnic identities of both parents and children. Therefore, it should be noted here that culture and identity are used interchangeably by parents to mean the same thing:

I think they're one and the same thing. Culture is part of who we are and your identity is part of who you are. It's important to understand yourself and part of that is your culture and identity as a Pacific person. It's important to know who you are – it makes you confident (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Faith's reflection echoes the strong sentiments of parents that Pacific identities are valued and central to the wellbeing and confidence of their children as it "definitely makes you confident in yourself and in your abilities" (*Tikei - Māori & Samoan*).

The term "Pacific identity/identities" is used interchangeably with "cultural identity/identities" by both the researcher and participating parents. This has partially been influenced by the parents and acknowledges the view that the diverse ethnicities that make up their children are all equally valued and recognised. It became apparent to the researcher during the *talanoa* stage, that the discussion of Pacific identities as a valuable factor in raising children, may simultaneously consider the non-Pacific identity/culture as not as valuable, because it fails to acknowledge the presence of the non-Pacific parents. Cultural identities in this context is an inclusive term and implies that all cultural affiliations are important and valued. Ngaire and Thomas reiterate the importance and value of identity and culture when raising their children:

Once you know who you are and where you connect and fit in the world, you have a sense of belonging. When you have a sense of belonging you will be okay in life. It's when you don't know...if you don't know who you are – you don't know how you fit in (*Ngaire - Māori & Pākehā*).

...it's very important to me as it reflects the way I was brought up. You want your kids to have the moral values we have...and the whole thing about respect. The way I was brought up and those values hold true to me and hopefully I can communicate these to my children (*Thomas - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

From the *talanoa* with parents, it appears that culture and identity are central to children's holistic wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging. Three parents reflected on their own identity journey, and noted that the absence of culture and identity at certain points in their lives spurred on feelings of emptiness, confusion, and longing to be connected and accepted within their



families. Terina, when reflecting on her upbringing and exposure to her Cook Island and Māori heritage, made the conscious decision to turn negative experiences into positive experiences for her own children. Terina and Rangi had contrasting upbringings with Terina strongly influenced by her Māori whanau in an environment that was centred around her marae. Terina also described her longing to be connected with her Cook Island culture in her younger years, which was dependent on her mother who at the time was not actively involved with the Cook Island community. Rangi, on the other hand, wants to see his children exposed to cultural learnings because his own upbringing and knowledge of his Pacific cultures and languages was minimal:

Drawing on my own experience, I put a lot of time and effort into learning my Pacific side...making me feel more rounded as a person. My Mum wasn't really active or thoughtful about how that could make me feel whole...it was a very concerted effort to walk my Mum back into her community because for a long time she had chosen to stay out of it. It was my longing to connect and learn about that side....that experience for me is what influenced my parenting skills with my children and just wanting to make sure that they never lose touch and that they value all sides. I don't want them to feel empty on one side and have that longing (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

I just wanted them to have plenty of it and to be surrounded by culture...all their cultures and to accept and appreciate it more than I did...and with my Dad, he didn't teach us the language either. He never had the time or bothered to teach us – I'd say I was a bit resentful for that growing up and didn't embrace my culture as much as I could of or should of – but now with our young ones we're trying to do our best for them (*Rangi - Samoan, Tokelauan & English*).

### *Access and exposure to culture and language.*

Most parents value any opportunity that enables their children to learn about their cultural heritage and identities and indicated that these opportunities are mostly presented through school and family. For some parents, limited access to culture and language within their immediate environment has meant committing to long distant travel on a regular basis. This included being committed to attend family and cultural events and for some families, simply being in the company of extended family members enabled contact that facilitated cultural learnings. Broken marriages, separations, and new

relationships can also determine the extent of cultural affiliation and identity as it means children may spend more or less time with a particular parent and their families. This was evident in the case of Rangi whose exposure to language and culture was impacted by the separation of his parents and being raised by his Samoan/English mother:

I haven't had a lot of influence – my parents were separated when I was at a young age. My Mum's Pākehā side, there wasn't a lot of culture there and my Grandfather, he didn't really know his side or wasn't in contact with a lot of his family. My Grandmother was Samoan but my Mum and her siblings were never taught Samoan and she never spoke the language to us. But I was always proud of being a Samoan...claimed anything good that I would see on the news but in terms of culture there wasn't a lot of it. Yet on my Dad's side [Tokelau] – there is a lot more...but because we grew up with my mother...  
*(Rangi - Samoan, Tokelauan & English).*

The value of Pacific identities by parents is expressed and actioned in many ways; through the teaching of family connections and genealogies, song and dance, sharing stories about grandparents, and normalising Pacific/Māori languages by speaking them in the home:

Things like cultural sports event where the kids meet all their whanau ... We go out to the cemetery and make an effort to walk through all the headstones telling the kids...these are your grandparents...this is your great grandparents. During Māori language week I plastered the house with posters of charts and resources we had. I do try to encourage them to watch Māori television as much as I can even if they're not listening – just having the language around them, even if it's one or two words they pick up subconsciously, it's there so that it makes them feel comfortable to be around it *(Terina - Māori & Cook Island Māori).*

In sum, all parents indicated that it was important that their children know about their cultural heritage but acknowledged that maintaining access, exposure, and opportunities to learn and maintain this was difficult.

### *Cultural differences – Pacific and non-Pacific.*

Both positive and negative experiences have influenced the way parents view and value Pacific identity and culture. Faith acknowledged the stark contrast

of her upbringing in comparison to husband Tikei. When asked to describe her cultural identity she said:

Well I don't really have one which sounds really awful, because I do have one. Culture was never a thing. We didn't know what or who we were up until 5 or 6 years ago. We don't even know who our relatives are because it's just not part of what we are - which is weird for Tikei because he knows every cousin, name and birthdates...and I don't even know any. I think we are from two very different worlds in that aspect. I think funnily enough when we were growing up, white people weren't cultural. Brown people were cultural so if you met a Māori person, they were cultural and that word was associated with their skin colour. Māori had culture, they had family...they had that and we didn't. I only really noticed that when I started going out with Tikei – that I had something totally different (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Most parents respected each other's cultures while not necessarily agreeing to all aspects of how things were done; however they see the value in teaching children what they know.

### *Language.*

English is the main language spoken in all of the homes and the use of Pacific languages and/or *te reo Māori* was often confined to basic conversations using command words and general phrases. Sera spoke of her realisation of the value of her Pacific languages and the need to teach her children, as this set the platform for positive identity development:

It was when I had [my son] cos I looked at my own kid and then I thought, here I am – a plastic as Tokelau/Samoan...Mum's fluent, Dad's fluent...and Mum and Dad they spoke mainly Tokelau in the house and here I am speaking English and not passing it on to my kids. I think I opened myself up to my cultures at the age of 18 and I made that effort to learn the lingo. It's really important to pass it on to our kids because they're our future and they're the ones who have to pass it on to their kids...I think it's a big part of our lives (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

Several parents spoke of their concern around the consequences of their children not understanding and/or speaking a Pacific language or *te reo Māori* as they recognised how language enabled a sense of knowing and belonging with peers and in their communities. Parents' personal experience of "being

on the outer”, “not fitting in” or being “not accepted” within their own family and peers motivated some to be active in seeking any opportunity that enabled their children to have a strong sense of self and connection to their cultures:

For ages I was really hoping Dad could speak Samoan to the kids – just like I wanted him to speak Samoan to us. To me it was a ‘fitting in’ thing probably more with family than friends. There were times where I felt left out – it wasn’t because we were left out, it was that I didn’t know what was going on. Like if there was a family meeting, everyone’s laughing and we’re sitting there going...uh-huh. I really wanted to learn and that’s why I took a Samoan language course and that was probably the first time I actually started to learn Samoan (*Tikei - Māori & Samoan*).

Teuila also shared the experience of her eldest son Brian being selected to play rugby for Samoa, where the family was elated not only because he was rewarded for his efforts and talent but because his selection meant that he was representing his Samoan heritage and family. Being selected in the team enabled him to have a rich cultural experience while touring Samoa but the experience was cut short as Brian chose to return home early. Teuila and Hone spoke about the language barriers and difficulties Brian experienced because he found it hard to fit in and the fact that he did not look or speak Samoan hindered his experience. The experience of not “fitting in” also resonated with one of the non-Pacific parents who spoke of the cultural conflicts and discomfort of being in an environment where languages and cultural practices are foreign, but they continue to persist as they see the value it brings for their children. For Joseph, being in a room full of people only speaking Samoan and Tokelauan is an uncomfortable situation:

I don’t like it...yeah...it’s awkward. I can pick up words and hear ‘palagi’ and I know they are talking about me, but sometimes you don’t know if they’re talking about you. I mean I understand that obviously some of them can’t speak English so I can understand why they talk in their language...but there’s been a couple of times like at rugby where I’ve heard my name and I’ve gotten angry and left cos I don’t know what they’re saying if they don’t tell me... if I’m in the room then at least try and speak the language we all know (*Joseph - New Zealand European*).

In trying to mitigate uncomfortable situations for Joseph when with family, Sera has requested her family to speak English so that it does not exclude the non-Pacific family members:

The oldies they can have their chat but just to be aware that you can speak English sometimes, to make our family members feel appreciative of being in our family. Our family are aware that if we're all in the same room then English, Tokelauan and Samoan can be spoken...it's not only for Joseph, we don't want family members to feel excluded (*Sera – Tokelauan & Samoan*).

Sera described translating and explaining Tokelauan to her children as being time-consuming and challenging. Tokelauan was the least exposed Pacific language to her children as they only hear it spoken when visiting Sera's mother's side of the family:

It's only when we come out here to Mum that Mum speaks Tokelau to the kids. I can have a conversation with a Tokelau person but when I bring it to my kids they're like 'huh? huh?' and then you know – you can't just keep up with the 'huh? huh?' so we keep it to English because it's so much easier. So they know their Tokelau lingo but they are not fluent – same with Samoan (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

The *talanoa* highlights how language facilitates the acquisition of cultural capital that enables children to know how to confidently behave and respond appropriately when with peers, family members, and different community groups. The *talanoa* also demonstrates how language influences whether an individual feels that they belong or are accepted by their peers, families, and the environment which they are in.

### *Generational dilution.*

The cultural identities of children were constructed within an Aotearoa/New Zealand context as all were born and schooled within Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ngaire and Thomas emphasised a sense of belonging as being critical to how their children felt when amongst different family members:

I often wonder about our kids being of mixed ethnicities...in terms of their island cousins. You know they're never quite island enough...or with their Tokelauan cousins...they're never Tokelauan enough...that's basically around the language. You know their island cousins are fluent speakers of Samoan. I would love them to be native speakers of their languages and I guess we could do more to support that (*Ngaire - Māori & Pākehā*).

...they identify themselves with their cultures....but they probably don't know how it is really because they're not around it enough. They identify with their cultures but they won't really know the Samoan way or Tokelauan way (*Thomas - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

For Teuila, maintaining a connection to Samoa is a way to reaffirm the cultural identities of her children. She also views the connection as giving her children a meaningful sense of belonging to places outside of Aotearoa/New Zealand:

I see the importance of taking them back to the islands...taking them through places of significance means there's a good chance to talk about my Grandma and stories about where you're going to...like stopping into villages to see family and that's a really good chance for them to connect to that place... In my work I come across a lot of Pacific kids and I find it all interesting that they've never been back to the Islands so their worldview is completely based here in practicality. I think the reason that I like taking the kids back to Samoa is so that they can have that as an experience and so they can see things for themselves, and then that hopefully influences the way they look at things in the education setting (*Teuila - Samoan & British*).

The dilution of language from generation to generation appears to highlight the value of language where at times, it was viewed only appropriate or useful in certain contexts. This is evident in Terina's *talanoa* regarding the presence of *te reo Māori* and the Cook Island language in her upbringing:

They didn't come to bring their culture and share it with the world – they came to get a job, make money and send it home to support the ones that were still in the islands. Their language and culture wasn't the focus....so the language took a back seat until they got themselves established. And my Dad, in a slightly different way, he was raised by his grandparents. He grew up at a time where kids were punished at school and Māori wasn't encouraged. He was told 'don't speak the language, you need to speak the language of Pākehā if you wanna make change (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island Māori*).

When moving between four different families, all with unique practices, Terina noted that it “felt like a merry-go-round. It can get a bit tiresome trying to get to everyone’s house at times”. Terina also voiced the importance of integrating cultural traditions in a modern context as a way of affirming the value of cultural traditions in the learning journey of a child. As an example, the haircutting ceremony was an important Cook Island custom that Terina and Rangi wanted their eldest son to undertake as a way of honouring his Cook Island heritage:

You know we can make our choice that will help shape them and there have been some cultural choices I have made for my children – so I guess with the haircutting ceremony, he was the eldest boy mokopuna on both sides and my Mum in her own ways made it clear to me how important it was to me to honour that particular role and what expectations would be placed on that boy (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

Managing the cultural identities, values and practices of the mixed ethnic generation can present challenges for parents and these are outlined in Ngaire’s concerns for her children:

I just worry that with each generation it becomes a little bit more diluted...and I guess that’s one of the challenges of having four cultures is that you predominantly favour one more than the other...or one child favours one more than the other...and then the rest become diluted (*Ngaire - Māori & Pākehā*).

The degree to how much children know and are connected to their cultural identities is largely influenced by the presence of and time spent with family. The generational dilution of cultural identities, values and practices presents a troubling sense of reality for parents as their worldview, and those of their children are influenced by the Aotearoa/New Zealand context of which they are born and raised in.

In concluding the theme of Identity, parents’ signalled identity and sense of belonging as central themes as the *talanoa* conversations often referenced the way in which these concepts grounded their perception of the world around them, thus affirming the value of identity and culture as integral in teaching and raising their children.



## **Family – the influence of family on cultural identity development.**

The second theme of Family is presented below and includes a discussion on cultural differences; physical connection to family and Pacific roots, and meeting expectations.

The theme of family occurred most often in the *talanoa* interviews. The majority of comments about family were positive, with family being seen as necessary for positive cultural identity. All participants acknowledged the presence of significant people in their lives as influencing the expectations of how to behave or speak in certain familial situations and cultural/community events. Significant family members included grandparents and other extended family members (Aunties, Uncles and cousins). All participants credited their parents as being key supporters, caregivers, and teachers of all things “cultural”. Some parents relied heavily on grandparents to take children to family and community events as it was the grandparents who maintained the commitment to such events. Thomas admitted the effort to ensure his children have access to learning about their Pacific cultures and languages was largely from Ngaire and his own parents:

It’s mainly my parents that encourage the kids to learn all the cultural things. I admit I don’t do enough for these sorts of things (*Thomas - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

Similarly, Tikei, Teuila, and Sera regarded their own parents as being the drivers and main source of cultural knowledge and learning of language:

I think a lot of it is driven by Mum. If something is coming up Mum will ring and I will say ‘but they’ve got school...and rah rah rah’ and then I’ll take them out (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

I often refer to Mum and Dad about things I have been taught and also Nanny and Kolo [Grandfather] (*Tikei - Māori & Samoan*).

When we had our two eldest we used to live with Mum - but yeah, Mum is here every day. Mum used to talk about growing up in Samoa and the kids learn from talking and hearing about her experience too (*Teuila - Samoan & British*).



### *Cultural differences.*

Parents acknowledged that the differences between their own cultures required negotiation and an openness to the different values and practices that each brings into their relationship. Ngaire and Terina identified similar experiences of cultural conflicts with *tikanga Māori* that have presented challenges:

there are some different cultural beliefs and practices which have been conflicting and challenging for me at times like the cutting hair and where that is appropriate to take place and eating at the *urupā* (cemetery), it is just respected that we practice in different ways. We do what we are comfortable with – you practice in your way and I practice mine and both are respected and valid. These two examples in particular have been most challenging for me and Thomas has been respectful of that, he has adapted this practice to align with more of my beliefs systems not cos he has to but out of being respectful. He is willing to negotiate where for me those two examples are non-negotiable (*Ngaire - Māori & Pākehā*).

Faith, similarly describes the need to be open to the differences to enable a supportive relationship as parents:

We could not be more different culturally. We are very insular as a family, Tikei's family is very inculcated into extended family. We have both had a church influence but that's about it in terms of similarity. I have always been open to Tikei's culture – my first *tangi* (funeral) was quite scary for someone never exposed to death or grief like that. I have always been open to cultural experiences and we have a very supportive family who have gently included me and shown me the parts of their culture. We are very lucky in this way (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

For Terina and Rangi, teaching their children culturally expected practices and behaviour of the Māori, Samoan, Cook Island, Tokelauan, and European cultures was sometimes a “fusion of sorts”:

Even though we don't have the reo, we do the culture in our own way. It's a little bit of a fusion to be honest. Boys don't lie on girl's bed and girls don't lie on boy's bed – it's about respecting the integrity of boys

and girls in the family. It's also knowing your place in the family and not talking to your elder line disrespectfully. At the marae, don't walk over people's bed...even at home...you don't walk over peoples legs. On the Pacific side or when you're in front of elders, you excuse yourself or lower yourself. Things like that, we've tried to remind them. You don't touch other people's heads - the *tapu* state of one's head - that was something that my Cook Island mother really instilled upon us - so when the kids are play fighting they don't slap each other's heads. We don't hit them or discipline them around the head because it's tapu. Not cutting your nails at night - all those little things  
(Terina - Māori & Cook Island).

Sera echoes similar examples teaching her children to wear appropriate clothing at family/community events when with the Samoan family:

I tell them 'oh when you go to the hall for a Samoan thing you have to wear a *lavalava*'. You know telling them that's the *Fa'a Samoa* way over there and explaining it so they always know that when we go to Samoan things they know to wear a *lavalava*. Just the little things like that where they take it on the chin and take that knowledge to other places (Sera – Tokelauan & Samoan).

Being able to reach a mutual understanding on parenting matters is challenging at times for parents as cultural differences can induce conflicting views. Parents found that open communication assisted in teaching and reaffirming the cultural values, beliefs, practices and behavioural expectations of their children when amongst the different families.

### *Physical connection to family and Pacific roots.*

For some families, maintaining connections to Pacific cultures is sustained through regular family trips to the Islands/ancestral home, and for one family this meant sending their son to Tokelau with his grandparents for four months:

It was a commitment to our son...well, for me it was a commitment to my children that I would give them every opportunity to experience the culture for themselves (Terina - Māori & Cook Island).

Living away from the immediate family (Samoan and Māori side) and in a community with a very small Māori and Pacific population meant that the only

way the children of Faith and Tikei could learn about their culture was through the school and family:

The only way for them to really know about their culture is through school and their grandparents and hanging out with their cousins...that's why we make the effort to come down here so that they can hang out with their cousins and Grandparents because they don't get that where we live. And that's really important to me (*Faith – New Zealand European*).

Most parents expressed the desire to continue family traditions which include attending annual family reunions and gatherings, sending children to traditional family schools, attending church and community events, family celebrations and in some cases, baptising children in the faith/religion of their families.

### *Meeting expectations.*

Parents identified challenges related to managing the cultural identities and languages of their children include upholding family traditions and expectations to attend traditional family, church, or community events. Terina and Rangi honoured their parents and their culture by giving the naming duties of their firstborn son to the grandparents who included a Māori grandfather, a Tokelauan grandfather, and a Cook Island grandmother. The Samoan/British grandmother was content to not take part in the process. The process turned into an arduous challenge that went on for months:

He had no name for about 3 months - in the end to shut them all up, they all got a name each. My Dad got to give the first name and Rangi's Dad got to have a name and then my Mum...and I said to them all, his name has got to fit on one line - he might have 5 lines to write one name! They all took it very seriously about the naming process and I knew enough to know that - I guess it comes back to tikanga - that's how it's done, but you have the New Zealand law where you have to name the baby in a certain time...and they're like - no - we're doing it this way, because the child will be sick if you give the child the wrong name (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

While family expectation at times added pressure to how they raised their children, parents also had expectations of each other to be responsible for teaching children their “own” culture.

While grandparents are seen as the immediate lifeline to children learning about their Pacific culture and identity, some parents felt that it was challenging to deal with the expectations of the grandparents, where some were “competing” for their grandchildren’s time so that the grandchildren represented and knew more about their own culture:

The grandparents can get a bit greedy and try to compete who gets the most time. We might have one ringing up...are you coming to church? Are you coming to my house? Are you coming this weekend...blah blah blah. There was a time when it just felt like a merry-go-round! It can get a bit tiresome trying to get to everyone’s house at times - but it is a really nice thing to have because they bring so much richness to our lives. I just hope that their mokopuna gives so much back to them. The Māori, Cook Island and Tokelau always compete – they’re all competing for their mokopuna to be strong in their culture (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

Joseph spoke about the conflicts of cultural expectations where their children’s behaviour changed depending on where and who they were with. He spoke of the challenges of managing what is culturally acceptable when spending time with family and the parental expectations of children’s behaviour:

For me it’s a challenge because the way I’ve been brought up compared to the way you [Sera] were brought up...we sort of get it together ourselves in town but as soon as we get out to Sera’s family ...it’s different because they have their way. We have our way and rules but we come out here, they have their rules. I find that’s hard because they come out here and they can do what I said that they can’t do out there. It’s like two different worlds and different cultures (*Joseph - New Zealand European*).

Parents indicated that they were supportive of any opportunity that enabled children to learn about their Pacific cultures and languages, but balancing family traditions clearly presents some challenges for the parents. This is of concern to them as it impacts the sense of belonging which parents acknowledge as being important in order to walk confidently in the worlds that they belong to.

## **Peers – social interaction in the school, playground and community.**

The third theme to emerge from the *talanoa* was Peers and the following discussion describes key points around the influence of peers on cultural identity development.

When identifying factors that influence their decisions about Pacific identities in their children's learning, some parents identified the presence of school peers as impacting how and what children learned and maintained. All parents pointed out that children learn about their culture and pick up the language through their peers and by spending time with the families of their peers. Parents identified schools as providing a platform for children to gain a sense of belonging with their peers through learning *te reo Māori* and joining cultural groups like the school Poly club and *Kapa Haka* group. For Teuila and Hone, the opportunities for their three children to learn about their cultures are predominantly through family, school, and peers. Their two older children, aged 20 and 14 mostly associated with peers of Māori and Pacific heritages in their respective schools and their youngest child, aged three, attends a local *Kohanga Reo*. Joining the Poly club and *Kapa Haka* group was a positive experience for their 14 year old daughter as she was able to solidify her cultural identities by learning together with her peers.

Interestingly, most of the fathers talked about their children's choice of friends and who they hung out with at school as having a significant influence on their identity. Rangi, Hone, and Tikei all pinpointed the playground as a place of negotiation where sports teams were picked on not only how good or "cool" you were but also by the ethnic group that one belonged to:

It wasn't until college - during sports games or when we're out in the playground with Samoans against Tokelauans and Māori – it wasn't until then where we'd have to pick or choose a side and then one side might say 'oh you don't speak Samoan' and then the other side would say something else (*Rangi - Samoan, Tokelauan & English*).

The negative impact of peers was noted by Tikei as impeding on his ability to reach his full educational potential. More notably he defines the "brownies" as

being an impeding factor in why he did not achieve academically at high school:

My Pākehā friends from primary school like Richard - if I stayed with that group I reckon I would've been more focussed but the group that I was hanging around with which was the rugby players...all the brownies...weren't interested in school either. They were interested in scabbing lunch, playing league at lunchtime and our games in the weekend – that was what we were interested in...and getting into trouble. As I've gotten older, I know the importance of education and I've tried to instil that into the kids (*Tikei - Māori & Samoan*).

Faith acknowledges the presence of peers as having a positive influence in what and how her own children learn about their cultures:

Like their cousins Greta, Bill, and Beck are really good influences on our two. They are really in tune with themselves culturally – like when you see their artwork on the wall and a lot of it is Island-influenced looking...a lot of flowers...it's that – and I love that the kids get that from their own peers (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Similarly, the networks that parents choose to associate with also influences which culture and language were dominant in their lives. For Sera, who is of Tokelau and Samoan descent, switching between her place of residence, a strong Samoan community which the family is actively engaged in, and the Tokelauan community, where her extended family live, determines what language is used and which culture is more dominant in the identities of their children:

'Cos we're in the city, there's a lot of Samoans there...and the kids have a lot of Samoan friends so they pick up the Samoan lingo. So our eldest son as a prime example – he's picked up more Samoan lingo than Tokelau and it's only when we come out here to Mum that Mum speaks Tokelau to the kids (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

Peer influence is noted by parents as a significant factor in the cultural identity development of their children. Parents identified interactions with school peers, family, and community members as stimulating cultural and language learning opportunities that determine how active and connected their children are. For Sera and her family, English was spoken in the home, Samoan was used to converse and socialise when amongst community members, and the

Tokelau language was spoken more when with Sera's mother's side. This switching of language and behaviour between the different families occurs at most times, unconsciously for some Pacific parents. However a conscious effort is made to teach their children the values and appropriate behaviour when with either families:

If anything, I suppose if I was fluent and knew both my Samoan and Tokelau culture, then I would favour them both, but with Joseph being Palagi we would say that we favour the Palagi lingo in our household but would always favour our Pacific culture when outside our home, only because my knowledge of my Pacific culture is limited. When we are outside of the home we learn so much more from families, friends, community and school (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

### **School – a site for cultural learning, identity affirmation, and ethnic categorisation.**

The following discussion presents the school as the fourth theme to emerge from the *talanoa*, and describes the impact that schools have on cultural identity development, childrearing, and parental decisions.

Teuila and Hone identified their secondary schooling and university experience as being significant to understanding the context behind their identities and family history. This knowledge grounded them with values to confidently navigate their journey through their chosen pathways:

I suppose when I went back to Uni and I studied what I studied, a lot of it I related back to my upbringing. I never really had an opportunity before to turn around and really have a look at myself and where I came from...my studies was a real awakening really (*Teuila - Samoan & British*).

Faith explains that the school curriculum played a major factor in determining which schools to send their children to and that she had enquired upfront about the Māori curriculum content. Both Faith and Tikei felt that the chosen school had a strong Māori curriculum content that would enable their children to learn basic *te reo Māori* and the opportunity to be educated in an environment that acknowledges their Māori heritage. In this situation, schools act as a means of convenience as parents rely on the school to teach cultural content when they cannot or do not have the time. Faith identified the lack of Pacific content



in the school curriculum as a negative impact, as it appears that it does not value Pacific cultures:

When we were considering where we were going to send them, part of our consideration was upholding their cultural identity because we really want them to have that heritage and connection to who they are because I never had that. It was really important for us that they had at least a strong Māori influence...I want them to know who they are and part of that is learning their heritage (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Of the five families interviewed, three have had one or more of their children attend *Kohanga Reo*. Two families currently have a child attending a *Kohanga Reo* and *Kura Kaupapa Māori*. The decision to send their children to a Māori immersion language nest/school was that it prioritised *te reo Māori* and *tikanga Māori* in the education of their children. Poly clubs and *Kapa Haka* groups also enabled children access to cultural knowledge and connections that validated their cultural identities. Some parents felt this was important to build strong social networks with school peers and a sense of belonging in the school environment.

The *talanoa* around prioritising education and culture for their children varied amongst the parents. While all parents considered education as key to a future of vast opportunities and success, they also wanted their children to be confident in whom they identified themselves to be and to have a strong sense of belonging with all their friends and relatives. How parents managed the practicality and expectations altered depending on the surrounding support network and environment. Some parents expressed that culture, cultural occasions and family expectations should not be a detriment to their children's education because education was considered the utmost priority.

Sera spoke about prioritising education over family and cultural expectations, noting that during her own upbringing, culture was put first with cultural and community events distracting her from the effort that needed to be put into her school work:

I know it's sad to say, that is why I suppose some Samoans/Tokelauans call us plastic. I grew up vice-versa – culture then education and it didn't work for me. The Tokelau community would always have something on



that involved the whole of the community. Me being a *moepi* [know-it-all], I would rather go to the hall than stay home and do my homework, so that meant no assignment done and failed exams. Today my kids are strictly focused on education first, then culture. Your kids are the first things you need to sort...there's that saying – the opportunities you never had, you give to your kids. We didn't care what was on, we made so many sacrifices from things like there was always to'onai [family feast], or get together but we never came. Why? Because our kids wanted to do well in rugby and things like that, and that was the sacrifice we would make like we hardly came out (*Sera - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

Terina, on the other hand, expressed that education, culture, and identity should go hand-in-hand and complement each other. This would give her children well rounded and balanced opportunities to thrive:

I think it's important right now. I want it to be upfront for my children and always paramount – their culture and identity – because of the challenges of the Pākehā education system; and I say that because I've experienced being treated like another Māori statistic – you're nothing...and so I've tried really hard to be really blatant and brazen with my boys and make sure that they know who they are and what they're going into for any situation (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

The school is not only considered by parents to be a place of learning that enables generic skills, confidence, and knowledge development but also a key platform where children have access and exposure to their Pacific cultures and languages. When thinking about factors that impact their decisions about Pacific identity in their children's learning, it is clear that parents want their children to aspire to and achieve more with the opportunities given to them than the parents, themselves, experienced in their own educational and identity journey.

### **Environment – societal perceptions, racism, and stereotypes.**

The final emerging theme from the *talanoa* with parents was environment. A discussion on societal perceptions, negative stereotypes and racism is outlined below.

### *Negative stereotypes and racism.*

Some parents pinpointed societal stereotypes of Māori and Pacific learners as influences that can have both negative and positive impacts in the way they nurture the cultural identity development and educational opportunities of their children. Faith and Tikei reflected on experiences of racism and low expectations as impacting their educational experiences. Now in their role as parents, they place high expectations on their children to try harder and achieve more than they themselves did when growing up. Faith and Tikei had contrasting experiences of racism with Faith proclaiming that “race or culture was not a thing” until she met Tikei:

I think that there are challenges for them [the children]...and for me because I never had that, it's more obvious to me. Whereas for Tikei because he grew up with that as a semi-regular occurrence... it's just not as obvious for him. So when the kids have come home and say 'I got called a nigger' or whatever, it enrages me, because I just can't understand why or how people come to that conclusion. I think it's different for our kids, they don't look white and they don't look 100% brown...I think it will be a big challenge for them – especially where we live. It's a predominantly white, aged community and so there's a lot of ingrained perceptions. It's making sure they have access to their own heritage and that they have access to that influence in their life (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Tikei, on the other hand grew up in a middle-class suburb closely connected to his extended family:

...then I noticed it was about how they treated him and therefore then I realised, how I had been treated my whole life and how that was different to him. It was only through experiencing those things with him, that I realised there was difference (*Faith - New Zealand European*).

Similarly, Ngaire and Thomas talk about the negative stigma and statistics outlining Māori/Pacific underachievement but choose to focus on the positive aspects to inspire their children. The danger of negative stereotypes is that it can potentially influence those who are being stereotyped to internalise and believe these thoughts:

I tend to see a lot of Pacific Islanders and Māori people succeeding...I know the stats are there but I see more successful people. That's what I want to see, what I want to read about and what I want my kids to know about...the successful ones and to say 'look at all the successful Pacific Island and Māori people out there doing well' (*Thomas - Tokelauan & Samoan*).

I know that there's so much more to our culture and who we are as people than what the statistics portray. I think because of my sense of belonging is that I don't have a negative connection to it at all and I think because of that our children don't either. I just see that actually we are great people, our culture is great, you are great, born from greatness and that you can be whoever you are (*Ngairi - Māori & Pākehā*).

Several of the fathers interviewed referred to examples of successful Pacific peoples in sports and within the community that are used as positive role models for their children. Sports stars in particular has enthused Sam, the nine year son of Tikei who is a huge fan of the Samoan players in the All Blacks – “they're all the cool ones”. Sam associates his identity as a Samoan as being just like the Samoan All Blacks of whom he one day hopes to aspire to be.

Terina also reiterated the need for schools, particularly teachers, to learn and understand the cultural qualities of children and to not misinterpret these characteristics as being lazy, quiet, or not putting in enough effort. She expressed that societal perception of Pacific stereotypes or learning behaviours often perpetuate mistruths about why children achieve or underachieve in education:

My experience has been to challenge the institutionalised attitudes - don't misunderstand their ways...there are a lot of reasons why our children are raised different. They're not the ADHD kid that jumps up and commands attention of the teacher all the time. They're respectful...not silly enough...they're actually quite mature enough to sit back and let other kids have a turn and sometimes they will put their hand up. But sometimes other people will look at that and think they're lazy (*Terina - Māori & Cook Island*).

## **Conclusion.**

The *talanoa* findings are presented through five themes to address the four central research questions. The first research question seeks to explore how

parents view and value Pacific identity. It is revealed that parents value Pacific/cultural identities and view culture and identity as central to children's holistic wellbeing, confidence, and sense of belonging. More importantly, a *sense of belonging* was the principal means for an individual to locate their sense of being and connection with people, places, and the environment in which they live and are located in. In the absence of a strong connection and affinity to a culture, parents reflected on language loss, isolation, stigmatisation, and a longing to learn as motivators to nurture the cultural identity development of their children. The knowing of *not knowing* stirred a desire for parents to support any opportunity for children to learn and engage with their Pacific/cultural identities, languages, and cultures. Parents in this study are active in seeking and supporting opportunities for children to learn and embrace their cultural identities; however the practicality of negotiating, managing, maintaining, and nurturing cultural identities is a complex balancing act. The parents desire to see their children develop confident cultural identities but this is tempered by access and exposure to resources and holders of cultural knowledge, regularity of family and community interaction/engagement, and devoting time needed to commit to cultural commitments.

The intent of the second research question was to explore parents' decisions and practices of Pacific identities in their children's learning. The findings linked the influence of family and peers as having a direct impact on parents' decisions. The themes of the school and environment also highlighted factors influencing parents' decisions. The findings show many factors that influence the decision making of parents to participate in cultural events such as meetings and fundraising; these include financial restraints and being time poor.

The balancing act of managing family, cultural, and community expectations is clearly a challenge that parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities in this study struggle with. For example, finding the time and energy to distribute (equal) attention to each family in order to please grandparents and other family members to attend family traditions and fulfil cultural obligations,

is difficult. Pleasing family members means upholding cultural pride and values and for some parents, when this was not able to be managed, the decision to “not go”, “not attend”, or “not participate” was the easiest way to cope with family expectations and pressure. Maintaining cultural traditions and behavioural expectations is considered a complicated task as it requires patience and knowledge to explain and validate cultural practices in a modern context. This includes interpreting and translating language. Some parents also recognise the challenge of encouraging children to embrace their identities and cultures in the face of racism and negative societal stereotypes. Furthermore, nurturing a sense of belonging with all the cultures to which they belong is challenging as it requires immense commitment that is dependent on active engagement and regular interaction with family and community members.

Finally, strategies parents use to encourage positive Pacific/cultural identities and learning include focusing on successful Pacific people as examples of positive role models. School and family are the key factors that parents refer to most and, in some cases, depend on to encourage positive cultural identities. The school is recognised as a site of cultural learning through its curriculum content (although limited in some instances), language celebration events, cultural days, and *Kapa Haka* groups/Poly clubs. Perhaps most importantly, and central to cultural identity development, is the presence of family and spending time with grandparents. In the effort to embrace the value and place of cultural identities, parents make a conscious decision to normalise culture and language into everyday life through the use and display of Māori/Pacific words and commands and being pro-active in supporting the interests of children.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **Coming of Age – on Whose Terms?**

This thesis was prompted from my personal aspirations as a mother to nurture and equip my children with the tools, skills, and knowledge to be confident in their cultural identities regardless of their chosen pathways and company they keep. The parents in this study echoed similar aspirations and acknowledged that their children's journey of finding their place and sense of self will be dictated by unpredictable currents that may be smooth and, at times turbulent, yet always shifting within the cultures they affiliate with and connect to. The discussion chapter draws together the five themes generating an underpinning finding that cultural identity development and transmission of cultural knowledge is dependent on the ongoing balancing act that parents engage in. The discussion addresses the research questions to highlight key issues and factors that influence the role of parents in the cultural identity formation of the future mixed Pacific generation.

Bronfenbrenner's revamped human ecology development theory (2005) is referenced throughout the discussion chapter to illustrate the links to the identified thesis themes and to articulate how a multi-layered environment influences the developing individual and their world view. The thesis theme of identity encases the individual who is placed at the centre of Bronfenbrenner's theory and encapsulates the wellbeing of the individual as determined and influenced by their surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner (2005) describes the microsystem as the most immediate environment to the individual and includes the presence and interpersonal relationships with significant others who have direct contact to the individual. The next layer, known as the mesosystem, refers to direct and indirect interactions and relationships between the settings and significant others in the immediate environment of an individual.

The impact of the micro and mesosystems is evident from the *talanoa* interviews and is discussed in the themes of Family, School, and Peers. The

outer layers of the ecosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem further characterise the processes that influence constancy and change (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) in an individual developed over time through broader external influences. These external influences include the values systems, beliefs, and ideals of a culture that may not be implicitly or consciously obvious in the lives of families – for example, the existence of government policies that families are not consciously aware of and/or how they directly influence their lives. External influences like racial stereotyping and racism have a direct and implicit impact on both an individual and parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities and these are explained in the theme of Environment.

### **Identity – Pacific identity construction.**

The first theme, identity, is presented in this section and draws on the reviewed literature and *talanoa* findings. Specifically, this section addresses the place and value of identity, culture, and language as determined by parents and the influence this has on the sense of belonging and wellbeing of their children.

The findings indicate that parents value the cultural identities of their children. When children have a strong sense of their cultural identities it empowers them with a sense of belonging, which is essential for an individual to make sense of their existential purpose and connection to people, places, and their surrounding environments (Durie, 2006; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Pasikale, 1996; Siteine, 2010). Sense of belonging was strongly reiterated by parents as being central to the holistic wellbeing of children as it enables a physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional connection to places of historical, familial, and cultural significance and people – in particular within family and amongst peers, the wider community, and society. The parents of this study emulate the characteristics of Schachter and Ventura's (2008) "identity agent" as they are proactive and deliberate in their approach of nurturing positive identity formation.

Personal experience of loss of identity and language has instilled the desire for parents to embrace opportunities that support a strong sense of identity and belonging. When recalling their own upbringing the parents who were of



mixed Pacific ethnicities reported feelings of “fitting in” and weaving between different worlds resonating with Tupuola’s research (2004). The terrain of identity literature pertaining to the New Zealand-born Pacific populations paints a landscape that is a politically contested domain where identity tensions are created, recreated, and influenced by social, cultural, familial, religious, and environmental factors (Keddell, 2006; Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae, 2001; Manuela & Sibley, 2012; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004). Nostalgic recollection of memories often spur on feelings of emptiness, confusion and “not belonging” which has then instilled the desire to embrace opportunities that nurture a strong sense of belonging and connection for their children. Rocha’s (2010) memory concept draws on positive and negative experiences that influence individuals to define their mixed ethnic identities and the sense of belonging attributed to the groups they affiliate with. In this study, parents drew on both positive and negative experiences that influenced the aspirations they have for their children. Memories of defining moments that influenced their life choices and identity, grounded parents within a context of “knowing” and understanding the value of a strong cultural identity and what they are committed to for their own children. The memories shared and expressed by all participants have had a defining impact in how they choose to teach and raise their children.

While this research focuses on the Pacific component of the mixed Pacific generation, the participants have all been very clear that they value all cultures that their children are affiliated to. All the participant parents expressed a strong desire to access opportunities that expose their children to culture and language and, thus, facilitate their children’s learning about these. Such opportunities consolidate a strong identity development and sense of self which is essential for the wellbeing and confidence of an individual.

### *Language use and learning.*

While there is no “Pacific language” as such, the term is used generically in the context of this thesis and taken to mean one of the Pacific languages that the parents and children affiliate with. The parents who indicated infrequent use of a Pacific language were confident in using basic sentences infrequently



throughout the day. Parents who could understand a Pacific language predominantly responded back in English and were able to hold general conversations with family members. The fluency levels of the participating parents varied from knowing very little to knowledge and usage of basic words and commands. Of the four families whose children were also Māori, three reported strong exposure to *te reo Māori* via Māori medium schools and *kohanga reo* that their children attended. Language is considered a significant marker to solidifying Pacific identities (Anae, 2002; Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001; Manuela & Sibley, 2012; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Tiatia, 1998) where the ability to speak a Pacific language often determines both positive and negative experiences of “being” and belonging within family, social, cultural and environmental contexts – yet for all of the participating families, English is the dominant language spoken.

For the New Zealand-born youth participants in Tiatia’s study (1998) language loss meant a loss of identity and place to speak, where if one could not speak Samoan, then one’s opinion was not considered valid. Similarly, in a study nearly 20 years on, Keddell’s research (2006), also framed within the Aotearoa/New Zealand landscape, set out to identify and examine influential factors on the identity construction of the Samoan/*Pākehā* participants. Her research found that language loss, or not possessing the ability to understand, speak or converse in a language would not guarantee equality of treatment, in comparison to someone who could. One’s identity as a Samoan was deemed questionable and not authentic.

The *talanoa* discussions generated a consensus amongst all participants that culture, language, and identity are all integrally connected and dependent on each other to flourish. Most challenging is the language maintenance and finding the time, resources, and exposure to learn and nurture the languages. The 2013 census statistics indicate a continuous decline in fluent Pacific language speakers, particularly amongst the New Zealand-born cohort. This has seen a response from the Ministry of Pacific Peoples to prioritise language preservation through initiatives like the Pacific Languages Framework that was developed to support the language revitalisation of Pacific communities

(Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016). To further breakdown the 2013 census statistics, the language statistics of Pacific ethnic groups show 60% of the Samoan population were classified as fluent speakers. Fluency in the context of the data collected is defined by the ability to converse about everyday activities and communication.

The census statistics outline the decline in fluent Pacific language speakers in Aotearoa/New Zealand and this is illustrated in the percentage breakdown of fluent speakers of the following Pacific nations: Tuvalu (66%) Tonga (53%) Fiji (43%) Tokelau (34%) Niue (19%) and Cook Islands (13%) (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2016). The Cook Islands, Tokelau, and Niue statistics are of particular concern considering the relationship these countries have with Aotearoa/New Zealand. A further characteristic to note about the Cook Islands, Tokelau, and Niue populations in Aotearoa/New Zealand, is that the populations are significantly larger than the resident populations in the Pacific nations themselves. While the population count of some Pacific nations are proportionally larger than others, the impact of migration, assimilation, and acculturation on the language, culture, and identity of Pacific peoples is clearly evident in the statistics that indicate the decline of fluent Pacific language speakers. The decline in the number of Pacific language speakers in Aotearoa/New Zealand implies a shift in both language and identity, one that is influenced by the changing environment and evolving population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Could the decline in Pacific language speakers be partly inclined to the fact that Pacific languages are not valued as being relevant, and useful for Pacific peoples?

Starks, Taumoeofolau, Bell, & Davis (2005) examined the attitude of four Pasifika communities towards language and language maintenance and suggest that when an identity tension arises “group’s original language need not remain as an objective marker of identity, language shift is common, and language as a key feature in identity is demoted to a symbolic feature or replaced entirely with other cultural features” (p. 2189). The research found an identity shift occurring amongst the Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, and Cook Island communities insofar as while language was valued, it was not perceived

as the sole means of cultural identity. Their findings suggest that a positive attitude is necessary for language maintenance. They also posit that researchers should pay attention to the identity shifts of each community to understand the conditions and situation unique to each community/ethnic group.

Efforts to maintain the Pacific/Māori languages was managed by the parents of this study in a variety of ways which included sending children to Pacific language nests, *kohanga reo*, and *kura kaupapa*; investing time for children to spend with family; participating in community/cultural events; playing music and Pacific Island/Māori radio stations; speaking words and commands in the home and displaying posters and words as a way of normalising the presence of language in the home. Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) correlates Pacific identities and the knowledge of a Pacific language as leading on to pathways of enhanced educational and economic achievement and increased positive outcomes. While learning a second language is acknowledged as contributing to improved cognitive development, enhanced educational outcomes and strong, confident identities (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001; Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2016) this is not always practical or realistic for parents who are raising children with more than one ethnic identity.

### **Family – the influence of family on cultural identity development.**

The second theme of family draws on the familial factor and the influence this has on parents and the cultural identity development of their children.

For the parents in this study, the Pacific sense of family (inclusive of extended family members) is integral and important, however the family members with the most frequent and closest interactions were grandparents and then followed by the siblings of the parents and their children (that is, Aunties, Uncles and first cousins). Bronfenbrenner's microsystem setting (2005) describes the presence of family members as significant others in the immediate environment of a developing person most likely to instigate interactions that are dynamic and influential. According to Manuela and Sibley

(2012) the familial factor is influential in determining self-affiliation to ethnic identity, as family in a Pacific sense, is viewed as central to one's livelihood and existence. Taule'ale'ausumai (1990) describes Pacific notions of family as including grandparents, uncles, aunties, and cousins in comparison to the Western interpretation of family as a nuclear unit consisting of just the parents and children.

Parents in this study spoke of the reliance on their own parents to take children to family and community events and to teach them in a way that was nurturing and unopposed by time and other competing daily tasks. For some parents it was important to visit family in the Pacific homelands so children could connect and feel a sense of belonging to their cultural heritage. While the *talanoa* discussions did not specifically focus on the influence of family members and the role that they played in the upbringing of children, one does wonder how relevant the long bandied quote "it takes a whole village to raise a child" is today and in the lives of children with mixed Pacific ethnicities in some parts of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Are there just too many families and relationships to manage and maintain – as suggested by the parents? The transmission of ethnicity to children clearly occurs predominantly between parents and their offspring, but this research highlights the role of grandparents as key influencers and teachers of culture, identity, and language. Callister, Didham, and Potter (2005) argue that the determination of ethnicity can be complex, identifying family as a "site of struggle and compromise, where a child's racial and/or ethnic identification must be negotiated between both parents" (p. 554). The transmission of ethnicity then from parents to children can be complicated particularly when one or both parents affiliate with more than one ethnic group.

### **Peers – social interaction in the school, playground and community.**

The following section outlines the fourth theme of peers which draws on influential interactions that commonly take place in the school, playground and community.

In terms of cultural learning, it is noted in the findings that learning the language and cultural values, beliefs and practices is dependent on how often children are immersed and spend time with family members or “holders of cultural knowledge”. Bronfenbrenner (2005) looks at the influence of peer groups in the developing individual, where, in the modern context of living and raising a family, more time is potentially spent socialising, living, and learning with peers and in other societal settings outside of the home. He views that the place of the family as holding primary responsibility of raising families has shifted to other settings in the society as the conditions of life have changed.

Keddell (2006) identifies internal and external forces within the social, political, educational, and familial contexts as a combination of layers impacting self-perception of cultural identity and describes situational ethnicity as a “fluid and normal process whereby they [research participants] used their ‘insider’ knowledge in both groups in different circumstances” (p. 54). Sera (Tokelauan & Samoan) described this process clearly when switching between the local Samoan community, her matriarchal Tokelau family and the language and behaviour practised and modelled in their family home. It is suggested here that when parents remain closely involved and connected with their extended families, situational ethnicity is a process that occurs naturally and normally. This parallels with Mackley-Crump’s (2015) concept of mooring posts which “reinforces the unfixed and changing nature of identity” (p.190). (see Chapter Two, p. 13).

### **School – a site for cultural learning, identity affirmation, and ethnic categorisation.**

The school, as an identified site for identity affirmation and both educational and cultural learning, is the third emerging theme and a discussion is presented below.

Worthy of attention is the reliance of parents in this study on the schools to teach and maintain cultural knowledge and language in the absence of grandparents and significant family members. Schools act as a powerful medium for children to learn about themselves and others and for some

parents in this study, the school was a site of convenience as parents rely on the school to teach cultural content when they cannot or do not have the time. It appears that there was no featured Pacific language in the curricula of the schools attended to by the children of the participating parents. However, the opportunities identified for learning cultural knowledge were mostly Pacific language weeks, cultural days, and joining the school *Kapa Haka* or Poly Club.

Learning Languages is one of the eight specified learning areas in the New Zealand curriculum and the Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island, and Niuean languages are now offered and taught at some secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2016). The inclusion of Pacific languages in the New Zealand curriculum recognises the value that language learning contributes to learner and community development. The language curriculum development has brought together Pacific communities, leaders, and language experts to collaborate and develop language resources and curriculum and assessment modules which have, in turn, increased language learning exposure and opportunities. Learning a language has become much more accessible (although limited to age and learning levels) for families that rely on schools for language and cultural learning that are difficult to maintain in the homes. Learning that acknowledges the identity and culture of students has enabled meaningful engagement to occur for both parents and children as often children are given homework that requires inquiry into *whakapapa* (family genealogy) or family history. Faith identified homework and school projects as opportunities for their two children to discover and learn about their cultural identity and language.

Four of the sets of parents identified school cultural groups like the *Kapa Haka* group and Poly club as opportunities for their children to learn and affirm their cultural identities amongst their peers at school. Fairbairn-Dunlop's study (2014) describes Poly clubs as a supplementary education site that reinforces a sense of belonging through brotherhood, cultural knowledge, trust, and responsibility as members. Findings from the *talanoa* with parents of this study, indicated that parents welcomed membership opportunities as the Poly club offered a culturally secure, educational space that enabled cultural

enrichment, leadership skills, and identity reinforcement. Parents also recognised the benefits of participating in a cultural group as empowering and self-defining both individually and collectively as Pacific or Māori with their peers. Parents referred to school concerts and annual secondary school Pacific festivals as opportunities for children to articulate their cultural identities. These opportunities confer a sense of pride and accomplishment for both parents and children. As Mackley-Crump (2015) points out, these festival spaces act as a conduit of connections that link children to their cultural roots and Pacific origins. It also affirms both their identity as an individual and as a member of a collective amongst their peers, and within the school and community.

### **Environment – societal perceptions, racism, and stereotypes.**

This section addresses the fifth theme of environment and the key elements of ethnic intermarriage, societal perceptions and stereotyping are presented below.

Giddens (2009) describes two aspects of the environment; the natural environment which includes “all of those non-human, natural surroundings within which human beings exist” (p. 158) and societal environment which is concerned with the external conditions and surroundings that people live and work in. Environment in the context of this research is concerned with the external conditions that include geographical location, social, and cultural forces and relations/interactions with people, all of which shape and influence the worldview of a person. The findings of this research demonstrate how for some parents, structural factors like location and the ethnic community make-up where families reside, determine how families practise their cultural values and languages.

Having a sense of belonging was a recurring factor underpinning the five identified themes as parents recognised the value of belonging and feeling accepted within a group and amongst family and peers. The identity journey of all interviewed parents are grounded and defined within the Aotearoa/New Zealand context and experience. All the children of the parents in this study



were born in Aotearoa/New Zealand which is consistent with statistics profiling the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a predominantly New Zealand-born, English speaking generation, with their Pacific and cultural identities influenced by a worldview that is further removed from the Pacific roots of their grandparents and preceding generations. This was noted by some parents as they expressed concerns over the task of having to manage the rich cultures that make up the ethnic identities of their children.

Much of the research reviewed in this thesis is concerned with the socio-cultural factors that influence cultural identity formation and the identity tensions that impact how individuals make sense of themselves. Macpherson (2001) points to social and environmental factors influencing the emergence of new Pacific identities where there appears to be a gradual dilution of traditional Pacific knowledge, values and language across the Pacific generations in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is evident in the literature that details the history of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand; from the migrant waves in the 1950s-70s to the New Zealand-born cohort that now includes second, third, and fourth generations with Pacific heritage (Anae, 2001; Loomis, 1990; Mila Schaaf, 2010; Tiatia, 1998).

This research found that the identity and wellbeing of an individual is influenced by societal interactions from both within the immediate settings and external conditions surrounding an individual. Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem (2005) asserts that socio and historical factors impact the development of an individual and their environment and this is mirrored in the evolving phenomenon of the mixed Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The emerging experience and identities of the mixed Pacific population details the constancy and change that Bronfenbrenner identifies as triggered by "significant life events in the external environment or within the individual, altering the existing relation between person and environment, thus creative a dynamic that may instigate developmental change" (p. 119). The process over time as identified in the chronosystem infers that an individual is a product of the society in which they are born and influenced by the environment in which they are socialised. This is applicable to the families in



this research as they are all connected to the Pacific migrant experience and journey to settle in the new-found home of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### *Ethnic intermarriage.*

Four of the participating families identified Māori as one of the ethnic affiliations of their children and it is interesting to note that Māori children between the ages of 0-14 were more likely to identify with other groups with 58.8% of Māori children identifying themselves with Pacific peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). This is a significant proportion and draws attention to the increase in ethnic intermarriages and the population identifying with more than one ethnic group, particularly between Pacific peoples and Māori. Muttarak (cited in Callister, Didham, & Kivi, 2009) points to ethnic intermarriages as key to understanding interactions between ethnic groups and “acts simultaneously as both a primary cause and indicator of social and cultural integration” (p. 21).

Several parents identified the process of naming their children as a carefully considered and important process directly connecting the child to their heritage, family, and *whakapapa*. The majority of parents in this research gave Māori and/or Pacific names to acknowledge family members, ancestors, and ancestral links of importance to the cultural identity of their children. Parents were deliberate in their decision to gift their children names that explicitly and openly identifies their ethnic identities.

In trying to ascertain the why and how ethnicity, cultural values, attitudes, customs, practices and language are transmitted from parents to children in this research, it is assumed that as Kukutai (2008) found, ethnic identity is not transmitted in a straight-forward, direct way; it is complex, unpredictable, flexible, and influenced by shifting influences over time, place and space. This could be viewed as a process of fusion for parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities, as the shifting between different families, cultures, and environments often sees the different cultural expectations either conflict, coincide, and/or cross over. As described in Chapter Four, this was evident in the *talanoa* with Terina and Rangi who indicated that the task of managing what and how they teach and nurture their children is a culturally-fused

process. As parents to children of five ethnicities, they are conscious of their efforts to teach and nurture their children to act accordingly and appropriately.

### *Societal perceptions and stereotyping.*

Mara, Foliaki, and Coxon's (1994) account of Pacific Islands education provides an historical account of the impact of shifting educational ideologies on Pacific societies, from the pre-missionary period through to the Pacific migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The history of stereotypical labels for Pacific peoples can be traced back to the colonisation of the Pacific Islands where they were portrayed as "savages", "natives", and "heathens" who needed to be civilised to learn the ways of the European settlers. The era of the labour market shortage in Aotearoa/New Zealand was marred by racism towards Pacific peoples and influenced by the political economy. Pacific peoples were viewed as low-skilled workers and later blamed for social and economic problems and seen as a threat to New Zealanders (Spoonley, 1988). In recent decades, Pacific peoples are widely portrayed as excelling in and dominating sports teams, particularly rugby and rugby league, and often assumed to have musical and creative talents (Pasikale, 1996; Teaiwa & Mallon, 2005). Although the profile of Pacific peoples paints a sobering reality of the poor living and health conditions, and educational and employment outcomes, these negative statistics are often used to generally stereotype Pacific peoples. In this light, stereotypes are limiting and can hinder Pacific peoples reaching their full potential to perform, achieve, and succeed in their various endeavours.

Societal stereotypes can perpetuate mistruths about the capability of children to achieve and succeed in society (Webber, 2008). These stereotypes draw on preconceived assumptions about a group of people and are often generalised, exaggerated and based on information that is grounded from small minded, inaccurate, and uninformed perceptions. School streaming procedures were described in Tiatia's (1998) research, as perpetuating stereotypes that undermined the true potential and capability of Pacific students. Such streaming procedures categorised Pacific students based on their "Island" names and Tiatia (1998) maintains that stereotypes are

detrimental to Pacific students' confidence in their learning abilities when students themselves reinforce and believe the stereotypes.

Cultural, sporting, and creative spaces are domains that generally portray Pacific peoples positively and some of the interviewed parents report strategically using these examples of role models with their own children. Both Tikei and Thomas mentioned using successful Pacific peoples as examples of positive role models to show their children that anything is achievable when they work hard and put their mind to a task. Positive role models and mentors of similar ethnic backgrounds and experiences have proven to be effective in engaging and inspiring Pacific peoples to strive for success, particularly in the academic arena where there is still a prominent gap in the retention and completion pass rates of Pacific students (Chu, Abella & Paurini, 2013).

Educational disparities can be linked to the historical and colonised experience of Māori and Pacific (Pearson, 1990). For Māori, colonisation, alienation, racism, and historic dispossession of lands and resources have all contributed to the inequalities experienced today. For Pacific peoples, it is a different journey although with similar remnants of racism and marginalisation, but one marked by migration and struggles to find a strong foothold in a foreign country that was to become "home". While we have come a long way from the fallout of the labour shortage era in the 1950s and 1960s, to the Dawn Raid era of the 1970s, it is clear that racism is prevalent today, however predominantly taking form in a subtle and institutionalised way (Blank et al., 2016). Faith's frank account of racism and her observations of a perceived "normal life" reflects the white privilege (Consedine & Consedine, 2012) that describes the difference in the life experiences of the dominant majority group and other minority groups. This illustrates the contrast of race relations as experienced by both Faith and Tikei who acknowledged their worlds and upbringing were very different. It also demonstrates how social, economic, environmental, and political factors determine the worldview, experiences, and outcomes of people's lives (Macpherson et al., 2001).

In her critique of Sibley and Manuela's 2012 research, Kedell (2014) writes that people with multiple ethnic identities are likely to have lower self-esteem ratings because they are polarised between internalising negative societal beliefs, racism from the dominant society, and seeking acceptance of their authenticity as Pacific within their respective Pacific cultures. It was clear from the discussion about examples of race relations and cultural differences that parents in this study were determined to make a concerted effort to manage these challenges by continuing to encourage their children to embrace their cultural identities and to build their character of resilience. More importantly, the efforts to negotiate and manage such racism and cultural differences, portray the endurance of love and commitment that couples like Faith and Tikei have to raise their children together.

### **Parents as edgewalkers.**

The following section concludes the discussion of the five identified themes and considers parents in their role of nurturing and raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. The metaphor of a balancing act is introduced to outline the strategies parents use to address challenges.

Extending Tupuola's (2004) Pacific edgewalker concept, the children of the parents in this research could be considered to be "mixed Pacific edgewalkers" – a generation who, in their journey of self-discovery, traverse through multiple cultural boundaries that are defined by very distinct, and, at times, common values and behaviours. Parents are critical to the role of raising this growing generation of mixed Pacific edgewalkers. Further, parents may or may not choose to affiliate with or traverse all boundaries that the children are ethnically affiliated to. In this sense parents are viewed as agents of change, enablers, or enforcers determining how children connect to, identify, and learn about their cultural selves. In Tupuola's (2004) research, edgewalkers are described as possessing cultural resilience that enables the ability to negotiate and maintain cultural boundaries while walking between the edges of the cultures they are connected to. Furthermore, Tupuola views edgewalking as a healthy process that is manipulated by global influences, which is in contrast to much of the research that focus on the identity tensions experienced by the New

Zealand-born Pacific generations. Parents, who are laden with rich life experiences and insights, can be viewed as edgewalkers themselves; having navigated the toils and shifting currents in their own journeys of self-identification, they then guide, influence and share the cross cultural journeys of their children.

*A balancing act.*

Given the time and effort needed to maintain access, exposure, and opportunities, the balancing act of managing family and cultural expectations and obligations appeared to be a considerable challenge for parents. The balancing act assumes a potentially difficult situation for a person when attention is needed in more than two places/activities at a time. This leads me to ponder – when does it get too much for parents? Is the time spent with each family enough to uphold family and community expectations? Are parents able to negotiate and nurture the upbringing of their children so that both parents and children are comfortable “in their own skin” when amongst their own? The balancing act metaphor presents strategies and actions parents use to enable a healthy cultural identity:

*Managing the challenges.*

As shown in the findings (Chapter Four), managing the cultural identities of the mixed Pacific generation is largely impacted by time, resources, and access to opportunities of learning. Parents – as agents of cultural transmission – need to manage the challenges that come with the identity construction of their children. For this mixed generation of children, such challenges often come in the form of racism and negative situations that require parents to reinforce their children’s sense of belonging amongst family, peers, and in the community. Parents of this study use various strategies that include using successful Pacific role models and engaging in candid conversations with children about cultural differences, racism, and embracing diversity – both of their own unique mix and of others around them.

*Negotiation between parents.*

The process of negotiation can be defined as engaging in discussions to decide the best outcome for a situation. Negotiation between the parents in this study is demonstrated, for example, by deciding which grandparent/s children spend time with, which family/cultural/community events to attend, or which school may enable better access and exposure to cultural knowledge or language. Several couples identified culture and language as impacting the decisions on school choice, who their children spend time with, and what they learn. When a compromise cannot be reached parents either make a decision that best suits their family needs by not attending family/community events or leaving it up to one or the other spouse to take control and decide.

*Maintaining commitment to family expectations.*

The act of maintenance necessitates effort and energy to support something to exist, continue, and remain in good condition. Maintaining commitment to complex family/community/cultural obligations can be a mammoth task for some families who are dependent on the family/friends support networks to keep things in balance. Maintaining expectations and pleasing family can be draining and tiring and in some instances parents make decisions that are convenient to their immediate needs. Parents in this study value good communication between each other and often rely on grandparents and familial support to see through commitments and family expectations.

*Nurturing wellbeing and sense of belonging.*

Ultimately parents aspire to raise, care for, and protect their children to the best of their abilities. The parents in this research have clearly articulated they want the best of all worlds for their children. They actively encourage their children to be proud of who they are and the cultures they belong to. The parents demonstrate this in many ways: by supporting the interests of children wanting to learn and participate in cultural events and groups, prioritising time and effort to immerse children amongst family and community members, and by verbally affirming to children that their cultural identities are unique.

## Conclusion.

This chapter affirms the notion that Pacific identities are contextually complex and shifting according to the interactions and socialisation with other people – that is, identity development and formation is situational, relational, and influenced by both immediate and external conditions surrounding an individual. The issues raised in the literature review parallel the parents' *talanoa*, supporting claims that a healthy cultural identity gives a sense of belonging and place in the worlds that an individual walks in. Furthermore, the *talanoa* also reflects parents' understanding that taking pride in cultural values, languages, and identities will lead to better educational outcomes for their children (Mila-Schaaf and Robinson, 2010).

The intra-diversity within ethnic groups emphasises the complexity of identity formation that is influenced and varied by migration, language fluency, ethnic intermarriages, and place of birth. This is widely recognised in research and literature on Island-born and New Zealand-born Pacific peoples, drawing attention to the features and characteristics that sets apart two very distinct groups, despite sharing the same genealogy, heritage, and connection to the Pacific Islands (Anae, 2010; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004). Being judged or deemed as not “real” or authentic by members within one's own ethnic group can be a harrowing experience that influences whether an individual chooses to accept or reject their cultural identities and connections. Others may be more resilient in ignoring the negative perceptions of others and walk confidently in their worlds.

This study has shown that edgewalking and traversing the mooring posts that outline cultural boundaries can be difficult for parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. The *talanoa* elicited a rich response from parents about their aspirations, desires, and hopes for their children, and about the ways in which they approach the challenges and strategies of raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. While culture, identity, and language are clearly valued priorities, the time and effort required to maintain access, exposure, and opportunities for learning the languages and upholding cultural values is complex and difficult for parents to juggle. Thus, the transmission of cultural

knowledge from parents to children is dependent on a balancing act when managing family and cultural expectations. The strategies parents select to manage this balancing act can ultimately determine how much time is spent and what is passed on to their children.



## **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

### **To the Future and Beyond**

This thesis set out to explore the factors and conditions influencing the ethnic transmission and identity construction of the mixed Pacific generation in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The research aimed to provide insights into how parents manage and value the cultural identities of their children, and introduced the voices of five couples to illustrate their experiences raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities.

A distinctive feature of an ethnically mixed person is that identity development is complex. The reviewed literature reveals the shifting dynamics of identity issues impacting the mixed Pacific population where succeeding generations continue to navigate through authenticity issues, imposed labels, and stereotypes. This also highlights the “in-between” and marginalised state of being that characterises the identity journey of the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The study identifies the limited body of research on parental influence in the identity development and transmission of cultural knowledge to the mixed ethnic population. Chapter Two makes explicit links between identity development and learning and posits that a healthy Pacific/cultural identity contributes to self-confidence and enhanced educational outcomes. While the literature notes the identity tensions and subjective marginalisation experienced by the Pacific diaspora, it also highlights cultural resilience associated with “edgewalking” (Tupuola, 2004) and a multi-local sense of belonging through the “mooring posts” (Mackley-Crump, 2015) that an individual is able to navigate through and adapt to. The remainder of Chapter Two discusses the role of parents in their children’s learning and the need for culturally responsive policies and practices that recognise cultural diversity and collaborative relationships supporting educational success. The findings of this study align with the reviewed literature that says identity is central to subjective wellbeing; it is contextual and situational; it is fluid and dynamic; and linked with culture it is critical to learning outcomes.

This study sought to investigate four specific areas outlined in the research questions:

- How do parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities value Pacific identity?
- What influences parents' decisions and practice of Pacific identities in their children's learning?
- What are the challenges faced by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities?
- What strategies do parents use to encourage positive Pacific identity for their children's learning?

Firstly, it looked to understand how parents value Pacific/cultural identities. Parents in this study view Pacific/cultural identities as significant to a holistic sense of wellbeing, confidence, and belonging. Through their own life experiences, parents recognised that a strong sense of identity is self-affirming and sets a positive platform for how their children approach life circumstances, how they socialise and interact with others, and how they learn. Therefore, how an individual *feels* they belong determines the degree of enthusiasm and confidence they have to venture, live, and learn. In this study, parents demonstrate explicit ways of valuing Pacific/cultural identities by incorporating cultural practices and values into everyday life. This includes speaking simple phrases and words in their Māori and/or Pacific languages, reciting prayers, and singing songs. Other ways of acknowledging Pacific/ cultural identities include the naming of children after ancestors and family members, being deliberate about school selection, and actively facilitating opportunities for cultural learning/knowledge. I propose that, to some extent, the degree to which parents value the cultural identities of their children determines the commitment they have to their children accessing and participating in cultural practices and/or learning the languages of their ethnic backgrounds. However, it can be argued that choice or circumstances influence the degree to which parents are able to invest in valuing Pacific/cultural identities. For example, some parents feel they have “no choice” in the decisions impacting

how they raise their children as, following work and life opportunities, they live away from the immediate influence of family.

The second area this research has explored is the influences on parents' decisions about Pacific/cultural identities in relation to their children's learning. The findings clearly indicate that parents, as agents of change, face challenging decisions when deciding which cultures, languages and ethnic identities to maintain and nurture in the upbringing and education of their children. The *talanoa* with parents articulated how identities are contextualised and shift according to where one lives, where they are schooled and who they socialise and spend the most time with. Factors that influence parents' decisions about Pacific/cultural identities include the luxury of time, availability and access to resources and familial support, and exposure to culture and language in the immediate familial setting. Increasingly, schools, peers and grandparents are seen as sites of cultural learning that support parents in their role as identity agents and nurturers of culture and language. Parents in this study also reflected largely on memories, using these emotions and experiences to create better experiences and opportunities for their children.

Thirdly, this research aimed to investigate the challenges faced by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. The challenge of managing time and balancing work, school, family and community commitments can determine how much of a commitment parents can make. Effort and energy is required to maintain cultural values and practices, family traditions and community expectations. This study found that some parents relied on school cultural groups and the school Māori curriculum as there was no one in their immediate environment who could devote the necessary time to teach cultural knowledge, values, practices and languages. With the inclusion of more Pacific languages in the New Zealand school curriculum, more families may see this as an opportunity to develop and strengthen cultural knowledge and identities. Racism and stereotypes also raised concerns by parents of this study and were conscious of their role to teach children to embrace their identities in the face of negative stereotypes, and racism.

Finally, this study investigated strategies parents use to encourage positive Pacific/cultural identities for their children's learning. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory was useful in demonstrating how internal forces and external conditions influence both the identity development of an individual and how parents choose to nurture, maintain, and manage the cultural identities of their children. The study found that schools, peers, and family are central to how children learn and maintain their cultural identities, values, practices, and languages. Parents rely on the school as a site of cultural learning through curriculum content. Membership of a Poly club or *Kapa Haka* group provides a means for children to affirm their identities and sense of belonging with peers in the learning, social, and cultural environments. Role modelling remains an effective strategy for facilitating positive behaviours and parents refer to successful Pacific peoples and statistics of Pacific success as a way of buffering built-in societal perceptions, stereotypes, and expectations.

### **Recommendations.**

Based on the findings – issues raised and themes that emerged – from this research, the following recommendations are made with a specific focus on parents, schools, and policy makers.

#### Identity development education

Given that parents rely on the school as a site of identity affirmation and cultural learning through peer interaction and curriculum content, education that acknowledges the link between cultural identity and educational outcomes will empower both parents and educators to employ a conscious and active role in the identity formation of the growing mixed ethnic generation. Workshops and programmes with this focus are relevant and give parents the tools to encourage children to be confident navigators in their chosen pathways. Empowerment through identity development education enables the development of tools that unlock unconscious biases and challenges stereotypes.

### Implications for parents

Discourse and communication with parents is vital in their role as identity agents of the mixed Pacific generation. To assist parents in managing this, open *talanoa* is necessary between parents, families and schools about teaching and reflecting values and practices that are important to positive cultural identity development. Such *talanoa* includes co-parenting discussions on what is realistically manageable or important in supporting children to find a sense of belonging in the cultures they affiliate with. Ultimately, parents will manage what they can; however, by reflecting on their own experiences and identity journeys they can contribute to nurturing the cultural identity development of their children.

### Implications for schools and teacher education

Based on the finding that parents increasingly rely on schools to support cultural learning and identity development, schools play an important role in the formation and reproduction of ethnic identities. The balancing act described in this research illustrates the complex tasks that parents manage, thus exposure and opportunities of cultural learnings will facilitate greater support available to parents. A positive identity development can be constructed through a culturally responsive education system that recognises the ethnic background, values, and practices of students. Low expectations placed on learners continue to influence learner outcomes and educators need to understand and be conscious of their own biases and how these influence the way they teach and interact with students.

It is recommended that the curricula and practices of schools are relevant and reflect the experience of Aotearoa/New Zealand and learners to enable the opportunity of identifying how learners connect to the Aotearoa/New Zealand experience. A relevant history curriculum would incorporate the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori and Pākehā race relations, Pacific migration, and multiculturalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Pacific migration education as a feature in the New Zealand school curriculum is valid as Pacific peoples continue to contribute to and feature prominently in New Zealand's history. A school curriculum that is inclusive and recognises both diversity and intra-

diversity enables learners of mixed Pacific ethnicities to locate a sense of self and connection with others around them. Schools that promote cultural awareness and encourage social acceptance of differences are likely to minimise bullying, exclusion, racism and isolation – all of which have been experienced by the edgewalkers of mixed ethnicities.

#### Implications for policymakers

Unconscious bias and institutional racism are undercurrents that continue to mark the social and education systems and, therefore, a whole systems approach is required to improve processes, policies, and procedures that manage the impacts of behaviour towards the mixed ethnic generation. A whole systems approach implies developing broad policies and procedures across education, health, and social services that consciously recognise cultural diversity and address racism and perceptions that are ingrained into society. This research highlights the importance of recognising the changing demographics of the Pacific population in Aotearoa/New Zealand as illustrated by the parents' experiences. Government policies and Pacific models/initiatives need to factor in the intra/inter nuances of the mixed Pacific population to ensure the values underpinning such initiatives reflect the values of today's parents' raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. The complexity around identity construction and formation for the mixed Pacific population may deem current policies as being irrelevant as it does not reflect or resonate with their own personal and cultural identity.

#### **Future research.**

Church and the importance of religion does not feature in this research and it would be interesting to see any future research that explores the place and relevance of church for parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities.

Other pathways building on this research could explore whether the same results could be derived from parents located in another town or city. Other variations could include:

- choosing a specific ethnic combination to investigate similarities or differences

- a comparative study on the experience of parents from different generations to identify historical factors that influence the identity development of children
- a specific focus on language as a significant identity marker on mixed ethnic and/or ethnic specific groups
- a specific focus on the cultural differences between the non-Pacific/Pacific combination of parents and the mixed Pacific parents
- an exploratory analysis of the uptake of Pacific learners taking Pacific languages at secondary school to understand the influences behind choosing a Pacific language as subject choice and the challenges that arise.

### **Conclusion.**

As the thesis title suggests, the findings show that the notion of Pacific identities is complex and shifting according to the environment a person is nurtured and socialised in. Hence, the identity of an individual is socially constructed and a product of the environment that they are exposed and have access to. The inability to speak or understand a Pacific language often causes feelings of isolation, exclusion, and alienation both for parents and for children who, as a result, find it hard to fit in and feel a sense of belonging. For many parents, the feeling of exclusion and being on the outer “circle” acts as a catalyst for them to ensure their children are in a better position to access the Pacific/Māori languages and cultural knowledge. While a sense of belonging is a principal factor in feeling confident within one’s cultural identity, the practicalities involved in parents ensuring this happens are challenging.

The implications from the recommendations made align with literature that endorse home/school partnerships as necessary for learners to shift comfortably and confidently in the environments that they move between. The balancing act metaphor illustrates the multi-layer of peer and family interactions, and societal and environmental factors that parents manage when raising their children of mixed Pacific ethnicities. Learning environments that recognise the diverse realities of Pacific peoples and the link between

identity, culture and education, create conditions that are conducive to positive learning experiences and outcomes.

It is clear that the dreams and aspirations of the interviewed parents are to see their children strive to the best of their abilities and to be proud of who they are. The emerging generation of mixed Pacific edgewalkers has the potential to negotiate and facilitate cross cultural relations by bridging together nations based on their experience and insight of the worlds they walk in. Parents see themselves as the facilitators and door openers of opportunities, encouraging participation and supporting the interests of their children throughout their journey in life.

*Well it's their decision really. We tell them every time, "it's your decision...you're the one that decides for you – it's your life, we can only guide you and give you the courage to go forward" (Hone - Māori & Niuean).*



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# Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet



## INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

**Master of Arts (Education) – Thesis Research**

**Student: Rachael Leafe**

**Massey University**

*‘The influence of shifting Pacific identities in learning: the experience of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities’*

## INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATING PARENTS

Kia ora & Talofa lava

My name is Rachael Leafe and I am currently studying part-time towards the Master of Arts (Education) degree. As part of the University requirements, I am required to conduct a research project and write a thesis to complete the degree. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the underlying challenges and strategies used by parents in negotiating and influencing the Pacific and cultural identity development of their children.

I would like to invite you to be a part of my research project and to be interviewed as parents raising children with mixed Pacific ethnicities. This will consist of a semi structured talanoa/interview with parents that should take up to an hour and a half of your time. All names and information from the interview will be kept confidential. The interview will be at a time and place convenient to you and your family. Once receiving your permission, the interviews will be recorded and then transcribed into notes for the analysis and writing up of my research project. Conversations are recorded to assist in the process of checking, analysing and writing up of information.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study up until data has been analysed
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

Te Kunenga  
ki Pārehuroa

Institute of Education  
Cir Albany Drive & Collinson Road, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9093 [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded
- ask that tape recorder be turned off at any point

Following the interview, the tapes and transcribed notes will be stored in a secured place that will only be accessed by me. Audio recordings and transcripts will be kept for a period of three years and then destroyed.

My co-supervisors are:

Dr Lesieli MacIntyre (06) 356-9099 x84464  
Dr Tracie Mafile'o (06) 356-9099 x85027

This research has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk (Human Ethics Notification – 4000015194). Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committee and I am responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).

You are most welcome to ask for the questions before the interview. I am also more than happy to send you a summary report of my research once it has been submitted and marked. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Soifua ma ia manuia

Rachael Leafe  
021 xxxxxxxx  
[r.v.leaf@gmail.com](mailto:r.v.leaf@gmail.com)

## Appendix 2: Consent Form



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Master of Arts (Education) – Thesis Research

Student: Rachael Leafe

Massey University

*'The influence of shifting Pacific identities in learning: the experience of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities'*

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that the interview will be recorded and that I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I understand that the data I provide will not be used for any other purposes or released to others without my written consent. I may also request a summary report of the research project once it is completed and marked.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent and participation at any time without prejudice; and that I may request to read notes taken at the session.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

Parent (1) ..... Date: .....

Full name – PRINTED: .....

Parent (2) ..... Date: .....

Full name – PRINTED: .....

## Appendix 3: Authority to Release Transcript



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

### Authority for the Release of Transcripts

Master of Arts (Education) - Research Project

Student: Rachael Leafe

Massey University

*'The influence of shifting Pacific identities in learning: The experience of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities'*

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name - printed \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Massey University Human Ethics Approval



Date: 04 November 2015

Dear Rachael Leafe

Re: Ethics Notification - 4000015194 - The influence of shifting Pacific identities in education: The experience of parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicity

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please go to <http://rims.massey.ac.nz> and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

*"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research."*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz).*

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise  
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 F 06 355 7973  
E [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz) W <http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz>

## Human Ethics Low Risk notification

Dr Brian Finch

Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise  
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 F 06 355 7973  
E [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz) W <http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz>



## **Appendix 5: Question Guide for *Talanoa***

### **How do parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities value Pacific identity?**

- Tell me about the ways your culture/cultural identity shaped you
- Can you recall any defining moments where you became conscious of how others/society defined you/your identity?
- In what way does this impact how you raise and engage with your children's education?
- How do your children learn about their cultures? (draw on community, family, school, church involvement)
- Is culture or having a strong Pacific identity important to you?
  - What about for your children - How, and in what ways do you value their Pacific/cultural identity?
- When thinking about the cultures of your children, how do you manage this?
- Where do you see culture and identity fitting in terms of your children's education? (separate time and place?)

### **What influences parents' decisions and practice of Pacific identities in their children's learning?**

- What was your own educational experience like? Tell me what you remember about it (primary/secondary school)
  - Was it a positive or negative experience? Why?
- Tell me about the ways your culture/cultural identity shaped you
- Can you recall any defining moments where you became conscious of how others/society defined you/your identity?
- In what way does this impact how you raise and engage with your children's education?
- When it comes to your children learning about their Pacific culture, what factors influence your parenting decisions?

### **What are the challenges faced by parents raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities?**

- What are some of the challenges, if any that you face raising children of mixed Pacific ethnicities?

### **What strategies do parents use to encourage positive Pacific identities for their children's learning?**

- What strategies do you use to encourage positive Pacific identity for your children's learning?