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I was doing time too.

Experiences of Pasifika parents in the
Youth Justice system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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Abstract

Navigating the youth justice system for any parent is extremely challenging. However, for Pasifika (Pacific Islander) parents in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), these challenges are often compounded by ongoing experiences of injustice, racism and discrimination. Difficulties range from cultural barriers relating to language and worldviews to the complexities of engaging with Western legal and mental health systems that often conflicts with Pasifika understandings of behaviour, accountability and justice.

There is growing recognition that parental involvement in youth justice processes contributes to more positive outcomes, yet Pasifika parents and families remain largely unheard in existing research and policy. Despite the over-representation of Pasifika youth in the justice system across the globe, interventions are predominantly framed through Western paradigms. Given the collective identity central to Pasifika cultures, youth are not viewed in isolation, but as inseparable from their families and communities. Meaningful responses must therefore centre on the experiences and voices of Pasifika families as a whole.

This PhD explores the experiences of Pasifika parents and families in the youth justice system in Aotearoa NZ. Framed within a Pasifika (Samoan) worldview, it adopts a by-Pasifika, for-Pasifika approach, culturally aligned methodology, methods and data analysis. Through this approach, the research journey is metaphorically and carefully woven as an 'ie toga (fine mat) embodying care, respect, and knowledge-sharing.

This study culminates in the development of a culturally grounded model for enhancing Pasifika parental engagement in youth justice processes. Key findings provide insight into systemic challenges faced by Pasifika families and offer practical recommendations for policy and practice aimed at reducing disparities and supporting collective wellbeing.

For my father, Ta'igalaala Ioane

The first one was mum, the last one is yours.

I hope you are proud of the legacy that you left behind.

E manatua pea oe.

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Filipi 4: 13

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O ai a'u? Who am I?

O lo'u igoa o Apaula Julia Ioane. Ou te sau mai le nu'u o Fasito'outa, Leaupepe, Pu'apu'a ma Lotofaga i Samoa. O o'u mātua o Tautegaatufanua Kuresa Ioane ma Taigalaala Folasaitu Ioane. O o'u uso o Siniva Van der Ent ma Mickey Ioane ma o lo'u to'alua o Anthony Joseph. I am a daughter of migrant parents, a plantation owner and a primary school teacher who met in the villages of Samoa, travelled separately to the 'land of milk and honey' (Aotearoa NZ) and reunited in Porirua, Wellington. My parents then joined extended family in Grey Lynn, Auckland – where their family life began.

Born in the 1970s, my early childhood years were spent in Otara, South Auckland, mixed with a lot of family love, church, family violence and parents struggling to pay bills and a mortgage. However, obtaining an education was non-negotiable as we were raised to “live a better life than the life we were raised in”. As a child growing up in a Samoan household, you were generally seen as an ‘extension’ of your parents. When I was introduced to people, it was always “daughter of ...”. Parents were the family that you were raised in. Everything was seen as a whole. Your parents were responsible for you, and therefore they made decisions for you. In my world, if it was OK with my parents, it was OK with me. In school, it was quite strange to be asked what I thought about things or to offer an opinion to a teacher. The teacher was the expert, and I was there to learn. High school was eventful – for all the wrong reasons of truancy, underperforming and mixing with local “gangs”. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for us to hold part-time after-school jobs whilst attending high school. There was an unspoken agreement that parents provided you with basic needs and if you wanted anything else, you sourced it on your own. Growing up, it was not a big deal to spend time with youth gangs in the community; they were friends, mates and you all grew up together, attended the same church and social gatherings. Being in an all-female household,

apart from my father, in some ways was a protective factor given the cultural elements present for ‘protecting girls’.¹

As I progressed through university, I graduated with an undergraduate degree and immediately gained employment. Employment was all about seeking a “good job”, help out at home, pay for parents’ mortgage – that was the reciprocity to our parents. Once those obligations were met, there was a desire for further training and subsequently returning as a mature student and completed doctoral training as a clinical psychologist.

It was always my intention to work with children, youth and their families in the justice system and fortunately, that intention did not change once I graduated. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenges and rewards of working with children, young people and their families in youth justice. It was a privilege to hear their stories and work with them to try and identify what needed to be done to prevent any further involvement in the youth justice system. However, as I did this, I realised that there were often tensions between my world as a clinical psychologist and as a Samoan. Further, there were many contradictions between what I had been taught, and what I instinctively knew, with regards to what worked for our Indigenous and ethnic minority communities. I also realised that the number of Pasifika psychologists was few. I felt the pull of academia to influence the curriculum and promote opportunities for Pasifika in clinical psychology.

I moved into academia, not as much by choice but as by what was needed to serve the community - I had elders from my Pasifika community asking me why there was a low number of Pasifika psychologists. My reason for moving into an academic position was to strengthen capacity and capability for working with Pasifika communities and to support

¹ Generally, girls within the Samoan context were to be protected with different rules applied to raising girls compared to raising boys e.g. boys had more freedom to socialise with their peers compared to girls.

Pasifika students in becoming psychologists. Alongside my academic role, I continue to practise as a clinical psychologist and work in areas of governance and strategy planning across the justice sector. Many times, my elders or my Pasifika community will contact me to go and serve in another area or provide support to a family – that is my service.

As a member of the Pasifika community, I am a daughter, sister, aunt, wife and chief from Fasito'outa, Samoa. My Western privilege as clinical psychologist, professor in clinical psychology, researcher, advisor, board and community member and as a support person for those who are coming in after me, provides me with an opportunity to authentically serve my community. *O le ala i le pule o le tautua* – In order to lead, one must serve.

O lo'u fa'atu. My positionality

Why on earth did I do this PhD...when I already have a doctoral qualification in clinical psychology? This was a common question that I asked myself throughout this journey. What followed was usually a deep breath and a sigh, I knew exactly why I was doing this PhD.

I saw this PhD as a call from my community. At the time, I was conducting a separate piece of research about Pasifika youth in the justice system. I was clear on my focus. However, as I conducted my research, it became evident to me that it was not a focus of the Pasifika parents I was engaging with. They wanted to be heard, and they wanted me to listen to them. They wanted to tell me about their experiences in youth justice. Within a Pasifika context, it was my duty to listen. I did.

A personal reason for doing this PhD was my own internal conflict. I felt unqualified to supervise PhD students when I had not completed a PhD. Whilst it can be argued that a doctoral thesis has its own merit alongside a PhD thesis, my personality wanted to explore what it took to do a PhD – my own personal and private challenge to myself.

Whilst completing this PhD, I had my own expectations of what parents would say, given my clinical experience in the field. My expectation was that a) Pasifika parents' experiences of the youth justice would all be negative; b) Pasifika parents' understanding of the Pasifika culture would be limited; c) Pasifika parents would be disconnected from family; and d) the youth justice system in Aotearoa NZ was broken. I was mindfully aware of these views that I had. As a result, I created strategies to ensure I did not inadvertently influence participants. This resulted in preparatory sessions prior to talanoa (interviews) or writing to clearly identify my biases, reminding myself of the research question(s) and sharing ideas and findings with my Expert Advisory Group² (EAG).

It was an interesting journey to walk alongside these participants in a research relationship. I was more familiar with interviewing them for Court reports and psychological assessments and yet I was hearing similar stories, though interpreting them through a different lens. As a psychologist, when you hear these stories, you are drawing on your clinical skills to determine what is in the best interests of this child and their family. As a researcher, your analytical skills are used to address matters at a systems level – what can the youth justice system learn from this child and their family? I reflected on my role and wrote things down prior to the talanoa (interview) as to what I was expecting. I then made a conscious effort not to lead the participant towards a pathway I was expecting. I remained curious in my talanoa by saying, “Tell me more” and “What do you mean” as points of reference. Some may say that I drew on my clinical assessment skills to inform and guide the talanoa. However, as a Pasifika person, I was aware of cultural protocols and how to ensure a talanoa-approach of being open, non-judgemental and seeking to engage would be all-inclusive in my interaction with participants. I implemented the Pasifika way for values such

² I describe this group in the Pacific youth justice research section of my PhD.

as Respect, Reciprocity, Compassion and Love in my talanoa – ways that I instinctively knew of ‘being’ who I was.

O le a 'ie toga? What is a fine mat?

This section was written from my own lived experiences as a Samoan in my observations of the 'ie toga as it is made, talanoa with family members and women involved in making the 'ie toga and various websites. I chose not to include references in this section in order to honour the mālie and sweetness of this talanoa. However, I have provided a brief acknowledgment of sources at the end of this section, and in the reference list.

Figure 1

An 'ie toga



Note. A picture of an 'ie toga. Reprinted from 'Ie toga, 1938. Retrieved May 23, 2023, from ['ie toga \(fine mat\) | Collections Online - Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa](#)

Fine mats are made throughout many Pacific Island cultures. They are unique treasures and artifacts of the Pasifika culture. In Samoa, the fine mat is known as the “ie toga”. The ie toga is arguably Samoa’s finest treasure and symbolic of love, respect and unity. It is a finely woven mat, that can take months or even years to complete. It can be woven by one woman, or by a group of women. It is an honoured skill among women as only women can weave the 'ie toga. Women then pass on the art of making fine mats to their next generation. When it is completed, the 'ie toga is generally celebrated in the village for all to see.

‘Ie toga are made from long-leaved pandanus known as the lau’ie. They have an unwoven fringe with feathers. The value of the ‘ie toga is determined by how fine the fibres of the ‘ie toga have been woven, its shine and size. Generally, the finer it is, the more detailed the design is, the higher the value of the ‘ie toga is. They can be exchanged and presented at formal events and occasions. These include weddings, funerals, bestowal of chief titles and at special occasions such as the blessing of a new house or the opening of a church. At funerals, ‘ie togas are given to the family of the deceased. It is to acknowledge the passing of a loved one, and exchanges of food can be given in return. This is the value of *Reciprocity*. It can also be used as an attire particularly for a daughter of a chief when she performs the customary dance of the “taoaluga”. The ‘ie toga is also passed down from one generation to the next; to maintain the family ties and connection between generations. Unfortunately, the numbers of women with the art and skill of weaving the ‘ie toga is dwindling. More needs to be done to maintain this treasure amongst current and future generations.

This PhD has been created and woven as a metaphorical ‘ie toga. It has taken a few years to complete, though every effort has been made to ensure its fibres have been finely woven with the stories of participants. I began the PhD drawing on the processes of developing an ‘ie toga; namely, *filifili le lau’ie*, which is to propose the PhD. This is to determine whether an ‘ie toga should be created and for what purpose. Secondly, I *su’esu’e le lau’ie*. At this stage, I start to carefully select the lau’ie to determine what leaves will be chosen to make the ‘ie toga. I am selecting the literature to review for the ‘ie toga. Once the lau’ie are carefully selected, I *sauni le ‘ie toga*. I undergo a process to ensure the leaves are ready to be woven. I identify the methodology and method to ensure the voices of my participants can be heard. Once the leaves are ready to be woven, I put them into bundles known as *Talanoa bundles* and begin to strip the leaves into smaller strips in preparation for weaving. These are the voices of my participants that are then analysed and stripped into appropriate Talanoa or

themes, ready for weaving. Once the lau'ie are finely stripped, I then *lalaga le 'ie toga*. I start to weave the lau'ie into an 'ie toga. This is the process of making sense of the voices of my participants and how it fits within the current context of youth justice. Finally, I conclude with *fofola le 'ie toga*. This is the presentation of the PhD – the gift of the 'ie toga to the youth justice system, from our Pasifika parents.

I will use the words 'ie toga interchangeably with PhD throughout this journey.

Throughout this research, I provide personal photos to highlight my journey and those who were crucial to informing, developing and weaving this 'ie toga.

Special thank you to the following individuals who contributed to this talanoa:

Silaulelei Kuresa (aunt), Pimento Fata (friend), Neri Sauaso (weaver)

3

³ Some useful source materials include:

Far & Away Adventures (n.d.) *The significance of Ie Toga: Samoan fine mat weaving and its role in society*. <https://farandawayadventures.com/fr/the-significance-of-ie-toga-samoan-fine-mat-weaving-and-its-role-in-society/>.

Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (n.d.) *'ie toga (fine mat)*. <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/1522>.

National Park Service. US Department of the Interior. National Park of American Samoa (n.d.). *'Ie Toga (Fine Mat): Samoans Traditions of Weaving*. <https://www.nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/-ie-toga-fine-mat-samoan-traditions-of-weaving.htm>

Sailelagi, M. (2010). *The Ie Toga (Fine Mats) of Samoa*. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL). <https://macimise.prel.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Manu-Sailelagi-Ie-Toga-fine-mats-of-Samoa.pdf>.

Filifili le lau'ie (Proposal and introduction)

The pandanus tree is a very important tree to Samoans, with different types of leaves used for various things. The laufala (type of leaf) is used to make mats for general use, e.g. sleeping or sitting mats. The lau'ie (type of leaf) are used to make fine mats, known as 'ie toga (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Pandanus tree



Note. A picture of a Pandanus tree. Reprinted from Pandanus tectorius (pandanus), In *Specific Profiles for Pacific Island Agroforestry*. Retrieved August 14, 2025, from Agroforestry.org - Traditional Tree Profiles

This section presents the process that involves a discussion of whether an 'ie toga should be made. The decision to do a PhD on a certain topic came from the voices of participants in

a larger study. I will be discussing this larger study in the next section of this metaphorical ‘ie toga.

“I was doing time, too” are powerful words from one of the parents in my research. When a child breaks the law and enters the criminal justice system through youth justice, it is a defining moment for any parent. One can imagine that there will be feelings of surprise, heartache, pain and sadness, coupled with feelings of anger, guilt, frustration and self-blame. Generally, the role of a parent is to protect and care for their child; so, what happens when their child comes in contact with the law? We know the impacts on a child when a parent has broken the law and is placed in prison (Lee et al., 2013; Miller, 2006; Murray et al., 2009). However, what do we know when these roles are reversed? When a child has broken the law, they can be removed from their parents. What is the impact on parents as they attempt to support their child?

When we think of Aotearoa NZ and the youth justice system, it should not come as a surprise that there continues to be an over-representation of Māori tamariki and Pasifika tamaiti in youth crime (Ioane et al., 2016). Consistent with overseas literature, children from ethnic minorities and low socio-economic communities are generally overrepresented in youth justice across youth prisons and detention centres (Nowak, 2019). This over-representation is often thought to be due to inequalities in law enforcement and youth justice decision-making practices (Jones, 2016; van den Brink et al., 2022). In Aotearoa NZ, Kokaua and colleagues (2024) found in their research that administrative practices of recording ethnicity affect how Pasifika children are categorised, and therefore impact on how they are responded to in practice. For example, children with mixed Pākehā (NZ European) and Pasifika heritage may be treated as Pākehā. Similarly, children with dual ethnicities (mainly Māori and Pasifika) may be predominantly seen as Māori and therefore Pasifika identity remains invisible (Kokaua et al., 2024). Furthermore, as highlighted in their study, the

growing emphasis on Māori-centred practice within Oranga Tamariki-Ministry for Children (OT) can be confusing for those working with Māori and Pasifika children or lead to inadvertently emphasising a child's Māori whānau (family) more than their Pasifika family. These administrative processes are likely to impact on having a clear and authentic understanding of Pasifika children statistically and in practice. I have encountered many situations where Pasifika young people in the justice system are identified in the system as Māori. It is not until a thorough assessment is undertaken, or in the middle of therapy, that I discover their dual ethnic identities. Reasons for this have ranged from “no one asked me” or a loss of connection to that ethnic identity through death, relocation, parental separation or parental imprisonment.

So - why a topic like this?

First of all, whilst academically there is clearly a gap in the literature and practice that justifies this research, that is not the key driver for me. Parents wanted to share their experiences of youth justice. This PhD arose to meet a need in the community that was currently unmet. The gap was identified by these parents and, as a result, the creation of a metaphorical 'ie toga or PhD was initiated. I will discuss this later as we journey on this metaphorical 'ie toga.

Secondly, there is much research on experiences of children and youth with parents in incarceration (Herreros-Fraile et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2013; Turney & Goodsell, 2018). Within the youth justice system, there is some research that looks at parent-child relationships (Vidal & Woolard, 2016), but little that looks at the experiences of parents in the traditional justice system (Magidson & Kidd, 2021; McGinnis, 2024). We need to understand more about the experiences and needs of people who use the system – not just professionals working in the field (Farrow, 2013). This is not to say that the involvement of parents in

youth justice is minimised. Parental involvement in youth justice continues to grow (Walker et al., 2015), which includes some efforts to understand their experiences (Snider et al., 2022).

There is an awareness of the value of parental involvement in youth-justice matters. Programmes that include family – namely, parents - have had successful outcomes (Harvey & Hill, 2004). Almost 20 years on from Harvey and Hill's work, research continues to show that active and engaged parents do assist a young person to deter from future crimes and enhance their current and future outcomes (Magidson & Kidd, 2021). In Aotearoa NZ, family involvement is important, and a family-based response is crucial. We know this given the over-representation of our Māori youth in justice and the need for a holistic approach (Hapeta et al., 2022; Maitland et al., 2025). Furthermore, the over-representation of our Pasifika youth in justice continues to call for a family-based response (Ioane, 2023).

Why is this then still a topic worth researching in 2025?

Whilst it absolutely makes sense amongst all of us working in the justice system that family involvement is crucial, it is difficult to implement (Becroft, 2015). Furthermore, the youth justice system is extremely complex in its administration worldwide (McGinnis, 2024). Parents and families involved in youth justice can be challenging to work with – if we do not have the appropriate relational, cultural and clinical skills. This is because challenges these families face tend to be a contributing factor for serious youth offending and families will come with their own interpersonal difficulties and mental health concerns, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Pieterse et al., 2022). Equally important, parents and family are likely to come from backgrounds of low socio-economic circumstances (Webster, 2018), intergenerational transmission of trauma (Malvaso et al., 2022) and crime (Farrington et al., 2009). Furthermore, parenting a child within youth justice is predominantly by the mother,

both anecdotally (in my experience) and through research, leading to criticisms such as mother-blaming (Holt, 2008). Given the over-representation of young people from Indigenous and ethnic-minority cultures within Western-dominated youth-justice systems, the cultural identity and worldviews of these communities are not reflected in, nor aligned with, the practices and policies by which the justice system is governed (Smith, 2013). The youth justice system is often seen as gendered and racist (McGinnis, 2024). All of these factors contribute to the way in which parents engage with the system and the way professionals respond to, and work with parents or those that hold a parental role in a young person's life.

This focus on Pasifika parents for this metaphorical 'ie toga is (in my opinion) simple. The youth justice system is premised on Western worldviews, yet Pasifika youth are over-represented in that system both in Aotearoa NZ (Ioane et al., 2016) and across the globe (Le & Arifuku, 2005; Ravulo, 2016). Further, Pasifika worldviews are collective (Teariki & Leau, 2024) and therefore to understand and work with Pasifika youth in justice is to work collectively with their family, that is, their parents.

This PhD and 'ie toga seeks to understand the following:

1. What are the experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system?
2. What do Pasifika parents need in the Youth Justice system?

I also explore and conclude with recommendations and practice implications for working with parents in the Youth Justice system.

Preface

As I propose the lau'ie (leaves) for this research, there are some key assumptions and points of clarification that need to be identified from the outset. These include:

- The definition of parents in the weaving of this ‘ie toga includes biological and non-biological family members and caregivers that were identified as having the main care responsibility of the child involved in youth justice. They are referred to as parents in this ‘ie toga.
- This ‘ie toga prioritises Pasifika people as a whole. I am aware of the diversity and heterogeneity of Pasifika people; for the purposes of this ‘ie toga, I am drawing on what unites us as Pasifika whilst acknowledging our differences in the various Pacific Islands that we come from.
- The term Talanoa will be used throughout this ‘ie toga, though it will have different meanings, such as a conversation, a talk, or a formal meeting (Vaiote, 2006). Talanoa can be a conversation or a formal discussion depending on the context within which it is used. In this ‘ie toga, talanoa refers to the conversation or interview that I had with the participants, the method and the engagement process that I undertook throughout this journey and my data. The various contexts by which the term talanoa is used will be defined clearly throughout this PhD.
- The term Pasifika, Pacific, Pacific People(s) and Pacific Islander are used interchangeably throughout this research.

It is important to state clearly that the purpose of this ‘ie toga is not to diminish nor minimise Pasifika culture(s), nor is it to offend the beauty and value of Pasifika culture. However, if an offence is made throughout the writing of this metaphorical ‘ie toga, I genuinely apologise – that is not my intent.

There are voices of Pasifika that are often not included when we talk about our Pasifika community. For me, if we are to truly measure the success of our Pasifika community in Aotearoa, we must start with those in our Pasifika community who are under-served and remain vulnerable within society; that is, those engaged in the justice system. For example,

reports about Pasifika communities are generally not inclusive of our Pasifika community in justice (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2020; Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2024). We need to focus on our Pasifika youth and families in the justice system because if we do not address their issues, it will contribute adversely to the future of Aotearoa NZ and her identity as a Pasifika nation.

Su'esu'e le lau'ie (Literature review)

Once it is decided what lau'ie to choose, then the process begins to cut the pandanus leaves from the tree, stacked and tied – ready to be taken back to the village for the process to begin (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Su'esu'e le lau'ie. Selecting the pandanus leaves to make the 'ie toga



Note. A picture of cutting pandanus leaves from the tree. Adapted from Sailalagi (2010).

The literature review is metaphorically the process by which the lau'ie (literature) is selected to create the 'ie toga. The careful selection of lau'ie was undertaken through reviews of the academic and grey literature alongside consultation and guidance from my expert advisory group (EAG), and my own experience as a clinical psychologist. It is important to acknowledge that the research on parental experiences of youth justice is growing (Becroft, 2015; Snider et al., 2022; Varma, 2007). However, like most areas of research, understanding and responding to Pasifika experiences and worldview is limited though growing (Teariki & Leau, 2024). Similarly, Pasifika psychology continues to remain limited, due to low numbers

of Pasifika in psychology programmes and the general absence of Pasifika context and worldviews in psychology training (Ioane et al., 2023). This is despite recent research showing the need for more cultural supervision and formal training for non-Pasifika practitioners working with, and for, Pasifika communities (Almao & Ioane, 2023).

The carefully selected lau'ie begins with a journey to gain insight and some understanding of our Pasifika community in Aotearoa NZ. However, the focus is on an underserved group of Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ – our families in youth justice. I will discuss values, family, young people, frameworks and models within the Pasifika context. Following this, we explore the context of youth justice in Aotearoa NZ. I highlight briefly the history and legislation of youth justice in Aotearoa NZ with an attempt to bring to the forefront the role of parents/family in the legislation. One of the reasons why it is important to explore and understand the role of parents and family in youth justice is, simply put, because it is the law (Becroft, 2015). I also draw on international conventions highlighting our responsibility and contribution to protect the rights of our children and tamariki. As the study is located in Aotearoa NZ, I honour my lived experience as teina (younger sibling) to my tuakana (older sibling) in Aotearoa NZ⁴ and discuss Tikanga Māori and te Tiriti o Waitangi Principles, and their role in the current legislation. Following this, I briefly look to the Pacific Islands and their Youth Justice given the cultural background of participants. I then take a slightly different direction to discuss “adverse childhood experiences” (ACEs), given their well-known relationship with youth offending (Astridge et al., 2023). I also look at the Child and Youth Strategy (Te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government, 2024) for context in relation to this PhD.

⁴ As a Samoan, we have shared ancestry with Māori in Aotearoa NZ as Polynesia. When in Aotearoa NZ, Māori are seen as an older sibling within our Polynesian heritage.

Given the primary focus of this 'ie toga, I will discuss offending behaviour within a Pasifika worldview. I highlight Pacific youth offending in Aotearoa NZ before leading into the central focus of this thesis – Pasifika parental experiences in Court. Having this topic towards the end of this literature review is aligned with how one chooses lau'ie. I want to provide you with all the necessary lau'ie that contribute to forming the 'ie toga. This last lau'ie will show research that explores parental experiences as the purpose of my metaphorical 'ie toga.

Pacific people

Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ are made up of people who have migrated from the Pacific islands or identify themselves as being connected with the Pacific islands due to ancestry, genealogy or heritage. The Pacific realm is made up of islands in the Pacific Ocean and divided into three main regions based on their geography, location and Indigenous communities (Berglee, 2016). The three main regions are Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

Many of the Pacific islands are independent, though others continue to remain under the auspices of colonisers such as France, the UK, New Zealand or the US. Melanesia is located to the north of Australia and borders Indonesia. The main island groups in Melanesia are the independent countries of Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, plus New Caledonia (France). Micronesia is located to the north of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. It was named Micronesia as the islands in this area are small in size and it includes more than 2000 islands. The independent countries of Micronesia are Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati (Western), Marshall Islands, Nauru and Palau. Guam, Northern Mariana Islands and Wake Island are under the auspices of the US. Polynesia is the largest region with many island groups, many under separate political arrangements. The independent countries of Polynesia include Kiribati (Eastern), Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu. The Cook Islands and Tokelau

are under the auspices of Aotearoa NZ; the Hawaiian Islands and American Samoa (US), Pitcairn Island (UK) and French Polynesia (France) (Berglee, 2016).

Aotearoa NZ is seen as a Pacific country given its location in the Pacific Ocean and its Indigenous community, Māori - as descendants of Polynesia. Pasifika communities have lived in Aotearoa NZ for more than 100 years. Currently, there are almost 400,000 people living in NZ's population of 5 million who identify themselves as Pasifika (Stats, 2023). They continue to grow in their diversity, with more than half of Pasifika people living in Aotearoa NZ having been born here. Some will be of mixed Pacific and non-Pacific ethnicity. Pasifika people are a youthful population with a median age of 23 years old, compared to the general median age of 38 years old (Stats NZ, 2024).

Forty-two percent of Pasifika families are comprised of two parents with at least one child under 18 years, compared to European (33%) and Māori (35%) rates of two-parent homes. However, Pasifika (27%) and Māori (28%) have more single-parent families with at least one child aged under 18 years, compared to European families (11%) (Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, 2015). In addition, Pasifika families are also more likely than other ethnicities to live with another family. These figures show that almost half of Pasifika families have a child under 18, consistent with its youthful population, and almost a third of Pasifika families come from single-parent households though they are more likely to have also lived with another family.

These key statistics highlight the communal living environment of many of our Pasifika communities, though it also highlights the risk of overcrowded homes vulnerable to poverty indicators, such as housing insecurity, and negative effects on youth mental health (Elers et al., 2021). Furthermore, Pasifika communities are well known to be earning below the average income in Aotearoa NZ. Therefore, with large family numbers and overcrowded homes (shared due to high housing costs), risks of poor physical and mental health are increased (Elers et al.,

2021). Despite these issues, the communal and spiritual worldviews of Pasifika people will mean most families share their wealth with other family members, such as sending remittances back to their island homes to support families in the main islands (The Treasury, 2018), often regardless of their own levels of material hardship in Aotearoa NZ. Research on Pasifika gambling, for example, found problem gambling could arise from efforts to win income to meet family obligations of support (Urale et al., 2015).

In summary, Pacific people are migrants to Aotearoa NZ, though they have common ancestry with Māori as Indigenous to Aotearoa NZ and with Pasifika as migrants from other lands in the Pacific region (Enari & Haua, 2021). Pasifika communities are increasingly diverse, youthful yet with ongoing exposure to poverty and subsequent poor health. Despite this, their worldviews continue to prioritise family, community and spirituality. Therefore, to work with Pasifika communities, one must truly understand their culture(s), and identity (Liddell et al., 2017) .

Values of Pasifika people

Pasifika people are a value-based, heterogenous group of communities. Their worldviews are generally described as being based on values that include respect, family, love, humility, compassion and reciprocity, to name a few (Elers et al., 2021). Religion and spirituality are important, with more than 70% of Pasifika peoples affiliated to a religion in Aotearoa NZ (Pasifika Proud, 2016). Ataera-Minster and Trowland (2016) looked at the mental health and wellbeing of Pacific peoples and found that 94% of participants reported that they relied on family for support. However, as noted above, this reliance on family can come with its pressures, such as where gambling can be seen as a way to seek income in order to meet family and church obligations (Urale et al., 2015). Despite some of the nuances that exist amongst Pasifika, it is important to remember that they are collective and communal; with family being foundational to their existence.

Concept of Va

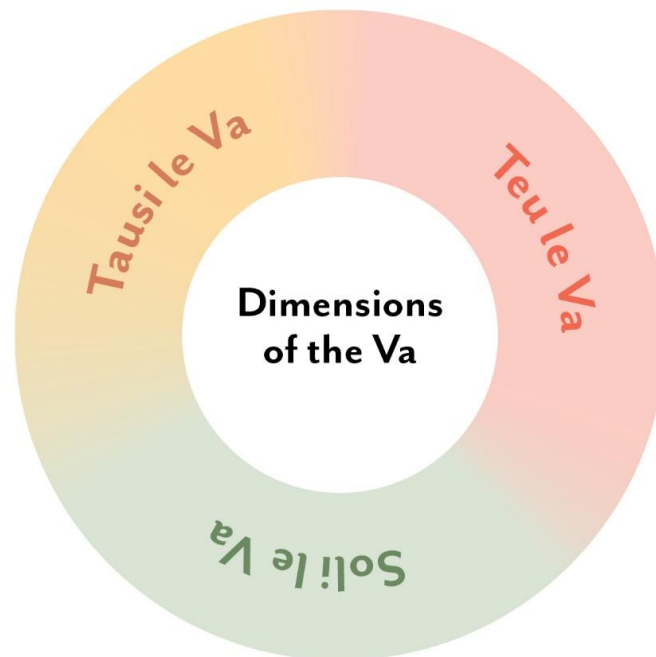
When values are discussed among Pasifika communities, Va is often a key focal point of the talanoa. The concept of Va (as it is named in Samoan, or tauhi va in Tongan or tabu in Fijian) is what generally underpins relationships among Pasifika communities. It is what governs relationships among Pasifika (Samoan) communities (Mo'a, 2015), as the identity of Pasifika (Samoan) communities is relational (Tamasese et al., 2005). Amongst Samoans, there are three dimensions of the Va that will be used in this research (Ioane, 2023). *Teu le va* is the start of a relationship by building and connecting with another person(s), land and environment, that includes ancestors, spiritual and cosmos realms. *Tausi le va* is nurturing of the relationship where all values of Pasifika are practised. For example, respect is practised in tausi le va, with examples such as respecting your elders by ensuring they speak first or that they speak on your behalf and reciprocity is practised by an older sibling by looking after their younger siblings and, in turn, their younger siblings are protected by their older sibling. *Soli le va* is when the Va is breached. The Va is breached because there is disharmony or conflict in a relationship, or an offence or harm has occurred towards others (Figure 4). It is to be expected that at some point during a relationship, there will be conflict. In its mildest form, soli le Va can be a disagreement between friends.

Among the Tongan community, tauhi va is “to take care, to tend, or to nurture” (as cited in Tevita, 2005, p. 92). It highlights the space in-between, rather than an open area. This space is related to place and relationships (Reynolds, 2016). Tongan scholar, Dr Mila-Schaaf (2006) describes the Va as being intentional, in order to influence the nature of relationships. It is seen as having four categories that include physical, social, intellectual and symbolic dimensions, all of which are interconnected (Māhina, 2002). It is a holistic concept. In one way, the conceptualisation of the Va may also be seen in how families are defined within a Pasifika

context – interconnected to one another and seen holistically. People are seen within the context of their family and place of belonging (Ioane & Tudor, 2023).

Figure 4

Dimensions of the Va



Note. Dimensions of the Va. Reprinted from my 2023 research report on young people in youth justice, *You've just got to think about your family and what type of person you want to be* (Ioane, 2023, p. 11).

Among the Fijian community, tabu can restrict disclosures of certain acts within the family and, as a result, tabu is prioritised and carried out of fear that a disclosure will put into dispute the reputation and credibility of the family (Tuwere et al., 2012). This highlights the credibility of the family as being paramount. This is therefore challenged when a member of a family has carried out illegal and/or inappropriate behaviour.

Young people engaged in offending behaviour and their families have many layers of complexities that are exacerbated further when they enter the justice system. When you add culture and worldviews outside of the dominant Western worldview, this creates a further layer of complexity. There are cultural beliefs, values and practices that need to be acknowledged,

understood and incorporated when working with non-Western communities. This is to ensure authentic relationships are developed and parties work together to reduce the risk of offending and/or recidivism.

Within a justice perspective, all offending behaviour takes place in *solu le Va*, as highlighted by Maka's story:⁵

Maka (Samoan, 16 years old) stole a vehicle and consequently violated the *Va* between the owner of the vehicle (now a victim) and himself. Maka also violated the *Va* with the family of the owner (victim's family). In addition, Maka violated the *Va* between himself and his own family, given the identity of Pasifika as relational. As a result of Maka's actions, his family violated the *Va* with the owner (victim) of the vehicle *and* their family. If Maka's offending behaviour becomes known outside of his family, another breach of the *Va* has occurred. This is because shame has now been brought to the extended family. In my professional experience, it would not be uncommon for a young person like Maka and his nuclear family to deal with this matter on their own and in isolation from extended family members.

When *solu le Va* occurs, there can be a process of apology, reconciliation and restoration – to heal from this breach. In Maka's case, the *Va* can be repaired and restored through interventions and responses to his offending behaviour in order to *fa'alelei* (to heal, restore) and *teu/tausi le va*. However, herein lies the challenge.

Pasifika people are a collective community with a shared identity (Teariki & Leau, 2024). In order to truly restore the *Va*, family-based approaches are typically what is seen to theoretically and culturally work best for a young Pasifika person engaged in offending behaviour (Ioane, 2023; Ravulo, 2016). However, what happens when the family do not wish to be a part of the therapeutic plan and believe it is the responsibility of their child to engage in

⁵ Maka is a pseudonym. This is a vignette drawn from my typical clinical experience but not related to any specifically identifiable person or family.

programmes? At a practice level, this is the difficulty. Most of the offending behaviour of a young person can be traced back to dynamics within the family. However, I advise caution here. This is not to put blame on the family, it is to show some understanding of what might have happened or be happening within a family that may have led to this young person's behaviour. Remember, it is not uncommon for young people engaged in offending behaviour to come from families who are facing enormous challenges (Grinenko et al., 2023; Rodriguez et al., 2009), as you will also see from the participants in this PhD.

I have found from my experience as a clinical psychologist that some Pasifika families do not engage with the system because a) it is their child/young person who is at fault and therefore needs the help, not their parents; b) there is shame and self-blame within themselves as they see their child's behaviour as a reflection of their parenting practices; and c) mistrust of the system, given previous history. It can be one or two of these reasons; or even all three or other reasons that this study may discover. Professionals and practitioners have to then navigate in this space, which can be frustrating and likely to reinforce their negative beliefs about families with young people engaged in offending behaviour.

Family

Family is the institution that Pasifika people identify with (Human Rights Commission, 2020). Rather, the concept of “family” or Aiga (Samoa), Matavuvale (Fiji), Magafaoa (Niue), Kàiga (Tokelau), Kàinga (Tonga), Ngutuare Tangata (Cook Island), and Kaaiga (Tuvalu) includes (though is not limited to) aunties, uncles, grandparents, cousins, close family friends. Samoan scholars, Tamasese et al (1997), stated that:

The whole person exists, not as an individual, but in relationship with other people, this being has meaning only in relationship and derives its sense of wholeness....and uniqueness from its place of belonging in its family and village, its genealogy, language, land, environment and culture. (p. 83)

Meleisea and Meleisa (1987) used the analogy of a fishing net to describe a Samoan person's identity whereby their ancestry is linked together to their families, villages and districts within Samoa. Similarly, Tongans have an extended family structure as their basic family unit (Foliaki, 1997). The support of family and the connections within family and the wider community are fundamental to the health and wellbeing of Pasifika communities in Aotearoa NZ and throughout the globe (Kealiikanakaoleohaililani & Giardina, 2016). Many studies have shown the importance of family among Pasifika communities given their collective identity (Havea et al., 2021; Matenga-Ikihele et al., 2021; Southwick et al., 2012). Grounding family relationships in cultural customs and traditions enables the transmission and preservation of cultural identity and belonging to current and future generations. As a result, the potential for positive wellbeing and life outcomes for Pasifika families is optimised (Vakalahi et al., 2013).

The 2018 Census in Aotearoa NZ showed that one-third (89,500) of Pasifika people lived with extended families, in large households with five or more people (Stats, 2023). However, housing inequity is a significant issue for many families that ultimately affects wellbeing (Howden-Chapman et al., 2021; Stats, 2023; Tukuitonga, 2023). In my practice as a clinical psychologist, home visits to young people and their families provide a realistic insight to the struggles our families face. On one hand, there is the protective factor of living multigenerationally, where children are more likely to speak a Pasifika language and learn their culture experientially (Stats, 2023). On the other hand, the houses are damp, cold and often overcrowded. It is challenging for families to prioritise Court matters when they are struggling with the basic necessities of life. Poor housing conditions are significantly associated with youth offending (Abd Al-Lattif et al., 2025; Jackson et al., 2017).

The social structures in Pasifika families are comprised with boundaries and hierarchies that acknowledge and respect the Va. For example, children, young people, adults and parents all have roles to play that contribute to the family. Traditionally, the general hierarchy exists of

the father as the head, underneath this is the mother and then the younger adults and children in order of age, and in some Pasifika cultures, gender (Schoeffel et al., 1996). The idea is that those at a higher level speak and make decisions; and those at the lower level are obliged to listen. Furthermore, the rights of Pasifika children are collective, meaning that parents, elders are actively involved in a child's upbringing, compared to Pākehā children which has a focus on the individual and nuclear family (Suaalii & Mavoa, 2001). In my assessments with Pasifika youth in the justice system, respecting these cultural boundaries is often confusing. The youth justice system is asking them for their opinion to inform decisions, yet their Pasifika culture is a collective approach with their parents' voice having priority. As a result, they become confused and distressed in trying to adjust to the worldview that they live in within the home versus the worldview that they face outside the home.

For NZ-born Pasifika children and young people, they are generally trying to find ways to belong, to be accepted and to challenge the "old school" stereotypes (e.g. that being unable to speak the language of your historic islands means that you are not Pasifika enough). However, at the same time, the relationships with the generations before them as migrants to Aotearoa NZ are integral and fundamental to their identity (Mila, 2013). These are challenges that Pasifika children and young people in general continue to face in Aotearoa NZ (Burnett & Bond, 2020), that require further exploration and understanding (Freeman et al., 2022). For those at risk of criminal offending, this potential for disconnection from cultural identity for Pasifika youth can be yet another risk factor for adverse outcomes (Shepherd et al., 2018).

Given that Pasifika people are from cultures with a collective worldview, an individual identity as we know it in a Eurocentric world is almost non-existent. In my clinical practice and lived experience, when you ask a Pasifika person where they come from, this is usually responded to in terms of their family members, ancestors, land and genealogical heritage. Therefore, when a Pasifika person is successful, it will often be attributed to their family.

Similarly, the failure or inappropriate behaviour by a Pasifika person will also be attributed to the family – hence the need for this research exploring parental experiences of young people’s offending behaviour. However, we need to ensure that the way in which we work with, and respond to, the needs of Pasifika families in youth justice is appropriate. Once we understand our Pasifika families in youth justice, this is likely to create a pathway to working authentically with their child/young person.

Pacific youth

Pasifika in Aotearoa NZ make up almost 9% of the population but have the largest proportion of youth by population across all ethnic groups (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2022; Stats NZ, 2024). Therefore, the success of Pasifika youth will undoubtedly have an impact on the future of Aotearoa NZ (Eng et al., 2024). There are 34% under the age of 15 years, 27% aged 15 to 29 years, and a median age of 23 years compared to 38 years in the total New Zealand population (Stats NZ, 2024). Pacific children under 15 years make up 14% of the NZ population, with more males aged between 0-14 compared to females. Pacific youth (aged 15 to 29) make up almost 10% of the total youth population. Many Pasifika children and young people come from multi-ethnic diverse backgrounds and almost 80% of those aged 0-29 years were born in Aotearoa NZ. Since 1995, people who identify as Pasifika and Māori has had the greatest increase, with approximately half of this group aged under 15 years old (Ministry of Pacific Peoples).

The Youth2000 surveys⁶ show positive progress being made in areas such as substance use, feeling safe at school and delayed sexual activity for Pasifika youth. However, mental

⁶ These are national surveys conducted in Aotearoa NZ that focus on the health and wellbeing of young people. The surveys are collected from secondary schools and began in 1999 with subsequent surveys in 2001, 2007, 2012 and 2019.

health and contraceptive use remain significant issues (Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2024). Pasifika youth (14-15 years) were engaged in higher substance use (vaping, cigarette smoking, cannabis) and heavy alcohol use compared to non-Pasifika and non-Māori. However, a further breakdown showed that those who identified as Pasifika-Māori reported higher use of substances and alcohol compared to those who identified only as Pasifika. In education, Pasifika youth continue to leave school with lower qualifications than the total of all school leavers in Aotearoa NZ. As a result, achievement gaps remain between Pasifika and Māori students in comparison to non-Māori and non-Pasifika students. Risk factors for youth offending include (though are not limited to) low educational attainment, substance abuse and poor mental health (Bailey et al., 2007; Farrington, 2012).

Recent studies focusing on the voices of Pasifika youth in Aotearoa NZ revealed interesting findings. Pasifika youth were generally proud of their culture and identity and remain motivated to maintain family and cultural traditions (Malatest, 2021; Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2024). These findings of positive family connection, religion, faith and cultural identity are also strong amongst Pasifika youth in Australia (Liddell et al., 2017). However, their views of culture, religion and tradition, including differences between Pasifika and Western (Aotearoa) NZ worldviews are often contradictory. For example, young people embraced their cultural values yet at times would clash with their culture. (Malatest, 2021). Furthermore, they might have conflicting views about religion (Malatest, 2021), yet large numbers rate religion as having a high priority in their lives (Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2024). Unfortunately, both studies in Aotearoa NZ reported Pasifika youth experiencing discrimination because of their ethnic identity, impacting on their sense of belonging, faith and cultural identity. Overall, there were contradictions among Pasifika youth in Aotearoa NZ where family, religion and culture were seen as both protective and risk factors within the same paradigm.

Across the globe, a systematic review about development amongst Pasifika youth found that historical trauma and cultural loss from colonisation are contributing factors to health and education disparities, likely to lead to criminal justice outcomes being prevalent amongst Pasifika youth (Eng et al., 2024). Further, compared to dominant cultures, young people from ethnic minorities (that include Pasifika) have higher proportions of socio-economic hardship, adverse challenges in their upbringing and antisocial peers, which partly explain an association between ethnicity and offending (Foster et al., 2024). However, these measures are always based on Western worldviews and systems of failure. A targeted approach is needed to understand whether Pasifika models, derived from their own epistemology and worldviews, can better illuminate these links and what to do about them, which provides further rationale for this research.

Fonofale model and other Pasifika models

To further understand the value of family within Pasifika models, the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 1995) shows the family as being the foundation of Pacific people's worldview (Figure 5). The Fonofale model is a pan-Pacific model and has been around for well over 30 years in Aotearoa NZ. It was developed in consultation with the Pasifika community, by Fuimaono Dr Karl Pulotu-Endemann, a psychiatric nurse and highly credible, well-respected Pasifika leader. Currently, it is the only model (as far as I know) that was developed with a number of Pasifika groups in Aotearoa NZ in response to the need for culturally responsive and effective services for Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ (Cammock et al., 2014). Further, it incorporates the values and beliefs of Samoans, Cook Islanders, Tongans, Niueans, Tokelauans and Fijians gathered during workshops about sexuality, HIV/AIDS and mental health in the 1970s to 1995 (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The Fonofale, named after Fuimaono's grandmother and symbolising a Samoan meeting house, is an analogy of how Pasifika people see themselves, their health and wellbeing. It is made up of

various elements and dimensions, all interconnected and highlighting the complexities of Pasifika people.

Figure 5

Fonofale model



Note. A designed version of the Fonofale model to show clarity of pous and dimensions. Adapted from Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, [Pacific approach - Fonofale Model | Mental Health Foundation](#).

The roof that protects the family is *culture*. This includes the cultural values and beliefs that are understood to protect the family for life. Culture is dynamic, evolving and adapting. It acknowledges the variation of culture amongst Pasifika families in Aotearoa NZ. It acknowledges the culture of Pasifika people growing up in Aotearoa NZ as well as the

culture of Pasifika people born and raised in the Pacific islands. Therefore, some Pasifika families may be living in a household that is traditional, where family members live and practise the ways of their Pacific Island cultural identity group (e.g. Tongan or Samoan), somewhat similarly to what is prioritised within their home in the islands. Other families may live more of the Palagi (Western or European; non-Pasifika) worldview where they practise and promote Palagi values and beliefs in their households. Other families may create a household whereby their lives are on a continuum of blending between traditional Pasifika to contemporary Palagi cultural orientation (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001).

The foundation that grounds oneself is the *family*. Family is foundational to all Pacific Island cultures. It can be a nuclear family, extended family or a family that has come together by kinship, marriage, partnership, agreement, titles, all of which are the fundamental basis of the social structure within Pasifika. The history, gafa⁷, ancestral or genealogical links of family is also what binds them to titles, land, village, island sea and to the Gods of the Pasifika, including other cultures that are also located within the family dimension. It is all the kin and family connections that ground a Pasifika person and their sense of wellbeing (Young et al., 2022).

Then, there are four pou (posts) that connect the roof (culture) and foundation (family), as well as connecting to one another: *spirituality*, *physical*, *mental* and *other*. Each pou reflects crucial aspects of a person's life (Pulotu-Endemann, personal communication, 10 February 2025). The *spirituality* pou is seen as a sense of wellbeing that comes from a belief grounded in Christianity or traditional (pre-colonisation) spirituality that relates to nature, language, ancestors, spirits and history; or it can be combination of Christianity and traditional spirituality. The *physical* pou is about physical wellbeing that is made up of the body and also

⁷ Samoan word that refers to one's ancestry or genealogical connection.

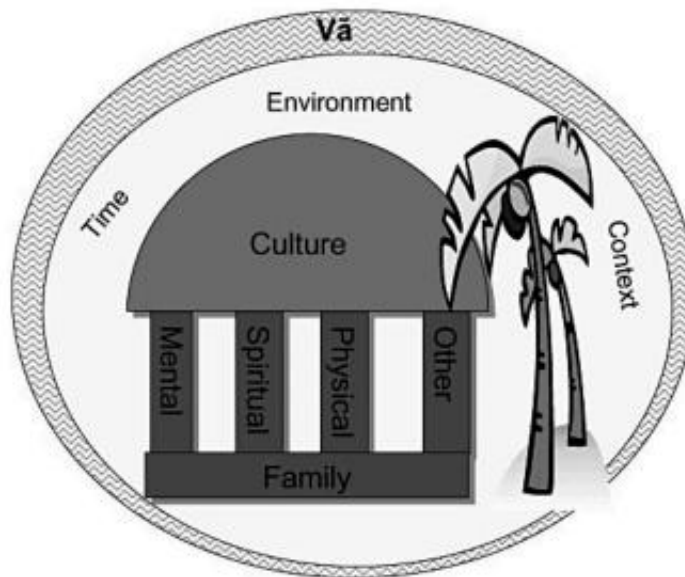
includes organic and inorganic substances (e.g. food, water, air, medications), all of which will impact in some way on physical wellbeing. The *mental* pou is the health and wellbeing of the mind that relates to thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and also includes traditional understandings and interpretations of the mind. The *other* pou includes variables that can have a direct or indirect impact on health, such as gender, sexuality/sexual orientation, age and socio-economic status.

Surrounding the Fonofale are the dimensions of *time*, *environment* and *context*. Time is the actual or specific time in history that impacted/impacts on Pasifika people. Environment is the relationship Pasifika people have with their physical environment that can include rural, urban and/or village settings. Context is the where/how/what of the context and its meaning to Pasifika people. It can include the context in relation to Pasifika people of being raised in the Pacific Islands or in Aotearoa NZ. Other contexts can also include legal, political and socioeconomic contexts (Pulotu-Endemann, 1995).

The Fonofale has been adapted by other researchers while still maintaining its authenticity. One such adaptation of the Fonofale model (Figure 6), which resonated with my research, was the inclusion of the Va (Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009).

Figure 6

Fonofale model incorporating Va



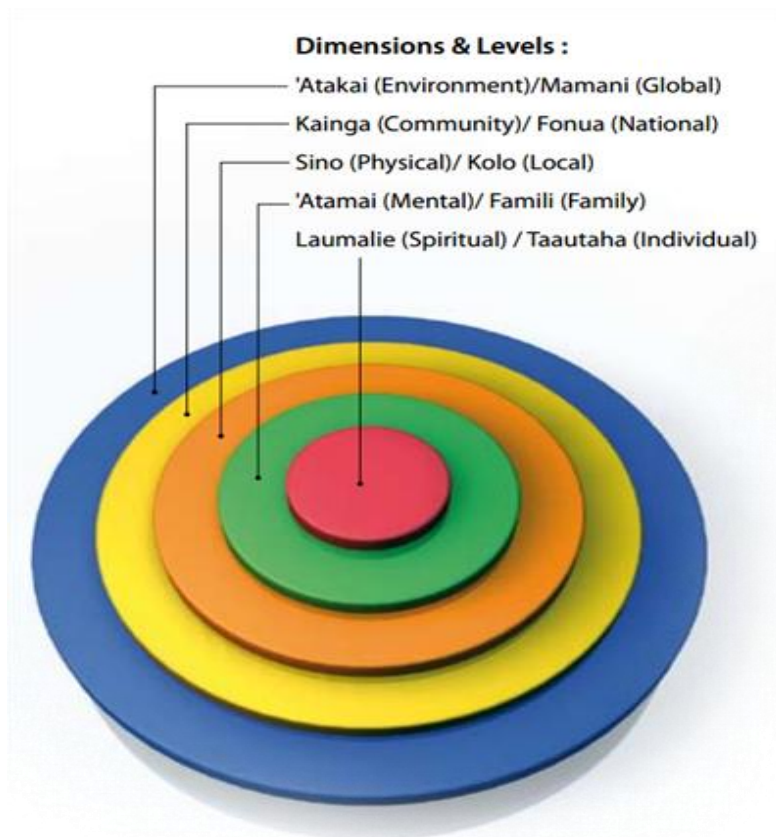
Note. An adapted version of the Fonofale model incorporating Va. From Suaalii-Sauni et al. (2009), p. 24.

As noted, Va is typically the overarching framework of what governs Pasifika communities and allows for relationality, and is added as the outer circle of the whole structure. The Fonofale model plays a significant role in this PhD and will be discussed further in the next laufala of this metaphorical 'ie toga.

There are other Pasifika models currently available in the literature and in the field; however, to what extent they are actively used or referred to in areas of psychology and the law is unclear. This is despite an over-representation of Pasifika families and community in the justice system. I will refer to them briefly to provide an awareness of existing Pasifika models that could be accessed and implemented when working with Pasifika communities.

Figure 7

Fonua model



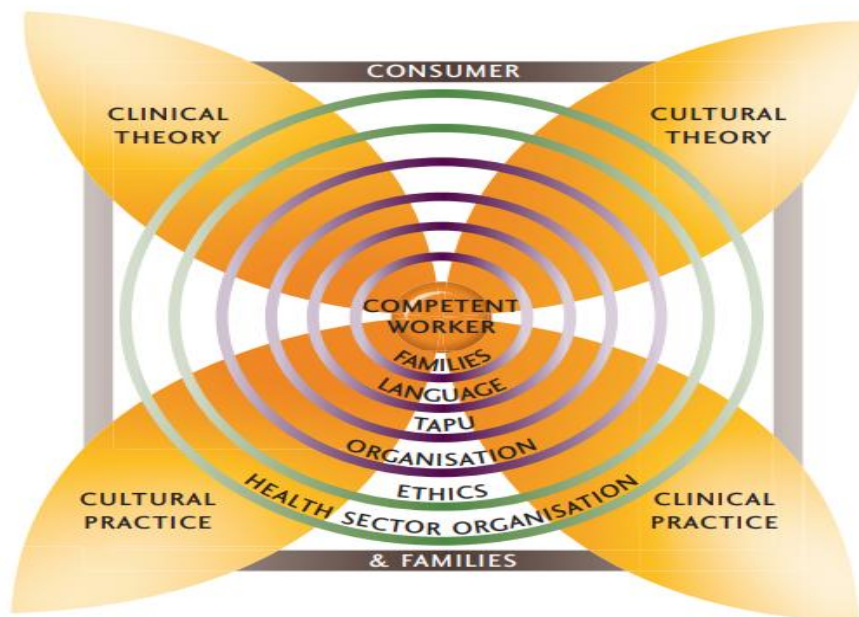
Note. The Fonua model highlighting its dimensions, with family playing a pivotal role in the wellbeing of Pasifika communities. Adapted from Talemaitoga (2010), p.6.

Pasifika models that also incorporate family include the Fonua model (Tu'itahi, 2005) (Figure 7). It is a Pacific model of wellbeing in which there are five dimensions (spiritual, mental, physical, collective/community and environment) interwoven across levels that include family. It is a cyclic model highlighting the interconnectedness of the five dimensions at the levels of the individual, family, local/village, nation and global society.

The Seitapu model (Le Va, 2009; Pulotu-Endemann et al., 2007) highlights the competent worker as being key to working with Pasifika communities because it again highlights that, to work effectively with a client, means to work effectively with their family (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Seitapu model



Note. The model shows that there must be competency in cultural theory and practice alongside clinical theory and practice for the competent staff member. Adapted from Le Va (2009) p. 13.

Recent research has also highlighted and emphasised the value of family-based approaches to work with Pasifika youth in the justice sector (Ioane, 2023). A study of practitioners and agencies looking at Pasifika perspectives and experiences of Pasifika mental health services in Aotearoa NZ mostly cited the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001) as the one they use to address Pasifika health needs. It is the model that “provides the value system that informs service delivery” (Agnew et al., 2004, p. 33). Further, it is well known for its promotion of a holistic view of health care (Faleolo, 2013; Goodyear-Smith & ‘Ofanoa, 2022). When addressing Pasifika people and the worldviews by which they live, the inclusion of family is critical, as these models have highlighted. Therefore, when working with Pasifika people who have engaged in criminal and antisocial behaviour, it will be important to understand the role of family including parents, particularly when working with young people in youth justice.

Youth justice

‘Youth justice’ in Aotearoa NZ and internationally is a justice system for children and young people who have or are alleged to have committed a crime. In Aotearoa NZ, youth justice jurisdiction includes “children” aged 10 to 13 years old, and “youth” aged 14 to 17 years old (Lynch, 2008). Given the age of the children and young people, family/caregivers must be involved with decision-making and be present to provide support. For this to occur, professionals and partner agencies must work together with families as they support their young person in justice (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2019). Local and international studies show that a supportive environment that includes having a safe home, and having targeted responses to improve parenting practices, school retention and access to prosocial peers can mitigate the risk of youth offending and recidivism (Barnert et al., 2015; Dennison, 2011; Ioane, 2023). Positive parent-child relationships and family-child relationships are seen as a major protective factor to reduce youth offending and recidivism (Queensland Government Statistician's Office, 2021). However, when a young person’s offending has escalated to becoming chronic, they require intensive interventions that address risk and enhance protective factors in ways that may be different to non-chronic youth offending (Baglivio et al., 2014). Having a coordinated, multiagency approach is important to respond to the needs of a young person engaged in offending behaviour (Barnert et al., 2015; Becroft, 2015). Not unexpectedly, involving the family of the child or young person has been shown to improve outcomes for those engaged in offending behaviour (Ioane, 2023; Magidson & Kidd, 2021).

History of youth justice in Aotearoa NZ

Youth justice in Aotearoa NZ has followed pathways similar to international trends. Historically, children and young people were convicted similarly to adults with criminal

behaviour (Watt, 2003). Towards the end of the 19th century, there was an increased understanding that children and young people needed to be dealt with differently. Countries began to establish reformatories to keep young people separate from adults in the criminal justice system and to look at a more unique and appropriate processes for dealing with children. That is, there was a move towards child-centred, welfare-based treatment, as child welfare agencies and child laws were established (Lynch, 2008).

At a global level, it is difficult to say where the first ever separate youth court was established. Some say it was in Illinois, United States in 1899, though the State Children's Act in South Australia established their youth court in 1895 (Frieberg et al., 1989). Subsequently, youth courts were also established in England and Canada (1908), France and Belgium (1912), Austria and Argentina (1919) and Germany and Brazil (1923) (Watt, 2003). For Aotearoa NZ, the Child Welfare Act 1925 formally established the Children's Court. The purpose of the Act was "to make better provision with respect to the Maintenance, Care, and Control of Children who are specially under the Protection of the State: and to provide generally for the Protection and Training of Indigent, Neglected, or Delinquent Children" (Children Welfare Act, 1925). This highlighted a welfare approach where the response was about protection and guidance and seeing the 'delinquent child' as a child in need (Watt, 2003). Since then, there has been a number of pieces of legislation and significant events that have impacted and affected the youth justice system in Aotearoa NZ, as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 *History of legislation relevant to Youth Justice in Aotearoa NZ*

Year	Legislation / Event
1867	Neglected and Criminal Children Act passed. This gave the Courts power to commit to industrial schools. Children and young people who were neglected and/or with delinquency behaviour were kept separate from adults.
1882	Industrial Schools Act passed, the Neglected and Criminal Children Act is repealed, placing guardianship of neglected or criminal children in the hands of Managers of Industrial Schools.
1893	Criminal Code Act passed. S22 states that no person under the age of seven could be convicted of an offence and those under the age of 12 were given the benefit of the <i>doli incapax</i> ¹ rule.
1906	Juvenile Offenders Act. Objective of the Act is to keep children separate from criminal acts by establishing private hearings for young people, Magistrates assign ‘special hour’ for hearing about charges against a person under 16 years old.
1947	District Courts Act gave a Judge the power to hold “a particular sitting of a Court at any place he deems convenient”. This is the provision that provided the opportunity for the Rangatahi and Pasifika Youth Court to be set up in 2010.
1957	Juvenile Crime Prevention section of the Police established.
1961	Crimes Act passed. The age of criminal responsibility was raised from seven to ten years old and the <i>doli incapax</i> rule was formalised.
1968	Guardianship Act was passed stating that the interests of the child or young person shall be the first and paramount consideration (s23(1).
1972	Department of Social Welfare (DSW) formed.
1974	Children and Young Persons Act. It placed an emphasis on diversion for young people.
1978	Royal Commission on the Courts is published with a recommendation to establish a Family Court that includes the Children and Young Persons Act within its jurisdiction.
1979	Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination (ACORD) provides a report on the maltreatment of children placed in the care of DSW homes.
1984	Labour government establishes a Working Party to review the existing Children and Young Person’s legislation. Also, the Women’s Anti-racism Action Group (WARAG) submitted a report <i>Institutional Racism in the Department of Social Welfare</i> . ²
1985	Criminal Justice Act passed. A person under the age of 16 years cannot be imprisoned unless for purely indictable offence. ³
1986	Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū (Daybreak): The Report of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on a Maori Perspective for the Department of Social Welfare was submitted. ⁴
1989	Aotearoa NZ signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children Young Persons and their Families Act is passed.
2008	Rangatahi Youth Court established.
2010	Pasifika Youth Court established.
2014	Vulnerable Children Act passed.
2017	Children Young Persons and their Family Act is renamed the Oranga Tamariki (OT) Act with an accompanying title of the Children’s and Young People’s Wellbeing Act.
2018	Royal Commission Inquiry into the Abuse in State Care begins.
2019	Amendments made to s5 and s7 of the OT Act (see Tikanga Māori section).
2024	Royal Commission Inquiry into the Abuse in State Care ends and reports submitted. Youth Offending Amendment Bill (Responding to Serious Youth Offending). ⁵ S7 of the OT Act is repealed.

Notes: 1. A legal presumption that a child below a certain age is not criminally responsible for their actions.

2. The report was completed by a group of women employed in DSW who chose to research racism within their workplace. As a result, the WARAG was disestablished following the release of their report. See [Institutional-Racism-WARAG \(1\).pdf](#)

3. These are serious offences usually dealt with by a judge and jury in the District or High Court in Aotearoa NZ.

4. A pioneering report that recognised issues faced by Māori due to systemic failures because of colonisation, racism and structural inequity.

5. Cabinet-agreed policy decisions to establish a Young Serious Offender (YSO) declaration and a military-style academy order.

Sources: Becroft, 2015; Smith, 2023; Watt, 2003.

The Rangatahi and Pasifika Courts were established in the late 2000s. These courts operate in the same way as Youth Court though their location is in the cultural community (e.g. marae, church hall⁸) and also includes the implementation and practice of Māori and Pasifika worldviews. I have attended these Courts as a report writer of psychological reports. The ‘vibe’ or experience is an engaging, therapeutic and inclusive environment for the young person at their family. At the same time, it also upholds the accountability of the young person without diminishing their identity and worldview. The cultural environment, cultural attire and the presence of elders, plus the use of te reo Māori and relevant Pasifika languages, creates a stark contrast to the Western mainstream youth court setting. Research also validates the positive influence of the Pasifika Youth Court on youth (Urale-Baker, 2016), and is discussed further in this literature review.

In 2024, Cabinet agreed to establish a Young Serious Offender (YSO) declaration and a military-style academy order. Currently, the Government has set a clear target to reduce child and youth offending, seeking a 15 percent reduction in the total number of children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour by the end of 2030. Further, it will give Police and Youth Court additional powers with a military-style academy order as a new sentencing response under Section 283 of the Oranga Tamariki Act.

Legislation⁹

Oranga Tamariki Act

The Oranga Tamariki Act (1989) ("OT Act," 1989) is the legislative framework by which youth justice (YJ) is implemented in Aotearoa NZ. The objective of the OT Act is to

⁸ A marae is a traditional Māori meeting place; and the use of a church hall responds to the spiritual identity of many Pasifika people in Aotearoa NZ and throughout the world.

⁹ In this section, I have emphasised in bold various sections of the legislation that refer to family and parents.

“promote the wellbeing of children, young persons and their families, whānau, hapū, iwi and family groups” (Youth Court of New Zealand Te Koti Taioho o Aotearoa, 2019). Of interest to my research is an understanding of the general principles in the Act that involve family and whānau. Section 5(c) and 8 of the Act (Appendix A) highlights the emphasis on family where relationships with the child are to be maintained and strengthened. Further, family is to be included in decisions with efforts made to seek support of the family in relation to the young person; and be informed of decisions made. Section 208 2(c) of the Act (Appendix A) highlights the Principles of Youth Justice. It also provides opportunities whereby any responses to child and youth offending should include a focus on family to strengthen and build their capacity to respond to their child. Parental involvement is also highlighted at the time of questioning their child when an offence is alleged or committed in s229 and s232 of the Act (Appendix A). It is clear that the Act supports parents/caregivers being well-informed on what is happening to their child right from the outset. Furthermore, s232 also highlights the need for the notice to be *given in language that can be understood by all the persons who are required*.

One of the key practical methods for involving parents is the establishment of a Family Group Conference (FGC) (Becroft, 2015). The FGC is a statutory forum where the child, family, professionals (e.g. police, lawyer) attend to decide on responses to the child’s offending. Supporters of the family and relevant agencies may also attend. The victim(s) of the offence is also invited to attend, though this has its own challenges and needs more systemic support (Williams & Ioane, 2021).

S259A of the OT Act (Appendix A) refers to the FGC as a forum where consideration is given to provide support to a parent/caregiver. Specifically, for parents, s259A (b) refers to a parenting programme for a parent or guardian having care of the child. Of interest are the Court’s expectations of a parent in s278 (Appendix A). Further more, s288 talks about the

parent/guardian being fully informed when orders are made and be given opportunity to respond. Another part of the Act, s297A (Appendix A) refers to parenting education programme orders and parents being required to attend a parenting education programme. This includes an appropriate written statement directing parents to do so and what will occur if they fail to comply. There can be times where Court places a young person in the custody of the Chief Executive of OT (that is, removes them from the care of their parent/guardian). Despite this, and to maintain contact between parent/caregiver, s313 (Appendix A) provides opportunity for the Court to grant access for the young person to their parent/caregiver based on terms and conditions that the Court thinks fit. There is also an opportunity for parents to appeal to the High Court against any orders by the Youth Court or under the OT Act, providing an opportunity for parents to challenge appropriately drawing on the relevant legislation, s352 (Appendix A).

Following on from this, s359 (Appendix A) advises that the High Court is then able to order for parents to be present at the hearing. The High Court is also able to order that the parent, guardian or another person brings the young person to the hearing with them. If this is not complied with, the Court can issue a warrant to arrest. At the hearing, the parent can be queried in any matter relating to the appeal.

There are also miscellaneous provisions relating to proceedings under the Act where s437 (Appendix A) highlights the requirement that any person making an application or any matters under the Act is to inform the parent/guardian with a copy of that information. The information needs to ensure that the parent/guardian is able to understand clearly what is happening. The information also needs to show what rights or obligations a parent has or to be represented by a lawyer, and any rights of appeal against the order.

The OT Act clearly lays out that the involvement of a parent, guardian or other person caring for the child or young person is to be included in the child's youth justice matters. The

nature of their involvement ranges from strengthening the relationship between child and parent, participating in decisions and sharing their views, supporting their child, being informed of decisions, providing family-centred solutions, to be kept informed, and to engage in a parenting programme if appropriate. Whilst the legislation acknowledges the importance of family, including the involvement of parents, putting this principle into practice is difficult (Becroft, 2015). The challenge is that whilst parental involvement is important, difficulties around that is potentially a key factor that has influenced youth offending, and a successful intervention ideally requires the involvement of family and parents to address those challenges. Historically, a child and their parent are seen to be responsible for the offending behaviour of their child (Hollingsworth, 2007). More recently, the rhetoric is about supporting the parent, and the youth justice system working together with them (Snider et al., 2022). Equally important is recognising the relevance of social and economic factors that need to be addressed when involving the family (Becroft, 2015) – for example, having a parent attend Court may involve them seeking unpaid leave from work (and therefore potentially disclosing to an employer what is happening), transport issues, lack of childcare for other children in the home and so on.

The legislation appears to assume a relationship exists between the system (e.g. Court, OT) and parent/caregiver, and that this relationship is critically important to a child's (positive) progress in the youth justice system. Research has shown that the more active and engaged a parent is, the more likely an outcome can be successful (Magidson & Kidd, 2021; Varma, 2007)

However, in my experience as a psychologist in the justice sector, I continue to observe the absent or minimised voice of the parent/caregiver of the child. The review of legislation that I have undertaken has made me wonder how much of this information is shared with parents so that they understand their legal entitlements. Lawyers and advocates involved in

Youth Court are there for the child, it is unlikely that they provide information to parents about the role a parent has according to the legislation. Whilst the OT Act (1989) refers to parents/caregivers in a variety of areas of YJ, there is little discussion on the implementation of the legislation, guidance on how parents/caregivers are to be included and, of critical importance, the timeframes for when such involvement should occur. Importantly, the voices of parents are integral to determining whether legislation is being effectively implemented, but evidence of that occurring is missing.

International Conventions

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of the Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rule) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) acknowledge specifically the role of family in youth justice¹⁰. The focus of UNCROC is on the rights of the child, rather than the family. However, reference is made highlighting the importance of the family as noted in its preamble, “***convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community***”¹¹ (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1989). Article 18 of UNCROC¹³ appears to suggest that the role of parents is in their child’s upbringing and development. Further, Article 27¹³ infers that the state will assist the parents in supporting them, with mention of basic needs. In reference to criminal justice provisions, article 40 (b) (ii)¹³ highlights the involvement of parents though the responsibilities and rights

¹⁰ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (“The Beijing Rules”), adopted by General Assembly resolution 40/33 of 29 November 1985.
<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/beijingrules.pdf>.

¹¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child. Preamble adopted 20 November 1989. [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#)

of parents/guardians are unclear. The legislation does not explain nor specifically highlight the role of the parent in criminal justice processes (Becroft, 2015). Therefore their presence is recognised, but not their role.

Aotearoa NZ signed UNCROC on 1 October 1990.

Whilst the above has discussed the legislation both locally and internationally, I now turn to what is both law and lore in Aotearoa NZ, followed by a brief exploration to youth justice in Samoa and Tonga.

Tikanga Māori and te Tiriti o Waitangi Principles in the Youth Court

In 2019, amendments were made to the OT Act ("OT Act," 1989) that included the wellbeing of a child/young person to be at the centre of decision making. S5 (b) of the Act included:

(iv) mana tamaiti (Tamariki) and the child's or young person's well-being should be protected by recognising their whakapapa and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whanau, iwi and family group: ...

(v) a holistic approach should be taken that sees the child or young person as a whole person which includes.....

(C) whakapapa; and

(D) cultural identity

S5(c) of the Act goes on to say that the child/young person's place within their family (hapu, iwi, family group) should be recognised, and in particular recognised that:

(ii) the effect of any decision on the child's or young person's relationship with their family, whanau, hapu, iwi and family group and their links to whakapapa should be considered

(iii) the child's or young person's sense of belonging, whakapapa and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whanau, hapu, iwi and family group should be recognised and respected

S7AA of the Act places a specific duty and accountability on the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki to commit to practically applying te Tiriti o Waitangi. This led to a whole new standard and ways of responding to and working with youth justice to ensure the principles were effectively met. As a result, tikanga Māori and te Tiriti principles informed a range of decisions across the Youth Court since the amendments in 2019 (Smith, 2023). However, in 2025, s7AA was repealed by the current government (Beehive.govt.nz., 2025).

Given the Polynesian connection between Māori and Pasifika, the implication of this repeal further supports the need for this research - looking at experiences of Pasifika families in YJ. Prioritising the role of families and whānau gives opportunity for Tamariki Polynesia (Polynesian children/young people, whether Māori or Pasifika) to thrive under the protection of their whānau and aiga (family).

Youth offending legislation in the Pacific Islands (Samoa and Tonga)

In 2019, I was fortunate to be offered a role to work for the Judiciary in Samoa as a consultant psychologist (Figure 9).

Figure 9

With members of the Samoan Judiciary



Note. (L-R) Judge Papalii, Justice Tuatagaloa, Judge Saaga, Julia Ioane (Dec 2019).

Most of my work involved training of staff and conducting psychological assessments across the various jurisdictions. I was often in the Youth Court training clinicians and providing them with opportunities to observe my practice. The Judiciary in Samoa were very keen to understand the role of psychology and psychologists in the justice system.

Samoa has a Young Offenders Act (2007), which in some ways has similarities with the OT Act in Aotearoa NZ. Parents are referred to in the Act in Section 7. *Youth Court may require **parents attendance**.....to appear before the Court and may ask any questions of the parent or parents or guardian and may require such questions to be answered under oath. Failure to comply by the parent or guardian can result in a warrant of arrest.* Section 9 refers to the right of a young person being entitled to *(b) **attendance of his or her parent or caregiver or any member of his or her family at the hearing of proceedings where it is practical to do so.*** Other areas of the Young Offenders Act (2007) refer to formal police warning (s18) and notice of warning or formal police warning (s19). This is done by

including parents to ensure that they are informed and aware of the warning or formal police warning to their child.

Tonga has no separation of children and youth offending (17 years old and under) as they did not have the legal framework to cater for a child- and youth-specific justice system. In their 150-year-old written Constitution, there is nothing specific for a child's rights, though they have access to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). They had an "unofficial Youth Court" established in 2008, dealing with young people under 18 years old, where they adopted principles and articles from the UNCROC (Pahulu-Kili, 2024). However, recently this has changed. In 2024, Tonga established a Tonga Youth Justice Bill 2024 (Lao Fakaangaanga 'a Tonga ki hono Fakamaau'i'o e To'utupu 2024) with a public consultation held in October 2024. The aim was to look at the objectives of the Tonga Youth Justice Bill and to address youth offending in a developmentally and culturally appropriate way (Talanoa 'O Tonga, 2024). Given the collective worldview of Pasifika people, it is most probable that parents and families will have a role.

The relevant legislation in Aotearoa NZ for youth justice including tikanga Māori and te Tiriti o Waitangi Principles, international conventions, and legislation in the Pacific Islands clearly highlight and (in some cases) direct the involvement of parents and caregivers in their child's journey in youth justice. The legislation *requires* the involvement of parents and caregivers. However, when I explored studies looking at parental experiences in youth justice in the literature, it showed that in reality this was not the case. I will comment further on this in the relevant sections to come; however, it is clear that legislation upholds and directs parental participation in youth justice, without clearly indicating where and how this should occur.

Therefore, if the YJ system is to truly involve parents and families, it requires an understanding of these families. We need to understand their background, what they bring to the situation as they try to support their child. This also includes the possibility of trauma, intergenerational trauma and childhood experiences which can impact on their engagement with services, their responses and their resources.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study is an investigation of childhood abuse, neglect and household challenges and their impacts on the negative outcomes in adult health and wellbeing (Ogilvie et al., 2022). However, more recently, ACEs has been used to understand drivers of behavioural outcomes, including youth offending behaviour (Craig et al., 2017).

The ACEs study began in 1995 in the US, with the work of health practitioners, Dr Vincent Felitti and Dr Robert Anda. Dr Felitti began to see a theme amongst his patients with obesity – that they had had abusive childhood experiences, particularly growing up in dysfunctional households (Felitti, 2019). As the team began to research this further with the distribution of questionnaires to households about adverse childhood experiences, they found a strong relationship between exposure to abuse and household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). Subsequently, ten key ACEs were identified – emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, parental separation, exposure to family violence, family member substance abuse, family member mental health problems, and family member incarceration. This research has been replicated and expanded on globally, with a growing and expansive body of literature pointing to the emotional, social and physical consequences of complex, chronic, childhood trauma.

Indigenous youth in Aotearoa NZ and Australia, including Pasifika youth, are found to have a disproportionately higher risk of ACEs, compared to non-Indigenous youth (Fanslow et al., 2021; Lambie et al., 2025; Ogilvie et al., 2022). This is consistent with overseas studies looking at multiple minority identities (Areba et al., 2021; Sieben et al., 2020). Of importance to this PhD, and to the design and development of the metaphorical 'ie toga, the most significant protective factors for children at risk of ACEs are the relationship between parents (mother-partner relationship), and the level of parental health and wellness (Walsh et al., 2019). Parents' ACEs have an impact on their parenting, and consequently, on the health and wellbeing of their children, and their engagement with services involved with their youth. This provides further evidence to support research into parental engagement and role of parents with their child in the youth justice system.

ACEs are well known to be prevalent in the childhoods of those involved in youth justice systems both nationally (Lambie et al., 2025) and internationally (Astridge et al., 2023; Malvaso et al., 2022). Astridge's study, for example, found that emotional abuse was a key contributing factor to youth offending. Exposure to family violence is consistently present in the developmental histories of young people whose antisocial behaviour has brought them into the youth justice system (Ioane et al., 2016; Ogilvie et al., 2022). Therefore, programmes need to look at ACEs of young people who are in their services, in order to strengthen protective factors and weaken risk factors to reduce recidivism (Astridge et al., 2023; Graft et al., 2021).

Interestingly, cultural perspectives on trauma are absent from the current ACEs framework and more needs to be done here. Furthermore, it is also thought, at an international level, that poverty and racism need to be added to ACEs, particularly for Indigenous and ethnic minority youth (Maté, 2025). This was validated by an earlier study exploring the impact of systemic adversities within the communities within which children grow up. In a racially diverse urban

population in the US, 40% of the sample had experienced at least four of the five community-level ACEs¹² (Finkelhor et al., 2015), including experiencing racism or discrimination.

Understanding ACEs among young people in youth justice provides an opportunity for a targeted response to their needs and provides insight to what children have already endured in terms of childhood and intergenerational trauma. However, it is also important to explore ACEs among parents/caregivers in YJ. This is so that the system is able to respond with the right interventions and resources for the child and their parents/caregivers. Also, even though there is evidence to show the prevalence of ACEs with young people engaged in offending behaviour, it is important to remember that a large number of young people who experience ACEs do not go on to engage in antisocial/criminal behaviour (Ogilvie et al., 2022).

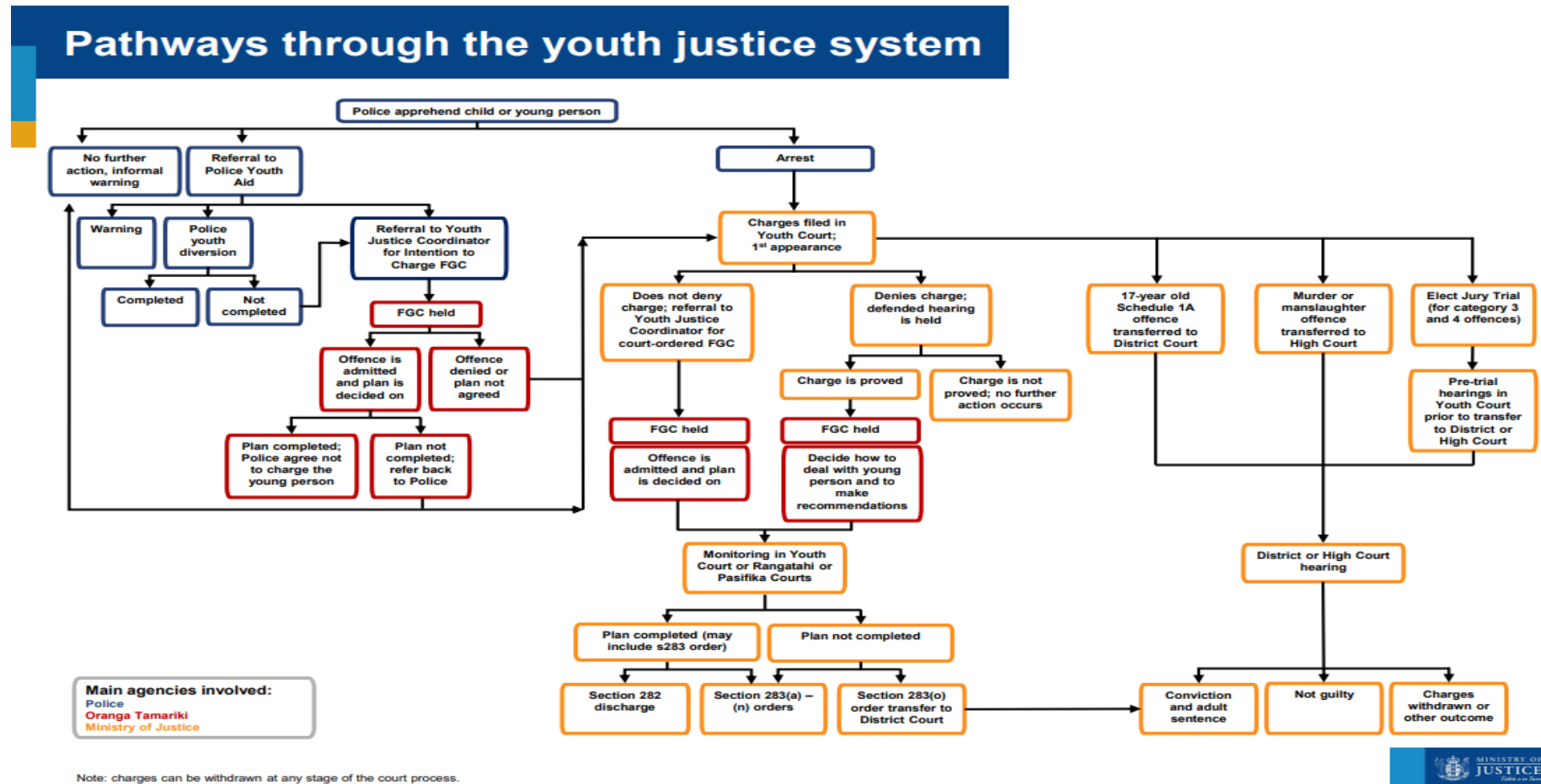
Pathways into youth justice

Figure 10 shows the pathways through youth justice in Aotearoa NZ and clearly highlight the level of involvement by justice sector agencies (Police, Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Justice). However, it does not show where there is interaction, involvement or contact to be initiated with parents/caregivers. In my opinion, this clearly shows the disconnection between legislation and practice. Whilst the legislation refers to parental/caregiver involvement (as noted), the pathway that guides agencies and practitioners in YJ makes no mention of parents/caregivers. If parents/caregivers are to be involved, they need to be seen, addressed and included, in the same manner as the involvement of agencies are acknowledged and highlighted in all youth justice information.

¹² The 10 ACEs were expanded to include five adverse experiences at the community level (witnessing violence, being put in foster care, experiencing bullying, experiencing racism or discrimination, feeling unsafe in the community).

Figure 10

Pathways through the Youth Justice system



Note. Adapted from Ministry of Justice (2025), <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Pathways-through-the-youth-justice-system-v1.0.pdf>

In order to have effective engagement and involvement from parents/caregivers, we first need to understand their experience of being in the YJ system. However, their voices are largely absent from the literature and pathways in Aotearoa NZ. Etiological studies are seen as having a ‘deficit’ lens, where they look at the failings of families when their young person ends up offending. Yet the strengths and needs of families, once offending has happened, is not well known. This metaphorical ‘ie toga (study) seeks to explore and address this current gap in the field.

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

The Ministry of Justice in Aotearoa NZ premises its work with children by drawing on the Child and Youth Strategy 2024-2027 (Te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa New Zealand Government, 2024). The strategy outlines the vision and desired outcomes for all children and young people nationwide. The three priorities are a) supporting children and their families and whānau in the first 2000 days; b) reducing child material hardship; and c) preventing harm against children. The strategy will be reviewed in late 2027. Achieving these priorities means to take action in improving the lives of children and young people in Aotearoa NZ and is aligned with the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 ("Child Poverty Reduction Act," 2018).

The Ministry of Justice contributes to this strategy via work in the Family Court (Ministry of Justice, 2022). This is done by making sure that the children’s interests are paramount, and by working with the Ministry of Education to make sure that children and young people live free from discrimination and racism. The Ministry of Justice also works together with other sectors via the implementation of new family violence laws and supporting the Sexual Violence Legislation Bill. This is to promote and enable thriving families and communities that support our children.

Of interest to this PhD and its metaphorical 'ie toga, the Ministry of Justice also contributes to child and youth wellbeing through the Rangatahi and Pasifika Courts (Ministry of Justice, 2022). The aim is to reduce Māori and Pasifika youth offending by enabling families and communities to be more involved in the youth justice process. Overall, family and parents play a significant role in the lives of young people (Snider et al., 2022). This is also crucial amongst Pasifika youth, though the emphasis is more on their collective identity (Pasikale & George, 1995). Therefore, in order to respond to Pasifika youth offending, an understanding of offending behaviour within a Pasifika worldview is crucial.

Offending among Pasifika people

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a "tofi" [an inheritance] with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging. (Efi, 2003, p. 51)

When working with young people who have engaged in criminal and antisocial behaviour, it is important to understand their family and background, including parents. Given the collective worldview of Pasifika (as described in Efi's words above) and understanding of the Va, offending behaviour is often attributed to the whole family, rather than the individual who practically carried out the offence. I have grown up hearing stories and witnessing violence in my community, hearing my elders ask the questions, "Where are they from? What village are they from?" Once you knew where they were from (in terms of family name and village), then one could reportedly begin to make sense of the tragedy that has occurred. It is important to note that this will also occur when you hear stories of accolades and

achievements in the community. People will ask, “Where are they from? What village are they from?” One’s success is attributed to their family, their village. Similarly, one’s failures or shame will also be attributed to their family, their village. There is shame amongst the family and, potentially, a misguided sense of pride not to seek out support. In my experience, many of the parents I am involved with will try to keep the offending behaviour private, for fear of being judged and shamed by extended family members. They experience self-blame and guilt for their child’s behaviour and typically anger and frustration towards their child for the offending behaviour. Therefore, the notion of a family-based response is appropriate and relevant; though the understanding of why it is appropriate and relevant goes beyond family dysfunction, shame and guilt. It must incorporate cultural understandings of offending behaviour and Indigenous worldviews.

The response by Pasifika families in justice, who are trying to deal with matters on their own, is not an isolated experience. Pasifika families with loved ones with poor mental health try to deal with their loved ones on their own without seeking help (Agnew et al., 2004). The reasons why they do not present to mental health services, unless it is mandatory, or they are late to seek help from mental health services is due to issues of shame or pride (Jeremia, 2003). In contrast to families with justice-involved children, when families do need support with a loved one’s mental health, they are more likely to turn to the system for support rather than to extended family members. Reasons for this include pride, geographical distance from extended family members, and knowing that family members are already stretched, due to their own commitments and lack of socio-economic resources (Agnew et al., 2004). However, this view has somewhat evolved, with research showing that more than half of Pasifika people experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression were more likely to talk to a close friend or family member, rather than seek professional support (Ataera-Minster & Trowland, 2018) .

Across all ethnicities, understanding why a young person might have engaged in offending behaviour cannot be authentically understood without considering the family (Becroft, 2015; Magidson & Kidd, 2021). However, beyond Western understanding of including the family in Youth Court because of legislation, the worldview of Pasifika highlights the need to include family because of a) the collective identity of Pasifika; b) responsibility and blame placed on Pasifika families from their own community; and c) violation of Va that subsequently violates and compromises Pasifika identity. Given the lack of knowledge regarding Indigenous parents' experiences of Youth Court, coupled with historical and current issues of racism and discrimination that exist in Youth Court (Brown et al., 1990; Love & Wiley, 2025) and the over-representation of Indigenous youth in the system (Ioane et al., 2013; Latu & Lucas, 2008; Olsen et al., 1995), targeted research and understanding parental experiences and involvement is well overdue.

Pacific youth offending

Youth justice statistics in Aotearoa NZ show rates of offending continue to decline, dropping by 64% for young people between 2009/10 and 2019/20 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Furthermore, Youth Court charges have decreased by 73% between 2008 and 2018. Whilst this is encouraging, the rate of decline is less for Māori and Pasifika, and for those engaged in serious offending (Polglase & Lambie, 2024). This is consistent with global data where there is a reduction in low to moderate youth offending although the growth in chronic and serious offending remains significant (McCarthy, 2021).

Nine percent of youth in the YJ system in Aotearoa NZ are Pasifika, compared to Māori (69%) and European (21%). However, it is important to acknowledge that those of Pacific/European or Pacific/Māori ethnicities can be prioritised into European or Māori, which means their Pacific identity is not recognised nor counted (Ministry of Pacific Peoples,

2020). The proportion of Pasifika youth in Youth Court with ‘orders’ (offences that have been proven or not denied) has varied between 11% and 14% since 2010, with a recorded drop to 9% in 2019/2020. The number of distinct offenders for Pasifika young people in YJ reduced by 62% between 2009/10 and 2019/20 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Whilst this is positive news, the type of offending behaviour by Pasifika children and young people remains a concern.

In 2007, almost two decades ago, violent offending was the main offence type recorded against Pasifika youth (Ioane & Lambie, 2016). In 2020, the main offences for which Pasifika children and young people were charged in Court were ‘Acts intended to cause Injury’ (NZ Police, 2022). These ‘acts’ included interpersonal violence, aggravated and common assault (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017). A review of the past decade shows that in 2009/10, 32% of offending by Pasifika children and youth was of a violent nature,¹³ increasing to 51% in 2020/21 (Stats NZ, 2022). In summary, while youth offending has decreased overall across all ethnicities, violent offending continues to be significant amongst Pasifika youth in the justice system.

Research published in 2016 showed Pasifika youth in the justice system in Aotearoa NZ (Ioane & Lambie, 2016) and Australia (Ravulo, 2016) grew up in the lowest socio-economic areas in both countries, were exposed to or involved in family violence, and were more likely than those from other ethnic groups to commit a violent offence as their first offence. Unfortunately, a further study on Pasifika youth in the justice system in Aotearoa NZ nearly 10 years later found that they continued to be raised in environments with emotional and physical abuse and living in low socio-economic areas (Ioane, 2023). All of the young people in this latter study were either facing or had faced Youth Court, suggesting their offence was

¹³ Offences included homicide, Acts intended to cause injury, sexual assault and related offences, dangerous and negligent acts endangering persons, abduction, harassment and other offences against the person, and robbery, extorting and related offences.

at the severe end of criminal behaviour. Similarly, Pasifika youth in the justice system in Australia engaged in offending behaviour that is seriously indictable; that is, of an aggressive and violent nature (Ravulo, 2016).

Research has shown that the reasons for their offending included a need to survive, alongside having status, sensation-seeking and not thinking about the consequences of their actions (Ioane, 2023; Perkins, 2015). However, offending stopped due to a change in motivation/mindset, with some recognising the adverse impacts of their offending behaviour on others or needing to be there for their family. Other factors included a positive change in the way they valued their family, and having access to appropriate programmes including a return to or staying in school (Ioane, 2023). Interestingly, a study looking at young people offending in the Cook Islands found that risk factors related to poverty, child abuse, school exclusion, and grief and loss (due to parental migration and subsequently the loss of a grandparent), all contributed to their offending behaviour (Perkins, 2015). Unsurprisingly, a family-focused approach that incorporated cultural responsiveness and understanding (e.g. inclusion of spiritual worldviews) was seen to produce cultural resilience that protected the Cook Island family (Perkins, 2015).

Work is needed to develop family-based programmes to address cultural factors and resources, prioritise high quality of relationships alongside economic and financial wellbeing (Ioane, 2023). Furthermore, the need to provide culturally appropriate responses to understand social risk and protective factors are important to reduce the influx of our Pasifika children and youth being part of the youth justice system in Aotearoa NZ and across the globe (Ioane, Tofaeono, & Lambie, 2021; Ravulo, 2016). As this literature review continues to highlight, culturally responsive approaches are needed for Pasifika youth, and it is important to understand how they are currently dealt with in Youth Court. Fortunately, and unique to Aotearoa NZ, we have a Pasifika Youth Court, which will be explored next.

Pasifika Youth Court in Aotearoa NZ

Within the Youth Justice (YJ) system, the Pacific Youth Court (PYC) was established in 2010 to address youth offending within a cultural context. Currently, there are two PYCs, both of which are in Auckland. Provisional results of reoffending rates appear positive, with a lower recidivism rate for those who appeared in PYC compared to a control group (Tuimavave, 2017). The purpose of the PYC is to ensure that the best therapeutic response to Pasifika youth prioritises strong cultural connection and inclusion with Pasifika communities. It is inclusive of the young person and their family and introduces Pasifika cultural elements whereby court proceedings are contextualised to the language and worldview of participants. It features elders and lay advocates from the appropriate Pacific Island for the young person and their family. Lay advocates are appointed under the Oranga Tamariki Act (s326) to ensure that the court is aware of cultural matters relating to the young person and their family, and to represent the interests of the young person or their whānau in their culture ("OT Act," 1989). Elders are not appointed under legislation, though it is often well known that they are there because they are respected amongst Pasifika communities (Tamasese et al., 2014). In practice, I have seen lay advocates work directly with parents/caregivers to ensure they are aware of court processes and support them to motivate their young person with appropriate court plans.

Positive experiences by Samoan youth in PYC were based on the cultural relationships they encountered that included their interaction with a Pacific Judge and elders (Urale-Baker, 2016). Comparisons were made by Urale-Baker (2016) with the mainstream Youth Court, where the environment was described as being surrounded by “criminals”, “gangster” with feelings of a “need to impress” and be “cool”, whereas in PYC, the Samoan youth described being surrounded by Pasifika people and family, with feelings of “calm” and being “safe” (p.

73). This suggests that a cultural environment in a court setting provides opportunity for positive connection and engagement for a young person. The PYC prioritises Pasifika youth in the YJ system though it is also available for non-Pasifika youth. Furthermore, the PYC understands their collective identity as Pasifika and therefore a young person is seen within the context of their family. Alongside the research exploring young people's experience in different YJ court settings, it is also important to explore what is currently in place to support families within those settings.

Youth offending interventions (Pasifika and non-Pasifika)

As previously discussed, Pasifika models implemented in practice here in Aotearoa NZ consistently highlight the role of family (Le Va, 2009; Tu'itahi, 2009). In the context of YJ, families are important, though the resourcing for families in YJ is limited. Therefore, as noted in the review by Forrest and colleagues (2021), Indigenous models must be prioritised when working with Pasifika communities.

What works for youth and their families in YJ continues to be reviewed throughout the world (Haines & Case, 2018; Smith & Gray, 2019). An exploration regarding the future of youth justice in England and Wales identified three areas of practice that could be enhanced to reduce offending/recidivism as well as the gaps in policy. These included expert analysis, specialised youth justice workers and Children First approaches (Haines & Case, 2018). Expert analysis engages in practice-informed evidence by reviewing real-world evidence and integrating this within an expert analysis framework for policy and practice development. This promotes collaboration and partnership between practitioners and academics, leading the researchers to introduce the concept of 'pracademics' (Posner, 2009). Specialist youth justice workers are focused on youth justice, though are also specialists in areas such as child and adolescent mental health or speech language therapy. Children First approaches highlight the needs of children first and the organisational structure, that those needs fit within, is

secondary. For example, this is almost a ‘do what it takes’ pragmatic approach, to ensure the needs of children are met, ranging from prevention (Taylor 2016) to diversion, to child-focused intervention (Byrne & Case, 2016), and individualised and targeted prevention (Kelly, 2012). How this will be implemented remains a challenge. The organisational structures in YJ often impede how interventions can be sourced and actioned. Whilst there is merit in the three practice areas identified by Haines and Case (2018), from my own Pasifika lens, a Children First approach without family involvement is likely to have limited effect.

In Aotearoa NZ, youth facing YJ matters are usually required to engage in mentoring, alcohol and drug counselling, counselling and education, as described in Section 259a of the Act ("OT Act," 1989), and parents may also be required to take parenting education classes. An exploratory study was recently undertaken regarding young people’s interactions with professionals in the YJ system, including Pasifika youth (Lount et al., 2018). All of the young people involved in the study highlighted communication difficulties within the system. This ranged from difficulties in understanding what was being said in court, to limited opportunities to speak. The use of “communication assistants” in the Youth Court was significantly supported by professionals in the justice system (Howard et al., 2020b). Communication assistants are speech and language specialists who provide support for young people in YJ who have communication difficulties (such as difficulty concentrating, literacy or language issues, learning difficulties). An evaluation of the communication assistance programme showed that it prioritised young people being at the centre of the YJ system, supporting it to function optimally. This was also substantiated in a later study with rangatahi and whānau who found that having a communication assistant resulted in positive experiences in court and promoted children’s rights to be fully recognised (Howard et al., 2021). Interestingly, and relevant to this current research, there is a need to explore the involvement of communication assistants for parents and families supporting their young

person in YJ who may be finding the language and procedural systems very difficult (Howard et al., 2020a).

A recent article by Pacific social workers looking at Pacific youth justice suggested that the Fonofale model and Talanoa model may be beneficial in working with Pacific youth in the justice system (Ravulo, 2019). Ravulo suggested that having a cultural understanding of the young person and their family, that responded to their social and welfare needs, enabled positive change, whilst engaging with a young person. This included a prioritisation of the contexts in which a young person lived, and, for Pasifika, that included considering their cultural values and beliefs. Interestingly, a project in Australia with young Pasifika people in the justice system who struggled with their cultural identity gave them the opportunity to be introduced to Pasifika cultural materials (Blake et al., 2015). The young people were exposed to this via a visit to the museum looking at Pasifika history and cultural collections. The outcome was promising and funding was granted to roll this out to the community; thereby highlighting the potential that reconnections with culture may have as a protective factor (Blake et al., 2015).

Youth offending amongst Pasifika youth remains a concern in society today. Fortunately, we have the PYC to assist a young person and interventions to support them such as counselling, mentoring and having communication assistants. Of note, however, the PYCs are only located in Auckland, which does have the highest proportion of Pasifika residents but by no means all of them, meaning that Pasifika elsewhere do not have access to this service. It is clear from the evidence of having individual, youth-focused interventions, that more needs to be done to target appropriate and culturally responsive interventions for Pasifika youth. Pasifika youth have a collective identity and yet this review so far has shown that the authentic inclusion of Pasifika parents and families remains to be seen. As noted at the

beginning of *Su'esu'e le lau'ie* (literature review), I conclude this section with the core focus of this PhD research – parental experiences in Court.

Parental experiences in Court

Parental experiences in Court are understandably challenging as parents attempt to navigate through a system that is complex, with many processes and resources to understand and professionals to work with. I will first provide a literature review looking at parental experiences in Court that include the Family Court, Youth Court and the Sexual Violence Courts. Unsurprisingly, there is no research on Indigenous parental experiences in Youth Court as far as I know, so I will provide literature on Indigenous parental experiences in *other* Court jurisdictions. As far as I am aware, there is no research on Pasifika parental experiences in Court or the justice system. However, there is research on Pasifika parental experiences in the education and health sectors that I later draw on as a comparison with the current research.

There has been some research with parents in relation to youth justice proceedings, outside of Aotearoa NZ. Overseas studies in the 1990s showed parents (of all ethnicities) being dissatisfied with sentencing, and young people with youth justice matters pleading guilty to avoid a trial (Sas & Project, 1993). Parents reported long waiting times for Court hearings and feeling stressed, betrayed, abandoned by the justice system (Eastwood & Patton, 2002). Of importance is a recent US study showing almost 90% prevalence of PTSD among parents with a child involved in youth justice (Pieterse et al., 2022). Peterson-Badali and Broeki (2004) in Canada looked at perspectives of youth and parents in YJ proceedings and showed parents being excluded from having formal influence in court. However, parents also provided a supportive role, such as helping their young person understand matters in court. Parents wanted to be involved but needed information about the system, including the specific matters/issues

surrounding their child. A later study in 2009 by the same authors highlighted the role of parents as fundamental to child and adolescent development (Peterson-Badali & Broeki, 2009). However, the practical implementation of involving parents is challenging. In Canada it is unclear how parents could be involved more, with the researchers highlighting an absence of parental involvement in processes and procedures. This is also similar to Aotearoa NZ (Becroft, 2015).

American research showed Corrections staff to be motivated to include parents, but court processes were difficult to navigate (Davies & Davidson, 2001), even for highly educated parents (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003). However, when Corrections partnered with parents, probation outcomes were prioritised, rather than less favourable custodial outcomes (Maschi et al., 2013). Furthermore, when parents were involved, they were likely to have an impact on the outcome of their child in court (Varma, 2007). Not surprisingly, parents who turned up with plans and support for their child were more likely to influence outcomes. Despite this, however, Varma observed that there was no appropriate process for parents to provide feedback in a court hearing. This was often dependent on the judiciary – as I have also witnessed in my psychologist role in Aotearoa NZ.

Another Canadian study looked at parental experiences of legal and judicial processes for child sexual abuse (CSA) victims. It found inconsistencies in the legal system, dissatisfaction with outcomes and parents losing control once CSA had been reported to authorities (Alaggia et al., 2009). Alaggia and colleagues (2009) noted this as an understudied area yet important given that parental support can be a mitigating factor for the negative effects of CSA.

Parents experience difficulty in having to navigate through various agencies in the justice system whilst also dealing with socio-economic disadvantage (McGinnis, 2024). Furthermore, it is important to recognise the impacts of structural factors, such as poverty, on children that

can contribute to a pathway towards criminal offending (Jahanshahi et al., 2022; McAra & McVie, 2025; McGinnis, 2024).

More specifically to the jurisdiction of particular types of courts, the Australian Family Court was experienced by parents as creating anxiety and distress (Francia et al., 2019). Parents were concerned that they were not taken seriously and noted inadequacies in their knowledge of the system. This impacted on their relationships with others, including family and professionals. As a result, there was a call for more collaborative, high quality and independent information to assist them. A 2011 New Zealand review of Family and Youth Court proceedings reported that parents found that, even when they tried to do the right thing, they experienced systemic injustice and exclusion (Boshier, 2011). Children needed consistency and high responsiveness from their parents. This included the courts needing to have a focus on providing parents with education and support and that the foundation of good judicial intervention needed to be planned appropriately and with the community (Boshier, 2011). More recently, research showed that parents wanted to see services that were more connected, such as social and youth offending services coming together for the young person and their parents/caregivers (Hunter et al., 2020). In general, Court is difficult to navigate with parents continuing to find it punitive and unsupportive as their voices are not being heard, nor do they fully understand what is being asked of them nor how to ask questions (Aldrich & Berman, 2006; Schechter, 2001; Stephens et al., 2021). Interestingly, a parent's relationship with the Judge and the Judge's ability to understand and connect with them are seen as being transformative in the courtroom (Stephens et al., 2021).

When a parent is first made aware of the offending behaviour of their child or young person, it is a time of stress and mixed emotions (Johnson, 2016). Their ability to manage themselves appropriately is being judged from the outset by professionals, such as lawyers and Judges (Snider, 2023). Issues also begin to arise such as who to share their child's situation with, such

as telling an employer (to seek leave), telling younger siblings or extended family members (Snider et al., 2022). Parents are also limited in their knowledge of the various processes such as plea decisions/bargaining¹⁴. They will often become frustrated in the decision-making process because they do not have the legal right to make decisions on behalf of their child and, in many cases, will find themselves in new territory as their legal rights as parents are not supported (Fountain & Woolard, 2021). Children and young people in the justice system can often look to their parents for support to make a decision or plea. In my experience, parents are not asked nor included, and their child or young person is not aware that they can speak to their parents. Parents feel a huge sense of stress, loss and grief when their child is placed away from them, especially when they feel they have no say in such a decision (Thomas, 2018).

In general, parents are expected to participate in areas such as providing transport for their child/young person to attend all required meetings and proceedings; ideas on placement options, including away from their care; and even covering court costs. Research has shown that there is a lack of communication and relationship between what expectations are between parents and professionals, coupled with evidence of professionals' biases and preconceptions about parents who have a child involved in youth justice (Aldridge et al., 2011; Maschi et al., 2013). Parents have been reported as often finding themselves silenced in the court room, where they experience a sense of blame that has been placed without any exploration of their circumstances or barriers to access (Lens, 2019); issues around language barriers and understanding that have not been recognised (Riley & Hayes, 2018; Abel 2013); and being judged by their emotional expressions in Court. Parents blame themselves and express shame about their child's behaviour (Aldridge et al., 2011). Parents have also reported that they felt

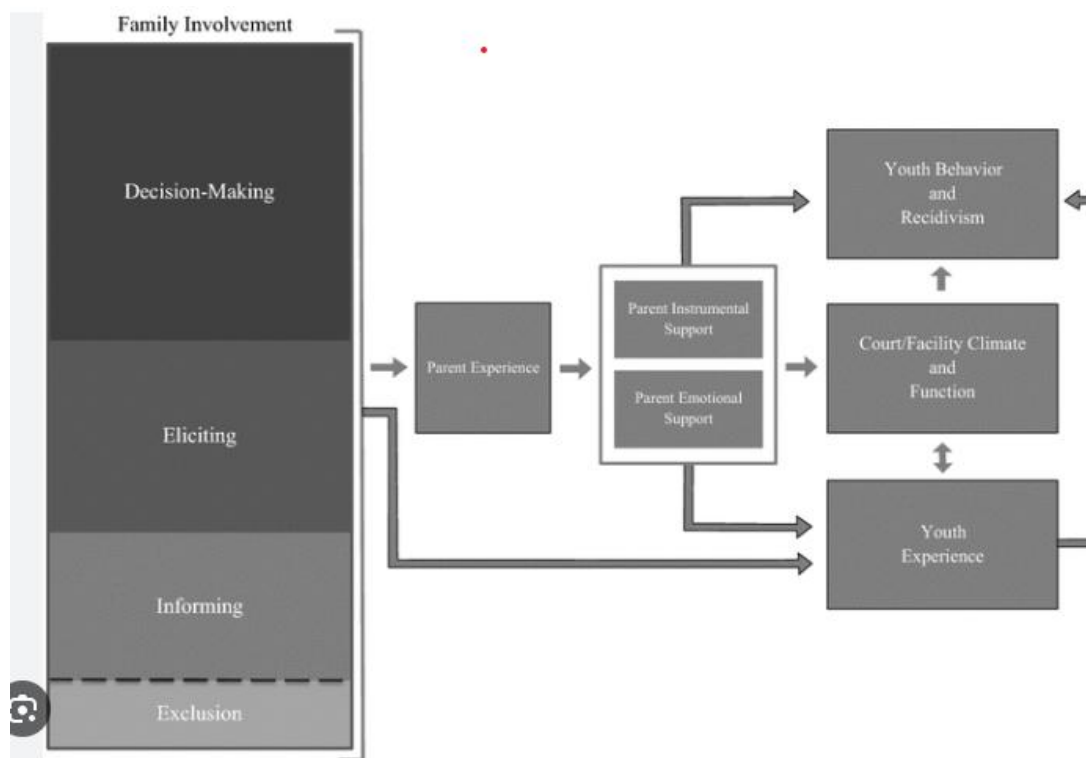
¹⁴ A plea decision is a young person's response to the offence they have been charged with. In Youth Court it is whether a young person denies the charge or admits to the offence. Alternately, the Judge can decide that the young person committed the crime and therefore the offence is proven.

threatened and judged by professionals, impacting on their ability to feel welcome in Court and subsequently limiting their interaction in Court (Pennington, 2012).

The “Juvenile Justice Family Involvement” model (Figure 11) was developed in the US, drawing on practice-based evidence and models currently implemented in health and social systems (Walker et al., 2015). It is a model that looks at the levels of involvement a parent can be engaged in, ranging from information-giving to full participation in decision-making. It is understood that this model is best implemented first by building relationships with parents who have previously gone through the system. Building these relationships will provide opportunity to develop strategies to support new parents coming into the youth justice system. Therefore, the voices of parents are included from the outset and are seen as contributing to identifying problems and solutions to work successfully with parents and their child. The study authors argue that this is more likely to lead to parent-informed, family-influenced processes and systems that build collaborative, respectful and mutually beneficial relationships between parents, family and the youth justice system (Walker et al., 2015).

Figure 11

Juvenile Justice Family Involvement Model (JJFIM)



Note. The Juvenile Justice Family Involvement model. Adapted from Walker et al. (2015), p.416.

Parent advocacy services in youth justice are interesting to explore, though existing research consists of a focus on such services predominantly care and protection, and child welfare systems (Jones et al., 2021). Defining the role of parent advocacy services is somewhat vague though it is generally about empowerment, enabling and speaking up for those discriminated against or unable to speak for themselves (Schraml-Block & Ostrosky, 2022). However, it appears to be an ‘experts by experience’ approach, where those who have themselves navigated successfully through a system can be valuable to support others going through that system. The benefits of parent advocacy include increased quality engagement in court, helped by matching parent advocates with other parents based on socio-economic status, cultural and lived experiences, which leads to much better connection (Nilsen et al., 2009). Unsurprisingly, there is limited research looking at parent advocacy services for

Indigenous people (Jones et al., 2021). Parent advocacy services are not formally provided to parents/caregivers of children/young people involved in offending in Aotearoa NZ.

Overall, the experiences of parents/caregivers in youth courts continue to be less than positive, with ongoing recommendations made but not enacted, such as for parental education about Court and providing parental support (Pennington, 2015; Varma, 2007), more coordination among sectors (Alaggia et al., 2009; Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009), and quality partnerships needed between parents and professionals (Maschi et al., 2013). This is despite the evidence that parental involvement leads to better outcomes for their children and young person (Snider et al., 2022; Stephens et al., 2021). The challenge remains, that parents are insufficiently supported to be able to understand what is expected from them and what occurs at the various stages of a youth court process. It is clear that research in the area of parental experiences in Court are largely from Western dominated countries such as Australia (Francia et al., 2019), Ireland (McGinnis, 2024), the USA (Snider et al., 2022) and Canada (Badali & Broeking, 2004); further supporting the need for prioritising research with Indigenous including Pasifika parents experiences of Youth Court.

Indigenous and ethnic-minority parents experiences of Court

Studies looking at Indigenous parental experiences with child welfare court in Montreal, Canada found that power disparities existed predominantly amongst professionals (Leckey, 2022). Child welfare was seen as a form of power and control over a mother's experiences of the system (Robertson et al., 2022). Recommendations to enhance authentic Indigenous parental experiences ranged from building more effective relationships between parents, family supports and professionals; having greater access to quality Indigenous cultural supports (e.g. elders), including the implementation and recognition of cultural legal traditions; using interpreters; and holding conferences outside of the court room. Further, whilst Leckey's study reported an openness amongst the judiciary to adapt the legal system to

accommodate cultural traditions and practices, it was only to be “as long as within what is reasonable” (p. 165). Herein is an example of the power disparity that exists. Whilst there is an openness to working together, one party (the judiciary) continues to hold the power of determining the nature and extent of working together. Within a local context, it is heartening to see that the Rangatahi and Pasifika courts provide “court outside of the courtroom” in Aotearoa NZ; whether this could be mirrored in the Family Court may be a point of exploration, but is outside the parameters of this research.

A study of parents’ views and personal experiences of court by African American and Hispanic communities in the US showed that parents saw themselves as being relevant to their child’s case matters (Pennington, 2015). They sought support from the court to address their child’s behaviour. However, parents in the study still felt disengaged and passive and that, in turn, influenced their behaviour and affected case outcomes. Therefore, even if ethnic-minority parents were given a sense of having a voice, it may not necessarily improve the fairness of the court (Varma, 2007)

Interestingly, findings of Indigenous parental experiences in Court are similar to those in other sectors such as education. A systematic review of Indigenous parents’ educational engagement highlighted barriers to effective engagement that included parents’ relationships with school; the school’s cultural barriers and inability to respond to the cultural worldviews of parents and families; difficult family circumstances; lack of material support available to Indigenous families; and their own capacity as parents to help their child (Sianturi et al., 2022). As a result, the systematic review found that supporting the child’s development *and their parents* was the most recommended response strategy. This included developing a curriculum that integrated Indigenous culture, language and knowledge, and acknowledging economic circumstances, such as needing to access support with transportation, housing and food.

Pasifika parents' experiences of the systems we live within

Pasifika parents' experiences and how they view themselves and their families are likely to be influenced by a number of social, economic and cultural factors that impact on their engagement in services and adherence to treatment and programmes (Ministry of Health, 2020; Pulotu-Endemann, 1995). Research on parental experiences in health revealed services were not family-centred, and had limited social and parenting support. Further, the effects of poverty, the importance of religion, the constraints of socio-economic status, and having to endure lifelong stigma were important factors that needed to be clearly understood and incorporated by the system to effectively engage with parents (Palavi et al., 2025). Another study of Pasifika parents' experiences in health found the need for healthcare professionals to *teu and tausi* (build and nurture) *le Va*, recognise and acknowledge culturally responsive practices (e.g. relevance of faith and spirituality) and the importance of information-sharing that was undertaken in a culturally responsive way (Walsh et al., 2025).

Interestingly, a study across seven Pacific Islands found decreased substance use (alcohol, cigarette, cannabis) amongst young people when their parents were positively involved with them, and the risk of engaging with antisocial peers reduced when parents made a point of setting rules with the child about their peers (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2018). This was consistent with other (non-Pasifika) studies highlighting the benefits of positive parental involvement to stop substance use (Tornay et al., 2013), and prevent violence and truancy (Fletcher et al., 2004). Further, a more recent meta-analysis found the value of parents' participation in therapy with their child, which helped to curb externalising problems, when compared to the child partaking in therapy on their own (Pine et al., 2024).

Within the education sector, Pasifika parental experiences of engaging in education found that relationships were key to effective engagement (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006). However,

barriers to the engagement included mutual lack of cultural understanding and acculturation between teachers and parents, language needs not being met, and limited resources within the family and system. Recommendations included building, supporting and sustaining quality authentic relationships that were empowering and collaborative, with clear communication between parent, community and school. This was to ensure parents were included in their child's progress, maximising opportunity for achievement.

It is clear, therefore, that gaps exist in the involvement of Pasifika parents in their child's education and health in Aotearoa NZ. However, evidence across the Pacific Islands has shown the value of parental involvement, which is consistent with other international findings. Furthermore, involving parents can be seen as an avenue to address the inequitable outcomes that exist for Pacific and minority populations in health (Palavi et al., 2025) and education (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006), as well as decreasing risky behaviours and poor psychological health amongst children and young people (Fletcher et al., 2004).

Summary

Parents feel shame and responsibility as they come to terms with the trauma and stress of their child's offending behaviour and subsequent isolation as a parent navigating through the system (McGinnis, 2024). Despite this, there is (to an extent) an expectation by society including themselves that they should play an active role in their child's youth justice matters. The review of the literature highlights the legislative requirements of the role of parents in youth justice, though the implementation and operationalisation of this is challenging (Becroft, 2015) The involvement of parents in the youth justice system needs to start with communication, participation, and working together. Parents need to understand what their role is, and the system needs to be clear on the role of a parent, including within each of the various professions involved in the justice system (Snider et al., 2022). How a

clinical psychologist might see the parent's role (while conducting psychological assessments of the child's mental state and the parents' skills as caregivers) might be very different from what lawyers from the court or social workers from child welfare services consider parents should be doing. Parents continue to have a protective role during adolescence, even when it is developmentally appropriate for the role of peers to be prioritised (Quiroga et al., 2017). Their role is, arguably, critical in influencing outcomes for their young person in the justice system.

From a practice perspective, I often experience that the actions of a parent can be misunderstood in the youth justice system. When parents do not engage, it is seen to be uncooperative, resistant and 'typical'. As an assessor or therapist, my role is to understand what is happening with a young person and their family that is related to the offence, although equally important is the extensive background and dynamics of the entire family system. This is very different to enforcement (Police) or mandatory services (OT). I have generally found when conducting assessments that parental 'non-compliance' can be due to structural barriers (e.g. having to travel or take time off work to get to appointments or receive visits during the scheduled hours that suit professionals), consistent with previous literature (Snider, 2022). There is often poor communication between professionals and parents, including a lack of understanding that can be frustrating for everyone. However, the issue is that the disconnection between parents and the system can impact negatively on the current and future outcomes of the child. More research is needed to understand parental experiences and provide opportunities for their meaningful participation to uphold and value their rights as parents, and support them in putting their child first (McGinnis, 2024).

Pasifika youth are over-represented in the youth justice system and they continue to be vulnerable to risk factors contributing to youth offending (Ioane & Tudor, 2023). However, the response to mitigating the risk of re-offending continues to be drawn from Eurocentric,

individualised and Western worldviews. This review has provided something of the background, worldview, beliefs and practices unique to Pasifika communities. It has also paid attention to the understanding of offending behaviour within this cultural context, including how Pasifika worldviews are currently responded to in the youth justice research. A specific and targeted review of the literature, directly relating to the topic of parental experiences, has highlighted how negative they tend to be for ethnic-minority families in health, education and justice.

The review has highlighted gaps in research mainly relating to parental experiences in youth justice and the role of Pasifika worldviews, beliefs and protocols in youth justice. More needs to be done to respond effectively and appropriately to this marginalised community in society.

As a result, my PhD aims to a) provide a worldview of this Pasifika community; b) provide research on Pasifika parents' experiences in youth justice, given the significant role of parents with their children; and c) increase knowledge of working with and for Pasifika communities in Aotearoa NZ. Of utmost importance to me, and honouring my leadership servitude, is to reiterate that this research is not initially informed by the literature reviewed. Rather, it came from the voices of Pasifika parents in youth justice who participated in a separate study on the mental health and wellbeing of their justice-involved children and young people, and subsequent discussions with appropriate leaders of the community in justice and Pasifika. And so, this research has been driven by the voices and needs of those families, in a plea to be heard, understood and meaningfully included in the YJ system when their young person becomes involved in this system. This is their story.

My Pacific youth justice research

The development of this PhD or metaphorical 'ie toga was born out of a larger piece of research looking at the health and wellbeing of Pasifika young people in the youth justice system (Figure 12). I was the sole researcher on this original Pacific youth justice research (entitled *Assessing mental health and wellbeing among high-risk Pasifika youth in Aotearoa*) and it is therefore important to contextualise how my PhD came to fruition.

Figure 12

Research on Pasifika youth in the youth justice system (Aotearoa NZ)



Note. This was research with Pasifika youth and their families involved in the youth justice system. This is the cover page of the research report (Ioane, 2023).

The research focused on the prevalence of mental health issues amongst Pasifika young people involved with youth justice, and examined culture, family and spirituality to determine any association with mental health. Participants were 24 young people, and their parents/caregivers of Pasifika descent engaged in the youth justice system in Auckland. The

exclusion criteria were young people in the youth justice system with a diagnosed intellectual disability, given the literacy required for the psychometric questionnaires involved in the research.

The research was funded by the Health Research Council (HRC) as a Pacific Emerging Researcher First Grant in 2018 after a rigorous review process with external reviewers to HRC. An Expert Advisory Group (EAG) was identified as part of my application and played a critical role in the research. The EAG were comprised of Pasifika and non-Pasifika leaders of the community in justice, education and social services (Figure 13). The primary role of the EAG was to provide subject matter expert opinion for the research. Various areas that they contributed to included recruitment, methodology, and connection and engagement with the Pasifika community and the justice sector. Findings were discussed with the EAG for their insights, particularly in how findings would relate to policy and practice in the YJ system. Despite the busy schedules of the EAG members, they remained committed to attend and participate in meetings, throughout the duration of the HRC research project.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the involvement of the late Professor David Fergusson¹⁵ with my HRC application (Figure 14). Numerous meetings were held with Professor Fergusson to discuss the feasibility of the project, its mixed methodological approach and its relevance to the Justice system. Fortunately, the application was a success, and I engaged in a robust, rigorous and intensive ethics process.

¹⁵ Professor David Fergusson was a well-known and highly respected international leader among researchers. He was the founder of the longitudinal study, Christchurch Health and Development Study in the 1970s and was a strong advocate for developing interventions to reduce childhood adversity and behavioural disorders. He is often regarded as New Zealand's greatest ever lifecourse researcher ([Obituary: Emeritus Professor David Fergusson remembered](#), News, University of Otago, Christchurch | University of Otago).

Figure 13

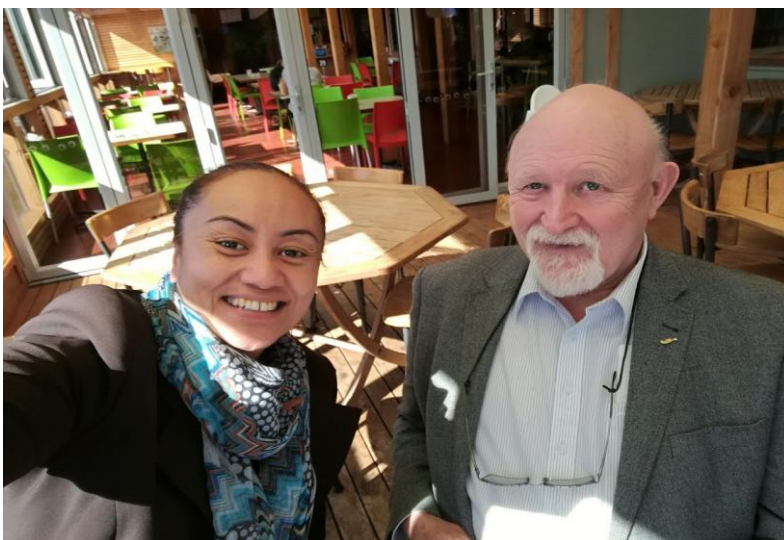
Expert Advisory Group



Note. Members of the Expert Advisory Group from (L-R) Prof Ian Lambie, Ms Analaupulou Cullen (Dept of Corrections), Mr Steve Pasene (OT), Judge Ida Malosi, Prof John Horwood, Ms Eleanor Chan Boon-Hunt (Lay Advocate), Aiolutepa Ms Sina Aiolutepa-Aiono (OT), and Inspector Peter Stokes (NZ Police).

Figure 14

The Late Professor David Fergusson



Note. I was fortunate to meet with Professor Fergusson in person to discuss the research methodology and recruitment process (2018).

With the advice and guidance of Professor Fergusson and Professor Lambie, an application was submitted to the Health and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC) in March 2018. Due to the sensitive nature of the research and the vulnerability of participants being those in youth justice, I attended an in-person meeting with HDEC. The meeting was an interesting process with one Pasifika person on their committee. I found it challenging in having to justify my Pasifika processes to a committee that did not understand nor, from my perspective, accept my worldview. Comparisons were made about their experiences with trying to engage in research with my Pasifika community and the expectation that I would have the same challenges. Issues were raised about my intention to give a monetary gift to participants and the risk of ‘coercion’ they felt that could introduce. Yet, from a Pasifika worldview, honouring participants’ engagement in this way was about having integrity and honouring the Pasifika values of Respect and Reciprocity. Another example was the committee’s concern about me interviewing young people and their families that I may know, given my clinical work in the justice sector. In my worldview, the identity of Pasifika people is relational and we would engage based on our relationships (Tamasese et al., 2005). It was entirely appropriate to talanoa with participants who were known to me, and it was also encouraged by my EAG.

According to HDEC, there were a number of ethical concerns and issues raised, and the research was consequently declined. The reasons for decline were that it did not meet certain ethical guidelines for intervention studies. Further discussions were held with my EAG and Professor Fergusson, and it was decided that I would submit a new application and would compromise over some of the concerns raised. For example, I would not interview participants who were known to me clinically. I did not change my intentions around providing a monetary gift for participants. As a result, and following a further meeting with HDEC, I was granted ethical approval in September 2018. I also submitted an ethics

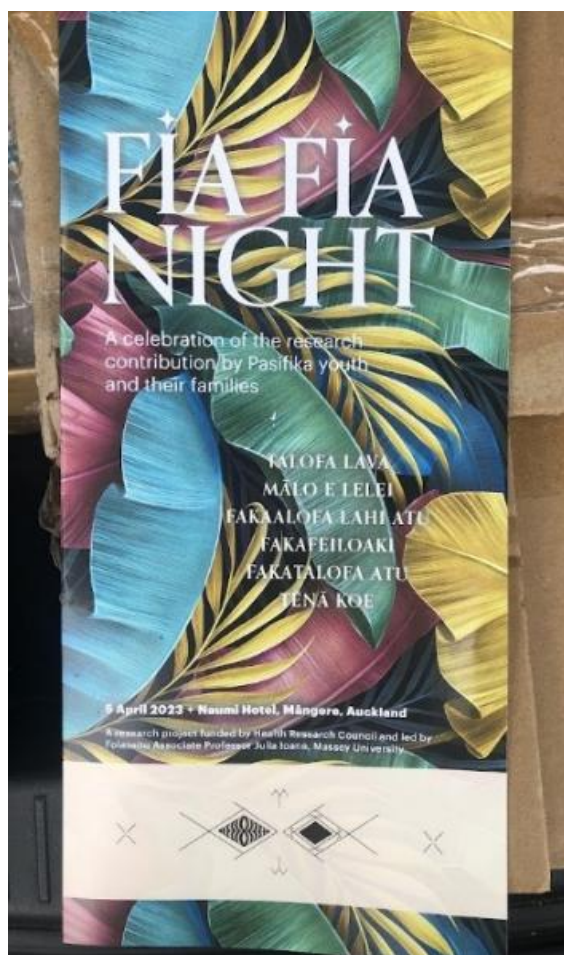
application to Oranga Tamariki that was approved, given the role of OT in the care and administration of support to young people in the youth justice system. Numerous meetings were held with OT site offices and the NZ Police to recruit participants. I also drew on the support of a Samoan Lay Advocate to assist with recruitment.

The Pacific youth justice research was a mixed methods pilot observational study grounded in the Fonofale model. Given the collective identity of Pasifika people, their families (parents/caregivers) would also be included to ensure a holistic and culturally authentic understanding of their mental health and wellbeing. For the HRC research, the Talanoa methodology was used to ensure there was ample opportunity for time, labour and location to be acknowledged and adhered to (Vaiotele, 2006). The participant information sheet and confidentiality/consent forms were discussed in person with all participants. These were available in English, Samoan and Tongan. Opportunity was provided for any questions to be asked. Once parents signed their consent, the interviews could begin. The same process was followed with the young person. All interviews with the young person and their parent/caregiver were conducted separately. Interpreters were offered, though only Samoan participants wanted to speak in Samoan, which I could respond to, given my own fluency in Samoan. I met them at their preferred location and time; and I would take something with me to acknowledge my gratitude for their time and sharing of knowledge. The interviews with parent or young person were conducted over a four-year period (2019–2022) to ascertain their voices throughout their journeys. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a Samoan transcriber based in Samoa.

Expectedly, COVID-19 delayed some of the talanoa, although phone calls were made to check in with participants during this time and maintain our Va. Appropriate cultural protocols and practices were adhered to and are discussed in the next chapter of this PhD. At the end of each talanoa, a meaalofa (monetary gift) was given to each participant for their

time and knowledge. Throughout the journey, meetings were held with the EAG to discuss findings and to hold me accountable in my work.

Figure 15 *Programme for the Fiafia Night*



At the end of the project, I hosted a Fiafia (celebration) night with all participants to celebrate the end of the research journey. When the idea was canvassed with participants and the EAG, all were motivated to support an event. It is important to acknowledge that all of the participants in the study lived in the areas in Auckland with the highest deprivation. I was aware of the need to ensure the event would be accessible for this community. Therefore, the event was held locally, and invitations were sent to the young person and their parent/caregiver, with the dress code described as ‘Pasifika wear’. Due to our collective identity, the

invitation was extended to any other family members they wished to invite, and transport was provided to the event. Senior and Pasifika members of the Judiciary, NZ Police, OT, Health, and the HRC were invited and attended, including the EAG and Professor Fergusson’s wife. The event was hosted by the late Fa’anana Efeso Collins. The event was particularly moving. It was an opportunity to honour participants and witness an occasion that was unique to the way research is conducted, yet authentically representative of the way in which Pasifika respect relationships and Va.

Approximately 80 guests attended the Fiafia night. The key speaker for the event was the NZ Principal Youth Court Judge, Judge Ida Malosi. A programme was distributed to every

attendee outlining the evening. In the programme was an outline of the event and a brief summary of findings (Figure 15). There was also a written acknowledgement of all the participants with their names listed in the programme, with their permission. None of the parents wanted to remain anonymous; they wanted to be acknowledged, as well as meet with other parents with similar experiences.

Figure 16 *Service Recognition Award for participation in the HRC research*



Figure 17 *Food packs gifted to parents at the Fiafia night*



A buffet Pasifika menu and entertainment was provided. The young person was gifted with an award to acknowledge their contribution (Figure 16). Parents/caregivers were gifted with a food package (Figure 17). The highlight of the evening was when a young person spoke about his experience with the research and his journey in youth justice. The event was well-received, and participants were reportedly grateful for the experience. I made a point of not discussing the research during the Fiafia night; rather, it was an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of the Pasifika community to the youth justice system through their participation in the research.

A few weeks later, the research report (Ioane, 2023) was blessed by one of our church pastors and launched at a private

dinner with participants and the EAG (Figure 18). Presentations soon followed to OT, Police, Education and the Judiciary, including local and international conferences alongside media interviews. Whilst recommendations were made, there was still room for more research, given some of the limitations acknowledged in that report. Recommendations included conducting a national study with potential for a longitudinal approach, and the need for more diverse Pasifika participants including our tangata whenua in the youth justice system.

Figure 18

Launch of the Pasifika youth justice report



A further funding application was made to the HRC in 2023 based on the recommendations made in the report (Ioane, 2023). Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in the second round of the process. Currently, a further funding application is being made for the 2026 round with HRC; with current discussions held with Australian counterparts for trans-Tasman research looking at Indigenous youth in the youth justice system.

Sauni le 'ie toga (Methodology)

The thorns of the lau'ie (leaves) are removed then laid out in the sun to wilt and dry. This is the beginning of the preparation process (Figure 19).

Figure 19

Drying the lau'ie



Note. Thorns are first removed from the lau'ie then laid out in the sun to wilt and bleach (Saillelagi, 2010).

The process by which this research was undertaken drew on the Fa'afaletui as the research framework (Helu-Thaman, 2007), Talanoa as the method (Tunufa'i, 2016; Vaoleti, 2006) and engagement (Ioane, 2017a; Ioane, 2017b), and the Fonofale model as its analysis tool (Pulotu-Endemann et al., 2007) (Figure 20).

Figure 20

Overview of methodology



Background

This PhD or metaphorical 'ie toga was influenced *by* Pasifika (Pasifika parents in justice), *led by* Pasifika (Pasifika - Samoan - researcher), *with* Pasifika (members of the EAG) *for* Pasifika, including all who work with Pasifika communities in justice. As a Samoan, much of my methodology has been what I would consider 'thoughtfully instinctive'. I drew on my own upbringing within the fa'asamoa, (loosely translated as the Samoan way) alongside my assessment and interviewing skills as a clinical psychologist, to think about an appropriate and respectful way to conduct my research. At the time this PhD began, I had worked for almost 20 years with youth including those in youth justice. I was aware of my clinical experience in the justice system, my expectations and likely influence on my data collection and gathering of information. To ensure the voices of participants were received in an authentic manner, I consulted with the EAG at key points of the PhD. This included before and after each stage of the data collection and an initial interpretation of the findings.

The whole purpose of Pasifika research is to build and generate knowledge and understanding about, and for, Pasifika people (Health Research Council of New Zealand,

2014). As a clinician, it is important to ensure that the research has an applied focus aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of Pasifika communities in Aotearoa NZ, across the South Pacific and worldwide. Much research has been done about Pasifika communities, often without consultation nor their involvement in decision-making roles about their community. However, recent research has included the involvement of cultural advisors for non-Pacific researchers conducting Pacific research (Flavell & Cunningham, 2023). For me, this continues to place non-Pacific researchers in a position of power with Pacific peoples. Advisors are generally consulted by a researcher when the *researcher deems it appropriate*. It is not a reciprocal process whereby knowledge and expertise is appropriately shared. I have often been invited to be an advisor on research projects about Pasifika – where there are no Pasifika members as part of the research team! It is often my first response to query the involvement, leadership and influence of Pasifika people. At that point, the communication usually ends.

It is imperative that any research about Pasifika people needs to be sourced from their worldviews and experiences; and equally important, it needs to be something that *they* want. Further, Pasifika research must be agile to evolve and respond appropriately to the dynamic Pasifika context we live in. It must be grounded in Pasifika cultural values and beliefs in its conduct, delivery, implementation, dissemination and impact (Anae, 2019).

Drawing on the Health Research Council's Pacific Research guidelines, I approached this research incorporating cultural values of *communal relationships, reciprocity, holism and respect* through the entire project (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2014).

Communal relationships are fundamental to Pasifika people; they encompass the Va and its sacred role as governing those relationships (Mo'a, 2015). This was a key area of consciousness for me as I navigated relationships with participants and the EAG, and being

aware of my role as a NZ-born, Samoan female researcher and a matai¹⁶ (Samoan chief), engaging with my Pasifika community.

In terms of *reciprocity*, I was acutely aware of the need to maintain balance in my interaction with participants and the EAG. I was providing skills and resources for participant voices to be heard authentically and participants were sharing with me their knowledge and wisdom. A similar approach was undertaken with the EAG, though their role was also to ensure my approach was culturally safe and responsive, and to avoid the exploitation and harm that is commonly experienced by many Pasifika communities involved in research (Chung-Do et al., 2016).

Given the collective *and holistic* nature of Pasifika peoples including myself, it was important that the research I was conducting paid attention to relationships that were fundamental to Pasifika peoples' existence (Tamasese et al., 2005). This included relationships within their social structures and environment, spiritual world and cultural identity – whilst also honouring the Va across these relationships. I was taking knowledge away, and therefore I needed to reciprocate this with recommendations and potential outcomes that would benefit and help to restore balance across the various contexts and dimensions of their lives.

Respect was a fundamental feature in all my conduct throughout the research. I was aware of my gender, genealogical links, chiefly title and achievements thus far, and the role I had in my Pasifika community. My humility was crucial here as I acknowledged participants and the EAG as the experts throughout the formal and informal processes that were adhered to

¹⁶ A matai is a Samoan chief and there are certain protocols and practices that Samoans must acknowledge and adhere to when interacting with a matai.

throughout the research process. I will discuss further how I implemented and practised these values throughout the next sections.

My research dilemma – Western vs Indigenous knowledge

For this PhD and having completed a clinical doctorate in the past, I wondered about how I could be “Pasifikally” authentic in my research. Pasifika knowledge is not necessarily a right that one can automatically assume to access. It is associated with authority and privilege (Schoeffel et al., 1996). For more than 30 years, Tupuola (1993) has argued that Western academia needs to recognise and acknowledge scholarship and knowledge of other cultures. Universities influence the culture that we live in and therefore it is now even more crucial that Western academia actively promotes Indigenous knowledge – if we are to be a genuine learning institution for the future. Even non-Pasifika/non-Indigenous researchers acknowledge that Western methodologies are not aligned completely, nor do they complement Indigenous worldviews and knowledge; therefore, it is important to use culturally appropriate methodologies (Feetham et al., 2023).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) “refer to specific systems of values, knowledge, understandings, and practices developed and accumulated over millennia, by a group of human beings in a particular region, which may be unique to that group or region” (Thaman, 2006, p.176). IKS include the methods by which knowledge is created, that Indigenous people have drawn upon for thousands of years. In agreement with the author Thaman, if “Indigenous knowledge” is not appropriately prioritised over “traditional knowledge” (aka Western European hegemonic systems), it can be misunderstood with negative implications.

In the last three decades and beyond, Pasifika people including myself have taken our knowledge systems for granted, as largely excluding anything but dominant Western views. I wonder whether this omission of Indigenous knowledge systems was due to our learning curricula and the dominant Western worldview that we lived in. I have been extremely

fortunate to experience and witness the growing presence of Pasifika researchers in academia and its influence on Pasifika students to embrace Indigenous knowledge in their research (Pau'uvala, 2011; Silulu, 2021; Tagoilelagi-Leota, 2017; Ualesi, 2021). For me, my Pasifika knowledge was something that was personal and instinctive to me - so why would it be of any interest or value to others? Fortunately, my role in academia has afforded me the opportunities to make space, promote and embrace Indigenous knowledge systems in spaces that did not exist during my training. I realised that my Indigenous (i.e. Pasifika) knowledge systems was voiceless in Western society, yet we were actively contributing to this country in terms of growing and maintaining its sustainability, growth and existence (The Treasury, 2018).

Indigenous knowledge is different from Western knowledge on the grounds of context, substance and methodological approaches; both undergo quite rigorous observation, experimentation and validation within their own worldviews, but not so much across them (Thaman, 2006). As a result, we continue to be on a journey of reclaiming the rightful place in our communities and future generations. As Dewes (1993) commented:

Western scientists tend to perceive indigenous knowledge as a means of resolving development problems of developing communities, indigenous people themselves see indigenous knowledge as part of their overall culture and therefore important for their identities and consequently their survival as people. (cited in Thaman, 2006, p. 176)

Fortunately for me, I stand on the shoulders of giants and acknowledge the work of those who have gone before me and subsequently shaped the methodological approach of this research.

Pacific Knowledge Systems (PKS)

For the purposes of this metaphorical 'ie toga, I drew on Thaman's reference to 'Pacific Knowledge Systems' (PKS) as grounding my PhD, by focusing on Pasifika (Indigenous) knowledge, its meaning and relevance and how I applied this in my research (Thaman, 2016). This is Pasifika research informed by PKS, and embedded within it, that involves Pasifika people as leaders, advisors, participants and experts throughout. Pasifika people are active participants as advisors and research participants; and the research is relevant to respond to the needs of Pasifika people (see section on Pacific people in *Su'esu'e le lau'ie*). Of utmost importance (as mentioned previously and in sections to come), I talk about the implementation of values such as respect, relationships, cultural competence, meaningful engagement, reciprocity, utility, collective and individual rights, balance, protection, capacity-building and participation whilst also maintaining protocols specific to my culture. I will comment further on this in the research methods and engagement section.

I wanted this research to reflect the authentic nature of Pasifika people and worldviews, because, too often, research about Pasifika people has been dominated by non-Pasifika research paradigms that often result in irrelevant, meaningless and deficit-focused data (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This would then address what is worth knowing across different Pasifika communities and perhaps lead to an acceptance that there can be more than one knowledge system that exists (Meyer, 1998). Therefore, data is more likely to make sense, and help improve the world, as it has come from PKS authentically (Thaman, 2016).

Despite this goal, I was filled with caution and pessimism – as I then realised that my own training was from a Western worldview. Was I able to safely prioritise my Indigenous knowledge despite being trained outside it? A member of my EAG (non-Pasifika) reminded me to be bold in my prioritisation of Pasifika researchers and frameworks in order to stop the marginalisation and minimisation of Pasifika research. To minimise risk and responses to

expected criticism from an academic environment regarding the essence of my methodology, I prioritised consultation and decision-making with my participants and the EAG. My Pasifika-ness and my Pasifika communities (mainly in justice) guided my research, not my Western-dominated training as a clinician and researcher in Aotearoa NZ.

However, whilst I acknowledge differences in Pasifika vs Western knowledge systems, there are, of course, also areas of similarity. For example, community-based participatory research (CBPR; Shalowitz et al., 2009) has elements that reflect Pasifika methodologies. It requires a relationship of togetherness across all involved in the research, whether it be the researchers, participants, communities, policymakers, practitioners, advisors or funders. It is collaborative, cooperative, and empowering, as everyone shares in the decision-making as well as addressing a response or implementation of the outcomes, with a commitment by all involved (Shalowitz et al., 2009). These are reflective of Pasifika values that include *respect* to recognise that Pasifika research is a collaborative approach, *humility* to accept that answers and solutions lie outside of one's expertise and *love* for my own community to ensure that they are given a voice in areas that I am fortunate to have access to. Ponton (2018) highlights the collective and collaborative approach of CBPR that involves working with the community. It is time-consuming though worthwhile, as part of honouring participants and their worldviews.

Relationships in Pasifika research

The concept of *relationality* is thought to be central to Indigenous (Pasifika) research, given the belief that everything is interconnected (Saha et al., 2019). Relationships are who we are because the identity of Pasifika people is relational (Tamasese et al., 2005). Indigenous Pasifika research is relational (Kilian et al., 2019; Wulff, 2010) and therefore time is needed to foster and create these relationships (Feetham et al., 2023; Ioane, 2017a; Ponton, 2018). The challenge is that often organisations and systems are constrained by factors such

as time and policies, and communities are forced to adhere to those constraints to maintain le Va (Whyte, 2013). Therefore, the relationship exists, but it is not necessarily balanced, fair and just. However, ways to overcome this include drawing on multiple knowledge sources that will often require an amendment to systems and policies (Feetham et al., 2023). Furthermore, as a researcher, I tend to minimise my professional identity and highlight my personal identity to authentically connect to participants. *This* is relationality, a mutually reciprocal relationship (Zealand, 2003). The concept of relationality and the cultural concepts of teu le Va and tausi le Va that is unique to Pasifika (see section on Concept of Va) were fundamental, key components to preparing the 'ie toga.

Research framework and methodology

A methodology is the link between how we understand the world, and the ways in which we think we explore the world (Emmel, 2016). It is the context of our study as we use a particular method (Kothari, 2004). As I prioritised my own Pasifika identity, I also included a definition of Indigenous methodology that resonated with me by (Wilson, 2001):

To me an Indigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability.

As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgements of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship? The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge, in order to fulfil my end of the research relationship. This

becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to *all my relations*. (Wilson, 2001, p. 175)

Wilson's definition reminded me of the instinctive process I had undertaken throughout this research. It was my relationship with participants that led me to reflect on my obligations and accountability to them. It was my relationship with participants that led me to this metaphorical 'ie toga. It was my relationship with participants that led to a celebration and Fiafia night in the larger research project (see section on My Pacific youth justice research). This was my relational accountability to my participants.

Following a focused literature review of methodologies used by Pasifika scholars and experts, five recurring principles were identified in their methodological approaches. These were holistic systems, collective family, spirituality, Pacific peoples' connection with the natural world, and relationships (Teariki & Leau, 2024). The Fa'afaletui model was selected as the methodological approach for this research as it aligns nicely with the overarching metaphorical design (fala or fine mat) of the research.

Drawing on relevant principles identified for this research, the Fa'afaletui model encompasses a *holistic system* that weaves relationships between various groups – the participants, the EAG, the community, the researcher. It drew on their views including my own, across the various contexts they navigated as Pasifika parents, partners, leaders, chiefs, with professionals across the justice sector and as tangata moana (people of the Pacific including Aotearoa NZ) in Aotearoa NZ. My role as a researcher was to ensure I acknowledged all these identities by attending to them and ensuring their harmony throughout the research (Anae, 2019). *Collective family* is the core of Pasifika people - their identity and belonging (Ta'isi, 2008). Family is often at the centre of Pasifika models such as the Fonofale model (Pulotu-Endemann, 1995) and Te Vaka Atafaka (Kupa, 2009), and is the epitome of Pasifika identity:

If individualism is the essence of the mainstream culture, then being part of a family: aiga, anau, magafoa, kaiga, kainga and kawa is the essence of Pacific Island cultures. (Duituturaga, 1995, pp. 73-74)

It is also how this research was born from the larger Pacific youth justice research, as discussed.

Expectedly, *spirituality* was a feature throughout this research. Spirituality is a way in which Pasifika people make sense of their world (Teariki & Leau, 2024), as it connected with Pasifika worldviews, traditions, mythologies, and the natural world and environment (Nunn et al., 2016). Spirituality was evident throughout this research through various examples such as starting with prayer before the talanoa¹⁷ and using storytelling as part of the talanoa. Pasifika people have deep ancestral links to the land and their natural environment, and these links cannot break. They belong to the land. *Relationships* were governed by the Va (Mo'a, 2015) that weaves in the connections of space and time that holds things together (Atua et al., 2008). In my larger research project on Pacific youth justice (as discussed), the young person and their family were woven together, given the collective identity of Pasifika people. Relationships were also held between the research and the participants, and between the researcher and the EAG. By building (teu) and honouring (tausi) the Va, a Pasifika-led engagement throughout data collection was allowed for (Cammock et al., 2021). Further discussion on the implementation of these principles is outlined in the *Research method and engagement* section.

Fa'afaletui methodology

Fa'afaletui is a methodology *and* method responding to Samoan cultural norms and practices with a strong emphasis on collectivism (Goodyear-Smith & 'Ofanoa, 2022;

¹⁷ Referring to interviews with participants.

Tamasese et al., 2005). Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) describe it as “a culturally appropriate research method and a methodology of weaving together knowledge from within the houses of relational arrangements” (p. 334). By way of semantics, it generally involves closed discussions of a serious nature (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). Fa’a means ‘to do’ or ‘to make’, fale means ‘house’ group, and tui means ‘to weave’. It is a method to allow for the gathering or making of information by drawing on the houses of knowledge that are woven together to provide an understanding and subsequent solution. The houses of knowledge are represented by three perspectives as eloquently described here, and shown in Figure 21):

In Samoan culture there are three perspectives. The perspective of the person at the top of the mountain, the perspective of the person at the top of the tree, and the perspective of the person in the canoe who is close to the school of fish. In any big problem the three perspectives are equally necessary. The person fishing in the canoe may not have the long view of the person at the top of the tree, but they are closer to the school of fish...(Tamasese et al., 2005, p. 301).

Figure 21

Fa’afaletui model



Note. Three images of the Fa’afaletui model: (L-R) View from the canoe (participants), view from the treetop (researcher), and view from the mountains (EAG and supervisors). (Te Tāhū Hauora Health Quality & Safety Commission, 2023)

Fa'afaletui has been described as a culturally sensitive framework to reduce cultural barriers in research, such as around language or data collection, and replace with a framework that is sensitive and responsive to Samoan perspectives (McCarthy et al., 2011). It is the process of bringing data and information together from participant voices, whether it be verbally, by gesticulation and/or by communicating culturally specific meanings and storytelling (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). It has been further described as a philosophical paradigm adapted as a research framework relevant to Samoan and other Pasifika philosophies that prioritise connection and collectivism (Goodyear-Smith & 'Ofanoa, 2022).

Subsequently, Mulipola and colleagues (2023) refer to Fa'afaletui as a methodology grounded in the values and principles of fa'aaloalo (respect) and alofa (love). These values are important to the Samoan culture as they enable a conversation to be held and information to be gathered authentically – even when the topic may be one that could elicit shame and distress. Implementing the values of Fa'afaletui enables the language, cultural concepts and ways of knowing to be prioritised from all three perspectives of those involved.

For this research, the perspectives included a) the EAG and supervisors, as the people at the top of the mountain who have comprehensive views and awareness of the issues at a macro-level; b) the researcher at the top of the tree who has some understanding of the issues, though lacks an overarching systemic understanding of them, including the potential sense of immediate need or urgency around them; and c) the family/parents (participants) who are most affected by what is going on. As a researcher, psychologist and a member on boards and advisory groups in the justice system, I have a broad-ranging awareness of the issue of parental engagement in youth justice at a macro-level, and therefore Fa'afaletui and its meanings could be extended. However, before the model can be extended or given new

meaning, it is important to be clear on its original definitions (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

Interestingly, there have been ethical concerns raised because of a perception that the Fa'afaletui model could be seen as elevating researchers into positions of authority (at the 'top of the tree'), which goes against calls for Pasifika research to be about empowering communities and decolonising knowledge, and extending meanings to give new meaning (Tunufa'i, 2016). I would agree with this caution, as by employing 'cultural' models, there is potential for Indigenous knowledge to be inadvertently (or purposefully) distorted, to suit the still-mainstream research and researchers. Furthermore, Pasifika university researchers are predominantly Western-trained and often Western-born (because of persistent socio-economic, systemic and other barriers to accessing tertiary study); therefore, it is important to explore and recognise how these influences affect researchers' journeys and their interpretation of the data that is collected.

I also considered whether to use a Talanoa methodology for this research project. Talanoa methodology is about prioritising Pasifika ways and values in how research methods are applied (Vaiolleti, 2016). However, debate continues as to whether Talanoa is a methodology or method (Tunufa'i, 2016), or both (McFall-McCaffery, 2010). Methodology is the philosophy behind the research and the method are the tools used to gather the data and information (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). However, in consultation with my community, "any Pacific model is both [a method and a methodology]" (Fuimaono Karl Pulotu Endemann, personal communication, Feb 7, 2025). Therefore, for the purposes of my PhD, Talanoa was used as a method, rather than a methodology. Talanoa was used to gather information and Fa'afaletui was more aligned with the philosophy, intention, values and sensitivity of this research.

Similarly, questions have been raised with Fa'afaletui as a methodology and as a method. Some have suggested it as a research methodology within phenomenology or interpretive constructivism but to see it like this would mean seeing it within a Western worldview. Arguably, there are similarities with phenomenology or interpretive constructivism as forms of qualitative research and inquiry (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014) but I would say that employing these approaches then loses the identity and credibility of the research as Pasifika-led with Pasifika-informed methodology. Pasifika research must determine its own journey, just as one would expect Westernised research to do. Another view acknowledges the framework of Fa'afaletui as fitting within the ontological and epistemological stances of critical realism, constructivism and pragmatism, though in acknowledging this, Teariki and Leau (2024) nevertheless propose that Fa'afaletui should be seen as an alternative to Western frameworks, able to sit alongside other worldviews and their research, rather than within (Teariki & Leau, 2024).

In reflecting on these debates, I tested the use of Fa'afaletui alongside the Pasifika principles and values used by those who have gone before me, such as holistic systems, collective family, spirituality, Pacific peoples' connection with the natural world, and the central importance of relationships (Teariki & Leau, 2024). In terms of *holistic systems*, the Fa'afaletui draws on three perspectives, as previously listed, to highlight its holistic system. A *collective family* approach is seen in the overall aspects of this project with young people engaged in offending behaviour, where the young people's views were gathered in the first study and this PhD then deepens our understanding of the collective issues by focusing on their parents. *Spirituality* is part of Pasifika people's identity and worldview, and my own. It was present in the delivery and interaction with participants, and it was part of the valuable information gathered from participants. (I suspect it might not have been such a vital part of a research project using supposedly similar models such as phenomenology, critical realism or

interpretive constructivism.) Participants' *connection with the natural world* was evident in our discussions as we connected to our villages and islands in the South Pacific. Finally, *relationships* were fundamental to the sustainability of this project. Drawing on the values and principles of Pasifika, alongside with my own lived experience, *teu and tausi le Va* was key to the retention of participants and my research community, including the EAG.

Therefore, I have chosen not to compare Fa'afaletui with other Western research methodologies in more depth; rather, it is to be seen as a methodology carefully selected on its own merit with its own rigorous testing to reflect the essence, worldview, values, principles and practice of Pasifika people for whom the research is for, and about.

Research method and engagement

Background

As highlighted previously, this PhD came from a larger Pacific youth justice research project. The title of the research report quoted a young person who said to me, in relation to changing his offending behaviour, "You've just got to think about your family and what type of person you want to be" (Ioane, 2023). Whilst it was not initially a key objective of the youth justice research project, large amounts of information about Pasifika parents' experiences of the youth justice system were shared with me, often without prompting. As the data about parental experiences was not part of the objectives for the original youth justice research project and therefore could not be used, the idea of a PhD was discussed with my EAG. It was agreed that I would revisit all family participants for their consent to use the existing data regarding parental experiences. and I also offered them the opportunity to be interviewed again for the purposes of the PhD.

Talanoa method

Talanoa is a pan-Pacific term (Tongan, Fijian, Tokelauan, Samoan), though not used across all Pasifika cultures (Tunufa'i, 2016). It is often used generically, variously defined as meaning 'to discuss', 'to talk', 'to converse' and 'to share stories'. Talanoa can be between two or more people and can be informal or formal (Teariki & Leau, 2024). Dr Timote Vaoleti, a well-known Tongan academic at the University of Waikato, was one of the first pioneers to initiate conversations about Talanoa as a research methodology and method. According to him, Talanoa is "superficially" referred to as a conversation or exchange of ideas, and literally means "talking about nothing" (p. 23) and interacting with another person(s) without a rigid framework (Vaoleti, 2006). Interestingly, Vaoleti refers to Talanoa research as belonging to phenomenological research with a philosophical base that is collective and similar to a narrative approach in research. However, subsequent Pasifika researchers argue that this can inadvertently create limitations by attempting to fit or compare it with Western frameworks, rather than standing independently alongside them (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Teariki & Leau, 2024).

Talanoa prioritises the relationship and is therefore agile because it allows for the "interview" to flow according to the Va that is taking place in the room, and the talanoa that occurs. It is an open-ended method of approach where questions are not necessarily developed in advance and will be dependent on the talanoa taking place (Feetham et al., 2023). It is seen as a respectful and reciprocating interaction promoting mutual accountability between parties. As a result, it allows for a more balanced interaction that builds trust and quality in the authenticity of the data received (Nabobo-Baba, 2008; Vaoleti, 2006). For example, Talanoa amongst Fijians is seen as a way to request knowledge that the researcher is seeking (Nabobo-Baba, 2008). It is important to recognise that the participants and their worldviews will also guide how the knowledge is sought and subsequently used. Talanoa is

guided by the worldviews of participants that includes understanding relationships and shared ways of knowledge. Mo'ungatonga shared the power in her interviews in her use of the Talanoa method:

I find Talanoa friendly; it allows relationships between me and my participants, which helps my work greatly. At the beginning of my interviews I would ask the mothers how their days had been while helping them with their chores, things that were totally irrelevant to my topic....Once they accepted and trusted me as a person, out came their stories, including the information I was wanting to know about...I rarely needed to ask specific questions. On some occasions, I would do so, however, in order to probe and to maintain the mālie of the Talanoa. (as cited in Vaiioleti, 2006, p. 24)

Mo'ungatonga's description is an example of *teu le Va*, the building of a relationship that is undertaken through the researcher's actions and conversations. It starts with asking a participant how they are, and then physically walking alongside them and helping them with their chores. Both the participant and the researcher are likely to be settling into the *Va* as they engage physically in sharing of the chores, and verbally in the conversation. As the *Va* begins to build, the Talanoa has naturally begun and over time, evolves to centre on the research. The mālie of the Talanoa describes its 'sweetness'.

For me, the Talanoa method allows the researcher to recognise the power dynamics that exist with participants, and how it is our responsibility as researchers to respond appropriately. Participants may see our power as privileged academics with research funding; they need to also understand their power in having knowledge they may choose to share. Finally, I believe that Talanoa complements *Fa'afaletui* as it is the means of bringing data

together from those three perspectives. It is the process of storying and gathering of such stories (Teariki & Leau, 2024).

Ethics and ethical considerations

I needed to apply for ethics approval to be able to revisit the parents/family of the young people with offending behaviour involved in the first study, and have their Talanoa included or extended by spending more time with them. A further ethics application was sent to the Health and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC), requesting permission to use my existing data for the purpose of a PhD (Appendix B). This was subsequently granted provisionally (Appendix C) and full approval granted in September 2021 (Appendix D). Non-standard conditions were provided for me to update prior to conducting the research. These included a) correcting the management plan to show that identifiable data is collected in the informed consent; b) updating the management plan with page numbers; and c) changes in the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (PIS/CF) (Appendix E).

Criteria

As parents/caregivers were participants of the larger study, the criteria remained the same. Participants were:

- Pasifika parent/caregiver of a young person currently/previously involved in Youth Justice matters within a year. This also included non-biological parents (e.g. aunt, caregivers) identified by the young person and the YJ system as having a parenting role or the responsibility as a parent to the young person.

Language was not a barrier as interpreters were provided if needed. Only Samoan participants preferred to be interviewed in Samoan. As I am fluent in Samoan, no interpreter was needed. Tongan participants with English as a second language still preferred to be interviewed in English. My lived experience as Pasifika and my skills as a clinician were

utilised to ensure my Talanoa with Tongan participants was relaxed (in terms of timing), deliberate (in content) and prioritised the use of simple, clear and easy English words. I also used Tongan words from my own upbringing to build rapport and connection with participants.

Re-consent and confidentiality

Fortunately, I had an existing relationship with participants due to the larger Pasifika youth research. I completed visits to all participants in early 2022 to update them on what I was doing. All participants were supportive of my request to undertake a PhD, though I often wondered whether they were truly aware of what a PhD was. Therefore, I spent time to discuss the proposed PhD with them and provided them with ample opportunity to share their voices, while explaining to them the benefit for me in doing a PhD. They all responded warmly, with some wondering why I would do a PhD when I already had a ‘doctor’ title.

Parents were highly motivated for their voices to be shared with anyone who would listen – if it was going to help. I spoke to them about re-consent and confidentiality, though many were not particularly interested in re-signing the documents signed when I was first connecting with their young person. The parents did not see a need to sign another consent form as they believed our existing relationship was the consent I needed to use the data for my PhD. I explained to them the reasons for re-consenting to their accounts being used, and they subsequently signed the consent form (Appendix F).

Interview process

All the parents gave their consent for their Talanoa to be included in the PhD. Two parents wanted to also be re-interviewed; the rest chose not to be interviewed again, explaining that their Talanoa had already been captured during the original interviews. Therefore, as most of

the data was gathered during the original youth justice research project, I am outlining here the process undertaken with the larger research project.

I met with all participants at their nominated place, such as inside or outside their home, workplace, church, local eatery, and with their support people if they wanted. Most were interviewed on their own; though there was one interview where the entire extended family sat with us and listened to our talanoa.¹⁸ Another Talanoa was carried out with me holding the caregiver's 9-month-old baby while she talked to me and made a meal for her other children. Some Talanoa were held at places of employment while participants were working. There was no limitation on duration or frequency of the interviews and all participants were met at a time that was convenient for them. This ranged from morning to a late evening and often in the weekend. Interviews ranged generally from 1.5 hours to 3 hours, and I met with parents two to three times on average. Two of the parents in this study were seen only once, due to the transient nature of their living circumstances and not being able to find them again, despite numerous attempts by both the Samoan Lay Advocate on the EAG and me. One parent was seen five times as per their request because they had many things to discuss. Given the transient, challenging and sometimes chaotic pressures families in youth justice face (Heath & Priest, 2016) or participants no longer being available upon arrival, rescheduling of Talanoa was quite common.

Talanoa – an interviewing model

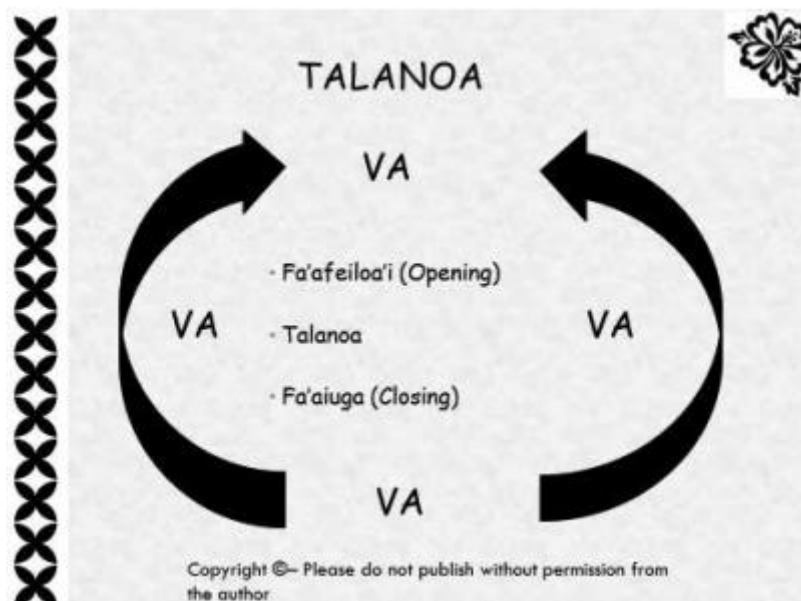
I also drew on a clinical interviewing model known as the 'Talanoa Engagement model', which I had developed as part of my clinical experience (Ioane, 2017b). At the time of development, the approach felt instinctive to me as a Pasifika person which I practised in my

¹⁸ The term Talanoa is referred to here as an interview.

clinical assessments. However, following consultation with my Pasifika community and non-Pasifika colleagues, it was formally developed as a resource to support engagement with Pasifika people. The model is grounded within the Va, specifically teu and tausi le Va, and is implemented with universal values within the context of Pasifika.

Figure 22

Talanoa Engagement Model



Note. This slide was presented at part of a keynote presentation, at the New Zealand Psychological Society Conference in 2017 (Ioane, 2017b).

The Talanoa Engagement Model has three stages of Fa’afeiloa’i (Opening), Talanoa,¹⁹ and Fa’aiuga (Closing). There are practices and protocols in a **Fa’afeiloa’i** that must be adhered to before Talanoa begin. These include practices such as offering hospitality, removal of shoes in a home visit,²⁰ correct name pronunciation, and sharing who you are – beyond your professional role. This enacts the value of *Respect*. The identity of Pasifika people is

¹⁹ The term Talanoa is used here as an interview and conversation as part of the engagement.

²⁰ Removal of shoes when visiting another home acknowledges the sacredness of one’s home. Whilst this is often recommended, health and safety is to be prioritised, if removing shoes could in any way be risky.

relational, so they need to see or hear something that they can relate to before they can share with you. I also looked at their environment, such as photos in the lounge, or mentioned their place of employment and would comment to initiate a Talanoa. I also would check in to ask about their family. Whilst I was a researcher, I was always Pasifika; and therefore I “knew” the basics of engaging with my community. Every Talanoa I attended also involved me taking hospitality with me. This might be bread and milk, a packet of biscuits, food from a local bakery. As a Pasifika (Samoan), visiting someone else includes taking something with you to acknowledge their hospitality in visiting them in their home. Depending on the participant, we would share some of what I brought during our Talanoa, or it was left for them to enjoy later. This is the same process I follow when undertaking a psychological assessment.

One of the common practices as part of Fa’afeiloa’i is to know when to speak, and when to apologise. This also enacts the value of *Respect*. It was important not to launch directly into the purpose of the visit. Rather, it was about waiting to see from the participant when it was appropriate to speak – which they would often prompt you. The use of prayer/lotu was consistent in all my Talanoa. All except one parent wanted a lotu to begin the Talanoa. Before I began, I would start with an apology to state clearly that my role was not to offend, though in the unlikely event that an offence occurs (*soli le va*), then I was apologising from the outset. This is the value of *Humility*. As Fa’afeiloa’i occurs, **Talanoa** has already begun and continues throughout the process. Participants begin to share stories, some of which related to my research and some that did not. For stories that did not relate, time was still given to listen, as it was honouring the Va and practising Respect. However, most of the time these stories were related; the more I listened to the content and the process of our Talanoa, the more I could see the links relevant to my research.

Given the sensitivity of the topics discussed, values of *empathy* and *compassion* naturally flowed. There were tears and laughter as parents shared the heartache and guilt of their

child's behaviour. In one Talanoa, parents argued in front of me, and so the Talanoa focused on talking through their situation; that was one where my skills as a clinical psychologist were also helpful! Other Talanoa often focused on providing recommendations and potential pathways of enquiry for parents as they tried to navigate through the justice system.

Fortunately, my role as a clinical psychologist in the justice sector gave me the opportunity to share and reciprocate my knowledge with them in exchange for their experiences. The Talanoa was purposefully and deliberately centred on the participants' capacity and expectations. As the mālie of the Talanoa begins to expectedly diminish over time, time is taken to summarise the key points made by participants and **Fa'aiuga** subtly begins.

However, I noticed that as the Va was built and nurtured, participants were very amenable to what I shared. Therefore, I was cautious in my approach to ensure I was gathering their authentic voices rather than what I interpreted to be their authentic voice, or what they thought I wanted to interpret as their authentic voice. Just as I was displaying *Humility* in my approach, so too were the participants in honouring my role as a researcher and, in some cases, recognising and respecting my chief title.

As we came to a close, I offered my apology again, knowing that if I had offended, I was not going to be told. Therefore, to protect the Va, an apology was appropriate. The last action in our Talanoa was to close with a prayer to formally end the Talanoa. Informal conversations would then begin; and at this time, meaalofa (a monetary gift) was provided to the participant to acknowledge the time they had taken to join with me and to share their knowledge. This is the value of *Reciprocity* in action. I also then outlined to them the next stages of the research relating to data collection and dissemination before I would leave. These are the values of *Respect* and *Love*.

Following is my reflection on one of the first Talanoa I was involved in during the larger research project. During this Talanoa, Meleane (pseudonym), the mother of one of the young

people involved with youth justice, spoke extensively about her journey and experience of the youth justice system. The data about her experiences was part of what prompted the move to looking at parent/caregiver experiences for my PhD; these are the type of reflective notes and summaries I would make as the research progressed.

Meleane was very engaging from the outset. We always met on her front porch where she would smoke her cigarettes during our Talanoa. She was highly motivated to discuss her experiences with me. The Talanoa would begin with us sharing about our day and each time, I would look for opportunities to make a connection. Examples were our shared experience of growing up in South Auckland and rugby. We talked about her grandchildren and adult children as they would often walk past us as we sat on her front porch. Talanoa was open and fluid and rarely did I need to prompt or redirect Meleane. As she talked about her son, she opened up about her experiences of the Justice system, the shame and guilt she experienced; and ultimately her joy at seeing her son discharged from Youth Court. I saw Meleane over a period of 2-3 years and each time, I remembered key aspects of her family such as her daughter's upcoming pregnancy, her son's new job, their trip to the islands. She spoke openly about her guilt, her healing journey to amend relationships with her and her husband, recognising her own childhood trauma and how the system ended up being an ally for her. Meleane's positive experience with Police from the outset is what enabled and motivated her to actively support her child during his journey in the Justice system. At the end of one of our Talanoa, Meleane stated that she felt like we were "just talking", and that it was not an interview for a research project.

Recording and transcribing

Most of the Talanoa with the young people and their families in the youth-justice project were recorded on my phone, following their permission being given. Despite recordings, I still took hand-written notes primarily to record presentation of participants or context of their Talanoa. Transcripts of Talanoa (Samoan and English) were completed by a Samoan transcriber who was based in Samoa. A link was sent via email for each recording, and a password code sent via Messenger. Each recording needed a password code for it to be accessible. Once I received a copy of the transcript, and had checked it, I deleted the recording from my emails and made the link invalid. I chose to seek out a transcriber in the

islands to support my island community and maintain confidentiality. I also recommended her to other colleagues, as her work was so accurate.

For the two additional interviews for my PhD, I took notes by hand. My experience as a clinical psychologist in conducting assessments and making therapy notes by hand, in real time, were transferable skills in these Talanoa. Prior to meeting with them, I did go through their original transcript focusing on their Talanoa about their experiences, given that most of the data had been collected as part of the larger research project, and I wanted to ensure I recalled the detail before seeing them again.

Research analysis

I used the Fonofale model as a data analysis tool, as I had used that model to structure the Talanoa analysis in the original Pacific youth justice research. The Fonofale model is underpinned by the philosophy of connectedness (Agnew et al., 2004), and as Pasifika identity is relational (Tamasese et al., 2005) and collective (Teariki & Leau, 2024), I wanted to analyse the Talanoa data drawing on these very same principles. Over time, there have been reiterations and translations of the Fonofale model²¹ including adaptations and variations (Savaai, 2017; Seiuli, 2013). I have also observed research where Pasifika methodology and methods are used but then the research reverts to using a Western tool to analyse the data (Fa’alogo-Lilo & Cartwright, 2021; Foliaki et al., 2020). More recently, there is one example where deductive thematic analysis was used when possible and themes were mapped onto the Fonofale model (Mew et al., 2024). Fortunately, I had engaged with Fuimaono Dr Karl Pulotu-Endemann in previous work and therefore contacted him for to discuss my intentions (Figure 23).

²¹ For example: [Fonofale | Te Pūkenga – New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology](#)

Prior to meeting with him, I had carried out a preliminary analysis using the Fonofale model and discussed this with him. I spoke to him about my project and my desire to use the Fonofale model as an analysis tool. We spoke about the likelihood of some of the Talanoa aligning across more than one of the Pous (e.g. spirituality *and* mental), or whether there could be a possibility that Talanoa may not align with the elements and dimensions and whether this could be changed. Fuimaono reminded me that the elements and dimensions of the Fonofale are all interconnected as well as being dynamic. They can be replicated across more than one pou, because they are connected. He gave an example of a mental health issue where one may attribute this to their spirituality, whilst another may attribute this to sexuality. Therefore, it was possible to change – with appropriate analysis and explanation (F. Puluotu-Endemann, personal communication, February 10, 2025). This was an extremely enlightening, thought-provoking and impactful Talanoa for me that gave me the confidence and permission to proceed with the Fonofale as an analysis tool. The formal analysis that followed was a direct replication of the preliminary analysis I explored with Fuimaono.

Figure 23

Fuimaono Dr Karl Puluotu-Endemann



Note. Fuimaono Dr Karl Puluotu-Endemann with me at the Pacific hearing for the Inquiry into the Abuse in State Care, July 29, 2021.

Following my Talanoa with Fuimaono and prior to formal analysis, I reflected and pondered about my Talanoa with him, and my own paradigm of being Pasifika. Not surprisingly, there was an overwhelming sense of self-doubt as to whether I was going to be able to honour the voices of my participants genuinely. I recognised the significant task I was undertaking – I was working with and doing research for my own community that I lived within. Images of my own parents came to mind, and I wondered what they might be thinking. As these thoughts and images swirled in my mind, I found myself move into a spiritual sense of being, where the notion of prayer took place. I prayed. I began my analysis.

The Fonofale model was etched in my mind with its dimensions of Culture, Family, Physical Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, Other (Figure 5). I was consciously aware that this was in relation to their experiences as a parent navigating their way through the youth justice system. I read through each of the transcripts carefully and observed two internal processes. The first process was reading the transcripts verbatim and noting down what was being said that was relevant to the dimensions of the Fonofale model. The second process was noticing what I was feeling, noticing what was not being said and its relevance to the dimensions of the Fonofale model. I circled and highlighted where voices were relevant to each of the dimensions of Culture, Family, Physical Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, Other. At the same time, I also highlighted sections that I found interesting, though queried their relevance to my study. Transcripts in the Samoan language took longer to analyse as I was consciously aware of my bi-lingual abilities and whether my translation was being influenced by my existing knowledge. I also translated to English any Samoan quotes I used in my Talanoa Bundles (see next section). I was aware that as I read through the transcripts, I was reminded of the physical environment and feelings I encountered during the Talanoa at that time. Interestingly, it also reminded me of similar experiences voiced by

parents I was currently or previously involved with for a clinical assessment in Family or Youth Court.

I took a break between each transcript to revert back to my two research questions: What are the experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system? What do Pasifika parents need when involved in the Youth Justice system? I did this to remain robust and focused on my analysis. The dimensions of the Fonofale model were an analysis tool that helped to define and analyse their experiences and needs within the justice system.

I then re-read through each transcript a third time to review my analyses and seek out any further voices relevant to the dimensions of Culture, Family, Physical Health, Mental Health, Spiritual Health, Other. Upon completion of my analysis, I recognised that the pous of Physical Health and Other did not seem as relevant to the voices I had gathered, and that the foundation of Family did not seem as pertinent or crucial to the experiences that the participants had shared. I reviewed my highlighted sections of voices that I had found interesting though, at the time, not necessarily so relevant. As I explored these further, I realised that the participants spoke a lot about their experiences with the programmes, services and the overall justice system. It was evident that this focus was perhaps the most significant to their engagement and often was the foundation and ‘deal-breaker’ that guided their support for their child in the justice system. The participants did not speak about Physical Health in their Talanoa; however, an emerging topic that they raised related to their socio-economic status. This was particularly relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic that also related to the cocoon of Time, Environment and Context.

Based on these findings of the relevance of systems and services as being foundational to their experiences, and the role of socio-economic status in their experiences, I will discuss this in the section of Lalaga le ‘ie toga (Discussion). Further, I recognised that the Talanoa

shared by the participants reflected negative and adverse experiences, consistent with the literature on parental experiences. As I thought about this, a picture of the Fonofale model came to mind that I believe is a more accurate depiction of the Talanoa contextualised within an analysis of the Fonofale model. I will discuss this as I gather my Talanoa Bundles – my research findings – in the next chapter.

Talanoa Bundles (Findings)

This is the stage of rolling the leaves to be grouped into bundles (Figure 24). The leaves symbolise the voices of parents being analysed for this research and are grouped into “Talanoa Bundles”. These Talanoa Bundles are presented within the context of an adapted Fonofale model.

Figure 24

Preparing lau'ie for weaving



Note. Once the leaves are dry, they are then rolled into bundles. The leaves are then boiled in soap or detergents and placed in steel containers. This helps to whiten the colour of the leaves as they remain in bundles ready for weaving (Sailelagi, 2010). Second image, photograph taken by P. Fata, January 2025 (personal communication).

I flattened and straightened the leaves of the Talanoa (the data collected from my participants) by identifying generalised Talanoa (similar Talanoa by most/all parents), contradictory Talanoa (Talanoa that contradicted one another) and Talanoa that was interesting and relevant. I then stripped the flattened leaves or Talanoa into smaller strips by analysing each of the bundles into dimensions consistent with the Fonofale model, such as Family, Spirituality etc. There is variation based on their Talanoa. Parents/caregivers shared numerous Talanoa of their experiences in the YJ system. There are also some responses from

the EAG that have been included here. However, given the small and identifiable number of the EAG, their voices are referred to as a group.

I begin with a brief background about the participants followed by each research question and a presentation of Talanoa Bundles and their strips (sub-sections). As a reminder, the term ‘parent’ also includes those who provided a parenting role to the young person at the time of their involvement in youth justice. The research questions posed are:

1. What are the experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system?
2. What do Pasifika parents need when involved in the Youth Justice system?

Demographics

There were 24 participants from 23 families who participated (Table 2). All participants had at least one child or young person who had been involved in the youth justice system in the past year of data collection. All names in Table 2 are pseudonyms, and employment status is described only by sector, not in terms of workplaces through which they could be identified.

All were mothers, except for one aunt, one father, and one uncle (Neemia, who participated in joint Talanoa with his sister Alieta, one of the mothers). Ages ranged from 30s to 50s with a fair number of participants parenting alone (whether separated or divorced), 12 were married, four of whom had remarried.

They were overwhelmingly on low incomes, whether in low-paid employment or on social welfare benefits. There were six who worked in factories; two who were in hospitality; three in cleaning and home help. There were eight who received government welfare benefits (sickness, unemployment). Only three had professional careers (‘Medicine’, ‘Finance’). A third (65%) were Island-born; the rest were NZ-born.

Table 2*Demographics of participants with pseudonyms*

Name	Parent	Age	Employment	NZ/Island born	Status	Number of interviews	Hours
Meleane	Mother	40s	Beneficiary	NZ born	Married	3	4
Helena	Aunt	50s	Factory	Island born	Married	1	3
Epenesa	Mother	30s	Factory	Island born	Separated	1	4
Analosa	Mother	30s	Cleaner	Island born	Married	3	4
Rasela	Mother	30s	Beneficiary	NZ born	Separated	1	1
Feleti	Father	40s	Beneficiary	Island born	Married	3	6
Avele	Mother	30s	Factory	Island born	Married	2	4
Talia	Mother	40s	Home Help	Island born	Married	5	8
Siusega	Mother	40s	Beneficiary	Island born	Separated	2	3
Litia	Mother	30s	Beneficiary	Island born	Remarried	1	3
Evelina	Mother	30s	Beneficiary	NZ born	Separated	2	6
Alieta & Neemia	Mother/Uncle	30s/ 40s	UK/ Hospitality	Island born	Separated/ Single	3	5
Lemau	Mother	30s	Home Help	Island born	Separated	2	2
Seluia	Mother	40s	Factory	Island born	Separated	1	2
Apollo	Mother	40s	Beneficiary	Island born	Married	3	5
Mele	Mother	30s	Medicine	Island born	Married	1	2
Shelley	Mother	30s	Finance	NZ born	Separated	2	4
Samantha	Mother	40s	Beneficiary	NZ born	Separated	1	3
Lisa	Mother	40s	Factory	Island born	Remarried	2	4
Sosetina	Mother	40s	Factory	NZ born	Remarried	2	3
Ioritana	Mother	40s	Hospitality	NZ born	Separated	2	4
Toni	Mother	30s	Home executive	NZ born	Remarried	2	4
Loloma	Mother	40s	Medicine	Island born	Separated	1	2

Quotes from participants are presented to illuminate the points being made (with hesitations, ‘umms’ etc removed for readability). Where Samoan or Tongan words are included with English, they are translated in square brackets in the English text. Where a quote is presented in Samoan, the English translation follows separately.

1. What are the experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system?

Talanoa Bundle: Culture protects you - if the YJ system truly understands your culture.

Pasifika Court is valued

All parents who accessed Pasifika Court spoke extremely positively about their experience. This ranged from the cultural practices and processes they observed, to the interaction they had with the Judge. Shelley reflected positively about her experience:

And [staff member] took an interest in [child's name] and if you go to the Pasifika Court there's a massive tapa cloth on the thing you can see signatures from people that have signed out of there, you know, and I want his name to be on there, that's what I really want. And you've got elders of the xxxx community and they're hilarious.

Mele affirmed this view shared by many other parents, "I enjoy the Pasifika Court. Pasifika Court, it's more like you're in a family environment, I feel comfortable." Litia wished it had been available for her older child, "I wish it was there with my oldest boy²², e mamalu [it's sacred] to see the elder there and having their time with me and my family." Avele chose to talk about the culture and the dual role of Pasifika Court - teaching her child about the Pasifika culture. She explained that her children were growing up in a society that contradicts their worldview as Samoans. However, Pasifika Court provided her children with an opportunity to experience the Samoan way.

²² Litia had older children outside of her current marriage, at least one of whom had been justice-involved.

Kuaiga mea faapega. E aoai mai foi le kamaikiki i mea faaleaganauu, mea lae
vaai ai lakou e lē fekau ma lakou vaai i le olaga kupukupu a’e o le kamaikiki
aemaise a kamaiki Samoa auā o lae i ai kagaka Samoa e i ai.

[It’s like this. It teaches the child about cultural practices; they see things that
does not resonate as they continue to grow especially because they are Samoan
children and there are Samoans present.].

Like many parents, Evelina valued the cultural learnings from Pasifika Court, particularly
the way staff in Pasifika Court related to them:

It’s their input, their advice, the way that they spoke to my son....the Judge
she was awesome, she made me understand that they were doing their job
but at the same time they were there to help me and my son, not to make
me feel like a criminal or make me feel like I’m an outcast sort of thing.

A solution for youth justice was succinctly suggested by Loloma, “That Pasifika Court is
available for everyone, not just Youth Court”. This was further substantiated by Mele, “the
voice of parents is not heard in Court. It’s just judges and lawyers but it would be good to
have a say so our kids can hear – just like they do in Pasifika Court.”

The rights of a child violate Pasifika culture

Many of the parents spoke to their confusion and somewhat disbelief that their child had
rights that were considered without their involvement as parents. Siusega reflected on this,
stating that the laws in Aotearoa NZ gave the responsibility to the child to determine whether
they wanted to go to programmes and interventions. She did not have a say if her child did
not want to attend and therefore it was left up to the rights of her child, “ga ou iloaga lea o lae
o lakou i le mea e magao ai le kaimakiki” [it was there that I knew, they do what the child
wants]. Feleti believed that it confused their role as parents, therefore the Oranga Tamariki
(OT)/youth justice approach was wrong and the system needed to support them as parents:

O igā la e saisaikia ai le galuega a le makua lea e fai oga o lae sesē le piko lea aumai e lakou. A o le mea e kakau ga o mai e support aku mā'ua.

[This is where it's confusing for parents because their approach is wrong. They need to come and support us as parents.]

Shelley further expressed her dismay at the power and rights given to her son to make decisions. She described being overwhelmed that her son was making key decisions about his life when she strongly believed that he was ill-equipped to manage and understand the impacts of his decisions. She also provided an explanation of *why* it was a “violation”: “I think that's us – because I think as Pacific, we have a lot more tighter boundaries so there are things where children are a part of the conversation, and they shouldn't be.” This was consistent with views held by others such as Evelina who referred to the children's rights as giving them “too much power”.

Cultural matching of staff can be an enabler and barrier to engagement.

Cultural matching is an attempt to match the cultural ethnicity of staff to the cultural ethnicity of the client (Maitra, 2004). Parents in general had opposing views when it came to working with Pasifika staff. Some had positive experiences, others had negative experiences. Despite this, cultural matching is often seen as a means to be culturally responsive to Indigenous and ethnic minority communities (Lynch & Stein, 1987; Perry & Limb, 2004).

Avele often felt that Samoan professionals prioritised the laws in Aotearoa NZ and sacrificed their Samoan identity by not helping their own Pasifika community:

O lakou a e alu a lakou I kulafogo iigei ua leai se agaga for lele pei o se Samoa a?
E magaomia le fesoasoagi a leisi i leisi; magaomia le alofa foi lele a? Fesoasoagi
ma kalagoa mai, faukua ma a? Ou fai aku “O le a le mea e ke sau e fomai e ke le
iloa fai kagaka?”

[They (Samoan professionals) come here (to NZ) and go by the laws here; they no longer have their Samoan-ness right? We need their help; we need their love, right? Help us, talk to us, advise us. I say, “There’s no point coming here as a doctor when you don’t know people”.]

Some parents like Feleti often clashed with Pasifika professionals involved in helping their son. Pasifika professionals were often described as controlling, “e control e [name of professional]” and refused to listen to them as parents, “e le fia fa’alogo [name of professional] ia ma’ua”. In other situations, Pasifika professionals were lacking in their own ability to implement appropriate Pasifika protocols and practices. A typical example was Evelina’s Talanoa when staff visited her uncle, a Matai,²³ without any prior notice to her as the young person’s parent - so that she could inform her uncle in the first place.

He’s a Matai so you don’t just go to a Matai’s house and put out a spread and say, “here’s the child”. They’ve just gone and done it their way with no discussion with me; it should have been a proper transition.... the Samoan coordinator was trying to address my uncle in Samoan, but his Samoan wasn’t great, he knew basic Samoan, but he didn’t know.... the social worker [Samoan] comes.... he was struggling to keep the conversation going [speaking in Samoan] and my uncle turned around to save face for him and just said, “I can speak English if you think that would help” so that was my uncle saying, “Don’t bother because you’re just making a mockery of yourself”.

Similarly, Lisa recalled her experiences working with Pasifika professionals. She found them to be judgemental: “They think they’re higher than me...I swear to God it’s a Tongan

²³ A matai is a Samoan chief and there are certain protocols and practices that Samoans must acknowledge and adhere to when interacting with a matai.

thing...”. Lisa literally kicked them out of her house saying that she can speak English and would talk to anyone that is not of the same ethnic culture as her own!

In contrast to the above views, other parents spoke about the positive experiences they had working with Pasifika people from their own worldview and cultural background. This was mainly in relation to staff helping them to navigate throughout the process of Youth Court and understanding their culture. Toni had a number of Pasifika professionals helping her throughout her son’s journey in the youth justice system.

I felt good when I saw [name of professional], a Samoan. She understood and the other lady was Pacific too though I don’t think Samoan. We all came into a group to help [name of son], and I must say it’s helpful and it makes me feel good as a mum to have people willing to help me.

Some of the parents also spoke positively about the positive influence cultural matching had on their own children. When their child was supported by someone who came from the same culture as them, their child was more likely to engage. Litia reflected on this when she spoke about her daughter who was previously involved, “e sili le Samoa fafige e lelei e fa’aaloalo i ai” [it was best to have her work with a Samoan female, it was good as she listened].

Despite the different views towards cultural matching, Shelley provided an interesting reflection that was not shared by any other parent. Shelley wondered whether there was perhaps too much focus on culture. She was a parent with a child involved in youth justice matters for more than two years. There had been ongoing reoffending, significant mental health and substance abuse issues that occurred whilst he was in the ‘care’ of OT. Her view was by focusing on culture, it distracted from the reality of systemic barriers with discriminatory policies that enabled racism to exist within the justice system.

They're failing culturally, but they won't have a look at their systems...they're solving the problem with blaming, 'It's a cultural thing', but they're never going to look at their systems, their system sucks, their processes suck, the way they treat families suck, it's nothing to do with the colour of their skin.

Whilst many of the parents did not state this directly, Sositina reflected upon the concept of cultural matching and believed that it was more about the individual staff member rather than matching by culture.

There should be enough information about cultural background...and then if you're going to bring in a social worker at least have a half decent social worker who is willing to do their job and maybe even go just the extra mile to understand the family because usually there's a reason behind everything.

Cultural differences between Aotearoa NZ and the Pacific Islands

Some of the parents were first-generation migrants to Aotearoa NZ with their child born in Aotearoa NZ. Other parents migrated with their children to Aotearoa NZ. Some reflected on the challenges in Aotearoa NZ and how philosophically and fundamentally lifestyles were different. Whilst it was not a direct experience in their journey in youth justice, the journey led them to reflect on how their child ended up in the youth justice system. There was a tendency to blame themselves for migrating to Aotearoa NZ because, in their view, migration created difficulties for themselves and their family. Siusega highlighted this in her Talanoa when she also compared the laws of the different countries:

ga sau mai Samoa o lae lelei le mafaufau me lelei ae iigei loa ma pipii I isi
kamaiki e le masagi ai, o iga la ga falekogu ai loa le mafaufau...aua makaulia o
kakou i Samoa o le aganuu...aua e eseese a kulafogo, ese for ia ku ma aga foi o
lea akuguu a? [he] came from Samoa and his mind was fine, but here he started to

hang out with people he was not used to, it was there that his mind wasn't right.... because remember in Samoa, it's our culture...our [Samoan] laws are different, each culture and worldview is different right?]

According to Siusega, her child was fine when he came to Aotearoa NZ. Everything was fine though when he started to associate with people he was not used to, his thinking was different. As she thought more about society in Aotearoa NZ, she wondered about life in Samoa and how it is based on Samoan values, beliefs and protocols including lore that is different to Aotearoa NZ with its own worldviews. Similarly, Apollo, her husband and their four children migrated from the islands. The intention was for a better life for her children that included education. However, her son reportedly became involved in the youth justice system as a result of associating himself with other young people at school that were involved in gangs. At the same time, her husband, who reportedly drank excessively in the islands, continued to do so following their migration; and as a result, ultimately contributed to family violence and subsequent imprisonment. Apollo attributed this to their family not having the appropriate support and skills to cope with changes following their migration.

Talanoa Bundle: Family is everything, just not all the time.

Positive family relationships

Many of the children and young people interviewed in the larger study (see HRC section) reported being raised in homes where there was family violence, or had been. Whilst not directly asked about, this was alluded to by some parents in their Talanoa. For example, Analosa spoke frankly about their role as parents, and the need to change, "If the parents change, the kids are going to change. I believe that thing." Analosa recognised the journey she needed to take with her husband, to communicate better with each other, particularly as she was asking her child to talk to her when it was clear that they were not modelling

appropriate communication skills within their family. Furthermore, Sosetina acknowledged their journey through the youth justice system gave her insights to building a positive relationship with her son, “I needed to listen to my son more, really listen because he had seen a lot of my bullshit growing up and I knew that this was him trying to send me a message.” By the end of her son’s journey in the YJ system, they had built a close relationship; similarly reflected in Shelley’s relationship with her son: “It took this [offending] for us to become close.” Analosa, too, commented on changes with her family after the offending, “It changed me to spend more time with family, my kids need me.”

Being judged and blamed by family

It was not uncommon for many of the parents in the study to keep the matter about their child private and within their nuclear family circle. Toni chose not to tell her parents because she did not want to burden them; and Ioritana was adamant that she would not tell her wider family “because I know my aunt, you know, she judges me a lot of times and so it does my head in”. Ioritana felt that she was already being judged by the system (professionals) and did not want to experience this with her own extended family, “I don’t want to be judged”. As a result, only her sisters knew what was going on with her child.

Evelina explained that OT had shared the information about her son to wider family members to seek placement options, without giving her the opportunity to speak to her family first. As a result, this led to a breakdown in her relationship with extended family:

I don’t know what was said or discussed...the extended family they talk and there were things that was said to him and things he said to them – I believe there was a negative picture of myself and the father put out there, possibly by his grandmother... now that that case is closed, my relationship with my uncle is

damaged and my son's thoughts of how I handled it because obviously I get the blame of all of this.

Collective responsibility for their child's offending behaviour

Some of the parents felt a huge sense of responsibility for their child's offending and the impact it continued to have on their family. Feleti's views were typical of many, "o le aafiaga o le makou aiga ua maka leaga" [the outcome of this, our family looks bad]. It also included a sense of being 'stuck', "ia ma leisi aafiaga foi a lele ua stuck ai le makou aiga, ua stuck ai ii a? Ae le o le plan lea a le makou aiga si i ai" [another thing that affected our family was that we were stuck. This was not the plan for our family].

Despite this, a smaller group of parents felt the responsibility of their son's offending, as shared by Analosa:

I said to him, "What you do to me, I don't wanna feel like walking on the shopping centre", that's what I said to him, "When I'm walking, oh look, that's the mum, the son's who's...." I said to him, "You can realise what they say..?"

Many parents felt the responsibility of their child's offending was thrust upon them by professionals, as highlighted by Meleane, "Sometimes it makes me feel like I'm a criminal with my son, but I guess they're [Police] doing their job." Reflective of the view of many parents, Avele explained this further:

Aua e le faapea e ave ga o la'u kama i se Court, lea avaku ai ma makua la ia....auā kusa o le mea ou ke ka'u aku sa'o a ua ka'uvalea aku ai a ma kagaka oga o amio a le fagau a? Pei ua o mai loa iigei, pei ua i ai gai suiga ia ua le faalogo, ua le usikai, ua o i ka'aiga a kamaiki, o auala ga e faigaka foi o le kulafogo iigei ua (inaudible) lakou.

[Because it's not just my son going to Court, it's us as parents also going Court...because I'll tell you straight, we lost our own credibility because of the actions of our child right. It's like we come here [to NZ], and there were changes of not listening, not obeying, going with their friends, it's hard because of the laws here.]

Being there for your child

Positively, many of the parents spoke about the reality of being present for their son or daughter. As parents and as family, they remained committed to being there for their child. Sositina, similar to many parents, typically highlighted this in her regular appearances at Court, “Yeah just showing up. Just showing him that no matter how much you try to push me away, I’m going to be there for you.” Furthermore, it was not uncommon for some parents to think about the future outcomes for their child, based on their actions as a parent now. As shared by Helena, who said: “One day I think I don’t know but I think he won’t forget it in his life with what he go through now because every single step he take through the Court, I always there with him.”

Talanoa Bundle: Spirituality where church is not everything - faith in God is.

Have faith in God

Whilst a large number of parents did not disclose their situation with the church, all the parents spoke about their faith in God as a great source of support for them during these challenges. Feleti chose to pray about his son rather than seek solace in the church, and many parents such as Siusega saw the help of others as being God’s way of helping them, “Ou ke faafekai i Le Akua oga o auala ia, auala eseese a Le Alii e auala mai ia oukou ma [name of person], kagaka a? Lea aumai ai le fesoasoagi” [I’m just grateful to God because the way He works, different ways of working such as with [name of person], people right? He brings them to help me].

Parents also explained that, in general, they relied on God to carry them throughout this journey rather than the church. Loloma stated, “Ia, oga o a’u ma lo’u akalii e le o le loku, o lou kakalo i le Alii” [Well, for me and my son, it’s not the church, it’s praying to God]. In addition, Epenesa’s view was representative of many parents, “E lagona fo’ ia aú le i isi taimi, o le fefe, o le faanoanoa, e tagi a o’u loimata I le ao ma le po tuu atu i le Atua e fesoasoani mai” [Sometime I’m scared, I’m sad, I cry day and night, I leave it to God to help me]. Parents generally highlighted their own relationship with God as being a key component to what they needed to sustain their resilience during their journey. Rasela highlighted, “So [my son] has taken me on a trip [laughs], yeah! An interesting trip for me. He’s taken me on a trip to, I don’t know, to experience but I can’t walk through this experience with him, without God’s help.”

Epenesa added to this further with her own beliefs that were representative of many of the parents, “Believe in God and with His help, He helps us deal with children. Pray to God.” Feleti described his faith in God as his main support, that resonated with almost all of the parents in this study:

E leai a se – o le fofo ia a’u o loka kakalo pe a oo mai, luluki mai mea kiga i loka fai’ai ma le faagoagoa, e leai a seisi ou ke sulu i ai, e ka ke sulu i Le Alii, kakalo ai, a? O iga ka ke lagoga ai se suiga foi a lele i loka mafaufau.

[There is nothing – the best thing for me is to pray, when things become stressful in my mind, there is nothing else I can do except to fall in front of God, to pray right? It is when I pray that I can sense a [positive] change in my mind.]

Church prevents crime

Notably, there was a smaller group of parents who felt that the church played a significant role in any deterrence of crime. Epenesa shared her views briefly, “e loloku lo’u aiga mai ma le makou auai i le loku e fesoasoagi lava le Alii i so’o se mea [our family goes to church, and

it is our commitment to the church that allows for Him to help us with anything]. Helena highlighted her similar view, “But, if you, you know, if you go to church and just think of your family, work hard, you know, love others, you won’t get in trouble, that’s why you steal because you don’t go to church.” Seluia added to this:

I have a lot of faith in God because He helps in my family; and especially because our family goes to church. We strive to go to church because God helps us with anything. When anything is hard, He heals our suffering.

No help from church

Despite more than half of the parents actively engaged in church, a large number of parents refused to share their experiences about their child in the youth justice system with the church. Specifically, some parents stated very early in their journey that they would not share with the church for reasons of being judged. Toni described the church as “hypocrisy” and “backstabbing”. Analosa’s views was typical of many parents, “You know, that’s the only thing...our island way, they, you know, moaning. I never share with my church.”

Many of the parents shared their reluctance to raise the subject of their child’s offending with the church and did not seek support from the church for reasons that were shared by Toni:

The church itself has nothing – for me, I think the church itself is good. The church itself is good. But I think it’s how we run the church, how we get ourselves involved and what we say...that’s another reason we don’t want people to judge our parenting.

Shelley added to this further though with an interesting outcome, “I saw a lot of hypocrisy in that sort of the system [church], so I thought I was raising them with a very honest sorta like thing, and then who comes along and saves the day? [God and church].” Shelley

admitted that despite her disconnection from God and church *prior* to her son's offending (for her own personal reasons), it was her son's involvement in church, due to the nature of his then placement, that ended up helping.

Talanoa Bundle: Mental health is not mental health.

They are crazy people

The literature on mental health within a Pasifika worldview differs quite substantially from Western understanding of mental health in Aotearoa NZ and across the globe (Ioane, 2023; Leckie & Hughes, 2017). Research has shown that for some of our Pasifika communities, mental health is understood within a collective, holistic context where all dimensions of health are interconnected with one another, inter-dependent rather than independent and operating autonomously (Agnew et al., 2004; Mew et al., 2024; Vaka, 2016) However, as a member of the Pasifika community and clinician, it was important to understand first what their understanding of mental health was.

Similar views ranged across parents that related to the mind not functioning well. Apollo referred to mental health as “crazy people”; Siusega explained “le mafai le mafaufau, leai se galuega” [the mind can't handle, [because] they have no job]; and Talia described mental health as “mafua mai i siosiomaga, they've gone crazy due to their own pressures and stress caused by drugs, alcohol, petrol sniffing”. For some of the parents, views of mental health related to intellectual disability, as explained by Avele:

O loú iloa o le mental health kusa poo se kagaka foi lea e le o akokoa lelei loga mafaufau. E ka ke iloa lelei i uiga ma amio fai. Pei e iai leisi ou kama kama ma ke le o koe mafuka gei, ua 14 oga kausaga, o le vaega ga e lavea ai loú kama. O loú kama ua 14 oga kausaga, uma suesuega faapikoa a laú kama o loga mafaufau

ua ga o se kamaikiki e ga o le 3 kausaga i le 5 kausaga i le kaimi gei, a ua 14 agai luga le kausaga...

[What I know about mental health is a person whose mind is not fully developed. You can see it in their behaviour. It's like my other child, we [ex-husband] are not together now, he's 14 years old, he falls into that category [of mental health], he is 14 years old and following special tests, he has a mind of a 3–5-year-old yet he is 14 years old].

Negative emotions

Parents had many mixed negative emotions mainly centred around frustration and feelings of being blamed or blaming others. Typical of some parents, they recognised their frustration, as aptly stated by Seluia, “It’s been frustrating, but I don’t get angry, like I can’t afford to get angry about it because it’s not helpful.” Some parents also highlighted how scary the system was, as recalled by Mele, “The court system is scary enough and the trouble that they are in is scary enough. They need to know that there is some love on their side too because it doesn’t look like anyone is on his side at the moment...”

Parents spoke extensively about their own self-blame and blamed others. Meleane talked about blaming others, including blaming her husband and other family members. She also attributed blame to how she was raised, though overall, she mainly blamed herself. This was typical of many of the participants in the study. Analosa recalled:

For me, I think for xxxx too. The father they are going to blame the mum, it’s come first for the mum and that’s why I sit down and thinking, I think to change my life. I always leave them and I go working and I never have time with them.

Like some of the other parents, Ioritana reminisced about her behaviour as a child and subsequently blamed herself:

Yeah, I didn't listen [when I was young] but sometimes I thinking oh is that the punish for me what I'm doing but you know I forgive everything. I explain to him you know I said to him, "I can't justice [justify] you what you're doing but sometimes it put to me that's the Bible say and that's if your parents doing something wrong in the old, old day it's going to come –"

There were also a large number of parents like Sosetina who, despite their own self-blame, were equally frustrated with their child and their offending behaviour:

You're full of so much emotions like rage, disappointment, but then you wonder like what was going through your head? Why did you do it? What else...it's just crazy that's the best way I can explain it, just the fact that that was my kid that had done that going from this happy-go-lucky kid to being a kid that wants to follow a life of crime sort of thing.

Shame

Shame was perhaps the most common emotion felt by many of the parents. Given the Pasifika understanding of offending behaviour and the collective responsibility of parents to share and shoulder some of the shame; Analosa and Feleti provided some interesting insights representative of most of the parents in the study. Analosa recalled, "We feel shame, yeah we feel shame. When the people see him go to the Court, "Look that people there they done something wrong" ". Feleti recalled:

Ou ke le faavaivai o le keke o kaimi ka ke lagoga le ma, ou ke sau i le fale ou ke kakalo i Le Alii e leai, a?E pei ua fekagofi kuu faakasi a'u ma lo'u akalii; ...o lo'u kala lea fai kusa o lea loka lo'u akalii, o lea loka foi ma a'u.

[I won't falter, though a lot of times, I feel shame, I come home to the house and pray...It's like they've put me together with my son, I'm just saying because my son is locked up, I'm locked up, too].

Epenesa and Lemau's insights were also typical of many parents who experienced shame, given the collective identity of Pasifika communities. There was shame with their wider family as well as the community as recalled by Epenesa:

Pau a lo'u iloa ia vave ga faauma aku gei mea, faamamā le igoa a lo'u kama. Pau a gale mea, e mo'i a e lagoga a le fiafia ae e le o akoakoa. Magakua lea e ese le Court i kai, ese le Court lea ii.

[All I know is I want this to finish quickly, clear my father's name. That's all, it's true you might feel happy at times, but you don't feel whole. Remember, the Courts are different (in the islands), the Courts here are different].

Lemau extended this further, "It's shameful, people will know my history and our name gets spread out, yet I didn't do anything." Samantha's ex-partner was well known to police and would be bought into conversations with her, "I feel ashamed; I don't want to show my face. When professionals talk, I just put my head down and I really don't know what to say to the point that, you know, you don't have to be ashamed of what your partner did, you can tell us."

Talanoa Bundle: Socio-economic status remains an issue.

Parents talked about the challenge of having a child involved in the justice system and wanting to be present to support them versus ongoing life stressors and commitments. All of the parents in this study came from low-income families living in socially and economically deprived areas. The motivation expressed by many parents to be there and support their child at Court hearings and meetings was often challenged, given their employment commitments with low income and financial obligations

Employment

In Epenesa's case, her employment was negatively impacted with her child involved across two Youth Court jurisdictions. This led to having to work an extra day at the weekend, that impacted on her church attendance:

Leisi la ga lea ua lua ai vaega. Le iloa la poo le a le umi. Ouke iloa a e umi a se mea...Auā o lea ouke faigaluega, o lea ouke alu ma le Aso Sa pei o le mea la ua ou le alu ai i le loku.

[Because there were two [Courts]. I don't know how long it would take. I know it takes a while. Because I'm working, I work on a Sunday so I don't get to go to church].

Analosa's experience resonated with many parents faced with the dilemma of taking time off work and not being paid, yet she wanted her son to know that she was there to support him:

I tell my son you know I can do, I always go with you, supporting but you know I can't do for my new job because I was new for this job....The hard thing is because I have to off from work every week that he having a Court case...I said to his social worker, you know I don't want him to stand on the Court and see only his father, I always off from work but I said to him, "Look, whatever silly thing you've done, you only see us we gonna support you".

Unlike many of the parents, however, Analosa made the hard decision to reduce her hours to prioritise her children's needs over the need for money. This was understandably a difficult decision to make, and was not a possibility for most parents, though it was important to highlight the sacrifice made:

So I get use to work from 7-11. I do double shift but when this [offending] happened I just cut down to one shift and I do the 3-11, not the 7-3 because I need to drop the kids to school or take the workers, you know some of my kids they work. So, I cut down my hours, I think my kids need me – not the money.

Many of the parents changed hours, shifts and, in some cases, their job to accommodate and make themselves available for meetings and Court hearings for their son, as typically expressed by Ioritana:

I just don't want to go through it again and it was just a lot of ummmm because I was actually working mornings; I had to leave my morning job. Because I knew that it's going to be constantly Court. And everything like that. So, I had to leave my morning job and that's when I had to look for a night shift job. Yeah, just knew because there was no one else to take him, you know because his dad's not much help.

Material hardship

As highlighted previously, parents were on relatively low incomes in their employment and living in low socioeconomic areas. The pressures of the justice system that impacted directly on them were mainly related to taking time off and therefore affecting their weekly income and basic needs being met. However, it was clear in my observations and their Talanoa, that these families faced the constant pressure of living costs *prior* to entry into the justice system. Mele spoke about this and became emotional during our Talanoa:

Sometimes we do go without food like I use to do it this way just to ease my mental thinking, I use to pay the bills in two weeks and have no food; and the next two weeks I fill up the cupboards and don't pay the bills, but the bills don't go away because the people come to repossess; and because they do turn up at

your front door I go crazy, and when I go crazy I mean I dwell on that fact and I sit in the room and feel sorry for myself. I cried. I don't want my husband or my children to see me crying but I do and once I finish crying I get sick. And when I do get sick I'm either in the hospital or home and I lock myself away for at least a day or two just to bring myself back to normal.

Mele added to this, questioning her role as a mother, "...and that I'm not a good mother; I can't feed my children because if I use the money to pay my bill, how am I going to feed my children?"

For the participants in this study, their child's entry into the justice system added more pressure to their social and economic situation. Therefore, they were dealing with the significant impact of their child's offending behaviour on top of what was already stressful in trying to meet the basic necessities for their family's livelihood.

Impacts of COVID-19

Inequities, racism and stereotypes were exacerbated for Pasifika during the COVID-19 pandemic, from March 2020 (Foon, 2020). Parents were trying to navigate themselves through a global pandemic, alongside their child's involvement with the youth justice system. Contrary to public views at the time, COVID-19 was seen as having a positive impact on the Pasifika parents in my study. At that time, parents spoke about the abundance of food packs and grants that included support with basic needs such as accommodation/rental fees and electricity expenses. Whilst many of the parents were essential service-workers (e.g. supermarket employees, caregivers in rest homes), some were able to stay home and therefore were able to spend more time with their children. As described by Neemia, "It was a good way of being together." Lemau provided a deeper reflection:

More relationships ma kamaiki, o mai fai le loku, fai le kalagoa, faikau le Tusi
Paia fai makou Bingo.

[There were more relationships with our children, we did worship together, we talked, we read the Bible, and we played Bingo].

Apollo articulated what most parents were alluding to at the time of COVID-19, “Kusa o uke faaigoaga le Koviti lea ga oso gei o faamanuiaga, Koviti o faamanuiaga. I have called this Covid as a blessing, a Covid of blessings”. It is clear that the response by the NZ government to COVID-19, and the benefits experienced by Pasifika parents in this study, highlighted even more the economic and social realities and challenges they face on a regular and daily basis.

Talanoa Bundle: The Youth Justice system and its services are not great.

Many of the parents highlighted their experiences with the services provided to their children and the system that they worked within. Overall, their experiences were generally negative, with a smaller number of parents reporting positive experiences with the services implemented for their child.

Good programmes

There was a very small group of parents that talked positively about their experiences with the programmes. Talia talked positively about her experiences with an anger management programme that was helpful for her. She came to understand the impact of her loud and raised voice when she is with her children, and the need to “bring this down”. Similarly, despite Lemau’s overall negative view about services, she did recall a parenting programme as being useful, “tali filemu e te’a ai le ita” [respond calmly so the anger goes away].

Some parents spoke positively about the cultural programmes available for their children. Seluia recalled a positive experience as it led to her child learning about their culture that they were using at home and subsequently improved her behaviour:

It's fantastic programme. I'm so happy because e work ia manua ma lo'u [it works for me and my] daughter. That's the main thing ia ke a'u a ia [to me], that's beautiful. Ua learn mai ai [They've learnt] to me, we using the Fa'asamoa now, our language. Koe [It's] improved ai fo'i gale [in a way] stay away from the trouble.

Litia substantiated this too, highlighting the relevance of cultural programmes, "the aganuu [cultural] programme, so they know this culture, know how to respect and live life".

Feleti elaborated further about programmes being helpful as well, though it depended on staff delivering the programme and being grounded in Pacific values:

O aú ia o lou mafaufau i lou akalii ma le polokalame o le mea kaulia e kakau ga maua e kagaka ia faia le polokalame muamua o le alofa e faakigo ai le galuega a aua e leai se aoga e ke alu ai e fai – aua o lou vaai i le mea ga i kagaka ia ga o mai pei ga o le ku a; kusa e lelei kala a o le galuega e le...a?

[For me, when I think about my son and programmes for him, the important thing for people who are delivering this programme is that they show love in their delivery of the programme, otherwise there is no point in doing the programme.]

Mele highlighted communication from staff as a positive feature in programmes. She talked about staff giving them advance notice and time before actually conducting a home visit. In the past, she found that programmes made numerous promises, but nothing would happen, "Yeah, programmes, so many programmes, promises ae leai se mea o faia, [promises yet they don't do anything]."

Programmes and interventions don't work

Similar to other parents, Lemau talked about programmes not targeting their needs as a family, “ [There’s] no point in telling us about family programmes but it doesn’t give us what we need.” According to Lemau, she was seeking an alternative strategy to smacking her children, yet the programme was about alcohol and drugs. Similarly, Samantha talked about the gaps in the services provided and if the services had been relevant, her child was unlikely to have entered Youth Court:

It is called a wraparound service, but we apparently got the wrap around service but all we got is this is the person that wants to medicate you; this is the person that wants to punish you; this is the person that will go to Warehouse and buy your clothes, you know? Here it’s all sorted. This is the person that brings me food, you know? There was a wraparound service, but it was missing...it was missing the essentials.

Mentoring programmes were often seen by many of the parents as having no value in improving their child’s progress, as summarised by Feleti:

O le kaimi e alu ese mai ai lo’u akalii mai le makou fale kou ke o aku avaku, aveese, kaimi ga o oukou. Kaimi kogu a la lea kupu ai le faalavelave,” ae le o i ai se alofa, pei o se mea ga faakigo ae le o, a? E leai se agaga ia liliu le kamaiki, alu ese mai le mea lea i ai, a. The moment my son leaves our house, you [mentor] take him, that’s your time. It’s at that time things happen. There’s no love, there’s no purpose for what you are doing. There’s no motivation to change him, to disengage him from where he is [offending].

This was consistent with the view of other parents like Loloma:

Ga o le o mai a, “O fea ga lua o ai?” Ga o i le beach” Ia, “Fea ga lua o ai?” “Ga o i le voli.” Ia, a o le mea kusa pei o lae e o ave kamaiki e ola ise olaga – e kakau ga o e fai se galuega foi gale e iloa e kakau ga foi ai mafauauga...auā kusa o lae e o e faakafao, e le o i ai se...They [mentors] just come and I ask, “Where did you go?” “We went to the beach” OK. “Where did you go?” “We went to volley [ball]”. “Well, they’re showing the kids a lifestyle – but they should go do some work to help their mindset – because really they’re just mucking around”.

A common message amongst parents, that was highlighted clearly by Sosetina, referred to the number of counsellors her child had:

Yeah, the private counselling, then he has a Drug and Alcohol Counsellor, and then there’s another person he has to talk to and for him it’s just frustrating because he has to repeat the same thing over and over again and I think personally it will work better if they just have those three people in one.

Lisa extended this further, highlighting the change of staff partway through therapy, as other parents had also experienced:

And, you know...oh and the other thing is when you’re going, even with counselling he was in the counselling, once he started to just open up this counsellor left! Then he bottled up again; she actually left and that was after like 5 sessions with him...so he bottled up again, that’s exactly the same as workers like xxx, xxxx, people like xxx, xxx. I had gone for all those through my kids, the problem was no one completed anything. So I strongly agree that if you put our young people into programmes because believe it or not when they do get into those programmes they get a bond with whoever that they’re dealing with and if you just dump them there, that’s why they don’t have trust in anybody, they think

you're just going to leave them, "Oh it's not going to last, I'll be passed over to the next guy soon." That's the way I saw my kids and that's something that I strongly believe that if you're going to put our kids into a system or a group, make sure they, you know –

Furthermore, members of the EAG acknowledged the negative role of the system:

Just thinking, when you're talking about the challenges of parents about accessing services....when we are talking about and thinking about these things, [we have to acknowledge] the revictimisation of families from agencies like ours.

Lack of systemic support

Similar to many parents, Loloma and Lemau highlighted similar issues of attending Family Group Conferences (FGCs), where a number of professionals discuss matters about their child in front of the family. However, following the meeting, there would be no further progress or outcome. Shelley spoke strongly about the need for services to work together rather than trying to pass on responsibility to one another. This was consistent with many views of parents.

When there's a mental health issue they need to work together instead of trying to – and I've literally had the Youth Aid Officer and OT at a meeting with the [other organisation] and they saw for themselves, and everyone saw there was one person trying to fob, then fob back, and then fob back and everyone had a reason for going, "But it should be -" "But it should be you," "But it should be you," literally in front of me and [my child] when this was going.

Esther's experience was also common amongst some of the parents.

So there was a lot of gaps, and even in the Family Group Conference I raised the issues, they were like, "Uhh," and then they'd look at each other and

there was absolutely like – so who...they were looking...oh that's the thing that so and so – do you have any, umm, and then they'll quickly just try and come up with something on the spot, which tells me there was no preparation and planning, proper planning of my son.

Many parents also referred to being voiceless throughout their journey. This was clearly articulated by Sositina:

Things could've been – oh, like the hardest part was the stand-in lawyer, in my words, basically telling me that I kind of have no rights to say what my son can do; that's in context to he was living with his grandmother at the time and I felt that she was unfit to take care of him because he just kept getting himself in trouble; and explaining that to her, to the stand-in lawyer, and she said that because at the time I wasn't his caregiver, I kinda couldn't say much.

However, Feleti highlighted his anger at not having a voice for his child.

O le loia foi la ou fai aku ai ae fai mai o le ma kama e le o i ai se ma aiā ke le ou ke ika ai. Ou ke fai aku o le pule a ai ga fai mai e le i ai saú aiā ke le i le kaimi gei i loú akalii a? The lawyer told us that we didn't have much influence which got me angry. I told him, who's authority says that I don't have a say about my son?

Similar to other parents, Esther felt disheartened with the process as she felt that some professionals were rushing to close her child's file:

Yeah, and putting that transition period. They tried to transition the child with the extended family but what they should have done was they should have had a meeting like a Family Group Conference where they had the family meet with me or get me that's why I asked the Judge if I could be excused there was no

point because I said they've all agreed.... It was a sense of everyone just wanting to close the file....you can change the name from CYFS to Oranga Tamariki but if you don't change the structure and how the – I know there is no - what do you call it? - system that is flawless, there's going to be flaws but the issue here is how to minimise the flaws.

Communication issues

Typical of many parents, Samantha highlighted the lack of communication and often the difference in understanding amongst professionals involved with her child. Expectedly, this created inconsistencies in how things were done:

Well I had a – I guess with the first three months before he was arrested – we sort of had the xxx and the xxx involved anyway but he hadn't had any charges or anything and what I found over there is that everybody that we encountered had a different understanding of what the process was; and every police person dealt with everything differently and it was really inconsistent. So yeah, everybody had a different understanding; everyone had a different way of thinking this is how they dealt with it, I felt so sorry for xxx because he would get the call –

Rasela recalled difficulty in understanding what professionals were trying to explain to her, “They talked to me as a child, not as an adult.” Talia’s comment reflected many of the parents, “e talanoa mai, le ofi i lo’u mafaukau” [they would talk to me, it [what they were saying] couldn’t fit in my brain]. Talia was referring to the overwhelming information that they receive about the system. Tori wondered about this too, though felt it was more related to cultural differences, “That I think the system often – they don’t understand that about us because at the same time we have that sense of humour that just comes out of nowhere, even doing anything.”

Shelley alluded to an abuse of power and [paraphrased], “They have a front of where they’re quite staunch, they speak to you like you’re dumb and their tactic of ‘cold call’ [unannounced home visit] is to catch you out as to whether you’re neglecting.”

On a slightly different note, whilst it was not a common view amongst all parents, it was clear that a fair number of parents were able to understand what was being spoken to them in English. However, their ability to articulate and respond in English was limited. Feleti in hindsight admitted that a translator would have been helpful, though it was never suggested to him, and he was too embarrassed to ask for one. I often observed in my interviews a difference in the message they gave in English, vs when they responded in their native language. This was clearly explained by Avele:

Sa’o. O isi kagaka – e maua ai foi a’u i isi kaimi. Ka ke malamalama but o le gagana, it’s...o le gagana auā e pei o le igilisi o le gagana lona lua, a? Ka ke malamalama la i isi kaimi pe a fai mai le kagaka foi a gale ia kaika but it’s hard to reply foi a gale, ka ke le iloa faavasega leisi kaimi but lea ka ke malamalama lelei a. [Yes. Other people – it’s like me sometimes. I can understand but it’s the language, it’s....it’s the language because English is my second language, right? I understand though when someone speaks to me, it’s hard for me to reply, I don’t know how to articulate a response even though I understand].

Child became worse

As the parents continued in their Talanoa, parents also reflected on their views that their child became worse when placed in the care of the state. Most parents felt that their child became worse once the justice system became involved. This was mainly due to their child having access to other antisocial peers, as highlighted by Feleti:

Sau lou akalii ou fai o le a lau mea sa fai? Ga o le gofogofo a. E o kagaka e faauluulu ai faiaoga, e o solo ae gogofo lakou i kokogu ga o le gofogofo a, o i fafo ulaula, ula drugs. Kusa o iiga lea ga igifeki mai ai lou akalii ua amaka foi ga sola aua foi o kamaiki uma ga i o o le sifi o gaoi kaavale, o le trouble a.

[My son comes home, and I ask him what did you do? He says they just sat around. The teachers come, students just sit, go outside, smoke drugs.

That is where my son was infected because that's where the kids were that steal cars, that's the trouble].

Shelley referred to the number of charges her son had received once placed in the care of OT:

He was there for...running away. The original charge that he had was two and a half years ago, getting into a fight with my boyfriend; everything else, the twenty odd charges he had from that time, all in their care – escaping custody, stealing cars...in OT's care; ran away from a boy's home, stole a car, crashed it. Twenty odd charges!

Time delays of Court

Many parents raised the issue of time delays throughout their experience of youth justice. This included ongoing Court appearances, as highlighted by Sositina:

Umm, the whole process dragged so long...just the whole thing, the fact that we had to be in Court so many times. But yeah, the whole turning up to Court process, oh man. It was so long and sometimes I had to take the two little ones, so it felt even longer (laughs).

Similar to many other parents, Feleti gave an extensive account of his experience of delays due to reports not being received:

I Manukau. Ma ke o ai a i court case. Ae le'i maua a se iuga lae a e kolo a; kusa o le mea lea faakali ai le Faamasino, e le'i maua aku gi molimau a leoleo e kusa ma lakou moliaga, a?Ma ke le'i o i ai ae fai mai o lae foi ua koe kolo; kusa o lae ua koe kolo, ou ke le malamalama poo le a le mea, a? O lae la e fai mai si ou akalii ga ku i luma o le bail e koe faaopoopo oga masiga e gofo ai, kusa o lea ua koe faaopoopo leisi kausaga, a? [In xxxx [District Court], we go to his Court case. Before an outcome is reached, it's postponed; because the Judge is waiting, they haven't received any reports from Police about his charges. We'd be on our way and then they say its postponed; it's postponed again, I don't understand why? My son says he appeared for bail, and they added more months to his [sentence], they've added another year, right?]

Time Environment Context

For most of the parents, whilst the Va was not explicitly spoken about, many of their experiences referred to the Va implicitly. As someone of Pasifika descent, I was fortunate to recognise this and discuss it with the EAG. Drawing on the three dimensions of Va, the findings showed the following in regards to Teu le Va, Tausi le Va and Soli le Va.

Teu le Va

Parents recalled experiences that implied the Va and the efforts that were made by professionals to build/teu le Va. Meleane highlights this in her Talanoa:

It's their input, their advice, the way that they spoke to my son, the way that they encouraged my son and it encouraged me, my husband and my other children to be more aware of what's going around in our surroundings, you know, because like I said in the beginning I lost faith in the cops and in the

system.....He [police] made me feel like a mother. He made me feel human.

Litia's view resonated with some of the parents on how the Va was established:

That you build a friendship with them and a bond with them, everybody that's involved and it's not in a way to manipulate or anything, it's like everything works easier like that.

Sosetina highlighted the values of a good staff member that reflected the principles of teule Va:

Umm, what I see the right person doing is having a meeting with the family but not making it a meeting. Like maybe a lunch or even if it's at the home like maybe a shared lunch – they've just picked up pizza or something cheap just to talk like normal, like not by the book. By the book would be some European-looking person knocking on your door asking for parents to have a discussion and sitting there kinda pointing out what the parents done wrong. Closed minded, very closed minded and leaving there making the family or parents feel worse off than when they started; embarrassed, just yeah, just feeling like shit (laughs).

Lisa openly reflected on the positive experiences with her child's social worker that allowed her and her child to engage:

You know when – I believe that with social workers, I believe if you bring yourself down and just let the social worker – a bit to the side - just talk to the young person.

Often once the relationship with parents was established, it was the ability to maintain and nurture the relationship that was often recalled by parents.

Tausi le Va

Parents highlighted positive experiences, such as Loloma referring to the system as “really good and a great help”. She highlighted ongoing communication as a means to *tausi le Va*, “They actually worked with me. Like communication. It’s good, you know, communicating with me - with me, all I ask is let me know – good or bad – just let me know what’s going on.”

Similarly, Apollo recalled the positive and clear communication from OT in clarifying the goals and plans with her son, including the support she raised with her two younger children with care and protection matters. Ioritana’s most positive recollection in maintaining the *Va* was OT’s understanding of the need to accommodate for her son’s loss when his friend completed suicide. A key component here was the professional staff member taking an interest and being relational in their approach, rather than just being task-orientated. Meleane and Lisa provided key insights of how practitioners and professionals *tausi le Va*. Lisa recalled, “We ended up as friends [social worker], you know, because he still checked up on my son and that’s what I needed.” Meleane spoke in some depth about her relationship with the police officer:

He made me understand, he talked to me, talked me down. Even though I was being rude to him he talked me into a situation where he made me feel comfortable.... I remembered telling him, “As soon as I know where my son is, I will call you.”

Fortunately, many of the parents recalled positive qualities and characteristics amongst some of the staff that maintained their engagement with the system, as Analosa discussed:

You know, she makes things easy for us, like she doesn’t judge us, she doesn’t look at us like we’re that kind of family, she doesn’t look at us, “Oh, this is the

family that they're well known from the police and these are the family that people are blah blah blah about," she doesn't look at us that way, it's always a different way, she's always approaching us in a good way, you know.

From a psychological context, having a humanistic, person-centred and strengths-focused approach increased the likelihood of maintaining engagement with parents. Many parents talked about professionals who made sure their child understood what was going on for them. Shelley recalled this experience with her child's lawyer:

Even when we go meet his lawyer, his lawyer is a very nice guy, and he always makes sure that his speech therapist is there for [my son] to understand and I was going, "That's the main important thing, is that he understands." It's no good jabbering up from the front and all these lawyers saying he did this and he did that and he just sits there because in Court, I can't talk for him anymore.

Alieta talked about the regular communication with the social worker that helped her understand processes, "Yeah, and everything I need to understand I will always email her, she will email me back and she writes the timetable for him as well." It was this relationship that helped her to understand the plan that her child had with numerous agencies and programmes which led her to say that "The system was very helpful".

It is important to note that there were a small number of parents who reported an improvement in their emotional functioning, particularly in relation to being provided with support, as highlighted by Sosetina:

Just helpful with [my son] in itself, just when I need someone there to talk to him like on a different level, like not as a nagging parent. Just someone from the outside to be like, "Hey come on xxx, your mum is trying to help you," and he's

like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, okay.” And then when he comes to talk to me again he’s not so defiant, I guess, “There goes mum again talking for half an hour,” (laughs), you know –

Soli le Va

Expectedly, there were instances in which the Va was breached while parents were engaged with the system. This was raised by many parents on numerous occasions throughout their Talanoa. Samantha spoke to the ongoing violation of the Va that was shared by many parents.

Oh yeah, we [social workers] care about you and this and that. And then I’m just sitting there thinking it’s a load of rubbish because, at the end of the day, they walk out that door and they’re just going to forget about me.

Many parents spoke about being judged by professionals as a result of their child’s offending. In turn, this breached the Va between themselves and the system, as explained by Toni:

Yeah. So, for me, say, the system, it’s because it could be, I don’t know, it could be that they look at your background and they judge you by your background saying because the kids are just going to be like the rest of their family, you know?

Lisa elaborated further:

They’re, like, judgemental. They judge how we speak, judge how we are as a person and how we talk to them....they don’t look at me as *foi gale o le kagaka* [I’m not a human being]....I ask for support and the only thing I get is, “Okay, I’ll get back to you”... and then they come around at the wrong time..

o lae fai le meaai ua ou pisi [I'm making a meal, I'm busy]. And then they go back with a different story, "Oh yes, I went there to the house ae alaku e le fia kalagoa mai fai mai o lae e pisi" [they didn't want to talk to us, they said they were busy].

Similar to other parents' experiences, staff also breached the Va directly in ways that impacted on their entire family, as stated by Evelina:

But just calling her [Evelina's aunt] up and saying blah blah blah blah, that's not how you introduce it, it's like from their end a bomb was dropped into their laps so culturally it was irresponsible....

Fa'alelei (Restore) the Va

The foundations of building the relationship is crucial. Despite a general failure to build and nurture a relationship with parents, parents provided solutions to heal and restore le Va, as summarised by Soseina:

I believe that with social workers, I believe you bring yourself down and just let the Social Worker bit to the side²⁴, just talk to the young person....it's the way you approach me – you approach me properly and I will respect you and thing, but if you approach me in that kind of way, oh you're going to get the ugly side of me.

Similarly, Siusega's comments reflected the views of many of the parents I spoke to, "Fa'alelei atili atu le latou auaunagu, latou o toe su'e ni auala e lelei atu le le latou auaunagu." Siusega's advice for practitioners (namely mentors, social workers) was to review

²⁴ Meaning to put aside their role as a social worker and talk to their child.

their services and the way they support families. From her perspective, she felt like they talked down to her so that, rather than support her, she felt devalued and unimportant as a parent to her child. Parents and families need to be seen as having strengths and resources, beyond seeing them as causal and maintaining factors of offending behaviour.

Shelley acknowledged the support provided by the system, once she was able to accept their support in relation to what her boy needed.

I needed space from the situation, and I needed time out sometimes to be able to reflect back and look on how I dealt with things... and thought, “F***, I should have done this differently”. ...Well, I tried everything, I tried everything from an angry state and a worried state. Now [after accepting support from professionals] I look and I’m like, “What a bitch” [referring to herself], that boy just needed a hug [laughs].

2. What do Pasifika parents need when involved in the Youth Justice system?

Talanoa Bundle: Cultural programmes

In addition to having access to Pasifika Court, many of the parents spoke about needing cultural interventions to work with their child, as stated by Lemau, “Aganu’u programmes – so they know this culture, know how to respect, how to live.” Like some of the parents, Lisa admitted that she did not know too much of her own Pasifika culture including the language. Therefore, providing programmes to learn the language, including its protocols and practices, would be valued, “Having someone to provide cultural classes to my son, learning the language.”

In support of the need for cultural programmes and understanding of offending behaviour, a Pasifika member of the EAG highlighted the following: “We have our own ways of seeing those behaviours, interpreting those behaviours, managing those behaviours.” Therefore, it was important that practitioners, policy makers, and service providers were aware of the cultural (Pasifika) context and worldview of families and young people in the justice system.

Talanoa Bundle: Family inclusion

It was evident from the voices of parents that they wanted to be involved in their child’s matters, as eloquently described by Evelina, “o le aiga e leai se matai, o se aiga o tamaititi, a family with no leader, is a family of children”. Often parents, whilst faced with the judgement from extended families, drew on their nuclear family to assist – like Meleana:

So, in order for my son to be back to normal, as a normal child, he needs to hear it from me, my husband, his sisters, his brother. He needs to know that we are all there for him...I recruited my own family.

In the rare times that parents such as Talia felt included, they reminisced about the experience:

And going through the [Family Group] conferences, the meetings with social workers and everyone, it’s awesome because you walk away with something new, I did with my family, I walked away – every time we have a conference, I walked away with the knowledge of...we could change everything.

Talanoa Bundle: Spirituality through faith and prayer

Parents did not talk about what they needed in terms of spirituality and church. In general, they relied heavily on their prayer and faith during these times. There was a divide between some parents (as noted in their experiences) and the role of the church. However, as Helena

highlights below, some parents saw attendance and participation in church as a deterrent of crime:

You know, God is everything to us, He created the world, and put us in here, there is a purpose for me here....you know, if you go to church and just think of your family, work hard, you know, love others, you won't get in trouble, that's why you steal because you don't go to church, that's why you steal because you don't go to work, you don't work hard. You need to aim for family.

Talanoa Bundle: Wellbeing support

Many parents spoke in hindsight about the need for appropriate mental health services for their child. Seluia spoke about the challenges she faced in making sure her child had the right mental health support:

I would think that all mental health services for children should be across the board, that's the whole thing with the whole processes across the board. Dr xxx still thinks that xxx's problem with his mum is causing all this problem, so we would go do family functional therapy at the time, so maybe he thought that was all he needed.,...youth forensics service I think – they've focused with what is going on with him because even if they think he and I's relationship is a problem, how can we work on that when he hasn't worked on what, you know, controlling his temper, controlling his emotions?

Lisa added to this like some parents, who acknowledged that whilst their child needed mental health support, it did not appear to be enough – there was insufficient depth and breadth in the mental health support provided:

I know my son, my fourth son, when that happened and his brother went to jail, I never knew mental health happened and he should have gotten help, better help.

You know I tried bits, like counsellors, but I think he needed more than that and now he's going through mental health help inside prison.²⁵

As I continued to Talanoa with these parents, they spoke only about mental health support for their children. However, as a clinical psychologist conducting the research, it was clear that these parents needed their own mental health support. Many spoke about the opportunity that the Talanoa had given them, as described by Mele, “It just feels good talking to someone about this”, and substantiated by Samantha, as “really helpful”. Avele “ua māmā ai le avega” [feels lighter [to share] what I am carrying]. I will discuss this further in Lalaga le Fala.

Talanoa Bundle: Socio-economic support

As highlighted previously, all families lived in high deprivation areas in Auckland. Throughout the journey, some parents found full-time employment (Talia) or moved to better housing (Lemau), which, according to them, made things easier in the family home such as fewer arguments and “being happier”, as acknowledged by Lemau.

Similar to many parents, Samantha talked in depth about the challenges of her financial situation that impacted on her attendance and motivation to support her child in the youth justice system.

I want them to please work together with us, not to judge us as bad people. Work together is helping us out. Something if we need a lift to go to Court stuff with the girls they're never there. It's always excuses after excuses, “Oh sorry I don't have a car to come and pick you up, can't you ring a family member?” Or, “Don't you have money to pay a taxi to go there?” So yeah, when they say that, I just fully

²⁵ It was not uncommon for parents to refer to a youth justice secure residential facility as a ‘prison’. The loss of freedom, particularly the loss of family contact and connection, is what made the facility (in their opinion) a prison.

back away, you know, like OK, this is my thing to do, I need to do this, it's not their job, in which I did do to the point that that wasn't their job, for them to come and help us out, you know, transport us wherever the girls are supposed to be. The other time, I was late to the meeting, Oranga Tamariki's meeting, because of the transport so I had to catch the train from here all the way there, by the time I got there they cancelled the meeting and the Family Group Conference but I asked them for help way before the date of the Family Group Conference, e leai seisi ga koe call mai, no call back, no message. I left how many messages on their phone. I look at it like I've been abandoned with my girls like we've been pushed to the side. No asking questions if we were alright or, you know, the girls need something that they need to do or myself. Nothing at all.

Talanoa Bundle: Youth Justice system/services are a foundation for positive current and future outcomes

Need for interpreters

Some of the parents talked about having interpreters. Even though they might understand English, the ability to clearly express themselves in English was limited, as highlighted by Feleti:

Ga ou lē fia fai i ai mo se faamakala upu. Aga lē sau gei [lay advocate], o [lay advocate] a lea fight gei a mo se faamakala upu. Ua ou faafia fai i ai i se faamakala upu mo aú ia ou malamalama lelei i mea ia, e moí ou ke malamalama ae saoasaoa keke le kalagoa a le palagi, ia ou ke gegefu la i isi mea...

[I did not want to ask for an interpreter. If it wasn't for [the lay advocate], [she] asked for an interpreter. I happy to talk to the interpreter so I could really understand what was going on. Yes, I can understand [English], but Pakeha speak very fast and I don't understand at all].

In contrast, Lisa (fluent in English) was clear in her views, as were many parents who were articulate in English, “If you feel something is wrong, ask questions, and if they need an interpreter, get one. Get one!”

Consider a preventative approach

Meleane reflected on her experience and wondered whether her child’s involvement in justice could have been prevented:

Yes. For example, that someone could acknowledge the fact...like he spends half of his days at school, you know? It doesn’t matter whether it’s a teacher or counsellor or whoever is at school with him, notice one little thing, could easily pick up the phone and ring me and say, “Meleane, I think your son is getting up to no good.”

Unfortunately, when he did become involved in justice, the lack of early communication continued, according to her (like some of the other parents), they could have been told things earlier about their child as they navigated their way through the youth justice system:

Yes. And I’m so overwhelmed with it, like I said before. I stood in the courthouse, and I said to myself, you’re telling me all these things? I even said it to [social worker], “Why couldn’t this be foretold to us parents before we come and sit here and hear it?” We could have got our sons out of this before it gets worse. Is it that people just want to wait or the government wants to wait for someone to be dead or buried or something to happen before we could –

Help us understand

In general, a number of parents wanted services (including Court) to make sure they and their children understood what was going on. Mele explained, “I feel that it is really, really important to make sure our young people, including us [parents], understand everything that

is said in Court. Because to be honest, I used to sit in Court, [my son] used to sit there like and just go, “Yes sir, yes sir” while I had no idea of what was going on!” Talia provided a number of comments that were reflective of the Talanoa from most parents about the system, “galulue fa’atasi i mea uma, a lelei pulega a leoleo, social worker, Oranga Tamariki, e lelei pulega a aiga” [work together [the system], if leadership is good with police, social workers, Oranga Tamariki, leadership will be good in families]. Talia believed that if there was good leadership modelled by the systems that supported them, then this would flow on to providing families with examples to work together with professionals and with one another as family members.

Time Environment Context

Tausi le Va

Shelley provided further insights on how *tausi le Va* could be maintained. She suggested a navigator to assist a parent/caregiver, “From the get-go, someone assigned to the...I honestly think somebody assigned to the family to help them navigate all of this; like I did all of this on my own.”

As *tausi le Va* is also a reciprocal process, some of the parents talked about what they could do as parents to *tausi le Va* with the system. Neemia talked about parents having patience and approaching the situation with an open mind so as not to criticise, but to work together with the system. Lemau highlighted the need for empathy towards the people working in the system and to find ways to support the system as they worked with you. Similarly, Lisa suggested building a relationship with professionals:

That you build a friendship with them and a bond with them, everybody that’s involved and it’s not in a way to manipulate or anything, it’s like everything works easier like that.

Similar to a number of parents, Lemau highlighted issues with changes in social workers, while Toni talked about the changes in Judges. They acknowledged that changes amongst staff and professionals happen, though the inconsistency of information and the lack of handover was a common feature. As a result, they saw this as a significant gap, as the quality-of-service delivery and the ability for a plan to continue was often hindered or a Court hearing postponed because things were not completed. These situations can violate the Va as relationships are formed with sensitive matters discussed and potentially trust is established. However, when relationships end without appropriate closing or handover, this can be detrimental to a person's worldview and have a negative impact on how they continue to engage with the system.

3. The influence of Talanoa: What can Pasifika parents share with others in the Youth Justice system?

Whilst this was not one of the questions to be explored in this research, as is common in Talanoa, sometimes the Talanoa can take a direction of its own. Therefore, it is important to let this occur in order to maintain and tausi le Va between a research participant and a researcher. So, as parents often gave suggestions and advice to others that might be in a similar situation to them, they are included here. This highlights the value of peer support and service-user perspectives.

Positively strengthen the relationship with your child

Many parents highlighted time and relationship with their child as being fundamental to having a positive experience with the system. Lemau alluded to this, “*aua le mapu le fautua, talanoa i ai ma tatalo i le Ali'i, e faigofie ai mea uma*” [never stop giving advice and support, talk to them and pray to God, it makes things easier].

Some parents emphasised the point of not giving up on your child and to support them, as explained by Loloma, “100% support for your child...support him, encourage him, remind him, know what their goals are so you can support them and give all your 100% direct to them.” Meleane reflected further, providing the following advice, “Be more patient with your children. Never judge them. Eventually they will open and let you know what’s going on in their little mind and their hearts. It took me a while to find that.”

Epenesa reminded parents that they were role models for their children:

...e mulimuli foi le fagau i mea lelei e fai auā o mea e fai e makua, e fai e fagau;
ae afai e le o faia e makua a o lae alu le kamaikiki e fai mai isi kamaiki foi ie lae
kilokilo ai, ia o le eseese la lega....

[a child will follow the good way because a parent is doing that, a child will do it too; however, if a parent is not doing that, a child will go to other peers and watch them, that’s the difference.]

Epenesa was explaining that if a parent is not modelling prosocial behaviours, then a child is likely to engage with other peers who would teach them antisocial ways and practices. Some parents advised that children need to see parents change before *they* change – this was a lesson learnt from a parenting programme. Whilst parents spoke abundantly about improving communication with their children, Analosa provided an example of this when her son started to be verbally aggressive towards her. She believed he mirrored this from her own communication with his father:

Yeah, loud, he gonna talk back to me. I changed. It’s the same with me with the husband and I said to my husband we have to change our way, how we treat him. If we like that, oh, we never, we change the way that we - we talk softly, we call him to come and sit down, I hug him.

Interestingly, Shelley provided a practical example of rebuilding the relationship with her son:

Yeah...before all this started, remember what they look like, how they sounded.

I've got videos and stuff on my phone...that giant person over there is this little kid and even now that he's settled, he's more that little kid.

Being strong for their child was another feature that parents believed strengthened their relationships. However, this was understood differently by some parents. For example, Toni highlighted being strong as trusting someone else to be there for her child:

It couldn't be me at the time, I could have done it, but it had to be someone else who loved and accepted him for what he was. He had to come to the conclusion that what he was doing wasn't good for him, I think.

Having someone else step in for her child provided Toni with the space needed to process her own current experience in the youth justice system, and how to be present for her son on a long-term basis. Ioritana's advice on being strong was to initially keep it away from her wider family until she had no choice but to tell them, "Yeah, my uncle was just telling that, you know, 'everyone makes mistakes, you know?' And I said, 'Yeah, I know but this is like a big mistake'". Ioritana's uncle also recognised that other family members were not understanding, though they were also angry that she had not told them so that they could support her and her child.

Have faith

Mele spoke openly about having faith, "Pray a lot and have faith in yourself." Apollo had only one piece of advice for parents, "leai se tali na'o le tulivae i le Atua ma faalogo i polokalame, nothing else but just fall on your knees [pray] to God and listen to the programme." Helena extended this by having faith in God to also attend church:

If there is a family that come into Court my advice is to, you know, keep talking to your son, you know, every evening and, not only that, go to church, if you don't go to church, try to find a church.

Know the Court

Sosetina referred to Court processes when thinking about advice to give to other parents. She talked about the importance of speaking up in Court:

In Court to the lawyers and when the Judge asks you questions, don't be afraid to just pour your heart out. And let the Judge know what you're feeling and what else...what you're feeling and just if your child isn't with you and you feel they're unsafe, like let it be known. Sometimes the Judge will ask kind of how things got to where they are.

Lisa extended this further by providing more examples for parents:

I warn them [other parents] don't ever let your child be alone in any courtroom or in any meeting, always be there and be alert to what they're saying. Take notes, take copies, build a folder so let them have paper trail, written, don't let anything be too verbal, take notes if they must.

Pay attention to your wellbeing

Sosetina uniquely shared the view that one's wellbeing was crucial, "Pay attention to stress levels." Sosetina talked extensively about noticing physical warning signs that were an indication for her to take some time out for herself, like resting or going for a walk. It was not uncommon for many parents to talk about stress (e.g. sleepless nights, arguments with partners), but they saw this as part of the experience and did not seek support for this. I comment on this further in Lalaga le Fala.

A summary of Talanoa Bundles

To conclude our Talanoa Bundles, the next images (Figures 25-27) provide an overview of the experiences and needs of Pasifika parents in the youth justice system. They also provide an opportunity to understand the advice shared by these parents to new parents entering the youth justice system. I conclude with a ‘shaky’ adaptation of the Fonofale model (Figure 28), to highlight the experiences of Pasifika parents in YJ. This will be followed by an analysis and interpretation of these findings in Lalaga le ‘ie toga – weave the metaphorical ‘ie toga.

Figure 25 *A snapshot: Experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice System*



Colour code key: *Green:* Positive experience *Red:* Negative experiences *Blue:* Comments made.

Figure 26

A snapshot: Needs of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system

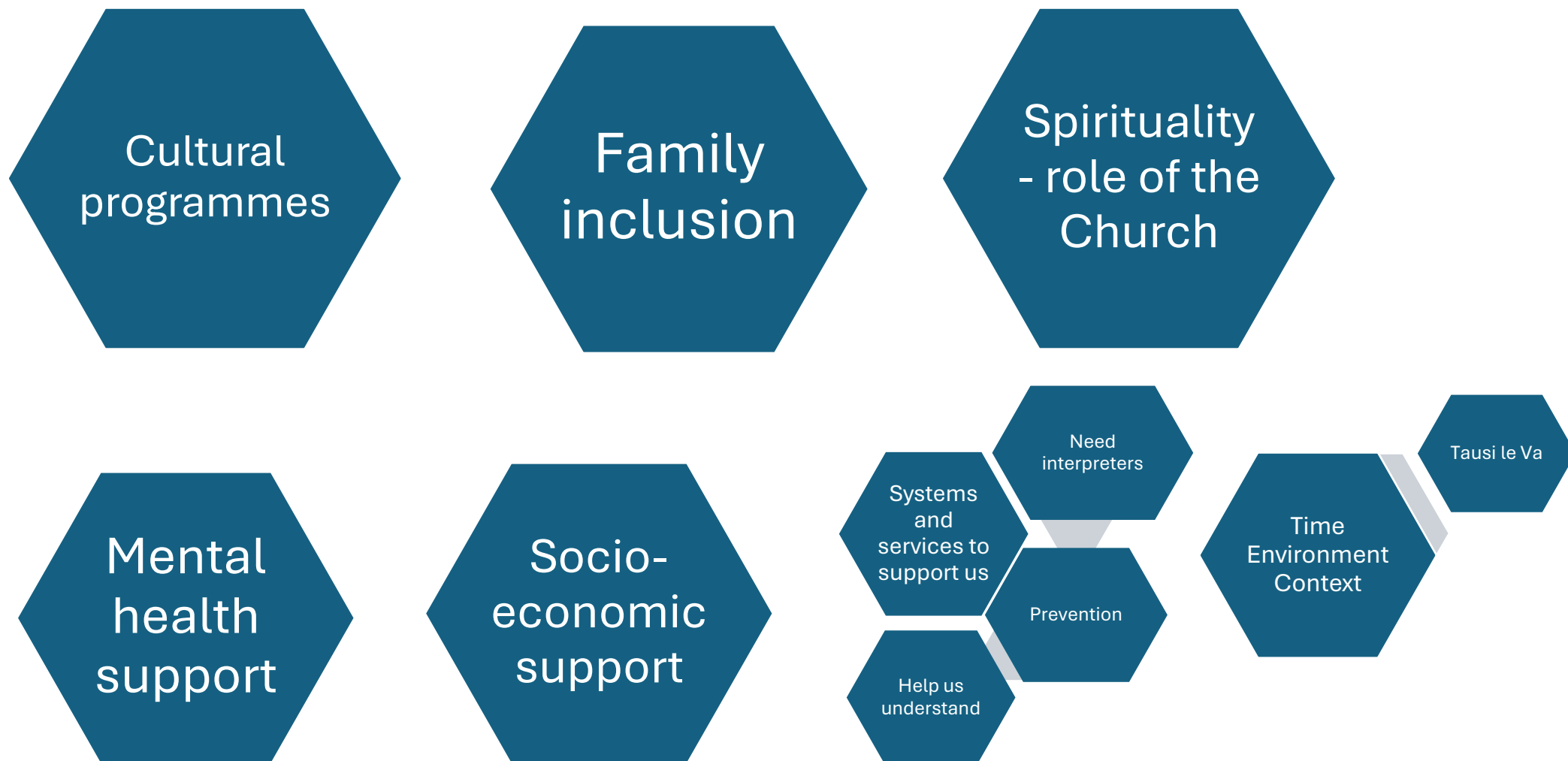


Figure 27

Advice from Pasifika parents for new parents entering the system



Experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system - a shaky adaptation of the Fonofale model

The findings from this study were analysed by drawing on the dimensions of the Fonofale model. With permission from Fuimaono Dr Karl Pulotu-Endemann, the dimensions of the Fonofale model could be adapted accordingly. I imagined the findings as a shaky fale, as depicted in Figure 28.

Figure 28

A shaky fale of Findings

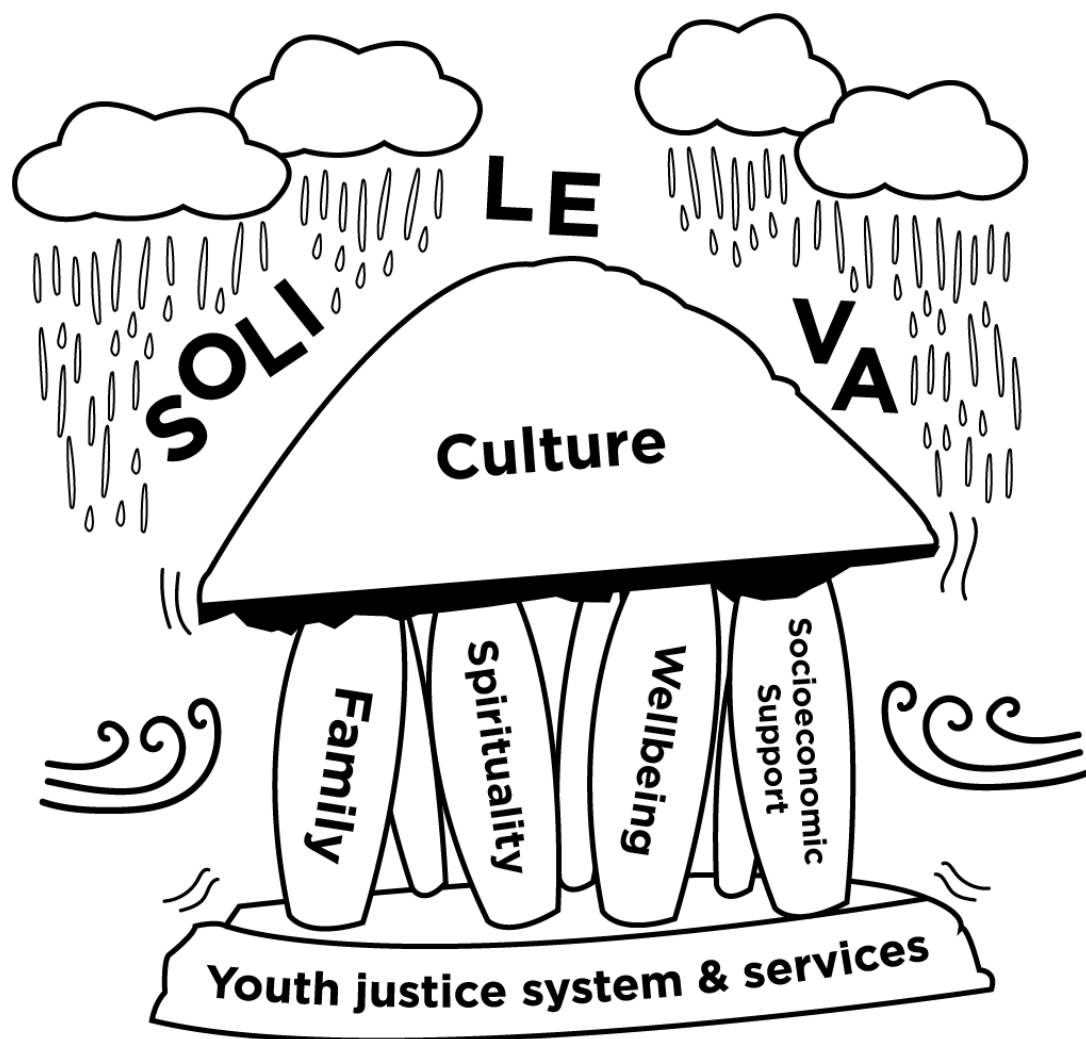


Image designed by Dimitris Potusa (2025)

Note. A shaky fale highlighting the experiences of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system.

Lalaga le 'ie toga (Discussion)

The thin strips of the lau'ie are ready to be woven into 'ie toga.

Figure 29

Weaving of the 'ie toga



Note. Image taken by P. Fata (2025).

This is the process where I take the fine strips of the flattened leaves and begin to lalaga le 'ie toga – to weave and create the 'ie toga. The weaving of the 'ie toga is to create an understanding of the experiences and needs of Pasifika parents in the Youth Justice system. This is the most crucial aspect of making the 'ie toga. As I lalaga le 'ie toga, I am mindful of the audience that the 'ie toga is for. These are our Pasifika parents involved with the youth justice system, my Pasifika community and particularly the professionals who work within the youth justice system, and the system that governs youth justice. It is my view that there may also be some learning for all parents with a child or young person in the youth justice system. Voices of the EAG are also included here, given their professional identities and vast experience in youth justice.

Research and my own clinical experience with families of many ethnicities in youth justice shows that many of our young people in justice come from homes that face (among other things) being marginalised (economically and culturally), and damaged with exposure to violence, substance abuse, trauma and adverse childhood experiences (Astridge et al., 2023; Farrington, 1989; Halemba et al., 2004; Herz, 2010; Herz & Ryan, 2008; Lambie et al., 2025; McAra & McVie, 2010, 2025; Rodriguez et al., 2009). Pasifika families involved in the youth justice system are no different, both locally and internationally (Ioane et al., 2016; Pasko & Mayeda, 2011; Ravulo, 2016). However, economic hardship appears to be more significant for Pasifika families, when compared with non-Pasifika families. The risks to the wellbeing of Pacific children and young people also increases the risk to the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, given that they are the largest and fastest-growing youth population in Aotearoa NZ (Thomsen et al., 2023). Attention is needed to address our Pasifika population in youth justice.

In this section, as I reflect on the Talanoa Bundles, I start with a reflection on what the parents did *not* say. This is because Talanoa can be referred to as “talk about nothing”, yet we as Pasifika also take note of what is not being said; and how we feel (Vaiioleti, 2006). A summary of the main findings is then provided, followed by a comprehensive discussion on the ‘so what’ aspect of these findings, weaving in previous literature, discussions with the EAG and my own clinical experience and knowledge of the YJ system. Rather than create a separate section, I also weaved into the ‘ie toga the advice given by parents (Figure 27).

It is important to recognise that as I present these findings, I draw on what is uniting us as Pasifika people. There is local and global research on ethnic-specific Pacific Island communities in areas such as education (‘Otunuku et al., 2013; Borrero et al., 2010; Hune & Yeo, 2010; Te Ava & Page, 2020) and health (Cleverley, 2023; Dollar, 2019; Nosa et al., 2023; Park & Littleton, 2013). However, given the sparse literature on ethnic-specific

Pasifika communities in youth justice, it made sense to begin with highlighting and referencing our fundamental similarities as collective Indigenous cultures.

Reading between the lines

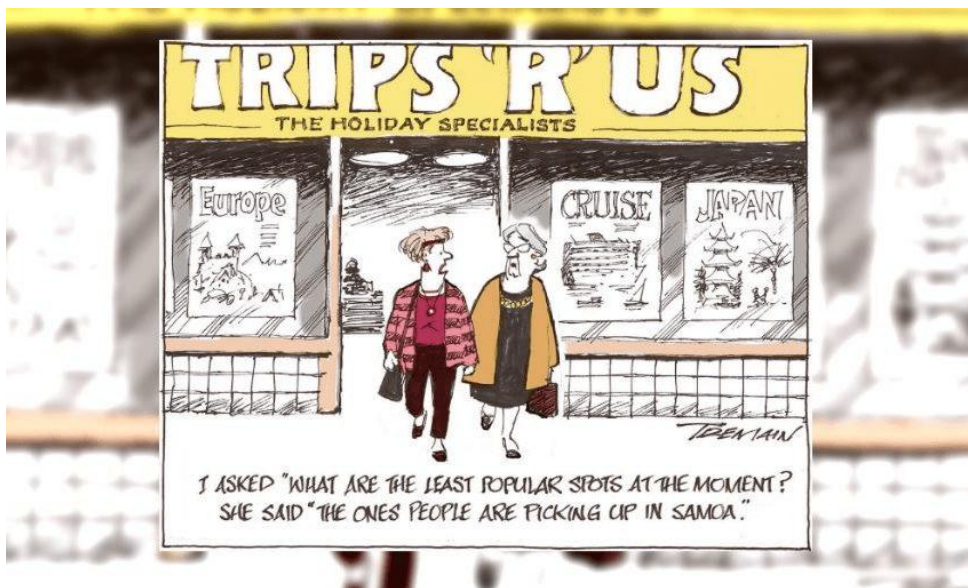
Racism

Interestingly, parents did not name nor refer to their experiences as having any element of racism or discrimination. Rather, it was identified by the EAG when the Talanoa Bundles were presented to them. It was the view of the EAG that there was racism despite parents not naming it, “I don’t think parents have named it, not in the responses here but I do think there’s a strong overlay of racism and stereotyping of Pasifika parents and such that not even the parents recognise it when it’s happening to them.” This could be due to these stereotypes and biases being such a regular occurrence for Pasifika communities that they become passive recipients of such treatment and attitudes. The systemic marginalisation they have endured in society over a significant period of time recognises that they cannot fix the issue on their own (Falzon & Batur, 2018).

Pasifika families have histories of mistrust and distaste about the system, particularly with past experiences of racism and discrimination, including structural racism (Mayeda et al., 2014; Sumibcay, 2024). Furthermore, media portrayals of Pasifika communities have not been helpful with negative stereotypes, racist remarks and biases evident (Loto et al., 2006). Media examples in Aotearoa NZ include Pacific Islanders referred to as ‘leeches’ (Giblin, 2018) and a cartoon referring to the deadly measles outbreak in Samoa (Figure 30).

Figure 30

Cartoon about the deadly measles outbreak



Note. Reprinted from Otago Daily Times by Garrick Tremain, December 3, 2019.

Health inequalities amongst various ethnic groups, particularly Indigenous and ethnic minorities, is often caused by systemic racism and discrimination (Harris et al., 2018; Paradies et al., 2015). Unfortunately, systemic racism and discrimination is not new to Pasifika communities in Aotearoa NZ and abroad (Sumibcay, 2024). Pasifika people continue to experience racism and discrimination in the workplace (Ofe-Grant, 2022), education (Mayeda et al., 2014; Vakalahi, 2009) and in our criminal justice system (Latu & Lucas, 2008). Anecdotally and from a clinical psychologist perspective, I have experienced this when I work with Pasifika communities versus non-Pasifika communities. Services are not implemented, relationships are not valued, promises are not kept and generally, many of our Pasifika communities ‘accept’ the response from the system. Pasifika parents often explain to me that professionals (e.g. social workers, lawyers, psychologists) are experts, and therefore should not be challenged or questioned. Interestingly, findings of my PhD did not make any clear distinction between services and staff that reflected the worldviews and cultural

ethnicity of the parents. Rather, many parents experienced the same disservice, regardless of whether professionals and services were Pasifika or not.

Mental health

As Talanoa continued, parents generally defined mental health as an acute condition of ‘being crazy’. However, they *described* symptoms of anxiety, depression and, in some cases, the trauma they were experiencing. Expectedly, they did not label or refer to these symptoms as relating to mental health. This is not uncommon for Pasifika and Indigenous communities to have a different understanding of the term ‘mental health’, discussed further in this section (Ioane, 2023; Tamasese et al., 2005).

Conclusion

Having poor mental health reflecting anxiety, depression and trauma, along with experiencing racism, are features that exist amongst communities in justice (Clemente & Padilla-Racero, 2020; Rucker & Richeson, 2021). Furthermore, previous research in Aotearoa NZ has also highlighted the racism that exists against Māori and Pasifika in the justice system (Jones, 2016; Latu & Lucas, 2008). Unfortunately, this PhD continues to substantiate these findings, despite previous findings being almost ten years old.

Translating findings into meaning

An overarching theme across all the dimensions identified from the Talanoa Bundles was a **lack of understanding and awareness of Pasifika worldviews** by those in the youth justice system engaged to support them. Whilst Pasifika Youth Court was a positive experience, violations of the Pasifika worldview were observed and experienced by parents, such as when the rights of a child were prioritised over their voice as a parent; perceived misuse of cultural matching between staff and families; and a lack of awareness or understanding of the impacts of migration on families. The solutions parents gave included a request for more cultural

programmes, though more needs to be done to educate the system on understanding criminal behaviour within a Pasifika worldview and context.

Following on from this, parents spoke significantly about **the need for family to be there**. Parents were unanimous in their Talanoa to be included in the discussions and decisions made about their child. At the same time, they also expressed a strong sense of collective responsibility for their child's offending behaviour and being judged by their own family. Therefore, whilst faced with the stigma of their child's behaviour, they were navigating this journey on their own as they tried to support their child.

Mental health, as understood within a Western worldview, was not reflected in the parents' understanding of mental health. However, they did highlight **negative emotions** but did not attribute these to having poor mental health. **Shame** was a significant emotion expressed by the parents that partly led to withdrawing from extended family support. This was coupled with feelings of being judged by family and professionals. Parents were expectedly **strong in their faith** throughout this journey, though surprisingly there was a larger group of parents that **did not seek help from the church** for various reasons.

Economic hardship was a significant issue that was exacerbated further by their child's entry into the youth justice system. This impacted on their employment and mental health, though parents did not appear able to connect economic hardship with mental health. This is likely to be due to their understanding of mental health. It was clear from the Talanoa that poor mental health and economic hardship were *exacerbated* by their child's entry into youth justice.

Throughout the Talanoa, a lot was shared about the **role of the system**. The services that were provided, the systems that governed these services, and the people that implemented these services were extremely influential on the parents' experience of youth justice. As

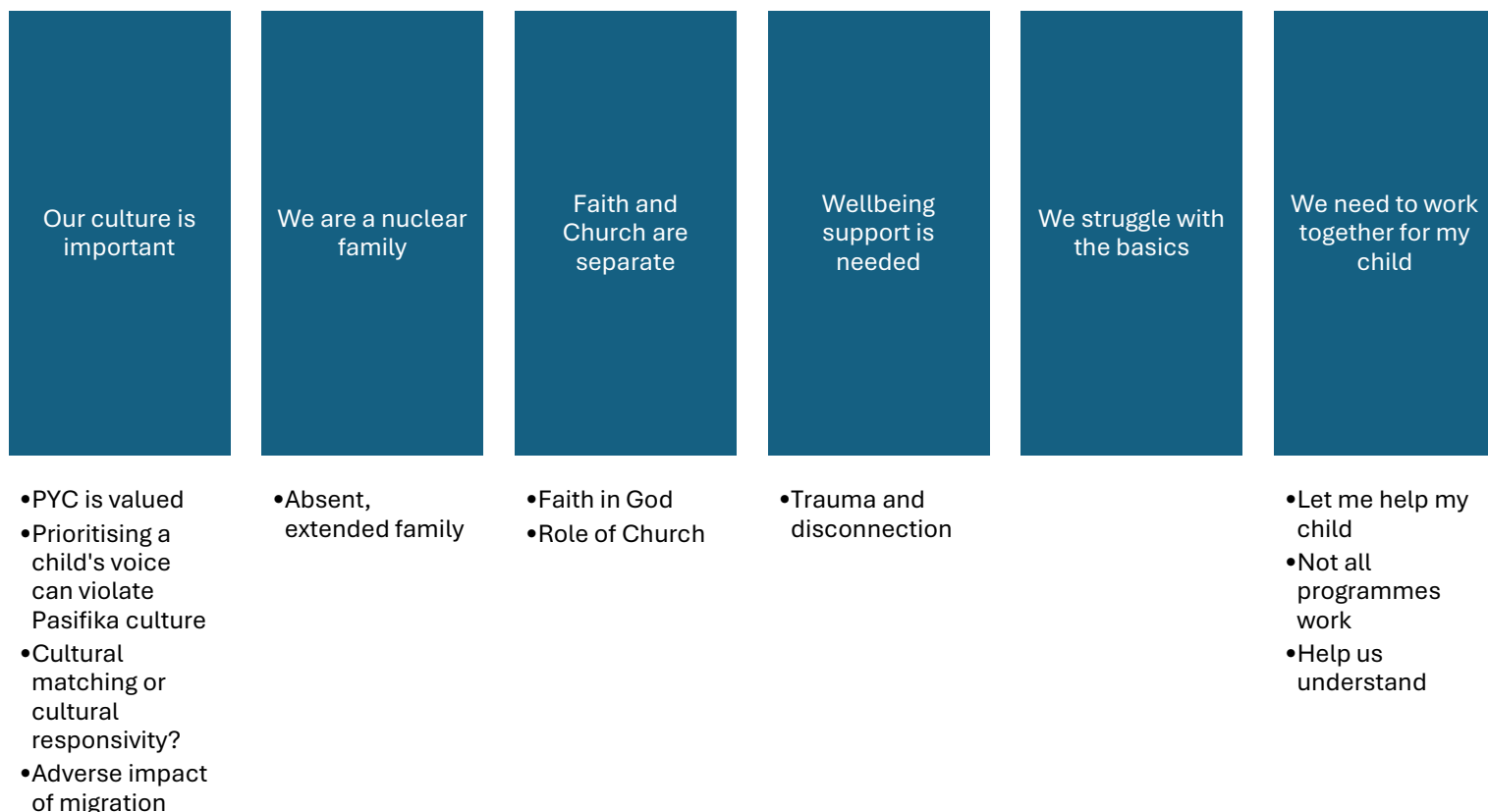
highlighted by the EAG, **racism** was not explicitly identified by the parents, though it was implied by parents as they navigated through the youth justice system. Parents, whilst not being explicit, also spoke *about* the **Va and the role it played** as part of their experience in youth justice.

Parents in general did not have an entirely positive experience of the youth justice system, yet they were extremely willing to ‘gift’ their genuine insights and advice for parents entering that system. The main advice from parents involved in the justice system for other parents was to **a) know the Court system well, b) have faith in God, and c) strengthen relationships with your child.**

The above summary is drawn from a deep analysis and interpretation of the Talanoa Bundles into six main areas (Figure 31).

Figure 31

Interpretation of the Talanoa Bundles



Our culture is important

Within the youth justice system, Western worldviews are dominant in legislation and systemic structures. Expectedly, this continues to have an adverse impact on non-Western communities such as Māori and Pasifika who are over-represented in youth justice statistics. Cultural incompetence, institutional and structural racism and a lack of respect of Indigenous cultural norms are risk factors for youth justice involvement (Stewart, 2012).

Our Pasifika communities benefit from programmes and interventions that are aligned with their cultural worldviews (Matenga-Ikihele et al., 2021; Walsh et al., 2025) and with culturally appropriate policies, staff and workforce (Vaughan et al., 2018). Unfortunately, such programmes and policies are extremely limited, compared to mainstream, failing approaches. This understanding is not new to Aotearoa NZ and has been discussed on numerous occasions with leaders and practitioners in various sectors including justice for the last decades (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Pulotu-Endemann & Faleafa, 2017). Action is needed beyond Talanoa.

For most of the time, Pasifika parents experienced a breakdown in the response of the youth justice system to adequately acknowledge their worldviews and identity as Pasifika. A more comprehensive and thorough understanding of Pasifika cultural principles and values that underpin the function and identity of Pasifika community and how it is to be acknowledged and respected in practice is needed. Evidently, some of the aspects of the youth justice system violate Pasifika culture despite policies that it is important that everyone should have access to their culture (Tupuola, 2004). The difference in this study is that learning and understanding about Pasifika must be centred around *a Pasifika understanding of criminal behaviour*. Further, attempts to engage in cultural and ethnic matching were not necessarily successful, as this research has shown that it is more than just ethnic matching

that is required to authentically engage parents. Ethnic matching and understanding cultural differences need further exploration and will be discussed in the next chapter, Fofola le 'ie toga.

Pasifika Youth Court is valued

One of the most positive experiences by parents/caregivers in this study was their involvement with the Pasifika Youth Court (PYC). Currently, there are only two PYCs in the country, both based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Parents/caregivers in this study saw the PYC as positive, particularly in terms of its cultural practices and processes and their relationship with the Judges, both Pasifika and non-Pasifika Judges who were culturally responsive. There was often the view that PYC should be available to everyone, and its principles be applied to mainstream²⁶ Youth Court. However, previous research has shown that the transferability of PYC to mainstream is questionable and not necessarily ideal (Tuimavave, 2017). Mainstream Youth Court location is still a formal courtroom rather than a more culturally appropriate venue, time constraints are different and processes are less likely to be responsive to the needs of Pasifika communities. However, the features of PYC are considered to be transferable across Pacific Island nations as values and ideals are likely to be the same or similar. Despite this finding by Tuimavave, more research is needed to explore this further as it is the only study that has explored the transferability of PYC.

Many of the participants in this study also commended PYC on its family environment, the presence of elders and the positive interaction with PYC staff. These views were consistent with previous research on young Pasifika peoples' experiences of PYC (Urale et al., 2015). Pasifika youth in justice found that cultural practices in PYC, interactions with a

²⁶ I refer to mainstream as Youth Court in its general setting of a court room.

Pasifika Judge and the presence of elders provided them with the opportunity to reflect and accept the consequences of their actions. Consistent with previous research, access to cultural artifacts and resources (e.g. tapa cloth), specialised staff (elders), and community location (church/community hall) appear to have a positive effect on Pasifika young people and their families in the justice system (Blake et al., 2015). It creates positive connection and engagement for the young person (Urale-Baker, 2016) and this research has shown its value with Pasifika parents, too. Whilst there is limited research on the outcomes of PYC, initial analysis has shown a lower percentage of reoffending by Pasifika youth who appeared in Pasifika or Rangatahi Court compared to a matched comparison group who appeared in mainstream court (Tuimavave, 2017).

Prioritising a child's voice can be a violation of our Pasifika culture

In contrast to their positive experience with PYC, parents/caregivers expressed concern regarding their perception of the rights of their child being prioritised without their input as a parent. According to parents, this was a violation of their Pasifika worldview.

Legislation and policies that govern our society are based within a Western, Eurocentric worldview and pedagogy (Al Attar, 2021). Underpinning these laws and policies is research that continues to be harmful in its colonial practices towards many Indigenous communities (Ahmed, 2024). Unfortunately, research often leads to the development of models from a Western worldview; yet is applied to Indigenous and collective communities.

For example, the Bronfenbrenner ecological systems model is used in social work practice (Fearnley, 2022) that includes Aotearoa NZ (Matheson, 2023). It has been used to assist social workers to better understand family structures and how to work more effectively with culturally diverse immigrant populations (Paat, 2013). However, the Bronfenbrenner ecological systems model was found to be inadequate for representing family arrangements

within Pasifika communities (Forrest et al., 2021). Another example is Erikson's model of development that talks about autonomy as a child, and seeking independence as a teenager (Erikson, 1959). Forrest criticises this as not relevant for Pasifika as their journey is from dependency to interdependency, not autonomy. He refers to works by arguably Samoa's great philosopher, Tui Atua Tamasese:

The Pacific child is part of a nonautonomous relational world all of the time. To promote autonomy and independence in an Indigenous child carries the risk of alienating them from their relational world and depriving "the mind of the soul and its nurturing and protective qualities" (Tui Atua, 2017, p. xi; as cited in Forrest et al., 2021, p. 442)

Pasifika communities are collective and their identity is relational (Tamasese et al., 2005) and children and young people are seen within the context of their parents and family. The rights of Pasifika children are determined by their family as their identity is collective and their sense of self is inextricably linked to their role within the family (Suaalii & Mavoa, 2001). In addition, the rights of a Pasifika child are the responsibility of their parents, village and nation – to protect their child. When issues occur, such as child/youth offending behaviour, then the parents and family are seen to have failed in their responsibility to protect their child and subsequently breaching custom, village policy and local law (Tamasese, 2006). Given the significant emphasis on parents being responsible for their child in a Pasifika context, the current response of focusing solely on the child, listening to the child and making sure the child is being heard, without necessarily including the parents' voice, violates Pasifika worldviews.

As shown in the literature review opening this PhD, legislation in Aotearoa NZ appears to include the family throughout the process – there were many phrases about family

involvement in the words. However, as pointed out by Becroft (2015), the legislation is in place but the support and resources to *implement* the family's role in this legislation is not sufficiently available. To further strengthen a philosophy of child-centredness *within a family context*, is the alignment of current legislation within the OT Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child, where globally, there is an intention to focus on the needs of children *and* families. Theoretically and strategically it is identified that families are intrinsic to children's 'rights' and wellbeing, yet practical implications of this are somewhat vague and ambiguous (Dyer et al., 2024). The frustration, confusion and sense of anger expressed by parents engaged in the youth justice sector about this highlighted a significant gap in the system to truly understand and incorporate Pasifika perspectives, epistemology and practice when working with Pasifika communities in youth justice. From a logical standpoint, some of the experiences by parents could be attributed to the Western philosophies and legislation that underpin the youth justice system in Aotearoa NZ. However, one area which has potential to evolve and influence their experiences as parents, would be through better cultural engagement and relationship with staff. It can be argued that a deeper understanding of the collective world view of Pasifika *will* show that the rights of children vs the rights of parents are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complementary to one another, as "every person in a family is important; without one part, the other has less meaning" (EAG, personal communication, 19 August 2025).

Cultural matching or cultural responsivity?

Ethnic matching is seen as relevant and appropriate for engagement, assessment and treatment and understanding comprehensive processes between a client and clinician or practitioner (Ilagan & Heatherington, 2022; Weekes, 2010) However, participants' views on ethnic matching were mixed, with it being a barrier *and* an enabler towards engagement and participation. Research studies have also shown mixed findings; that ethnic matching does

not necessarily mean engagement will be authentic and appropriate (Maitra, 2004) nor does it mean that service-users will readily discuss family issues with someone from their own community (Leung et al., 2022). Two people can come from the same ethnic culture yet have diverse views, as there are many other differences (e.g. age, gender, migration history) that can make it difficult to understand their perspectives (Reiter, 2022). Clients can also be suspicious of working with staff from their own ethnic group (Iglehart & Becerra, 1995; Lum, 2000). They often worry about staff from their own ethnicity breaching confidentiality (Sawrikar, 2013). As a clinical psychologist, I too have experienced this with my own Pasifika community regarding suspicions as to my intentions in an assessment and whether I will disclose issues, given that I come from the same community.

However, there are also benefits to ethnic matching particularly when staff are otherwise unable to understand the lived experiences of their client (Chenot et al., 2019), that includes having similar attitudes, values and cultural beliefs (Harvey & Hill, 2004; Ibaraki & Hall, 2014). From the perspectives of practitioners, ethnic matching can help to bridge the gap between them and their client, alongside increasing safety and comfort (Leung et al., 2022). Research has also shown that treatment utilisation increased and dropout rates decreased when there was ethnic matching (Ibaraki & Hall, 2014; Leung et al., 2022). My ability to speak the language of Samoan has assisted me greatly to engage with Samoan parents and families in the youth justice system. Further, having a 'brown face' has helped my engagement, as many parents and young people have often commented that I am a familiar face to them or that I would "just get it" – that is, understand their lived experiences.

Most recent research has shown that clients prefer being matched to someone with shared identity or cultural background, though whether it was the therapist's culture or identity or their therapy skills and multicultural competence was unclear (Marsyla, 2024). As a clinical psychologist, ethnic matching has been appropriate for some of my clients, although not all,

being Pasifika and Samoan has not always been the drawcard for maintaining engagement. Clients have often inadvertently presumed me to be Māori; yet, they have found that my ability to understand and sit with them safely in their trauma (as opposed to whether I am Samoan or Māori) was their reason for maintaining engagement. Because of this, I agree with the work on moving the concept of ‘cultural competence’ to one of ‘cultural humility’ (Chenot et al., 2019). Cultural competence assumes that the clinician or practitioner is the expert on the culture of the client that is sitting in front of them. However, it does not acknowledge nor pay attention to the complex differences that exist. Cultural humility is about moving clinicians (e.g. social workers in child welfare) from their expectations of having cultural expertise about others; and, instead, to focus on working and engaging with their client’s experiences whilst bringing in awareness of their own cultural differences (Ortega & Faller, 2011). It allows for inclusion, diversity and sharing between client and social worker, that promotes tolerance of one another and promoting knowledge development that is authentic and empowering for all involved (Ortega & Duntley-Matos, 2020).

When parents/caregivers talked about the negatives of ethnic matching, it was more about the behaviour and practices of the practitioner, rather than their ethnic culture. Ethnic matching has a place, that potentially is to build and maintain engagement. However, it is the responsiveness skills and humility that maintain authentic participation. Staff can all work effectively with Pasifika communities – as long as we respond to their needs. For Pasifika practitioners, this means going beyond the view that a shared cultural identity is ‘good enough’ and being rigorous in one’s practice, given the diversity of our Pasifika community. For non-Pasifika practitioners, it is about recognising their humility (e.g. by learning about their culture and those of their clients), being aware of cultural differences and navigating these safely in the privileged time they have with clients. “A white person can be an ally as

long as they have compassion for an experience that they can never fully grasp” (Brancato et al., 2019).

Adverse impact of migration

It is a time-honoured tradition, for centuries, for Pacific people to travel across the Pacific Ocean in search of opportunities and adventures (Hau’ofa, 1993). It has been valued and subsequently contributed to the identity of Pasifika people as navigators. Parents shared briefly about their migration stories, though they emphasised the cultural differences that existed between Aotearoa NZ (Western world) and their Pacific world. These differences occurred typically in examples where their child was first-generation NZ-born or a child raised in Aotearoa NZ. Either way, parents reportedly struggled to raise their child with strong Pasifika values and traditions, whilst living in a society that is predominantly based on European cultures.

Acculturation has been seen as an explanatory reason for health and social disparities of Pasifika in Aotearoa NZ (Schluter et al., 2017). An example is in their disproportionate numbers entering the state care system (Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care, 2024) and subsequently the criminal justice system. Culture shock is perhaps one of the most negative outcomes of acculturation, that includes racial discrimination, financial stress and language problems (Furnham, 2010). My research highlighted the parents’ perceptions of a lack of commitment by the justice system to understand, acknowledge and include Pasifika cultural worldviews, practices and beliefs. For Pacific in Aotearoa NZ, there is a long history of migration from the Pacific where New Zealand is happy to have Pasifika as low-paid workers but then casts them out. Pasifika have continued to experience challenges such as in employment and housing, with limited English contributing to low-income jobs and increased vulnerability to devastating economic conditions (Sin & Ormsby, 2019).

We are a nuclear family

As highlighted previously, for the purposes of this study, the definition of ‘parents’ includes non-biological caregivers.²⁷ Family within a Pasifika context differs from the nuclear family defined in a Western worldview (Crampton et al., 2018). One definition of a Pasifika family is having at least one person in the family home of Pasifika descent (Koloto & Katoanga, 2007). In addition, the closeness of immediate and extended families, despite some people living in another physical dwelling, is still relevant and important to the Pasifika idea of family. This was most salient during COVID-19 when the direction was made to stay within your family home, yet many Pasifika communities traversed across a number of physical homes that were all seen as the ‘family home’ (Ioane et al., 2021). This highlighted the collectivism that exists amongst Pasifika when it comes to the definition of family, that is beyond the nuclear family.

Family – that is, parents - are the cornerstone for a young person’s identity. However, parents need to recognise the dynamic environments (e.g. physical, emotional, digital) that children and young people are being raised in when living in Aotearoa NZ, and how to ensure the success of their Pasifika family as a minority culture (Tautolo et al., 2020). When looking at Pasifika young people in the youth justice system, parents and professionals need to have an understanding about their children being raised in the diaspora (Liddell et al., 2017). This speaks to the distress and challenges parents experienced while supporting their child in the system. However, the findings from this study also brings awareness to parents navigating

²⁷ In this study, parents include biological/non-biological parents including caregivers. Those invited to participate were identified by the young person and the youth justice system including self-reports that they were the primary caregiver to the child involved in the system.

this journey on their own, without extended familial support. This is a key opportunity for the system to actively intervene and support parents as they support their child.

Positive findings from this research highlighted the strengthening of family relationships, especially between parent and child, during their journey in youth justice. Parents in this study also emphasised the importance of prioritising and strengthening relationships with their child in the justice system. It was more than just referring to family as being a strength or protective factor. Rather, it was enacting increased positive communication and connectedness between parents, as well as between the child in youth justice and their parent(s). This resonates with research on protective factors against ACEs (Walsh et al., 2019). It is also consistent with findings about Pasifika students, who identified that communication within family (i.e. with parents and siblings) and family connectedness were part of how they defined success in their worlds (Helu-Thaman, 2007). Wider research, including with non-Pasifika families, identify positive communication, spending quality time and sharing the same values, morals and beliefs, as part of being successful within a family (Haddock et al., 2001; Krysan et al., 1990).

Absent extended family

As highlighted by parents in this study, there was a collective responsibility that they experienced with their child's offending behaviour and being judged by others, where they were referring primarily to hesitation about extended family members knowing about the offending. The self-blame and responsibility experienced by parents resonated with previous studies relating to adolescent mental disorders (Moses, 2010) and child behaviour (Fernández & Arcia, 2004), where parents try to not tell others. However, within a Pasifika context, this self-blame and responsibility is magnified because of the collective identity of Pasifika (Teariki & Leau, 2024). Therefore, one's success is attributed to one's family; and in turn, one's demise is also attributed to family.

The judgement by extended family members and the collective responsibility parents placed on themselves reinforces their narrative that they are responsible for their child's offending behaviour. This is also consistent with the Pasifika worldview that the child is the responsibility of the parent (Tamasese, 2006). However, as a result, this has an adverse impact on a parent's ability to seek and reach out to personal and community support, where it feels hard to turn to the extended family members they would usually turn to for help in life. This is, therefore, a key opportunity for the youth justice system to intervene appropriately and provide support accordingly. How support from the system towards parents can be implemented and practised is discussed in Fofola le 'ie toga.

Faith and Church are separate

Unsurprisingly, spirituality, faith in God and the role of the church were raised and discussed by most of the parents in this study. Spirituality is a core element of Pacific people's existence, belief and worldview (Teariki & Leau, 2024). Pacific people are well known to have links and spiritual connections to the land, sea and natural environment, including ancestral ties to those ancestors who have gone before them. The worldview of Pacific people is cognisant of spirituality being part of what it means to be Pasifika. This is reflected in many Pasifika models such as Fonofale (Pan-Pacific) (Pulotu-Endemann, 1995), Fonua (Tongan) (Tu'itahi, 2009), and Te Vaka Atafaga (Tokelauan) (Kupa, 2009) that define models of wellbeing. Spirituality is part of a belief system that impacts on how Pasifika people see themselves, that is interconnected and fundamental to their existence.

Faith in God

Faith in God was well-voiced by the participants in this study. It was their faith in God that enabled them to endure the stress and challenges in their experience in the YJ system. Furthermore, it was a key piece of advice from participants to new parents coming into the

youth justice system, that they need to maintain their faith in God. For many Pasifika communities, belief and faith in God is a significant part of their lives (Pouono, 2024). From birth, many Pasifika children and youth are taught about God and Christianity, with many young people seeing their faith in God as a cornerstone of their lives. This includes learning about their cultural values and beliefs (Fehoko et al., 2022; Veukiso-Ulugia et al., 2024). Furthermore, the role of spirituality has been found to mitigate emotional and behavioural problems for Pasifika youth engaged in offending behaviour (Ioane, 2023).

Role of church

However, the role of the church was an interesting finding in this study. Christianity, religion and the role of church can be seen as another layer of spirituality for Pasifika people (Wildermuth, 2012). Spirituality, faith, church and religion can be seen as synonymous with one another. Historically, following migration to Aotearoa NZ, churches replaced the village structures and support systems that were available in the islands (Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care, 2024). Contributing financially to the church has been a well-known feature amongst Pasifika communities, although this can be detrimental to families when they prioritise the church over their own family's wellbeing (Perese & Faleafa, 2000; Urale et al., 2015). However, this has evolved over time, with families being encouraged by church leaders to prioritise commitments to their own families (Thornton et al., 2010). Despite this evolving aspect with regards to the role of churches within Pasifika communities, it is still a successful vehicle for psychoeducation or promoting and working with Pasifika communities (Hopoi & Nosa, 2020; Ioane, Percival, et al., 2021) .

Some of the parents in this study spoke about the positive support of the church as a source of comfort and strength. Interestingly, some parents spoke about church being a strong deterrent for criminal behaviour. However, this was somewhat contradicted by their current situation as their child was engaged in offending behaviour, at the time they were attending

church. Despite this contradiction, the church was generally seen as a source of comfort and strength and a resource to disseminate important information to the Pasifika community (Neville et al., 2024; Teganahau, 2023; Wright & Hornblow, 2008).

In significant contrast, some participants also experienced the church as a place where critical judgements were made about them and/or their young person. As a result, participants chose not to disclose to the church the situation with their child in the youth justice system. Some withdrew from attending church largely due to feelings of shame and/or fears of being judged harshly by the congregation. Previous research has shown that the church has been detrimental to Pasifika peoples' wellbeing or their seeking support (Katavake-McGrath, 2021; Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care, 2024). Furthermore, some Pasifika people have been too ashamed to discuss or seek support from church leaders, due to the collective identity and responsibility within their families (Wurtzburg, 2003). Experiences by participants in this study were contrary and in contradiction to what is generally understood as the positive role of churches amongst Pasifika people (Hopoi & Nosa, 2020). Therefore, the role of the church can be a protective factor as well as a risk factor. More specifically, this research showed that the church does have an adverse impact on some parents' ability to seek support for themselves and their child/young person.

This study has shown that whilst spirituality and faith in God is a strong and positive feature for Pasifika communities, the role of the church is not straightforward. Given that almost all of the participants attended church or had been attending church prior to their child's offending behaviour, the church may still have a role to play for families engaged in the youth justice system, perhaps after learning more about some of the challenging nuances in how the YJ system works, and how little power parents may have in managing the consequences of offending for their child.

Wellbeing (mental health) support is needed

Mental health continues to be a topic for ongoing attention and understanding amongst Pasifika communities (Fa’alogo-Lilo & Cartwright, 2021). The definition of mental health differs from Western understandings (Ioane, 2023). Definitions of mental health in this study were centred around someone being ‘crazy’ – that is, more at the acute end of mental *illness* – consistent with previous research about Pasifika peoples’ understanding of mental health (Fa’alogo-Lilo & Cartwright, 2021; Ioane, 2023). Mental health amongst some Pasifika communities is still a taboo topic that creates stigma (Ioane, 2023). Pre-colonisation, mental illness and poor mental health were often seen as being possessed due to breaching the sacred relationship between people and gods (Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009).

Given the limited mental health literacy and understanding amongst Pasifika communities (within a Western context of very limited mental health service provision), I chose to change the wording of a need for ‘mental health support’ to that of ‘wellbeing support’. This also allows for consistency of terminology with the All of Government Pacific Wellbeing Strategy in Aotearoa NZ and responds to its goal of Resilient and Healthy Pacific Peoples (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2021).

A small group of parents reported positive emotions when interactions with the system reflected cultural values, such as when *teu* and *tausi le Va* were honoured, leading to enhanced engagement and service retention (Ravulo, 2024). A larger group of parents/caregivers experienced negative emotions relating to frustration, being blamed by family and professionals, and their own blaming of others including themselves. Previous research has shown that Pasifika people with symptoms of anxiety or depression tend to seek advice and support from a family member or friends (Ataera-Minster & Trowland, 2018). A key finding from this PhD study is that some *purposely* chose not to confide in family

members for fear of being judged. Therefore, this is an opportunity where the system can provide wellbeing support to respond to these negative emotions. This can create a pathway for an authentic relationship with parents and maximise opportunity for positive outcomes with their child (Snider et al., 2022).

Expectedly, parents experienced a significant amount of shame, as would be commonly felt by parents who have a young person involved in the justice system (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003; McGinnis, 2024). However, these feelings are likely to be exacerbated further amongst Pasifika, given their collective worldview and absence of individuality (Tamasese et al., 2005). As parents described their experiences of shame and frustration, they did not interpret this as having poor mental health despite describing symptoms reflective of this. Recent research has shown that the mental health of parents is negatively impacted due to the stress and stressors they experience with having a child in the youth justice system (Fix & Mendelson, 2022). However, the participants in this study reportedly had no place to Talanoa about these negative emotions as they were disconnected from external family members and church – their usual sources of support.

Pasifika people will use mental health support services provided that services respect Pasifika worldviews and beliefs and promote relationships (Fa’alogo-Lilo & Cartwright, 2021). Unfortunately, Pasifika people have a history of mistrust towards organisations and services who have failed to authentically understand their beliefs, protocols and worldviews (Cutrer-Párraga et al., 2024; Neville et al., 2024). There continue to be largely unheeded calls to incorporate, understand and implement traditional medicine and healing practices in the provision of mental health support (Blignault & Kaur, 2020; Ravulo, 2024). More exploration is needed to look at the role of traditional healers and mental health professionals (Nortje et al., 2016), particularly as traditional practices still play a role amongst Pasifika communities (Blignault & Kaur, 2020).

Trauma and disconnection

The parents in this study come from family backgrounds that typically included family violence and poverty, with parents reporting trauma-related symptoms of poor mental health. The added pressure of a young person in the youth justice system is another traumatic incident that they have to endure. As a result, there is disconnection between parents, disconnection between parents and child, disconnection with extended family and church. This is the trauma that can occur.

Currently, as far as I am aware, we do not have a model for wellbeing support for families in the justice system. However, we do know that relationship-based, collaborative models with an integrated model of health care that incorporates Pasifika cultural values are more likely to be appropriate (Mulder et al., 2020). Furthermore, service delivery for Pasifika communities needs to encompass a clinical and cultural competence element (Le Va, 2009). As an example of a relationship-based, collaborative model in health care, the Nuka system of Care is a health care model that is relationship-based and owned by the Indigenous community of Alaska (Gottlieb, 2013). Nuka talks about shared responsibility with a commitment to family wellbeing and wellness. Evaluations have been positive and is consistent with previous findings that relationship-based partners have the power to influence health outcomes, that include mental health (Frosch & Kaplan, 1999; Stewart, 1995).

The urgency of wellbeing support for parents in the youth justice system is warranted so that they can effectively support their child. Positive outcomes for a child in youth justice is more likely to be achieved when parents are actively engaged (Magidson & Kidd, 2021). Secondly, providing much needed wellbeing support for parents (as they are unlikely to seek support from family members) creates an opportunity for an authentic relationship to develop with the system that includes service providers and organisations. This can only be beneficial to their child and young person.

We struggle with the basics

Consistent with previous studies, socio-economic deprivation continues to exist amongst Pasifika communities in Aotearoa NZ (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2020) and across the globe, e.g. Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders (Thephasit, 2024) and Australian Pacific Islanders (Ravulo, 2015). This study continues to highlight this significant issue. The socio-economic deprivation and low economic status and earning of Pasifika communities has been an issue for a very long time in Aotearoa NZ. During the early 1990s and before, Pacific people were at risk of becoming an “entrenched underclass” in Aotearoa NZ (Krishnan et al., 1994), with their socio-economic disadvantage clearly highlighted for more than 20 years (MPIA 1999a, MoH 2003a, 2004, 2007). Pacific people are significantly more likely to be in lower-paid employment and face higher unemployment rates, compared to other ethnic groups, and have higher rates of underutilisation (where people are in work but want to work more hours) (Thomsen et al., 2023). Furthermore, low incomes amongst Pasifika communities cannot be attributed to low employment rates alone, but also relate to discrimination and bias in hiring, promoting and retaining workers (Cochrane & Pacheco, 2022).

The low income of Pacific peoples impacts negatively on children living at home, thereby increasing the risk of poor wellbeing for future Pasifika generations and society as a whole, as many Pacific communities show disadvantage and deprivation (Pacheco et al., 2022). Research with Pacific communities involved in the justice system further validates this (Ioane et al., 2016). However, it is important to recognise that social and economic deprivation was not caused by their young person’s entry into the justice system - parents were already struggling economically and financially prior to that, despite being employed. In this study, parents were conflicted in wanting to be there for their child, yet if they did, they were unable to take time off or it would be unpaid leave. For many parents in this study, poverty was often

a choice of food versus rent and not being able to provide basic needs for their children. Therefore, as so eloquently highlighted by one of the parents, COVID-19 was a “blessing”. The availability of food grants and economic resources to cover pandemic lockdowns, and having family time, was a godsend where parents spoke positively about the value of a pandemic. This is consistent with another study across the Tasman (Evans et al., 2020), although very different to most experiences of marginalised communities (Elers et al., 2021; Kandil et al., 2020).

We know a parent is involved simply if they attend a court hearing – but what happens when they cannot attend because poverty and employment stops them (Harvel et al., 2004)? Consistent with previous studies, Pasifika parents felt that their work and family commitments were not considered by the youth justice system (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003). Having access to your child as they go through the youth justice should be about gaining access to the kinds of life opportunities that create a successful outcome for you and your child. “It’s about accessing equality, understanding, education, food, housing, security, happiness etc. It is about the good life – that is ultimately the point” (Farrow, 2013, p. 33). Therefore, it is clear that the socioeconomic status of Pasifika families in youth justice needs to be clearly understood when responding to their needs.

We need to work together for my child

The youth justice system has the potential to play a significant and foundational role in meeting the needs of Pasifika parents as they try to support their child engaged in offending behaviour. Like many parents, Pasifika parents are unable to provide this support without being supported themselves. One of the needs expressed by parents in this study was to be given the opportunity to understand Court processes and expectations (Arya, 2014). This would provide them with the tools to participate genuinely in Court matters. Research has

shown that parental influence and involvement can lead to positive and sustainable outcomes for their child (Snider et al., 2022)

Let me help my child

Prior to entry into youth justice, the possibility of early intervention is always favourable and preferred (Hobbs et al., 2013; Malvaso et al., 2024). Consistent with overseas literature, this research highlighted parents' motivation for a preventative approach, to stop the pathway into the justice system and identify warning signs for early intervention and prevention, possibly in the school environment (Arya, 2014). They wished someone had let them know much sooner that there were negative peers or activities at risk of influencing their child.

If that early intervention opportunity was missed, the history of parental involvement with the justice system began with blaming parents, as highlighted previously in *Choosing the lau'ie (literature review)*, to now seeking to work with parents (Becroft, 2015; Hollingsworth, 2007). However, the reality of 'working with parents' authentically remains questionable, given that the voice of parents in this study continues to highlight a lack of commitment from the system to actively seek their involvement – despite their reported willingness to participate. Parents wanted to be included, highlighting their commitment to be present for their child both emotionally and physically. However, parents in this study felt a sense of exclusion from the system where they were often voiceless in the decisions made about their child. This sense of exclusion was not solely a Pasifika parent experience, as it has been experienced by many parents across the globe (Badali & Broeking, 2004; Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009; Snider et al., 2022), though it is exacerbated by processes not always being culturally inclusive or appropriate.

Furthermore, when staff have been motivated to include parents, Court processes make this difficult to implement (Davies & Davidson, 2001). Professionals can be limited in their

engagement and response with families, as family trauma and chaos can often be a contributing factor for serious youth offending, and staff may assume blame or negative judgements, without knowing the family circumstances (Becroft, 2015). Almost all of the parents in this study were supportive of their child and expressed their opinion in Court and amongst stakeholders. Interestingly, research has shown that when parents have turned up to support their child and become actively involved in planning and support, this positively influenced outcomes (Varma, 2007). Furthermore, the relationship between a parent and the youth justice system (e.g. youth justice professionals) has the potential to influence their child's risk of recidivism and commitment to interventions and plans (Pennington, 2010; Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2010) .

Herein lies a difficulty. Family and parental involvement is 'common sense' and evidence supports the value of parental involvement influencing positive outcomes for the child in youth justice (Magidson & Kidd, 2021; Varma, 2007). Yet, a detailed definition of what parental involvement in youth justice actually means varies, and is limited (Burke et al., 2014; Snider et al., 2022), and their involvement has been sporadic (Pennell et al., 2011). Further, research has shown there are differences amongst professionals in how they view and practise policies of involving parents, that then creates confusion for parents and their child (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009). Even when parents do what is asked of them by the system, they can still be excluded from participating meaningfully in the discussions about their child, and what needs to happen next (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003). Whilst legislation acknowledges the importance of family, it is difficult to implement (Becroft, 2015).

Given the cultural background of participants in this study, it is also possible that whilst parents expressed their motivation to be included in their child's youth justice matters, the system available to support them was not designed to recognise the various social, economic

and cultural factors that influenced their involvement (Fletcher et al., 2004; Palavi et al., 2025). To practically support in mitigating this lack of awareness regarding Pasifika parents, OT appointed specialist Pacific Cultural Advisor roles in response to their Pacific Strategy 2021-2024 (Oranga Tamariki, 2025). However, my experience has been that these advisors are not accessed enough by OT staff, and in some cases I have provided information about these roles to OT staff, despite this being an internal OT resource! Unfortunately, the most recent report on National Care Standards in Aotearoa NZ showed that whānau (family) continue to feel unheard by social workers and the system that is meant to support them (Aroturuki Tamariki Independent Children's Monitor, 2025). The experiences of parents in the justice system determine their trust and confidence in services working for their child, which can be significantly undermined by staff behaviour (Bouma et al., 2020).

Not all programmes work

I sought to obtain data on the number and type of services available for young people in the youth justice system that include services for their family. Data was provided, though due to confidentiality, I was unable to seek approval to include it in detail in my research.²⁸ From the data provided, it was interesting to see it was inaccurate, in that programmes identified as serving the young person and their family do not necessarily do so. This is due to my clinical experience of the field and working alongside young people and their families in youth justice. Therefore, the data (if released) was unlikely to be accurate. Based on my clinical experience, interventions and programmes for families (parents) and/or parents with their young person, are minimal. The primary focus is generally on the young person alone.

²⁸ I was able to review this data in my role as a member of the Pasifika Advisory Group to the OT Chief Executive.

In this research, programmes that were received positively by parents highlighted that it was more than just the content. Parents highlighted that parenting programmes and anger management programmes had been useful to them, and they were able to apply the learning at home, which has also been reflected by non-Pasifika parents (Martínez-Muñoz et al., 2019). Research has shown that parents involved in the youth justice system benefit from parenting programmes, particularly to enhance communication and connectedness with their child (Fagan, 2013). Similarly, positive changes in the relationship between parents and their child in my study were linked to an improvement in communication and an acknowledgement by parents of the changes they needed to make within their family.

Interestingly, parents in this study did not hold strong support of mentoring programmes and the number of counsellors that their child had to see. They also believed that there was a lack of understanding and a lack of support from the system, consistent with previous studies (Boshier, 2011; Davies & Davidson, 2001; Francia et al., 2019). However, young people value building relationships with mentors who have lived experience of contact with the criminal justice system (Creaney, 2020). A recent review of mentoring programmes for youth in juvenile justice in the USA noted that the effectiveness of such mentoring programmes at the regional and national level is unknown and evaluations have had mixed results (DuBois, 2021). In Aotearoa NZ, a review of mentoring programmes in general did not necessarily include the opinions of families, yet this was seen to be important amongst Pasifika communities (Farruggia et al., 2011) What was interesting to note here was that the parents in my research spoke significantly about the quality of relationship with staff and practitioners. Although they spoke about a programme not being appropriate, after further discussion, it was more about the relationship they had with the facilitator or the social worker, rather than the content of the programme. Therefore, it appeared that it was the relationships that determined any further interaction or positive outcomes.

After further thought and consideration, the lack of understanding and engagement between Pasifika parents and professionals in the youth justice system may be due to the *quality* of their relationship. The identity of Pasifika people is relational (Tamasese et al., 2005) and it is the relationship that needs to be nurtured, supported and prioritised. Pasifika parents are then likely to engage, to trust and be trusted, and to work together to increase opportunities for better life outcomes for their child.

Help us understand

Youth justice is a verbal system where interactions are communicated verbally or written and it is assumed that people are sufficiently fluent in speaking and understanding the English language (Maitland et al., 2025). This would logically highlight difficulties for parents where English is a second language, as were most of the parents in this study. However, research has also shown that professional parents with fluent English as a first language also struggle in their navigation of the youth justice system (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003).

The use of interpreters was seen as an appropriate tool to support parents in the youth justice system, consistent with previous research (Hau‘alofa‘ia Koloto, 2003; Ludeke et al., 2012). However, access to interpreters was not something that parents were comfortable to ask for. Rather, it needs to be a resource that is seen to be of value not only to parents, but also to the Court. Having an interpreter is likely to ensure parents’ responses are authentically understood. In addition, having an interpreter will provide the Court with an opportunity to make sure their questions have been asked accurately, and therefore the response is likely to be appropriate. Currently, there are language lines (on the phone) that are available for practitioners to engage with interpreters for Pasifika services (Ludeke et al., 2012). In

addition, Pasifika navigators²⁹ are often asked to fulfil an interpreter's role, despite an absence of training in professional interpretation, including rules about confidentiality and learning how to correctly translate technical legal and Court terminology (Gray et al., 2017). It is clear that the involvement of interpreters should be provided to Pasifika parents and the Court, to ensure everyone's safety throughout the process.

Research has shown that parents are able to identify real gaps in the youth justice system that they can share with Courts to improve and enhance their services. However, this requires a respectful relationship between parents and professionals to improve Court, parent and youth outcomes (Becroft, 2015; Bennett, 2022; Maschi et al., 2013; Walker et al., 2015). Previous studies have shown that parents are seeking more connection between the sectors including themselves (Hunter et al., 2020) and more parental education and support services (Pennington, 2015; Varma, 2007). This is despite parents feeling left out (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2009) and often disengaged (Pennington, 2015). In this study, Pasifika parents identified clearly what is needed to enhance their experience and subsequent support for their child in the youth justice system. To work with a child in youth justice is to work with their parents and family.

More needs to be done to look at working collaboratively on youth offending from an ecological and holistic perspective (Ioane & Tudor, 2023) and coordination among sectors (Alaggia et al., 2009). Parental involvement justice models have already been developed though are not necessarily in use here in Aotearoa NZ (Walker et al., 2015). We know that Pasifika people prioritise relationships as fundamental to their existence and identity (Tamasese et al., 2005). A relational approach can be appropriate for Pasifika parents and has

²⁹ Support people who provide support to clients as they 'navigate' their way through the system they are involved in. Depending on their training and expertise, they can have various roles as navigators.

been seen to be effective for Indigenous communities in practice (Gottlieb, 2013; Maitland et al., 2025) and in research (Tynan, 2021). From a Pasifika perspective, it also responds to *tausi le Va* - nurture and respect the relationship. Ultimately, the youth justice system needs to work towards a vision where they are no longer involved with a child and their family. Therefore, the sustainability of good relationships and moving away from offending behaviour lies with families and communities. This is where the system has the potential to truly be effective.

Fofola le 'ie toga

Figure 32

Presenting the 'ie toga



Note. This is one of the smaller 'ie toga presented at my mother's funeral. It is currently displayed in a family home and will be shared amongst the generations to look after.

Fofola le 'ie toga is to “spread the fine mat”. It is the unfolding of the finely woven mat to be presented. The 'ie toga I present above was one of many that was gifted to my family during the death of my mother. The defining feature of the 'ie toga is its feathers. It is well-made when the 'ie toga is soft, shiny and fine. My PhD is a metaphorical 'ie toga woven together by the fibres of experiences and needs of Pasifika parents in youth justice. This

metaphorical ‘ie toga was led by Pasifika, with Pasifika, for Pasifika. A brief overview of similar and unique findings from the Talanoa with parents is presented. As an outcome of this PhD, an adaptation of the Fonofale model is proposed, to respond to the needs of our Pasifika parents in youth justice, including a call to action.

Consistent with previous findings of parental experiences in the youth justice system:

- a) Parents continue to experience difficulty and challenges in navigating their way through the system (Peterson-Badali & Broeking, 2010)
- b) Parents want to be heard and included in the matters for their child (Hillian & Reitsma-Street, 2003)
- c) A focus on wellbeing and the mental health of parents is needed (Pieterse et al., 2022).

Understandably, parents want to support their child through a system that is challenging and complex. As evidence continues to grow regarding the positive influence of parents with their child’s youth justice matters (Maschi et al., 2013; McGinnis, 2024), parents also need support to support their child.

This PhD found four unique findings to add to the body of literature regarding parental experiences in the youth justice system. Given the focus on Pasifika (collective) community, I found that:

1. The Pasifika worldview, culture and understanding of criminal behaviour needs to be recognised as fundamentally important to contextualise and work effectively with Pasifika parents in youth justice.
2. Faith in God is part of the ‘ie toga by which Pasifika parents pride themselves on as a strength and this acts as a protective factor during their journey in youth justice.

3. Pasifika parents in youth justice continue to struggle with their socio-economic circumstances.
4. Building meaningful relationships framed within a Pasifika context is likely to increase opportunities for better outcomes of our young people in youth justice. This requires a movement beyond being transactional and functional in relationships; rather, it is the need to be caring, hope infused, trauma informed and humanistic.

This 'ie toga also found an element of disconnection by our Pasifika parents to their child engaged in youth justice, to their wider family and to the church. However, for some of the parents, the journey in youth justice provided a platform to rebuild a relationship with their child. It is important to recognise that whilst parents had disconnected from wider family and church (often by choice), this creates a unique opportunity for the youth justice system. It is an opportunity for the system to connect authentically (be caring, be culturally aware, be responsive) to these families and to provide them with much needed support and engagement.

The sections to follow first begin with a pictorial overview of the journey thus far from the experiences, needs and sharing of knowledge by Pasifika parents, to the translation of these findings into meanings, leading to the development of the Youth Justice Parent Engagement Model (YJPEM). I present to you the YJPEM with its implications, recommendations and limitations. Of key importance to me and my community is a specific Call to Action for our Pasifika community, followed by areas for future research.

My journey with the 'ie toga

Parental Experiences

- *Culture* protects you - if the YJ system truly understands your culture
- *Family* is everything, just not all the time
- *Spirituality* where church is not everything - faith in God is
- *Mental health* is not mental health
- *Socio-economic* status remains an issue
- The *Youth Justice system and its services* are not great
- *Time Environment Context*

Parental Needs

- *Cultural* programmes
- *Family* inclusion
- *Spirituality* through faith and prayer
- *Wellbeing* support
- *Socio-economic* support
- *Youth Justice system/services* are a foundation for positive current and future outcomes
- *Time Environment Context*

Parents Sharing Knowledge

- Positively strengthen the relationship with your child
- Have faith
- Know the Court
- Pay attention to your wellbeing

Findings into Meanings

- Our *culture* is important
- We are a nuclear *family*
- *Faith* and Church are separate
- *Wellbeing* (mental health) support is needed
- We *struggle with the basics*
- We need to *work together* for my child

Youth Justice Parent Engagement Model (YJPEM)

- *Culture* is the Roof that protects you
- Pous:
 - *Family*
 - *Feelings (Wellbeing)*
 - *Faith*
 - *Food (Socio-economic)*
- *Youth justice system & services* ground engagement
- Surrounded and supported with *Teu le Va and Tausi le Va*

Youth Justice Parent Engagement Model (YJPEM)

The fibres of this 'ie toga have led to an adaptation of the Fonofale model that I name the Youth Justice Parent Engagement Model (YJPEM) (Figure 33). It is intended as a model to meet the engagement and participatory needs of Pasifika parents in youth justice. However, it may also be generalised across non-Pasifika parents, and our young people in the justice system. This is because the values of Pasifika people are universal to us all and culture is a construct that we can all relate to. Further, given the view of Pasifika people being collective, there are also indications that individual cultures have the potential to be collective, especially in families and teams working together to help children (Mohammad et al., 2022). A collective approach is also an effective framework to working with trauma from a racial context to heal and build authentic relationships (Alvarez & Farinde-Wu, 2022). Whilst this model is based on evidence from Pasifika communities, further testing may determine its suitability with individualised and Westernised communities.

Figure 33

Youth Justice Parent Engagement Model (YJPEM)



The YJPEM model was developed within a mindset of what can be easily remembered by professionals as they work within youth justice (including four pous beginning with F). It is proposed as a model (developed from the Fonofale model) to be used by practitioners to ensure the involvement of parents in the youth justice system is relevant, appropriate and authentic. Firstly, I make the following presumptions:

- a) It is presumed that the youth justice system wants to work authentically with families to support their child.

- b) It presumes that parents will be involved in making decisions for their child and that care is required here, given the worldviews of Pasifika parents and the young person in the justice system.
- c) It is presumed that the responsibility of the youth justice system is to ensure that 1) parents and families fully understand the requirements of youth justice and 2) parents and staff agree to work together in partnership – for the benefit of the child.
- d) It is presumed that success for the young person is determined by the young person themselves *with* their family.

Culture refers to *Our culture is important*. It is the roof that has the opportunity to truly protect families from further harm. However, culture is not limited to ethnicity and can also include culture within families and across community. Culture must address the worldviews that Pasifika and many collective communities are governed by, in order to inform the ways in which we work with Pasifika parents and communities in justice. The **Family** pou refers to *Pasifika parents as a nuclear family in Youth Justice*. However, family remains a significant and fundamental support network, as parents attempt to engage with the youth justice system. It is important to recognise parents' vulnerability as they disconnect from external family. The strength of the family, in this situation, is the opportunity to improve the relationship between a child and their parent. This is an opportunity for the system to connect and become a pseudo-family of support to parents and their child.

From a spiritual perspective, the **Faith** in God pou was a crucial part of parents' belief highlighting their views that *Faith and Church are separate*, and that it was their Faith in God that maintained their engagement in the justice system. Interestingly, a noticeable number of parents purposely avoided sharing their situation with the church. This is another opportunity for the system to connect and provide an alternative source of support to parents whilst they are steadfast in their faith in God. A third pou is named **Feelings** to highlight the

Wellbeing support needed for parents, as this ‘ie toga highlighted the significant mental health stressors during their journey in the youth justice system, yet they do not identify these as mental health issues. These stressors can be linked to many factors such as (though not limited to) familial, economic, social and spiritual factors. Expectedly, these stressors can easily become a barrier to their engagement with the youth justice system and their child. In addition, the final pou identifies basic necessities such as **Food** and other socio-economic circumstances that highlight parents as they *struggle with the basics*. These struggles create barriers to attendance, engagement and active participation with their child and the youth justice system. As a system, we seek parental support for their child, yet how much do we consider the socio-economic challenges that these parents and families live in on a daily basis? Herein lies another opportunity for the system to connect and support parents, given their possible isolation from wider family and spiritual support networks.

The **youth justice system and its services** are the foundation that plays a pivotal role to connecting everything together while parents deal with their child’s criminal behaviour. *Parents want to work together with the system and its services*. The youth justice system includes its professionals, and the government and non-government agencies that are the foundation to optimising experiences for Pasifika parents in youth justice. All connections and relationships must be grounded in a system that is authentically collective in its beliefs, protocols and practices.

Of significance, and overarching all of this, is the concept of **Va**. Va is fundamental to all areas of engagement for Pasifika communities. It is deeply woven in the fabric and identity of Pasifika people. Similarly, this metaphorical ‘ie toga has been woven to connect all the voices of participants in this study. Va governs the relationships, with Teu le Va guiding the start of each relationship by building and connecting with others holistically, and Tausi le Va guiding the nurturing of the relationships, where all values of Pasifika are practised. The identity of

Pasifika (Samoan) people is relational and the importance of relationships is fundamental across Pasifika (and non-Pasifika) cultures. The interaction, engagement and relationship-building by those of us working in the justice system is a critical element of YJPEM. Like the Fonofale model, the Va is the overarching framework that underpins all the dimensions and aspects of the model. This YJPEM cannot function if the Va is not seen as the context by which we ground ourselves as professionals working in the justice system. Pasifika members of the EAG were clear to also note that, “if we’re talking about the Va, then we just need to be really, really careful about how we do that and uplifting that concept rather than diminishing it”.

A *relational youth justice system* is one that prides itself on the Va, and draws on Pasifika values to lead, guide and deliver their service to the parents as needed. All these elements are connected to one another, and therefore need to be seen as a whole, rather than parts of a whole. To focus on one aspect of the YJPEM will be detrimental to parents, and subsequently their child. A holistic approach is the answer.

Implications of the YJPEM

Working with Pasifika communities cannot focus solely on the content of the intervention or programme delivered. It must also focus on *how* it is being delivered and *who* it is being delivered by. Furthermore, in this context that is informed by the Talanoa from participants, the *relationship* should be the priority, guiding *how* matters are discussed with parents and interventions are implemented with family.

A **relational approach** to working with parents in the youth justice system is well overdue. This can be achieved by building capacity and capability of the workforce to assess its ability to authentically relate to the communities it is employed to serve. A relational approach is values-based and identifies practical implications of being values-based in its relationships. It draws on the values such as empathy, respect, compassion, love, and being non-judgemental as it engages with parents. **Building cultural capacity** requires training. This training needs to prioritise understanding Pasifika worldviews *within the context of offending behaviour*. When an offence occurs, it is a direct violation of the Va and all of what it means to be Pasifika. Therefore, this must be acknowledged and responded to with humility, respect and understanding. Furthermore, *the role and voice of a Pasifika child* needs to be clearly understood, beyond legislation and practice policies. Finally, to be authentically Pasifika in practice means a review of existing systemic structures and policies in order to create **culturally responsive systems**. A system is only as effective as the people who implement its structures and policies. However, people can only be effective within the boundaries of its structures and policies. Culturally responsive systems and cultural capacity are mutually inclusive of one another. If one invests in these two elements, an authentic relational approach for Pasifika people and communities in justice is likely to be created.

Recommendations

Drawing on the YJPEM (with its 4Fs), practical recommendations born from the Talanoa with parents is provided.

Culture

Interpreters: This is a resource that is available to parents in the youth justice system, should they request it. It may be an opportunity for services to create an Opt-Out service so that it is readily available for parents and the system supporting them. Interpreters should not be limited to supporting only parents. They are also a service that can hold professionals accountable to ensure communication is clearly understood by all parties.

Regular cultural responsiveness training: A training package should be developed for professionals in the youth justice system (e.g. social workers, police, psychologists, judiciary, lawyers, counsellors) that encompasses: a) understanding offending behaviour within a Pasifika and collective worldviews perspective; b) prioritising a relational approach with parents; and c) trauma-informed training within a cultural context that includes recognising practitioner and systemic biases and racism. This training should be co-designed and potentially co-delivered with parents to practitioners working in the field.

Cultural responsiveness training for Pasifika professionals: It is important that Pasifika professionals acknowledge our privilege and work towards an identification of our biases and expectations of our Pasifika community in the throes of youth justice. Pasifika professionals have the opportunity to be authentically effective in our roles in the system. We (Pasifika) are not successful if we continue to have Pasifika communities in justice that are harmed by our own Pasifika actions. We simply must do better.

Family

Parent advocacy groups: Given the isolation from church and family that parents reported, and their willingness to share their experiences, it would be appropriate to pilot parent advocacy groups for Pasifika and collective communities. Evidence is encouraging regarding the value of parent advocacy groups, though it is fair to say that research on the evidence of their effectiveness with Indigenous and ethnic minority groups in particular has not been funded (Nilsen et al., 2009) (Jones et al., 2021). It was also a suggestion made by parents in this PhD and could be an opportunity to enhance and sustain their participation in the youth justice system.

Family-based programmes: Improved relationship and communication with their child was seen as a positive outcome by parents in this study. The delivery of family-based programmes *within a Pasifika worldview* is needed. This creates an opportunity for strengthening relationship and enhancing communication between parents and their child is likely to be effective and sustainable. It also substantiates the family-driven approach (Arya, 2014) that can prevent or stop the flow of our young people into the justice system.

Faith

Connection to church: A formal relationship between child welfare agencies (Oranga Tamariki) and local churches may create opportunity for community support for Pasifika families. Churches can be an authentic source of support for families; however, they will need training. With appropriate education and training for churches by child welfare agencies, this could create another resource to support families during their journey in youth justice.

Feelings

Wellbeing and mental health support: This is likely to be a resource that parents are not recognising as one they need to access, partly due to their understanding of mental health. The fibres from this PhD highlighted clinical presentations that are symptomatic of depression and anxiety. As parents involved with youth justice are often expected to engage in parenting programmes (as part of legislation in Aotearoa NZ), I strongly recommend that *these programmes include wellbeing and mental health support.*

Food (and other socio-economic support)

Social service agencies: A formal relationship between child welfare agencies and social services providing socio-economic support to families is needed. This is a significant stressor for Pasifika families and is often a decisive factor in their ability to attend and authentically engage with their child's court matters.

Youth Justice system and services

There are many ways to improve and enhance our youth justice system. However, just as Pasifika communities are collective, a collective approach is needed to explore, understand and work within our current youth justice system. The recommendations below are limited to my own views; however, more Talanoa and discussion is expected to be held with community and stakeholders as the fibres of this 'ie toga are subsequently disseminated.

Early connection to school: Talanoa showed a desire for parents to have been made aware of, and to understand, early signs of their child's behaviour. However, more needs to be done to maintain and sustain the support that is available at the school level. This means working with teachers, support staff and parents to respond effectively to early childhood problem

behaviours. Whilst it can be argued that these practices are currently in place, the voices of Pasifika parents in this PhD highlighted that more needed to be done.

University curriculum review: These Talanoa have highlighted a need for practitioners in youth justice to assess their relational skills when dealing with families likely to be experiencing interpersonal difficulties, coupled with a background of trauma, a history of mistrust towards systems and desperately seeking to navigate complex and challenging processes whilst extremely distressed with their child's offending behaviour. As far as I am aware, programmes do not necessarily provide training in the finer detail of relationship-building. As a teacher in a doctoral clinical psychology programme, there is training around the use of micro-skills and connecting with clients; however, it is my view that we do not focus on relationships as a fundamental clinical skill and approach that is a priority for working with Pasifika and collective communities. Our duty as practitioners is to connect authentically with families. A first step would be for programmes to review their philosophy, values, policies and processes, and how these respond to working with our Indigenous and most underserved communities in Aotearoa NZ.

Regular cultural responsiveness training (also highlighted above as a response to Culture): A training package should be developed to foster cultural humility and responsiveness, that encompasses: a) understanding offending behaviour within Pasifika and collective worldviews; b) prioritising a relational approach with parents; and c) trauma-informed training within a cultural context that includes recognising practitioner and systemic biases and racism. This training should be co-designed and potentially co-delivered with parents to practitioners working in the field – or in training to do so.

Pasifika programmes in youth justice: An independent review of Pasifika services and programmes in youth justice should be clearly explored and understood. There needs to be

Pasifika programmes in youth justice that go beyond understanding cultural protocols, practices and values for Pasifika young people. These programmes need to address key issues within Pasifika families, particularly between parent and child. The findings from this research have highlighted potential programmes to address: a) cultural differences and understanding between Pasifika parents and their child(ren); and b) communication strategies between Pasifika parents, and between Pasifika parents and children. A co-design, co-delivery approach between Pasifika professionals, parents and young people may be an ideal solution to explore this, thereby highlighting the collective identity of Pasifika people.

Role of Lay Advocates in the Youth Justice system is potentially a role that can practically enhance the value of parental engagement. Lay Advocates are a statutory appointment and their current role is to support a young person or child appearing before the Youth Court charged with an offence³⁰. However, this role could be expanded to prioritise and support the voice of parents in the system. Further exploration of this role is warranted as it is already in place within Youth Justice.

The provision of services for Pasifika people must continue to be advocated for, within a “by Pacific, for Pacific” approach. However, the demand for a Pacific workforce continues to outweigh the supply, we are just not there for a fully capable Pacific workforce - *yet*. Therefore, it is vital that there is an ongoing commitment to training the non-Pasifika workforce to work effectively with Pasifika communities, which is just as important as growing the Pacific workforce. Furthermore, I believe we do a disservice to Pasifika communities if we promote only a “by Pacific, for Pacific” approach, given the growing diversity of Pasifika. It is crucial

³⁰ [Youth Court Lay Advocates | New Zealand Ministry of Justice](#)

that working with Pasifika communities must be led by Pasifika and contextualised within a Pasifika worldview, though the responsibility is on the entire system to deliver services with, and for Pasifika peoples.

Limitations

Like any 'ie toga, there can be flaws in design, layout or weaving. In some cases, those flaws can be significant, others may be minimal. Whilst every effort has been made to review the flaws of this 'ie toga, it is likely that those who use the 'ie toga will find further flaws in its design and structure.

This 'ie toga drew on the experiences of Pasifika parents in the youth justice system. It is important to acknowledge that the voices of Pasifika parents in this study are those who were willing to share their experiences. Almost all of the participants in this study were mothers and the voice of fathers is visibly missing from this group. This is not uncommon within the literature on parental perspectives in youth justice (Alaggia et al., 2009; Varma, 2007) and in the context of trauma, separation and family harm that leaves women disproportionately parenting alone. Within a Pasifika context, this can be appropriate; however, it does give rise to needing to seek out the voices of fathers that are likely to be crucial in the experiences of youth *prior* to their engagement in youth justice (Zimmer, 2023). In addition, most of the young people involved in the larger Pacific youth justice research were males and the relationship between father and son may be worth exploring. Finally, the voices of Pasifika parents in this PhD were mainly Samoan. Whilst Samoans are the largest Pasifika population in Aotearoa NZ (Ministry of Pacific Peoples, 2020), it is important to recognise that there are key differences amongst Pacific Island communities that are worth exploring.

A call to action for our Pasifika community

The development of this 'ie toga highlighted three key points that were personal and challenging for me as a Pasifika person. Parents in this study highlighted areas that were painful for me to hear:

1. *Pasifika parents experienced negative judgement from Pasifika professionals in the youth justice system.*
2. *Pasifika parents experienced judgement from their church.*
3. *Pasifika parents experienced judgement from their own extended families.*

As a Pasifika professional in youth justice as a clinician, researcher and advocate, I reflected on these points with Pasifika members of the EAG. WE are the professionals in youth justice that these parents were referring to. What could we do? As eloquently stated by one of the EAG members:

We don't drop our expectation, we bring our people, we all move together.

I think that's the notion, we go together and some of us have gone out way ahead and we've got to stop and just work out where we are and then bring them forward and I think this is the model that shows us how we do that, how we leave no one behind but we keep going, we can't stop.

Given the collective identity of Pasifika people, it was clear that Pasifika professionals in youth justice needed to hold themselves accountable to the difficult message that Pasifika parents were telling us. We (Pasifika professionals) need to listen to our own families in youth justice as mentioned by the EAG: "I mean one of the things that's coming up there is about respect; it's about whether you listen to people, whether you truly listen, whether you truly respect them." Further, we need to recognise our own biases as Pasifika professionals in

youth justice, “But who in the YJ space of all the professionals is trained in a cultural competency? We’re all trained in the Western model.”

A call to action for Pasifika professionals in youth justice:

Across Police, OT and Ara Poutama, the EAG advised that there are networks of support and forums for Pasifika professionals in the justice system. Dissemination of the findings of this research is important to share with these groups to be delivered as a workshop Talanoa. There needs to be a Talanoa about these findings to determine a response from Pasifika professionals.

We need an active response to how Pasifika parents feel judged by their own people (professionals) in the justice system. This needs to be led by Pasifika *with* Pasifika parents in youth justice.

Future ‘ie toga (research)

Before looking at future research, it is important to step back to review the complexities of this metaphorical ‘ie toga. In my opinion, it was not a traditional research project. There were factors that were brought to my attention during the research that I needed to respond to. At times, after a Talanoa, parents spoke about their current housing or income situation. For example, Litia asked if I could write a letter of support as they applied for housing. Rasela asked me if I knew of any employment in the warehousing industry for her and her son. I also wrote a letter to Seluia’s employer as evidence of her involvement in the research, in order to allow her to rearrange her shiftwork to attend the Fiafia night. Her employer supported her attendance, though in order to be granted paid leave (without using up annual leave), they needed a letter of confirmation.

Fortunately for me, I also have connections in the community for food grants (particularly during the pandemic), local community churches and employment. With consent from families, I passed on their details to the connections I had within the community, including

my own family connections within the relevant support areas. In one situation, I was unable to provide a letter of support for housing (following guidance from my supervisor), though I connected the family with a local Pasifika social service agency for their support. To authentically undertake meaningful research that has potential to be impactful and benefit communities, *a researcher must see all of a participant*. This is relational accountability (Wilson, 2001) and highlights a values-based approach reflecting Pasifika and Indigenous worldviews.

A next step approach to this PhD and metaphorical ‘ie toga would be to actively address the recommendations identified. This would ensure that the Talanoa from participants is not forgotten. As a result, I intend to disseminate and share findings with the youth justice system at all levels; that is, the judiciary, law, government departments, non-government agencies, churches and community groups, and seek opportunities to collaborate in implementing these findings. Further, a key point of discussion during this dissemination is a Talanoa to explore the rights of a child and the violation of Pasifika culture perceived by parents in this study. This is important given the cultural elements involved in this Talanoa that is crucial for authentic parental engagement.

- 1) A possible ‘ie toga is to engage in research to study the implementation of YJPEM.

This may include a study in the following areas:

- Designing a culturally responsive training package with current participants and parents in youth justice; alongside practitioners in justice and the young person involved in offending behaviour, where appropriate. This training package would be for practitioners in youth justice with a focus on understanding the cultural context of offending behaviour and the importance of a relationship-based approach when working with a family in youth justice.

- 2) Piloting a Pasifika parent advocacy group could be an area for further research. Based on the Talanoa from parents, the group could be a source of emotional support, information and advocacy for one another.
- 3) Another 'ie toga could explore the perspectives of Indigenous and ethnic minority (e.g. Pasifika) practitioners working with the youth justice system. This can then create opportunity for larger research that attempts to compare the voices of Pasifika young people, families and practitioners in youth justice; with an opportunity to develop an overarching justice-related framework to working relationally in the system.
- 4) Pasifika professionals are encouraged to come together to address the criticisms raised by Pasifika parents in this study. In particular, it is the judgements that parents have raised that has come from their experience with Pasifika professionals in the youth justice system. This is likely to be a challenging Talanoa though it creates a pathway to fa'alelei le Va, restore the Va between Pasifika professionals and Pasifika parents in youth justice. This can be an area of future research that leads to developing practice implications specific to Pasifika professionals in the justice system.
- 5) This 'ie toga focused on the Pasifika community, though as acknowledged at the beginning of this 'ie toga, our tuakana (Māori) are significantly over-represented in youth justice. A larger study that includes the perspectives of Māori *and* Pasifika would be appropriate, with a view to responding to the similarities and differences in their needs for better youth justice system delivery.

O le meaalofa o le 'ie toga – Our gift

Ua fofola le 'ie toga. The fine mat has been presented.

It is important that as a system, we need to understand and learn more from the communities we are serving in youth justice. These families are disconnected from their own child, wider family, church and society, therefore we, as a system, must be careful *not* to exacerbate these disconnections. At the same time, we must be tolerant, fair, just and empathetic. Firstly, we need to understand ourselves as practitioners, and as a youth justice system. Secondly, we must be open to learn from our families in youth justice, and finally, we must be honest in our efforts to work together for better outcomes for our Pasifika children and families.

Whilst these recommendations are prescriptive and significant, these services cannot be implemented effectively, without the strong system of support that it is grounded in. Understanding of Pasifika worldviews, the critical importance of relationships and the structures they are governed by, is imperative to maximise opportunities for the successful implementation of services. Parents openly shared their knowledge and experience of what they learnt from their observations, mistakes and decisions they made. This was a gift from them to other parents coming through the Youth Justice system.

This PhD is wrapped up in a metaphorical 'ie toga.

It is a gift from our Pasifika parents and community to the youth justice system that is meant to support them.

It is my gift to you.

The 'ie toga is of significant value to Pasifika cultures. It is used in ceremonies to highlight the respect between families and villages, and part of the identity for Pasifika (Samoan) people. When the 'ie toga is given, and subsequently received, it must be honoured. As this is now gifted to the youth justice system, the system must honour this 'ie toga and seek to ensure the findings and model provided is reviewed with potential to use.

I have woven this 'ie toga with considerable care to ensure that the Talanoa from parents were included and prioritised so that parents felt empowered as their Talanoa was heard.

Just as the 'ie toga is passed from one generation to the next, the findings and recommendations from this metaphorical 'ie toga cannot be ignored or placed on a shelf. An 'ie toga is treasured and valued - it is to be displayed. This metaphorical 'ie toga must be displayed and used appropriately by those in the youth justice system.

The 'ie toga I have provided is for the system to adapt its mindset to creating a culturally responsive, empathic, holistic and effective approach to supporting parents in youth justice. Pasifika parents, like all parents, have a legal right to be included and informed; alongside a moral and social obligation to be there for their child in the youth justice system. However, for Pasifika parents, it is also their cultural right to be responsible for the rights of their child. The challenges are with the system to create pathways for their presence to be included with meaningful participation in their child's matters. This is not easy, though it is possible. If we are to truly be effective in our response to youth justice, the focus must begin at home.

O le tagata ma lona aiga, o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga.

Every young person belongs to a family and every family belongs to a young person.

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Appendix A. Relevant sections of the OT Act ³¹

section 5(c)

- (c) the child's or young person's place within their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group should be recognised, and, in particular, it should be recognised that—
 - (i) the primary responsibility for caring for and nurturing the well-being and development of the child or young person lies with their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group;
 - (ii) the effect of any decision on the child's or young person's relationship with their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group and their links to whakapapa should be considered;
 - (iii) the child's or young person's sense of belonging, whakapapa, and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group should be recognised and respected;
 - (iv) wherever possible, the relationship between the child or young person and their family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group should be maintained and strengthened;
 - (v) wherever possible, a child's or young person's family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group should participate in decisions, and regard should be had to their views;
 - (vi) endeavours should be made to obtain the support of the parents, guardians, or other persons having the care of the child or young person for the exercise or proposed exercise, in relation to that child or young person, of any power conferred by or under this Act;

section 8

8 Parents and others to be informed of decisions

- (1) Where any person takes any action, or makes any decision, under this Act that significantly affects any child or young person, that person shall ensure that, wherever practicable, the following persons are informed, as soon as practicable, of that action or decision and of the reasons for it:
 - (a) every person who is a parent or guardian of, or a person having the care of, the child or young person;
 - (b) the child or young person.
- (2) It is not necessary to inform a child or young person of any action or decision if—
 - (a) that child or young person is incapable of understanding it; or
 - (b) it is plainly not in the child's or young person's interests to be so informed.
- (3) The information required by subsection (1) to be given to any person shall be given—
 - (a) orally and, where practicable, in writing; and
 - (b) where practicable, in a manner and in language that the person understands.

section 208 2(c)

- (c) that any measures for dealing with offending by children or young persons should be designed—
 - (i) to strengthen the family, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family group of the child or young person concerned; and
 - (ii) to foster the ability of families, whānau, hapū, iwi, and family groups to develop their own means of dealing with offending by their children and young persons;

³¹ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/24/en/latest/>

section 229

229 Parents or guardians or other persons to be informed where child or young person at enforcement agency office for questioning in relation to commission or possible commission of offence or is arrested

section 232

232 Notice of offence with which child or young person charged to be given to parents or guardians or other persons having care of child or young person

- (1) Where a child or young person who has been arrested is charged with the commission of an offence, an enforcement officer shall, as soon as practicable, give oral or written notice specifying the nature of the charge to—
 - (a) the child or young person; and
 - (b) a parent or guardian or other person having the care of the child or young person; and
 - (c) the person nominated by the child or young person pursuant to [section 231](#).
- (2) Every such notice shall be given in language that can be understood by all the persons who are required, by subsection (1), to be given that notice.

section 259A

259A Family group conference must consider attendance at parenting education, mentoring, and alcohol or drug rehabilitation programmes

Every family group conference convened under this Part must, in complying with [section 208\(fa\)](#), consider—

- (a) whether the young person should be required to attend all or any of the following:
 - (i) a parenting education programme;
 - (ii) a mentoring programme;
 - (iii) an alcohol or drug rehabilitation programme; and
- (b) whether a parent or guardian or other person having the care of the young person should be required to attend a parenting education programme.

Section 259A: inserted, on 1 October 2010, by [section 11](#) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Act 2010 (2010 No 2).

section 278

278 Parent or guardian may be summoned to appear when young person charged with offence

- (1) Any Youth Court Judge or District Court Judge or Justice or Community Magistrate or Registrar (not being a constable) may, where a charging document is filed against a young person in respect of any offence, issue a summons to any parent, guardian, or person for the time being having the care of the young person, requiring that parent or guardian or person to appear before the Youth Court at a time to be named in the summons.
- (2) At the hearing of the proceedings in respect of the offence any such parent or guardian or other person may be examined in respect of any matter relating to the proceedings.
- (3) Every person commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$1,000 who, being required to appear before the Youth Court under this section, refuses or fails, without reasonable excuse, so to appear.
- (4) In any case where a person does not appear in answer to a summons that has been served under this section, a Youth Court Judge or District Court Judge may direct the issue of a warrant to arrest that person and bring that person before the court.

section 288

288 Order in respect of parent or guardian or other person having care not to be made without first informing of proposal to make order and giving opportunity to make representations

No order may be made under [section 283](#) in respect of a parent or guardian or other person having the care of a young person unless that parent or guardian or other person has been—

- (a) informed by the court of the proposal to make the order; and
- (b) given an opportunity to make representations to the court.

Compare: 1974 No 72 s 36(5)

Section 288: replaced, on 1 October 2010, by [section 28](#) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Act 2010 (2010 No 2).

section 297A

Parenting education programme orders

Heading: inserted, on 1 October 2010, by [section 30](#) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Act 2010 (2010 No 2).

297A Written statements of terms, and how court may respond to failures to comply

- (1) If an order under [section 283\(ja\)](#) is made requiring a young person who is, or is soon to be, a parent or guardian or other person having the care of a child to attend a parenting education programme, a written statement of the terms of the order must be supplied to that young person in accordance with [section 340](#).
- (2) If an order under [section 283\(ja\)](#) is made requiring a parent or guardian or other person having the care of a young person to attend a parenting education programme, the court must as soon as is reasonably practicable cause to be supplied to the parent or guardian or other person a written statement specifying—
 - (a) the terms and conditions of the order;
 - (b) possible consequences of a failure to comply with the order;
 - (c) provisions for variation of the order;
 - (d) rights of appeal against the order.
- (3) Subsection (4) applies if the court is at any time satisfied in the light of a report under [section 320](#) or of other information available to it that a person required to attend a parenting education programme by an order under [section 283\(ja\)](#) has failed to comply with the order.
- (4) The court may direct a care and protection co-ordinator to convene a family group conference under [Part 2](#) for the purpose of considering matters relating to the care or protection of every child or young person in the care of the person required by the order under [section 283\(ja\)](#) to attend the parenting education programme.
- (5) The care and protection co-ordinator must comply with, and [Part 2](#) applies with all necessary modifications to a conference convened in accordance with, a direction under subsection (4).

Section 297A: inserted, on 1 October 2010, by [section 30](#) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Act 2010 (2010 No 2).

section 313

313 Court may make orders for access and exercise of other rights by parents and other persons

- (1) Where the court makes an order under [section 311](#) placing a young person in the custody of the chief executive, it may on making the order, or at any time thereafter, on application made by any parent of that young person or by any other person, make an order—
 - (a) granting access to that young person to that parent or other person;
 - (b) conferring on that parent or other person such other rights in relation to the young person as it thinks fit.
- (2) Any such order may be made on such terms and conditions as the court thinks fit.

section 352

352 Appeal by parents or guardians or other persons having care of young person

Any parent or guardian or other person having the care of a young person may appeal to the High Court against—

- (a) any order made by the Youth Court under [section 283\(k\) or \(m\) or \(n\)](#) in respect of that young person:
- (ab) an order made under [section 297B\(5\)](#) placing that young person in the custody of the chief executive, an iwi social service, a cultural social service, or the director of a child and family support service to enable the provision to that young person of a programme that that young person is required by an order under [section 283\(jc\)](#) to attend:
- (ac) an order made under [section 307\(4\)](#) placing that young person in the custody of the chief executive, an iwi social service, a cultural social service, or the director of a child and family support service to enable the provision to that young person of a programme or activity that that young person is required by a condition of an order under [section 307\(1\)](#) to take part in or undertake:
- (ad) an intensive supervision order made under [section 296G](#) in respect of that young person:
- (b) any order made under [section 283\(e\)](#) requiring that parent or guardian to pay a sum towards the cost of the prosecution:
- (c) any order made under [section 283\(f\)](#) requiring that parent or guardian to make reparation to any person:
- (d) any order made under [section 283\(g\)](#) requiring that parent or guardian to make restitution:
- (e) an order made under [section 283\(ja\)](#) requiring that parent or guardian or other person having the care of that young person to attend a parenting education programme.

section 359

359 Presence of parents at hearing of appeal from decisions of Youth Court

- (1) Where any appeal relating to a young person is made under this Part from a decision of the Youth Court, the High Court or a Judge of that court may order that any parent or guardian of the young person, or any person having the care of the young person, shall be present at the hearing, and may further order that that parent, guardian, or other person shall bring the young person with that person.
- (2) Where, pursuant to subsection (1), the High Court or a Judge of that court orders any person to be present at any hearing, the Registrar of that court shall cause every person so ordered to be present to be served with written notice of the time and place at which that person is required to attend.
- (3) If any person fails to attend at the High Court in accordance with an order made under subsection (1), the court may direct the issue of a warrant to arrest that person and bring that person before the court.
- (4) At the hearing of any such appeal, any parent or guardian of the young person, or any person having the care of the young person, may be examined in respect of any matter relating to the proceedings.

section 437

437 Notice of proceedings and orders to be given to parents or guardians or other persons having care of child or young person

- (1) Where any application is made to, or any proceedings are commenced in, any court under this Act, being an application or proceedings relating to any child or young person, it shall be the duty of the person making the application or commencing the proceedings to give notice of the application or proceedings to a parent or guardian or other person having the care of the child or young person together with a copy of any such application or proceedings.
- (2) Every notice given under subsection (1) shall specify—
 - (a) the nature of the application or proceedings and any orders sought in sufficient detail to enable that parent or guardian or other person to understand both the nature and implications of the application or proceedings; and
 - (b) the rights or obligations of any parent or guardian or other person to appear at the hearing of the application or proceedings or be represented by a barrister or solicitor.
- (3) Where any order is made by a court on any application made or in any proceedings brought under this Act relating to a child or young person, it is the duty of the Registrar of the court by which the order was made to give notice of the making of the order to a parent or guardian or other person having the care of the child or young person, and also give that parent or guardian or other person a copy of the order.
- (4) Every notice given under subsection (3) shall specify—
 - (a) the terms of the order made in sufficient detail to enable the parent or guardian or other person to understand both the nature and implications of it; and
 - (b) any rights of appeal against the order.

Appendix B. Amendment to HDEC

A3. Please indicate whether the amendment:

- ☐ concerns urgent safety measures that have already been implemented
☐ notifies the HDEC/SCOTT of a temporary halt of your study
☐ requests that your study re-commence following a temporary halt or suspension of approval
☒ none of the above

A4. Please briefly explain the effect that you consider that this amendment may have on the following ethical aspects of your study.

Benefits:	[< 600 characters] It will provide the Justice sector with an understanding from a parent/caregiver perspective of the enablers and barriers to supporting their young person in the Justice system. Ultimately, parents/caregivers hold a key role in the support of a young person in the Justice system. However, most of the interventions are provided for the young person, and in some way; parents/caregivers are expected to support the young person - without anyone supporting them. However, it is hypothesised, that if parents are well-supported, then this in turn will increase better outcomes for the young person.
Risks:	[< 600 characters] The risk is that parents/caregivers may feel the researcher as having benefitted from the research with a potential PhD qualification. However, this will be explained to them as it will require their consent for this data to be used for a PhD qualification. It does not impact on the intent of the existing research, methodology nor its findings. Further, given the ethical risks of privacy/confidentiality, no data will be reported in a form that can directly be linked to an individual or family.
Respect for persons and populations:	[< 600 characters] The respect for persons and population will continue to be upheld throughout the study and as data is analysed and findings gathered. All parents/caregivers will be contacted as to whether they given consent for this information to be used as part of a PhD qualification. It will not impact on their existing participation. Information/Consent forms will continue to be provided in their language of choice and due to the existing relationship, appropriate language spoken will be used.
Fairness:	[< 600 characters] The data to be used for a PhD will provide opportunities for equity amongst those that access the Justice system. It allows for the voices of Pasifika families to be heard and recognised regarding their experiences of the Justice system. Given the Pasifika engagement and protocols acknowledged, that is the foundational aspect of this proposed PhD, it is likely that the responses will be genuine. These voices need to be heard to ensure parent/caregiver wellbeing is supported and nurtured, so that they may look after the health and wellbeing of their child/young person in the Justice system.

A5. Only substantial amendments, as defined in section 11 of the Standard Operating Procedures for HDECs, need to be submitted to HDECs.

Is this amendment substantial?

- ☒ Yes
☐ No

A6. Please explain your answer above

[< 1200 characters]

The data gathered was due to building rapport and engagement with participants. It was not seen as directly responding to health and wellbeing of high risk Pasifika youth. However, as the information was gathered, it provided rich and comprehensive information that has an opportunity to influence practice and policy. Anecdotal feedback also showed the value by parents/caregivers to have an opportunity to share their own experiences, rather than prioritising only the views of their young person in seeking support.

A7. Please provide the current number of NZ participants affected by this amendment.

25

Please upload amended versions of all relevant study documents in the "Documents" tab.

Appendix C. Provisional Approval from HDEC

15 June 2021

Dr Julia Ioane
AUT - Akoranga Campus
AR320, AR Building
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1142

Dear Dr Ioane

Re: Ethics ref:	18/STH/96/AM02
Study title:	Assessing mental health and wellbeing among high risk Pasifika youth in Aotearoa

This amendment was reviewed by the Southern Health and Disability Ethics Committee and provisionally approved pending receipt of further information. This decision was made through the HDEC Expedited Review pathway.

Further information requested

The further information requested in order for the Southern Health and Disability Ethics Committee to make a final decision is as follows.

- 1
- the HDEC form states that the request from the Massey University Ethics committee was to have been attached. Please can this be provided to HDEC
- an information and consent form need to be provided for participants to approve the secondary use of their data. Please see the HDEC template which will provide information for the data management section.
- please also provide a data management plan. A template exists on the HDEC website which may assist with this. Please note, this is aimed at clinical trials and will need to be customised for use for this application

Responding to requests for further information

In addition to making requested changes to study documentation, a cover letter should be used to respond to any outstanding ethical concerns.

As the amendment form cannot be edited when responding to a provisional approval, please address any concerns raised about questions in the application form in a cover letter.

Please remember to track or highlight changes made to new versions of existing documentation. Both tracked and clean versions of updated documents should be provided when responding to a provisional approval.

Timeline for providing further information

P - 18/STH/96 – Provisionally Approved Amendment – 15 June 2021

Page 1 of 8

You have 90 days to provide this further information. Your application will be considered to have been withdrawn if this information is not received on or before 13 September 2021. A new application would be required in this case.

Timeline for giving a final decision

The 35-day clock within which a final decision must be made on this study is suspended as of the date of this letter. This clock, on which -14 days remain, will restart on the date on which **all** of the further information requested above is received by the Southern Health and Disability Ethics Committee.

Appendix D. Approval from HDEC



Health and Disability Ethics Committees
Ministry of Health
133 Molesworth Street
PO Box 5013
Wellington
6011
hdec@health.govt.nz

Ethics reference: 18/STH96/AM02

23 September 2021

Dr Julia Ioane

AUT - Akoranga Campus, AR320, AR Building, Private Bag 92006
Auckland
1142
New Zealand

Tēnā koe Dr Ioane

APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT

Study title: Assessing mental health and wellbeing among high risk Pasifika youth in Aotearoa

I am pleased to advise that this amendment was **approved** by the Southern Health and Disability Ethics Committee (the Committee) with non-standard conditions. This decision was made through the post-approval pathway.

Non-standard Conditions

The main ethical issues considered by the Committee which require addressing by the Researcher are as follows.

1. The Committee noted that Section 7.1 of the data management plan states no identifiable data will be collected, however participants are giving written informed consent etc., and access to identifiable information is described in Section 8.1. Please amend section 7.1 to include any documents carrying participant identifiers.
2. The Committee noted that the table of contents does not match page numbers in the data management plan. Please update the table for ease of use.
3. The Committee requested the following changes to the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (PIS/CF):
 1. Please amend the sentence stating 'I would like to request that your experiences as a parent/caregiver with a child involved in the Youth Justice system is the basis of my PhD'. This currently reads as though the researcher is seeking permission to do a PhD based on one individual's experience as a parent / caregiver.
 2. Please state how many people will be invited to take part in the research.
 3. Please state where interviews will be held.
 4. Please state whether the interviews will be recorded. If they are to be recorded, state what happens to the recordings (whether they are transcribed, how long they are kept for, etc.)
 5. Please amend 'we guarantee that your identity will not be known nor shared with other people'. Although best efforts to maintain privacy will be made, the risk of privacy / confidentiality breach exists.
 6. As this is a purely observational study, participants should have the right to withdraw already collected data until the point that it is analysed. Please amend the body of the PIS/CF accordingly.
 7. The consent form states data will be retained for 5 years; please amend to 10 years for consistency with the body of the information sheet.
 8. It is suggested that an optional tick-box is added to the consent form, asking whether the participant agrees to be contacted in the future about further research.

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study, however, they do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by HDECs.

If you would like an acknowledgement of completion of your non-standard conditions you may submit a post approval form amendment through the [Ethics Review Manager](#). Please clearly identify in the amendment form that the changes relate to non-standard conditions and ensure that supporting documents (if requested) are tracked/highlighted with changes.

For information on non-standard conditions please see paragraphs 125 and 126 of the [Standard Operating Procedures for Health and Disability Ethics Committees \(SOPs\)](#).

Further information and assistance

Please contact the HDECs Secretariat at hdec@health.govt.nz or visit our website at www.ethics.health.govt.nz for more information.

Nāku noa, nā

Appendix E. Participant Information Sheet



COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE Kōwhiri Kōwhiri Tangata

EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS/CAREGIVER WITH WHANAU INVOLVED IN THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM

(Parent/Caregiver version)

Locality: **AUCKLAND**

HDEC Ethics
ref.:18/STH/96

Researcher: **DR JULIA IOANE**

Thank you for your participation in the study of Pasifika young people involved with the Youth Justice system; and their parents/caregiver. We received valuable feedback and insights from you regarding the health and wellbeing of your child involved in the Youth Justice system.

I felt that as part of our talanoa we were able to build a Va and relationship over the past 18-24 months. As you shared your experiences, there was some rich and insightful comments that you made that were not necessarily a part of the purpose of this study. This was due to our acknowledgement of Va and ensuring we provided a crucial space for us to get to know each other. As I did this, many of the parents/caregivers talked openly about their experiences as a parent/caregiver with a child involved in the Youth Justice system. I have heard from 23 parents/caregivers who shared their experiences.

Hearing the voices of support people such as yourselves is not often known and I feel it is important for your voice to be heard. As a result, I have recently applied to undertake a degree in the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programme. I would like to invite you to be part of this study by drawing on the experiences you have shared as a parent/caregiver with a child involved in the Youth Justice system.

It is completely up to you to decide whether you want to be involved though before you decide, it is important that you know a number of things before you make a decision.

With this PhD study, you have a right to refuse and say "no, I don't want to be a part of this study". You can also agree to be involved now, and if you change your mind, you can pull out at any time.

Dr Julia Ioane
School of Psychology

Level 3, Albany Library Building, Kell Drive, Albany Village
+64 212-7160 | +64 274352519 | j.ioane@massey.ac.nz | www.massey.ac.nz

This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. It sets out the purpose of the study, what we would like you to do, how we will ensure your safety and what would happen when the study ends. I will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will be a part of this study and we can give you up to one week to think about it. Before you decide you may want to talk about the study with other people, such as your child/young person, family or whānau, friends, or healthcare providers. Feel free to do this.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to try and understand the experiences of parents/caregiver as they support their children involved in Youth Justice. The impact of crime on the community is huge and for Pasifika, the support of families is crucial during this time. I believe that if our parents/caregivers are well supported, they can continue to proactively support their child/ren and contribute to mitigating the risks of reoffending.

The aims of the study are:

1. Understand the experiences of parents/caregiver with children involved in Youth Justice
2. Identify what is needed to support parents/caregiver with children involved in Youth Justice
3. Provide solutions for transformation of change for Pasifika communities in Justice

The research questions are:

- a) What works well for Pasifika parents/caregivers as they support their child(ren) involved in the Youth Justice system in Aotearoa NZ?
- b) What needs to improve for Pasifika parents/caregivers as they support their child(ren) involved in the Youth Justice system in Aotearoa NZ?
- c) What are the implications for this research on practice and policy?

This study will provide the researcher with a PhD at Massey University. It is part of a larger study that is funded by the Health Research Council (HRC). I am the person you can contact for further questions by texting [REDACTED] or j.ioane@massey.ac.nz. This study has been approved by Health and Disability Ethics Committee (HDEC) in September 2018, Ref 18/STH/96.

HOW WILL YOU CARRY OUT THIS STUDY WITH ME?

You were asked to be a part of this study because you are already involved in the larger study of Assessing mental health and wellbeing of high risk Pasifika youth in Aotearoa.

Most of the data has already been collected and therefore further participation will not necessarily be needed.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY INVOLVE?

I expect that participation in the current study will be minimal as data has already been collected. However, should you wish to provide further information, I can meet with you again and the talanoa should take an hour of your time.

HOW WILL YOU ENSURE THAT MY HEALTH AND WELLBEING INCLUDING MY PRIVACY IS PROTECTED?

If you wish to contribute further, as Pasifika interviewers, we will ensure you're your wellbeing and safety is looked after at every stage of our study. From the previous study that you have been involved in, best efforts continue to be made to ensure your privacy is upheld, though the risk of privacy breach continues to exist. The information you provide will continue to remains strictly confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone.

If you share any information that talks about you being at risk of harm or others at risk then we will undertake the necessary steps to ensure their safety as well as the safety of others is maintained. This may require us to break confidentiality. We will inform you of what we will do, however we may not seek your permission to do so.

WHO PAYS FOR THE STUDY?

There are no costs for you to be a part of the study though you may need to organise transport to the place of the interview. If this is a problem, we can sort this with you.

As we value your involvement in this study, a koha of \$100 Pak n Save voucher will be given to you to say thank you for each time you participate in our study.

WHEN DO I NEED TO DECIDE TO BE A PART OF THIS STUDY OR NOT?

You can let us know now what you decide, or you have one week to think about it and then come back to us. If you would like to be a part of this study, then please contact me using the information below. If you do not wish to be a part of this study, you do not have to do anything further.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE INFORMATION I HAVE GIVEN AFTER THE STUDY?

The information collected from you will be stored electronically in a confidential and secure location for a period of ten years. Your personal details is coded and will not have any identifiable information. If we continue with further research in this area, we will contact you within two years from the date this study has ended to invite you to participate. At the end of ten years, the electronic data will be permanently deleted.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AND COMPENSATION?

You can withdraw or tell us that you don't want to be a part of this study at any time. If you wanted to, you can be given access to the information you shared during the study.

As we have said before, your responses are strictly private. The only person who can link your response to your personal details is the researcher, Assoc Professor Julia Ioane. This information is kept in a secure and confidential location at Massey University – Albany campus. Only Dr Ioane can access this information.

If you were injured in this study, which is unlikely, you would be eligible to apply for compensation from ACC just as you would be if you were injured in an accident at work or at home. This does not mean that your claim will automatically be accepted. You will have to lodge a claim with ACC, which may take some time to assess. If your claim is accepted, you will receive funding to assist in your recovery. If you have private health or life insurance, you may wish to check with your insurer that taking part in this study won't affect your cover.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE STUDY OR IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

If you change your mind during the study, which can happen to some people, we will continue to include your responses in the study. However, we will not contact you for any further interviews. At the end of the study (2022), you will be given an opportunity to receive the summary of the results and key themes and findings of the research. We will also invite you to a community workshop to share the results of the study with the community. Please note, that your personal information will not be shared with anyone.

WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION OR IF I HAVE CONCERNS?

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about the study at any stage, you can contact: Associate Professor Ross Flett, R.A.Flett@massey.ac.nz

If you want to talk to someone who isn't involved with the study, you can contact an independent health and disability advocate on:

Phone: 0800 555 050 Fax: 0800 2 SUPPORT (0800 2787 7678)

Email: advocacy@hdc.org.nz

You can also contact the health and disability ethics committee (HDEC) that approved this study on: 0800 4 ETHICS Email: hdec@moh.govt.nz

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR SUPPORT IF NEEDED?

- Agency	- Contact details
- Youthline	- 0800376633/Txt234
- Healthline	- 0800611116
- Lowdown	- Txt 5626
- Alcohol Drug Helpline	- 0800787797
- Suicide Prevention	- 0508TAUTOKO
- What's Up	- 0800942878
- Lifeline	- 0800543354
- Mental Health Crisis Teams	0800800717 (Central) 09 2704742 (South) 09 4868900 (West/North)
- Community Alcohol and Drug Service (CADS)	09 8451818 (West/North) 09 2632000 (South)
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	- 0800775222 (South) - 0800800717 (Central) - 0800489555 (North) - 0800228666 (West)

Appendix F. Consent form



COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

CONSENT FORM (parents/caregiver)

Please tick to show that you are agree with the following (Add or delete as appropriate)

Please only include yes/no boxes if the statement is truly optional (i.e. – that a person could still participate if they answer no).



I have read or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.

I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.

I have had the opportunity to use a legal representative, whanau/ family support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study.

I am ok with the answers I have been given about the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.

I understand that taking part in this study is my choice and that I may pull out from the study at any time

I am ok with interviewers collecting and sorting information about me

If I decide that I no longer want to be a part of this study, I agree that the information collected about me may continue to be used, without personal identification..

Yes ☐

No ☐

I understand that my answers in this study is private and that no information, which could identify me personally, will be used in any reports on this study.

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general.

I understand what I have to do as a person doing this study.

Dr Julia Ioane
School of Psychology

Level 3, Albany Library Building, Kell Drive, Albany Village
+64 212-7160-1 | +64 274352519-1 | jioane@massey.ac.nz | www.massey.ac.nz

I wish to receive a summary of the results from the study. Yes ☐ No ☐

I would like to be contacted further for any future research. Yes ☐ No ☐

I know that at the end of this study, the information I have provided will be stored securely for a period of ten years. The researcher also has up to two years from the end of the study to contact me if they would like me to be a part of a further study.

Declaration by participant:

I agree to be a part in this study. My name is:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Interviewer's name:

Signature: _____ Date: _____