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**Ululaau – the power of transformation to curb
Samoan youth offending, a 275, South Auckland
worldview**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Social Work

in

College of Health

at Massey University, Manawatū, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Jack John SCANLAN

2025

Abstract

Research on Samoan youth offending emphasises the disproportionate number of Samoan youths committing crimes and the negative effects. Little is known about positively transformed at-risk Samoan youth, especially those who have gone on to work in the youth offending field. This qualitative study sought to understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the perspective of former Samoan youth-at-risk to transformed Samoan social practitioners in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, the city with the largest Samoan population outside of Samoa. The study had four objectives: a) to explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand; b) to understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners; c) to understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field; and d) To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland Aotearoa New Zealand.

The purposeful sample of thirty Samoan social practitioners, comprised of interviews from various professions, such as social work, youth work, pastors, leadership, management, sports coaching, and teaching, were interviewed using a Talanoa method in a mix of individual (22) and group (8) sessions conducted by an insider researcher. Critical Race Theory was used to interpret findings. Although Samoan social practitioners had ways to reduce Samoan offending, they experienced exclusion in dominant white spaces, where they were not listened to, undermined, bullied, or left out of critical decision-making processes.

The study introduces the Ululaau framework, named after the researcher's late mother, to address the racial barriers experienced by participants. The Ululaau framework has three named principles that advocate for racial inclusion within social work: a) Past - Less restricted entry of Samoans into social work education based on criminal pasts and financial cost; b) Practice – Samoans fully utilises resilient factors such as faith, family and culture in their practice; and c) Positionality, Samoans having more opportunities to become a leader or to be on governing bodies to effect change within their community. This research contributes to new knowledge in social work in that it can inform policy and services on achieving inclusive decision-making so that race is not a barrier for

Samoan social practitioners working with Samoan youth and families in the justice system. Furthermore, a justice system that values redemption, reclamation, paying it forward and advocates for community-led approaches is recommended. Additionally, this research invites non-Samoans and social work to the South Auckland table, a metaphor of racial and community inclusion nationally and globally recognised for reducing Samoan youth offending through the power of transformation.

Dedications

In loving memory of my guardian angels who never saw me complete this journey but were in my thoughts and, at my most challenging times were a source of encouragement. Rest in love.

To my loving parents, Jack Joseph Scanlan (father), 10 September 2008 and Ululaau Margaret Scanlan nee Asiata (mother), 6 February 2014. I often reflected on my father's favourite saying during this journey, "*We're here because we are here.*"

Figure 1-1: Personal photographs



(Photograph supplied by author)¹

Jack Lindsay, father-in-law.

Katuma Kenneth and Fa'ata Rosemary Scanlan (Grandparents on father's side).

Siaosi and Talaloa Asiata (Grandparents on mother's side).

Peniamina (Benz) Valeni.

Keneti Muaiava.

Uncle Ulugia Lematua Aso Asiata.

Aunty June and Uncle Elai Tyrell.

Aunty Alamein Mohr and Uncle Tony Mohr.

Pepe Chan Chui.

Malagaomā Allan Va'a

Fa'anana Efeso Collin.

Teleiai Fuama'i Tofa.

¹ L-R Mum, me & Dad. Pōwhiri (formal Māori welcome) as the new South Auckland Police youth social worker in 2002.

Last but not least, the late Dr Michael Dale (pictured below in the white shirt) and Dr. Andrew Trlin thank you for gifting me your doctoral regalia, which continues a legacy for our collective aiga/families.

Psalm 116:15: *"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints."*



(photograph supplied by author)²

² L-R – Jack with Doctoral Supervisors, Prof. Tracie Mafile’o, Prof. Kieran O’Donoghue (standing), and the late Dr Michael Dale.

Acknowledgements

Psalm 34:3: *"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together"*.

This scripture hung on a wall in my family home, where I grew up, and was the first thing I saw as a child when I went through the front door. In this instance, the door is a metaphor, signifying those who opened their hearts and minds and blessed me with their time and patience to complete this thesis. First and foremost, I give all glory to God for his grace during this journey and for blessing me with the ones on my dedication page and for the ones I am about to acknowledge³.

I acknowledge and am indebted to the amazing thirty participants whose stories I have the privilege of telling. This is only Chapter One of your collective stories. Your transformative journey and passion for Samoan youth in South Auckland are at the heart of this thesis, Fa'afetai tele lava.

I acknowledge my doctoral supervisors, Professor Tracie Mafile'o, my day one! I acknowledge you, Taupo and your sons. There are not enough words or cake to express my gratitude and for never giving up on me. *"Ko e koloa 'a Tonga ko e fakamālō"*. Professor Kieran O'Donoghue, thank you for being my sensei (in every sense) and for showing me that this is my Everest moment. As Doctoral supervisors, I value your kindness, guidance and belief that this Samoan uso from 275 Māngere could do this. I also want to acknowledge the doctoral support of Dr Cherie Todd-Williamson. Thank you for your advice and support in formatting this thesis. Professor Mark Hendrickson for supporting my decision to choose a DSW over a PhD. Finally, the late Dr Michael Dale, my doctoral supervisor from the start. I will wear the doctoral gown you have gifted me, our last conversation, and will think of you, my uso, as I carry you across the stage, Fa'afetai tele lava.

I acknowledge the financial and mentoring support: At the start, the Leva Mental Health & Addiction scholarship and the Massey University Pacific Success doctoral scholarship. The mid-point, Mana Moana Pasifika Leadership, thank you, Dr Karlo Mila (founder and

³. If you have read the acknowledgement and are wondering where you are mentioned, then here it is: [insert name here]. You are not forgotten, and you are equally important, but I am limited by the words of this thesis to say thank you.

visionary), Pakilau o Aotearoa Manase Lua, and to my 2021 cohort (the best by far 😊) for your collective spirit of being Tāngata Moana way finders with A.I (ancestral intelligence). Through to the end, I would like to thank Massey University School of Social Work for the financial support and for freeing up time and space for me to complete this thesis.

I acknowledge my Samoan Doctoral Support crew for your encouragement and inspiration: Dr Natasha Urale Baker, Dr Sarah McRobbie, George Gavet (PhD Candidate), and Dr Naomi Fuamatu. It's incredible to think that when we started this collective journey, we would all be Samoan Doctors one day. Notwithstanding Professor Ridvan (Riz) Tupai-Firestone, the weekly Pacific health researchers catch-up was the final extra push I needed toward the end. Right people, right time.

I acknowledge my current and former work friends and colleagues. New Zealand Police, Genesis Youth Trust, Brothers Keepers (Peau Sio Laumatia, you're the man), Te Wananga o Aotearoa, Oranga Tamariki, Barnardos Aotearoa, especially the governance board.

A special mention goes to my Massey University School of Social Work family, Head of School, Professor Kieran O'Donoghue, and Deputy Head of School, Associate Professor Polly Yeung, for your leadership and support, 非常感谢您. To my amazing Tāngata whenua and Tāngata Tiriti teaching team colleagues in the Manawatū and Albany campuses, Fa'afetai tele lava. Finally, thank you to my two out of three amigos, Thirusa Naidoo and Dr Paul'e Ruwhiu. Your heart emoji on any of my posts to being a massively supportive hype crew at work kept me grounded. Ngā mihi nui Dr Paul'e, our regular phone calls, which you will never know, kept me so many times from pressing send to a draft email, *I cannot complete this thesis*. Notwithstanding, thank you to the many students (faces I remember) in the various tertiary institutions I have been blessed to teach and to be inspired by in the past and present; Fa'afetai tele lava.

I acknowledge my gym mental health warriors. To think, in my darkest days/months/years of writer's block, I could break a sweat, laugh, cry and be inspired by this amazing group of friends who have become family. To the Container Crew, BFT Airport Oaks, AOXFIT members, especially the owners John, Dee, Kath, and our amazing coaches, who get me up at 4 a.m. every morning, thank you. Special mention

goes to my carpark debriefers and breakfast champions: Juanita and Lui Tia, Toleafoa Dr Yvonne and Lawrence Ualesi, Fuatai and Oskar Afele, Vaine Teura, and Melody Yeng Tung Karaitiana - Alofa tele lava.

I want to acknowledge my family, particularly my parents, the late Jack and Ululaa Margaret Scanlan. I am so proud to be your son. My siblings, Robert, Olivetta, Tony, Andy, Ken, and your spouses, and not forgetting my favourite nephews and nieces. My uncle Joe represents my Scanlan (dad's side, village of Faleula), including uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces. My Auntie Ulla represents my Asiata/Cowley (mum's side, villages of Vaiusu/Vaigaga), including uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces. "It took this collective village to raise this greyish sheep of a child" - Alofa tele lava, Chee hoo!

Finally, my inner circle, my beautiful children. I love you so much. To my eldest Jackson and his loving partner Keiana, whom we promised we would graduate together, but beat me to the finish line. Jackson, you have a big heart and brains to match, son, nothing but love. G. At least I can say I finished this thesis before the NZ Warriors won a Premiership. Next year is our year, son, Up da Wahs! To my middle child, Lucan, this is what our car ride talks to school is all about if and when you decide to read this thesis. As I always said, you have a big brain, as I rub your big head, fill it with possibilities of where you can go in life, son. To my youngest, Telesia, who outdebates me in everything and declared one day that she is the smartest one in this household. I will give you that, but be your best, knowing you will always be my "baby gurl". To you, my kids, you make me so proud in every way possible; you carry my heart and are my why.

Finally, to my beautiful soulmate and Ngāti Tūwharetoa wifey, Nicky. When I started this doctoral journey, I noted that it is associated with the highest divorce rate, according to social media (Facebook, N.D.) 😊. Well, you've proven that theory wrong! You have stayed by my side, been patient, and put up with my imaginary non-writing while playing Candy Crush and staring at a blank laptop screen. Only God knows where this journey will take us, so let's celebrate that we've done this together. Your husband is back, as I dedicate this thesis to you and our kids.



Source: Ali Cowley animations (thank you, cuz).

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Glossary of terms

The glossary of terms in this thesis includes Samoan, Māori, slang, and the definition of youth-at-risk. It is arranged alphabetically, except for a numerical term that begins the list. To distinguish the Samoan and Māori terms, the letter (S) for Samoan and (M) for Māori follows each term. While brief translations are provided, these words have different and deeper meanings depending on the context in which they are used. Throughout the thesis, English translations will be included.

275	Pronounced, <i>two-seven-five</i> , is the colloquial reference for Māngere, and is based on the area's three-digit telephone prefix.
Āiga (s)	Family, which includes extended family.
Ali'i(s)	Chief.
Alofa (s)	Love, Care, Nurture.
Alofa tele lava (s)	Lots of love.
Aotearoa (m)	<i>"Land of the long white cloud"</i> , also referred to as New Zealand.
Fa'a Samoa (s)	Samoan way of life, Samoan culture.
Fa'aaloalo (s)	Respect, to be respectful.
Fa'afetai tele lava(s)	Thank you very much, to give great thanks.
Faiaoga (s)	Teacher, educator.
Faifeau (s)	Church minister, pastor.
Loia (s)	Lawyer.
Māngere (m)	<i>"Lazy winds"</i> is the name of a suburb in South Auckland.
Māori (m)	Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Oranga Tamariki(m)	<i>Wellbeing of Children</i> . Refers to Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which replaced the name Child, Youth and their Families Act in 2017. This legislative act protects Children and youth and is enforced by statutory social workers, police, and courts.

Otara (m)	<i>“The place of tara”</i> is the name of a suburb in South Auckland.
Pālagi (s)	European origin or white people.
Pacific People	Interchangeable with Pasifika and Pacific Islander. Of Pacific descent.
Puao-te-atatu (m)	<i>Daybreak</i> . Refers to the 1986 report of institutionalised racism of Māori in state care.
Social Practitioners	Non-social work qualified and registered practitioners. In the context of this study, they are Samoans from South Auckland who self-identified as former youth-at-risk, from a range of helping professionals working with Samoan youth offenders.
Tamā (s)	Father.
Tāngata Tiriti (m)	Non-Māori people who acknowledge the significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) and aim to build and sustain strong relationships with Tāngata Whenua.
Tāngata Whenua (m)	<i>“People of the Land”</i> , Māori, Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.
Talanoa (s)	Respectful dialogue.
Tautua (s)	Service, to service, Servanthood.
Teu le va (s)	To nurture, honour the sacred relationships, sacred social relationships.
Tinā (s)	Mother.
Tufuga (s)	Expert, master craftsman or artisan.
Ululaau (s)	The name of the researcher’s late mother. Refers to the framework developed in this thesis to address racism faced by Samoan social practitioners.
Uso (s)	Brother or sister. The shortened version is Uce (slang). It identifies friends and acquaintances as being akin to your siblings: It is

gender-specific, so it is usually used for male-to-male or female-to-female relationships.

Whānau (m)

family includes extended.

Youth-at-risk

The definition is two-fold, describing the participants recruited for this study and the clients they support. Part 1: The participants were youth-at-risk, self-identified, not necessarily with criminal convictions. These individuals overcame risk factors such as poverty, gangs, and lack of youth justice involvement to transition into adulthood successfully. Part 2: The client definition of youth-at-risk is Samoan youth whom the participants in this study support in South Auckland, some of whom were involved in the youth justice system in Aotearoa New Zealand. Oranga Tamariki, the main statutory body for youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, defines youth-at-risk as a child or young person in need of care and protection (Oranga Tamariki, 1989).

Chapter 1 Welcome to South Auckland

Seek the Heights

Let this journey begin with this Son of Samoa

Navigating his way home to the promised land of 275⁴

Seeking a voice, but who will listen?

I don't know, but let's start by seeking permission.

1.1 Constructing the South Auckland table to find oneself

As a Samoan social worker from Aotearoa New Zealand, born and raised in Māngere, South Auckland, and with over 20 years' experience working in youth offending, I have long believed that there must be a better way to address Samoan youth offending (Anae, 2006; Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014). Despite accumulating years of experience, I never felt fully consulted about what I thought would work best for my people and community, and how my ideas could influence the interventions and policies within social work. This made me think of Samoan social practitioners⁵ from South Auckland who work tirelessly in the community and share my sentiments. If given the chance, I wondered what our collective voices could do to shape programmes and policies targeting Samoan youth offenders within social work (Faleolo, 2016).

This study questions the focus on Western-based international interventions (Healy & Link, 2012; McLaughlin, 2012), which often overlook local or indigenous voices (Faleolo, 2014; Gray et al., 2010; Havea, 2010; Healy & Link, 2012; Mafile'o, 2005). From a community viewpoint, South Auckland serves as a testing ground for efforts to address Samoan youth offending through pilot programmes, many of which fail to extend beyond their initial funding period, even when they show promising results (Nakid, 2012; Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014). While research exists on the causes and effects of Samoan

⁴ Pronounced, two-seven-five and is the colloquial reference to Māngere, a suburb in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

⁵ Social practitioners are helping professionals who may not necessarily be qualified social workers but are dedicated to working with Samoan youth offenders. For this study, social practitioners were, but not limited to social workers, leaders, youth workers, sport coaches, pastors and lawyers.

youth offending, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014), there is limited understanding of the experiences of Samoan practitioners involved in effective social work interventions (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000) in recent years.

"We need to get the whiteness discourse out of social work."

(J. Ife, personal communication, September 6, 2017).

A chance conversation with Professor Jim Ife in 2017 prompted me to reflect on the discourse of white privilege in social work. During our talk, he discussed the dominance of Western ideology in social work and how we need to address the 'whiteness' inherent in the field. As I reflected on this discussion with this highly respected social work academic, I couldn't shake the fact that this mature Pālāgi⁶ man was more passionate about and more attuned to racism than I, a New Zealand-born Samoan. This prompted me to consider my personal experiences of racism and how it manifests within the social work field. Cox and Pawar (2013) state that racism is a broad topic and addressing it may start by unpacking one's understanding of racism, first and foremost, to determine one's positioning.

I am a second-generation New Zealand-born Samoan. My parents migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1950s seeking a better life, only to find that their social justice was overshadowed by the racism of the dawn raids (Anae, 1997; Noble et al., 2014). As a child of the dawn raids era, my experience of racism included being called a FOB (Fresh off the Boat), Coconut, Bunga, and Overstayer (Anae, 1997), all derogatory terms that were common growing up in South Auckland. My experiences of racism are best described by Maiava (2023) as a twofold risk for New Zealand-born Samoans, where Pālāgi and Samoans question my cultural identity. For Samoans from Samoa, I am seen as a Pālāgi or "Plastic," ridiculed for my limited understanding of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) and mispronunciation of the Samoan language (Anae, 1997; Maiava, 2023; Radclyffe et al., 2023). For Pālāgi in New Zealand, I am often questioned about my cultural background, especially when I say, "I'm a Kiwi" (Mila, 2013). This usually confuses them and makes me relent and say I am Samoan, much to the satisfaction of the

⁶ White or European person .

Pālagi who asked. This is made worse when I mention I am from Māngere, often mispronounced as Mangry, and sarcastically questioned about my safety or how I survived not being in a gang or prison, as saying I come from South Auckland implies that I am from the crime capital of Aotearoa New Zealand (Borrell, 2005; Nakid, 2012).

My stance on the issue of racism in social work comes from my experience of the lack of professional consultation when working with Samoan youth offenders. Ofe-Grant (2018) describes this lack of consultation with the analogy of a ‘brown glass ceiling’. When it comes to key decision-making, our views or opinions as Samoans are often overlooked due to racial discrimination and bias (Ofe-Grant, 2018). As a Samoan male social worker from South Auckland, who was involved in the government strategy to address Samoan youth offending in the early 2000s, it helped that I ‘looked more like a client’ (not my words) or fit the physical profile of a crime statistic. Even before being asked for my opinion, especially in new or unfamiliar settings, I would often show my identification lanyard and dress like a Pālagi to avoid suspicion. The irony is that my name, Jack Scanlan, reflecting my Irish roots, often leads to my Pālagi name not matching others' expectations when they first meet me. Sadly, my strategies for clarifying my professional identity back then are still the same today. Nevertheless, Ofe-Grant’s (2018) research highlights the discourse examined in this study namely, the complete lack of consultation, racial bias among Samoans that can influence policy, and how current measures for Samoan youth offenders remain ineffective.

1.2 Background and context

The dichotomous nature of the migration of Pacific⁷ people to Aotearoa New Zealand has provided opportunities and challenges that have resulted in racism and discrimination for Samoan people (Anae, 1997; Royal Commission of Inquiry in Care, 2024a). The first wave of Pacific migration occurred in the 1950s, following World War II, to support the expanding manufacturing sector and address a labour shortage that required unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Anae, 2020). Subsequent waves of migration from the 1960s to the early 1970s further supported the labour shortages in the manufacturing industry (Anae,

⁷ This research mainly uses the term Pacific people, but the terms Pasifika, Tāngata Moana are also used, which are interchangeable terms that refer to people of the Pacific and are inclusive of those of the diaspora.

2020). The reciprocal return for Pacific people in their adopted country provided better opportunities, including improved education, family health, and higher wages that helped support their villages (Royal Commission of Inquiry in Care, 2024a). However, the global economic recession of the late 1970s led to Pacific people migration being targeted by the National Party's political campaigns, which were cited as the main reason for the country's economic decline (Anae, 1997). This resulted in the "Dawn Raid", a term that remains an intergenerational trigger for Pacific people's racist past in Aotearoa New Zealand (Anae, 1997; Asafo, 2021). The Police would conduct racially based dawn raids on alleged Pacific Island overstayers who were deported back to the Pacific Islands (Anae, 1997; Royal Commission of Inquiry in Care, 2024a).

Despite the contentious nature of Pacific people's migration journey, Aotearoa New Zealand has become home to the largest Polynesian population in the world (Whimp, 2009). Pacific people comprise of 443,632 or 8.9% of the total New Zealand population (Census, 2023). From this total, Samoans make up the largest Pacific ethnic group, with 213,069 or 49.3 per cent. (Census, 2023). According to the Census (2023), the Samoan population is mainly born in New Zealand (67.8%) and is young, with a median age of 24.2 years, compared to 38.1 years of the total New Zealand population. Furthermore, most Samoans reside in Auckland, with 63.7% of the population living there, and over half, 53.8% of the total Auckland Samoan population, residing in South Auckland (Census, 2023). Research on Samoan people in New Zealand typically highlights the low socio-economic factors they face, such as poor health, low educational outcomes, and low-wage earners (Anae, 2006; Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014), compared to most ethnic groups.

Similarly, previous research on youth offending and Samoan youth offending tends to be negative and focuses on the harm that youth offenders create on the New Zealand economy. According to Scott (2003), in 2003, the estimated cost to society of the one per cent of teenagers who ended up in prison was around \$3 million each over their lifespan. In 2011, Maxwell (2011) paints a bleaker picture, as the New Zealand Government spent \$3.4 billion on crime in 2010, with research indicating that the increased spending did little to reduce the chances of re-offending.

Additionally, this thesis acknowledges Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, who have the unfortunate statistic of being overrepresented in all areas of the justice system, with over half of the prison population being Māori (Ministry of Justice, 2022). While there is an increasing number of mixed Māori and Samoan ethnicities, there is currently no statistical data on this distinction, especially concerning crime (Webb et al., 2022). However, Samoans, compared to other ethnic groups, are significantly overrepresented for violent offences (Tunufa'i, 2017) as well as perpetrators and victims of family violence (Ioane, 2011; Tunufa'i, 2017). Samoans are also less likely to report family violence or to access support services (Ioane, 2011; Ioane et al., 2013; Kaloto, 2003; Ministerial Taskforce, 2002; Ministry of Justice, 1999). Although there is no specific data on the cost of Samoan youth offending in Aotearoa New Zealand, most studies indicate a high socio-economic cost and prevalence, as evidenced by the disproportionate representation of Samoan youth offenders (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Tunufa'i, 2017).

1.3 The research gap

Not since the early 2000s has the government provided positive, community-based strategies for working with youth offenders (McLaren, 2000; Ministerial Taskforce, 2002), which was part of my previous role as a social worker in South Auckland. In both McLaren's (2000) "Tough is not enough – getting smart about youth crime" and the Ministerial Taskforce's (2002) reports, the need to address the overrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika youth offending was highlighted while providing solution-based strategies compiled through a comprehensive evaluation of government and community agencies and their practitioners working collaboratively. While the early 2000s interventions outlined in McLaren (2000) and the Ministerial Taskforce (2002) ministerial reports highlight the need for and importance of addressing New Zealand's youth offending issues, the problem persists today. Unfortunately, what is currently in place are tougher and more punitive measures, such as military-style boot camps, that do not work (Reil et al., 2024; Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, 2024b; Wood and Tauri, 2025).

Furthermore, what has not remained from McLaren's (2000) and the Ministerial Taskforce's (2002) recommendations are the effective interventions and social services

that specifically targeted Māori and Pacific youth offending in South Auckland in the 2000s. This includes Te Whanāu o Waipareira Trust Wraparound Service, 274 core, which focused on medium to high-risk Māori and Pacific offenders in South Auckland (Tamihere, 2015; Ministry of Social Development, 2010), and the Youth Court Pacific Liaison officer, who supported high-risk Pacific youth offenders based at the Manukau, South Auckland Youth Court (Ministerial Taskforce, 2002; Ministry of Social Development, 2010). As a South Auckland community, the longevity and sustainability of effective interventions to effect and maintain real change for Samoan youth offending is both very concerning and familiar (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Nakid, 2012).

Additionally, the lack of community consultation, especially at a grassroots level, is a common concern in South Auckland, an area often piloted for youth offending initiatives (Nakid, 2012). Unfortunately, programs do not continue past their pilot period due to government-directed funding changes, as highlighted by McLaren (2000), the Ministerial Taskforce (2002), and its discontinued initiatives of the early 2000s. Maxwell (2011) argues that funding is not the issue, but instead how it is spent, and suggests that there is an absolute lack of funding in New Zealand for victims of crime, the rehabilitation of offenders, and support for the families of offenders. Mooney (2010) argues that funding and intervention focus on youth offending as a ‘problem’, rather than on why young people commit crimes. The evolving landscape of social work practice is guided by this shift, as there are continuously new directions for addressing youth offending, often founded on Western and non-indigenous approaches outside of Aotearoa New Zealand (Hollis-English, 2012; Maxwell, 2009).

Ironically, internationally, the Aotearoa New Zealand youth justice system was once regarded as a cutting-edge approach to addressing youth offending, incorporating an indigenous perspective (Hollis-English, 2012; Maxwell, 2009; Wood & Tauri, 2025). It introduced the family group conference model to the world, based on indigenous Māori kinship Tikanga (protocols), to address youth offending outside of the courts and into the community (Maxwell, 2009; Wood & Tauri, 2025). However, Hollis-English (2012), Walker (1990), Walsh-Tapiata (2008) and Wood & Tauri (2025) argue that the implementation of social policies has fallen well short of incorporating Māori aspirations into the norms of the majority. The discursive nature of the Puao-te-Ata-tu report of the 1980s highlighted the institutionalised racism toward Māori in state care (Māori

Perspective Advisory Committee, 1988), which remains unchanged (Hollis-English, 2012), as evidenced by the ongoing lack of Māori social workers and Māori cultural models in social work practice and policies today (Williams & Hastie, 2025; Wood & Tauri, 2025).

Unfortunately, the findings highlighted by Hollis-English (2012) for Māori are similar to the challenges faced by the Samoan community. There is limited literature on the racism experienced by Samoan youth in social work, aside from the negative impacts documented in the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care (2024b). Like Hollis-English (2012), there is also a shortage of Samoan social workers, and little is known about whether Samoan cultural models are the primary approach used for Samoan youth offenders in social work (Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024). As Aotearoa New Zealand's approach to youth offending shifts towards a more punitive stance (Reil et al., 2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025) and becomes less community-focused (Omowon & Kunlere, 2024; Wood et al., 2024), this research is timely and will contribute to current and future policies regarding Samoan youth offending.

1.4 Research Aim, Objectives, and Question

This research aims to explore the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former ⁸youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending. Emanating from the aim are four main objectives:

- I. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand;
- II. To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners; and
- III. To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field; and

⁸ Youth-at-risk is self-identified and not necessarily tied to criminal convictions. Please refer to the glossary

IV. To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

1.4.1 Research question

What can be learnt about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk?

1.5 The significance of this research

This pioneering study in Aotearoa New Zealand investigates how Samoan social practitioners from a South Auckland perspective are viewed as experts in addressing Samoan youth offending, drawing on their lived experiences as former at-risk youth. This underexplored resource will significantly enhance local, national, and international understanding of reducing Samoan youth offending. It will highlight the urgency of confronting racism that affects both Samoan youth and the Samoan social practitioners working with them.

Furthermore, this research critically challenges the over-representation of offenders based on ethnicity (Hurley et al., 2015; Maxwell & Poppelwell, 2003), exposing the deep-rooted racism within New Zealand's criminal justice system (Asafo, 2021; Maxwell, 2011). Using critical race theory (Lavalette, 2011; Ferguson & Woodward, 2009) and a social constructionist approach to research (Burr, 1995), this study investigates the impact of Western discourse on addressing Samoan youth offending. Additionally, it employs the Talanoa method (Tunufa'i, 2016; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Havea, 2010; Vaioleti, 2006) to gather the experiences of Samoan social practitioners and examine ongoing tensions in current interventions, highlighting the significance of Indigenous, particularly Samoan, knowledge and practices (Gray et al., 2010; Havea, 2010; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

The research presents the Ululaau framework, which guides how social work can tackle racism on three levels: past, practice, and positionality, to foster fairness and equity for Samoan youth offenders and social practitioners from South Auckland. My framework, Ululaau, is named after my late mother, who, despite facing racism, did not let this experience prevent her from seeing the good in others, much like the study participants, as reflected in their stories. Additionally, my practices have been shaped by my mother's

Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way of life) values (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000), which have helped me and the study participants make a meaningful difference in many lives, even when challenged to practice in a Western way.

With this in mind, this study is led by Samoan social practitioners who head the South Auckland table, a metaphor symbolising the expert knowledge of transformed and community-focused practitioners who know best how to address Samoan youth offending, with Western knowledge as the invited guest to their table (Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024).

1.6 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction, exploring the problem of Samoan youth offending and the roles of those working in this area. It identifies the gap, explains why this research has been undertaken, and outlines its objectives. The second chapter is a literature review that examines past and current studies to explain the issue of Samoan youth offending in South Auckland and internationally, and why it needs attention. It also reviews literature on the transformational journey of former offenders who have become helping professionals, which informs this research. The third chapter presents the theoretical framework, incorporating critical race theory and social constructionism, to explain the racial marginalisation of Samoan youth offenders and those working in this field. The fourth chapter covers the research methodology, which includes Western and Pacific research paradigms. It outlines the research methods, including the talanoa method, a Pasifika approach to collecting data from participants—former youth-at-risk who have become Samoan social practitioners. The fifth chapter is the first of two presenting findings, focusing on the perspectives of twenty-two participants regarding the research aims and objectives. The sixth chapter offers a focus group perspective on the aims and objectives, highlighting collective insights that could inform policy. The seventh chapter discusses the Ululaau framework and proposes solutions to racial barriers to meet the research aims and objectives. The eighth chapter concludes with recommendations based on this research and outlines how it will contribute to new knowledge in reducing Samoan youth offending within social work.

Chapter 2 Samoan and South Auckland: A Literature Review

We're here because we are here – Jack Scanlan Snr.

Despite anecdotal accounts of successful South Auckland-based ex-Samoan youth at-risk (Tominiko, n.d.), few studies elaborate on their reasons for wanting to change and what made them stop committing crimes altogether, much less pursue careers in social work. Further, the dearth of literature on Samoans is compounded by the fact that there is no distinction between Samoans, as they are usually placed under the category of Pacific Islanders (Tunufa'i, 2017). This chapter introduces literature from within Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally that aligns with the study's four research objectives. In the first section, I present a literature overview of Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. In the second section, I examine the literature on how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners. In the third section, I present relevant literature on the transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioners. The fourth section presents the current state of social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Throughout this chapter, I identify the literature gaps, with the chapter's conclusion summarising key themes in the literature relevant to this study.

2.1 Samoan youth-at-risk – A Southside perspective

The origins of South Auckland Samoan at-risk youth can be traced back to the 1950s when Samoans migrated to Aotearoa, New Zealand, seeking better opportunities (Anae, 1998). Samoans were forced to move to more affordable suburbs of South Auckland due to the racially discriminatory dawn raids and the gentrification of their inner-city Auckland homes in the 1970s (Anae, 1997; Royal Commission of Enquiry in Care, 2024a). The intergenerational racial trauma caused by the Dawn Raids of the 1970s and its effects on Samoan youth are highlighted in the study examining the expression of anger among New Zealand-born Samoan youth (Mulipola et al., 2024). Mulipola et al. (2024) found that the sources of anger among Samoan youth are linked to the migration journey, experiences of racism, and being torn between two worlds, adhering to traditional Samoan values at home while trying to adapt to the Pālagi life of Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand-based Samoan youth offenders grow up in an environment where assuming a New Zealand identity is more useful if not better than continuing to hold on to their parents, Samoan homeland, and/or traditional identity. (Sualiii-Sauni, 2010, p.100).

The majority of Samoan youth offenders are New Zealand-born (Anae, 2006; Tiatia, 1998; Tunufa'i, 2017), which dispels the assumption that they should be “sent back to the islands” (Faleolo, 2016) and reinforces the struggles they face with their New Zealand-born Samoan identity (Anae, 2006; Ravulo, 2009; Tiatia, 1998). However, Pālagi and Samoan youth live two different lives in New Zealand, and it is not just based on socio-economic factors but also cultural ideology (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Literature on Samoan youth-at-risk in Aotearoa New Zealand indicates that they often reside in the lowest socio-economic areas, such as South Auckland (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Kaloto, 2003; Ioane et al., 2013; Ministerial Taskforce, 2002; Ministry of Justice, 1999; Nakid, 2012). These youth are overrepresented in violent offending compared to Māori and Pālagi youth offenders (Ioane, 2011; Tunufa'i, 2017). Tunufa'i (2017) notes that Samoan youth offenders tend to begin offending later than Māori youth, with violence serving as a way to assert their cultural identity and earn respect from their peers. Similarly, Faleolo (2014) points out that the social construct of gangs among Samoan youth-at-risk is based on factors such as peer pressure, protection, and acceptance.

The challenges faced by Samoan youth at risk in South Auckland relate to the unfair treatment they experience within a youth justice system that often appears hostile (Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014). A research study exploring their interactions with the youth justice system highlighted an incident involving a police officer in South Auckland known for using violent tactics against local at-risk youth (Faleolo & Fuamatu, 2024). Now an adult Samoan, the research participant reflected that during his time as an at-risk youth from South Auckland, this particular officer would beat them, leaving a lasting negative impression of the police and the justice system (Faleolo & Fuamatu, 2024). Ioane (2011) argues that increasing the number of Samoan practitioners could positively influence current intervention strategies and help educate non-Samoan practitioners working within these communities. Similarly, Faleolo (2014) suggests that Fa'asamoa (the Samoan way of life), rooted in traditional values and beliefs, could serve as an effective way to

discourage young Samoan men from joining gangs, but argues that non-Samoan practitioners need to understand the importance of their cultural heritage, especially if their role involves working with Samoan youth at risk (Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006).

Considering that current interventions for Samoan youth at risk in South Auckland focus on punitive measures (Reil et al., 2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025), it is timely to include a South Auckland perspective from those who have been former youth-at-risk (Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024). This perspective is necessary to challenge the current dysfunctional, racist justice system in Aotearoa, New Zealand, that works against both Samoan youth and Samoan social practitioners (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021; Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024; Webb et al., 2022).

2.1.1 Samoan youth at risk – an international diaspora perspective

Similar to Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoan youth at risk internationally are overrepresented in violent offences related to establishing their identity and earning respect from rival peers, according to international literature on the topic (Faleolo, 2014; Ravulo et al., 2019; Tunufa'i, 2017). According to Vakalahi & Godinet (2008) and Suaalii-Sauni et al., (2018), Samoan diaspora youth, mainly settling in the United States and Australia, also face challenges related to their Samoan cultural identity and repressive racial youth justice systems.

Previous research conducted in the United States has shown that Samoan youth are disproportionately overrepresented in racially biased social and justice systems (Vakalahi & Godinet, 2008; Godinet & Vakalahi, 2009). In their study of Samoan youth living in the United States, Vakalahi & Godinet (2008) highlighted the influence of peers and community connections in shaping risk and protective factors. While the expectation and demand for Samoan youth in the United States to be active in the church provides a positive way for them to stay connected to their Samoan culture, some youth rebel against the pressure to follow the church's doctrines and beliefs (Godinet & Vakalahi, 2009). Similarly, Stanley and Kearney's (2017) study of second-generation Samoans in Australia involved 11 participants aged between 16 and 27, and also identified the protective and risk factors associated with church and family. However, Stanley and Kearney (2017) argue that a collaborative approach involving the church, family, and schools is essential

to supporting Samoan youth in Australia to ensure economic progress and social mobility, which was the primary goal of their parents' migration to Australia.

The challenge Godinet and Vakalahi (2009) identified with Samoan youth in the United States who disengage from their church and community is that they face risk factors that can lead to encounters with the legal system. Racial bias by police and courts results in harsher punishments and the mislabeling of Samoan youth as violent and prone to criminal behaviour, which exacerbates the issue (Vakalahi & Godinet, 2008; Godinet & Vakalahi, 2009). Godinet & Vakalahi (2009) argue that an integrated theoretical model focusing on the causes and preventative strategies is needed to promote the values and principles of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) to help reduce the negative stereotypes of Samoan youth in the United States.

This view is supported by Fiaui & Hishinuma (2009), who, through their comparative study of Samoan youth in American Samoa and Hawaii, emphasise that positive nurturing of Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way of life) taught by parents is vital; however, they admit it is challenging when Samoan parents work multiple jobs. A more recent study of American Samoan youth highlights the importance of holding on to traditional Samoan values while recognising that change is happening, especially with the influence of technology (Mew et al., 2024). Additionally, the previous studies emphasise that non-Samoan practitioners working within the United States and the American Samoan justice system with at-risk Samoan youth need to be more culturally aware and require further training to counteract racial bias that remains today (Fiaui & Hishinuma, 2009; Godinet & Vakalahi, 2009; Mew et al., 2024; Vakalahi & Godinet, 2008).

Similarly, a recent international study on Samoan youth at risk that aligns with this study was conducted over three years (2017-2020), was proposed by Suaalii-Sauni et al. (2018) to examine how Māori and Samoan young people, along with their families, engage with the youth justice system across three settler-colonial countries: New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. The study highlighted the increasing Samoan population in these three countries while emphasising the importance of local community knowledge that privileged indigenous values and perspectives (Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2018). Findings from this three-year research revealed the ongoing failure of a monocultural white youth justice system, with data on Samoan youth indicating a need for indigenous and Samoan

community-led responses to effectively decolonise the youth justice system both globally and within Aotearoa New Zealand, which remains racist (Webb et al., 2022).

2.2 How former Samoan youth-at-risk become Social Practitioners

The motivation of Samoan youth-at-risk to become social practitioners is central to this social work research (Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Scanlan & Mafileo, 2024; Talaimanu, 2006). This motivation could arguably be best explained by two common cultural traits that Samoans are taught: fa'aaloalo (respect) and loto maualalo (humility) (Autagavaia, 2006; Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006). While loto maualalo (humility) and fa'aaloalo (respect) best characterise Samoan practitioners' "altruism," or the selfless caring of others (Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006), these qualities seem to have been overlooked in literature that focuses on crime statistics in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad, rather than highlighting the positive aspects of Samoan culture that can help transform youth (Lambie & Gluckman, 2018; Suaalii-Sauni, et al., 2018). Additionally, Tunufa'i (2017) states that Samoan youth-at-risk remain vulnerable, considering the justice system tends to work against them, relying on old punitive measures that were ineffective then (Maxwell, 2011). This approach persists rather than adopting new interventions that emphasise the importance of self-determination or motivation for change from a Samoan perspective (Auva'a-Alatimu, et al., 2025; Webb, et al., 2022).

2.2.1 We are not all Samoan youth-at-risk

The inherent bias in researching Samoan youth in South Auckland is intensified by racial prejudice embedded in search engine algorithms that perpetuate negative stereotypes related to crime, gangs, poverty, and underachievement in education and employment (Borell, 2005; Habgood-Coote, 2024; Nakid, 2012; Sharma, 2019). Borell's (2005) research on the cultural identity of young Māori in South Auckland highlighted the shared experiences of racism and prejudice among Māori and Pacific youth in the area, alongside a real sense of pride in coming from South Auckland. Similarly, Nakid's (2012) study of South Auckland Pasifika young people's views on their community offered insights from both gang members and non-gang members.

The Pasifika youth who were not involved in gangs believed that the experiences of ex-gang members were helpful in dissuading some youth from joining the gangs. Some had been dissuaded from joining the gangs after hearing stories of gang life from family members who had been or still were gang members (Nakid, 2012, p.22).

Both the youth gang members and non-gang participant groups in Nakid's (2012) study share a sense of pride in being from South Auckland, which stems from a shared feeling of exclusion from the dominant society. While both Borrell's (2005) and Nakid's (2012) studies highlight the dominant societal racist perception of South Auckland and Samoan youth as negative, the challenge is to create more stories that showcase the positive aspects to challenge these assumptions. This is exemplified by Mullen et al. (2025), who demonstrate this positive shift through 'Southside Rise', a full-scale musical theatre production that brings together young Pasifika leaders from South Auckland schools. Mullen et al. (2025) challenge the previous racist portrayal of Pacific youth from South Auckland (Borrell, 2005; Nakid, 2012) while elevating traditional Pacific values into a contemporary context in their musical production, Southside Rise, to inspire future Pasifika youth leaders who can stand proudly in both Pālagi and Pasifika worlds.

Similarly, Enari & Vaka's (2024) study of Australian Pacific youth who are often portrayed negatively in research highlights a positive shift of Australian Pacific youth being proud of their culture through popular culture.

Pacific people in reputable positions in the National Rugby League, Australian Rugby Union, Ultimate Fighter Championship, the music industry and the business sector have been able to (em)power and inspire Pacific youth to be proud of their Pacific identity(ies) while navigating the Australian context. (Enari & Vaka, 2024, p.153)

Furthermore, there is a need for more positive narratives to counteract the negative perceptions surrounding Samoan youth in South Auckland, which aligns with the study's objectives, as positive changes among Samoan youth explain their pathways to becoming social practitioners (Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024). Additionally, Borrell's (2005) previous study asserts that youth workers from South Auckland are well-acquainted with working with at-risk youth, due to their lived experiences that enable them to better understand

individuals who do not conform to mainstream or cultural norms, as well as their understanding of the negative stigma associated with areas such as South Auckland, all aspects which can inform current social work practice.

2.2.2 Desistance facing resistance

The lack of research on why Samoan youth at risk stop offending is worsened by the ongoing reliance of external agencies and practitioners on Western ideas and theories when working with these young people (Faleolo, 2014; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). A 2018 discussion paper about preventing youth offending in New Zealand highlighted the importance of using a culturally appropriate approach to address the overrepresentation of young Pacific people in the criminal justice system (Lambie & Gluckman, 2018). Lambie and Gluckman (2018) suggest that interventions should actively include Pacific families and communities, incorporate Pacific models, and ensure that social workers, psychologists, police, corrections officers, and legal professionals are well-trained to apply these models. However, despite Lambie and Gluckman's (2018) recommendations, the report admits that most current interventions for Pacific youth offending still rely mainly on Western ideas and theories.

Nonetheless, this rhetoric is not new, as Samoan scholars involved in Samoan youth offending intervention (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006; Tunufa'i, 2017; Webb et al., 2022) have consistently recommended similar approaches both before and after the Lambie and Gluckman (2018) report. While both Samoan and non-Samoan academics agree on the discourse of Western theoretical frameworks in addressing issues of Samoan youth offending, Healy and Link (2012) argue that systemic racism still exists within the justice system, marginalising certain groups while favouring others. Healy and Link (2012) contend that predominantly white individuals create these constructs, placing them at the top of societal hierarchies; therefore, the main challenge is representation (Mataia, 2022), specifically expert knowledge highlighted in this study of former Samoan youth at risk whose resilience and experienced desistance need to lead this change (Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024).

2.2.3 Black sheep turned white

Social work promotes human rights and social justice, giving clients and service users a second chance (SWRB 2017). However, what about individuals who, in their past,

committed offences and have since changed? Should they not be given the same opportunity (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022; Jackson & Chubb, 2024)? The motivation to reform one's life and engage with offenders is exemplified in Weaver & Weaver's (2013) autobiographical account of Alan Weaver, an ex-offender and former prisoner who transformed his life enough to become a Scottish probation officer. The importance of Weaver & Weaver's (2013) article lies in Alan Weaver's insights into why individuals might turn to and away from crime. Additionally, the article highlights the significance of lived experience, like Alan Weaver's, in shaping policies that might oppress offenders and, importantly, guide practitioner development (Weaver & Weaver, 2013). Alan Weaver attributes his desistance to his supportive relationship with his social worker, who helped him and positively changed his life (Weaver & Weaver, 2013).

Hylton's (2014) response to Weaver & Weaver's (2013) autobiography offers a practitioner's perspective, emphasising that ex-offenders' experiences should be central to criminal justice and community intervention policies. Hylton, a senior probation officer and advocate for ex-offender rights in the UK, highlights the stigma faced by ex-offenders attempting to access roles in criminal justice and rehabilitation services (Hylton, 2014). This viewpoint is supported by Jackson and Chubb (2024), who studied discrimination faced by social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand with criminal convictions.

Their article, based on Jackson's study of 11 registered and non-registered social workers with one or more criminal convictions, found that the stigma surrounding their past persists, especially in social work education and employment (Jackson & Chubb, 2024). Nevertheless, Jackson and Chubb (2024), like Weaver & Weaver (2013), emphasise the importance of social workers with a criminal history, as they can provide valuable insights into best practices within the profession and advocate for this underrepresented group, who have the potential to become social workers, a view also supported by this study.

2.3 Transformational journeys of Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioners

According to the literature, criminogenic risk factor approaches from the early 2000s (McLaren, 2000; Ministerial Taskforce, 2002) have favoured Western models and

theories over cultural considerations when addressing the needs of Samoan young offenders. Moreover, there is an emphasis on using Western models (Lambie & Gluckman, 2018), along with limited evidence that universal Pasifika cultural models and interventions, such as the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), a pan-Pacific holistic framework, are the primary tools used with Samoan youth offenders (Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014; Mafile’o, 2005). As a result, Samoan social practitioners continue to experience a tension between two worlds.

There was pressure to conform to a "West is best" approach. I have been trained and retrained in countless Western approaches to working with Pasifika youth, to the point that I believed that it was the only way to address Pasifika youth offending (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024, p.1277).

2.3.1 A strength-based approach to the Fonofale model

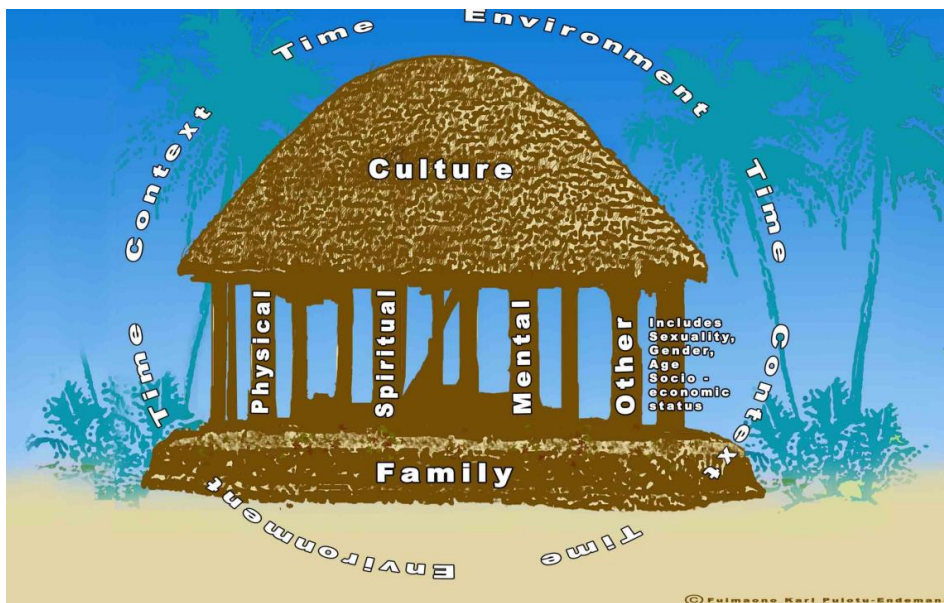
Despite the focus on Western methods of intervention (Lambie & Gluckman, 2018) and the tokenistic use of Pacific models when working with Samoan youth offenders (Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014; Mafile’o, 2005), the challenge remains in justifying the significance and value of Samoan cultural models to both Samoan and non-Samoan social workers.

I recall in my early years; I was one of the first in Aotearoa New Zealand to be taught the strength-based approach. The training was facilitated by two Pālagi (white) academics from Canada and was part of the government's strategy of what would work best with indigenous youth offenders. During the training, an indigenous Māori woman challenged these Canadian academics, who knew little about Māori culture, that what they were trying to teach us was nothing new and that Māori had their own words for the “flash term”. The indigenous Māori colleague said they (Māori) were using and had been practicing the strength-based approach for centuries. (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024, p.1277).

Pacific scholars and practitioners have long regarded the Fonofale model, Fig. 2.1 (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001), as the foundational Pan-Pacific model of well-being (Ioane & Tudor, 2017; Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009). Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann developed the Fonofale model in 1984, based on the metaphor of the Fale (house) that interconnects four Pou (posts): mental, spiritual, physical, and others, supporting the roof (culture) while being upheld by the foundation (family) (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The Fale is

surrounded by a cocoon of three components, Time, Environment, and Context, that influence individual identity and emotional state (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). Although the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) has been adapted for various contexts and applications (Ioane & Tudor, 2017; Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009), it remains the core framework for all Samoan models of practice that addresses the challenges faced by diasporic Samoan communities. Additionally, non-Samoan practitioners utilise it, albeit tokenistically, while recognising its relevance, but are reluctant to use it solely, preferring to incorporate it alongside Western models (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2016).

Figure 2-1. The Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001).

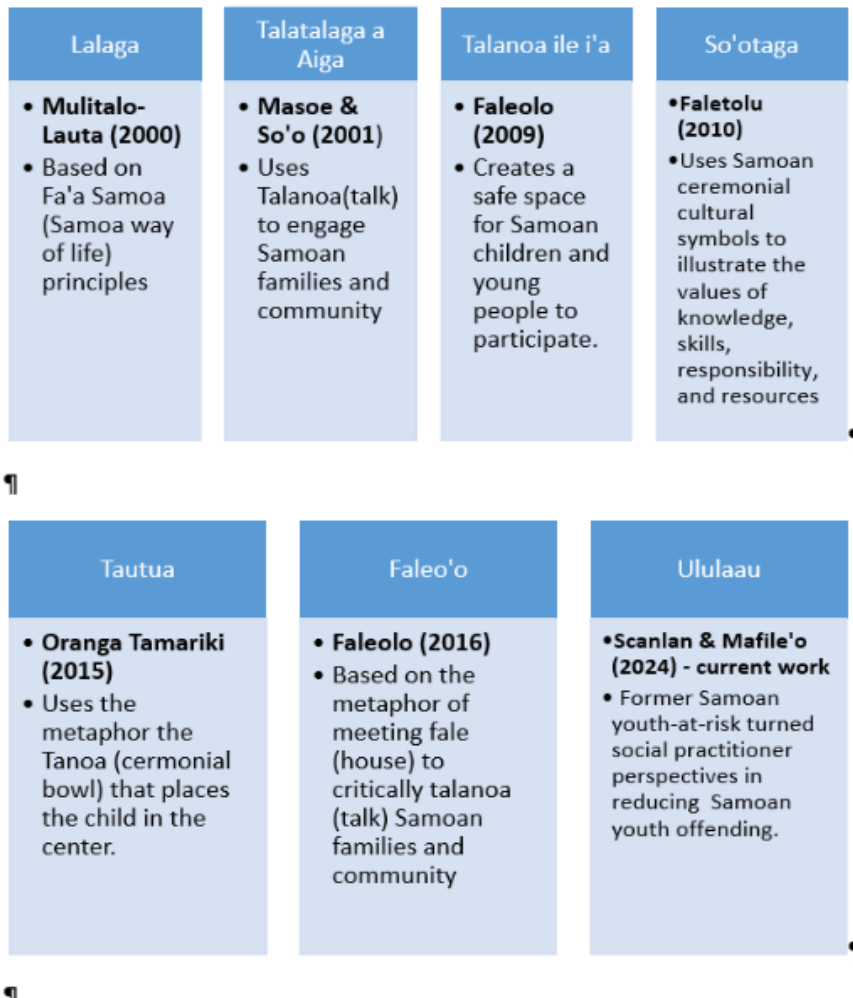


2.3.2 Samoan Social Work Models – yes, they do exist

When Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) authored 'Fa'a Samoa and social work within the New Zealand context,' it revolutionised the approaches that Samoan social workers could utilise, guided by their unique Samoan culture (Fa'a Samoa). Furthermore, this work contributed to developing numerous Samoan cultural models (see Fig. 2.2) within social work, highlighting the importance of Samoan cultural beliefs (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). A key aspect of these models (see Fig. 2.2) is that they were developed in Aotearoa New Zealand by Samoans who understand the benefits for non-Samoan social workers, who make up the majority of the social work workforce (MSD, 2023), working with Samoan

families to gain trust and understanding (Faleolo, 2009; Faleolo, 2016; Faletolu, 2010; Mafile'o & Scanlan, 2024; Masoe & So'o, 2001; MSD, 2015; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Figure 2-2 A timeline of Samoan social work models



The advantages of Samoan social work models stem from integrating indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge, benefiting both perspectives (Mafile'o, 2019). The challenge lies in recognising that Samoan social work models should be mandatory when engaging with Samoan youth offenders. However, implementing this idea faces obstacles, as Samoan social workers remain underrepresented in this area and non-Samoan institutions are hesitant to recognise their effectiveness and importance that remains today (Faleolo, 2016; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024).

2.3.3 Healing offenders, the Samoan way

Aotearoa New Zealand currently employs two government-led Pacific offender intervention models (Table 2.1): Va'aifetū (Oranga Tamariki, 2019), administered by Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) for Samoan youth offenders, and Saili Matagi (Corrections, 2017), which is implemented within a correctional facility targeting adult Samoan offenders.

Table 2-1 Comparison of Samoan offending intervention

Features	Saili Matagi	Va'aifetū Framework
Cultural approach	Integrates Samoan values within prison therapy	Samoan-centred approach that is pan-Pacific.
Setting	Prison-based (statutory)	Nationwide (statutory and community).
Scalability	Limited to a specific prison	High potential; cross-sector use.
Relevance to Samoan youth offenders	Mainly adult males.	Focused on youth and families
Strengths	Structured, culturally embedded	Relational, identity-affirming, flexible
limitations	Small sample, confined setting	Implementation and evaluation challenges

Va'aifetū (Oranga Tamariki, 2019) and Saili Matagi (Corrections, 2017) are rooted in Samoan values and beliefs (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000), using Samoan metaphors to demonstrate their importance and use. Va'aifetū is a Samoan word formed from two parts: 'va'ai', meaning to care for, look after, see, or observe, and 'fetu', meaning star or stars (Oranga Tamariki, 2019). The Samoan metaphor of Va'aifetū in social work presents social workers as guardians whose role is to watch over (va'ai) the stars ('fetu'), which represent children (Oranga Tamariki, 2019). The metaphorical meaning of Saili Matagi in Samoan indicates a *search for winds that bring healing*, referring to the changing attitudes and behaviours of Samoan men aimed at lowering the chances of offending (Corrections, 2017; Alefaio-Tugia, 2022; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Va'aifetū promotes and emphasises universal cultural practices across different Pacific cultures, but aligns with the following values:

- cultural humility
- dignity

- emotional intelligence
- diversity of thought
- respect for difference.

(Oranga Tamariki, 2019).

The Samoan element of Va'aifetū corresponds with the Tautua Model (Oranga Tamariki, 2015). Tautua signifies service to God and others (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). For social workers, it denotes their Tautua (service) to families, practitioners, and the community, ensuring their collective capacity to support Samoan children and families effectively. Central to the Tautua Model (Oranga Tamariki, 2015) are its Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way of life) core values: Alofa (love), Fa'aaloalo (respect), Fa'asinomaga (identity and belonging), Falā (kinship ties), and Gagana (Samoan language) (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Oranga Tamariki, 2015).

The Saili Matagi programme was started in 2003 for Pacific adult offenders serving violent sentences in prison (Corrections, 2017). The programme is based on four core principles of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life): Feagaiga (the sacred covenant relationship between brother and sister), Va Fealoai (the way individuals relate to one another), Va Tapuia (the sacred space that must never be crossed), and Faaleleiga (Restorative Healing) (Corrections, 2017; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). In 2008, it was further developed by Professor Saitu Alefaio-Tugia, an experienced Samoan psychologist and academic, to re-train and improve the skills of prison staff in its therapeutic approach, grounded in Fa'a Samoa principles (Corrections, 2017; Alefaio-Tugia, 2022; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

The limitation of Saili Matagi (Corrections, 2017) lies in its limited accessibility, as it is only available at Vaka Fa'aola (Spring Hill Corrections Facility) with a small number of participants, despite a review showing a 3.4% decrease in 12-month recidivism after release and a 1.5% reduction in reimprisonment. Regarding Va'aifetū (Oranga Tamariki, 2019), there is no clear assessment of its impact on Samoan children and families across Aotearoa New Zealand. Additionally, both Samoan offending programmes, particularly in relation to this study, lack an evaluation of graduates who have moved into helping professions like social work due to the intervention they received.

2.4 Addressing Samoan youth offending—current practices, policies, and education in social work

The lack of prompt action addressing youth offending among Samoans in South Auckland reflects past trends (Nakid, 2012; Tunufa'i, 2017). It was only after a series of homicides involving youth gangs in the mid-2000s that the Helen Clark-led Fifth Labour Government introduced a 26-point plan involving government and community stakeholders to reduce youth offending in South Auckland (Ministry of Social Development, 2006; Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). The 2010 evaluation showed a 9% decrease in youth offending in South Auckland, compared to a 3% increase nationwide in 2008 (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). Despite these positive changes, the government did not allocate additional funding beyond the pilot phase, a common situation in South Auckland (Ministry of Social Development, 2010; Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). Additionally, moral panic in the early 2000s over youth gangs stigmatised local youth as part of a growing gang issue, despite limited empirical evidence and community input (Roguski & Tauri, 2012). Furthermore, current youth offending interventions mainly target crimes affecting businesses, such as a South Auckland pilot programme addressing ram raids (Better Pathways, 2022). Moreover, current literature follows past measures indicating that rising youth offending costs are linked to higher incarceration expenses (Maxwell, 2011; Reil et al., 2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025).

The review of the 26-point plan (Ministry of Social Development, 2010) relevant to this study did not adequately recognise the importance of youth and community workers being residents of South Auckland and of Māori and Pasifika descent, nor how they played a vital role in reducing youth offending in the area. Instead, the report primarily focused on managerial perspectives related to organisational outcomes tied to the government contract (Ministry of Social Development, 2010). Furthermore, the review failed to mention that many youth workers were excluded from consultations and lost their jobs after the contract was terminated, a decision they would later regret, as there has been a push for the revival of these youth workers (Chiang, 2019). An abolitionist perspective on this issue suggests that Samoan youth and Samoan social practitioners face similar racial discrimination; however, it also presents an opportunity for social work practice, policy, and education (Toraif & Mueller, 2023) to critically assess the increasingly punitive strategies that marginalise Samoan youth offenders (Maxwell, 2011; Reil et al.,

2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025) while emphasising the importance of empowering the voices of Samoan social practitioners in South Auckland, who hold meaningful solutions to reduce Samoan youth offending in the region (Scanlan & Mafileo, 2024).

2.4.1 Abolitionist social work practice, don't be afraid

Abolitionist social work practice emphasises the importance of building safe and healthy communities without relying on punitive measures or incarceration (Toraif & Mueller, 2023). While abolitionists advocate for eliminating prisons and policing systems, due to their inherent racist nature, such goals are not shared in Aotearoa New Zealand (Asafo, 2022; Buttle, 2017). However, abolitionists challenge social work services and practitioners who support carceral systems that are racially biased and cause more harm (Lamusse, 2024; Silver, 2024; Toraif & Mueller, 2023). From an abolitionist perspective, social work in South Auckland should oppose punitive responses (Maxwell, 2011; Reil et al., 2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025) and instead promote non-carceral intervention (Silver, 2024) that fosters cultural identity, such as Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2014), collective care, and transformative healing (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2014; Scanlan & Mafileo, 2024). Furthermore, social workers practising in South Auckland need to understand that Samoan youth face systemic inequalities linked to poverty, colonisation, and racial profiling (Anae, 2020; Asafo, 2022; Tunufa'i, 2017), which have resulted in unfair racial and disproportionate representation in the youth justice system (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Tunufa'i, 2017).

The challenge of applying a non-carceral approach to social work practice (Silver, 2024), related to this study, recognises ex-offenders' perspectives as an untapped resource that could better inform social work practice. Abram and Hoge (2003) examined a group of women ex-offenders as group facilitators, which could challenge social workers to see incarcerated individuals not just as clients but as potential change agents. Similarly, Kavanagh and Borrill (2013) investigated eight ex-offender mentors and found that their lived experience provided the credibility and relatability needed in social work when working with offenders. Similarly, Kenemore and Roldan (2005) argue that offenders respect ex-offenders, unlike what they are used to, professionals who promise one thing but perpetuate carceral practices (Silver, 2024). However, proponents of a non-carceral approach to social work practice must start in the classrooms (Lamusse, 2024; Silver, 2024; Toraif & Mueller, 2023).

Another challenge to social work practice in relation to this study is ensuring that Fa'aSamoa (Samoan way of life) principles (Faleolo, 2014; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000) are used effectively in Samoan youth offending. Additionally, Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) argues that Samoan social workers are challenged in their practice in that they must comply with standards set by the social work code of ethics (SWRB, 2017), even though their Fa'a Samoan values and beliefs shape their practice. As previously mentioned, in Section 2.3.2 and Figure 2.2, the existence of Samoan social work models does not provide evidence that they are being used, especially by non-Samoan social work practitioners working with Samoan youth offenders (Faleolo, 2016; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

Therefore, let us now examine the seminal work of Ioane (2011) and Faleolo (2014), which pioneered Samoan-led, non-carceral interventions that can serve as models for social work practitioners. Since its inception, Ioane's (2011) study compared Pacific violent youth with Māori and Pālagi youth offenders. Faleolo's (2014) study, which investigated Samoan youth gangs in New Zealand, highlights the essential changes needed to respond effectively to Samoan youth offending.

Ioane's (2011) research focused on Pasifika violent offenders, mainly Samoan youth, who were disproportionately represented compared to Māori and Pālagi youth (Ioane, 2011). Findings of Ioane's (2011) research showed that most Pacific youth offenders were New Zealand-born (Anae, 2006; Tiatia, 1998), struggled with diaspora identity (Anae, 2006; Ravulo, 2009; Tiatia, 1998), and came from low socio-economic areas like South Auckland (Nakid, 2012). All Samoan youth offender profiles have remained the same today (Lambie & Ioane, 2024; Tunufa'i, 2017). In relation to this research, Ioane (2011) highlighted the need for more Pasifika practitioners to influence interventions and educate non-Pasifika practitioners working with Pacific communities. Inspired by Ioane's work, subsequent research (Lambie & Ioane, 2024; Ravulo et al., 2019; Tunufa'i, 2017) challenged existing methods for addressing Samoan youth offending, including Loto Malie (Contented Heart), a culturally rooted therapeutic approach to improve Pacific youth mental wellbeing in Aotearoa (Auva'a-Alatimu et al., 2025).

On the other hand, Faleolo's (2014) research focused on Samoan youth gangs and the reasons why Samoan youth joined gangs. It highlighted that Fa'asamoa (the Samoan way of life) could be used as an intervention to prevent young Samoan men from joining gangs

(Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006). Faleolo's (2014) research challenged social workers to provide alternative options of equal value to prevent young Samoan males from joining gangs. Faleolo (2014) gave the example of young Samoan male gang members joining a rugby team so that they can "learn how to manage their aggression, improve their listening to authority, respect people, and achieve in the context of sport" (p. 202). Furthermore, Faleolo (2014) suggests that "any strategy that substitutes for the attractiveness to gangs will help young Samoan males desist, and prevent younger Samoan males from entering gangs in the first place" (p. 202). Faleolo's (2014) seminal research has led to the development of Fa'a Samoa criminology, which can be used alongside other criminological theories valuing both Western and non-Western approaches but effectively highlights Samoan-centric strategies to reduce Samoan youth offending (Faleolo & Fuamatu, 2024).

While Ioane's (2011) and Faleolo's (2014) seminal works can inform social work practice, they also challenge non-Samoan social workers to adapt, as current approaches have not decreased or changed Samoan youth offending since these studies. Additionally, Mulitalo-Lauta (2000) argues that Samoan social workers effectively practise the same and have successfully adapted to working across cultures. Furthermore, in relation to this study, capturing the voices of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk, Scanlan and Mafile'o (2024), ensures that social work interventions aimed at reducing Samoan youth offending are based on lived experience rather than hypothetical Western theories that are neither Samoan nor from South Auckland.

2.4.2 Social work education, an abolitionist approach

The challenge in social work education (SWRB, 2017) related to this study is recognising whether students are adequately prepared to serve oppressed communities, such as South Auckland, and particularly in this study, understand how to reduce Samoan youth offending (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011), while also being ready to confront the systemic racism embedded within the justice system that disenfranchises Samoan youth offenders (Asafo, 2021; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2016). However, the issues faced by Samoans, especially ex-offenders, stem from their entry into the tertiary social work education system (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022), including the curriculum delivered, which should include Samoan content (Faleolo, 2016), and the skills of lecturers in teaching about Samoan youth offending (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). An abolitionist approach to social

work education challenges this paradigm by proposing alternative methods to ensure that non-carceral practices are incorporated into social work training (Silver, 2024), thereby better equipping future social work graduates to effectively address systemic racism in their professional practice (Bussey et al., 2021).

Existing literature highlights the barriers faced by ex-offenders in social work studies (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022), offering opportunities to explore a non-carceral perspective in social work education. Jackson and Hyslop (2022) agree with Runell (2020) on education's transformative potential and reducing stigma. An abolitionist approach advocates for prisoners' access to study opportunities (Ronda & Utheim, 2020), but Farley and Mehigan (2024) note that prisoners serving extended sentences in Aotearoa New Zealand cannot obtain degrees, unlike in countries such as Australia, the United States, and Ireland. Massey University is the only institution in Aotearoa New Zealand offering courses for prisoners, though these do not lead to a degree qualification (Farley & Mehigan, 2024). While current policies in Aotearoa prevent incarcerated individuals from pursuing social work degrees (SWRB, 2017), the literature suggests reforms are needed to support more ex-offenders wishing to enter the social work profession (Runell, 2020; Jackson & Hyslop, 2022).

A non-carceral approach in this study involves exposing social work students to the importance of lived experience in understanding Samoan youth offending. Current social work education involves two practicums (SWRB, 2017), with Samoan youth offending in South Auckland not being a priority placement for students. Additionally, social work students are limited to learning from the lived experiences of ex-service users who have become practitioners. Kraus & Moran (2019) examined the benefits of having Israeli social work students interact with mental health workers who were ex-service users to understand what it is like to have a mental illness. The results highlighted areas for improvement, noting that students could not relate to the mental health workers and could only see the ethical dilemmas in their interactions with patients, as perceived blurred professional boundaries (Kraus & Moran, 2019). Conversely, the mental health workers believed this exposure was necessary to better prepare social work students for the mental health field (Kraus & Moran, 2019).

A further challenge to social work education is the small number of Samoan students who study social work. The 2023 annual social worker workforce survey of social worker ethnic identities⁹ highlighted that social workers who identified as Pālagi European were (67%), Māori (23%), Pacific (11%) (SWRB, 2023).

Source: SWRB, 2023

TABLE 2. ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION 2023 – COMPARING SURVEY TO PRACTISING WORKFORCE AND CENSUS

Ethnicity	2023 workforce survey %	2023 full practising workforce %	2018 Census ¹ %
Māori	23%	24%	17%
Pacific Peoples	11%	12%	8%
European (incl. NZ European/Pākehā)	67%	64%	70%
Middle Eastern / Latin American / African	2%	3%	2%
Asian	9%	10%	15%
Other ethnicity	2%	1%	1%

* Both Census and workforce survey use 'total response' ethnicity calculations, allowing participants to identify more than one ethnic group. Totals will add to more than 100%.

Table 2-2: Social worker ethnicity

Although the 2023 social worker workforce (SWRB, 2023) survey did not specify the number of Pacific social workers who were Samoan, it is crucial to recognise the barriers to studying social work (O'Donoghue, 2024). A study by Theodore et al. (2018) surveyed 365 Pacific graduates across all eight universities in New Zealand. The research found that many Pacific tertiary students face issues such as financial burdens, cultural disconnection, family and community expectations, and institutional barriers, including experiences of racism (Theodore et al., 2018). Theodore et al. (2018) emphasise the need for culturally responsive teaching methods, the development of Pacific mentoring programmes, flexible learning models to address financial hardship, and improved community engagement initiatives between universities and Pacific communities (Theodore et al., 2018). Similarly, a challenge is the small number of Pacific university lecturers, as shown by Naepi's (2019) study of the eight New Zealand universities, which revealed that between 2012 and 2017, the number of Pacific academics remained unchanged, with most in lower or less secure roles. At the time of this thesis, only three

⁹ The survey allowed participants to identify more than one ethnic group. Furthermore, Samoan was not a separate ethnic indicator.

Pacific social work academics were affiliated with a New Zealand university; all three are Samoan and teach social work, who, from an abolitionist perspective, require systemic change.

2.4.3 Social work policy, abolitionists are putting you on notice

Considering the historical precedents of racial oppression, this abolitionist approach is familiar to the Samoan population (Anae, 1997). The Mau Movement of the 1920s represented a peaceful effort advocating for Samoan independence from colonial rule exercised by New Zealand (Campbell, 1999). This movement was overshadowed by the assassination of Mau movement leader Tupua Tamasese Lealofa III, who was killed by military police during a peaceful protest in Samoa (Campbell, 1999), which fostered a history of mistrust among Samoans towards New Zealand authority (Anae, 1998). The issue of racial oppression also sparked the Polynesian Panther movement of the 1970s, which opposed the deportation of suspected Pacific Islander overstayers (Anae, 2012; Anae, 2022). The Polynesian Panthers drew inspiration from the Black Panthers, leaders of the African American Civil Rights Movement, recognising that the rights of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, based on racial discrimination, required significant reform (Anae, 2012; Anae, 2020). In relation to this study, Samoans and New Zealanders must reflect on the impact of racism today, so history is not repeated, and that trust can be rebuilt (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024).

Racial reforms in social work are longstanding, with the Puao-te-Atatu report highlighting institutional racism against Māori in the 1980s (Māori Perspective Advisory Committee, 1988; Savage et al., 2021). It led to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which informs social work in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Addressing social work with Samoan youth offenders requires an abolitionist approach to prevent the adoption of racist practices like those in the United States (Toraif & Mueller, 2023). Washington et al. (2021) describe the abolitionist social worker in the United States juvenile system, advocating for decolonisation and anti-capitalist change. Silver (2024) notes that Aotearoa New Zealand justice system is built on colonisation and carceralism. An abolitionist social worker in Aotearoa, New Zealand should dismantle carceral practices and promote non-carceral social work (Silver, 2024) to up the rights of Māori and address the racial disparity in the justice system (Asafo, 2022). As a Pacific partner to Māori, Samoan people need to embrace Te Tiriti o Waitangi-based abolition constitutionalism to truly hold police and

prisons to account for their inherent racism toward Māori and Pacific people (Asafo, 2022).

The South Auckland table addresses whiteness in this field by prioritising indigenous and local knowledge at all decision-making levels (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024, p. 1277).

From an abolitionist perspective, social work policy in Aotearoa, New Zealand, supports dismantling oppressive racial systems (Asafo, 2022) rooted in colonial control (Silver, 2024). This research upholds the principles of Tiriti o Waitangi from a Samoan perspective (Asafo, 2022) while rejecting punitive measures that reinforce carceral ideology (Silver, 2024), which, in relation to this study, can assist marginalised Samoan youth offenders and the Samoan social workers needed to support them (Faleolo, 2014; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000).

2.5 Literature Review Chapter Summary

Four sections in this literature review align with the study's four objectives, collectively questioning the effectiveness of current measures in addressing Samoan youth offending, given that Samoan youth, practitioners, and the South Auckland community face racial disenfranchisement. Literature from Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally reveals gaps that highlight the need for this study. It also prompts social work to consider an untapped source for reducing Samoan youth offending: the lived experiences of former Samoan youth at risk who have become social practitioners in South Auckland.

The first section gave an overview of Samoan youth-at-risk in Aotearoa and around the world. While there are common traits among Samoan diaspora youth related to their protective and risk factors linked to their connection to Samoan culture or Fa'a Samoa and church, empirical studies indicate that Samoan youth-at-risk are overrepresented in the youth justice system, which is inherently racist. The challenge for social workers is understanding the importance of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) in engaging Samoan youth, while also highlighting more positive stories from South Auckland to counteract the negative stigma attached to this community, particularly the Samoan youth.

The second section reviewed literature to understand the motivation for Samoan youth at risk of offending to desist and how this positive transformation acts as a catalyst for becoming social practitioners. The challenge highlighted in this section relates to the lack of literature outlining self-determination to change or how Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) positively influences Samoan youth at risk. Instead, the literature suggests that intervention discourse for addressing Samoan youth offending is based on Western ideology or theories. Furthermore, this section encourages social work to consider the importance of allowing ex-offenders to become social workers and to recognise these challenges that require further attention.

The third section underscores the challenges encountered by Samoan practitioners when their Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way of life), which shapes their practice, is ignored in favour of Western approaches. Although Samoan social work models exist, non-Samoan social workers are not using them, and Samoan social workers find themselves torn between their cultural values and Pālagi-centric codes of ethics. The challenge for social work is to prioritise Samoan cultural models as the only intervention when working with Samoan youth offenders. Furthermore, any evaluation should explore why Samoan cultural models are not being adopted, and in this context, assess Samoan-led intervention programmes and the graduates who go on to work in helping professions, such as social work.

The fourth section highlights three key areas: social work practice, social work education, and social work policy as they currently stand in addressing Samoan youth offending. These areas are examined through an abolitionist lens, recognising that current interventions are ineffective and need change. While an abolitionist perspective might suggest that abolishing the police and prisons is necessary to dismantle racism, this is not practical; thus, it encourages social work to explore non-carceral approaches across all three interconnected areas, shaping the future of social work in addressing Samoan youth offending.

To conclude this section, the literature questions the effectiveness of current measures in addressing Samoan youth offending, which is hindered when Samoan youth, Samoan practitioners, and the South Auckland community continually face racial disenfranchisement. However, social work has the potential to change this narrative, as

current interventions are punitive, non-restorative, and racist, something that cannot continue moving forward. Furthermore, neglecting racism will prevent this study from achieving its aims. Nonetheless, this issue of racism requires further exploration through critical race theory, which is introduced in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Theory of Samoan Racism

3.1 Introduction

A main obstacle to reducing Samoan youth offending is racism, as outlined in Chapter Two, the Literature Review. This chapter introduces critical race theory to understand the key tenets of racism discussed in the literature review. Critical race theory was chosen as it challenges social work practice, education, and policy and is pivotal to achieving the study's aim. Critical Race Theory is used in this study to inform data (see Chapter Four, the method chapter). In Chapter Seven, the discussion chapter, critical race theory supports the Ululaau framework to dismantle racism through racial inclusion in social work. According to Payne (2021), a theoretical framework is grounded in formal and informal theories explaining how social work is implemented within a client's context. This current chapter is divided into two parts: the first part provides an overview of Critical Race Theory, and the second part explores Social Constructionism in relation to Critical Race Theory. The chapter conclusion summarises key themes that inform this thesis. This chapter by examining critical race theory in relation to Samoan youth offending.

3.2 Critical Race Theory and Social Work

Delgado and Stefania (2001) define critical race theory as a collective movement of activists and scholars that examines a race-conscious approach to understand the relationship between race, racism, and power to find solutions to create equity. Critical race theory challenges the dominant discourse on ethnic minorities (Delgado & Stefania, 2001). Furthermore, Pease et al. (2016) emphasise the importance of understanding the influence of Western ideology on the marginalisation of Samoan youth offenders and those who work with them, particularly in relation to this study. Critical race theory recognises that the power imbalance privileges "white" and perpetuates the marginalisation of people of colour (Delgado & Stefania, 2001). Critical race theory accounts for the disproportionate number of Samoan youth offenders and why, despite becoming social practitioners, they are not leading the policies aimed at tackling Samoan youth offending (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024).

3.2.1 Critical race theory education

Critical race theory is not generally part of social work education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. It is a bold claim I make that underscores the importance of understanding racism and the need to embed it within social work. However, adding critical race theory to the educational system is slow and is not understood as important to ethnic minorities of colour, not only in Aotearoa New Zealand but globally (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2001). Racial inequality in the education system for Black Americans has seen lower attainment rates compared to White Americans, remaining unchanged for the past 20 years (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). Dixson and Anderson (2018) revisited Billings and Tate's (1995) article on six key critical race theory principles and stated that the situation has not improved for Black Americans today (Brown, 2025). Before implementing any changes, Dixson and Anderson (2018) argues that the education system must adhere to Billings and Tate's (1995) six principles of critical race theory, which include: 1) racial inequality rooted in competition; 2) policies that normalise whiteness; 3) the dominant narrative; 4) rejection of ahistoricism; 5) the interaction of race with other identity markers (such as gender, class, sexuality, linguistic background, and citizenship status); and 6) the pursuit of meaningful outcomes to redress racial inequity. While Dixson and Anderson (2018) argue to hold onto the original intent of critical race theory in education (Billings & Tate, 1995), they argue that current measures to confront racial inequality should focus on the following areas that this study has adopted;

1. Counternarrative—One of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory is the “recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of colour” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6).
2. Colour blindness - The dominant discourse positions colour blindness as an ideal.
3. Interest convergence—Racial equality for blacks can only be achieved if whites support black interests in policy.

A key finding of Dixson and Anderson (2018), which this study has adopted, is the importance of counternarrative. To understand Samoan youth offenders, one must first understand what it means to be a Samoan (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Tunufa'i, 2017). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) suggest that the stories and experiences of students of colour must be emphasised to expose and critique the

normalised dialogue perpetuating racial stereotypes in education. Additionally, it is important to give a voice to marginalised groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004).

Furthermore, a review of current social work programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand related to this study suggests that while racism or anti-racism is taught through Māori-led papers (Hollis-English, 2012), more can be done throughout all social work curricula. However, before we examine the racial aspirations of this study, we must first address the racial disparity faced by Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand in social work education (Hollis-English, 2012; Maxwell, 2009; Wood & Tauri, 2025). Instead, this study advocates for more Pacific papers to be taught alongside bicultural or Māori-focused social work papers to address racism, which is not currently offered or mandatory in all social work programmes (Hyslop, 2016; Ide, 2020; McNabb, 2019; SWRB, 2017). A further challenge related to this study is attracting Samoans with lived experience as former youth-at-risk to lead social work education on critical race theory (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024).

3.2.2 Critical race theory in Indigenous communities

This study examines the overrepresentation of Samoan youth offenders from South Auckland and shares the stories of Samoan social practitioners working with them in this community. According to Dixson and Anderson (2018), it is crucial to understand the role of colourblindness in critical race theory, which often favours dominant voices within indigenous communities. Parker et. al (2018) highlight that critical race theory uses indigenous storytelling to provide context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting experiences to counter colourblindness. Delgado and Stefaniec (2001) argue that people of colour speak from experiential knowledge, recognising how communities are deeply structured by racism. Parker et al (2018) reiterate this point of colourblindness regarding Black Americans, stating that critical race theory begins with the idea that racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Although the participants in this study do not openly share their experiences of racism, it does not mean that it is absent. The normalisation of racism or colourblindness, as Parker et al (2018) describe, is challenging for the study participants, whose Fa'a Samoan values of alofa (love) and tautua (service through humility, Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000) foster an acceptance that leads them to avoid causing trouble. The dominant race, knowingly or unknowingly, employs these values

against Samoans through colourblindness (Dixson & Anderson, 2018; Parker, Deyhle, & Villenas, 2018).

Similarly, Hermes (2018) examined the colourblindness faced by the First Nation Ojibwe people on their reservation in northern Wisconsin. In researching her community, she provides insight into cultural appropriateness and the importance of respecting community values and beliefs to counter colourblindness (Hermes, 2018). Hermes (2018) refers to the emerging "ethic" surrounding the research of Native people in Native communities as indigenous people need to be the starting point for any community-based research project. Hermes (2018) defines a "community-based" research project as one that revolves around the community's needs rather than one dictated by dominant white academic research etiquette. Hermes (2018) views community-based research as a means of giving back and collaborating with the community to address areas of need, which in this case was the racial inequality her community faced concerning education. Hermes' (2018) study of her community relates to this work. I agree that critical race theory emphasises the importance of colourblindness in community interventions (Hermes, 2018), highlighting that inclusion of Samoans from South Auckland is essential and even better if transformed social practitioners lead solutions to reduce Samoan youth offending.

3.2.3 Critical race theory in social work policy

The third principle of Critical Race Theory is Interest Convergence, whereby racial equality for blacks can only be achieved if whites support black interests in policy (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). The relationship between critical race theory and social work is that it explains how and why systems benefit the dominant culture; however, the challenge is the Pālagi (white) support strategies necessary to change this system (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Social workers recognise that society is fundamentally unjust and that racial disparities are present (Kolivoski et al., 2014). However, Kolivoski et al. (2014) contend that social work has not fully utilised critical race theory, and social workers need to understand the role racism has played in creating inequalities within the welfare system. Kolivoski et al. (2014) emphasise that critical race theory is essential for social workers to address racial inequality in three key practice areas: colour-blindness, representation and retention. Additionally, Dixson and Anderson (2018) argue that social workers must adopt three critical race principles to address Interest convergence.

Firstly, they need to be aware of colour-blind approaches that ignore the uniqueness of races (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Further, the use of cultural awareness is tokenistic and does not support ethnic minorities (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Betancourt et al. (2003) suggest cultural competency is key to understanding social and health inequalities among ethnic minorities, but argue that the system favours the dominant race. Secondly, social workers are in a privileged position, and they must recognise that they are in a position of power with ethnic minorities and that their actions often support the dominant white narrative of society (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Similarly, the disparity will remain if ethnic minorities are not in leadership or influential positions (Betancourt et al., 2003). Thirdly, there is a real shortage of social workers from ethnic minorities, and many who are from ethnic minorities do not have a formalised social work qualification. Kolivoski et al. (2014) highlighted that 94% of child welfare workers were white, working in Black American communities. Whiteness in child welfare sees the perception that white people are preferred caregivers and that white people are not seen as the perpetrators of violence that perpetuates institutionalised racism. Furthermore, Kolivoski et al. (2014) critique liberalism in the welfare system in that creating equality takes away the inequality that ethnic minorities face.

3.2.4 How social workers can apply critical race theory in practice

Critical race theory provides a framework for understanding the complex relationship between race, racism, and power within social work practice (Kolivoski et al., 2014). It also helps social workers recognise their own racial biases and understand how policies and organisations sustain racial inequality (Kolivoski et al., 2014). Critical race theory fosters critical dialogue, which social workers can bring into supervision, challenging colleagues on their lack of cultural awareness or misuse of authority driven by unconscious bias (Kolivoski et al., 2014). This theory can promote social justice through open discussion and fundamental challenges, ultimately leading to societal changes that combat racism (Kolivoski et al., 2014). These critical conversations about racism can challenge social work practice. However, racism is a social construct that must be deconstructed if this study is to succeed in reducing Samoan youth offending, as discussed in the next section.

3.3 Social Constructionism and Critical Race Theory

Magdaleno (2021) contends that race is a social construct, not a biological fact; therefore, humans created race for their benefit. This idea of race has become embedded in systems throughout history that favour one race (white) over others, which justified early white colonisers' actions against people of colour worldwide (Magdaleno, 2021). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) argue that race inequality, a central theme of critical race theory, was socially constructed by white people to maintain their dominance in social, economic, and political spheres, which then contributed to increased crime and poverty in non-white minority communities.

Social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) in social work challenges the unbalanced relationships between social practitioners, their clients, and their respective agencies (Payne, 2021). However, social constructionist theory in relation to this study encourages social workers to understand the client's reality based on colonial legacies, migration and economic migration for Samoan communities to deconstruct their understanding of Samoan youth offenders (Anae, 2020; Payne, 2021; Teater, 2014). Furthermore, Teater (2014) points out that anti-discriminatory, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices involve the social worker respecting the client's culture, which shapes their identity and is central to the client-practitioner relationship. The social construction of critical race theory is central to this study, providing an understanding of participants' exclusion from voicing their opinions on reducing Samoan youth offending. Therefore, there needs to be a social construction of solutions to deconstruct racism, which Delgado and Stefancic (2001) see as the main reason that racism is difficult to resolve or address.

3.3.1 Social constructionism and social work

The strength of social constructionist theory in social work rests in its emphasis on reflexivity (Lit & Shek, 2002). McNamee and Gergen (1992), cited in Lit and Shek (2002), state that reflexivity invites self-reflection that might open future understanding for social workers. Sahin (2006) argues that clients' needs are better understood through their storytelling. Further, social constructionism enables storytelling approaches to privilege indigenous communities and identify the impact of dominant stories on individuals, families, and communities within social work (Connolly & Harms, 2015).

For social workers, it is essential to acknowledge the limits of their understanding of indigenous culture, especially if they are Pālagi (white), particularly within Samoan communities (Faleolo, 2016; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000). Indeed, Walsh-Tapiata (2008) emphasises that many stories about indigeneity are rooted in oral traditions. According to Walsh-Tapiata (2008), the real challenge lies in deciphering the “traditional methods that could positively influence our social work practice” (p. 113). However, the difficulty is that indigenous people must constantly explain and justify their knowledge in Western research that ignores or silences indigenous research practices (Bennett et al., 2025).

Grey et al. (2010) point out the challenges in applying indigenous social work theories and practices across the globe, especially when a Western perspective often shapes them. Galbin (2014) shares this view and emphasises that the social constructionist approach to indigenous social work, which is more participatory, co-creative, and focused on processes, can be overshadowed by Western models that are based on expertise, rationality, hierarchy, and results (Galbin, 2014). Additionally, recognised expertise often relies on formal academic training, which can overlook many non-Western social workers who may not have official qualifications (Galbin, 2014; Ofe-Grant, 2022, 2024).

3.4 Summary of the theory chapter

This chapter laid the foundation by explaining the theoretical framework that guides this research. The combination of critical race theory and social constructionism provides lenses to understand and interrogate the main research question:

What can be learnt about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk?

While social constructionism explains the concept of racism in this study, it challenges social workers to understand the social determinants, such as poverty, unemployment, and overcrowded housing, that are the main obstacles for Samoan youth in South Auckland. However, social constructionism also considers the influence of their aiga (family), Fa’a Samoa (Samoan way of life), and Church, which can provide protective factors and intergenerational pressure for Samoan youth. Critical race theory is necessary to understand the reason behind the exclusion of participants' faces when asked for their opinions on the research aims and objectives. Applying the critical race lens to research

aims is more about recognising when racism is not a barrier for the thirty participants of this research. While the theory chapter offers the “why” through the theoretical framework, the next chapter, the methodology chapter, explains the “how” or the practical framework of this research to capture the insights of an untapped source: ex-Samoan youth-at-risk turned social practitioners from South Auckland and their opinions on reducing Samoan youth offending.

Chapter 4 Methodology: through two worldviews

A wise Samoan scholar once told me that we can achieve the highest qualification in a Pālagi world, but a Pālagi would never want to achieve the Samoan highest qualification if that meant changing their world.

This chapter discusses the methodological approach and research methods utilised in this study to achieve the research aim and objectives outlined in Chapter One. This thesis aimed to understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk.

The four objectives for this study are:

- I. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand;
- II. To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners; and
- III. To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field; and
- IV. To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

With that in mind, this chapter sets out a Samoan and South Auckland way of knowing underpinned by a Samoan worldview supported by a Western ideology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2023; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Nakid, 2012; O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015; Patton, 2002; Payne, 2021). This blended approach, as described by Tualualei and McFall-McCaffery (2019), responds to the marginalised voices of Pacific communities brought forward by Pacific researchers who can choose between Pacific and non-Pacific indigenous research approaches.

This chapter is divided into four parts, with the first section detailing the research paradigm, which includes the epistemology and interpretivist paradigm that underpin the

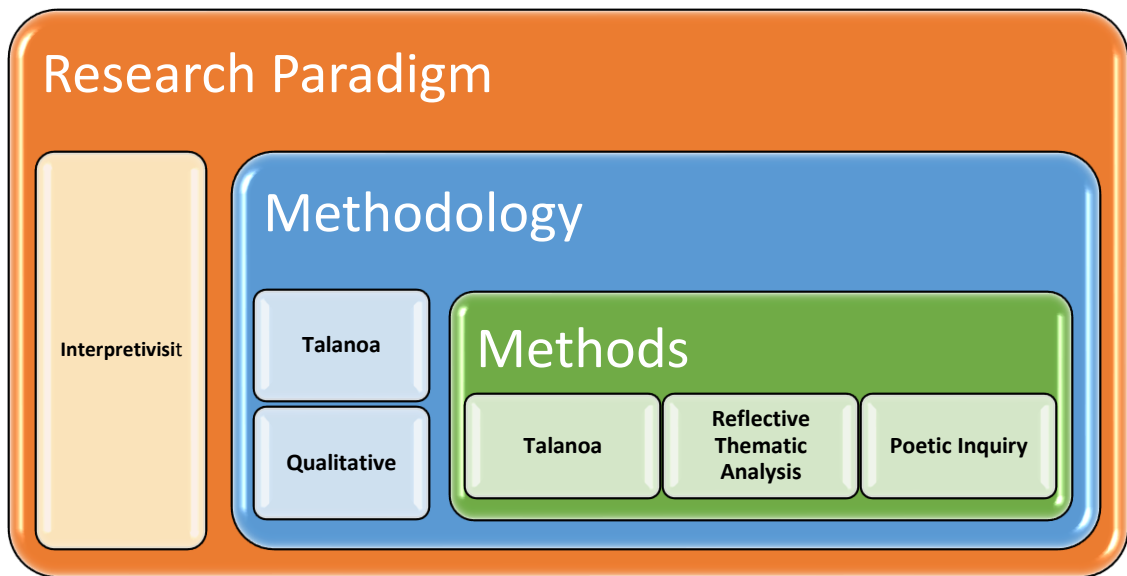
research methods. Second, a qualitative research design centred around telling the stories of the experiences of Samoan social practitioners. Talanoa (Vaiotele, 2006), a Pacific-appropriate methodology, is deemed suitable for this study, given that the participants and researcher are Samoan. Third, the data collection for this study utilised Talanoa, a Pacific qualitative data collection method (Vaiotele, 2006), which was conducted through the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating a shift from traditional face-to-face methods to a digital and distance method (Lupton, 2020). Fourth, the data analysis will utilise a reflective thematic analysis and poetic inquiry that formulates the cluster themes and Critical race theory analysis of the data. The chapter concludes with an overview of this section that reinforces the reliability and validity of my methodology and methods for this study.

4.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for this study is based on how to understand the effective ways to reduce Samoan offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth at risk (Fig. 4. 1). According to Sapsford and Jupp (2006), the methodology of one's research is about making "a philosophical stance of the worldview that underlies and informs a style of research" (p.175). This study is grounded in a qualitative approach, which Patton (2002) views as a reciprocal relationship between theory and practice based on words rather than numbers.

Denzin and Lincoln (2018) view qualitative research as a process of data gathering, which is determined by the research question and the evidence needed to answer it. This study employed an interpretivist paradigm, focusing on 'finding meaning' (Crotty, 1998) to reduce Samoan youth offending through the transformation of a former Samoan youth-at-risk who has become a social practitioner. Furthermore, this study employed methods that could best capture the views of a hidden group who were seldom asked.

Figure 4-1: Research Design



4.2 Interpretivist Paradigm

The chosen methodology for this study aligns with an interpretivist paradigm, as it “starts with a real-life issue that needs to be addressed” (Crotty, 1988, p. 13), specifically the disproportionate number of Samoan youth offenders from South Auckland (see Fig. 4.1). The solution stems from an underutilised source: the transformed Samoan social practitioners. According to O’Donoghue (2019), the interpretivist paradigm emphasises social interaction as the foundation for knowledge. As researchers, we need to engage socially with others to understand their perspectives and worldviews (O’Donoghue, 2019). In this way, O’Donoghue (2019) sees the researcher’s role as socially constructing knowledge, helping participants deepen their understanding of the researched situation. O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) explain that the research paradigm forms the basis for how research is conducted, noting there is no single method to do so. O’Donoghue (2019) adds that an interpretivist approach to understanding meaning only works if there is effective communication between the researcher and those being studied.

An interpretivist paradigm recognises multiple realities that the researcher must navigate, depending on the context of the investigation, the understanding and interpretation of the data collected, and ultimately, the researcher’s involvement (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). According to (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015), interpretivism “allows the focus to

be fixed on the understanding of what is happening in a given context rather than measuring it” (p. 65).

Interpretivism is a form of epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002) that grounds this research. According to O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015), epistemology explores how knowledge can be validated. This study is supported by an epistemological approach to capture the narrative experiences of Samoan social practitioners, whose transition from being youth-at-risk explains their work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. Epistemology involves asking: how does one know what one knows (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002)? It also reflects my insider research connection in this study, which underpins qualitative inquiry as described by Patton (2002). While Patton (2002) states that one’s interest and passion underpin qualitative inquiry, it also raises questions about whether this knowledge or experience is comparable to that of others.

An epistemological approach offers an understanding of Samoan youth offending. Drawing on the lived experiences of former youth-at-risk who have become Samoan social practitioners, it provides recommendations on how to reduce youth offending among Samoan youth. While recognising that meaning is not inherent in events but rather arises from human interaction and interpretation, it emphasises individuals’ subjective experiences and viewpoints in shaping their understanding of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002). It also states that meaning is not intrinsic to phenomena but emerges from human interaction and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002).

4.2.1 Interpretivist epistemology

Interpretivist epistemology centres on understanding how knowledge is socially constructed rather than existing objectively (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Patton, 2002). The focus is on the subjective experiences and perspectives of Samoan social practitioners in shaping their understanding of reality. The approach acknowledges that, to substantiate this claim, it is necessary to provide evidence that may support such an assertion.

O’Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) state that the interpretivist epistemology in qualitative research must;

1. Focus on meaning(s)

2. Try to understand what is happening
3. Look at the totality of each situation
4. Develop ideas through induction from the data
5. Use multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena
6. Small samples investigated over time

(O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015, p.60).

According to Weber (1978), a leading advocate, interpretivist epistemology involves understanding social phenomena through human experiences (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). Weber (1978) suggests that human interaction is subjective, and the social system can be predicted, whereas the physical system cannot (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). It necessitates an interconnected relationship between the researcher and their subject matter, which introduces subjectivity (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). The validation for the researcher, using subjectivity, is based on their interpretation of the metaphysical realm, which could influence the physical domain (O’Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015).

4.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research was deemed the most suitable approach for this study, as the emphasis is on exploring the perceptions and feelings of participants regarding the research question rather than quantifying or justifying Samoan youth offending (Kumar, 2011; O’Leary, 2014). For this research, the qualitative methodology concentrated on the quality of experiences within the participants' environment (Engel & Schutt, 2013). It examined the research problem through the subjective experiences of the participants (Engel & Schutt, 2013).

The strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide context for the research aim and objectives. According to Patton (2002), qualitative research provides the opportunity to probe in-depth participants' responses to open-ended questions based on their knowledge and experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) view qualitative research as a means to interpret meaning from both personal and professional perspectives.

Furthermore, the data collected was based on the experiences of Samoan practitioners through a reflexive approach. Engel and Schutt (2013) see reflexivity as a way for the researcher to connect with their intended participants. Given the nature of the research, building a connection with Samoan practitioners was vital to the process and results of

this study. The research recognises the importance of using the Talanoa methodology (Vaiotele, 2006) as a culturally appropriate method (Gray et al., 2010; Mafile'o et al., 2024a; Ravulo, 2025) to gather data in this qualitative research.

4.4 The Talanoa methodology

In utilising Talanoa, as Fa'avae et al. (2016) explain, it can serve both as a research methodology and as a method, since the theoretical framework justifies using the method to gather data. Given that research on Samoan youth offending interventions has historically been grounded in Western ideologies, with little indication that the expert knowledge of ex-youth-at-risk who are now Samoan practitioners was consulted (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024), Talanoa (Vaiotele, 2006) was considered a suitable Samoan research methodology for this study. As a methodology, Talanoa aimed to ensure that participants' Samoan cultural values and beliefs were honoured, and, as a Samoan researcher, that this relationship was maintained and genuine (Vaiotele, 2006).

The Talanoa methodology (Tunufa'i, 2016; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Havea, 2010; Vaiotele, 2013) challenges Western notions of ethical boundaries, highlighting the importance of a close bond between the researcher and their participants, encouraging a more personable connection. According to Vaiotele (2006), "Talanoa" is a narrative process in which both the researcher and participant can "challenge or provide legitimisation to one another's stories to co-create shared information" (Vaiotele, 2006, p. 25). According to Cammock et al. (2024), the Talanoa methodology shifts the focus away from Western, Eurocentric theories that create an assumed objectivity through distance, while closing the gap between researchers and their participants through a subjective, empathetic approach. Furthermore, Talanoa, as a methodology for this research, ensures that participants' stories are co-created by an empathetic Samoan researcher who understands the nuances of being a transformed Samoan social practitioner from South Auckland (Vaiotele, 2013).

Although Talanoa is not new in Pacific research, much can still be learned from the success of the long-established Pacific Post-Graduate Talanoa series, which started in 2007 (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). The Pacific Post-Graduate Talanoa series gave Pacific students and academics from Aotearoa New Zealand and around the world a platform to explore Pacific epistemologies, pedagogies, and research methods. However, it wasn't without challenges, such as Pacific students' hesitation to adopt Pacific research

design and methods that were still an emerging pedagogy (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). Additionally, academic research tended to be rigid and non-negotiable, forcing Pacific researchers to conform to Western research methodology and methods, especially since Talanoa, a Pacific pedagogy, was seen as unscientific storytelling (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014).

The strength of the Talanoa methodology, according to Havea (2010), is that no individual is illiterate or unlearned. Since Talanoa is an oral process, participants are free to speak in their native language, which in this case is Samoan, English, or both (Vaioleti, 2006). Moreover, talanoa is a methodology much like Indigenous knowledge that Western research often discourages (Smith, 2012). This study challenges Western knowledge through its use of Talanoa to capture the narratives of former Samoan youth-at-risk turned social practitioners who know how to work with Samoan youth offenders but were never asked..

4.5 Talanoa as a decolonising methodology

When Smith (2012) controversially stated that “research was the ‘dirtiest’ word in the indigenous world’s vocabulary due to its linkage to European imperialism and colonialism, it highlighted that stories of indigenous people need to be retold from an indigenous perspective. Decolonising methodologies is the platform that Smith (2012) argues is the standpoint from which indigenous researchers can reclaim their cultural identity. Smith (2012) goes further to say that it was stolen through past colonised research, which denied indigenous researchers the opportunity to tell their story through hegemonic Western academic structures that marginalised them.

Nabobo-Baba (2008) states that Talanoa is part of a decolonising research methodology. Decolonisation, diaspora, and understanding cultural identity loss underpin this research (Anae, 2006; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The use of Talanoa (Havea, 2010; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Tunufa’i, 2016; Vaioleti, 2006) provides a critical lens to discriminatory, racist and oppressive practices experienced by participants of this research (Pease et al., 2016). While the tenets of racism were not the research objectives, Chapter Three, Critical Race Theory, provides a reason for the participants’ exclusion. Furthermore, research goals drive Western research; Talanoa is not about that, instead it places Pacific ancestors and communities at the centre of Pacific ontology (Tecun et al., 2018). By doing

so, Talanoa becomes a link to both our Pacific past and present through storytelling narratives and ontology to balance the uneven power dynamics of research (Archibald et al., 2019; Chilisa, 2020; Johanson, 2008; Taufe'ulungaki, 2000).

The tension between ontology and epistemology, along with a Pacific research approach, is not new (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). Western research traditions often prioritise individualism, objectivity, and researcher detachment (Smith, 2012), whereas Pacific ontologies are relational, collective, and spiritually grounded (Havea, 2010; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Tunufa'i, 2016; Vaioleti, 2006). An alternative Pacific scholarly research approach emphasises relational accountability, reciprocity, cultural safety, and ethical responsibility to participants and their communities (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Coxon, 2014). Knowledge is understood as co-constructed through relationships, storytelling, genealogy, and service. In this study, Talanoa functions as both method and epistemology, resisting extractive research practices and affirming Pacific knowledge as legitimate and rigorous (Tunufa'I, 2016).

Furthermore, stories based on the talanoa of the participants in Chapters Five and Six reflect counter-deficit-based research that, as Chilisa (2020) points out, reflects the positive aspects, resilience, and the need for social change.

4.5.1 Samoan research methods: Talanoa and Faafaletui

Talanoa was not the only Samoan research method considered for this research. Suaalii and Fulu's (2014) article compares and contrasts two Samoan research methods, Talanoa and Faafaletui¹⁰ and discusses the benefits these methods can provide for Samoan researchers. Similarly, Mafile'o et al. (2024a) unpack Talanoa and Faafaletui within a study of Pacific elder care in Aotearoa New Zealand. Suaalii and Fulu's (2014) argue the importance of Samoan-specific research methods as they show how Samoan communities are perceived from a Samoan lens while highlighting the limitations of a non-Samoan perspective. Similarly, Tupuola (1994) argues that for too long, indigenous researchers

¹⁰ The researcher understands that there are more than the two Samoan research methods and acknowledges the important contributions of all Pacific research methods.

have been limited in their research due to the academic rigour that favours an ethnocentric and Western methodological framework.

Tupuola's (1994) article on "Fa'aSamoa" (the Samoan way) of research highlights that a Samoan perspective needs to have the same legitimacy within Western academia. Furthermore, Tupuola (1994) views Samoan research conducted by a Samoan researcher as a means to present the genuine insights of a Samoan, one that is not tokenistic but rather encompasses a culturally sensitive framework. By challenging the notion of past research on Samoans, which Tupuola (1994) views as having been written to benefit a Western academic elite, the use of Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006) changes the power imbalance.

I chose Talanoa as my research method to ensure that, as Tupuola (1994) has highlighted, retelling Samoan narratives must include their intended participants at the forefront. Faafaletui, as a research method, is more suited for a closed group (Suaalii & Fulu, 2014). In contrast, Talanoa is more open and conversational (Suaalii & Fulu, 2014), which, as an emerging researcher, also aims to demystify the perception of Samoans through the lens of transformed social practitioners from South Auckland that Western knowledge needs to understand.

4.6 Data Collection -Talanoa method

Data for this research was collected using the Talanoa method (Tunufa'i, 2016; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Havea, 2010; Vaioleti, 2006). In this section, I discuss the change to the recruitment process brought about by conducting the Talanoa method during a global pandemic.

4.6.1 The changes to the process of recruitment

This study originally planned to recruit twenty individuals to participate in a focus group talanoa, then select ten from this cohort for individual talanoa/interviews (Appendices D & E). The project advertisement (Appendix J) was shared on social work-specific platforms like the ANZASW (Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work) website. To recruit participants more specifically from South Auckland and not social work specific site, I contacted community website like, 275 times, Mangere East community page, Mangere Bridge community page, Coconut Wireless, not to mention the many family, colleagues and friends who shared the project advertisement through

their different social media platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn. A total of 74 participants were directly contacted as a result of this method.¹¹

Initially, the response to participating in this study was slow, particularly regarding involvement in a focus group, with work and time commitments cited as main factors. The idea of switching from a focus group to individual interviews was discussed and approved during supervision, which led to a slight increase in participant numbers. Nonetheless, the notable rise in participants was primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdowns, which altered the data collection methods. Furthermore, out of the 74 participants who were directly contacted and initially did not respond, most made themselves available because of lockdown restrictions and the opportunity to work from home. It was agreed under supervision that the sample size would be capped at 30 participants, comprising 8 in the focus group talanoa and 22 in individual talanoa/interviews. Additionally, the impact of COVID-19 on data collection meant that talanoa shifted from face-to-face to digital platforms.

4.6.2 The Digital Talanoa data collection

The data collection for this research was problematic, given that it was conducted during the global COVID-19 pandemic. While Talanoa is usually conducted face-to-face, the lockdown restrictions meant that most individual and focus group interviews in this study were conducted online using the Zoom digital platform.

Talanoa under COVID-19 restrictions presented both limitations and opportunities for research. Related literature from Enari and Matapo (2020) during this period highlighted that Talanoa has shifted to a digital platform and has become a new norm. Using a digital platform to interview participants (Gill & Baillie, 2018) requires more interpersonal skills and active listening, as one lacks the senses associated with face-to-face interactions, such as facial cues, body language, or a sense of presence. Conversely, Archibald et al. (2019) note that participants found digital platforms easier for building rapport than face-to-face interactions, possibly because of the bonding created during the initial online technical

¹¹ The total 74 are potential participants who responded to my project advertisement or whom other participants informed me to contact directly. This number does not reflect the number of potential participants who were informed of this research but did not reply.

setup. Most importantly, Zoom was the preferred digital platform for this research due to its ease of use, data management features, and security options (Archibald et al., 2019). However, I acknowledge that using Zoom may only attract participants who are familiar with this platform.

Furthermore, the digital talanoa during the COVID-19 pandemic in this study was more about checking in with the participants about their well-being through a shared experience of lockdown and vaccination concerning the virus before eliciting data for this research (Ravulo, 2025).

4.6.3 Talanoa versus individual and focus groups data collection

As a qualitative researcher, one must often decide whether to use focus groups, individual interviews, or talanoa to gather data most effectively based on the participants' experiences (Guest et al., 2017). While focus groups and individual interviews share similarities in that they collect data using open-ended questions to elicit information based on participants' experiences, according to Guest et al. (2017), the primary difference lies in their structure. In relation to this research, this study challenged the notion of the term interviews, which is different from the term talanoa (Tunufa'i, 2016; Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Havea, 2010; Vaioleti, 2006).

Focus group interviews align with Smuts' (1926) concept of holism in that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. However, scholars suggest that focus groups are merely a marketing approach that surveys the landscape of a research topic rather than providing the in-depth analysis that an individual interview can offer (Cyr, 2016). This study supports Otunuku's (2011) view that Talanoa focus groups are essential in not only collecting valuable data but also observing and adhering to participants' cultural values as a Pacific researcher, and that we need to depart from the task-oriented process of research but more embrace the shared space that Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006) provides.

Additionally, Stewart (2007), in her focus group research with indigenous Australians, highlighted that from a non-indigenous perspective, identified a power imbalance that exists in research. By using self-reflexivity as a non-indigenous researcher, she implemented changes, such as replacing the term 'focus' with 'conversation', to avoid controlling or limiting indigenous contributions. Stewart's (2007) findings from a non-indigenous researcher perspective reinforce the importance of Talanoa (Vaioleti, 2006).

This is not a short-term, tokenistic exercise but one that acknowledges Pacific historical and cultural traditions within a transformative paradigm of research (Tuafuti, 2011). While for non-Pacific researchers, utilising talanoa creates a better understanding of a meaningful Pacific worldview within a Western educational space (Ravulo, 2025), the challenge is having more non-Pacific researchers adopt Talanoa research methods.

Steward (2007) and Morgan (1996) suggest that research based on inductive reasoning involves comparing existing data and theory with participants' narratives. On the other hand, if it is deductive reasoning, focus groups can provide a way to examine issues of power and authority within an indigenous context. This research explores the interplay between inductive and deductive reasoning, examining how they complement each other by comparing participants' experiences with existing theories and deconstructing them based on indigenous experiences (Stewart, 2007). Furthermore, the participants in this study experienced individual and focus group talanoa and not interviews, as it was about creating a safe space whereby the focus was relational-driven (Ravulo, 2025), so that we could collectively give back to our Samoan and South Auckland community.

4.7 Participant process

This research employed purposive sampling to select participants for the focus groups and individual interviews. Patton (2002) emphasises the importance of purposive sampling in selecting this type of participant, as it yields information-rich and relevant data to the research topic. However, Mathews & Crammer (2008) state that recruitment from a hidden population may be difficult due to marginalisation or not wanting to be associated with this marginalised group. Further, the challenge in utilising purposive sampling was recruiting participants with whom I was unfamiliar; hence, non-traditional social work services, such as community voluntary services, churches and sports clubs, were enlisted to ensure that participants did not come from just one source or discipline. The use of purposive sampling in this situation, according to Flick (2018), ensures the research topic is covered by a range of participants and, in theory, provides different perspectives. However, Punch (2014) and Seale (2012) value bringing together the hidden population through a common sense based on ethnicity, locality, and shared experiences. This study brought together Samoan social practitioners to share their common trait of

transformation, which drives them to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland.

4.7.1 Internal confidentiality

While I will include what is discussed in this section in the Ethics section later in this chapter, I wanted to highlight the challenge of maintaining confidentiality as an insider researcher. Conducting research as an insider in South Auckland presents the difficulty that, although it is a large community, it is highly interconnected, with many people knowing each other, especially within the Samoan youth offending community field.

Tolich (2004) argues that it is the insider researcher's responsibility to mitigate the possible harm if other insiders read the information to protect the participants' anonymity. Tolich (2004) coined the term, insider confidentiality, which highlights the risk of participants being able to identify other participants in the research publication. As mentioned, sampling participants outside of social work was a way to minimise this risk. Further, Tolich (2004) and Kaiser (2009) highlight that no matter what precautions are taken to protect a participant's anonymity, it is not guaranteed.

The ethical dilemma I faced when conducting this research was that some participants may search for their contribution and share it with others, which I understand I have no control over, regardless of what was explained in the information sheets (Appendices D & E). Since our Samoan community is small, being discreet is more about respecting one another to reduce risk or harm. To illustrate this point, I used Talanoa, an open and transparent process where I could be more upfront and found it more effective than explaining the harm based on ethics in a Western context (Ravulo, 2025; Vaiiolet, 2006). However, Samoan principles of Tautua (respect) and alofa (love) underpin these courageous conversations in English and Samoan around confidentiality.

4.7.2 Participant Recruitment

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 highlight the 30 participants of this study. To protect their identity, they were assigned a pseudonym reflecting their main key resiliency factor trait (Fig 5.3) that contributed to their positive transformation. Initially, the participants were given a code number but were reassigned a recoded name representing their characteristics based on a famous person (fictional or non-fictional) or a Samoan term (Kaiser, 2009; Tolich, 2004).

Table 4-1: Twenty-two participants

Code	Recoded Name	Main transformational factor ¹²
P1	Fetu	Sport
P2	Nelson	Culture
P11	Fa'alelei (To fix)	Family
P12	Faiaoga (Educator)	Education
P13	Ali	Faith
P14	Tamā (Father)	Family
P15	Feagaiga(Sacred covenant between siblings)	Family
P16	Pule (Boss)	Family
P17	Opora	Family
P18	Luka	Culture
P19	Tufuga (Expert)	Faith
P20	Whina	Family
P21	Malakai	Faith
P22	Telesia	Faith
P23	Peniamina	Peers
P24	Faifeau (Church minister)	Faith
P25	Afa	Faith
P26	Loia (Lawyer)	Faith
P27	Ma'a	Culture
P28	Tinā (Mother)	Culture
P29	Ali'i (Chief)	Faith
P30	Mosese	Faith.

Table 4-2: Eight Focus group participants

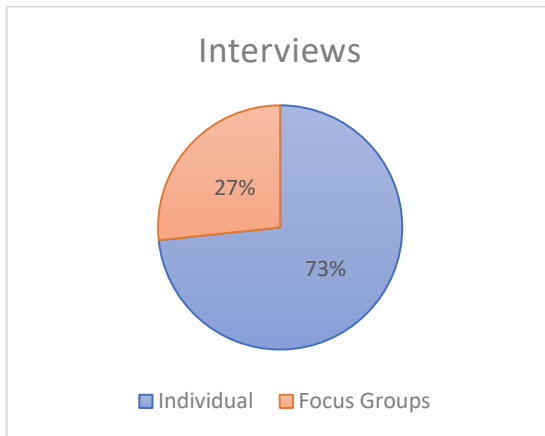
Code	Group Type	Recoded Name	Main Transformal factor
F1	All-male Community Focus Group	Paulo	Faith
F1	All-male Community Focus Group	Tui	Faith
F1	All-male Community Focus Group	Ioane	Faith
F1	All male Community Focus Group	Siaosi	Peers
F2	Male and Female Community Focus Group	Atamu	Family
F2	Male and Female Community Focus Group.	Eva (Female)	Family
F3	Male and Female Statutory Focus Group	Tali (Female)	Family
F3	Male and Female Statutory Focus Group	Keneti	Peers

¹² The main transformational factor refers the one key change for the respective participant. Fig 5.3 highlight the key resiliency factors as family, faith, culture, peers, education and sport that can be interrelated.

4.7.3 Participant overview

The following Figures provide an overview of the 30 participants based on types of interviews/talanoa, gender, at-risk behaviours as youth, employment, leadership role and whether participants were born in Aotearoa New Zealand or Samoa.

Figure 4-2: Participant breakdown



As shown above (Fig. 4.2), this research used two data-gathering methods: 22 participants engaged in individual talanoa/interviews, and three focus group sessions with 4, 2, and 2 participants (respectively).

Figure 4-3: Participant genders

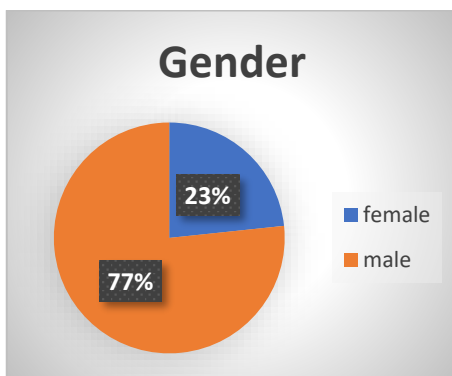


Fig. 4.3 highlights the gender breakdown for this research: 7 female and 23 male participants.

Figure 4-4: At-risk behaviours

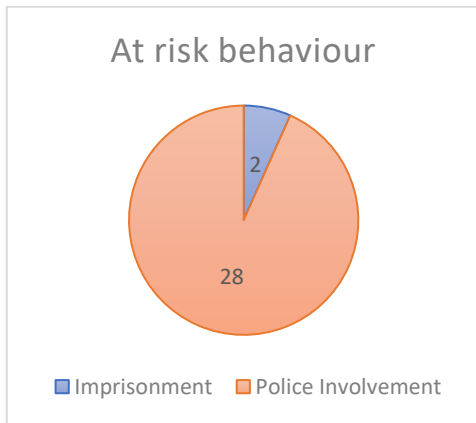


Figure 4.4 shows participants' experiences of imprisonment and police involvement (not necessarily resulting in convictions). Further, their Police involvement may not involve them, but family members as a youth.

Figure 4-5: Employment/vocation

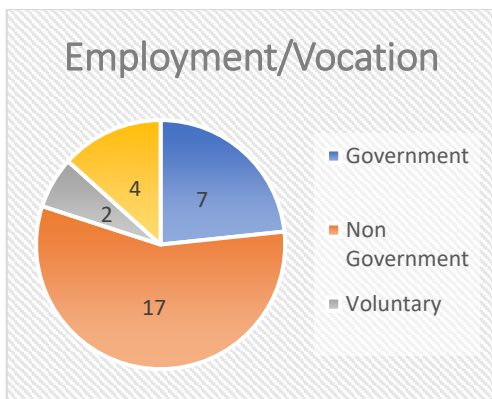


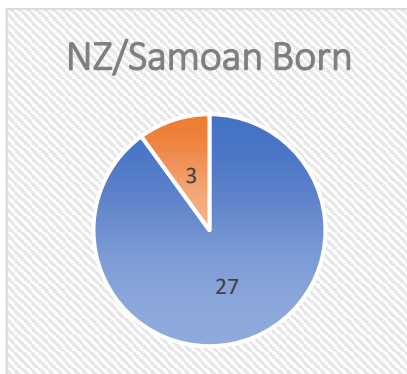
Figure 4.5: All worked in South Auckland, with the majority in the non-government or community sector.

Figure 4-6: Leadership roles



Figure 4.6 Half of the participants were not in leadership roles despite having vast experience.

Figure 4-7: NZ born /Samoa born



- New Zealand-born (Blue)
- Born in Samoa (Orange)

Figure 4.7 compares participants who are New Zealand-born Samoans with those born in Samoa. In addition to being Samoan, five participants noted that they were of other ethnicities, such as Māori, Tongan, Tokelauan, Fijian Indian, and Palagi.

4.7.4 Gender, a Samoan perspective

This study recognises gender as a contextual factor that influences participants' experiences of transformation, leadership, and practice within Samoan families, churches, and professional environments. Instead of treating it as a primary analytic variable, gender is viewed as relational and culturally specific, rooted in Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life) (Mulitalo-Lautatu, 2001; Faleolo, 2014; Talaimanu, 2006). Although Fig. 4.3

indicates that 7 out of 30 participants identified as female, the principles of Fa'a Samoa, Alofa (love), Fa'aaloalo (respect), and Tautua (service) were crucial in preserving the Va (sacred space) (Anae, 2019) between participants and the researcher, regardless of gender.

4.7.5 Participant summary

Overall, the response to this research was positive. Despite COVID-19, I managed to conduct 30 talanoa sessions. This included nine face-to-face talanoa sessions, including two focus group discussions conducted before lockdown restrictions, with the remaining twenty-one talanoa held virtually on Zoom. The figures align with the research aims, particularly Fig. 4.5, where more than half of the participants came from the community sector and had worked there for many years. Similarly, Fig. 4.6 showed that despite their years of experience, half were not in leadership roles. Regarding some participants knowing me as a long-serving social worker in South Auckland, this opportunity was the first chance I had to share that I was no longer practising and was now a researcher. My background in practice helped participants feel comfortable participating in this research, with Ali'i noting:

I am proud of you, uso (brother), for doing this research. Finally, it is one of us (Ali'i).

This sentiment highlights not only the importance but also the expectation of this research.

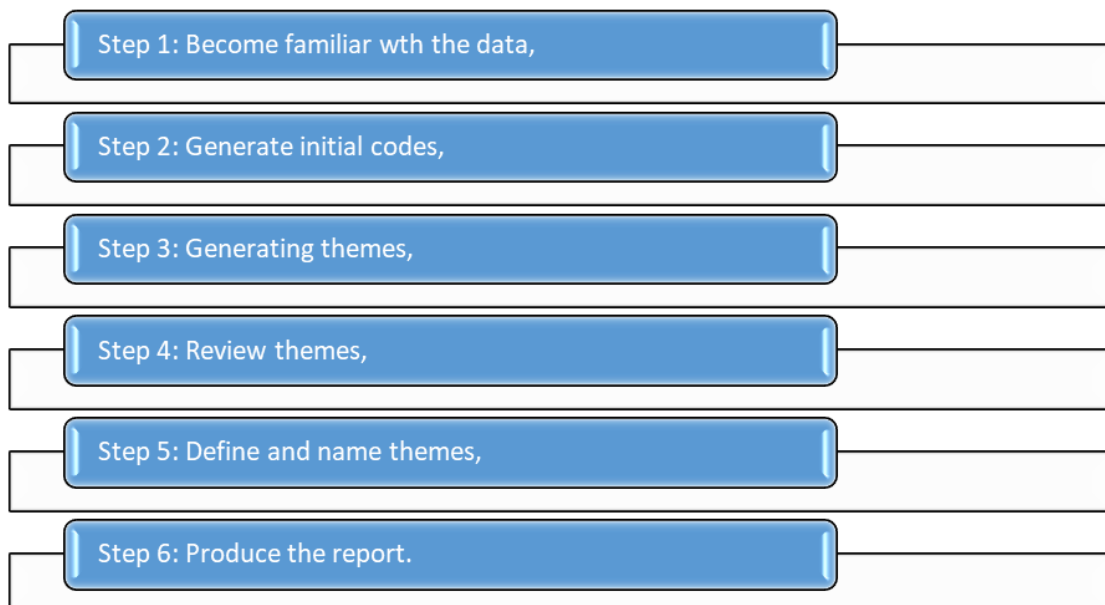
4.8 Data Analysis

This section outlines the process required to organise and analyse the data. It has two parts: the first part is the thematic analysis that helped shape the cluster themes for the Findings Chapters (five and six). The second part is how Critical Race Theory, introduced in Chapter Three, is used to analyse the data through Poetic Inquiry. This part of the process helped shape the Ululaa Framework in Chapter Seven, which addresses the racism that excluded the participants in this study.

4.9 Thematic Analysis

This section highlights that this study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased thematic analysis process (Table 4.3). Further, this six-phased data analysis led to the thematic analysis (Byrne, 2022), which created the cluster themes outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, Findings Chapters. According to Braun and Clarke (2019), Reflective thematic analysis is suited to this study as the focus is on the participants' perceptions or experiences of the research question and is theoretically flexible. Furthermore, critical race theory outlined in Chapter Three is integrated into the reflective thematic analysis to form the Ululaau Framework Chapter Seven as a reason for the participant's exclusion.

Table 4-3: Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases for Thematic analysis



4.9.1 Phase one: familiarisation with the data

I manually analysed the transcript through a thematic analysis based on the research aim and objectives (Barbour, 2008; Patton, 2002). I read the transcripts at least three times. The first reading recalled the talanoa/interview, noting key terms or interesting excerpts from the transcripts (Byrne, 2022). The second reading involved reflexivity on the participants' talanoa and my reaction to their story. While reading the transcripts, I also took note of the facial gestures and non-verbal reactions in individual and focus group talanoa recorded on Zoom (Gill & Baillie, 2018). In this process, I could review the notes

I made at the time, especially the face-to-face talanoa. According to O'Leary (2014), thematic analysis is a flexible approach to text analysis. The third reading involved examining the text to identify common themes and patterns (O'Leary, 2014). This first phase was the most time-consuming of the six phases, which Braun (2006) notes as important to ensure that I was not selective of what I read or watched, and had a complete understanding of the data.

4.9.2 Phase two: Generate initial codes

Codes are what will eventually become the themes (Byrne, 2022). I was reminded in this phase that coding was about reducing data into brief passages of meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). An inductive coding approach was used in this process as I wanted the eventual themes to come from the data instead of deductive coding, which is theory-driven (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Furthermore, the codes came from what was useful in addressing the research question (Byrne, 2022). It was essential to this research to understand the youth-offending world from which some participants came (as in their history) and their current role as social practitioners working with this clientele. I used a highlighter to review the transcripts that became the initial codes added to a spreadsheet. I also modified my initial codes, which was discussed with my supervisors. According to Byrne (2022), modifying codes is part of this process, as I wanted to capture the similar and different perspectives held by the participants, which will eventually inform the themes.

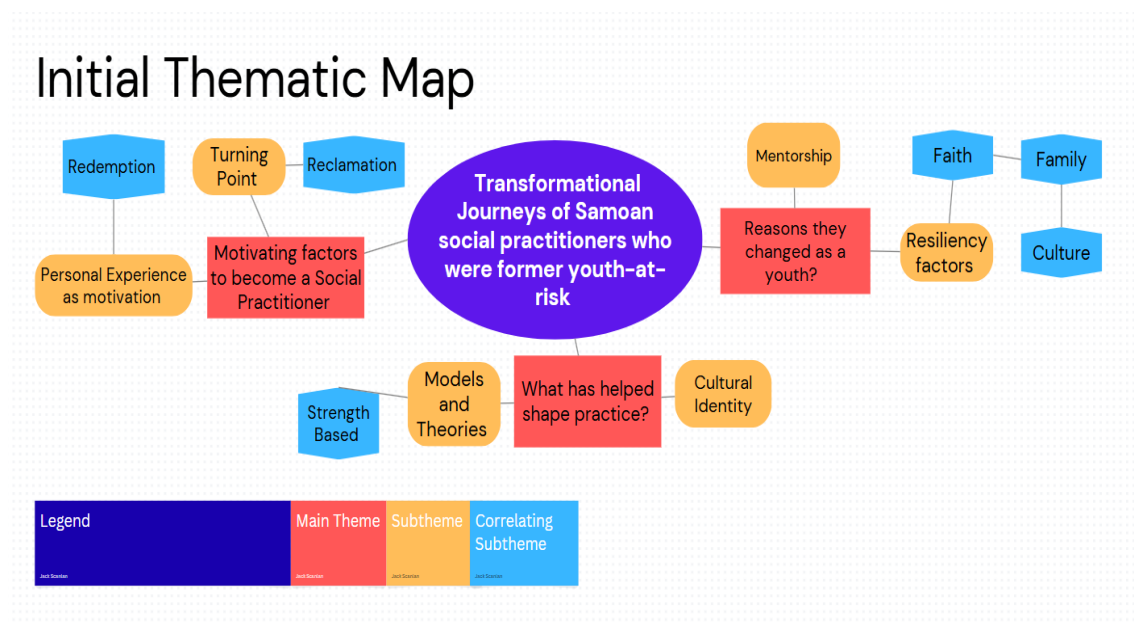
4.9.3 Phase three: Generating themes

In this phase, the themes and sub-themes emerged from the dataset (Table 4.4). According to Byrne (2022), it is about grouping different codes similar to one code, as they will form the themes and subthemes. An initial thematic map (Fig. 4.8) was used to group the emerging themes and subthemes from similar codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 4-4: Generating Themes

Main themes (Red)	Subthemes (Orange)	Correlating Subthemes (Light Blue)
Reasons they changed as a youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resiliency Factors Mentorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith Family Culture
Motivating factors to become a Social Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turning Point Personal Experience as Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redemption Reclamation
What has helped shape practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Models and Theories Cultural Identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strength Based

Figure 4-8: Initial Thematic Map



The Themes, subthemes and correlating subthemes in the thematic Map (Fig. 4.8) were my first attempt to group codes to help answer the research question, “*What can be learnt about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk?*”

4.9.4 Phase four: Review Themes

The Initial Thematic Map (Fig. 4.8) allowed me to review the themes and subthemes. I used Braun and Clarke's (2012, p.65) list of questions to revise the themes;

- Is this a theme (or could it just be code)?

- If it is a theme, what is the question of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the dataset and my research question)?
- What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
- Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?
- Are the data too diverse and wide-ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

Indeed, this list of questions supported the themes that eventually emerged as the main focus of this research. My supervisors supported me throughout this phase, as I often mistook codes for themes and vice versa, a phenomenon Byrne (2022) notes is common. Further, my initial thematic map (covering my wall with numerous post-it notes) had more themes and subthemes before I developed (Fig. 4.8). This visual initial thematic map allowed me to remove codes, themes and subthemes that would be the basis of the eventual cluster themes and subthemes for Chapters 5 and 6, the findings chapter.

4.9.5 Phase five: Define and name theme

This phase involved analysing what eventually became the study's themes and subthemes (Byrne, 2022). Defining or settling themes was complex, which led me to reflect on different possibilities. However, supervision provided me a sounding board, which Braun and Clarke (2012) note is part of the process and a reminder that the themes must align with the research aim, objectives, and question. Furthermore, supervision helped resolve this dilemma by suggesting that I group related ideas and concepts into cluster themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

4.9.6 Phase six: Producing the report

This phase finalised the cluster themes (Table 4.5), which informed the study's two findings chapters (5 and 6). Braun and Clarke (2012) highlighted that the themes represent how I would like to write up the analysis of this qualitative research. A further description of the cluster themes and subthemes is outlined in Chapter 5, the Findings Chapter.

Table 4-5: Cluster Themes and Subthemes

Cluster Theme One	Talavou (youth): Transformation of former youth-at-risk.
	Resilience and Personal Growth.
	Mentorship and Support Systems
	Overcoming Adversity
	Empowerment and Self-Discovery
Cluster Theme Two	Tagata Poto (expert): Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners.
	Personal Experience as Motivation
	Turning Points and Epiphanies
	Transformation as Empathy Generators
	Advocacy and Social Justice
Cluster Theme Three	Galuega (work): Transformational journey in the Samoan youth offending field.
	Cultural Context and Identity
	Restorative Justice and Healing
	Trauma-Informed Practice
	Strengths-based Approaches
Cluster Theme Four	Faiga Faavae (policy): Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.
	Community Engagement and Collaboration
	Culturally Responsive Interventions
	Education and Skill Development
	Policy Reforms and Support Services

4.10 Critical Race Theory Data Analysis

Critical race theory in data analysis acknowledges the influence of racism that challenges traditional research paradigms that minimise or overlook the impact of race and racism (Pajak, 2024). The difficulty is that racism was not part of the research aim and objectives.

In the next section, poetic enquiry is used to voice participants' experiences of racism, with reflexivity in the data analysis.

4.10.1 The use of Poetic inquiry as the voice of the participants

According to Cooms and Saunders (2024), poetic inquiry is a decolonising tool for qualitative research, challenging dominant research paradigms while supporting indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Similarly, Mishra (2025) argues that poetry has been a medium to privilege marginalised voices in dominant spaces. This research employed poetic inquiry to analyse the data, a method that allows participants to express their feelings and engage the reader emotionally (Moran, 2024). Furthermore, poetic inquiry serves as a vehicle that empowers marginalised communities by fostering a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences and co-creating knowledge that advocates for social justice (Mishra, 2025). The central aspect of poetic inquiry as a decolonised process is its resistance to Eurocentrism and its uplift of marginalised voices by enabling participants to be active agents rather than passive objects in research (Mishra, 2025). The challenge of using poetic inquiry in research is that it confronts the conventional modes of academic writing (Parsons & Pinkerton, 2022). However, the use of poetry inquiry acknowledges the limitations of hegemonic Western knowledge and, in a sense, is culturally appropriate for this research (Parsons & Pinkerton, 2022).

The challenge of outlining experiences of racism in this study is that the participants did not explicitly name racism, but their feelings and mannerisms indicated its presence. Therefore, poetry in this study privileges the participants' unspoken experiences of racism, which Parsons and Pinkerton (2022) describe as co-creating their understanding of socio-political injustices. The researcher and participants' shared identity as Samoans from South Auckland meant there was no need to name racism, as there was a shared understanding of the nuances of racism. In this case, it was co-creating their experiences of racism in their youth and respective fields of practice. Further, in the individual and group talanoa, participants are conditioned in their professional roles to 'be nice' based on Fa'a Samoa (Samoan way of life) principles such as Alofa (love), Fa'aaloalo (respect) and Tautua (service) (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2001; Faleolo, 2014; Talaimanu, 2006) that made calling out racism difficult. These nuances of the common understanding of navigating racism through shared understanding, Mishra (2025) argues, are important in poetic inquiry in that they address the power imbalance in research. That is, poetic inquiry

emphasises the shared vulnerability, in this case, racism. Shifting the power imbalance between researcher and participant co-creates new knowledge and benefits both parties (Mishra, 2025).

While tackling racism is key to reducing Samoan youth offending in this study, the poems used throughout this thesis analyse the data by capturing participants' feelings while maintaining a safe space for them to express themselves. It is creating this safe space that Anae (2019) refers to as *Teu le va* – a concept that Samoan researchers must adhere to. Anae (2019) states that *Teu le va* is the relational space between the researcher and the participants, as it ensures that minoritised voices can be finally heard and that research positively impacts their community while maintaining their dignity as Samoans. It is important to note that the poetry created in this study anonymises the participants' collective thoughts on racism and respects the relational space created by *teu le va* between the researcher and participants.

4.11 Ethical Approval

This research gained ethics approval on the 11th August 2020 with the protocol number SOB20/24 (see Appendix K). According to Tolich (2001), ethics in social research are first and foremost about not harming participants while gathering reliable information on how to address a social problem. Adhering to high ethical standards, this study followed the ethical guidelines provided by the Massey University Ethics Committee (Massey University, 2017) and the Massey University Pacific Research guidelines (Meo-Sewabu et al., 2017). Additionally, this research was guided by the Social Work codes of ethics, such as the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW, 1993) and the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB, 2016), as I am a current registered social worker. Of special note are the guidelines set out in Section 8 of the ANZASW Code of Ethics, "Responsibility for research and publication" (ANZASW, 1993), which protect participants and ensure the integrity of this research. Massey University's Pacific research guidelines were also used, as this is a Pacific research project (Meo-Sewabu et al., 2017).

In relation to ethical matters for this study, all measures were taken to protect the participants. The participants were informed in detail of their involvement and rights through the information sheets (Appendix D & E). Further, before the interview commenced, I reviewed the consent forms (Appendix F & G) with the participants,

outlining their rights. Furthermore, Massey University's (2017) code of ethics stipulates the principle of autonomy, where participants have the choice to participate or not. This was followed up with the participants after the talanoa/interview by phone or email.

4.11.1 Insider research

Throughout this research, I have outlined my position as an insider researcher. According to Saidin and Yaacob (2016), insider researchers divide viewpoints, with some arguing that being an insider researcher leads to a lack of objectivity. However, Saidin and Yaacob (2016) view the benefit of being an insider researcher as understanding or sharing the problem that needs to be researched. The mutual understanding between the researcher and participants gained through an insider perspective (Unluer, 2012) opens the research world to a somewhat hidden population (O'Leary, 2014).

I acknowledge my familiarity with the participants through a shared understanding of the research aim and objectives. As Unluer (2012) notes, role clarification presents a challenge. However, for participants in this research, they may have known me as a long-serving social worker in South Auckland, now recognising me as an emerging researcher. Additionally, Massey University's (2017) code of ethics emphasises the principle of autonomy, which allows participants to choose whether or not to take part. While I recognise the potential pitfalls of insider research, I am guided by the process of reflexivity. This involves being self-conscious of one's position and being "both self-aware and researcher-self-aware and acknowledging the intertextuality that is a part of both the data gathering and writing processes" (Greene, 2014, p.9). Furthermore, recruiting participants without a social work background was deliberate in this research, as it enabled consideration of alternative approaches to reducing Samoan youth offending that could inform or influence social work interventions and policies.

4.12 Cultural competency

Cultural competency was an essential component of this research. I am competent in Samoan protocols and have an intermediate fluency in the Samoan language. I also had access to various Samoan cultural advisors through my Samoan community networks and aiga (family), ensuring that participants' cultural values and beliefs were respected. Being a New Zealand-born Samoan and understanding Fa'asamoa (the Samoan way of life) (Autagavaia, 2006; Faleolo, 2014; Mataia, 2006; Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Talaimanu, 2006)

is important as it invites New Zealand-born Samoans (Anae, 2006) who may not know the Samoan language and cultural practices to feel a belonging to this research, as I have the same background. For participants who were born in or more fluent in Samoan, it allowed them to correct me, the researcher, to ensure our Samoan values were adhered to.

4.12.1 Tāngata Tiriti obligation

While this is a Pasifika research, the importance of bicultural practice and Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles (Massey University, 2017) was embedded in this thesis. Having completed a Level 2 Te Reo Māori course, I have a basic understanding of the language. I also have intermediate fluency in Tikanga (protocols), as my wife is Māori, and I am heavily involved with her Iwi (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) and the Marae. Further, the significance of understanding Te Reo (Māori language) and Tikanga (protocol) ensured that participants who identified as Samoan/Māori were respected through the principles of Whakapapa (relationships), Tika (purposefulness), Manakitanga (cultural and social responsibility), and Mana (justice and equity), as outlined by the research with Māori principles (Massey University, 2017). Moreover, the importance of respecting Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles as a researcher (Massey University, 2017) privileges indigenous knowledge, which is an integral part of this research, and also upholds the mana (pride) of Māori, the indigenous people, and the whenua (land) upon which this research was conducted.

4.13 Confidentiality and data security

Given the sensitive nature of this research, all data collected was treated with confidentiality and sensitivity. I acknowledge that complete participant anonymity will not be possible (although participants were assigned pseudonyms, see Tables 4-1 and 4-2) due to the nature of this research. However, I sought further guidance through supervision to ensure that any ethical issues were discussed and that participant confidentiality was upheld (Tolich, 2001). All written data, audio recording devices, and other research documentation were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. Permission to use the information for this research was obtained from participants through their signature on the Release Transcript Form (Appendix H). Regarding computer

records, my laptop is password-protected, and I also use an Authenticator application that provides a two-step verification as an extra layer of security for this data.

4.14 Potential harm to participants

While I acknowledge that this research gained ethics approval (Appendix K) as a beginning researcher, I was guided by Massey University's ethical principles (Massey University, 2017). In this respect, this research adhered to the Massey University Ethics Committee guidelines (Massey University, 2017) and Pacific Research guidelines to minimise harm, and any potential threats were discussed under supervision by my research supervisors. Furthermore, as a registered social worker, I had access to cultural support and counselling services through my community networks for participants if required. This was explained during the information sheet process (Appendices D or E) and followed up with a call, text, or email after the talanoa/interviews.

4.14.1 Criminal activity declaration

The research recruited former youth-at-risk individuals whose past behaviour might not necessarily have involved imprisonment or a criminal conviction. A clear exclusion criterion was that participants could not be involved in any current criminal activity. Participants were asked at the beginning, when reviewing the information sheet (Appendices D or E), if they had been cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under their organisation's vetting processes, which include Police checks and Vulnerable Children Act 2014 vetting procedures. This approach aimed to ensure the safety of Samoan youth offenders and maintain the integrity of the research, based on the positive transformation of Samoan social practitioners who had ceased involvement in criminal activity during their youth.

4.15 Chapter Conclusion

The blended Western and Pacific research paradigm (fig 4.1) was appropriate for this qualitative research because, like many participants, they have had to navigate two worlds. The strength of Talanoa as a methodology and method lies not in the best approach to eliciting data, but in allowing me to check on the welfare of participants, who were essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Further, the altruistic nature of the participants in giving their time to this study demonstrated their commitment

to helping the South Auckland community (a service that went unnoticed) and the importance they held toward this research. Critical Race Theory and Reflective Thematic analysis, as Pajak (2024) best describes, is a counter-storytelling process to understand the existence of racial profiling and the rejection of colourblindness within social work. This notion of counter-storytelling also challenges the racial bias toward the participants, highlighting the positive and resilience that often go unnoticed, much like their opinions on what can best reduce Samoan youth offending.

The following chapters contain two findings chapters that present the participants' perspectives on the research aim and objectives. Chapter 5 presents the views of twenty-two participants, followed by Chapter 6, the views of three focus groups.

Chapter 5 Thanks for asking: The collective Samoan voices of South Auckland

The first of the two findings chapters presents the collective voices of 30 Samoan social practitioners from South Auckland on addressing Samoan youth offending, drawing on their transformational journeys as former at-risk youth. These findings add further nuance to Samoan youth offending research (Ioane, 2011; Faleolo, 2014), focusing on the perspective of Samoan social practitioners and how their own stories and transformations inform their practice. While both findings chapters (5 and 6) provide effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending, for many participants, this was the first time they had been asked. The use of critical race theory to interpret the data highlights racism as the underlying main factor of the participants' exclusion. Nevertheless, the majority of participants did not openly share their experience of racism. Instead, their mannerisms and use of language implied that racism was a normal aspect of their lives, both personal and professional, the effects of which are further examined in chapter 8, the discussion chapter. This chapter presents the narratives of 22 participants. The second findings chapter highlights participants' perspectives from three focus groups (chapter 6), with both chapters reflecting the study's overall aim and objectives concerning:

- I. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand;
- II. To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners; and
- III. To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field; and
- IV. To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

5.1 Structure of the findings chapters

This chapter begins with a brief description of the four main cluster themes (Figure 5.1). This is followed by a participant's story introducing the cluster's main theme. Quotes from other participants are used to support the subthemes. Following this chapter, Chapter 6

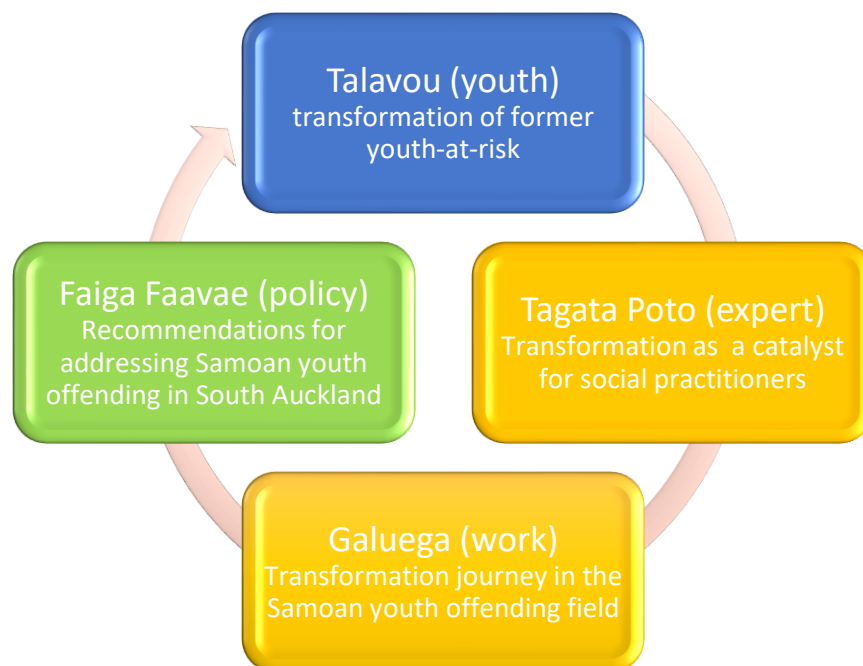
presents the focus groups' views on the fourth cluster theme. A poem concludes the findings chapters (5 and 6), highlighting key messages from both chapters' main themes and subthemes. Overall, the findings chapters contextualise participants' responses to the overarching research question:

What can the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk teach us about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending?

5.2 The four main cluster themes

The four main cluster themes (figure 5.1) have been derived from the 30 participants' responses to the study's overall aim and objectives. A brief description of each of the four main cluster themes includes a Samoan translation of each theme's key point.

Figure 5-1: The four main cluster themes



1. **Talavou (youth):** Transformation of former youth-at-risk. Talavou is the Samoan word for youth. This theme examines the factors that positively transformed the participants as former youth-at-risk.
2. **Tagata Poto (expert):** Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners. Tagata Poto is the Samoan word for the expert. This theme examines how the

participants' transformation motivates their work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland.

3. **Galuega (work):** Transformational journey in the Samoan youth offending field. Galuega is the Samoan word for work. This theme will examine the models and theories that have shaped the participant's work with Samoan youth offenders.
4. **Faiga Faavae (policy):** Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland. Faiga Faavae is the Samoan word for policy. This theme examines what participants would like to see happen to Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland and what challenges they face. In Chapter 6, the main cluster theme is further examined by the three focus groups.

5.3 Talavou (youth): Transformation of former youth-at-risk

This first main cluster theme contains four subthemes (Fig. 5.2).

5.6 Resilience and Personal Growth.

5.6 Mentorship and Support Systems

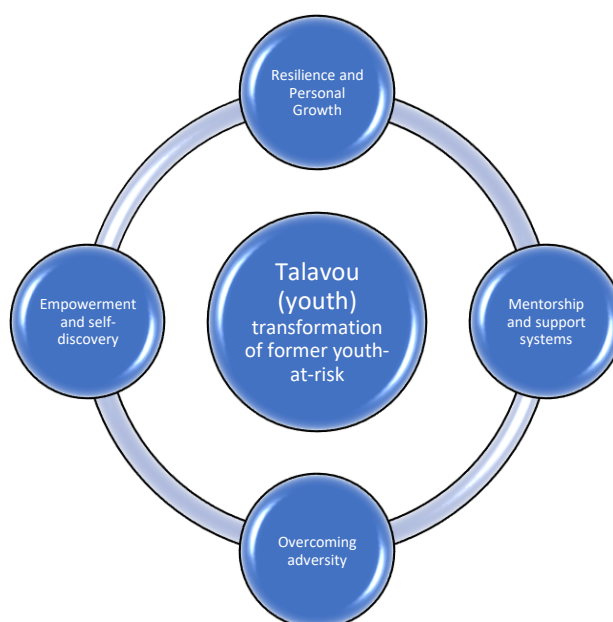
5.7 Overcoming Adversity

5.8 Empowerment and Self-Discovery

Each of the 22 participants' transformational stories was equally significant in illustrating the first cluster theme. The following story by Nelson¹³ was chosen because his experience of being incarcerated as a youth shows that what society and social work often consider as the “too hard basket” can be rescued. Moreover, Nelson’s story is a reminder that stories of hope can come from South Auckland, as seen in his transformation from a youth at risk.

¹³ Nelson’s story was previously published in Scanlan and Mafilo (2024).

Figure 5-2: Talavou: transformation of former youth-at-risk.



5.4 Nelson's Story

Nelson is a well-respected Samoan cultural leader and academic from South Auckland. He had hard-working, educated parents who were strong in their Christian faith and Samoan traditional culture. Nelson described his teenage years as walking in two worlds. On the outside, Nelson described his family as the typical Samoan family from South Auckland who valued church and Samoan culture. However, Nelson felt that he did not fit in that world.

My parents were very tough on me and my siblings, especially with education - but education just never fit with me... My dad was always saying, 'The only way is education. The only way is to get a degree'...If you walk into our lounge all their degrees are hanging up on the sitting room wall and it was always dad's challenge that I too had to fill that wall (Nelson).

Nelson went to an affluent school outside of South Auckland, and he attended church in addition to school. He talked earnestly about trying to do what his father wanted.

When I looked at my church crowd, [I saw] all the church boys were talented at volleyball, kilikiti and rugby, but I was trash at sports. So, I couldn't even fit in at church. At school, it was like 'spot the islander', it was very much a Pālagi (white) dominated school, so I didn't fit there. I didn't fit in at home, I didn't fit in at church, I didn't fit in at school and I needed to fit in somewhere 'cause I felt so alone.
(Nelson)

He reflects that not being able to fit in is why he turned to the gangs; a move made easier by having an uncle in the gang.

I joined my first gang when I was 14. I think the transition into gang life was quite easy for me because at the time my [uncle] was a gang leader, so he actually took me under his wing to walk me through... By the age of 15 I was seeing drugs, I was seeing firearms and I was touching the stuff (Nelson).

Nelson's gang life gave him opportunities he longed for, such as money, drugs and respect.

I had seen how much money they were making; I had seen a few jobs, and I had seen my uncle cut a few people's fingers off right in front of my eyes. At the age of 16, I thought it was cool at the time, and I said 'yes' to put me in the prospecting stage (Nelson).

At 18, Nelson became a respected leader on the youth gang scene and was part of a rival youth gang feud.

A couple of our boys died in 2007/2008, and then we had some of our boys disperse, but in 2008, we made a call to try and bring all our boys back together (Nelson).

Nelson regretted one fateful night, which also provided a realisation of the meaning of living gang life. At this stage of his life, Nelson was still a youth.

Me and the boys were at a party and made a call to rob a liquor store. We were part of a shooting at the liquor store where the store owner passed away (Nelson).

For Nelson's part, he was sentenced to 8 months' imprisonment.

So the people I looked up to at that time were now in jail. Our president at the time, well he kind of left the scene and he made the call that he was going to look after

his family and he was going to leave the boys. So all the guys I looked up to and idolised were no longer there (Nelson).

Nelson recalls prison life as a wake-up call. Although he was respected by his boys in prison and often visited by family and friends, he longed for his dad, who kept his distance during his imprisonment. This became a turning point for Nelson.

I have a really close relationship with my dad, and ... in the 8 months I was inside he was the only person that never came to visit. That hurt me the most... I had something very special with my old man and to not see him for that long, it still breaks me now just talking about it. (Nelson)

When I had come out, I made the choice that I never wanted to feel that feeling again of not seeing my old man.... I got into the journey of learning Fa'a Samoa, how to speak Samoan, and how to pray in Samoan. I started from scratch and that's when my relationship with dad reached a whole different level. I live and breathe that stuff today; my culture, my language (Nelson).

Nelson's journey learning his Samoan language and culture gave him a sense of belonging and a better understanding of his father's love.

Nelson recognised from his lived experience as a former youth gang member that there is a lack of resources and services within the community to support youth, and a shortage of youth workers. Indeed, from the time Nelson was a youth, there was a change of government (Helen Clark to John Key), and successful youth initiatives such as 274 Core in Otara were no longer around due to funding being cut (Ministry of Social Development, 2010).

So then you start to look around in the community and you actually realise that there's nothing out there, to me anyway. Everyone said that there were social services and agencies that we could approach but I never saw that. I never saw a presence from youth workers (Nelson).

Nelson also recognised the importance of education and the struggle of leaving school at an early age. However, this was something he had to overcome as job opportunities were limited due to his lack of qualifications and employers' reluctance to hire an ex-prisoner. Part of his education also involved unpacking his Samoan culture.

Upon reflection... the only way I knew how to express how to be Samoan was the (gang) patch, what my older usos (brothers/male friends) were showing me. But I know hand on heart if I had known this stuff – Fa'a Samoa – to fight with words, to fight with knowledge, especially the indigenous knowledge, not just Pālagi (white) knowledge but our own indigenous Samoan knowledge. That is really empowering stuff (Nelson).

His journey of understanding his Samoan culture and language landed him work opportunities teaching the Samoan language in prisons, including the prison he spent time in, eventually leading to teaching at a tertiary institution. He explains the significance of this work:

Now I'm trying to teach them a whole different fight game, fighting with your mind and words and it's not to beat someone but it's to uplift, it's a whole mind shift. It's that shift that I am trying to plant in these students. Yes, I am trying to teach language, and trying to help them speak Samoan but I have a much bigger long-term picture for these people... If it's not us, no one else is going to be carrying this once our parents pass on - they go to the grave and take this knowledge with them... This is my way of empowering my usos¹⁴ who are still in the gangs and empowering my students. Planting our indigenous knowledge, this is the new fight game (Nelson).

Nelson has also won back his father's love and, with that, a new life he never expected growing up.

I can honestly say it's been 11 years since my last joint (marijuana), I can honestly say I have been clean, no drugs, no criminal convictions for the past 8 years. I'm married now... it's my wife and I who are looking after my parents and my grandmother... it's the best feeling ever to be the one left at home to look after our elders (Nelson).

¹⁴The term for brother in Samoan is uso. It is possible to use the term between men and women, but not between men and women because it is gender specific. It is ok for males to call each other uso, but not for men to call women uso. The term uce is a shortened colloquial version of uso

Nelson is now a Samoan matai (chief) and expert orator for the Samoan community. He also has a tertiary qualification that joins his siblings' and parents' qualifications on the sitting room wall.

Nelson's story of transformation is a reminder to hold hope amid the oppressive degrees of racism that exist within the youth justice system that he does not openly discuss, and from an abolitionist perspective, prison did not define his future pathway. While, all four subthemes (see Figure 5.2) are evident in Nelson's story, the next part incorporates other participants perspectives who like Nelson are transformed youth-at-risk.

5.4.1 Resilience and personal growth

Overcoming racism as a youth is not what the resilient factors in this study highlight; instead, the resilient factors demonstrate what the participants had as youth when the system worked against them. Furthermore, the resilience factors are not independent; they are interconnected and equally vital. The resilient factors chosen in this study are based on the most common stories that participants shared, which transformed them during their youth. Faith was the main catalyst for transformational change, followed by family and culture. Other significant resilient factors included education, sports, and peers (see Fig. 5.3).

For me, my total turn-around was my faith. My positioning is that each individual is born for greatness, so what does greatness look like within their setting. Don't view your job as a job, see it as a ministry, as a passion (Malakai).

While faith is a primary resilience factor for the 22 participants, Mosese's view of faith as a youth highlights the dichotomy that the participants faced as youth and for today's Samoan youth-at-risk may continue to face.

so growing up... I felt we were living double lives. We were holy at the church stuff, and then on the street, we were doing dumb stuff (Mosese).

5.4.2 Mentorship and support systems

Family was the second most prioritised resilience factor contributing to their transformation as youths. Furthermore, their talanoa/interviews revealed that the main mentors were their parents, rather than external youth mentors. Additionally, the study found that mentors did not need to be gender-specific and challenged Western interventions that do not incorporate Samoan parents.

5.4.2.1 Samoan mother role models for Samoan sons

"O au a matua fanau"

This Samoan proverb best describes the role of Samoan parents. When translated, it means, "Children are the precious offspring of parents." Embodying this proverb involves the child taking on and reflecting on their parents' ideals. All participants in this study shared how they tested their parents' unconditional love when they were young. They also stated that restoring their parents' faith was a significant goal of their journey of redemption.

Like most male participants, Fa'alelei viewed his mother as the constant source of positive support during his upbringing and the primary reason for his transformation. He stated,

She was very instrumental, I guess in some of the principles growing up, which again led me into this sort of work because I now realise, when you get to this age, you look back and you go, they were only trying to help (Fa'alelei).

5.4.2.2 Samoan father role models for Samoan daughters

"Ia tupu i se fusi – May you grow in wet soil."

This Samoan proverb emphasises the importance of raising children in a nurturing environment. While there is a dearth of research on the importance of Samoan fathers within the family (Tautalo, 2015), this study reveals nuances of the redemptive role that Samoan fathers play in the positive transformation of the female participants.

Part of Tali's rebellion as a Samoan youth was against the traditional Samoan expectation of female responsibility.

I was the eldest daughter¹⁵, and because my dad held a high title, it was like, 'Oh no, I hate this responsibility'; I hate the duties that come with being the eldest daughter, and I just shifted away from church, shifted away from my parents. I actually left them at a young age, and went to Australia, because I didn't want that role as being the eldest daughter. I didn't want to have nothing to do with anything Samoan. (Tali)

Equally, Tinā shared a similar experience about the struggle of being a Samoan daughter within a traditional Samoan family.

The burden of being the Samoan daughter within a traditional Samoan family...I hated it. There was a lot of anger, and a lot of my anger was only shown behind closed doors when I closed that door. All I remember is my parents giving everything to our church community. (Tinā)

Both Tali and Tinā became young mothers living in Australia, separated from their family connections. They experienced the stigma of being young, unmarried mothers, and the shame they felt not only to their family but also to their Samoan culture. However, it was not until they hit rock bottom and returned to care for their fathers that they saw their life as Samoan daughters differently and were motivated to become social workers. Tali states:

When I was in Australia, I had my younger two and was away from God. I actually had problems because they were both premature babies, and it was then that made

¹⁵ The eldest daughter of a matai/chief is called a Tama'ita'i and is held in high regard. There is a Samoan saying, "E au le inailau a tamaitai" which translated means "whatever task women set out to do it is completed" and highlights the position of authority they have in Samoan culture.

me think. And I always remember [a] saying that my father would always say, That's what made me come back to my parents because my life was not going the way that I wanted it because I was still making bad choices. When I returned to my parents, things were starting to go well... I was going back to church, and I was making the right decisions, and that's where I made that change, and I went, 'man, I want me to be a role model for other female teenagers. Although I had my kids at a young age, my first daughter at a young age, I've now turned it into a positive role model. (Tali)

Similarly, Tinā's reconciliation with her father is the reason she became a social worker.

When I was in my early 20s, I became two different people. I felt like the choices I was making were just leading to a dead end. My father was very ill when I lived in Australia, and I returned to look after him, but I found that arriving back in NZ and taking on that role of being the carer for my father, there were other issues out there. There are agencies where Pacifica families are turned away. Families feel worthless, and it brings them down because they're not going to go out and venture out and look for those appropriate supports. That's one thing that grinds me. This is why I became a social worker (Tinā).

The love that Tali and Tinā received from their fathers motivated them not only to become social workers but also to instil the importance of Samoan culture, which they once despised, into their work practice, which in turn required them to embark on a transformational journey.

My recommendation for the practice side of dealing with working with our youth, is implementing the culture, because they seem to be lost. They come to New Zealand, and they try to adjust to the Western world, and then they get lost and confused. My recommendation for culture to be implemented with our Samoan boys (Tali).

Tali's comment above is helpful because it illustrates how this transformation has influenced her practice as a Samoan social worker in the youth justice field, where her clients are predominantly male. Moreover, this point also connects with cluster theme 4 - Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending. Today, Tali sees instilling Samoan culture as important for engaging Samoan youth.

5.5 Overcoming Adversity

Understanding how participants navigated and triumphed over challenges and obstacles in their lives, leading to transformation, is central to this research. However, this study highlights that Samoan youth in South Auckland do not have the same opportunities as other youth and are more likely to be exposed to negative influences such as crime, poverty and gangs.

Whina story of overcoming adversity questions why a Samoan female youth exposure to gang life her norm was growing up.

When I think about it now, my older family members were some of the bigger leaders in some of the adult gangs. Because we spent a lot of family time together, that included going to the gang pad... I think as a young kid, and as I got older, my cousins alongside me that were my age were doing a lot of that gang stuff... I think it started off with tagging. I would definitely say it was through whānau. It was hearing cool stories of what your cousins were doing and how they got stuff for free. That's what that was about (Whina).

However, her family, and especially her grandmother, were part of Whina's transformation and the reason she became a social worker.

I grew up with my grandparents and she was the 'one stop shop' social worker, where everybody in the family came to her. So, I was always around that. I think, innately, it was probably destined to become a social worker just through ancestry, both on my Samoan side, which is heavily in church and is always about service, and then on my Māori side, if I think about one of my tupuna. My grandmother taught me the importance of service to her community (Whina).

Like Whina, Fa'alelei and Feagaiga had a similar background in that gang life was family life. Fa'alelei notes:

I had a couple of cousins who were in gangs, motorcycle gang. I thought it was cool, but I didn't know the other bit, they're about to transition into this gang life (Fa'alelei).

Similarly, for Fa'alelei it was his mother who was a major influence on him as a youth which transformed him into the person he is today.

My mother was a librarian, and when I was fifth form, she started free homework centre. She had a bunch of friends who were teachers that also volunteered their time there ... She was very instrumental I guess in some of the principles growing up, which again led me into this sort of work because I now realise, when you get to this age when you look back you go, they were only trying to help. And when I realise now, back when I was fifth form I was too cool for it, and here I am now almost full circle doing the same thing that my Mum was doing. (Fa'alelei).

Fa'alelei also noted that his mother's influence led him to participate in his school's mentoring programme that steered into the work he does in the community.

So I got into the mentorship youth work and was a volunteer throughout my whole school years. It was actually really good for myself and we did stuff like barbecues at the night shelter, women's refuge, prison ministry, foster care days for kids that were staying with foster parents (Fa'alelei).

While gang exposure was common for Whina and Fa'alelei, it was key family members, rather than external supports like teachers, counsellors, and social workers, who helped their initial positive change. There is a Samoan proverb, "E fofō e le alamea le alamea," which best explains that solutions often come from within Samoan families, and perhaps the issue is the assumption that external agencies hold the answers (McRobie, 2023). When you stand on the alamea, a thorny starfish, it injects poison; however, if you stand on its underside, it can draw out the poison (McRobie, 2023). The healing process involves understanding that the Samoan families Whina and Fa'alelei belong to are not part of the problem but are part of the solution.

5.6 Empowerment and Self-Discovery

This subtheme examined how the participants' journeys of self-discovery, by recognising one's potential and gaining a sense of empowerment, were the reason for a positive transformation. The study identified the importance of Samoan culture, but at the same time questions how many social workers are proficient in Samoan culture. Furthermore, participants like Ma'a, highlight being exposed to Pālagi (white) education is a barrier to speaking their Samoan language.

When I was young, I could understand it but [when] I speak Samoan it was broken Samoan. Samoans will laugh at us every time we speak Samoan, and we used to hate it, but we would laugh at them every time they spoke English, so it was a two way (Ma'a).

For Ma'a, learning the Samoan language was important, as it provided him with a sense of identity and was a key factor in his transformation. What is unfortunate is that he teaches the Samoan language and culture to young Samoans who end up in prison.

I think it all comes down to a sense of belonging. That's the biggest thing for me is our young people, they just need to belong; they want to be loved, they want to be part of something. I'm in the Prison every week with this young boy that I'm working with - he's known as one of the worst, they call it OT Police Corrections Probation. We meet once a week for this kid and he's one of the worst, and I caught up with him just last week and I said "Why are you in the (name of gang)? We're trying to do all this work for you" and he just said "Bro, it's who I am. They got me, the brotherhood. They've got me, they look after me" and that's everything that a family's supposed to say. He comes from a broken family; his father's Samoan and he's got no relationship with his father and all of this stuff, so of course you gonna turn to a group of men that are going to take them in (Ma'a).

While the study highlights that participants like Ma'a often have to navigate two worlds: the Pālagi (white) and Samoan worlds. What participants like Ma'a do not explain is how to survive in a Pālagi (white) world while trying to maintain one's Samoan identity. Often not conforming to a Pālagi (white) justice system are the Samoan youth that Ma'a works with in prison, who struggle with their identity and sense of belonging and are shunned by both Pālagi (white) and Samoan worlds.

5.7 Summary of Talavou (youth): transformation of former Youth-at-risk.

The first of the four main cluster themes emphasised participants' difficulties as young people and the resilience elements that spurred change. The four subthemes of Overcoming Adversity, Empowerment and Self-Discovery, Resilience and Personal Growth, and Mentorship and Support Systems all link to the main cluster theme's transformation and resiliency components. . However, while the participants do not

explicitly identify racism as a barrier to their youth, the study shows that as Samoan youth from South Auckland, they faced gangs, poverty, poor education, and a lack of positive youth services. These experiences are uncommon for youth in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially if they come from affluent, Pālagi (white) families. Moreover, their transformation was not driven by Western intervention but by a rediscovery of their faith, culture, and family. The concept of the Samoan family, especially key members like parents rather than external support services supported their positive development as young people. The second main cluster reflects the next phase of the participants' journey, concentrating on how their experience as former youth-at-risk shapes their professional practice.

5.8 Tagata Poto (expert): Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners

Tagata Poto (expert): Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners is the second main cluster theme and contains four subthemes (figure 5.4).

5.4.1 Personal Experience as Motivation

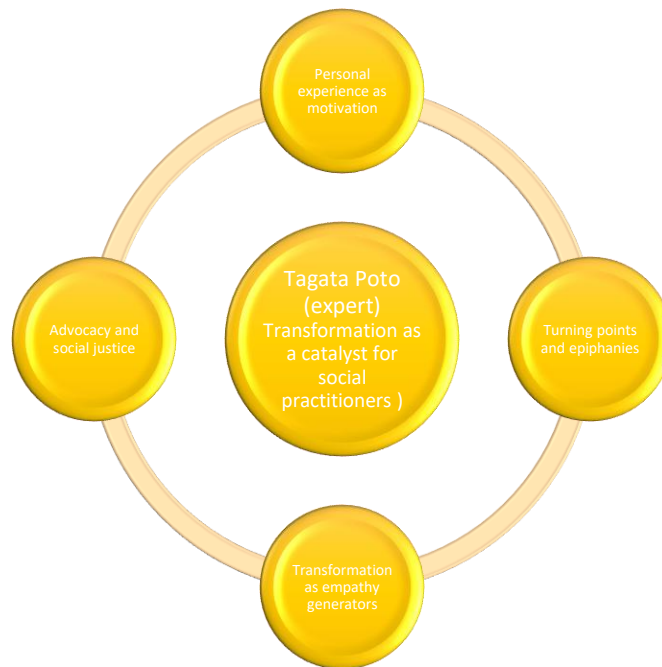
5.4.2 Turning Points and Epiphanies

5.4.3 Transformation as Empathy Generators

5.4.4 Advocacy and Social Justice

In the second main cluster theme, the focus is on how the transformational stories of the 22 participants have led them to become social practitioners. It also examines how the participants' lived experience has shaped their practice.

Figure 5-4: Tagata Poto (expert): Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners



This section begins with Ali’s story, an ex-kickboxer, bouncer, turned pastor, and community worker in South Auckland. Ali uses combat sports and a strong Christian faith ministry to engage youth. While studies show the prevalence of violence among Samoan youth, which contributes to offending (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011; Mulipola et al., 2024; Tunafa’i, 2017), this study adds to the dearth of literature around the causal factors of Samoan male violence. Further, Ali’s story demonstrates that combat sport combined with a faith-based ministry is an effective intervention not only for addressing Samoan youth violence but also for guiding them towards a more positive path, based on the experience of former offenders leading these programmes.

5.9 Ali’s story

As a youth in South Auckland, gangs and violence were a normal way of life for Ali.

With the group of friends I used to have, some of them were Bloods and some were Crips ... It’s like the community we lived in, it’s a lot of crime. Just down the road a guy macheted his whole family... domestic violence all over the show (Ali).

Becoming a bouncer in his youth became was a way to have fun.. He describes his experience of coming into this line of work:

I started going out with my friends then and checked this thing called nightclubbing. But then I think at 21, I got asked to become a doorman or a bouncer at the nightclubs, and here I am thinking in my head, “Okay so I will get paid to have fun and drink and do all that”. So I became a bouncer (Ali).

Ali reflected back to the time he was a nightclub bouncer stating that his work as a bouncer was an unhealthy outlet for his anger toward Samoans:

I’ve done over 67 bars I can remember. I guess through the job I had to manhandle a lot of guys for many years, so my temper just became shorter and shorter and shorter. I’ve given so many guys a hiding. When I throw guys out, and I’ll be honest with you, and most of the people I drag out and beat up for the last 15 years of bouncing are all Samoans. Mostly our own people, Samoans. Samoan people have a lot of pride (Ali).

Ali also talked about how he became involved in martial arts training.

At the time I was training kickboxing, Muay Thai and because of my size at the time I guess they asked me, “Hey look do you want to jump in the ring?” And I thought, “Okay get paid to have fun”. But at the same time, I was training with world champions, and I end up using that stuff, not in the ring (Ali).

Ali soon became addicted to fighting, learning kickboxing and using what he learned through his training in his bouncer profession. He states:

I became so addicted in that lifestyle that my hands used to shake if I hadn’t hit anybody. That’s how bad it got. So I got addicted and I need to hit somebody in order to soothe that inner me (Ali).

It was not until Ali fled to Samoa to avoid being incarcerated for multiple assaults that he discovered the source of his anger, which was not knowing his father, and how this encounter provided him with insight into his trauma and the search for a new pathway to break the cycle of violence. Ali described his first encounter with his father:

I met my father for the first time and I found he was a bouncer too. When I met him and I talked with him, it’s like I looked in the mirror and I saw myself. After 32

years not knowing my father, I looked and I actually saw myself and where I was heading. He's been in jail, and he's come out. I said to myself, "Man, this is where I'm heading? I'm just like my father." And to me, I thought, "This curse is in our family," 'cause then I met the whole family on my dad's side and I seen some of the uncles with scars from fighting. It's a very violent family that side of my family. So, I said to myself, "Hey, I've got to break this cycle". Not just for me but for my kids and the next generation after that(Ali).

Ali discovered that an ex-gang member-turned-mentor played a crucial role in his transformation and that combat sports could be utilised as an effective intervention.

When I came back to New Zealand, after meeting my father, I got invited to a Bible Study. It was run by an ex-gang member. It was through his Bible Study, I got saved. I found the holy spirit in my life. I could have been in jail, or I could have been six foot under, but it's God that started doing the transformation in me and I think everything makes sense when you have God in your life(Ali).

The above quote effectively demonstrates how faith was identified as a significant factor in Ali's transition and his new career as a community pastor, who works with at-risk youth and adults, and utilises martial arts such as boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts to effect positive change. For example, he noted:

Becoming a Christian, I had relearned a lot of stuff. I was training MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) fighters for like 80 bucks an hour, and I said to them, "Look nobody's comes to my Bible Study classes. So, I made a deal with them, and I said to them, "Look, how about I cut the fee if you just stick around for my Bible Study, and I'll train you for free. And man, they loved it. The numbers grew from there and I was attracting gang members who thought I was training people to fight not knowing I was introducing them to God (Ali).

Ali also talked about training and supporting ex-inmates and establishing a mentoring network:

I'm a community pastor now at a Church, so I deal with guys that come out of jail, quite a few of them were drug dealers, and here they want to change their life now in a positive way and start a legit business. So, I've been trying to look for some guys who are successful in the Island community to mentor them(Ali).

Ali understands that to detract Samoan youth from gangs, you need to ‘break the walls’ and show them the positives of a good family, something he wished he had from the start.

When you create an atmosphere of family as belonging, it’s like kind of breaking the walls (Ali).

Ali's story demonstrates that transformation can spark a person's profession. In working with Samoan youth offenders, Ali’s story also emphasises the significance of one's life experience and his entry into helping others was from an ex-gang member. Data from the 22 participants are utilised to demonstrate the importance of the lived experience of positive change in shaping one’s practice significantly, and are examined in the next four subthemes: Personal Experience as Motivation, Turning Points and Epiphanies, Change as Empathy Generator, and Advocacy and Social Justice.

5.9.1 Personal experience as motivation

The subtheme of personal experience as motivation examined how the participants' transformative journeys inspired them to become social practitioners. Ali's story highlights that he is not a qualified social worker; more to the point, no rule states that you have to be a qualified social worker to help South Auckland’s Samoan youth at risk. The following participants, selected for this subtheme, are not qualified social workers; yet, like Ali, they felt the same calling to work with Samoan youth at risk due to their transformative journeys.

The first of these participants is Loia, who decided to become a lawyer in South Auckland due to his negative experiences with the Police.

I had a run-in with the police when I was around 17. I was in seventh form at my secondary school, and I was part of the school show - I was one of the leading roles for this school show, and we had this after-school function. There was a Tongan church next door, long story short, they came round and there’s gonna be a rumble, anyway the police came and arrested people. And I was smart to the police. I said “It took you long enough to get here”, and then I got hit with a baton and got assaulted by police. And from there it kind of triggered the desire to pursue law. But then as you grow older, you understand the valuable skill set that can help people. I mean, it was one of the catalysts of it, probably not the defining one, but why I got into this because, man, if this happens to me, you can imagine

other people who aren't as informed, with the greatest respect for marginalised people; so that's the path I took (Loia)

Peniamina's situation is similar to Loia's, in that change came from a negative experience with the authority; which in this case, was when Peniamina was an ex-youth offender and facing his first Youth Justice Family Group Conference:¹⁶

It was scary. It was scary because it was my first time there. I got into an incident when I was at college where the Police had to come and arrest me and my mate, and then that was the whole start of it (Peniamina).

The impact of going through a Family Group Conference was bad for Peniamina, but it was more the look of disappointment in his parents that stood out the most.

The whole time I could see the look on my parents' faces. It was like a look of disgust, like I had dishonoured my family. Then it dawned on me, my parents had come here and this is what I'm doing, getting into trouble and that (Peniamina).

The turning point was going to Samoa and seeing how hard life was there, and the sacrifice his parents had made coming to New Zealand to give him a better life. Also, the death of a close friend occurred, and Peniamina could see where his life was heading if he did not change. He explains:

It wasn't until I first went to Samoa that I first saw the struggles of our people there, it dawned on me like, my parents had come from that place to provide us with something good and here I am tarnishing it. That was the start of it, but it wasn't until I lost a good friend of mine who was killed up here on the streets, it dawned on me, 'Man, if I can do something for our people, for youth, maybe his kids would still have their dad alive'(Peniamina).

As the above quotes demonstrate, Loia's turning point was a negative experience with the Police, where he made a deliberate decision to become a lawyer. Likewise, Peniamina's experiences showed him a possible future and because of it, chose to do something

¹⁶ The Family Group is a mediated formal meeting between professionals such as the Police, social workers and the youth offender and their family to address their offending

different, where he is now a voluntary youth mentor working with youth-at-risk in South Auckland. He notes:

I assist with mentoring youth. I just wanna give my time, and I just want to sit down with the boys, like whoever I see around and I just engage in conversation. We need to be real, they can see who's real and who's not. That's all it is, like be authentic (Peniamina).

Peniamina also aims to become a qualified social worker and is working his way toward that qualification.

I am studying for my Adult Education Diploma. I also completed a certificate in social service. My goal is to do my Bachelor of Social Work (Peniamina).

Peniamina went on to talk about how he found an educational provider recommended by fellow participant Fa'alelei, who was willing to overlook his criminal past, which helped him on his journey to becoming a qualified social worker. While his words did not explicitly state this, his gratitude was evident in his mannerisms, expressions, tone and body language.

Me and Fa'alelei and studying together at (educational provider) as I volunteer for Fa'alelei . I enjoy where I am studying as they get me (Peniamina).

While you do not need to be a social worker to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland, the next subtheme will examine the process participants went through to become qualified social workers.

5.9.2 Turning points and epiphanies

The turning points and epiphanies are the pivotal moments and realisations that prompted participants to pursue a career in social work . Of the 22 participants, 10 are qualified social workers. They all have similar reasons for being social workers. However, there are differences in how their background has informed their practice. Tinā, Whina, and Telesia, all three female participants, share their journeys to becoming qualified social workers.

Tinā's journey to becoming a qualified social worker began when she worked as a receptionist at a social service, where she was able to utilise her Samoan culture to make a difference.

I worked in (South Auckland social service) as an admin. Well, as I was a typist, I decided I was going to do studies, and do my diploma in social work (Tinā) .

However, while working with the South Auckland social service, she was asked to act as a translator by a social worker who was working with a Samoan family. She explains:

I was asked as a Samoan, “Can I talk to these two Samoan boys?” They were looking at bringing them into care.¹⁷ Basically, the dad had beaten them, but the boys wouldn't disclose reasons for what had happened. And so, being able to relate to these two young boys. They (social workers) thought it was the language barrier, but I was just able to relate to them as Samoan. I also know our Samoan parents and how they do things. I was able to put these boys at ease so that they could explain what happened to them (Tinā).

For Whina, she has embraced her previous gang background to inform her social work practice. She comments:

I think that's what has made my practice as a social worker, working with young people, is my knowledge about gangs, my intel about how they function and that I still have some of those relationships with people in that area. That's really just informed me around how to work with the young person (Whina).

For Telesia, her journey to becoming a social worker was not her first choice as she wanted to join the Police. For her, social work was a bridging programme to becoming a Police officer, stating:

'What will be a stepping stone for me to get into the Police force?' That's when I started thinking and social work came up. I thought, 'I'll go do social work, get some experience.' I went to, I think it was a seminar, and the Police would talk about what kind of people they were looking for and recommended that you get

¹⁷ Care is in reference to residential care for children in need of care and protection.

some experience under your belt. I thought, 'Cool, I'll head that way cos at least I'll get social work as an experience and then that'll be more positive for me to practice as a Police Officer once I go down that road' (Telesia)

However, for Telesia, once she became a social worker, she experienced an epiphany when she realised this was a profession she needed to be in permanently. She notes:

I did my social work placement in my final year and they contacted me and said there was a temporary position coming up, would I like to come and work with them. That's how I got into social work and then a full time position came up. In my social work role I was working with Police and I felt that we (social workers) were the ones really working with the families and that's what I liked. There was no need to go there in the Police force, I felt this was my calling pretty much. Then, 10 years later, I was still there (Telesia).

For all three female participants, becoming a social worker was definitely their calling. Tinā might not have pursued social work if she had not been asked to act as a translator for young Samoan boys when working as a receptionist. Similarly, Telesia originally wanted to be a Police officer but found being a social worker was the best way to engage young people. Moreover, Whina has not forgotten her previous gang connection and uses it as a way to better understand young people. Hence, it is this notion of understanding young people based on a lived experience that is discussed in the next subtheme.

5.9.3 Transformation as empathy generator

The subtheme transformation as empathy generator examines how personal transformations enhanced participants' ability to empathise and connect with others, particularly those in vulnerable situations. For all the participants in this study, it was clear that empathy for others stems from them coming from vulnerable situations and the lessons they learnt that drive them to do their work. The following participants, Ma'a, and Fetu have overcome hardship and the need to give back demonstrates their capacity for empathy.

Ma'a's journey to becoming an expert Samoan orator started with the shame he felt for not knowing his Samoan language when he was young.

I'll never spoke Samoan when I'm young but I could understand it but when I went to speak Samoan I spoke broken Samoan. My family would laugh at us every time I spoke Samoan and I used to hate it, but I use to laugh at them every time they spoke English so it was a two way thing (Ma'a).

Further, Ma'a's understanding of the Samoan language was when he was in trouble.

The only time dad spoke to us was when we were going to get a hiding or we did something wrong (Ma'a).

A turning point for Ma'a in understanding his Samoan language was an opportunity to do a social work placement in Samoa. This was pivotal in how he

I went to Samoa to do my social work placement back in 2000s that's when it hit me as I got to live in Samoa for four months and it was probably one of the most beautiful times of my life. I got to see how important and how beautiful the Samoan culture was, and not only that, but how lucky we are in NZ (Ma'a).

Ma'a's own experience as a youth inspired him to want to use the Samoan language and culture to engage with youth.

I love doing the social work, but what I've found is that if they're not fully grounded in their culture and in their faith and who they are, then it would be easier for them to go back off the rails and end up inside or worse (Ma'a).

Ma'a also sees the importance of Samoan youth understanding Samoan principles and the Christian faith.

The true essence of Fa'a Samoan which is based on love, respect, humility and service. Now you have those pillars and that is what we got to keep pushing. I don't want to keep bringing up the God factor but for us it is exactly who Jesus was. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey, he didn't come on a high horse saying "Hey, everyone look at me", hell no (Ma'a).

For Fetu he was a promising rugby player as a youth and was on his way to secure a professional contract until a career ending injury ended this dream.

The loss of opportunities hit hard. I saw a lot of my mates that I used to play rugby with, and I'll be out clubbing, and two o'clock in the morning I see some of them running on for the All Blacks. I'm like, arrrgh, I just don't want to watch this.

The impact of this injury was profound for Fetu. He states.

Being a rugby player, I was going through my own depression from not getting chosen. There is a connection, a relativity to crime, drinking, drugs, failure, jail. All of these things started to become real options for me (Fetu).

However, the turning point was the birth of his daughter and how he wanted to use his experience to support youth in South Auckland.

When I had my daughter, I was still young, 20 years of age. It was probably one of the hardest times because I was trying to do what I've got to do as a father and then obviously go out and tried still to pursue a footy career. Just a real time of confusion. But that was one thing that really centered me was having that child look up to me for once in my life (Fetu).

Fetu developed an intervention programme with youth but added that he needed to work with their parents who put unrealistic expectations on their child to gain a professional contract, which was something he knew too well from his lived experience.

They have this notion because their kid can play rugby that they were going to be the next Sonny Bill Williams. They're always comparing their kids to top end players and that their kids are going to get them their first house, buy a new car. You're going to feed all the rest of the family not knowing that their kid's skill level is not up to that standard but that's the perception that the parents have got (Fetu).

While Fetu recognised that the pressure and expectations coming from Samoan parents were unrealistic, he also knew that parents needed to be part of the intervention plan, which, in true Pasifika fashion highlights the importance of including aiga (family). For example, Fetu commented:

I ran an intervention programme that included the parents to understand, number one; the game plan and what we were doing. Number two; it taught them just how tough it was for the kids to actually try and understand what I was trying to teach. Most of these parents were very overweight, and they used to tell their boys to train

and they used to get so angry at them. So, I ran a training programme for the parents on the side. I told them, 'Hey, if the boys are going to be doing the training, I want you guys to be walking the laps or doing something (Fetu).

Consequently, the impact of Fetu's 'inclusive' training plan was immediate and more importantly, it made an impact on the younger boys. Here, Fetu said that he would often hear comments from the younger boys like "Yeah, it makes me feel like I need to train because I can see my dad doing it" (Fetu).

The motivation for Fetu in supporting young people is what he sees as core and that is family.

Part of the reason why I help our people is that we are paying it forward from the love of our parents, family and friends who believed in us (Fetu).

Both Fetu and Ma'a's experience of understanding young people comes from their lived experience of trauma that they have overcome, and the importance of nurturing young people, which they have used in their practice.

5.9.4 Advocacy and social justice

In this subtheme, we examine how participants' transformations ignited a passion for addressing societal issues and advocating for change.

My mother was a librarian, and when I was at high school, she started a free homework centre. She had a bunch of friends who were teachers that also volunteered their time there ... She was very instrumental, I guess, in some of the principles growing up, which again led me into my work in the community because I now realise, when you get to this age, you look back and you go, they were only trying to help. And when I realise now, back when I was back at school, I thought it was uncool to help others, and here I am now, almost full circle, doing the same thing that my Mum was doing (Fa'alelei).

However, being an agent for change for his community prompted Fa'alelei to establish his own trust for youth at risk in South Auckland.

Look man, we've helped so many other organisations it's time for us to make our own organisation. It's time for us to be in charge, to steer the boat and to not be the workers (Fa'alelei).

Fa'alelei saw an issue in his South Auckland community that no one really wanted to work with youth-at-risk.

I remember seeing so many organisations working with disengaged, hard-to-reach youth, but over time, I saw these numbers drop. So I said to myself, okay sweet I'll put my hand up and I'll go help out because I had some background growing up (Fa'alelei).

The motivation for Fa'alelei is the work that he does with youth is about giving back to his community.

I think at the moment working with youth, it also helps myself. Like I've always found that sometimes helping others helps yourself (Fa'alelei).

Afa shares the same sentiment as Fa'alelei in that there is a real need for targeted intervention programmes that were being led by Pacific, for Pacific people.

I always say there are so many amazing groups like ours in the community at grassroots, doing the work and achieving results without support from the government. They struggle to get by with limited funding, so what really needs to happen is for the government to come down here and see what's actually working for any kind of issue. They should see what's in the community that's working and then support it. They need to bypass the bureaucrats and the bureaucracy of the system, which is full of red tape. Unfortunately, many of our people and the groups set up to support us are the worst off (Afa).

Afa highlighted the main barrier for South Auckland community services and that is the level of reporting.

We got some government funding a little while ago and I said it's just not worth it. It's not worth getting that money because I can't deliver on the reporting side of it, so why bother (Afa).

Afa also highlighted a barrier for small community groups and that is the unfair competition that comes with government funding.

You got these big organisation that have all the processes and to me money just gets wasted. These organisation they get all the money from the government, huge amounts, and by the time it comes down to the community, it's just a trickle (Afa).

Afa provides insight into what his community group provides in South Auckland that is unfortunately self-funded.

What we want to do is set up a community kitchen where we can offer good home cooked meals for \$2 bucks. It's an alternative, and it's quick and it's there. But then you've got to go back to our people and educate them around it too, because we're our own worst enemies (Afa).

Afa also highlights what needs to change for smaller community groups in South Auckland.

There's a lot of work to do. Really, it's just supporting programmes that are already doing the work and having success. That's how you can ultimately change the pathway of breaking cycles is by going into communities and seeing what's working - bypassing the big groups, the big governing bodiess - bypass them and go into the community and see what's working and then do something. There's all these government huis, You go there and it's just all talk, nothing happens from it. You come there, take notes, and then nothing happens. That's why I don't go to that rubbish (Afa).

Afa and Fa'alelei highlight the plight of small community groups in South Auckland who struggle to find funding, however, they are motivated to change the perception of South Auckland. Afa states that:

Our people are not lazy; our (South Auckland) community is seen as lazy, which is racist. Our people who you know are just desperate, they're trying all they can, they're working, they're being laid off. So you can't say we're (the government) just going to make it stricter for them because they are the ones who really need the support (Afa).

5.10 Summary of Tagata Poto (Expert): Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners

The second cluster theme allowed the participants to share how their transformational journeys inspired them to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. Starting with Ali's experience, he would never have become a community pastor if a former gang member hadn't mentored him. The following four subthemes further reinforce the idea of the participants' motivation to work with Samoan youth offenders through their transformational journeys of change. Loia and Peniamina's negative experiences with the police and the youth justice system were the impetus for their careers as youth workers and lawyers in the first subtheme, *Personal Experience as Motivation*. In the second subtheme, *Turning Points and Epiphanies*, Tinā, Whina, and Telesia shared their journey of becoming a qualified social worker; although different, the similarity is the need to work with Samoan youth at risk. The third subtheme, *Transformational as Empathy Generators*, Ma'a and Fetu's story of overcoming adversity, whether not knowing his Samoan culture or breaking a traumatic cycle, has served as the reason for them working in their respective fields. The final subtheme, *Advocacy and Social Justice*, highlights the struggle of wanting to support one's community, as Afa highlighted that small community groups, such as his and Fa'alelei, miss out on major government funding because there are too many bureaucratic barriers based on compliance and unfair competition against larger organisations. The next theme examines the lived experience of the participants as a model of practice when engaging Samoan youth in South Auckland.

5.11 Galuega (work): Transformational journey in the Samoan youth offending field.

The previous section examined participants' motivation to work with at-risk youth based on their experiences of transformational change. This cluster theme examines how participants' lived experiences have shaped their work with youth offenders.

Figure 5.5: Galuega(work): Transformational journey in the Samoan youth offending field (galuega/work) and subthemes



Most of the 22 participants interviewed were New Zealand-born Samoans and, therefore, identified as able to work in both Samoan and Pālagi (white) worlds. This section examines the models and theories of practice that have shaped how they work with Samoan youth offenders across the Samoan and Pālagi (white) worlds. The section begins with the story of Tamā, whose lived experience of overcoming adversity underpins why he became a social worker and how this has shaped his practice. He also explains some of the challenges he faces regarding the limited number of Samoan practitioners, the exclusion of Samoan values within family engagement support processes, and the impact that they can have on the families he supports.

5.12 Tamā’s story

Tamā’s transformation journey comes from his mother's love, the guiding force that led to his becoming a statutory social worker. However, similar to the other 22 participants, he, too, had to overcome adversity as a youth.

I came from a really loving home like a lot of Samoan families. It was very strict, and everything revolved around church. I became rebellious because a lot of time

was taken within the church, and I missed out on a lot of that closeness with my parents (Tamā).

It was the death of his father that significantly changed his life as a youth.

I was sent to live with my grandparents in Australia after being kicked out of school. I felt abandoned at that point and that really hurt. After my dad passed away, my whole family collapsed (Tamā).

Tamā eventually came back to New Zealand and credits his mother for his change. He also described her as having the biggest influence on his life, especially when Tamā's marriage ended.

My mum had flown over from New Zealand to take me home. For me, that was the biggest thing because it showed how much my mum loved me (Tamā).

Tamā explained that his wife left because he lacked direction in life. However, with his mother's support, he managed to forge a new path for himself and became a social worker.

I let my anxieties get the better of me and to hold me back from what I could do. My wife leaving, I fell into depression, and I needed something to pick me up and a lot of that came from my mum and her support and that and that's what led me to studying social work. It was not easy when I didn't have UE (University Entrance) or anything like that. However, my mum really pushed me in that direction to become a social worker (Tamā).

Tamā successfully became a qualified social worker, but once in the job, he found that the challenges he faced were more related to the system that excludes one's lived experience.

Working for a statutory organisation, it's still mind-boggling as to why certain decisions are made or why haven't resources been passed out to some of our whānau (family) and that, especially Māori and Pasifika whānau (family). It drives me nuts because it's frustrating to always barking up and letting middle management know, but there's no movement (Tamā).

Tamā also expressed concerns with the current system, highlighting gaps he had experienced as a Samoan social worker, where cultural intervention is not being utilised with our Samoan youth offenders.

The lack of resources we actually provide our Samoan families based on assessments is a risk for Samoan YJ (youth justice) kids that come with health and behavioural issues. Our Samoan parents or grandparents don't understand this. We don't have enough Samoan speaking social workers in our role or even the use of interpreters to be able to do these assessments and get them what they need (Tamā).

Understandably, Tamā is critical of his Pālagi (white) colleagues who do not use Samoan cultural intervention when explaining Western clinical disorders, especially if the Samoan parents or grandparents have a limited understanding of English.

A good example is having a child with FASD (Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder). All the training around FASD is all very clinical and it's all in English. Our Samoan grandparents or parents need to attend an FASD workshop to provide them with extra resources. Or they won't get anything out of it and they just won't understand this process. Our Pālagi (white) colleagues do not get it. We are not taking into consideration those cultural traditions and how they play out in terms of proper support for our Samoan families (Tamā).

Tamā's experience serves as a reminder of the lack of Samoan practitioners and the dangers this could create.

I'm able to really do what I can with the knowledge that I have to meet those better outcomes for our Samoan families, but just imagine what if I wasn't here? What if I wasn't in this particular team? What would happen to these Samoan families? (Tamā).

Tamā recounts a critical case, where had he not intervened based on his understanding of Samoan culture, the outcome could have been much worse.

One case I recall was around not properly screening our caregivers. We were going to place these children with their Samoan grandparents, but the grandfather had a history of sexual abuse and he went to prison for sexual abuse of his

stepdaughter. But anyway, he came back on the scene, and the kids are all grown now and his kids have children. The grandchildren were placed in his and the grandmother's care, but social workers didn't follow up as in, is this person safe? Is this grandfather safe for these grandchildren? So when I got involved, I saw it as a let's sweep it under the rug because he hasn't offended for the past 20 years, so everything is hunky dory. But I didn't see it that way. I was the person who actually brought this forward, had the kids removed. But it was also my duty as a Samoan, to continue that relationship in a positive manner, to ensure that the whānau (family) and these grandparents were given the right to see their grandchildren (Tamā).

Tamā highlights the frustration Samoan social workers face in mainstream organisations when management does not understand the importance of Samoan values and beliefs when working with Samoan families. In this example, Tamā recalls management not understanding the importance of the Samoan value tautua (service), which often means providing service that exceeds one's job description.

Management tried to stop me from attending supervised access based on the fact that it was not my role. I said, "What is my role? I'm the social worker for these grandparents and I believe that it's my right to attend this access and be there for the grandparents at the end of the day". They said this could only happen once but I didn't let that stop me. I kept on doing it (Tamā).

Other Samoan values that Tamā sees as lacking in practice are the concepts fa'aaloalo (respect) and alofa (love), which are central to Samoan families. Tamā states that Samoan social workers will push the boundaries to ensure Samoan cultural values are upheld when engaging with Samoan aiga (families) within mainstream organisations.

What makes it [possible] are our Samoan social workers who are working with some of our families that actually push the boundaries and go above and beyond to ensure that our Samoan families are actually supported in a way that's culturally appropriate (Tamā).

Tamā emphasises the importance of understanding Samoan culture and the risk of excluding Samoan social workers from decision-making. In the four subthemes: Cultural Context and Identity, Restorative Justice and Healing, Trauma-Informed Practice, and Strength-Based Approaches, the 22 participants share how their lived experience has shaped their practice. However, most of the 22 participants, who are mostly New Zealand-born, recognise the importance of maintaining their Samoan cultural values within a Western mainstream framework.

5.12.1 Cultural context and identity

The cultural background and identity of the participants in this subtheme inspired their transformational journeys and shaped their work in the field of Samoan youth offending. Culture was the second most common resilience factor that influenced participants in this study. In fact, Nelson's story highlighted the importance of culture and, as a result, it became his career focus. Conversely, the lack of cultural competence among Tamā's colleagues is a recurring concern among research participants and highlights the difficulties they face in the youth offending sector. In this subtheme, the challenges participants encounter when integrating culture into their practice and the vital role culture plays in engaging Samoan youth are examined.

Faiaoga shared her enjoyment of working with Samoan youth as she was able to use her language to facilitate that process.

I enjoyed working with our Samoan youth because we got to utilise our language. They [youth] knew when they used to make me angry 'cause I used to go and threaten them. I used to say things you cannot repeat in English but that was our connection, our banter. And when we work with our own and use our own Samoan language, we capture them straight away (Faiaoga).

While cultural competency is important in engaging Samoan youth, Luka recalled a past experience when this was not adhered to, which caused a negative interaction with his supervisor at the time.

I had this Pālagi (white) lady. She was quite young. I was under her management. She did supervision for me. One of the biggest reasons I'm pursuing a supervision qualification [today] is [because of] bad supervision. She thought she was

pushing me, but that just had the opposite effect. I find Pālagi (white) people are very direct. I give you an example: I'm a big Samoan guy. She said to me, "I see you've got a problem with your weight. I've noticed when you jumped in the car, there was quite a bit of a struggle". So, in that context of supervision, I'm going, 'Fuck, is this my problem, or is this a problem for you?' (Luka)

It is important to note that Luka did not verbalise his internal thoughts to his supervisor, which for him the majority of Samoans, would have been a sign of disrespect. Moreover, given that directness is not considered to be a polite form of discourse, it also highlights the supervisor's lack of cultural knowledge. Most participants in this research also experienced similar levels of cultural disconnect. However, Luka's comment is helpful in that it brings attention to the intricate yet subtle ways in which cultural disconnects can occur, even among professionals who have the best of intentions. Luka went on to explain:

For years I just held it in, until I sort of found my own Samoan identity and found myself. It wasn't until I understood what it was. It was because us, as Samoans, we wouldn't say anything particularly if you don't take the time to get to know me (Luka).

Through this negative experience, Luka highlighted the importance of Samoan cultural competency when engaging Samoan youth. He also provides examples of what he sees as poor practice in engaging Samoan youth from non-Samoan practitioners.

In my own reflections, working with Samoan youth, my heart was always disappointed. My heart was sad when I worked in YJ (secured youth residential facility). In YJ, I ran out of fingers and toes to count for how many of our Samoan young people are in there. But, the thing that was really sad was how did they end up in here? One thing I have come to realise is that trust is important to Samoan youth but also that there is a massive disengagement with Samoan youth and adults (the practitioners) (Luka).

Luka is critical of who works with Samoan youth, highlighting the importance of understanding Samoan culture.

One of things you need to build with Samoan youth is trust. There are massive disengagements of our Samoan youth and adults. I guess I speak specifically to the youth, which out of that concept of trust, I question our system around recruitment (Luka).

Luka also expressed concerns about recruitment, noting that those who are working Samoan youth have little to no understanding of Samoan culture.

I use the example that the system hired staff to deal with these specific young Samoan people, and to be honest, if I was at the hiring table I wouldn't have them. These staff had different backgrounds and didn't know how to engage with these Samoan youth... You had a staff member bribing a young person to behave by way of, "Behave for me this shift and I'll bring you some noodles tomorrow" ... Then you had another staff member who would put their foot down to say, "Hey, use your ears and listen. Go and do what I said to you." The contradiction of both examples just shows they do not know how to engage our Samoan youth (Luka).

The above comments from Luka and Faiaoga highlight the need for more Samoan practitioners working with our Samoan youth, as well as the need for non-Samoan practitioners to have a better understanding of Samoan culture. Luka succinctly sums up this notion through a dream he has:

One of the first things that I've always said, if I ever run my youth centre, is that targeting the Samoan youth is to ensure staff understand our Samoan culture (Luka).

5.12.2 Restorative justice and healing

Participants often shared how their life-changing experiences influenced how they work with Samoan youth and promote healing in the Samoan community. The participants saw their path of transformation as a necessary component of their healing. This allowed them to explain that understanding the Samoan community is essential to healing it. The following participants (and Tufuga) were chosen to represent this subtheme based in part on their stories of wishing to change the negative stereotype about South Auckland-based Samoans that can contribute to this healing.

Faiaoga sees that part of the healing process is understanding our racist past, specifically the Dawn Raids¹⁸, of which many young Samoan people today are unaware of its impacts.

Growing up in that era, you know the dawn raids all that. We did not quite understand how much that would impact in terms of Pacific identity (Faiaoga).

Tufuga saw the impact of the Dawn Raids as the reason he wanted to work with the community.

Through the time of the dawn raids of course in the seventies. I thought as a child that my aunties and uncle were playing 'hide and go seek', but mum and dad would tell us to go into the room when the police came... It's through this experience that I wanted to work in the community (Tufuga)

However, the impact of the Dawn Raid, in conjunction with the recession put a heavy strain on Samoan families. For example, Tufuga recalls his father losing his job at that time.

Dad lost his job during the recession. In our Samoan culture the man is the head of the house, he brings home the bacon that way. However, when dad lost his job we were struggling with the mortgage, so mum became the breadwinner and dad didn't like that. Domestic violence started to occur because mum became a social butterfly, where traditionally dad would be the person going to work and making friends and coming home and providing (Tufuga).

The impact of domestic violence in Tufuga's youth was difficult, especially as it was not often spoken about within the Samoan community at that time.

Obviously, we became victims of domestic violence. When dad couldn't get what he wanted because he couldn't get a job anymore and he quickly became quite heavy handed on us, and he would spend all his money on alcohol. He would come home, he obviously wouldn't be happy. When I reflect back, I really felt for him,

¹⁸ Dawn Raids—the unjust removal of Pacific people who were alleged overstayers in the 1970s. These raids were conducted by the Police in the early hours of the morning, hence the term dawn raids.

but at that moment I was scared because we either got beaten up or we got sent somewhere. So, that silence was also psychologically beating us up (Tufuga).

However, it was during these experiences that Tufuga found a safe place within the church, which began paving the way toward his career as a youth worker in South Auckland.

I became part of a church youth group. It was in that time that I found a safe place to really share what I was going through with a youth leader. She helped me through the hatred I had for my dad and the sympathy for my mum. I felt I couldn't do anything, but I knew I had to stay at school to achieve something to prove that I was good at something... It was through this youth leader, I eventually became a youth worker. She helped me with my journey and made me realise that I could do something with my life and community (Tufuga).

Tufuga recognises this experience as being fundamental to shaping the person he became and how he would like to serve his community.

I never drank because I was a Christian. I didn't drink because I was afraid I could become violent. So, I never drank. Through the strength of church, through the strength of disciplinary places of our Samoan upbringing, that helped me shape where I'm at today. The development of all the places that God had placed me, community women, community men, opportunities, those early stages, it's like that youth work could change my life (Tufuga).

5.12.3 Trauma-informed practice

The participants shared their understanding of trauma and its impact on youth offending, as well as how their personal transformations informed trauma-informed interventions. Feagaiga's story and his encounter with male sexual abuse survivors illustrated how unresolved trauma can lead males to join gangs and become offenders. This resonated with Pule, who used his trauma to become an advocate in this area. While highlighting Feagaiga's story sheds light on hidden sexual abuse within Samoan culture, it also draws attention to the rarely discussed issue of Samoan male sexual abuse survivors.

5.12.4 Samoan child sexual abuse cannot be ignored

‘Moetolo’ is a Samoan term used to describe a person who sexually assaults another person. While the practice is known among Samoans, little attention is given to its impact on victims, especially if they are family members. Unfortunately, Pule recalls his experience of child sex abuse in what still remains a taboo topic within Samoan culture.

For me there was, and I say this because this stuff isn't new for those who actually know. I was sexually abused by relatives from four years old. As a child growing up, you get used to all these strangers at different times who are apparently relatives coming from Samoa living in an overcrowded state home in South Auckland. (Pule)

What was difficult for Pule as a child sexual abuse survivor was disclosing the abuse to his parents.

So anyway, I managed to build up the courage after that relative left, and said to my mum and dad, "Uncle so and so did this. I don't know what it is, but I think it's not right." Because you don't even know what sex is and you don't even speak sex to them, but I had to build up a lot of courage to do that. I was shitting myself approaching my parents, but I had to get it off my chest, but then I kind of knew what was going to happen. And so, I got a hiding, and that just basically fucks up your confidence (Pule).

However, it is this traumatic experience of sexual abuse disclosure that has motivated Pule to become an advocate for change in his South Auckland community. Pule credits his transformation to going to church and to the people there helping him see that he was talented at sports.

I decided to go to Church but not my family church which was a Samoan church. I went to their bible study on a Friday and Saturday night which I didn't enjoy at first, but I did enjoy the basketball and sports games after.

It was through the Church that Pule was able to find healing and forgiveness for his parents.

The church started encouraging me to get into sports more, especially rugby. Through this church I was able to mend the rift with my parents. I ended up playing professional rugby overseas for four years.

Pule further states what sports meant when looking after his parents and the importance of family.

I could have played professional rugby for over ten years but I came back to New Zealand after four years due to my mother being unwell and later passing away. I think part of my successes in rugby was that I was able to buy my parents their first home.

Losing his mother was hard for Pule, and becoming a new father he felt like he needed a new pathway and direction in life. Part of his healing involved giving back to South Auckland.

After my mum died, a year later my first child was born, my eldest daughter. That sort of kicked me up the arse a bit, and got me to rethink my life, you know, I couldn't be selfish anymore. It's like I've now got a new life, and I kind of saw that as a positive blessing... I saw an advertisement for joining the police, and I thought, 'I really do have a lot to offer, one the police, but two I can learn a lot from the police, so that I can go back and educate my community, to get them out of the shit, you know, to prevent them from getting into the shit in the first place'. That's kind of how I ended up in the police (Pule).

5.12.5 Strengths-based approaches

The participants shared how their transformation led them to recognise and leverage the strengths of Samoan youth, fostering positive change and resilience. While a strength-based approach can be argued to be a Western term, the concept has always existed in Samoan culture. A common Samoan proverb says, “O le ala ile pule o le tautua”, which means the pathway to leadership is through service. For Samoans, being a leader like a matai (chief) comes from your service to your aiga (family) and community. It is this Samoan proverb that defines the real strength of Samoans. In this subtheme, the strength-based approach recognises the strength of the Samoan participants and how they strengthen the Samoan youth they work with.

Mosese' story is one of growing up in South Auckland, where like most participants, he found himself living two lives.

At home there was drugs, there was violence, alcohol. I remember one time, there was probably about 30 people living at home and overcrowding and all that kind of stuff, but back then it was normal. It was just stuff that you grew up with, and everyone else around the neighbourhood grew up in the same way. Dad was a really hard man, really violent. Mum was a primary school teacher in my heart. And so growing up there was a little bit tough because I felt we were living double lives. We were holy at the church stuff, and then on the street we were living like gangsters (Mosese).

Afa had a similar background in that his father was a gang leader, and so gang life was the norm for him.

My first memory of the police was when they raided our house as a kid; they took all of our Christmas presents away... So from then on I hated the police for most of my life (Afa).

Growing up in a gang family, Afa shared who became his role models.

Being in a gang family as a youth you see drug dealers, and how they got the gold, money, girls; so as a youth, that's what you have as your role models (Afa).

However, Mosese and Afa's transformation journeys became their strength, and in a sense, their purpose in life; serving the South Auckland community. For instance, Mosese is proud of becoming a Christian and how this transformed him.

I think the turning point for me also came when I was 18 years old, and I became a born-again Christian. You use the word transformation, that was the ultimate transformation for me. I'm not going to hide it. It wasn't a programme. It wasn't an initiative. It wasn't a project. Even though those things have a place. But for me, I went to my sister's church. My life absolutely changed when I saw that I was a sinner before a holy God, and I accepted the salvation. (Mosese).

Afa shares the same transformation journey but sees the Church as a way of giving back to the community.

For me, I guess it's a God thing, my faith. My walk is not no where near down the path that my uncle and my family are, they're totally reborn and baptised; that's not me - the water's probably up to my ankles but I live my life in a good way and I serve. I believe in church is in your everyday life in the community and that's what this is, it's a church, we serve and help our fellow man. For me it's just about giving back (Afa).

The stories of the transformation journeys for participants highlight their motivations for working with young people and the strength that comes from this kind of work. For example, Faiaoga sees the potential in young people as her sense of purpose, although it did not start this way.

I was going, "Oh no, I don't want to work with young people. No way." It was strict, and I always voiced it. No youth work for me. However, you know how the Universe throws those curveballs Jack, and you've just got to run with it. And then I fell into it by accident and then thought, wow. "It's a niche that I can work with, and I sit down and develop something that I know works with our young people." Especially those ones that are high risk that are more prone to head into our jails. That kind of life. And I think you cannot work with our youth, unless you are fully present. Fully present. You can't be a nine-to-four youth worker. That's not how it works (Faiaoga).

Similarly, Telesia also sees potential in the young people she works with. The programme focuses on developing leadership potential, which reflects the Samoan proverb concerning the pathway of leadership and serving, then it also recognises that to serve the community, one must grow the next Samoan leaders.

I run this programme alongside my husband which we started 5 years ago. It is a programme that focuses on children who have leadership capacity/potential. The programme started at a South Auckland primary school where my husband and I were initially working with children with challenging behaviours. My husband had a rethink in terms of the focus of the programme and while there was and still is a huge need to support these children and their families he decided to shift our focus to children who are doing well and provide them with the resources for leadership and learning opportunities (Telesia).

Opora is a Samoan female leader, and she emphasises the importance of leadership for Samoans: understanding why one steps into leadership, which best captures this section, is to serve our Samoan community wholeheartedly.

I think the key thing is that people need to do it from the heart. You can have all the degrees under the sun, but if you don't have heart for what it is that you're doing, you're not going to make a difference. We're blessed to be Samoan, and say that you're Samoan. We're not perfect, but. I think a key thing is that if people have heart for our people, they can make change, and if you're only here to tick a box, then you're not doing it with heart (Opora).

5.13 Summary of Galuega (work): Transformational journey in Samoan youth offending (galuega/work)

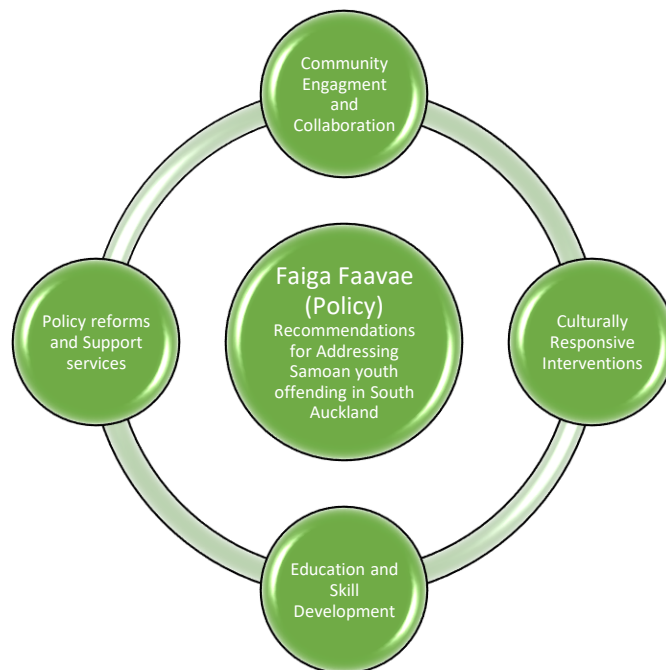
In the third cluster theme, Tamā's story explores the struggles of Samoan practitioners who feel overlooked in their work and face challenges in navigating two worlds: Pālagi (white) and Samoan. The concept of being a Samoan practitioner and balancing these dual identities is reflected across the four subthemes. The first subtheme, Cultural Context and Identity, highlights the importance of Samoan culture for Luka and Faiaoga. While they emphasize cultural significance, Luka also notes the need for more Samoan practitioners to support our Samoan youth-at-risk. In the second subtheme, Restorative Justice and Healing, Faiaoga and Tufuga acknowledge that Aotearoa New Zealand's racist history, including the Dawn Raids, should be widely recognised to foster healing among Samoans and promote understanding among non-Samoans working with them. The third subtheme, Trauma-Informed Practice, features Pule sharing an often-unspoken taboo: male sexual abuse survivors among Samoans. The next cluster theme, the Feagaiga story, illustrates the link between sexual abuse and Samoan male offending. In the fourth subtheme, Strength-based Approaches, although this model is Western in origin, its principles align with Samoan culture by recognising the strengths of both Samoan youth and practitioners. Mosese, Afa, and Telesia exemplify this strength through the Samoan proverb, “O le ala le pule o le tautua – the pathway to leadership is service,” a practice

model embraced by all participants as part of Samoan values—despite the challenges faced by practitioners working within Pālagi (white) spaces. The final cluster theme, Faiga Faavae (policy): Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending, will examine these difficulties and offer potential solutions.

5.14 Faiga Faavae (Policy): Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland

In the previous cluster theme, inherent risks come with excluding Samoan social practitioners from decision-making. In this final main cluster theme, Faiga Faavae (Policy): Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland, the importance of inclusion and how this can shape current policies is further examined.

Figure 5-5: Faiga Faavae (Policy): Recommendations for addressing Samoan offending in South Auckland (faiga faave/policy) and subthemes



The story chosen for this cluster theme is Feagaiga, which means the traditional Samoan sacred covenant between a brother and sister. It is an appropriate name for this participant and his story of changing one’s pathway due to his sister's dying wish. From ‘wannabe’

youth gangster to social worker. This transformation journey story highlights the influence and struggles of becoming a social worker and the policies that need to change for Samoan youth offenders and those who want to work in this field. Following Feagaiga's story, the four subthemes are reflected on: Community Engagement and Collaboration, Culturally Responsive Interventions, Education and Skill Development and Policy Reforms and Support Services, which highlight recommendations for addressing Samoan youth in South Auckland from the voices of the 22 participants.

5.15 Feagaiga's story

Feagaiga describes his youth as growing up in two worlds, church and wannabe youth gangster, living in two countries, the United States and New Zealand. Stability, for Feagaiga, came from being raised by his grandmother and a promise to his dying sister to change his life.

I grew up in the local South Auckland Samoan church. I grew up in two worlds: the church side of it and growing up with the local kids around getting into alcohol, parties and drugs (Feagaiga)

He was raised by his grandmother, who instilled in Feagaiga the importance of Samoan culture and the fact that his parents could not manage his behaviour as a youth.

I went back and forth many times and at one stage mum and dad said - because I was starting to play up in LA (United States of America)... It's safer for you to go home. We'd rather see you get old than something happens to you over here... I was the rebellious kid out of the five kids; that's why mum and dad sent me to grandma's. Part of my life in South Auckland was growing up with grandma who didn't know English and that's where I learned how to speak Samoan (Feagaiga).

However, Feagaiga's transformational change and why he became a social worker came from the promise he made to his dying sister.

I was in LA four years ago and my sister was dying of cancer – my younger sister. She said, “You need to go back to school bro,” because the other four in my family are all educated – they've all got degrees and masters. I said, “Nah, I've got a masters in growing up in South Auckland; that's enough for me.” She said,

“Seriously bro, you need to go back and help in the community” and stuff like that (Feagaiga).

Feagaiga describes his journey as a Samoan social work student as having no direction, but a chance encounter with a Samoan tutor put him on a new pathway.

*So, I was in LA for six months and I came home and then I went to WINZ, Work and Income. Man, you need a PhD to get a benefit nowadays bro. On my way home, I was walking home and I saw a tertiary provider and I was like, “What’s that place?” And I walked in and I met *Faiaoga ¹⁹and the rest is history. I did Faiaoga’s course. She said, “If you sort your essay writing out maybe you can go further and try the social work degree.” I never thought of the degree; I just wanted my foot in the door doing the Level 4. “Yep, I’ll give it a go” (Feagaiga).*

Feagaiga continued his studies in social work, and his interest in dealing with violent male criminals stemmed from a placement he had with a Samoan ex-gang member from a similar background. It also brought attention to the state of this industry and the need for reform in the laws. His goal was confirmed by this placement; the next step was to engage Samoan men and dismantle the misogyny that is sometimes referred to as ‘Samoan Pride’.

I remember I did a placement for males who were violent offenders. I always wanted to work with males, so I was lucky enough to do placement under an old Samoan Māngere boy who was an ex-gang member. On my first day on placement, we went to Parliament, and we went into camp with 50 guys, all ex-prisoners of sexual abuse, some of them been sexually abused when they were kids – all to do with violence. We were looked after by the gang down there. Their president, he’s a Samoan guy, I forgot his name. He’s got tattoos all over his face and then you look at his knees and he’s got a pe’a (a Samoan traditional tattoo). To see that was a real eye-opener (Feagaiga).

¹⁹ Faiaoga is a participant in this research and was the main supporter of Feagaiga becoming a social worker.

The shared experience Feagaiga had with these males from similar backgrounds made him reflect on his own upbringing. It also sheds light on an area that is often overlooked and that is male sexual abuse survivors.

A lot of them grew up in the church and they went against the church, they kicked their Samoan values and realised that church wasn't for them. As kids, they were sexually abused, and they were told, "Don't say anything that brings shame to the family. What are the church members going to think about us?" I really don't understand that mentality. I believe a lot of the gangs have a lot of ex-Samoan church members (Feagaiga).

Furthermore, this experience for Feagaiga highlighted that there needs to be more work with Samoan youth so that they do not become adult offenders.

When you work with these types of men, they know if you're bullshitting bro. They'll try to suss you out before anything happens. I believe Samoan men need to talanoa [speak] more, whether it's your close friends, you need a release from trying to be staunch [Samoan Pride]...all the time, growing up, men don't cry when you're a kid and all that stuff has to be locked up but it needs to change. We've [Samoan males] got to change our mindsets on how we treat our families, I suppose(Feagaiga).

When reflecting on Feagaiga's story, the main cluster theme, Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland (faiga faavae/policy), starts from the transformation journey as a former youth-at-risk and the fulfilment of his dying sister to pursue education. From there, Feagaiga recognises that his educational journey to becoming a qualified social worker included many challenges, such as leaving school too early, and his past as a Samoan male ex-youth-at-risk from South Auckland. Also, what is understated is the importance of a good tutor (Faiaoga), who understood Feagaiga's background and encouraged him to pursue a social work degree. All of which led to Feagaiga's successful social work placement, where a Samoan ex-gang member mentored him, turned advocate in an area overlooked, which in this case, is Samoan male sexual abuse survivors.

In summary, Feagaiga's journey to becoming a social worker (in relation to the main cluster theme) highlights the various barriers typically faced by those who have lived as

youth-at-risk. Therefore, it is essential that steps are taken to remove such obstacles to better allow more people like Feagaiga to become social workers in the future. In the four subthemes, Community Engagement and Collaboration, Culturally Responsive Interventions, Education and Skill Development, and Policy Reforms and Support Service, the 22 participants offer recommendations that align with Feagaiga's story, emphasising that changes are needed both in becoming social workers and in policies to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.

5.15.1 Community engagement and collaboration

There is a Samoan proverb, "*E sui faiga ae tumau faavae*" which means "*while our practices may change our foundations remain*". The Samoan practitioners in this study understand the importance of maintaining their Samoan culture, but they also realise they need to adapt their practice within a Western world. This subtheme highlights the importance of developing strategies that involve the local community, but there needs to be more Samoan leaders who advocate for the community while maintaining the importance of their Samoan culture within a Western system. Two Samoan leaders (Tufuga and Mosese) were selected in this subtheme to represent the old and new ways of working in this community. Tufuga shares over 30 years of experience working within South Auckland while Mosese represents the new way of Samoan leadership that can work in both the Samoan and Pālagi (white) worlds.

Tufuga loves working in South Auckland. However, his passion comes from previous female Samoan community leaders, who have shaped his practice.

Every time I go to community I am reminded of the people that prepared me for my community. They were longstanding community workers such as, (name withheld) and, (name withheld), they are our Samoan queens of our community who have trained and taught me what community was really about. And so being able to be taught from them, I carry their flag (Tufuga).

On the other hand, Mosese would like to see more Samoans making decisions for the South Auckland community. Further, he challenges statutory organisations such as Oranga Tamariki in how they engage the South Auckland community.

Groups like Oranga Tamariki are predominantly dealing with Māori and Pacific kids. Whilst I don't mind white social workers, I don't know that they come in with necessary mindset, or even just having exposure to it... we all love being social workers because it's the front line, but no-one is climbing the ladder so the Pālagi (white) are still making the big decisions (Mosese).

Further, Mosese sees that for the situation to change for South Auckland, Samoan voices need to be in the government that he sees serving the dominant Pālagi (white) viewpoint.

The thing in politics, and I don't know if you find this in social work, but the thing in politics is the Pālagi (white) still run the place. Because everyone loves Jacinda, but she's just another white girl. But, they pull out the brown people who are just the kiss-arses. A few still get left behind because they challenge the government, but let's get all the weak Pacific Islanders who won't challenge the government, and we'll make them look good... I just think, bro, I'm sick and tired of this bull-crap (Mosese)..

Mosese challenges Samoans who move into leadership not to become tokenistic pawns, which he saw in Oranga Tamariki. He recalls a time within Oranga Tamariki when there was a change in their CEO.

When that Pālagi (white) woman left Oranga Tamariki and then they go and get that old Māori guy in. Yeah, we just pull out the same old people...that's part of the racism. The Pālagi (white) look and they say, "At least it's a brown person." I say, "Mate, it's a brown person who's completely assimilated (Mosese).

While Tufuga acknowledges the pioneers of Samoan community development, Mosese emphasises the need to preserve Samoan culture and become leaders at the decision-making table.

When I talk about how we need more youth workers, or social workers that care, that's one aspect of it. I think the greatest need for us is to realise who we are as Samoan people and not let go of that identity. We have to accept that we are great people and have more to offer the world that is different. But, that we got to force it's way into a system that is set up to tell us, 'Actually, you're not that great. You should become white' (Mosese).

Reflecting on Mosese's statement, the challenge highlights the importance of Samoan culture in a system that does not prioritise Samoan views. In the next subtheme, we examine why having a Samoan voice in the intervention process is important.

5.15.2 Culturally responsive interventions

In this subtheme, participants recommended incorporating cultural practices, values, and traditions into programs and services to prevent and reduce Samoan youth offending. The following participants, Luka and Ma'a, share their experience of using Samoan culture as an intervention with Samoan youth offenders.

Luka recalls a time working with a Samoan youth in a juvenile detention centre and the importance of teaching Samoan identity.

When I working as a residential social worker. I connected to one of Samoan youth gang leaders. What worked was applying my Samoan culture and history with this young person. What I was able to apply it to this young person became an added tool of practice for me.. I started talking to this guy about narratives, about who we are; who we are as people, and where we have come from as people and the importance of who understanding all of that stuff. He was intrigued, and I know he was intrigued. But, in my own reflection this guy doesn't even know he is, or where he's from. He doesn't even know what it is to be Samoan (Luka).

Ma'a sees that culture has changed, Samoan youth and demographics have changed, and with that, the intervention needs to change.

Social workers need to understand the models of practise that we had 30 years ago, no disrespect, but our kids now are different.. Times have changed..our models of practice have not changed. Samoan identity has changed and the kids that we work with nowadays, they've changed. There are now mixed marriages, it's different cultures and there's a lot more confusion and that's why it's important that if we can strip it back and go back to the simplicity of what our culture is, then hopefully we can do something good for these kids (Ma'a).

The challenge for a Samoan cultural intervention is having more time working with youth that Ma'a sees as a systems failure.

There was some awesome work we do with them but then it's like we sort of failed them because there was only so much we could do in a three or six month plan, and then there was nothing afterwards (Ma'a).

Ma'a and Luka have highlighted that our intervention with Samoan youth needs to change. However, part of the change lies in how we educate our youth and those who work with them, which is examined in the next subtheme.

5.15.3 Education and skill development

This subtheme highlights the need for targeted educational initiatives that equip Samoan youth with essential life skills, employment opportunities, and positive role models.

Fa'alelei shared an initiative at his South Auckland high school that led him to work with youth and the community.

The reason why I got into youthwork was that I was asked to be a part of my school's youth mentoring programme in my final year. It was actually really good for myself personally because we did stuff like barbecues at the night shelter, women's refuge, prison ministry, foster care days for kids that were staying with foster parents (Fa'alelei).

Ali'i shared that although he did not have the best start in education he did go on to get multiple University degree. He credits his success to resiliency he learnt from South Auckland that he applied in his education journey.

I went to (South Auckland high school withheld) and got kicked out in my third form year. And so I think that was just all part of acting out. I thought I was tough like David Tua, thought I was a cool guy. But at the same time there was some real positives that came out of it. I think you learnt some real resilience. I learnt some real street smart.. I've got degrees from university, but I'd rather be street smart than book smart. I learnt a whole bunch of bad stuff, but I also learnt some amazing things as well. So, it was a foundation. Not the best foundation. I thought it was a decent foundation (Ali'i).

While Fa'alelei share initiatives such as a youth mentoring programme in high school and that we need not to underestimate young people's potential while at school, we do need

to look to change the policies that currently exist. This need to change to change existing police will be examined in the next subtheme.

5.15.4 Policy reforms and support services

All participants emphasise the need to advocate for policy changes and the provision of comprehensive support services, including mental health resources, rehabilitation programs, and family support, to address the root causes of Samoan youth offending. In this subtheme, key quotes already shared by participants are included here to reiterate what they want to see change in this area.

Ma'a argues that intervention with Samoan youth offenders must be longer-term.

There was some awesome work we do with them but then it's like we sort of failed them because there was only so much we could do in a three to six month plan, and then there was nothing afterwards (Ma'a).

Whina's experience of coming from a gang background has shaped her practice, and perhaps there are lessons we can learn to change our approach to Samoan youth offenders if we are open to hearing their stories.

my older family members were some of the bigger leaders in some of the adult gangs. Because we spent a lot of family time together, that included going to the Gang pad for birthdays.. we never saw any violence or anything like that; it was to celebrate the cousins' birthdays. When they got into drinking and stuff we would leave, so we never really saw violence; we only saw the whanaungatanga and that sort of thing (Whina).

Luka sees that more effort needs to be made when recruiting staff to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland.

I use the example that the system hired staff to deal with these specific young Samoan people, and to be honest, if I was at the hiring table I wouldn't have them. These staff had different backgrounds and didn't know how to engage with these Samoan youth (Luka).

Pule sees the need for trauma-informed practice based on his own experience of child sexual abuse, yet there is a dearth when it comes to Samoan-led trauma-informed practice. He shared what he has created within mental health,

I'm trying to run mentoring programmes for free for young people and those at the frontline that focus on stress management, and basically a resilience training. Ultimately, the focus here is on the wellbeing of the individual, and if we can help alleviate some of those stresses that impact on their mental health and wellbeing (Pule).

On the other hand, Afa shared his experience of mental health and the reality of growing up in a gang family. His first attempt to try change his life also nearly ended it. He recalls,

I'd been to Uni so I'd done psychology at Uni, I had broken that cycle but then when my dad went away to Prison. I quit it all and ended up living in a tinny house and tried to take my life (Afa).

This story is similar to Nelson's story who went to Prison but used this experience to help others.

5.16 Summary of Chapter 5

It is fitting that the final subtheme critically examines the need to change existing systems that address Samoan youth offending, which has been the focus of this study. The fourth cluster theme offers recommendations for tackling Samoan youth offences, highlighting gaps in current policy and emphasising the importance for those working in this area to implement changes. Feagaiga's story of fulfilling his dying sister's wish illustrates his journey towards becoming a social worker. However, what is less evident is the challenge faced by Samoans from South Auckland with little or no minimum entry requirements to study social work, especially if they have prior criminal convictions. In the first subtheme, Community Engagement and Collaboration, two Samoan leaders (Tufuga and Mosese) represented traditional and contemporary approaches within the community. Nevertheless, Mosese questions the idea that change can only happen if Samoans are involved in decision-making, viewing this as serving Pālagi (white) interests. In the second subtheme, Culturally Responsive Interventions, Luka and Ma'a shared their

experiences of using Samoan culture to intervene with Samoan youth offenders. However, Ma'a pointed out that while cultural intervention is vital, it should extend beyond the current 3-to-6-month youth justice period. In the third subtheme, Education and Skill Development, Fa'alelei and Ali'i discussed what is needed. Fa'alelei's entry into youth work started at his South Auckland high school, which perhaps needs further development so other young people from different areas can also experience the realities and challenges of being a young person in South Auckland. In the fourth subtheme, Policy Reforms and Support Services, there is a need to advocate for policy changes and expanded support services. Pule emphasised that mental health reforms are crucial for Samoan youth and those working with them. Ma'a argued that Samoan youth rehabilitation programs should last longer than the standard 3-6 months. Regarding family support, Whina shared her experience with her gang family, noting that her experience wasn't negative and that misconceptions about people from that background exist. However, this background has shaped her approach to working with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. In summary, twenty-two experts shared insights on what could inform effective policy and social services for Samoan youth, providing a platform for their voices. While inclusion will be further explored in Chapter 7, the discussion chapter, it is important to note that these twenty voices lay the groundwork for Chapter 6, which presents the collective perspectives of three focus groups on necessary policy changes to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.

Chapter 6 – The collective and united Samoan voices of South Auckland

This chapter focuses on the collective responses from three focus groups on ways to reduce underutilised Samoan youth offending. While exclusion based on race will be examined further in chapter 7, the discussion chapter, this chapter provides another platform for why it is important to hear the voices of transformed Samoan practitioners. Like the previous chapter 5, this chapter aims to provide the collective responses of three focus groups to the research aim and objectives through the four main cluster themes (Figure 6.1) with the main emphasis in this chapter the fourth main cluster theme, *Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland/ Faiga Faavae, and its four subthemes* (see Figure 5.1 “The four main cluster themes” in Chapter 5).

6.1 Setting the scene

In this chapter, three focus groups (see Table 4.1) collectively contribute to the research and offer three perspectives: a community response from four males (Paulo, Tui, Ioane, and Siasosi), a community response from a voluntary perspective (Atamu and Eva, female), and a statutory response (Tali, female, and Keneti). The three focus groups had a total of eight participants, comprising six males and two females.

Firstly, this chapter begins with a story by Tui, who is part of the four male community focus group, to best illustrate the fourth main cluster theme (Figure 6a), *Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland (faiga faavae/policy)*, and its four corresponding subthemes.

6.2 Community Engagement and Collaboration

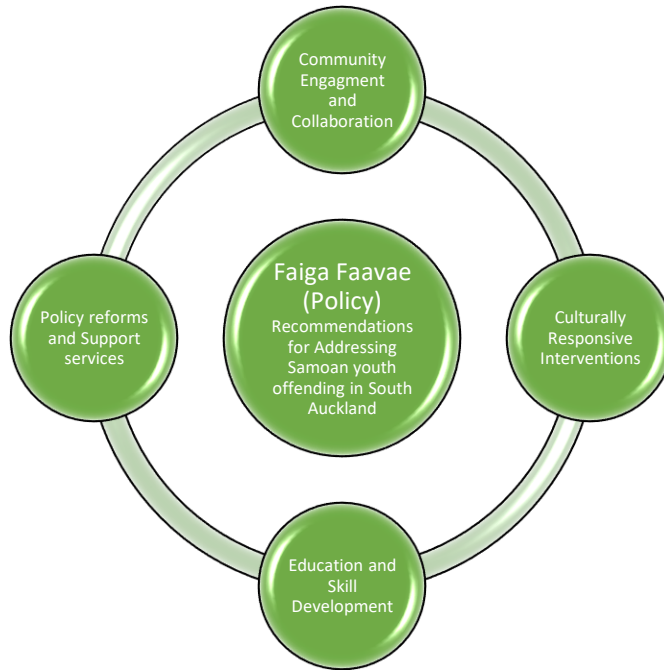
6.3 Culturally Responsive Interventions

6.4 Education and Skill Development

6.5 Policy Reforms and Support Services

Secondly, the responses from the three focus groups are used in relation to the fourth cluster's main theme and the four corresponding subthemes (Figure 6a). Thirdly, this chapter concludes with a poem that highlights key messages from the main theme and the subthemes of both chapters.

Figure 6-1: Fourth cluster main theme – Faiga Faavae (policy): Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.



6.2 Tui sets the South Auckland table

In this all-male community focus group talanoa, Tui highlights how his Christian faith was a catalyst for becoming a church youth leader, which in turn motivated him to become a youth worker. He also shares his frustration as a Samoan youth worker in South Auckland, recognising the fact that he and others are constantly being undervalued and facing racial barriers that inhibit working authentically with Samoan youth. This frustration led him to leave his work with youth. However, he remains passionate about Samoan youth in the South Auckland community and envisions starting his own youth service so they can be heard at the decision-making table.

As a Samoan youth worker from South Auckland, Tui's main frustration stems from being excluded from important decisions because of his race. In his talanoa, he uses the term "table" as a metaphor to show that his and others' ideas are considered, but promised funding is rarely delivered. Though youth gang shootings and ram raids in South Auckland are sad events, for Samoan youth workers like Tui, they're often asked to participate in community meetings with government departments, local councils, and community leaders, seeking community solutions. Additionally, while sharing ideas and

solutions in these meetings is vital, they are not invited to the meetings where major funding for South Auckland is discussed. Further frustration for Tui and other Samoan youth workers is that they are not paid for their ideas or extra work outside of their contracts.

We never get asked at the table; we never get invited to the table, and would we ever get invited because we're the wrong colour. I've never seen racism more than ever. I mean, look at our communities. If we look at them who are the ones in charge? And I don't know if they're brown people; Islanders and Pasifika are at those seats? I think that it should be us.

Tui goes on to note:

It should be us. We're the ones that work with our young people. We come from South Auckland, and there's not enough of our people, that present the community, sitting at those tables of how the funding is allocated. See the thing is we have these meetings right for example a gang shooting, and we voice our opinion but who's putting through our ideas? I don't know whether they're putting it through, or they just hold onto the information? There's been countless meetings, and all these things are always discussed. (Tui).

Another frustration for Samoan youth workers like Tui often relates to funding and superficial fixes, where limited funds are only accessible to larger organisations. As a focus group, Tui feels their work is undervalued, especially if they lack formal qualifications. This sentiment is echoed by Tui's fellow all-male community focus group member, Ioane, who is also a Samoan youth worker.

You pay a youth worker to do a job, and we're obviously doing that because of the passion, but imagine how much more you will get out of them if you value them. I look at the frontline, and they're all Pasifika, or Māori, and if you look at the management none of them are brown, same as corporate. Yet, management are not bringing our people in to sit at their level, to be able to make change, and it's frustrating. If there's funding going around, I don't know what's being distributed. (Ioane)

As a focus group, they all agreed that changes were necessary. The group's frustration was that funding in South Auckland was not sustainable, and when things worked, funding was withdrawn. In addition, when it came to funding, Tui questioned the integrity of certain groups, raising the question of how smaller groups could compete.

All these different agencies fighting over the same funding. Yeah, they're all having to do cartwheels just to earn that cent, which is ridiculous because out of that man, you see the integrity go out the door, and agencies are starting to do things that they shouldn't be doing, but only to meet that tick box to get funding. (Tui).

As Samoan youth workers, they have seen good practitioners of the past let go, and then when there is a new wave of crime in South Auckland, there is a call for more youth workers.

That's the system we have. When things go wrong, finally they tip money into something that we already had broken years ago. (Tui).

As part of the all-male community focus group, Tui felt that the perception of South Auckland was negative, and as a result, there was less coverage of what was working well for this community. Ioane sums up the group's feelings.

And to be honest, after all these years I'm sick of seeing the same stats, and if we keep showing these stats we're always going to work in deficit. (Ioane)

While the all-male community focus group talanoa highlighted relevant issues, it also enabled this collective to establish a Pasifika male practitioner support network to share their stories of resilience with other male practitioners. To date, this support network has grown to include not only South Auckland but also a national and international scope. More importantly, it showcases the dynamic and innovative approaches to youth work started by South Auckland Samoan all-male Samoan social practitioner community focus group.

6.2.1 Community engagement and collaboration

This subtheme highlights the importance of developing strategies that involve the local community. However, the three focus groups highlight their frustration in voicing what South Auckland needs.

In the all-male community focus group, Paulo explained the frustration of youth workers in South Auckland and the lack of consultation.

Eight years ago they used to have youth workers, actual youth workers in Otara, but they took the funding away, and you think, 'why did you take that away (Paulo).

Ioane from the all-male community focus group equally shares Paulo's frustration with the lack of community consultation.

My frustration is that I have not seen any changes with some of the issues that are going on, and I don't know if it's the system. To be honest I feel like that all our frustrations aren't being heard, to the point where the people that are sitting at those table, that are making those decisions, aren't the people that reflect our community (Ioane)

Unfortunately, the removal of youth workers in South Auckland that could engage with the gangs saw a rise in crime in these communities. Paulo explained that

And now that sort of stuff is starting to pop up again, with the shootings, the gangs, and that's becoming bad. They did an evaluation of the projects of the youth workers, to evaluate how effective they were, and around the country the youth offending had dropped by I think five percent, and with the youth workers in Otara, it dropped by 12 percent. There was a big significant jump, but change of government, change of laws, but the new government rehashes the same ideas as the last government. I think like anything is trying to get a consistency (Paulo)

Atamu from the Atamu and Eva male and female community focus group is passionate about his community and supporting at-risk youth. However, he sees an issue in his community where funding is not going to the right people or organisations.

There seems to be a real problem, that a lot of people are getting funding here and there, and then the programmes are running for maybe a year, or two years max, and then done, and then we ask, "Why?" "Oh, we run out of funding." Or, "They cut the funding." I mean, we had good youth programmes here years ago, and it was all going really well, and the crime rate started dropping, and then they cut the funding, (Atamu).

Keneti is the Samoan male participant from the male/female statutory focus group. Keneti is a youth worker who previously worked in the community but now works for a statutory organisation. He sees the difficulty in engaging with the community as stemming from the attitudes of colleagues within his statutory organisation.

I'm trying to get help, bridging those gaps between the younger people and the families with the social workers. It's sometimes those gaps of disconnection, for whatever reason are with the social workers...They sometimes don't connect (Keneti).

A further frustration that Keneti has are with this one Pālagi (white) social work colleague who have a racist attitude toward the South Auckland community.

I know some of my colleagues that I do work with that are non-Pacific, and unfortunately, there is a perception of, "Go home, don't think about it, they're not our kids at the end of the day." For me that's sort of stirs a lot in me. And so, this some of Pālagi (white) colleagues at work knows to be careful of what they say around me. There are times it touches my nerves in me, but I do not let it get it me.. .but I am always most respectful to them...(Keneti)

This subtheme, Community Engagement and Collaboration, highlights the fundamental disconnect within the South Auckland community and the frustration experienced by the three focus groups when excluded from the decision-making process. In the next subtheme, their responses as Samoan social practitioner and the importance of their culture within their practice are examined.

6.2.2 Culturally responsive interventions

Participants in this subtheme advocated for using cultural practices, values, and traditions in programs and services to prevent and reduce Samoan youth offending. However, their responses to this subtheme further highlight the barriers they face.

Siaosi from the all-male community focus group sees that Samoan youth want to know their culture, yet he is limited in the organisation he is with from practising in a more culturally appropriate way. However, Siaosi explains that what he sees would work, and the frustration he shares is how he would really like to engage with Samoan youth.

I believe that for the Samoan young people I work with, there isn't enough emphasis on our culture, like teaching them about their identity. I'm not sure if there's enough of that identity stuff being shared, because young people are influenced by gangs. Samoans living in New Zealand tend to lose a bit of their identity, and what they need from us (Samoan youth workers) is to teach them that we are inherently Samoan, this is who we are, and that's why we behave the way we do (Siaosi).

Tali, the female participant in the male/female statutory focus group, discussed how her Samoan culture influences her practice despite being a statutory social worker. Tali's motivation to work with Samoan youth stems from her cultural values and beliefs, as well as her children.

The reason why I came in here, and I'm looking at my own children and I say, "Who is the best work to work them?" I'm not going to have my children, my grandchildren going into care, and no-one in there who is not Samoan, and does not understand our culture, working with them. So that's the reason why I chose to come into the statutory organisation, to change how they work with our Samoan families (Tali).

Furthermore, Keneti, the male from the male/female statutory focus group sees being Samoan as an advantage in engaging with Samoan youth from a statutory perspective.

Being able to speak Samoan is part of my hook into many of the families. It brings out our genuine-ness with them, and once you've got that; sometimes I don't even speak about what I'm there for, they just know...We're easy-going people; we go at Samoan time, and that's the way I think we need to work with Samoans (Keneti).

This subtheme highlights the importance of Samoan culture as a form of intervention. The notion here is that it needs to be addressed, whether at the community or statutory levels. The next subtheme, Education and Skill Development, reveals the focus group experience within their practice.

6.2.3 Education and skill development

This subtheme was emphasised by the participants and highlights the need for targeted educational initiatives that equip Samoan youth with essential life skills, employment opportunities, and positive role models.

Atamu, the male participant in the male/female community focus group, highlights the frustration with the shortage of youth workers and the schools' responsibility to respond to Samoan youth at risk.

A lot of the boys I work with are now are selling drugs, or what they call slamming, or whatever it is, and money they make off this is to feed their kids or siblings. There is a lack of education, for some of our islanders families in that they have a mentality of, 'just drop them off to school, and it was up to the school to do the rest... they don't take responsibility say that's the teacher's job to sort out our kids (Atamu).

On the other hand, Tali, the female participant in the statutory focus group, draws on her Samoan background as a former teen mother and now a single parent to connect with Samoan youth as a statutory social worker. However, her story of resilience is what makes her a positive role model for her children. Unfortunately, her organisation does not fully recognise the potential she offers.

Why I became a social worker, and went to study social work, is that I was a young mother. I had my first born at 17 years old and I was making a lot of bad choices. I think it probably in my early 20's, that I said to myself, 'nah, my kids aren't going to grow up and have nothing'... they've got a mother who can be a role model for them.. Although, I had my kids at a young age, I've now turned my life into a something positive and even though I'm still raising my kids on my own, they see my work and the difference I am making in the community (Tali).

This study underscores the importance of lived experience as a former youth-at-risk and how it can shape one's practice. Both Keneti and Tali from the male/female statutory focus group value their experiences as former youth-at-risk, believing it provides them with valuable insight into working with Samoan young offenders within a statutory organisation.

I think for me working with the youth, like man, you've just got to be straight with them, they can read you. Those kids can read you straightaway whether you're honest with them or not (Tali).

Furthermore, Tali incorporates being a parent when engaging with youth.

I give them stories of my kids, and I'm always like, "Man, you so remind me of my son. He's so got not ears!'. They just crack up, you know, it's just things like that, or say, "Man, you're like my daughter. She's so quiet and doesn't say a thing, but when her temper goes up!" Those kids, if you talk to them like a parent they will respect you, because they've had no-one to lead them, or guide them, but once they can feel your there for them then your in with them (Tali).

Keneti agrees with Tali that you have to be your authentic self when working with young people.

Young people are mind readers and can read your body language and your language. I remember my supervisor listening to me speak to my young person over the phone and asked me after. "Do you normally speak like that with people?" My language is quite colourful when I'm on the phone, but I see it's all about forming those honest relationships (Keneti).

6.2.3.1 The Samoan value *Tautua* (service) is required

Paulo from the all-male community focus group sums up the passion that drives Samoan to work in this field and that is based on the Samoan value of *tautua* (service). He sums the notion of *tautua* (service) by stating.

All the youth workers I've talked to throughout all the years, they all have same heart of serving, and it's serving in either your family, serving in your community, church, it doesn't matter what setting you're in, but the heart of it has always been you're able to serve. If I look at us as Samoans, that's who we are; it's about serving our people. It's a life of service (Paulo).

While this subtheme examined *Education and Skill Development* the focus group highlight the gaps in not only practice but also in the field. Paulo states, *I have a heart to serve the youth, but the reality there is not enough any youth workers, (Paulo).* In all reality there a number of gaps that in the next subtheme *Policy Reforms and Support*

Services provide another platform for the focus groups to share what needs to change and why it is important to address.

6.2.4 Policy reforms and support services

All three focus groups identified a need to advocate for policy changes and the provision of comprehensive support services within South Auckland to address the underlying issues contributing to Samoan youth offending.

Tui from the all-male community focus group is tired of the politics in this field, and the people working in South Auckland and with our Samoan youth-at-risk do have the right mentality.

That's the sense sometimes when you go into those forums, that there's a lot of hidden agendas, and it's if you take away the money do you think we would still have those network meetings? It's like a box you have to tick, but at the end of day (Tui).

Tui highlights the motivation he sees from Samoan youth workers from South Auckland that often goes unnoticed and is not remunerated.

I think the key word is passion. I can go and work out there for free with young people. "I've been in Otara my whole life, and these same activities keep recycling." There's a lot of dominance and leadership in that who are not from this community. However it's just trying to get the right leadership, not the ones that are there, take away the money (Tui).

Siaosi, who is also part of the all-male community focus group, is motivated to work with young people in South Auckland, but his efforts are voluntary. He explains what he does with young people in his own time and after hours, despite working a minimum-wage job to help fund his passion. He teaches boxing to local kids for free as a way to steer them away from gangs.

Because boxing is connected to gangs, and the kids knows it. I say to them, "You don't need to go there. You can be yourself, be someone on your own." They come over and I just do pad work and give them a lesson, a life lesson (Siaosi).

However, what Siasosi does in his spare time does put a strain on his relationship, but he understands that this is his passion.

My missus always argues with me, and we go through heaps because I'm always putting my time into the kids, just practising and training, and just disciplining them in the life lesson week. That kind of thing helps them, but they always keep coming back to train. However, my missus understands why and says..That's your gift to God is giving back (Siasosi).

Eva, the female participant from the male/female community focus group, shared a similar motivation to Siasosi about giving back to the community. Like Siasosi, Atamu and Eva's work in the community is voluntary.

We were part of three foodbanks during the lockdown, and then after lockdown we moved into providing free meals in the community (Eva).

While the volunteer work of people like Atamu, Eva, and Siasosi often goes unnoticed, Ioane from the all-male community focus group shares the frustration that Samoan youth workers are not listened to and how this affects their wellbeing, which remains unaddressed.

I've been doing youth work for a long time. To be honest, the frustration that comes from being a youth worker and working with the vulnerable, is that we (youth workers) are the ones who are vulnerable... I feel the reason why there is no change happening, or sometimes it feels like it's getting worst is because as much as we advocate for our young people; I don't feel there's anybody advocating for the youth workers (Ioane).

Another area where the policy needs to change concerns individuals with past criminal records who want to work in the youth sector or pursue social work. The main reason Atamu, the male participant from the male/female community focus group, volunteers is because past convictions prevent him from joining the police or working in social services. Atamu recalls,

there's a criteria you have to meet, and if don't meet the criteria it's a straight no... For me it's like with the police system, and I always said to them, "They need to start looking at guys like us." We've got criminal records and we've done this,

done that, but we know how to deal with these kids. You need to look at guys that have a 10 or 15 year clean record, and what are they doing now to say they're good enough to become a cop, and then you'll get a whole lot of ex-criminals that will help you catch the criminals, because they know what they're doing, they know which way they're going to run (Atamu).

Atamu sees the benefits of having more ex-criminals as social workers. He states,

I see a lot of the old boys (ex-criminals), out now. They are real because they're Samoans, and they know how to deal with the Samoan boys, they can understand the family. If you were to run from a Samoan cop, he or she is going to be like, "I know your mum." It helps with that side of things, and it also makes the parents uncomfortable, because now you've got the cousin that's a cop, knocking on the door, and saying, "Aunty, cousin was running from us the other day, can you talk to them?" I think that there would be understanding from a Samoan cop or social worker to be an ex-criminal because they don't want Samoan youth to end up in the prison system (Atamu).

While Atamu is not a qualified and registered social worker, he is pleased to share that his daughter was on her way to becoming a social worker, based on her seeing the good work her parents do for the community.

When I had my first daughter, my eldest daughter, and the day she was born. That's basically the turning point for me really. It was me deciding, 'if I want to give my daughter a better life; I'm going to have to be a better person'. And so, how I raise my kids is giving them what I never had... I think it was more about living a legal life really, you know, doing everything legally, and stopped selling drugs, stopped hanging around with the boys more than I used to, and being a person that gives, and serves to the community rather than that person that I was... we're blessed, our eldest daughter she finished school last year, and she's completed her first year of Uni, and she's doing social work. She's in her second year, and now our son's finished school, and he's going off to Uni, to do his nursing degree (Atamu).

While Atamu's story sees how, as a parent, he turned his life around, he argues that there needs to be programmes out there for Samoan parents. He states,

What I was missing when I was growing up was parental support. I know that a lot of the kids out there are lost, especially us Samoans committing a lot of the crimes... They are in survival mode just trying to get by. It's these young ones that are coming up, and it's all about fame and fortune, but at the same time they're still trying to survive too. I know that I've done my job as a parent but I know I can offer support and advice (Atamu).

For Keneti and Tali, the male/female statutory focus group, they would like to see changes to policies in government agencies to support Samoan social workers.

There are quite a few recommendations that I have, because man, it was a struggle starting and working in the statutory sector. When I started at Oranga Tamariki; man, I was going to throw the towel in on the fourth week, because I did not get much training on how the processes work. You've got the initial team, the core team, and the intervention team. I was in the initial, and I had to practically learn everything on my own. And so, there was no support (Tali).

Keneti agrees and states

You've got to learn it on your own. But then I'm thinking, 'well, that's why there's a lot of turn over with your staff', because there's no support there (Keneti).

Both Keneti and Tali have identified that some staff need to move on, especially those who are not prepared to change their practices.

I find that a lot of the social workers who have been there five plus years are more into the old way, and still work that old way (Tali).

I think for me, it's a recommendation; that the majority of practitioners that are going to work with our Samoan people are going to be mainly Samoan. And so, my recommendation for the practice side of dealing with working with our Samoan youth, is implementing the culture, because they seem to be lost (Keneti).

This was the first time that Keneti and Tali shared their experience, which indicated that there is a stigma when working for government organisations that you need to maintain a sense of professionalism according to policy and procedures. However, Keneti sums up the reason faced all three focus groups by stating, “As a Samoan social worker, why do we have Samoan children in care?” (Keneti).

6.3 Summary of the focus groups findings

This chapter examined the collective voices of three focus groups. More specifically, it examined the fourth main cluster theme, *Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland/ Faiga Faavae*, and its four subthemes (see figure 6a). In the first subtheme, *Community Engagement and Collaboration*, there is a real disconnect within the South Auckland community and a sense of exclusion from the focus groups regarding community decisions. In the second subtheme, *Culturally Responsive Interventions*, the focus groups highlighted the importance of the Samoan culture that shaped their practice. However, none of the focus groups could recall Samoan cultural intervention as part of their practice. In the third subtheme, *Education and Skill Development*, there is real learning from the three focus groups if they can share how their transformation journey has shaped their practice. However, none of the focus groups have been given the opportunity to share their motivation in this field and what non-Samoan social practitioners could learn from this experience. In the final subtheme, *Policy Reforms and Support Services*, the focus group raised the reality of their work and the barrier for them to do more of this work they love. The final subtheme was also indicative of the two chapters in that the transformational journey of Samoan social practitioners who were themselves formerly youth at risk can address Samoan youth offending. However, before this untapped resource of thirty participants can be shared, what needs to be addressed primarily is their experience of exclusion based on racism, which will be examined in the next chapter, the discussion chapter. However, to sum up the two chapters, I conclude with a poem that can provide an insight into the thirty participants and the possible future to addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland when they are asked.

*Thanks for not asking.*²⁰

*Rams raid, shopkeepers robbed, increased youth crime, South Auckland we are
ashamed of you, but we will never ask you how you feel.*

*Who has the answers, Keyboard warriors, for example, John Doe, from predominantly
white town, New Zealand. He's a white boomer, never lived in South Auckland worked
hard all his life and can't understand how them Coconuts can't conform. Oh, their*

²⁰ This poem was previously published in Scanlan and Mafile'o (2024).

solution, thanks for asking are, military bootcamps, longer prison sentences, bring back Dawn Raid (Sorry not Sorry), all ideas set to replay and taken on board by the bloods and crips of the gang called government. By the way, Keyboard warrior you will hide behind your fake name, profile and picture because the only thing is real is that they own businesses filled with them Coconuts from South Auckland.

Thanks for not asking

Who has the answers, the academic researcher who at the end of their surname has ABC right through to Z qualifications. Surely with all those qualification, they know everything, that too, because they've written books on gangs, youth crime, South Auckland is bad by the way if you didn't know. Oh, that's right, they've been on TV, interviewed on the news straight after another gang shooting in South Auckland. They answer the white reporters' questions, nodding together in agreement, almost finishing each other's sentences that South Auckland is the problem. He/she answers the news reporter so convincingly that Coconuts from South Auckland start to believe they are the problem. As for the researcher, if they were asked by a South Aucklander, what place has the best steak and cheese pies, he/she would respond, I don't know, I've never been to South Auckland.

Thanks for not seeking

"685 - to the world" through the red sea of Samoan pride, fluttering in the wind, accompanied by the deep bass of Samoan siren songs. The capital of the South Pacific, Mangere 275 is taken over by the parade of Samoan pride, where South Auckland is not a place of shame but the place to be. Thank you, Toa Samoa 2022, for putting us on the map. Suddenly, Samoans are seen and heard globally, and non-Samoans are adopting a Judith Collins' approach to Samoans, stating that their mother's, brother's neighbour is Samoan, I say Toe-loaf-fahhh, let us all be Samoan. While the final whistle has blown and Samoa lost a game, but why did we lose the race, deflated like the balloons that once adorned the streets of South Auckland?

Surely our adopted non-Samoans will not forget us... Too late, they are onto the next catch cry of, "Up da Wahs"

So, what about the Samoans from South Auckland who came to the land of milk and honey?

Who are pausing to be asked, waiting to be seen, and longing to be heard.

Thank you for your attention.

Chapter 7 Discussion: Ululaau – the power of transformation

A timeline of Samoan racial reclamation

Samoa mo Samoa, Samoa for Samoan,

the catch cry of Samoan fighting against the racial oppression of colonial powers. Yes, we can have our independence, but are we truly free?

Welcome to Niu Sila, the land of milk and honey; surely, we are free, no wait, “go back to your home, you coconut”.

“Power to the People” is affirmative action symbolised by a Black Panther who fights back against the dominant discourse, as we try our best to be White Kittens.

Go to South Auckland, the promised land, and sell your city homes for a handful of beans, only to get Jack Shit.

Thank you for promising us unemployment, poor education, poor everything. We welcome that we live in a promised place known for high-rating chewing gum entertainment.

As for the city places, we once lived, it is now enjoyed by the Giant who overcharges us rent, overworks and underpay us; time to fletch the axe and chop this fairytale that did not end up as happily ever after.

We get an apology; now it is time to redress our racial past. Hang on, aren't you from the community of superspreaders for a pandemic you didn't cause,

We are in lockdown because of you and your kind.

Samoa mo Samoa, who will catch our cries now.

7.1 Introduction

When I started this research, I wanted to find a collective response to the research question: What can be learnt about the effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk? While the findings from the thirty participants provided strategies for addressing Samoan youth offending, the issue remains that they have never been asked to share their stories of resiliency, let alone be a part of the decision-making table. This exclusion, through a critical race theory analysis of the findings, revealed that although they did use the word racism often in their talanoa/interviews, their experiences evidenced racism as a barrier (see 7.2.). This chapter discusses the meaning and implications of the findings and considers the notion that if racial barriers were addressed, what would be

effective ways to address Samoan youth offending from an underutilised perspective, transformed Samoan social practitioners (see Figure 5.1, “The four main cluster themes” in Chapter 5).

This chapter introduces the Ululaau framework, which is central to this research and promotes racial inclusion, based on the four main themes identified in the findings chapters. The Ululaau framework provides an insider perspective that is unique to this research, as existing literature on Samoan youth offending mainly focuses on the youth (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faletolu, 2010; Faleolo, 2014), rather than on South Auckland Samoan practitioners who were previously at risk as youth. Therefore, this chapter addresses the research aim and objectives outlined in Chapter One by examining the racism discussed using Critical Race Theory in Chapter Three. The Ululaau Framework introduced here will be further explored in Chapter 8: Conclusion and Recommendations to highlight how to address Samoan youth offending and the importance of changing racist systems and policies that act as barriers, while advocating for a new perspective—transforming Samoan youth-at-risk into Social Practitioners from South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

The discussion chapter comprises four sections that integrate the four cluster themes from the Findings Chapter with the three principles of the Ululaau framework: Past, Practice, and Positionality (see Fig. 7.1). Section 7.2 (Past) examines why racism was not openly discussed in one's past; Section 7.3 (Practice) discusses how one's transformation motivates one to help others; and Section 7.4 (Practice) examines how one's transformative journey shapes one's practice. Section 7.5 (Positionality) examines the responsibility and advocacy inherent in one's position to influence how we address Samoan youth offending. This discussion chapter begins by examining why racism is not openly shared by the research participants, followed by an analysis of 7.1, the integration of the Ululaau framework in relation to the four cluster themes and how it addresses the four research objectives when racism is no longer a barrier.

7.2 Why was racism not openly shared by the participants?

This term, racism or experiences of racism, was often not mentioned by the participants; however, their mannerisms implied it was a normal or accepted part of their role as Samoan social practitioners and their own identity as Samoan. Additionally, being

Samoan involves adherence to key principles of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan way of life), such as Alofa (love), Fa'aaloalo (respect), and Tautua (service) (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000; Faleolo, 2014; Talaimanu, 2006), which make speaking out about racism difficult. It's important to note that this study was not focused on the participants' experiences of racism; therefore, questions did not directly target racism but aimed to understand the exclusion that hindered them from providing effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from their lived experience. Even so, their exclusion is racially based, though not openly discussed. Furthermore, Critical race theory begins with the idea that racism is normal, which Parker et al. (2018) argue is essential to exposing racism in its various forms. The challenge of unspoken racism is why the Ululaau framework was developed in the next section.

7.3 Ululaau Framework

The Ululaau framework was developed from the collective voices of the thirty participants presented in the findings chapters to address Samoan youth offending. It challenges that although participants had clear solutions based on their lived experience, the exclusion of their ideas was based on racism. The Ululaau framework (Fig7.1) has three main principles: Past, Practice, and Positionality. The use of the Ululaau framework informs the recommendations presented in Chapter Eight, the concluding chapter.

Figure 7-1: Ululaau Framework overview

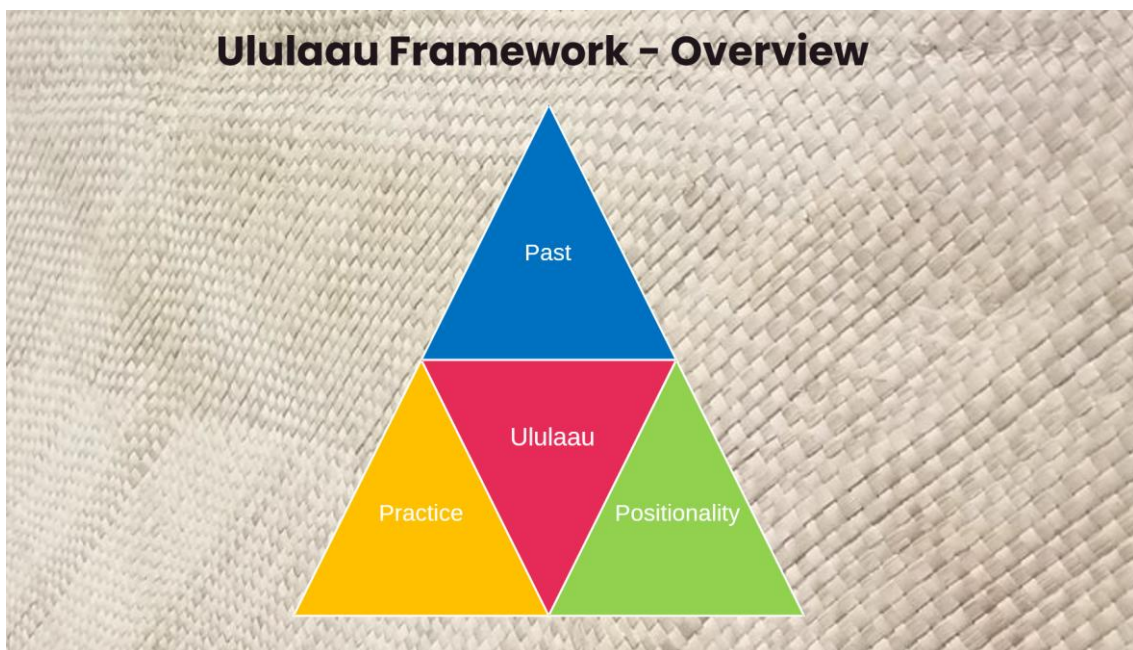


Table 7-1: The integration of the four cluster themes into the Ululaau Framework

Four Cluster Themes	Ululaau Framework	Research Objectives
7.2 Transformation of former youth at risk	Past	1. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand
7.3 Transformation journey in Samoan youth offending	Practice	2. To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners
7.4 Transformation as a catalyst for social practitioners	Practice	3. To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field
7.5 Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland	Positionality	4. To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

7.3.1 The origin of the Ululaau Framework

Ululaau is not a Samoan translation, proverb, or metaphor that explains how to address Samoan youth offending through Samoan ancestral intelligence. Instead, Ululaau is the name of my late mother, which she left in Samoa when she migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1950s as a teenager, adopting the name Margaret. The Anglicisation of her first name was intended to improve her chances of gaining employment and reduce the likelihood of facing racism (Anae, 1997; Edwards, 2006). However, as with my mother’s experience, the racial barriers faced by Samoans in the past (Anae, 1997) still need to be addressed today in order to dismantle racist systems and prevent a disproportionate number of Samoan youth offenders from becoming adult offenders (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021). The Ululaau Framework results from integrating the four cluster themes with the research objectives (see table 7.1), leading to the Ululaau Framework (fig

7.1), which addresses racial barriers at three levels: Past, Practice, and Positionality. This study highlighted that resilience and transformation are understood as collective, relational, and spiritually rooted processes, supported by faith, family, mentorship, cultural identity, and opportunities to contribute to the community. The Ululaau framework challenges Western individualised models of resilience by ensuring that transformed Samoan social practitioners working in global capital outside of the Pacific, such as in South Auckland, take the lead in tackling Samoan youth offending.

7.3.2 Ululaau Framework – First Principle, Past

My mother never spoke about her experiences of the Dawn Raids. In 2021, former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern delivered an apology for the impact of the Dawn Raids through the racist deportation of Pacific People in the 1970s (Anae, 1997; Kolia, 2024). However, post-apology, the intergenerational racial trauma faced by Pacific people who continue to be affected needs to be addressed (Asafo, 2021; Kolia, 2024). Part of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's apology was that she conducted an Ifoga²¹ ceremony, a traditional Samoan restorative justice process that asks for forgiveness through a public display of genuine remorse (Kolia, 2024). Whereas the Ifoga ceremony and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's apology are about reconciling the impact of the dawn raids and intergenerational racial trauma (Asafo, 2021; Kolia, 2024), the Ululaau framework recognises the participants' transformative change and that their views can be part of this change and healing their past. The Ululaau framework's first principle, Past, acknowledges the participant's past as a former at-risk youth.

7.3.3 Ululaau Framework – Second principle, practice

My mother's teachings have shaped my practice. The positive impact of mothers or significant family members outlined in the findings chapters has been instrumental in the thirty participants no longer offending and becoming social practitioners. Stasova's (2017) study of family member role models highlights the importance of mothers and

²¹ Ifoga is a traditional Samoan ceremony of atonement, in which the offender pleads for forgiveness and is covered with a 'Ie tōga (fine mats) until the victim's family forgives them and removes the 'Ie tōga. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is the first non-Samoan Prime Minister outside of Samoa to perform an Ifoga in 2021.

fathers in shaping youth (Stasova, 2017). Indeed, the positive traits of family role models are why the thirty participants no longer offend. Furthermore, a study by Petersen (2022) reveals that the traits of family role models are the reason they became social workers. The study of 583 newly qualified social workers found that one of their primary motivations was based on their personal experiences of family role models, which were both negative and positive (Petersen, 2022). The resiliency factors of the thirty participants from their past, coupled with the positive traits of the familial role models, are the impetus for their practice. The Ululaau framework, second principle, Practice, is about acknowledging the participant's transformative past, and the people who have influenced their praxis.

7.3.4 Ululaau Framework – Third Principle, Positionality

“Pau lava o le olaga – one life to live”

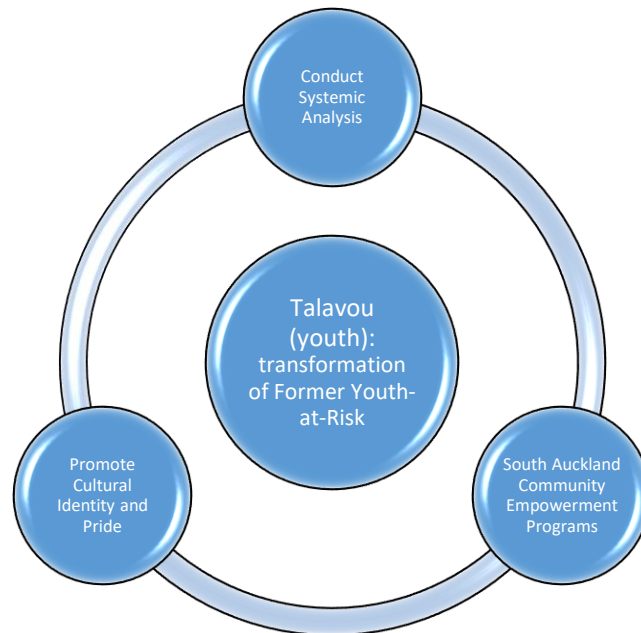
My mother often reminded me that we only have one life to live, and what we do with it determines our path in life. The thirty participants are transformed social practitioners. Some were beginning practitioners, while some were prominent leaders in their chosen fields. While the third principle of Positionality will form the recommendations to policy in Chapter 8 – conclusion and recommendations, in this chapter, we look at the challenges the thirty participants face in working in their fields. Furthermore, the Samoan practitioners in this research revealed that they often felt not listened to, bullied or left out in dominant white spaces (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). The Ululaau Framework, third principle, Positionality, is about privileging the participants' voices while challenging the racial barriers that inhibit them from being at the decision-making tables.

7.4 Ululaau Framework – Past - Transformation of Former Youth-at-Risk (talavou/youth)

This section addresses the racial exclusion of the thirty participants through the first cluster's main theme, the Transformation of Former Youth-at-Risk (talavou/youth). It uses the Ululaau framework to discuss the importance of the past by examining the systemic factors that perpetuate racism and exclusion based on the stories of when the participants were youths. Three subthemes that contribute to the first main theme are discussed: Conduct Systemic Analysis, South Auckland Community Empowerment Programs, and Promote Cultural Identity and Pride, which identify policies and practices

that contribute to the marginalisation of Samoan youth that need to be addressed. The section addresses the research's first objective. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand.

Figure 7-2: Talavou (youth): Transformation of former youth-at-risk



7.5 Conduct systemic analysis

You know, they need to bypass the bureaucrats and bureaucracy of the system that's filled with process, and unfortunately, a lot of our people, the groups that are set up to support our people, are the worst off. (Fa'alelei).

The previous findings chapter presented solutions from participants that were not solicited. Conducting a systemic analysis means addressing racism, which the participants in the findings chapter did not openly discuss, but can explain their exclusion. To begin this section, dismantling racism using the Ululau first principle of the past to provide a voice for the participants is examined.

7.5.1 Dismantling racism

We never get asked at the table; we never get invited to the table, and would we ever get invited because we're the wrong colour. I've never seen racism more than ever. I mean, look at our communities. If we look at them who are the ones in

charge? And I don't know if they're brown people; Islanders and Pasifika are at those seats? I think that it should be us. (Tui).

In this research, the participants did not openly talk about the racism they experienced as youth. However, their stories reveal how the system that supports youth, such as education, youth mental health, and youth justice, has let them down. Furthermore, it is these very systems that continue to disenfranchise Samoan youth today. Asafo & Tuiburelevu (2021) argue that it is problematic to determine how racist the New Zealand legal and social system is when the topic is confronting. However, not having these critical discussions on racism allows systemic inequities to thrive or remain unchallenged (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021).

To dismantle racism faced by Samoans, one must look at the discursive history Samoans have faced in Aotearoa New Zealand, which, for most Samoans, is the impact of the Dawn Raids. The Dawn Raids were a racially based immigration policy of the 1970s targeting Pacific immigrants (Anae, 2012). According to Tunufa'i (2017), the impact of the Dawn Raids has led to discriminatory and racially based policing that is still evident in present crime control policies for Samoan youth. This reflects a wider historical pattern of systemic marginalisation, as seen during the Dawn Raids, where Pacific communities were targeted and vilified (Anae, 2012). The practitioners' experience of racism was normalised, as demonstrated in Tui's quote *of never being asked to be at the table based on colour* (Tui). This research challenges systemic racial barriers and calls for Samoan social practitioners to be empowered to co-create solutions, starting with being at the forefront of the decision-making table (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). Furthermore, the research findings support the need to embed education on racism within schools, such as teaching the Dawn Raids, which was a part of the 2021 Dawn Raid apology package (Anae, 2020), to ensure structural racism is understood at the youth level, something the research participants said was not discussed when they were youths. An example of this is Fakailoga Tino, a programme designed for teachers to address concerns about racism raised by Pacific parents and teachers (Education Gazette, 2024). Launched in 2024 with seven South Auckland schools and a further eleven schools in 2025, Fakailoga Tino is a part of the Action Plan for Pacific Learners 2020-2030 (Ministry of Education, 2020). The Fakailoga Tino programme is, delivered by foundation members of the Polynesian Panthers, and provides teachers with an understanding of Pacific migration to Aotearoa

New Zealand and institutional racism while ensuring the dawn raid story is embedded in within the school curriculum (Education Gazette, 2024),

7.5.2 South Auckland Community Empowerment Programs

This subtheme focuses on implementing community-based programs that empower Samoan youth through education, mentorship, and access to resources. These programs should tackle disparities and foster resilience within the community. The Ululau Framework, the first principle of the Past, recognises that research participants identified the need for youth programmes in South Auckland that were, unfortunately, in short supply or unavailable when they were at risk as youth. Also, the stigma of Samoan youth coming from South Auckland (Borrell, 2005; Nakid, 2012).

A study by Yeh et al. (2014) on Samoan youth in America revealed that these young people faced institutionalised racism because they did not fit into the accepted norms within a school setting. They were targeted by discriminatory beliefs and assumptions held by the dominant group, employing the concept of “othering” that separated them from school communities through poverty, systemic social devaluation, and culture (Yeh et al., 2014). 'Othering' was a label used by the educational hierarchy to remind Samoan youth that they did not belong in their school system (Yeh et al., 2014). It can be argued that participants in this research experienced ‘othering’, as seen in the Yeh et al. (2014) study. For example, Nelson, Fetu, and Ali’i were sent to affluent, predominantly Pālagi schools outside South Auckland only to find they did not belong. However, Samoan parents often send their youth to affluent schools to secure economic prosperity for their families (Siope, 2011). Moreover, Rimoni’s (2016) study on Samoan male youth experiences at school found that these young men performed well if they felt a sense of belonging and if their hopes and aspirations were nurtured. Likewise, this research highlights the importance of participants sharing their stories of resilience as former at-risk youth to challenge negative stereotypes of Samoan youth from poorer communities such as South Auckland and to avoid ‘othering’ (Yeh et al., 2014), not only in schools but also in society.

7.5.3 Boot camps don’t work

No participant in this research advocated for or discussed boot camps as a form of rehabilitation when they were former youth-at-risk. I bring this up to examine the

government's approach to South Auckland's Samoan youth offenders, who are often targeted by boot camps. Despite earlier studies arguing that boot camps are ineffective and may worsen outcomes for youth (Meade & Steiner, 2010), the New Zealand coalition government in 2024 announced a military-style academy in response to public demand for stricter measures on youth offenders (Oranga Tamariki, 2024). Even though the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care outlined the harm caused by military boot camps in the past, boot camps remain a method of youth reform (Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, 2024b). A Samoan survivor described in the Royal Inquiry report that he had been in and out of prison, suffered nightmares, and regularly used drugs due to the abuse he experienced in a military-style boot camp as a youth (Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, 2024b). Applying the Ululau principle of the past, this research reinforces existing evidence that boot camps do not work (Meade & Steiner, 2010; Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, 2024b). However, while boot camps are still considered, the deeper issue for Samoan youth in South Auckland related to the Ululau Principle of Past is how boot camps perpetuate racism, especially since most of the youth in these programmes are Māori or Pacific (Ballantyne, 2024). This fact means government policies may continue to sustain a vicious cycle of the past into the present.

7.5.4 Promote Samoan Cultural Identity and Pride

This subtheme explores initiatives that celebrate and strengthen cultural identity, boosting pride and belonging among Samoan youth. These efforts can help counteract the negative effects of systemic racism. Webb et al. (2022) studied the interactions of Māori and Samoan youth with the criminal justice system in Aotearoa New Zealand, the United States, and Australia, revealing that the justice system was monocultural and reinforced negative self-images. The study suggests that addressing this monoculturalism requires increased engagement with Māori and Samoan communities and prioritising indigenous voices (Webb et al., 2022). Using the Ululau Framework of the principle, Past, the importance of Samoan culture was evident in the transformational journeys of all thirty participants in this research. Nelson's story was particularly significant how Samoan culture served as the main catalyst for his life change, from an ex-youth offender who served time in prison to becoming a leading Samoan cultural figure in South Auckland (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024).

7.5.4.1 Christianity and racism are not up for debate

While this research identified racism as a barrier for the participants, it also uncovered a contentious issue: the impact of Christianity. Although some argue that Christianity is a form of colonisation (Waiters, 1959), and there are negative experiences reported by youth through the Royal Community Inquiry of Abuse in Faith-based institutions (Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, 2024b), Christianity remains an integral part of Samoan belief systems (Yengoyan, 2006). Additionally, the research showed that faith was a key factor that positively influenced the participants. A quote from Mosese encapsulated what Christianity meant for most of them.

“The biggest transformative change was coming to know Christ. If this is the biggest advice I can give, I've never seen anything change a life like Christ”
(Mosese).

In summary, none of the participants viewed Christianity as a form of racism or colonisation. Furthermore, this study aimed to understand how to lower Samoan youth offending by drawing on insights from transformed Samoan practitioners. Therefore, if faith plays a key role in the participants' positive change, it's worthwhile to explore how it can be incorporated into social work rather than seeing it as a negative or colonised form of control.

7.5.5 Summary of Transformation of Former Youth-at-Risk (talavou/youth)

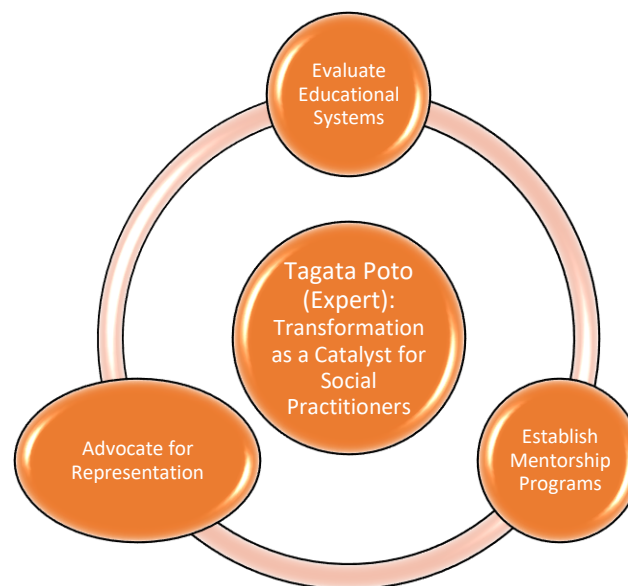
In utilising the Ululaa Framework, first principle, Past, one must acknowledge the impact of racism faced by the participants when they were former youth-at-risk. Although the participants did not openly share their experiences of racism as youth, their stories suggest that growing up in South Auckland as a Samoan youth with risk factors outlined in the findings' chapters increases the likelihood of facing risks compared to other cultures (Faleolo & Fuamatu, 2024). Therefore, this section emphasises the importance of examining the systems that continue to perpetuate racism against Samoan youth today, rooted in the discursive legacy of the Dawn Raid (Anae, 2020). The post-apology by former Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern for the impact of the Dawn Raid recognises New Zealand's racist past (Kolia, 2024). However, part of the restoration in this research advocates for a community-led movement in South Auckland that represents the participants in this study, who have been positively transformed from at-risk youth. The

next section explores the racial barriers that must be addressed to enable former Samoan youth at risk to become social workers.

7.6 Ululaau Framework – Practice -Transformation as a Catalyst for Social Practitioners (tagata potu/experts)

This section addresses the racial exclusion of the thirty participants through the second cluster's main theme, Transformation as a Catalyst for Social Practitioners (tagata potu/experts). It introduces the Ululaau framework's second principle, practice, to discuss the importance of prior lived experience in shaping their becoming social practitioners. Three subthemes that contribute to the second main theme are discussed: Evaluate Educational Systems, Establish Mentorship Programs, and Advocate for Representation. The section identifies policies and practices that inhibit the participants from becoming social workers and questions why there are a majority of Samoan youth offenders and a minority of Samoan practitioners. This section addresses the research's second objective: To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners.

Figure 7-3: Tagata Poto (expert): Transformation for social practitioners



7.6.1 Evaluate Educational Systems

This section discusses how access to existing educational systems can be used to identify and rectify discriminatory practices. Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the second

principle of practice advocates for inclusive educational policies that encourage and support individuals from at-risk backgrounds to pursue social work education.

In this research, the participants did not openly discuss the racial barriers they faced in becoming social workers at the respective social work institutions they studied. However, this does not mean there are no barriers for former Samoan youth at risk of becoming social workers, as most participants were not qualified social workers. Furthermore, this study highlights the need for greater inclusivity of social workers with lived experience of incarceration (Lucas-Smith et al., 2025). Similarly, Jackson and Hyslop (2022) emphasise the challenges of studying social work and becoming registered or pursuing a career in social work in Aotearoa New Zealand if you have a criminal background. This research supports Jackson and Hyslop's (2022) recommendation that social work educational institutions must decide whether to accept students into their programmes, given that registration or employment is not guaranteed. Additionally, Jackson and Chubb (2024) and Lucas-Smith et al. (2025) argue that the lived experience of individuals with criminal convictions adds value to the social work profession, as they represent the population they serve and become advocates in this area, a perspective supported by this research. While studies by Lucas-Smith et al. (2025), Jackson and Hyslop (2022), and Jackson and Chubb (2024) highlight the barriers to studying social work for individuals with a criminal past, this research focuses on the intersection of racial bias and these obstacles for Samoans.

The Ululaau framework highlights the racial basis that prevents participants in this research from pursuing social work studies while also challenging the educational institution's knowledge base in addressing these concerns. This study argues that to address this racial bias, there needs to be a review of social work educational institutions' recruitment policies of not only potential students but also staff and a push for Samoans from South Auckland, especially those who have a criminal past. However, such a change based on race and criminality would need to be supported by social work educational institutions and social services in alignment with the governing social work body (SWRB, 2023) policy. While Gair (2025) argues for the importance of lived experience in enriching social work, noting such fields as service users, mental health lived experience experts, and disability, in recognising the value of lived experience expertise, this study

challenges the dearth of knowledge about Samoan ex-offender experiences, particularly among those from South Auckland.

7.6.1.1 Social Work South Auckland Recruitment needs the return of the NGO study award

A significant factor when considering more Samoan social workers coming from South Auckland is the financial cost of studying social work. A report by Yeung et al. (2019) examined the NGO (non-government organisation) study award that supported social practitioners in the community sector without a social work qualification to gain this qualification. While Yeung et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of this scheme, with more than 700 people accessing the study award and over 400 individuals graduating with a recognised social work qualification, sadly, the scheme was discontinued in 2017. This research supports the need for the NGO study award to return, as the study by Yeung et al. (2019) also highlighted the positive impact of Māori gaining their social work qualification, as many were long-term practitioners who did not have a social work qualification, and once qualified, continued work and gave back to their Māori communities. A study on the financial hardship affecting the mental and social wellbeing of social work students in Aotearoa New Zealand, found that this area needs to be addressed (Bartley et al., 2024). With 3,000 individuals enrolled in recognised social work education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand, the study highlighted students' financial burden, including unpaid placements, part-time or full-time work, and caring for dependents, affecting their mental wellbeing (Bartley et al., 2024). Additionally, this study recognised the impact of finances on Māori and Pacific social work students who had a range of caring and cultural/community responsibilities, with few economic opportunities, such as grants and scholarships, and were reliant on their employment to support their studies (Bartley et al., 2024). Similarly, this research recognises the findings of Bartley et al. (2024) that financial hardship needs to be addressed and would argue that the NGO study award needs to be reinstated (Yeung et al., 2019) if potential social work students who are Samoan from South Auckland with a lived experience of being a former youth-at-risk could enrich these social work educational institutions.

7.6.1.2 South Auckland curriculum

A consideration outlined in this research is using the participants' expertise to shape the social work curriculum. A study by Scheyett et al. (2012) argued that social workers need

more exposure to the criminal justice system. Scheyett et al. (2012) study outlined the benefit of such exposure, which could lead to improved service and policies as social work students would better understand the discrimination faced by those in the criminal justice system.

The late Malagaomā Allan Va'a, a South Auckland Samoan stalwart of youth work, once said, “it takes the hood to cure the hood”. The notion of healing South Auckland can only happen when there is a fair representation of South Auckland in the social work curriculum and in the social work programme. A further consideration based on this research is how we scaffold individuals, like the research participants, to become social work academics and researchers who can truly rewrite the narrative of South Auckland by teaching South Auckland

7.6.2 Establish Mentorship Programs

This section discusses the need for mentorship programs within the social work field to support individuals who have undergone personal transformation. Utilising the Ululau Framework, the second principle of practice advocates for these programs to provide guidance, address systemic challenges, and promote diversity within the profession.

The current mentor programme for newly graduated social workers is primarily offered by Aotearoa New Zealand's statutory organisation. Oranga Tamariki (OT), New Zealand's largest employer of social workers, offers a six-month programme for new social work graduates (Oranga Tamariki, 2025). Similarly, the New Entrant to Specialist Programmes (NESP) focuses on new social work graduates gaining knowledge about mental health through the third-largest employer of social workers, the District Health Board (DHB) in Aotearoa New Zealand (Staniforth & Appleby, 2022). The second-largest employer of social workers is the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector, which does not have a sole graduate programme for new graduate social workers. However, the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) have launched a graduate programme open to all newly graduated social workers (ANZASW, 2025).

While the research findings revealed that all thirty participants were positively transformed, the mentorship they received was not through the established mentor programmes. This poses a challenge for established social work graduate mentoring

programs in terms of how participants in this research can be integrated into these programmes, and/or whether a new mentoring program needs to be co-created that captures their needs.

7.6.3 Advocate for Representation

“O le ala i le pule o le tautua – the pathway to leadership is through servanthood”

This section discusses the need to advocate for increased representation of individuals from diverse backgrounds in leadership and decision-making roles within the social work field. Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the second principle of practice advocates for the field to be more reflective of the communities it serves.

This research is based on the underutilised representation of the participants in leadership, and those who were leaders were not often listened to. Ofe-Grant (2024) conducted a study of 31 Samoan CEOs and senior managers across various New Zealand industries, coining the term “brown glass ceiling” to describe how participants missed out on opportunities due to racism. This research supports Ofe-Grant’s (2024) notion of the “brown glass ceiling,” and in this instance, the social work field has an opportunity to change this narrative by creating a pathway for participants who enter the social work profession to leadership opportunities.

Similarly, research by Mataia (2022) used the Samoan proverb, “O le ala i le pule o le tautua – the pathway to leadership is through servanthood,” as the title of a report that acknowledged the lack of Pacific representation at governance board level. Mataia (2022) reported that racism was a barrier faced by Pacific board members, as some were assigned roles of minimal importance or pigeonholed into Pacific interest matters only. Mataia (2022) highlighted the isolation of being the only Pacific member on boards, which is similar to Ofe-Grant's (2024) study, as there are few Samoan leaders in mainstream institutions. This research supports Ofe-Grant (2024) and Mataia's (2022) research, recognising the importance of developing leadership and increasing the number of Samoan leaders in mainstream institutions and governing boards. Furthermore, the issue of underrepresentation is worsened by gender inequality for Pacific women. The NZ Human Rights Commission's Pacific Pay Gap Report (2022) highlighted that Pacific women earn nearly a quarter less than Pakeha (white) men and are consistently the lowest-paid demographic in the New Zealand workforce. While the concept of Feagaiga (the

sacred covenant of Samoan brother-and-sister relationships) suggests that gender inequality does not exist for Samoans (Motusaga & Howard, 2025), the challenges faced by Samoans living in Aotearoa New Zealand reveal issues and emphasise the need for more Samoan female leaders to address not only racial but also gender inequality.

In utilising the Ululaau framework, the second principle of practice is about challenging mainstream social work institutions' need to be more culturally competent and recognising the importance of the participants of this research when they enter the social work profession and that a pathway to leadership is needed in order to ensure diversity and break the brown glass ceiling that remains a barrier for Samoan social workers.

7.6.4 Summary of Ululaau Framework – Practice -Transformation as a Catalyst for Social Practitioners (tagata poto/experts)

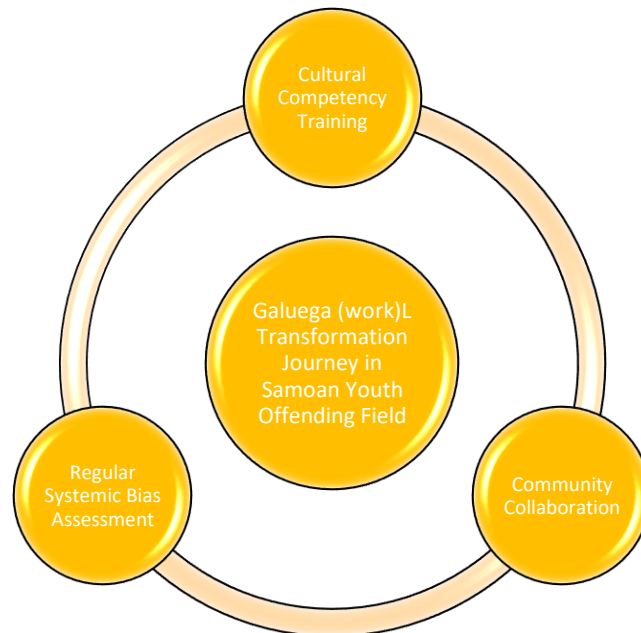
The Ululaau Framework's second principle, Practice, unpacked how racism needs to be addressed through its three subthemes to create a pathway for former Samoa youth-at-risk to become social workers. The three subthemes suggest that, firstly, the barriers that individuals entering social work educational programmes need to overcome need to change, especially those faced by those with a criminal past. Secondly, there needs to be a mentoring programme for newly graduated social workers that represents the participants of this research. Thirdly, there needs to be a clear pathway for new social workers who are participants in this research into leadership to change how Samoan youth offending can be addressed. In the next section, the transformational journey of these former youth-at-risk has shaped their practice, and the racial barriers that need to change for this to happen are examined.

7.7 Ululaau Framework – Practice - Transformational Journey in Samoan Youth Offending Field (galuega/work)

This section addresses the racial exclusion of the thirty participants through the third cluster's main theme, 'Transformational Journey in the Samoan Youth Offending Field' (galuega/work). It applies the Ululaau framework's second principle, 'practice,' to discuss the racial barriers that participants face as social practitioners. Three subthemes contributing to the third main theme are discussed: Cultural Competency Training, Community Collaboration, and Regular Systemic Bias Assessment. The section identifies the policies and practices necessary to reshape social work practice. Finally, this section

addresses the research's third objective: To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioners inform practice in the Samoan youth offending field.

Figure 7-4: Galuega (work): Transformation journey in the Samoan youth offending field.



7.7.1 Cultural competency training

This section discusses the implementation of ongoing cultural competency training for social workers, emphasising the importance of personal experiences in shaping effective intervention strategies. Utilising the Ululau Framework, the second principle of practice ensures a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to addressing Samoan youth offending.

Although cultural competency is available for social workers, Abrams and Moio (2009) argue it is ineffective as it tends to equalise oppression under the guise of multiculturalism and disregards the impact of racism in social work. Abrams and Moio (2009) question the effectiveness of cultural competency in social work education, highlighting that it depends on the teacher's preparedness and the student's willingness, noting that resistance is present in both groups. According to Abrams and Moio (2009), the importance of Critical Race Theory training lies in addressing the gaps that cultural competency fails to tackle, specifically racism. Furthermore, the critique of cultural competency and the

recognition of cultural humility in social work acknowledge that systemic and structural racial inequality can be addressed by focusing on institutional-level barrier factors, as well as accountability and ongoing critical reflection on power differences (Fisher-Borne et al., 2014).

In reviewing Samoan cultural models in social work, racism is rarely discussed. The Fonofale model (Polotu-Endermann, 2001), a pan-Pacific holistic well-being model based on Samoan concepts and widely used by social workers, does not have racism as a tenet of its model. Similarly, Va'aifetū (Oranga Tamariki, 2019), used by statutory social workers in the Youth Justice sector, and Saili Matagi, used with Adult Pacific male prisoners, do not incorporate racism as part of their model. Alefaio-Tugia's (2022) review of the Saili Matagi model states that it integrates Western treatment concepts alongside Samoan cultural principles. This research challenges Samoan cultural competency models to go beyond tokenistic notions of culture and fully understand that Samoan people are racialised (Anae, 2012). Furthermore, the Ululaau Framework, the second principle, practice, is about putting the participants of the research at the forefront of cultural competency training based on their lived experience, so that non-Samoan social workers can truly understand the culture of South Auckland, which questions why Samoan youth offenders are overrepresented.

7.7.2 Community Collaboration

This section discusses the need to foster more collaboration between social practitioners and local community leaders and organisations. Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the second principle of practice is about how this collaborative approach enhances understanding of community needs and facilitates more effective and culturally appropriate interventions.

South Auckland has had positive and negative experiences of community collaboration led by the government. The Helen Clark fifth Labour-led government's collaborative government and community 26-point plan to address youth offending in South Auckland saw the government take a targeted response to the rise of South Auckland gang shootings in the mid-2000s (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). Launch in South Auckland in late 2021, Kotahi te Whakaaro approach, created by the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board, brought together members from police, Oranga Tamariki, Counties

Manukau Health, education, Kāinga Ora, the Ministry of Social Development, local non-government agencies and Māori to address the escalation of Ram Raids by youth (8-13 years) in South Auckland (South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board 2021). While both government-funded initiatives reduced crime according to their respective data, these research findings highlighted a lack of a collaborative approach with the participants.

A critique of government intervention in South Auckland aligned with this research was highlighted in a report called Investing for Impact in South Auckland (Centre for Social Impact, 2018), which demonstrates the risks of collaboration with the government. The report stated that government intervention created a fragmented sector where contracts are often awarded to larger social service providers, while smaller community organisations rely on philanthropic grants or volunteer work to compete (Centre for Social Impact, 2018). This research supports the report's perspective that South Auckland needs increased access to funding and strengthened cultural intelligence that reflects South Auckland, Māori, and Pacific diversity (Centre for Social Impact, 2018). Furthermore, the Ululaau Framework, the second principle, suggests that the government's response to try to fix problems reduces an important resource Samoan social practitioners from South Auckland who remain underused.

7.7.3 Southside networks

There are already several South Auckland community networks that focus on youth, such as South Auckland Youth Network, Ngā Manga o Māngere, Manurewa Youth Workers Network, The Otago Youth Providers Network (OYPN), Papakura Youth Council, to name but a few. The research findings point out that the connection between the community and government is fragmented, and often, when it comes to funding, it becomes a real struggle for grassroots community groups to compete. In this instance, the Ululaau Framework, the second principle, practice is the recognition of these networks. However, it sees them at the forefront of funding alongside the government and companies to ensure projects align with the community's priorities from their perspective.

7.7.4 Regular Systemic Bias Assessments

Regularly assessing systemic biases within the social work system is needed. Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the second principle of practice is about developing corrective

measures to ensure equitable service delivery and address any institutional racial barriers that may hinder effective intervention.

Our people are not lazy; our (South Auckland) community is seen as lazy, which is racist. (Afa, research participant)

A study by Deckert et al. (2023) highlighted the negative impact of racial stereotypes generated by popularised police reality television series in Aotearoa New Zealand, *Police Ten 7*. Their study, based on 24 episodes, showed that Māori and Pacific featured more often in this show and were likely to commit crimes compared to Pālagi (white) or other cultures. This negative portrayal of Māori and Pacific sparked the late Auckland City Councillor and South Auckland leader, Fa'anana Efeso Collins, to ask for the cancellation of the show as it negatively portrayed brown young people, and quoted, “This stuff is low-level chewing gum TV that feeds on racial stereotypes”, that thankfully the show was cancelled in 2021 (Deckert et al., 2023). However, racial bias and the negative portrayal of Pacific people from South Auckland are all too common and were a shared experience amongst all research participants.

This study argues that racial bias training in social work needs to be assessed, as there is a lack of evidence or current evaluations on the impact on Samoans in all social work practices, especially in South Auckland. According to Busse et al. (2021) the benefits of anti-racist and anti-bias training was conducted in a large health social work department in the United States was that a number of their social work staff who completed the anti-racist/anti-bias training were able to understand, as social workers, how racism and bias were perpetuated within their organisation and the community they serve (Busse et al., 2021). This realisation enabled the social workers to change their practice, which was supported by their organisation (Busse et al., 2021). Similarly, a study of 67 newly qualified social workers in England found that they lacked the skills to address racism, highlighting the need for organisations and educators to develop a greater sense of racial consciousness to drive anti-racism in social work (Cane & Tendam, 2022).

Cane and Tendam (2022) argued that this research would support the idea that dilution of anti-racism through diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, or cultural competence prevents racism from being openly discussed and challenged. While the participants in this research did not openly discuss racism, the utilisation of the Ululau Framework's

second principle, practice, implies the need for anti-racist training for all social workers and social services serving South Auckland. Even better is if South Auckland practitioners, such as the participants in this research, lead this training.

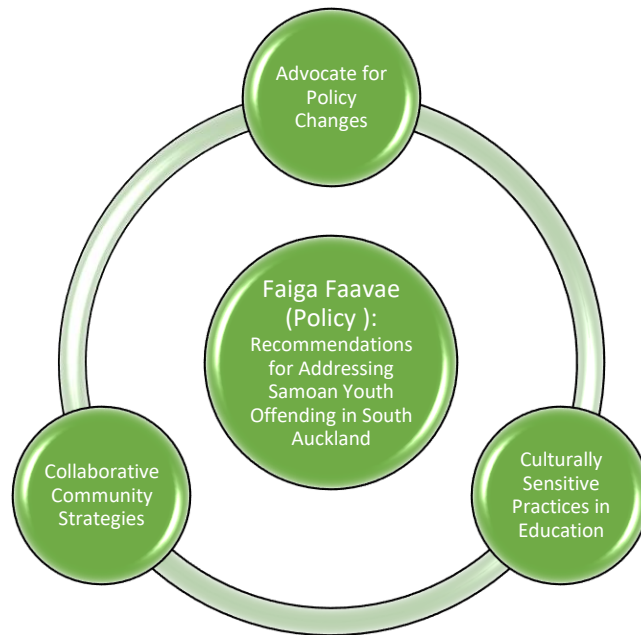
7.7.5 Summary of Ululaau Framework – Practice -Transformational Journey in Samoan Youth Offending Field (galuega/work)

This section addresses the racial exclusion of the thirty participants through the third cluster's main theme, 'Transformational Journey in the Samoan Youth Offending Field' (galuega/work). The application of the Ululaau framework's second principle, practice, underscores the racial barriers faced by participants as social practitioners and emphasises that best practices in working with Samoan youth offenders should be grounded in a South Auckland community perspective. The three subthemes contributing to the third main theme highlight that cultural competency training is inadequate, as well as the importance of Community Collaboration and the need for regular systemic bias assessment to be embedded in social work services. The final section examines the recommendations for addressing the issue of Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, with a focus on addressing racism.

7.7.6 Ululaau Framework – Positionality - Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland (faiga faavae/policy)

This section addresses the racial exclusion of the thirty participants through the fourth cluster's main theme, Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland (faiga faavae/policy). It utilises the Ululaau framework's third principle, positionality, to discuss the racial barriers participants face when recommending changes to how we address Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland. Three subthemes contributing to the fourth main theme are discussed: Advocate for Policy Change, Culturally Sensitive Practices in Social Work Education, and Collaborative Community Strategies. The section advocates for the need to change policies and practices that inhibit participants from utilising their expertise as former youth-at-risk turned social practitioners and provides an opportunity to work with Samoan youth offenders. This section addresses the research's fourth objective: *To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.*

Figure 7-5: Faiga Faavae (Policy): Recommendations for Samoan youth offending



7.7.7 Advocate for Policy Changes

This section advocates for policy changes that explicitly address and eliminate systemic racism within social work institutions. Utilising the Ululau Framework, the third principle of positionality emphasises a commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and equitable practices in policy development and implementation.

The Puao-te-Atatu report from the 1980s (Māori Perspective Advisory Committee, 1988) provided a blueprint for addressing racial inequality, and the policy changes inform how social workers under the Oranga Tamariki Act of 1989²² practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. While Puao-te-atatu was developed to address institutional racism impacting Māori communities (Savage et al., 2021), its principles of equity, inclusivity, and culturally responsive practice remain highly relevant to this research. Furthermore, this rhetoric of systemic and structural racism is not new. However, the subsequent review by

²² Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989, was renamed Oranga Tamariki in 2017 (Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2021).

Royal Abuse in State Care highlights that racism of all forms needs to be addressed by social workers and social services (Savage et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the findings from Royal Abuse in State Care on addressing systemic racism can only be achieved with a genuine whole-of-systems approach that breaks down departmental silos and ensures funding for outcomes is a priority and properly implemented (Savage et al., 2021). Using the Ululaau Framework, the third principle of positionality emphasises that excluding Samoan practitioners from key decision-making processes undermines the potential to address racism at a policy level and suggests that a transformative systems-change strategy is needed across all areas of social work.

7.7.8 Culturally Sensitive Practices in Education

There is a need to reexamine the development and integration of anti-racist practice from a Pacific perspective within social work education. Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the third principle of positionality involves incorporating real-world experiences and perspectives to enhance understanding, empathy, and responsiveness to the needs of diverse communities, such as those in South Auckland.

Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann, the architect of the most commonly used Pacific model, the Fonofale model, was once quoted as saying, “*The Fonofale model is not new. It’s been around for 30 years. It’s just taken that long for the right people to see and be able to use it*” (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The quote responds to Fuimaono Karl Pulotu-Endemann’s view that there is still resistance from certain non-indigenous people who did not see the model's value but would use it anyway (Pulotu-Endemann, 2021). In the same way, Ide and Beddoe (2022) conducted a comparative study on cultural competency between social work students and social work practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. They found that being a culturally competent social worker does not always mean being proficient. Ide and Beddoe (2022) critique cultural competency as being tokenistic, suggesting that social workers are not fully skilled in cross-cultural practice. They argue that cultural competence among social workers often implies confidence in working cross-culturally rather than proficiency. Ide and Beddoe (2022) highlighted that cultural humility, rooted in a practitioner's attitude, can foster cultural competence.

Similarly, the cultural humility framework, 'Tango Mou Tango Atui’anga Ki Te Papa Tupuna: Pacific Cultural Humility Framework', provides cultural support for frontline

social workers in engaging with Pacific children and families, which can only happen when it is supported by the organisation (Mafile'o et al., 2024b). The dual relationship and synergy between the organisation and the frontline social worker are essential in engaging Pacific people, as the cultural humility of this framework is about creating meaningful and sustainable relationships while dismantling systemic factors and power dynamics.

Utilising the Ululaa Framework, the third principle of positionality highlights that while youth offending in South Auckland is well understood, the localised positioning of what works for those who have a lived experience of being a transformed youth-at-risk remains unknown, which is the focus of this research.

7.7.9 Collaborative Community Strategies

This section discusses collaboration with community stakeholders, policymakers, and educators to develop comprehensive strategies for addressing the root causes of Samoan youth offending. Utilising the Ululaa Framework, the third principle of positionality involves collectively addressing social, economic, and educational disparities that contribute to offending behaviour.

The exclusion of Samoan voices from critical decision-making processes, particularly for addressing Samoan youth offending, is a common experience amongst the thirty Samoan social practitioners in this research. However, the question of how to address Samoan youth offending from a collaborative approach remains. A study by Ioane (2023) of twenty-four Pacific youth justice clients and twenty-three Pacific parents/caregivers, who shared their experiences of mental health and wellbeing, found that seeking solutions for Pasifika youth and their families within the justice system requires open-minded and agile minds to ensure sustainable outcomes. The complexity of the problem necessitates the development of innovative and groundbreaking solutions (Ioane, 2023). Similarly, Webb et al. (2022) view addressing Māori and Samoan youth justice as decolonising state intervention through community empowerment, prioritising indigenous values and voices in decision-making. Ioane (2023) shares a similar viewpoint to Webb et al. (2022) in that it addresses Pacific youth offending through implementing policy and practice that has been proven to work for Pacific people, led by Pacific researchers working within the Pacific communities.

Utilising the Ululaau Framework, the third principle of positionality addresses Samoan youth offending as a whole-of-country problem, not a South Auckland issue. Ioane et al. (2021) examined the all-of-government response to reaching out to Pacific people during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that engaging Pacific communities required a holistic approach incorporating Western knowledge to understand Pacific knowledge. However, this can only start when the root cause of Samoan youth offending is acknowledged, and the racial barrier faced by participants needs to be addressed to clear the pathway for the young people and the South Auckland community they serve.

7.7.9.1 Offenders as consumers: an abolitionist approach.

Youth offending in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how it is addressed within the justice system, is often viewed from a victimisation perspective, with a public perception of youth offenders that tends to be negative (Barretto et al., 2016). With this in mind, the current system for Samoan youth offenders and for Samoan social practitioners wanting to work in this field is punitive, broken, and racist (Asafo, 2022; Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024; Wood & Tauri, 2025). An abolitionist approach would involve removing prisons and police, which perpetuate racism through the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand within these institutions (Asafo, 2022; Buttle, 2017). However, Aotearoa New Zealand is not ready for this (Asafo, 2022; Buttle, 2017), but what the abolitionist perspective does advocate for is a non-carceral approach (Silver, 2024), supporting this study's aim to reduce Samoan youth offending by harnessing an untapped resource: transformed Samoan practitioners (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). This study challenges conventional approaches to offending and offenders by adopting a non-carceral lens (Silver, 2024), such as using offenders as consumers to inform how we work with them. Consumer input is commonly utilised in the addiction field in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand (Goodhew et al., 2019; Roche et al., 2018). According to Rance and Treloar (2018), consumer participation has disrupted the common dehumanisation in the treatment field. While this research does not condone victimisation through crime, there is an opportunity for youth- at- risk who have participated to have a stronger voice in policing that focuses on Samoan youth offending (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). Furthermore, there is a lack of consumer participation in youth justice. Using the Ululaau Framework, the third principle of positionality involves examining the opportunity for

Samoan youth offenders and their families to sit at the same decision-making table, much like Nelson (see 5.4. 4), whose transformation should facilitate these discussions.

7.7.10 Summary of Ululaau Framework – Positionality - Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland (faiga faavae/policy)

This section provided recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending by discussing the need to change policies that address the racial barrier to the participants and the young people they serve. The Ululaau framework's third principle, positionality, identifies three subthemes that contribute to these racial barriers and must be addressed. The first subtheme, 'Advocate for Policy Change,' adopts a whole-of-systems approach to South Auckland Samoan youth offending policing. The second subtheme, Cultural Sensitive Practices in Social Work Education, sees that cultural humility is needed for those who want to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland, and the third subtheme, Collaborative Community Strategies, sees the issue of Samoan youth offending as not a South Auckland issue, but needs a whole country approach. Finally, it considers an abolitionist perspective that advocates for a non-carceral approach to provide equity for Samoan youth offenders and Samoan social practitioners.

7.8 Summary of the Discussion Chapter

The introduction of the Ululaau Framework provided a voice for the thirty participants to address racism, as it is a barrier that needs to be overcome to achieve the study's aim and objectives. Furthermore, the integration of the four cluster themes into the three principles of the Ululaau framework provided the rationale and answered the research question of what can be learned about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformation journey of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth at risk, when racism is no longer a barrier.

The discussion chapter also provides context for *Chapter 8, Conclusion and Recommendations*, in that current policies and practices inhibit participants from utilising their expertise as former Samoan youth-at-risk turned social practitioners to address Samoan youth offending. The use of the Ululaau Framework in the final chapter of this thesis examines the need for the Ululaau Framework as a talanoa/discussion starting point

to address racism, particularly for social workers seeking guidance on working with Samoan youth offenders. It also advocates that transformed Samoan social practitioners from South Auckland are required to lead this change.

Chapter 8 Conclusion and welcome to a South Auckland Table

Pau lava le olaga

You've got one life to live.

A mother's wise words not listened to when you were younger.

I'm sick of being me, home is just a house.

Insert whitewashed stereotypical view of what society defines who you are.

10 Police 7 drive, which is off Once were Warriors Lane, Southside.

You know where my house is Officer.

Are you my social worker with a scripted response on repeat...big words with a matching fake smile that sees me, scared straight into a booted camp from society.

One life to live.

I'm tired of running from who I really am.

S.O.S, is a call for help.

S.O.S. you are a Samoan of Southside.

Hurt people hurt people but a healed person wants to heal people.

S.O.S, you called for help. I'm your Samoan of Social work.

One life lived.

You can hear me, see me, you want my opinion.

Let's talanoa and speak on truths. This is a South Auckland table; I'll speak you listen.

You feel uncomfortable, picked on. Can't we move on you say. Yes, we could but your way has not worked.

I want you to meet someone, her name is Ululaau not Margaret...Talofa means hello.

It is befitting that I lead this concluding chapter with my mother's saying that you have one life to live. It is also a reminder that we all make mistakes in life and can change. The stories of the thirty participants celebrate their contribution to reducing Samoan offending in South Auckland through their redemptive journey despite the racial barriers they faced. This chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations for effectively reducing

Samoan youth offending, drawing on the contributions of thirty transformed Samoan social practitioners from South Auckland. Six sections that correspond to the thesis chapters are reviewed. Firstly, the research objectives; secondly, the methodology; and thirdly, the findings. In the fourth section, the implications and recommendations of the Ululaau framework as an anti-racist talanoa strategy are discussed. The fifth section highlights the limitations of this study. The final section, contains a reflection on this thesis.

8.1 Research objectives

Chapter One explained the study's aim of reducing Samoan youth offending from the perspective of the transformational journey of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk. This aim came from the literature review (Chapter Two) and the author's insider research perspective, which was pivotal to this study as it leveraged the utilised voices of Samoan-transformed social practitioners from South Auckland.

Emanating from the aim were four main objectives:

- I. To explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand;
- II. To understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners; and
- III. To understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field; and
- IV. To make recommendations for social work practice, policy and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

The theory informing the study, incorporated Western social constructionism and Pacific indigenous, Talanoa, shaped the conceptual framework for addressing the research objectives and the study's methodology. The thesis is also informed by critical race theory in Chapter Three, which supported the interpretation and analysis of the data that produced the Ululaau framework in relation to racial discourse in social work.

8.2 Methodology

Chapter four outlined the research design for capturing thirty transformed Samoan social practitioners' voices from South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Semi-structured interviews that combined Talanoa methods (Vaiolleti, 2006) allowed participants to speak in either English or Samoan during twenty-two individual talanoa/interviews and three focus groups. As an emerging Samoan researcher, using poetic inquiry as a research tool provided a voice to explain the experiences of both the participants and the author while drawing attention to decolonising research (Cooms & Saunders, 2024). The chapter justified the use of a qualitative and inductive approach to conduct a talanoa/interview with Samoan social practitioners from a range of helping professions, not just social work, to share their experiences, motivations, and hopes for addressing Samoan youth offending.

8.3 A timeline of racism

This thesis revealed that racism was the main barrier to achieving the study's aim of reducing Samoan youth offending. Although the participants had solutions for reducing Samoan youth offenders based on their lived experience and transformative change, their collective voices were not listened to, and they felt bullied or left out in dominant white spaces (Scanlan & Mafile'o, 2024). The following is an overview of racism throughout the thesis.

Chapter One -The recognition of intergenerational racial trauma of the dawn raids through the racially based deportation of Pacific people of the 1970s impacted the parents and grandparents of the participants (Anae, 1997). Additionally, the gentrification of Auckland's inner city in the 1970s contributed to the discrimination against Pacific people (Anae, 1997). Pacific people once lived in inner Auckland City during the 1970s, which is now the most affluent area in Auckland (Anae, 1997). Furthermore, the rising cost of living, unaffordable rentals, and the relocation of the manufacturing industry to South Auckland, coupled with the ongoing dawn raids on their inner-city homes, led to a mass exodus of Pacific people to South Auckland (Anae, 1997). The result of these racially discriminatory practices of the 1970s impacted the participants through stories of neglect, poverty and abuse (Anae, 1997; Royal Commission of Inquiry in Care, 2024a).

Chapter Two - reviews the literature on the racial discrimination faced by Samoan youth offenders and social practitioners working with them in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. It also offers an abolitionist view on social work practice, education, and policy, suggesting that racism could be eliminated if prisons and Police were abolished. Although not feasible, this perspective challenges social workers to adopt a non-carceral approach that emphasises the importance of Samoan culture in dismantling racism.

Chapter Three – The Theory chapter introduces the Critical Race Theory to provide an understanding of racism for this study. The section on Social Constructionism and Critical Race Theory in social work highlights that social work has not fully utilised this theory, nor has it asked social workers to understand the role racism has played in creating the inequalities in the welfare system (Kolivoski et al., 2014). With the majority of social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand being Pālagi and the impact of racism toward Samoans in the social work system fully recognised in their abuse in care (Royal Commission of Inquiry in Care, 2024a), it highlights the need to provide a voice for the participants for this research.

Chapter Four - Methodology: This chapter introduces the Talanoa method (Vaioleti, 2006) to give the research participants a voice. The Talanoa method (Vaioleti, 2006), as a data collection process, allows participants to openly discuss their experiences of racism in both Samoan and English. Furthermore, the insider perspective (Unler, 2012) of the researcher provides a shared understanding of the participants' experiences of racism both professionally and personally, without the fear of being judged. Furthermore, Poetic inquiry (Cooms & Saunders, 2024) offers a means to express the experiences of racism, capturing the emotions that participants felt but were never asked to articulate.

Chapter Five – The first of two finding chapters. In this chapter, twenty-two participants shared their experience of racism through their exclusion as practitioners, which Ofe-Grant (2018) best describes as the brown ceiling, in which Samoans tend to be excluded from important decisions based on racial bias. While the four main cluster themes in the findings chapter provide the participants' perspectives on the research aim of effective ways to reduce Samoan offending, the racial barriers are their exclusion from important decisions, as noted by Ofe-Grant (2018), based on their transformational journey of being former youth-at-risk turned social practitioners.

Four cluster themes were derived from the collective voices of the thirty participants that correlate to the study's four objectives.

The first cluster theme, Transformation of former Youth-at-Risk/Talavou, examined factors that positively transformed the participants as former youth-at-risk. The positive factors that transformed Samoan youth, including faith, culture, family, peers, education and sports, are highlighted in previous studies (Faleolo, 2014; Ioane, 2011). It also revealed the importance of parental role models, especially Samoan mothers for the male participants and Samoan fathers for female participants, which challenges the social work view on gender match. Furthermore, participants who were social workers or in the statutory organisation, the stories of transformation as a youth were not encouraged, as the study revealed, for many, it was the first time they were asked.

The second cluster theme, Transformation as Catalyst for Social Practitioners/ Tagata Poto, examined how the participants' transformation motivates their work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. This section reinforced the notion that the positive change the participants experienced as youth is the impetus for them becoming social practitioners, as supported by the literature in Chapter Two. This section also revealed that social norms on transformative change depend on risk aversion, which steers towards the lower risk of your offence as a young person than the likelihood that you can become a registered social worker (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022).

The third cluster theme, Transformational Journey in Samoan Youth Offending Field/Galuega, examined the models and theories that have shaped the participants' work with Samoan youth offenders. This section revealed that participants work in two worlds, being Samoan and working in a Pālagi (white) world (Anae, 1997). Often, this dichotomy was challenging for participants, as their sense of belonging in both worlds was not guaranteed (Anae, 1997). It also revealed that although there are Pacific models, the tokenistic use of them in practice highlights that dominant Western models are the primary method of practice in working with Samoan youth offenders in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The fourth cluster theme, Recommendations for Addressing Samoan Youth Offending in South Auckland/ Faiga Faavae, examined what the twenty-two participants would like to see change in addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland and what challenges

they face. The two finding chapters (five and six) revealed inherent barriers on three different levels in social work that need to change. Firstly, entry into social work education programmes can be restrictive based on past offending (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022). Secondly, culturally responsive interventions that are cognisant of the participants. Thirdly, there is a need for more representation of Samoans at the decision-making tables for Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.

Chapter Six – The second findings chapter was the collective voices of three focus groups. The focus of this chapter is the fourth cluster theme, “Recommendations for addressing Samoan youth offending in South Auckland. As in the previous findings chapter, the racial barrier is their exclusion from important decisions (Ofe-Grant, 2018) or never being asked. Although the participants did not explicitly name racism, the barrier of exclusion for the Samoan social practitioners means that they are unable to achieve the research aim and objectives. However, the all-male community focus group of Paulo, challenge the notion of community inclusion by forming a collective that privileges what started as a Samoan male and South Auckland perspective to currently capture a Pacific male perspective nationally and internationally on reducing Pacific youth offending.

Chapter Seven – The focus of the discussion chapter is racial inclusion based on the expert knowledge of thirty participants in this study. Table 7.1 integrates the four cluster themes into the Ululaau Framework (Figure 7.1). The Ululaau framework answers the research question when racism is no longer a barrier for the participants and Samoan youth to reduce Samoan youth offending.

Overall, the findings reveal that although the participants had a solution for reducing Samoan youth offenders, their collective voices were not listened to, and they felt bullied or left out in dominant white spaces (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024).

8.4 Implications and recommendations; Ululaau framework as an anti-racist Talanoa

The normalisation of racism, where participants did not openly talk about racism, allows for systemic inequities to thrive or remain unchallenged (Asafo & Tuiburelevu, 2021). The introduction of the Ululaau Framework in Chapter Eight (Discussion) provided a way to reduce Samoan youth offending if the racial barrier experienced by the participants

was removed. Furthermore, the Ululaau framework for social work implies that racism is not openly discussed or addressed; instead, Pacific models such as the Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) or Va'aifetū (Oranga Tamariki, 2019) are used under a tokenistic premise of cultural competency (Abrams & Moio, 2009). Named after the author's late mother, the Ululaau framework captures three principles, past, practice, and positionality, which are racial barriers for participants and must be addressed in all areas of social work (see Figure 7.1 "The Ululaau Framework" in Chapter 7).

The first principle – Past. The Ululaau framework addresses the first principle, the past, about addressing racism for youth. While the participants did not openly discuss the racism they experienced as youth, it does not mean that it did not exist. The participants are the generation of the post-Dawn Raids (Anae, 2012), and the apology from former prime minister Jacinda Ardern in 2021 acknowledges New Zealand's racist past toward Pacific people and is a step in the right direction (Asafo, 2021; Kolia, 2024). In utilising the Ululaau framework, the first principle, Past in social work, could mean social workers asking young people about their experiences of racism. However, this will require a change in social work delivery around racism and staff competency in delivery and willingness to change (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

The second principle – Practice. The Ululaau framework and the second principle, Practice, asks that racism be addressed in service delivery. While cultural competency and cultural humility (Waqā et al., 2023; Faleolo, 2013; Faletolu, 2010) are ways to work with Samoan youth in social work, there is no South Auckland or ex-offender competency training. The study argues there is a need for a South Auckland community-led movement representing the participants of this research, who were positively transformed youth. It challenges the negative portrayal of the community in the media that feeds the racial bias (Deckert et al., 2023). The notion that the Samoan social workers are a minority and Samoan youth as clients are overrepresented needs to change (Faleolo, 2013; Ravulo, 2016). In utilising the Ululaau framework, the second principle, Practice in social work, could mean targeted recruitment of the participants from this research. Cost is always a factor; therefore, the reinstatement of the NGO study award or a similar scheme (Yeung et al., 2019) is necessary to see more qualified Samoan social workers from South Auckland and similar low socio-economic areas.

A further consideration is the barriers of a criminal past to studying social work and becoming a registered social worker (Jackson & Hyslop, 2022; Jackson & Chubb, 2024). This barrier is compounded by the fact that the (Clean Slate) Act 2004 does not apply to students applying to study social work (Appendix L), as they are subject to Police checks (SWRB, 2018). Considering individuals who have turned their lives around, this part of the Fit and Proper Policy may deter them from applying. Furthermore, Jackson and Hyslop (2022) revealed that minor offences are not wiped, which means the reluctance to apply for social work registration due to the fear of being rejected and the stigma of being “black marked for life”. Fit and Proper Policy changes should be considered since it has not been reviewed since June 2018 (SWRB, 2018).

The third principle—Positionality. The Ululaau framework and the third principle, Positionality, require that anti-racism be advocated in all areas, particularly in policy. Racism and anti-racist practice are not core competencies assessed by the Social Work Registration Board (SWRB) to become a registered social worker in Aotearoa New Zealand (SWRB, 2016) and globally (IFSW, 2014). The current Code of Conduct concerning Racism and anti-racism could relate to Principle 2, respect the status of Māori as tāngata whenua and Principle 3, respect the cultural needs and values of the client (Appendix M), but are not explicitly stated (SWRB, 2016).

The current SWRB code of conduct was written in 2016, providing an opportunity to update this policy. This could include a policy variance to Principles 2 and 3 or a standalone new Principle on Racism. It is proposed that Racism is not accepted in areas of social work, and that social work education and practice must be assessed using cultural humility and evaluated based on racial or anti-racist competency, using the Ululaau Framework or similar anti-racist assessment tools.

Overall, this study offers an opportunity to promote change. Using the metaphor of the South Auckland table (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024) highlights the importance of achieving equity across all sectors, ensuring that representation mirrors the study participants at decision-making tables. Applying the Ululaau framework, the third principle, Positionality in social work, could mean increased representation of participants at governance levels (Mataia, 2022) and leadership (Ofe-Grant, 2022, 2024). An additional consideration is an abolitionist approach that advocates for the complete abolition of

prisons and police due to the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacific people within these racist institutions (Asafo, 2022; Buttle, 2017). However, the removal of prisons and police may not be feasible, but an abolitionist stance promotes a non-carceral perspective (Silver, 2024) for those working with Samoan youth offenders. Furthermore, recognising offenders and ex-offenders as consumers in social work education, practice, and on SWRB boards, similar to the approach in the addictions sector (Goodhew et al., 2019; Rochette et al., 2018), is suggested as a way to foster equity and reduce Samoan youth offending.

8.5 Limitations of the study

In this section, I reflect on limitations based on my experience as a Samoan researcher from South Auckland to highlight the direction of this research and the potential for forming partnerships with others to continue this work and challenge racism across all areas of social work, such as education, practice, and policy.

Firstly, I acknowledge Tāngata whenua, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand, and their land that I am privileged to call home. However, in acknowledging Tāngata whenua, this research has significant implications for Māori, who remain overrepresented in all negative statistics, especially Māori youth offending, which must be addressed first and foremost. The limitation is that this type of research could have been conducted in partnership with Māori or focused on Māori by a Māori researcher. Further reflection is needed globally on the overrepresentation of indigenous youth offenders in colonised countries.

Secondly, I acknowledge Tāngata Moana, the Pacific peoples who also call Aotearoa New Zealand home. As a Samoan researcher focused on Samoan issues, this study does not fully encompass the collective voices of Pacific peoples. If I had the opportunity to do this again, I would aim to collaborate with Tāngata Moana to present a collective Pacific perspective, not only in Aotearoa New Zealand but also on a broader scale.

Thirdly, I want to acknowledge the role of Pālagi (white) people and the importance of working together in partnership. The goal of this research isn't to criticise or shame Pālagi (white) individuals, but rather to increase awareness of the racial barriers that Samoans face both as clients and practitioners. I recognise that some Pālagi (white) people are allies supporting Samoans in this space. However, since Pālagi (white) people are the majority

working with Samoan youth offenders, I hope future research will focus on promoting equity. This includes creating opportunities for Samoans to become policymakers, managers, leaders, academics, and researchers—including Pālagi (white) researchers who adopt an abolitionist and Samoan approach to creating meaningful change.

Racism continues to be a challenging issue in various fields, and the Ululaau Framework still has a lot to offer beyond social work. I see the need to develop this framework further to facilitate respectful talanoa conversations about racism. Building partnerships with the three earlier-mentioned groups will be essential. Additionally, collaborating with scholars from the United States who specialise in civil rights and critical race theory can help us learn more about tackling racism worldwide, starting with South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

8.6 Concluding reflections

The genesis of this research stemmed from being overlooked in what might work with my people and community, and the desire to see if others share similar experiences. Despite having several years of experience in this field, a common response when I shared my ideas about reducing youth offending in South Auckland was often, “According to the research,” which directed me to research from a Western perspective. This study shows that the Western research approach often did not resemble or reflect my South Auckland community. I am a proud 275, Māngere-born, bred, and raised Samoan who can finally say, “According to this research,” which captures the collective voice of the participants who were never asked but should lead the South Auckland table (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024). From an underutilised viewpoint, the proverbial South Auckland table recognises and gives priority to indigenous and local knowledge (Scanlan & Mafile’o, 2024), and those heading this table are transformed Samoan social practitioners who were once at risk of youth and need to be recognised nationally and globally as experts in reducing Samoan youth offending.

This research would not have been possible without my mother, who recognised my potential and tested her unconditional love as a former youth at risk, qualities I now see as traits I try to emulate as my first role model. I named my framework after her real name, Ululaau, symbolising the name she relinquished when she arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in the 1950s. She had to adopt the name Margaret to avoid being subjected to

racism. While racism is a barrier my mother once faced, and the participants of this study continue to face, it does not define who they are to those who love them most. It also does not extinguish their passion for South Auckland, as they continue to positively impact young Samoan lives. This thesis has only scratched the surface of the positive impact and their collective stories of redemption and reclamation. My final story is an opportunity to thank my mum from a son who misses her and strives every day to make her proud, and the reason I became a social worker.

I remember my mother and I went into the former Department of Social Welfare, which is now called Work and Income, looking for jobs for her as she was unemployed, a mother of six and on a solo mother's benefit. I was a child then, and I vividly remembered going into a clean, flashy-looking building filled with important-looking people. My role was to help her fill out the job application and be her translator as she had poor English and low literacy. After meeting with her case manager, where I basically answered every question to the shock of the Pālagi (white) staff member, my reward was a bag of chips and my mother's praise. As we walked home sharing a bag of chips, she turned to me and would often say, "tamaititi poto – which means clever child". Her look of pride and gratitude was that her child helped her get a job, and for me, it meant I could help the person I loved the most. I was born a social worker, not because of past trauma or that I had the answer to everything, but because my mother believed in me. However, being a tamaititi poto – clever child does not mean anything unless you can use these smarts to help others, and that is what the participants for this research have provided. I miss my mother and her praises, but giving this world a framework named after her means she is not gone but can live on to help others, as she has inspired me to be a better person.

I conclude my thesis with my final poem, about how helping others often starts with finding oneself.

Dear Jack,

You don't know me, but I have known you, your whole life.

I have reached out to you many times, but you have denied my existence.

I am you; you are me. I am your inner soul waiting to be your outer soul.

I come to you in your sleep, in songs, in food, in smell and you sense my presence.

I am no longer your voice of shame but your voice of strength.

*We connected when you were younger, and you embraced me much like the warm hug
of your mum in her embrace and in her words.*

*So, I have come back to you Jack, of connecting with who you are. And I see you have
invited me to meet other souls who like me, lay dormant waiting to erupt not with anger,
bitterness or sadness, but with joy, forgiveness and discovery.*

*So, prepare yourself Jack, take your sea leg medication because the sickness you feel is
not the motion-sickness of the physical but the healing of the new you, spurred on by
presence of the thousands of ancestors before you.*

*Enjoy your malaga Jack, welcome back home, we missed you, we love you, Tofa my
feleni, your waka is returning home.*

Yours faithfully,

Jack

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Appendices

- A. Thesis-related Presentations and Publications**
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Appendix A: Thesis-related Presentations and Publications

The following are chronological publications and presentations related to this thesis.

Peer-reviewed book chapters
<p>Scanlan, J., Mafile’o, T. (2024). Thanks for Not Asking: Samoan Social Practitioner Experiences of Racism and Exclusion in Decision-Making. In: Ravulo, J., Olcoń, K., Dune, T., Workman, A., Liamputtong, P. (eds) Handbook of Critical Whiteness. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-1612-0_55-1</p> <p>Ravulo, J., J. Scanlan, and V. Koster. (2019). “Delivering Youth Justice for Pacific Young People and Their Families.” In Pacific Social Work, edited by J. Ravulo, T. Mafile’o, and D. B. Yeates, 79–89. London: Routledge.</p>
Refereed conference proceedings
<p>Scanlan, J. (2025). Ululaau – Racial Inclusion in Social Work through a South Auckland and Samoan Lens. Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand SAANZ Conference, 3-5 December, Wellington, New Zealand.</p> <p>Scanlan, J. (2025). Ululaau- the Power of Transformation. Social workers' day, Massey University, 17 September. Manawatu. https://www.anzasw.nz/eventdetails/30773/aotearoa-new-zealand-social-workers-day-2025</p> <p>Scanlan, J. (2024). The voices of Samoan social work practitioners in South Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, will no longer be silent. Paper presented at the Australian New Zealand Social Work and Welfare Education and Research ANZSWWER Symposium, Dunedin, New Zealand, 19-20 November</p> <p>https://www.anzswwer.org/wp-content/uploads/2024-Symposium-Program-DRAFT.pdf</p> <p>Scanlan, J. (2024). Breaking the Wall of Racism in Youth Justice. Finalist for the Falling Walls Conference. Wellington, New Zealand, 11 September 2024. https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/funds-and-opportunities/falling-walls-lab/alumni-falling-walls-lab-new-zealand/2024-falling-walls-lab-aotearoa-new-zealand-alumni/jack-scanlan-breaking-the-wall-of-racism-in-youth-justice/</p>

Scanlan, J. (2024) Thanks for not asking: Samoan social work practitioners' experience of racism and exclusion in decision-making. Keynote presenter for Barnados, Social Work Registration Board and Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers joint conference on Māori and Pacific researcher. Wellington, New Zealand, 13 March 2024. <https://www.anzasw.nz/eventdetails/22955/m-ttou-m-k-uri-muri-ake-nei-for-us-and-our-children-after-us>

Scanlan, J. (2023). Ululau – The Power of transformation to curb Samoan youth offending. Keynote speaker for Auckland Hospital workshop, Auckland, New Zealand, 19 September, 2023.

Scanlan, J. (2022). Police social work speaking life into young people. Presented at ANZSWER symposium. Social Work Stories Podcast. (Oral Presentation). Melbourne, Australia, 10-11 November 2022. <https://socialworkstories.com/episodes/ep-78-police-social-work-speaking-life-into-young-people>

Scanlan, J. (2022). Thanks for not asking: Samoan social practitioners experiences of racism and exclusion in decision making. Presented at ANZSWER symposium. Melbourne, Australia, 10-11 November 2022.

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Anderson, R. (2023). What's good, bad and ugly about living in Auckland – according to young people. Mentioned in a Newspaper article. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300917190/whats-good-bad-and-ugly-about-living-in-auckland--according-to-young-people>

Scanlan, J. (2022). Ululau – the power of transformative narratives. Keynote speaker for Concrete Konvo. A podcast show. <https://www.facebook.com/concretekonvo/ululau-thepoweroftransformativenarratives>

Scanlan, J. (2021) Changing the narrative of at risk-Pasifika youth, one story at a time. Newspaper article of research. <https://i.stuff.co.nz/auckland/125821374/changing-the-narrative-of-at-riskpasifika-youth-one-story-at-a-time>. 1 August 2021

Scanlan, J. (2021). Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending. Radio Interview on research on Radio 531 PI. 14 July 2021

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Appendix B: Semi-structure Interview guide (Focus Group)



INTERVIEW SCRIPT (GROUP)

Ululaa: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

Preliminary discussion

Research Question

What can be learnt about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk?

Background and /experience questions

1. Tell me briefly about your background and why you chose to be a part of this study?

Prompts: Remind participants that they are not obligated to talk about any offending, past gang affiliation that may put your career at risk. Youth at-risk behaviour does not necessarily mean criminal activity. It could be that you did things as a youth that went against your family or parent's wishes such as you did not become a Minister, a Matai (chief) or dropped out of school early.

Work-related experience questions

1. From your experience, what do you see as factors that turn Samoan youth to crime in South Auckland?

Prompts: This relates to their work-related experiences and their own experiences as social practitioners that you have observed. Please note: Remind them that their organisation will not be named in this research if this is your point of reference.

2. From your experiences, what are the best way to engage Samoan youth offenders?
3. How much of your experiences from your past has shaped how you engage Samoan youth offenders?

Prompts: What works and doesn't work, and why? Have you ever been asked to share your transformational journey with Samoan youth offender? If so, how was that received?

4. Based on your experience, how do we address the Samoan youth offending problem in South Auckland?

Prompts: Have you headed a project, been asked to be a part of a project where your views were heard? Have been part of a local or central government initiative addressing Samoan youth offending. If you haven't, how does that make you feel? If you were, did you believe your views were valued and used? Please note: organisations or committees will not be named.

5. Any final thoughts relating to this research project before we finish?

Appendix C: Semi-structure Interview guide (Individual)

INTERVIEW SCRIPT (INDIVIDUAL)

Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

Research Question

What can be learnt about effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending from the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were formerly youth-at-risk?

Background and /experience questions

1. Tell me more about your background in working with Samoan youth offenders?

Prompts: Get the participant to reflect back on their answers from the focus group Talanoa.
What are your thoughts on the research question and what resonates for you?

Motivation to work with Samoan youth offenders

2. Can you tell me more about what contributed to your transformation from a youth-at-risk to now being a social practitioner?

3. In what way does your transformation shape you as a social practitioner?

Prompts: How does it impact how you engage? Also, who supported their change?

4. In your opinion why do you think former youth-at-risk make good social practitioners?

Prompts: You are not obligated to talk about any offending, past gang affiliation that may put your career at risk. However, (if applicable) I am interested why did you leave the gang? Why did you stop using drugs? Why did you stop offending in the past? Who helped you change? Please note: This is only an assumption that they were in gangs, an offender or drug user. However, the main part of your prompts is to ensure that they do not disclose unreported past events. Refer back to your offending disclaimer in your information sheet.

5. What barriers you have experienced in working with Samoan youth offenders?

Prompts: Ask to explain from both person and professional experiences. Did you ever face any discrimination based on your past? And what did you do in that situation?

Social practitioner experiences

6. What are the strengths or positive qualities in becoming a social practitioner?

Prompts: What does working with Samoan youth offenders mean for you?



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7. From your experiences, what could we do to address the Samoan youth offending problem in South Auckland?

Prompts: Have your ideas ever be used? Why or why not? How would you inform the government on policies to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland? Also, how would inform other social practitioners on best practise?

8. Any final thoughts relating to this research project before we finish?

Appendix D: Information Sheet (Focus Group)

Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

INFORMATION SHEET FOCUS GROUP TALANOA

Talofa lava and greetings, my name is Jack Scanlan, and I am a New Zealand-born Samoan. I am currently a Massey University Doctor of Social Work student. I have worked with Pasifika youth offenders in the South Auckland community and government sector for over 20 years. As part of my doctorate, I am required to do a research project in an area I am passionate about, and I have chosen to focus on Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.

You are warmly invited to participate in a research project that explores addressing Samoan youth offending.

Project aim and objectives

This research aims to explore the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending.

Emanating from the aim are four main objectives:

- I. Explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand.
- II. Understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners.
- III. Understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field.
- IV. Make recommendations for social work practice, policy, and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

Who can be involved?

I am looking for Samoan social practitioners working with Samoan youth offenders and who themselves are former youth-at-risk (not necessarily with criminal convictions). This can include but is not limited to coaches, youth workers, mentors, social workers, pastors, youth leaders, community workers, teachers, teacher aides, supervisors, leaders, entrepreneurs, musicians, sportspersons, entertainers, or an ex-offender advocate who may or may not be formally qualified in their chosen profession. The participants must be of Samoan descent, over the age of 16 years and can be any gender. The Samoan social practitioners I want to talanoa/talk to have been working with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland, (either be in paid employment or as a volunteer) for at least two years.

Vetting requirement

If you chose to be part of the study, you acknowledge that you have been Police vetted and are currently cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 through your respective organisation. This is important as your contributions will form the research findings that are analysed robustly with honesty and integrity. If you discuss any illegal activity that has not resulted in a conviction your participation in the research may be discontinued and you will be advised to seek legal advice. Further, if there is disclosure of any harm to others, I will have an obligation to report this to the appropriate authority.

The benefits of being involved

The benefits of being involved

I am interested in your story and the positive transformation you have made in your life and your motivation to work with Samoan youth offenders. If this is you, then this project would welcome your contribution immensely as the telling of your story would be a compelling account that can motivate others who are at a crossroad of life or are thinking about becoming a social practitioner. Your story could also explain how best to work with Samoan youth offenders that could influence our current policies or the way we engage with them.

What does participation involve?

I will be advertising for potential participant(s) from the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW), Social Worker Registration Board (SWRB), as well as social media platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn and government and community networks. Please pass on this information sheet or the advertisement to potential participants to contact the researcher directly.

You have the option of choosing to participate in one session (either in person or zoom) from three focus group Talanoa sessions. Two of the sessions will be conducted through Zoom, and one will be in-person. All sessions will be held outside regular work hours. The total number required for the focus group Talanoa (in-person and zoom) is limited to the first 20 people who respond to the advertisement and meet the participant criteria.

In-person option

If you choose this option, then this will be conducted at the Manukau Library and Research Centre – 3 Osterley Way, Manukau. Please note: This session will likely be held on a Saturday afternoon and is limited to the first five participants who reply. You will also be asked to complete a consent form.

Focus Group Zoom option

The Zoom focus group will be a closed forum, and entry is through registration to #####. In the subject line, please state your name followed by Ululaau participant. The email reply will have zoom details such as the two evening timeslots (where you select one timeslot) and the passcode. Please email the researcher if you would like more information on how to use Zoom such as setting up a pseudonym username, to participate through audio-only or how to use the chat function to maintain your anonymity. These steps will also be outlined at the start of each Group Talanoa session. Please do not pass the zoom login details and passcode onto others without letting the researcher know as only registered participants will be able to participate. All unrecognised or unregistered participants will be removed by the researcher using the zoom control settings. Also, your views will be only used once I have received your consent form.

The total predicted time for participation for either the In-person or Focus Group Zoom option will be one hour.

Data management

After the Group Talanoa interviews, the researcher will transcribe the digital video/audio recording. You will not receive the transcript unless requested as the document contains both collective and confidential information. Instead, you will have a get a copy of the summary of this research at the completion.

Your information will be secured in a carry bag while being transported and secured in a locked filing cabinet in my home office, where only I have access. Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected computer that only I can access. Any identifiable information (names of people, place names, organisation names, and so on) will be substituted with pseudonyms to promote confidentiality and anonymity. Your information will be disposed of at the conclusion of this research.

In my study, I will be looking for key themes related to the research topic and comparing them to the literature. I will use the information I have collected to develop into a doctoral thesis.

Invitation for the Individual Talanoa interview

From the twenty participants selected for the focus group Talanoa, only ten will be asked if they would like to participate in the Individual Talanoa interview. If you do not wish to be considered, please let the researcher know. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask the researcher, as well as an Individual Talanoa Information sheet, can be provided.

Participant's Rights

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;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you permit the researcher;
- To be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this study, you are most welcome to contact me on mobile ##### or email ##### OR my supervisors, Dr Tracie Mafile'o email ##### and Dr Michael Dale email #####

Fa'afetai tele lava – Thank you very much.

Jack Scanlan
Doctor of Social Work Candidate
Massey University.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/24. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone #####, email #####

Appendix E: Information Sheet – Individual

Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

INFORMATION SHEET - INDIVIDUAL

Talofa lava and greetings, my name is Jack Scanlan, and I am a New Zealand-born Samoan. I am currently a Massey University Doctor of Social Work student. I have worked with Pasifika youth offenders in the South Auckland community and government sector for over 20 years. As part of my doctorate, I am required to do a research project in an area I am passionate about, and I have chosen to focus on Samoan youth offending in South Auckland.

You are warmly invited to participate in a research project that explores addressing Samoan youth offending.

Project aim and objectives

This research aims to explore the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending.

Emanating from the aim are four main objectives:

- I. Explore factors that positively transform former Samoan youth-at-risk in South Auckland, New Zealand.
- II. Understand why and how former Samoan youth-at-risk become social practitioners.
- III. Understand how transformational journeys from Samoan youth-at-risk to social practitioner informs practice in the Samoan youth offending field.
- IV. Make recommendations for social work practice, policy, and education to address Samoan youth offending in South Auckland, New Zealand.

Who can be involved?

You have been identified from your contribution in the focus group Talanoa as an individual I would like to further (Talanoa) interview. Only ten participants were selected to be individually (Talanoa) interviewed.

Vetting requirement

If you chose to be part of the study, you acknowledge that you have been Police vetted and are currently cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 through your respective organisation. This is important as your contributions will form the research findings that are analysed robustly with honesty and integrity. If you discuss any illegal activity that has not resulted in a conviction your participation in the research may be discontinued and you will be advised to seek legal advice. Further, if there is disclosure of any harm to others, I will have an obligation to report this to the appropriate authority.

What does participation involve?

I am interested in hearing more about your story that you initially shared in the focus group Talanoa. During the interview, you will be asked a range of questions about your experiences relating to the changes you have made in your life and your motivation to work with Samoan youth offenders. It will be an opportunity to expand your contributions made in the focus group (Talanoa) or raise points that you did not share in that platform. In this Talanoa/interview, I want to explore further your experiences concerning the study's aim and objectives.

You have two options to choose from regarding our Talanoa/ Interview, it can be conducted either by zoom or in-person. It will take approximately one hour.

Individual Interview Talanoa Zoom option

Zoom Talanoa is a closed forum and entry to the Individual Interview Talanoa are through registration to #####In the subject line, please state your name followed by Ululaau participant. Also, indicate your preferred date and time. The email reply will have zoom details and the passcode and consent form. Your views will be only used once I have received your consent form.

In-person option

It will be organised at a time that is convenient for you. It can also be held at your place of work, café, or a library. Ideally, the venue needs to be a place that we can freely talk with some level of privacy. We also have the option of the interview conducted at Massey University, Albany campus.

Option for review

As a Participant, you will be given the transcript (a document that is typed up from your video/audio recording Talanoa/interview with me) to review. Also please note that transcribing our Talanoa/interview will take some time to do, but it will be sent to you once completed. You will be given an Authority to Release Transcript Form which means that after you have reviewed and we have edited the transcript, you give permission for it to be used for this project.

You will be given up to two weeks to review this document. This time will also give you time to decide if you wish to continue with the project and are comfortable with your Talanoa contribution. During this time, we could set a date for us to meet to hear your feedback or you can email your feedback and/or signed form. This feedback session could take around 30 minutes should you wish to take it up to go through the transcript while I re-edit this document. After the end of this Talanoa feedback session, I will ask you to view the edited transcript, and I will request approval and collect your Authority to Release Transcript form before your transcript is included in the analysis.

The total predicted time for participation will be 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

Data management

After our Talanoa interviews, I will transcribe the digital video/audio recording myself and you will receive a copy.

Your information will be secured in a carry bag while being transported and secured in a locked filing cabinet in my home office, where only I have access. Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected computer that only I can access. Any identifiable information (names of people, place names, organisation names, and so on) will be substituted with pseudonyms to promote confidentiality and anonymity. Your information will be disposed of at the conclusion of this research.

In my study, I will be looking for key themes related to the research topic and comparing them to the literature. I will use the information I have collected to develop the doctoral thesis. A summary of the overall findings will be made available to you after the research.

Participant's Rights

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;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you permit the researcher;
- To be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

Project Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this study, you are most welcome to contact me on mobile ##### or email ##### OR my supervisors, Dr Tracie Mafire'o email ##### and Dr Michael Dale email #####

Fa'afetai Tele lava – Thank you very much.

Jack Scanlan
Doctor of Social Work Candidate
Massey University

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/24. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone #####, email #####

Appendix F: Consent form – Focus Group

Consent form – Focus Group

Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

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 my participation in this study is voluntary.
- I have been Police vetted as well as been cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.
- I understand that if I disclose any illegal activity that has not resulted in a conviction that my participation in the research may be discontinued and I will be advised to seek legal advice. Further, if there is disclosure of any harm to others, the researcher will have an obligation to report this to the appropriate authority.
- I understand this interview will be an audio/video recorded zoom session. I also understand that I have a choice not to answer all questions.
- I understand that due care will be taken by the researcher to preserve my anonymity.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation without reason during the interview.
- I understand that information from this project, such as consent forms and my transcribed interview will be destroyed after five years.

Please circle one option in the statements below to indicate your agreement.

- I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio/video recorded.
- I wish/do not wish to receive a summary of findings that will be emailed to my supplied email address.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/24. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone #####, email, #####

Appendix G: Consent form – Individual

Consent form – Individual

Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

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 my participation in this study is voluntary.
- I have been Police vetted as well as been cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.
- I understand that if I disclose any illegal activity that has not resulted in a conviction that my participation in the research may be discontinued and I will be advised to seek legal advice. Further, if there is disclosure of any harm to others, the researcher will have an obligation to report this to the appropriate authority. I understand this interview will be an audio/video recorded zoom session. I also understand that I have the option to ask the researcher to turn the recording device off and have a choice not to answer all questions.
- I understand that due care will be taken by the researcher to preserve my anonymity.
- I understand that I can withdraw my participation without reason during the interview. I also understand that I can withdraw my contribution up to two weeks after being given the transcript of my interview to review.
- I understand that information from this project, such as consent forms and my transcribed interview will be destroyed after five years.

Please circle one option in the statements below to indicate your agreement.

- I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio/video recorded.
- I wish/do not wish to receive a summary of findings that will be emailed to my supplied email address.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/24. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone #####, email #####

Appendix H: Authority for release of Transcript

AUTHORITY TO RELEASE TRANSCRIPT

**Ululaau: Exploring the transformational journeys
of Samoan social practitioners
who were former youth-at-risk
to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending**

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 it may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

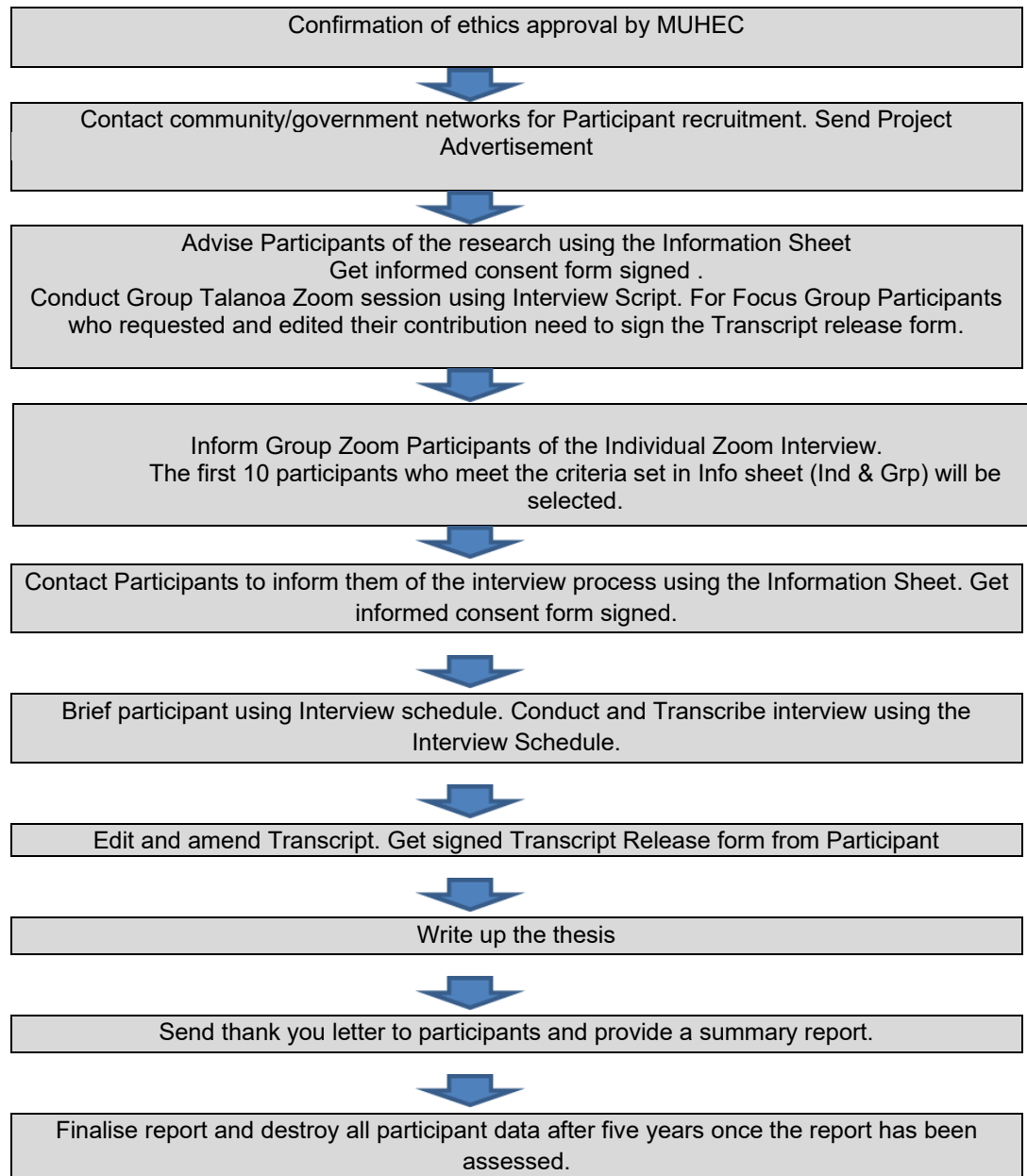
Date:

Full Name - printed

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/24. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone #####, email #####

Appendix I: Research Flowchart

RESEARCHER PROCEDURE FLOWCHART



Appendix J: Project Advertisement

PROJECT ADVERTISEMENT

Invitation to Samoan practitioners working with Samoan youth offenders

Samoan youth offending in South Auckland is a topical issue where everyone has an opinion on what would work. This study examines the experiences of Samoan practitioners working with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland and who themselves were former youth-at-risk (not necessarily with criminal convictions). This could include, but is not limited to, coaches, youth workers, mentors, social workers, pastors, youth leaders, community workers, teachers, teacher aides, supervisors, leaders, entrepreneurs, musicians, sportspersons, entertainers or an ex-offender advocate.

I am interested in your story and the changes you have made in your life and your motivations to work with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. If this is you, then this project would welcome your contribution immensely as the telling of your story would be a compelling account that can motivate others thinking about becoming a social practitioner or are at a crossroad of life. Your story could also explain how best to work with Samoan youth offenders that could influence our current policies or the way we engage our Samoan youth.

All interviews have the option to be conducted through Zoom or face to face. Firstly, you will be invited to be part of one of the Focus group Talanoa/discussions where you share about your experiences as a Samoan social practitioner working with Samoan youth offenders in South Auckland. I am seeking a total of twenty participants. From the focus group Talanoa/discussion sessions, you may be asked if you would like to participate in an individual interview. Only ten participants who meet all the requirements of this study will be selected. Participants must have a current Police vetted clearance as well as be cleared to work with Samoan youth offenders under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 from their respective organisation. For more information, please refer to the information sheet.

Project Contacts

If you are interested in this study and would like more information, please contact researcher Jack Scanlan on mobile ##### or email #####. All communication will be treated confidentially. Fa'afetai Tele lava – Thank you very much.

Jack Scanlan
Doctor of Social Work Candidate
Massey University

Appendix K: Approval Letter from the Human Ethics Committee



Date: 10 August 2020

Dear Jack Scanlan

Re: Ethics Notification - SOB 20/24 - Ululau: Exploring the transformational journeys of Samoan social practitioners who were former youth-at-risk to better understand effective ways to reduce Samoan youth offending

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Human Ethics Southern B Committee at their meeting held on Tuesday, 11 August, 2020.

On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely



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

Appendix L: SWRB (2016) Clause on Fit and Proper and Clean Slate (2004)

SWRB, Fit and Proper (2016)

FIT AND PROPER PERSON

- any other offence specified in Schedule 2 of the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

Applicants for registration should note that, as a result of the Vulnerable Children's Act, the "clean slate" provisions of the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004 do not apply to the Police checks obtained by the Board.

Clean Slate Act, 2004

- (da) the Social Workers Registration Board is considering whether the eligible individual is a fit and proper person to be registered or to practise as a social worker under the [Social Workers Registration Act 2003](#); or
- (e) the eligible individual has made an application to act in a role predominantly involving the care and protection of, but not predominantly involving the delivery of education to, a child or young person (for example, a foster parent or a caregiver of children or young persons); or
- (f) the eligible individual's criminal record or information about an eligible individual's criminal record is relevant to an investigation under [section 17](#) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 of a report of ill-treatment or neglect of a child or young person or in relation to any procedure under [Part 2](#) of that Act arising from an investigation of that kind (including, without limitation, holding a family group conference or the Family Court's consideration of an application for a declaration that a child or young person is in need of care or protection); or
- (g) the eligible individual's criminal record or information about an eligible individual's criminal record is relevant to the undertaking of research that requires access to criminal history information to be given to any employee or person contracted to a controlling public office or to any person undertaking research approved by a controlling public office.

Appendix M: SWRB (2018) Principle 2 and 3 Clause on Code of Conduct

Principle 2

Respect the status of Māori as tangata whenua

You are expected to:

- 2.1 work in partnership with Māori clients and their family/whānau
- 2.2 work in a culturally appropriate manner while recognising the diversity within the Māori population
- 2.3 have an understanding of Te Ao Māori and be able to state and use bicultural practice models
- 2.4 promote the rights of Māori to use Māori social work and/or bicultural models of practice to protect the integrity of Māori as tangata whenua
- 2.5 promote access to services that meet the needs of Māori clients
- 2.6 as a supervisor, endeavour to ensure supervision is culturally relevant if the supervisee is Māori
- 2.7 as a supervisor, endeavour to ensure supervision is culturally relevant, safe, and responsive to Māori clients.

Principle 3

Respect the cultural needs and values of the client

You are expected to:

- 3.1 respect the diversity between and within different cultures, including diversity of ethnicity, disability, economic status, age, sexuality, gender, faiths, and beliefs
- 3.2 understand as much as possible and support your client's cultural identity, recognising the significance of cultural identification and beliefs
- 3.3 consider and work with any social work service(s) that may help in providing culturally appropriate service make sure that your client understands the language being used and use a competent interpreter where practical if they do not understand
- 3.4 be aware of any personal or religious beliefs or moral positions you have and make sure these do not override a client's right to self-determination and to receive quality social work service
- 3.5 maintain professional objectivity and if this is not possible, discuss this with your client and if necessary refer them to an appropriate person or service.