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# **CHILDREN OF THE MIGRANT DREAMERS**

**Comparing the experiences of Pasifika students  
in two secondary schools  
attempting to be culturally responsive  
to mine from a generation ago**

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

**Master of Education**  
at  
**The University of Waikato**  
by  
**SEFULU ANNE MARIE SIOPE**

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2010

Dedicated to my late Grandparents  
Asotau and Va'ai Fesola'i Malopito  
and  
Sefulu Vui Siope

I am the seed of their migrant dreams

## ABSTRACT

Since the 1950s the original *Migrant Dreamers* have come from their home islands of the Pacific to Aotearoa New Zealand, in the hopes of gaining a better life with Education being that ticket to happiness. The title of this thesis *Children of the Migrant Dreamers* refers to their posterity.

This thesis investigates the experiences of Pasifika students in two secondary schools involved in the Te Kotahitanga project. External statistical evidence has shown Te Kotahitanga to be successful for all students, including Pasifika students. This thesis attempts to see if, and how far, the educational aspirations of the *Migrant Dreamers* were being manifested or realised through comparison of the Pasifika students experiences of these two schools with my own from over a generation ago. What I found was a much more positive picture in the way Pasifika students are being treated compared to my own schooling experiences. Although Pasifika students in both schools admitted that their schooling experiences were far from perfect, they were fully aware of the efforts put in by their respective schools specifically on their behalf.

The lessons to be learned from my research can be of use to teachers of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It can also be of use to the Pasifika students and their families now residing in Aotearoa New Zealand. These experiences serve as a reminder that within this culturally diverse land, we are all the descendent children of the one Alii.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank my Heavenly Father, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ and The Holy Ghost. All glory and honour be Theirs.

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To my first supervisor Catherine Lang, thank you for your patience. You helped me in more ways than I can name, fa'afetai, fa'fafetai, fa'fafetai tele lava. To Mere Berryman who also brought with you, Janice Wearmouth. Indeed, a very, very special acknowledgement to you both. Your help and faith has been absolutely invaluable. I cannot thank you enough for giving me the metaphoric 'kick' that I needed to get this finished. You all reminded me that this was not mine to hold on to – it also belongs to the 38 students and for this reason your support, your wisdom and friendships far exceeds 'the price of rubies'.

I thank all my long time close friends, especially Michelle Miller, whose ideas and thinking became so infused with my own that I was never sure when hers ended and mine began. To each and every one of you, please know that your friendships have not only helped to shape my thinking, but indeed my very soul.

I also thank my Te Kotahitanga whanau, past and present colleagues and friends. I know and understand that there are 'no accidents in life' and I recognise that 'where much has been given, much is required' and I do acknowledge this privilege of working for Te Kotahitanga and the responsibility of what this entails.

My two final acknowledgements belong firstly to my maths detention teacher, wherever you may be, thank you, thank you, thank you for teaching me the true meaning of 'place values'. You will always be my hero.

Last, but by no means least, to the two Te Kotahitanga schools, notably the two lead facilitators and their teams, the two principals and their deputy principals, all of whom I cannot name but to whom I am so indebted. 'Be strong and of a good

courage' in the great work (if not the greatest of all work) that you're doing and know that your tireless unheralded service has been duly noted by Him who sees all. Rich blessings lay in store for you.

But most, most, most especially, I would like to thank each of the 38 participations and their families for the opportunity of sharing their stories in this thesis. This is for you.

Manuia lava le soifua, fa'afetai tele mo le avanoa.

# CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
CONTENTS.....	VI
PREFACE.....	IX
INTRODUCTION .....	11
1. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	15
1.1 Pasifika identity and the education system.....	15
1.1.1 Cultural, socio-economic, political aspects of Pasifika identity .....	18
1.1.2 Misunderstanding over host-guest roles .....	19
1.1.3 The role of Church as a means of Pasifika identity .....	20
1.2 Media portrayals of Pasifika peoples .....	21
1.3 Families’ aspirations for their children .....	23
1.4 The fundamental need to belong .....	24
1.5 Culturally responsive practices in schools: Te Kotahitanga .....	25
1.5.1 Te Kotahitanga’s ETP: Positioning and Pedagogy .....	26
2. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD.....	28
2.1 Overview .....	28
2.2 Rationale for research methodology and methods .....	28
2.2.1 Culturally Appropriate .....	28
2.2.2 Culturally Responsive .....	29
2.2.3 Personal narrative design .....	36
2.3 Selection of sites.....	36
2.4 School Data and ERO reports .....	37
2.5 School 1 background .....	37
2.6 School 2 background .....	38
2.6.1 ERO findings: School 2 .....	38

2.7	Selection of students.....	38
2.7.1	The students: School 1 .....	39
2.7.2	The students: School 2 .....	39
2.8	Interview process.....	39
2.8.1	School 1.....	39
2.8.2	School 2.....	40
2.9	Focus group interview questions .....	40
2.10	Interview analysis.....	42
2.11	Ethical Considerations.....	44
2.11.1	Anonymity in a transparent setting – a cultural oxymoron.....	46
2.11.2	Final rights of Agency.....	46
3.	FINDINGS.....	47
3a	Part A: Personal narrative - Positioning myself in the story .....	47
3a.1	First-hand exposure to racism and discrimination .....	48
3a.1.1	Discrimination by the government.....	48
3a.1.2	Discrimination on a Thursday, 1974.....	48
3a.2	High School junior years: From Coconut to Potato Girl.....	51
3a.3	High school senior years: Not a Coconut, not a Potato, what then? .....	57
3a.4	The return of the Coconut .....	60
3a.5	High school hindsight.....	62
3a.6	The contradictory role of church .....	63
3a.7	High school aftermath .....	63
3a.8	Lessons I learned from my own schooling experiences as a NZ-born Samoan student.....	65
3b	Part B: Student Interviews.....	67
4.	DISCUSSION .....	112
4.1	High educational aspirations arising from the migrant dream .....	112

4.2	Strong sense of family loyalty and service ethic .....	113
4.3	Contradictory nature of the church.....	114
4.4	Effective teachers and learners, effective school structures.....	115
4.5	Inspirational leaders and role models .....	116
4.6	Challenging traditional family and cultural norms.....	118
4.7	Intra- and inter-discrimination, perpetuating division not diversity.....	119
4.8	Comparison between my experiences and those of the students.....	122
4.8.1	Racism, national and local .....	122
4.8.2	Negative stereotyping.....	123
4.8.3	Family support .....	123
4.8.4	Submitting to peer pressure.....	123
4.8.5	Support from teachers .....	123
4.8.6	Outside school pressures .....	124
5.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	125
5.1	Diversity is the reality of society. Unity needs to be its goal.....	126
5.2	A new dawn of the migrant dream .....	127
	REFERENCES.....	129
	APPENDIX.....	137

## PREFACE

My older siblings asked that in writing this thesis I should keep in mind my audience and the people whose narratives I am including, namely theirs and the 38 students whom I interviewed, for it is not their stories alone but that of our ancestors whose dreams of prosperity and happiness lie with them at present. These stories in Aotearoa New Zealand begin with the interpretation of my schooling reality of the 1970s and early 80s. I have purposely been aware not to romanticise or grandstand these stories for cathartic purposes, or to make excuses for what happened. My siblings requested that I write ‘plain and simple’ so that they would be able to read and understand this thesis freely. I have endeavoured to do so *but* with the same caution that ‘plain and simple’ writing does not mean that I have had to ‘dumb down’ what this thesis is about.

A wise colleague and friend reminded me that I have been blessed with the privilege of being others’ mouthpiece, their voice, and with such a privilege comes the responsibility to make this thesis academically robust, sound and watertight. What this means for me is to tell our stories in a manner that is clear about what our experiences have meant and still mean to us, as well as reaching the high standards of the university which I attend.

My purpose and aim of sharing these stories is to investigate whether the experiences of Pasifika students in two schools that are attempting to be culturally responsive to minority ethnic children are different from my own, a generation ago. In doing so I bring a ‘nuanced understanding’ of Pasifika children’s experiences in schools, and to inform teachers and school policy makers what their socially lived realities actually are. I have sought to do this by trying to make sense of the schooling system, to understand what took place for me, what is currently taking place for these 38 students, not so to act as a court juror seeking for a final verdict of just one or the other, but with all parties involved, to act with informed agency.

Understanding is not good enough, where in the field of researching and investigating underachievement in education it appears that the only advancement being made is the rhetoric (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai and Richardson, 2003).

This is not enough to make a difference for children in schools. In 1984 Metge and Kinloch noted that education policy makers were getting better at “talking past each other” and stopping there. Twenty years later Bishop et al., (2003) were still saying the same thing.

A wise leader, Thomas S. Monson (1970, as cited in Osguthorpe, 2009), once said that an effective teacher is one who empowers students to ‘think about, feel about and then do something about’ what they have just learnt. This too is my prayer for you the reader, to think about, feel about and then do something about what lies within.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates whether the experiences of Pasifika<sup>1</sup> students in Te Kotahitanga schools are different from my own experiences of a generation ago. It also compares those experiences with the experiences of Pasifika students in non-Te Kotahitanga schools as it appears in current literature, notably the work done in the South Island of New Zealand, in Christchurch by Allen, Taleni and Robertson (2008), Parkhill, Fletcher and Fa'afoi (2005), Taleni, Fletcher and Parkhill (2005), Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi and Taleni (2006; 2008), and Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni and O'Reagan (2009).

In this thesis my own narrative provides a framework within which to consider issues that I know from my own personal experience are highly significant in influencing personal identity (Bruner, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin 1988; 1990; 1995 as cited in Creswell, 2005). This personal identity has many faces. There is myself, the daughter of migrant Samoan parents raised to respect and serve my elders and those in authority; a sister bonded to my siblings especially my brothers in a feagaiga covenant where I am to respect their manhood as they serve others and protect us their sisters in love and honour; the niece, cousin, aunty and granddaughter of deceased grandparents who live on in me in a very large extended family on both sides.

Outside of my aiga (family and extended family); I am a friend who is loyal and committed; a qualified teacher who knows that a'o<sup>2</sup> (ako in Māori) is a two sided coin which extends beyond the walls of the classroom and outside of the school bell; a patriotic taxpayer who has the responsibility to make her government stand accountable; an employee for a Māori funded initiative called Te Kotahitanga at the University of Waikato. In this I am a member of two groups at opposite ends of the class continuum – the academic elite group on the one hand and a representative of one marginalised academic underachieving group on the other. I

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<sup>1</sup> Pasifika refers to a self preferred name of peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand of Pacific Island descent. This does not mean that they are by any means homogenous (see Wendt-Samu, 2006; MoE, n.d.). Pasifika includes both those students who were born in New Zealand of Pasifika heritage and also immigrant Pasifika students.

<sup>2</sup> A'o or ako is reciprocal teaching and learning where this dynamic is ever occurring. Unlike in English where there are two words to describe this dynamic, that being teaching and learning as two separate and distinct entities independent of each other. Thus only the teacher gets to teach and the student only allowed learning. With a'o and ako, both the teacher and the student get to do both.

am also a graduate student at Waikato University, Faculty of Education; a life-long learner who is sometimes studious and driven and at other times, unmotivated and tired.

In areas outside of work and family, I am a human being who strives to be human, as a citizen of the world knowing that even though I am but one tiny drop in the ocean that with a billion other tiny drops we become a force to be reckoned with; and finally, as a beloved daughter of God, La'u Matua Tama i le Lagi (my Heavenly Father), to know that after all that is said and done, His opinion is the one that truly matters.

This thesis is a qualitative study where my positioning is both subjective and objective in that I am both a participant and a researcher, an insider as well as an outsider. Drawing kudos from Wendt (1996), Anae (2001) and Silipa Silipa (2004), the fact that I am a first generation New Zealand-born (NZ-born) Samoan (and Tongan) descent, and having somewhat of a limited understanding and knowledge of full faaSamoa<sup>3</sup> culture does not negate the fact that I am still a Samoan. Therefore this thesis becomes subjective in that respect. Smith (2008), Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Pihama (2001) in regards to Kaupapa Māori<sup>4</sup> Research Methodologies all claim that Māori researchers by the fact that they are Māori makes their studies subjective and therefore, in showing all, being totally transparent and honest with their work, it is left for the reader to decide what stance they are to take, subjective or objective.

However, I am consciously aware that at all times I must proceed with humility and respect of my participants and for self, keeping uppermost in mind of who I am representing, my family, and therefore to act responsively. For although academic scholarship and status is held in high esteem by Pasifika peoples as the jewel of the migrant dream, it is as Fa'afoi, Parkhill and Fletcher (2006) caution to all insider researchers, that “it should not be seen or taken as a *right* to access,

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<sup>3</sup> Fa'aSamoa literally means ‘the Samoan way’, meaning their culture and the set heritage of doing things in Samoa

<sup>4</sup> According to Bishop and Berryman (2010), Kaupapa Māori is a discourse of proactive theory and practice that emerged from the wider revitalisation of Māori communities that developed in New Zealand following the rapid Māori urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1970s this movement grew further and by the late 1980s had developed as a political consciousness among Māori people that promoted the revitalisation of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices as a philosophical and productive educational stance and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse (p. 170)

knowledge from their community” and that “this knowledge should not be exploited to obtain data from the Pasifika community” (p. 111).

How then does one gauge if I am treading respectfully and with integrity as the insider-outsider researcher? I take comfort from Helu-Thuman’s (1984 as cited in Silipa, 2004) description of the essential difference between the subjective and objective entitled, *Our Way*, for the ‘hurt’ reflects what I see as the surrendering of my wants to the overall needs of the collective:

Your way  
Objective  
Analytical  
Always doubting  
The truth  
Until proof comes  
Slowly  
and it hurts

my way  
subjective  
gut-like feeling  
always sure of the truths  
the proof is there  
waiting  
and it hurts (pp. 24-25).

The personal narrative that I use as part of my findings is my subjective realities and as stated earlier, it provides me with a framework to work from, enabling me to establish themes and metaphors against which to compare the schooling experiences of the Pasifika students in the two Te Kotahitanga schools.

As I have stated above, my aim in comparing my own narrative and experiences against current literature and the experiences of the Pasifika students in the two schools is to investigate whether the experiences of Pasifika students in two schools that are attempting to be culturally responsive to minority ethnic children are different from my own, a generation ago. The project in which the school are involved is Te Kotahitanga. This thesis does not attempt to evaluate the project itself. The literature associated with evaluations of Te Kotahitanga indicates that Pasifika students achieve higher standards overall than such students in non-Te Kotahitanga schools, albeit Te Kotahitanga is a Māori initiative designed to focus on indigenous rather than Pasifika students. Instead it attempts to see to what

extent some Pasifika students seem to have achieved the Migrant Dream<sup>5</sup> in schools that try to be culturally responsive.

The structure of this thesis is as follows:

- Introduction;
- Chapter One: Literature Review;
- Chapter Two: Methodology and Method;
- Chapter Three: Findings
  - personal narrative
  - interview outcomes
- Chapter Four: Analysis of findings;
- Chapter Five: Discussion;
- Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations;
- References; and
- Appendix

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<sup>5</sup> I elaborate on what this means later on

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 1.1 Pasifika identity and the education system

In this study *Children of the Migrant Dreamers* refers to the Pacific Island-born immigrants and first- to third- generations NZ-born children whose parents, grandparents and great grandparents, the *Migrant Dreamers*, came to Aotearoa New Zealand in the hopes of gaining a better life with Education being that ticket to happiness. A report commissioned by the House of Representatives in February 2008, amongst others, showed that Māori and Pasifika students tended to be marginalised in the New Zealand classroom where they are overrepresented in negative statistics with the highest stand-down and suspensions, sharing the lowest literacy and numeracy regardless of school's decile rating (Alton Lee, 2003; Bishop, et al., 2003; Hattie, 2003, 2003a; MoE, 2005; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2001; and Timperley, et al., 2007).

In his keynote address at a Pacific Health Symposium in Manukau, South Auckland 2006 the former Samoan Prime Minister and the then Deputy Head of State, Honourable Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, responded to a question about the issue of NZ-born Pasifika generations fast losing the knowledge of their culture and not respecting their elders with a question of his own: *how can these children lose something they never had to begin with?*

The Samoan mother is right in her lament of a loss of 'culture' among our young. But that loss is not the fault of the young; nor really is it the fault of the parent or the elder. It is a consequence of a whole combination of factors, factors which bring poverty – poverty of the mind, the body and the soul. The role of the matua tausī (elderly), together with parents and elders, was to nurture the mind, the body and the soul (Tui Atua, 2006, p. 10 as cited in Tuagalu, 2008, p. 122)

Pasifika researcher Nakhid (2003) shares Tui Atua's perspective. She describes cultural identity as a dual dynamic process of both 'being' and 'becoming':

In constructing our identity, we build (with what we know of our past and our historical experiences), using the present to shape how we see who we are. That is not all that forms our identity. It is hollow unless we fill within it visions of what we hold for ourselves in the future, and how we see ourselves being. It is not only the state of being who we are, but who we are to become (p. 303).

Nakhid (2003) found that the perceptions held by both the schools and the teachers of Pasifika students adversely affected their educational opportunities and outcomes. Fergusson et al., (2008) concur with her:

Deficit theorising results in perceptions that are based on factors such as low socio-economic status of Pasifika, academic underachievement, and assumptions that many Pasifika students are recent migrants. These factors inform or shape some teachers' perceptions of what constitutes a Pasifika identity, and is the lens through which they "see" their Pasifika students (p. 27).

Regarding the question of cultural identity, Fletcher and her colleagues found that Pasifika children and their families held a strong desire to succeed in all aspects of mainstream culture as well as in maintaining their own cultural identity (Fletcher, et al., 2005; 2006; & 2009). However as Cahill (2006, as cited in Fergusson, Gorinski, Wendt-Samu, & Mara, 2008) found in her qualitative study of a small group of Samoan parents "the potential distance and disconnectedness that can arise between the world of home and the world of school, neither of which provides the skills to allow for interpretation of the other" (p. 24).

However important the role of education, especially the role of teachers, in shaping student identity words of caution need to be carefully considered. From his research of more than 40 years in schools both here in New Zealand and in the United States, Nuthall (2007) drew four conclusions: "first, students learn what they do; second, their social relationships determine their learning; third, effective activities are built around big questions; and fourth, effective activities are managed by the students themselves" (p. 36). Regarding the first, Nuthall found that teachers tended to separate the management of classroom behaviour from the subject matter they taught. However, in the students' minds no such a distinction or separation is made and they see them as one in the same. The second, "social relationships determine the learning" thereby should be his first.

This is especially so in high school, where students are more continuously and deeply involved in their relationships with their friends and enemies than they are in their engagements with their teachers. (p. 37).

His final two findings directly relate back to the work of Alton-Lee (2003), Bishop et al., (2003), Fullan (1993), Nakhid (2003), and Young (1991), where teachers let go of the dominating power of control within the classroom and share it by co-constructing the learning and teaching with their students. Nakhid (2003) advocates that Pasifika students be given the agency to self identify what their

identity means and their teachers relinquish some decision making power of the classroom to allow the students to do so. The identifying process she proposes is one where all students are equally represented and that answers the bigger life purpose questions of identity, that of both 'being' and of 'becoming'. The 'being' addresses the *who* and *why* questions that Pasifika students are asked by virtue of their physical features which includes who they are culturally, social-emotionally and intellectually. The 'becoming' addresses who they believe to be spiritually, what they see their purpose is and the purpose of education and who are they accountable to. In marrying the two dynamics of 'being' and 'becoming' this self-identifying processes allows for a clear educational direction where teachers and students, students with students, all act together with agency to co-construct learning.

Finally Nuthall's work confirms that of Hawk and Hill (1998), who in their study of both Māori and Pasifika students found that the students worked very hard to being active gatekeepers of their worlds especially the keeping of their world of school and home separate.

Most students live in five or six worlds. They live in the world of their family; the world of their culture; for many, the world of their church; the world of school; as they get older, the world of parttime paid employment; and most of all, their peer world. All these worlds are a reality for them and all are important to some extent. The children learn to live in each of the worlds but most of their parents are familiar only with the family, cultural, and church worlds and have little understanding of the worlds of work or school and virtually no understanding of their peer world. The teachers understand their work, school, and peer worlds but, in some cases, have little knowledge of their family, cultural, and church worlds (p. 1).

Another Pasifika researcher, Sitene (2010) found in her most recent study of eight teachers of Pasifika students attempting to be culturally responsive, that there are four types of identity searches occurring within their classrooms. The four types were further categorised into two definitions, cultural identity as based upon ethnicity and the other, cultural identity based on an overall national identity as a Kiwi<sup>6</sup>. In both cases Sitene identifies the teacher who acts as the one who allocates the cultural identity to the students. These four allocated identities are,

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<sup>6</sup> Kiwi is a flightless native bird to New Zealand and often when abroad, New Zealand travellers refer to themselves as Kiwis which is recognised as the national bird. The Kiwi fruit is also known as simply Kiwi over in the United States but this is not used in the same reference as the Kiwi bird by New Zealand travellers. Likewise, in New Zealand Pacific Islanders, Pasifika peoples, PIs are taken to mean a homogenous group of Samoans, Tongans, Cook Island Māori, Niueans, Tokelauans and so forth yet when this group travels overseas, they are referred to by their individual island group, such as I was referred to as a Samoan when I lived in Brisbane.

in very crude form: the teacher as the cultural provider; the teacher as cultural mediator; the teacher as cultural transmitter; and the teacher as cultural populist. Based upon Sitene's (2010) definitions a culturally responsive teacher would be one that models all four categories rather than focusing on one approach but would keep in mind the availability of agency and choice on the part of the student in a synergy of all the elements working together to create a culturally responsive context for learning and teaching.

### *1.1.1 Cultural, socio-economic, political aspects of Pasifika identity*

Automatically linking ethnicity to socio-economic class produces an outcome that uses the category as a descriptor and thereby becomes itself a confining, stigmatising label perpetuating the status quo. This is done by generalising that all rich are NZ-European/Pākehā and all poor are brown non- Pākehā, notably Māori and Pasifika peoples, resulting in a growing rich-poor divide. As many researchers of Pasifika peoples caution, notably McIntosh (2005) and Fergusson et al., (2008), identity allocations that are given involuntarily to groups and individuals tend to be based upon the perceptions of the group giving the label, and in this respect act as descriptors perpetuating stereotypes and inadvertently upholding the hegemonic status quo favouring the dominant class (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Hence the term Pasifika has become the preferred descriptor amongst Pasifika researchers because it is a term that was considered and formed by themselves (Wendt-Samu, 2006).

In the same way that Smith, G. (2008), Smith, L. (1998), and Pihama (2001), comment that self-identifying as Māori is a political statement in respect of Kaupapa Maori research, likewise, Anae (2001) purports the same conclusions with regards to Samoans, especially NZ-born Samoans:

Those with secured identities realise that 'to be Samoan' must be a political statement in which commitment to fa'asamoa is established by active participation in and commitment to fa'alavelave, church and aiga activities, by taking on matai titles and associated aiaga responsibilities, and by full Samoan language acquisition (pp. 115-6).

Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) agrees with Anae in terms of tautala gagana Samoa (full Samoan language acquisition) and states that this requirement is equally true of all Pasifika peoples in New Zealand not just Samoans. However, this is easier said than done and he points to depressing successive censuses that continue to

show declining levels of Pacific islands language fluency. The 2006 census indicates that of the four main Pasifika peoples in New Zealand, the largest being Samoan, less than half, 44% could speak it fluently, a drop in four percentage points. For Cook Island Māori, the second largest group, there was a mere 16% with a two percentage point decrease since 2001. Tongans reported 61% with a one percentage point decrease and Niueans, only 25% spoke it fluently with no noted change since the 2001 census (Statistics New Zealand, 2008).

The consequence of all this, as Hunkin-Tuiletufuga (2001) continues, is the negative social-emotional effects of their mother tongue losing its positional value. Young Pasifika children saw their parents' efforts to learn English in the "worst light, as unsophisticated new immigrants", "... downgrading the language through neglect and non-use to where significant numbers of first generation of NZ-borns grew up knowing little or nothing of their languages". He cites Spolsky (1998), who cautioned against "any group acquiring English by giving up its own language runs the serious risk of losing its own culture, identity and traditional values as well" (p. 203). This is an example of the beginnings of cultural hegemony where the children come to believe that their language and culture is valueless and in order to succeed Māori and Pasifika students, sacrifice their identity, leaving it at the school gates and adopting the mono-culture of the school (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop & Berryman, 2005; Glynn & Berryman, 2005; Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001; and Anae, 2001).

This view is supported by the work of Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi and Taleni (2006) who in their study of investigating barriers and aids to literacy for 34 Pasifika students in Christchurch New Zealand, found evidence of teasing, not so blatant and obvious to be termed as bullying, but nonetheless present. Teasing by their Pākehā and Māori peers, combined with the inability of their teachers to provide a safe learning environment, had a direct negative impact on their learning. Over time this spiralling effect led to a feeling of powerlessness and stunted progress.

### *1.1.2 Misunderstanding over host-guest roles*

There appears to be a common belief in some schools there is a natural alliance between Māori and Pasifika peoples because both peoples are Polynesian

descendants. However, the only real similarity is their sharing of the same negative statistics in the last 40 years. This is a suggestion in the literature by some writers that the Pacific migrant communities do not necessarily form easy alliances with Māori as Hao’uli (1996, p. 38, cited in McIntosh, 2001) says:

Pacific Island people did not come to hongi with Māori

We came here because the opportunities were here and, we thought, these came from Palangi, not Māori (p. 149).

Leilua (1995, p. 26) makes a slightly different point in talking about Samoan arrogance when judging Māori for their loss of land, autonomy and language:

Samoans can be arrogant towards Māori because they were one of the first nations in the Pacific to become independent. They successfully fought colonisation and kept hold of their land and can’t really understand where Māori people are (as cited in McIntosh, 2001).

Hauoli (1996 as cited in McIntosh, 2001) describes Pasifika migrants of the 1960s and 1970s as not being interested in Māori matters and affairs because they were deemed as being irrelevant to Pasifika immigrants’ lives. Because the majority of interactions were between Palagi and Pasifika immigrants, any alliance with Māori during this time was perceived as going against the Palagi who they perceived as the ‘host’ of the land as it was within their factories that Pasifika peoples worked in and came to New Zealand for. Māori were not recognised as the hosts, even though they are tangata whenua, the indigenous peoples of this land. It was not until the loss of the lucrative British export market in 1973 and therefore factory workers were no longer needed that Pasifika peoples began to have a change of heart.

### *1.1.3 The role of Church as a means of Pasifika identity*

In many places outside Western Samoa, Samoans have formed communities based around their local church, an important element of which is the religious school. Duranti, Ochs and Ta’ase (2004) suggest that ‘educational research needs to reconfigure the relation between home and school and between home and community’ to recognize that, for many communities:

. . . the boundaries of school go beyond the public school to include religious school and community extends beyond the neighbourhood to embrace the ‘church village’, a place where change and tradition can be safely negotiated (p. 169)

Tuagalu (2008) concurs stating that often meanings and nuances are lost in translation and this is mostly because of the “... marked differences between the village organisation in Samoa and the Church organisation in Aotearoa. The Church does not have a set fa’alupega, a permanent geographical location, nor an unchanging population as the membership is transient” (p. 120). Tuagalu goes on to point that changes are the result of living in a cash economy, where the giving of financial assistance has taken precedence in the measurement of tautua. However, true tautua (service) means consistent, daily rendering rather than provision of money.

## 1.2 Media portrayals of Pasifika peoples

An important influence on self image and therefore identity is the media which are also dominated by the privileged groups in society.

It seems that for many Pasifika students during the 1970s and 1980s it was not safe to be ‘brown’ with stereotypical views such as those described by Harker and Nash (1996) and Wylie (2001, as cited in Harker, 2006) of poor working-class Māori and Pasifika students from homes that do not value education. It was this misinformed public perception that Pasifika and Māori students bided their time till their 15<sup>th</sup> birthdays when they could legally leave school, by wagging classes, smoking cigarettes and generally causing havoc. Juxtapose to this the stereotype of our Palaigi<sup>7</sup> middle-class peers, who were perceived to value education because of their literacy rich heritages (Harker, 2006). Furthermore, the biggest misperception to come out of schooling of the 1980s and 90s that, with the exception of sport or art (Anae, 2001), Māori and Pasifika children are not interested in succeeding at school, especially succeeding academically.

A three month study conducted between October to December 2004 into the portrayal of Pasifika peoples in the news and press (Loto, Hodgetts, Chamberlain, Nikora, Karapu & Barnett, 2006), found that the media portray Pasifika peoples as ‘unmotivated, unhealthy and criminal others who are overly dependent on Palagi support’ (p. 100). The ratio of negative attributes reported to positive attributes of ‘Pacific Islanders being hardworking, generous, physically active and honest’,

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<sup>7</sup> Palaigi refers to person of European descent. The Māori term Pākehā is used synonymously although Pākehā more correctly refers to all who are non-Māori.

was around three to one (p. 106). Loto, et al., (2006) recommended was active civic participation on the part of Pasifika communities in telling their own stories through the media. However, they remind the reader that ‘discrimination is a problem owned by entire societies’ and therefore ‘requires all citizens to work together to support change and challenge discriminatory practices’ (p. 117).

Media coverage of the Tsunami in Samoa in September, 2009, and the sinking of the Tongan ferry, Princess Ashika, the month before in August, gives the impression that the victims of these two disasters have had to atone for the crimes reported in the media of Pasifika peoples the previous two years. In 2008 it was again not a popular year to be a Pacific Islander (Misa, 2008). A mental tally according to the negative media headlines beginning with the sentencing of Lipine Sila, the Samoan youth who crashed into a group of 12 party goers in Christchurch; the fraud charges of Immigration Minister Mary Anne Thompson; the stabbing of 15 year old Pihema Cameron in Manurewa caught tagging by his Palagi neighbour; the shooting of South Auckland Liquor store owner Navtej Singh leading to the arrest of three Pasifika youths; and the murder of a young Asian mother in South Auckland in front of her 8 year old son as the culprits, two Pasifika youth ran off in her car.

This only added fuel to Professor Clydesdale’s observations that Pacific Islanders make up a growing ‘underclass’ in our society and are a drain on the economy (Ling, 2008). The common theme of these reports is that the roots of crime lie in a society that has ‘come undone’ by indifference, apathy and lack of empathy because we ourselves believe we are no longer *connected*.

This deficit thinking therefore does not only stem from external forces and, but as Whyte (2005) showed with her study on Fijian students, it also comes from within, and only serves to reinforce the stereotype that in order to achieve in school you need to become Palaigi (Jones, 1991). Because this deficit thinking is so ingrained in our attitudes and structures it has rendered itself invisible. Moreover, Palaigi as the dominant culture is depicted as the ‘default setting’ against which all other ethnicities are to measure themselves.

### 1.3 Families' aspirations for their children

As stated earlier there is a general assumption held by the majority of Pasifika parents that all schools are good (Fergusson et al., 2008). Education is still seen as the 'ticket' to a better way of life, with Pasifika parents and caregivers still working long hard hours to keep their children in school. Pasifika parents' expectations have always been high for their children and also for how highly they regard education and schooling in New Zealand. The findings in Fletcher et al., (2005, 2006) concur that the parents of the Pasifika students held high educational aspirations for them. But unfortunately many of these parents lack the cultural capital required to get them there (McNaughton, 2002), and a lack of understanding of what schooling in New Zealand is compared to the schools of their island homelands.

Further to the lack of understanding of the school system is the mismatched perceptions of parental responsibilities between home and school. On the one hand Pasifika parents perceive their roles as firstly, getting their children to school and secondly, keeping them there for as long as it takes. This is evidence with the latest school attendance figures that Pasifika students do stay on at school longer (Education Review, 2008). They see the teacher's role therefore, as the expert responsible for teaching children how to become *doctors and lawyers*. However, often the schools' perception is that the academic achievement gap between Pasifika and Palagi students needs to be bridged with partnership with the home and this requires parents being more *active*, such as attending their children's classes and parent-teacher interviews, rather than as *passive* participants (Loto et al., 2006).

The tension between many families' aspirations for their children and the lived realities of children's lives in schools can create a sense of disjunction for children which may result in a fragmentation of those children's lives. Many Pasifika children do feel the pressure to live up to their parents' unrealistic expectations of them but they also know that their parents do not feel confident/safe/comfortable in attending schools, and play this card in keeping the two lives of school and home separated, as far as possible (Hill & Hawk, 1998; and Valini, 2006 as cited in Ministry of Education report on Pasifika education).

Perhaps the best explanation for this difference of opinion between Island-born and NZ-born Pasifika peoples is best described by Tuagalu (2008) and Anae (2001). Since both Tuagalu and Anae are of Samoan descent, as am I, then I shall not generalise and say that this applies more so to Samoan Island-born and Samoan NZ-born families. Anae (2001) gives examples of how NZ-born Samoans learn about FaaSamoa mostly from their parents and from their association with the Samoan-speaking churches their families attend.

Also, there are many Pasifika children who do wish to live up to their parents' expectations of them to get ahead in school, but this means denying their own cultural identity in order to amass the 'cultural capital' of the still very much monocultural classroom and school structure, thereby opting to leave their true identity at the school gate (Bishop, Berryman et al., 2003; Glynn and Berryman 2005; Bishop and Berryman 2006). Alternatively, Pasifika students that do excel academically are put in a dilemma of whether to continue on this path and fall prey to the *tall poppy syndrome* thereby opting to play down any academic abilities or potential so as to fit in with their peers. In my case as a 16 year old, the label of 'Coconut' given by Palagi and non Pacific Islanders was preferred to 'fiapalagi' (wanting to be white) or a 'Potato' (white on the inside, brown outside), labels given me from not only my Pasifika peers but also from members within my own aiga (family and extended family).

#### **1.4 The fundamental need to belong**

Research has clearly shown that when children grow up confident in their own language and culture, their sense of identity and belonging is assured allowing them to succeed academically compared to students that are not (Bruner, 1996; Fraser, 2005; Glynn & Berryman, 2005; and Mila-Shaarf & Robinson, 2010). For example, Glynn and Berryman (2005) state that the desire for "a sense of belonging is a basic human need" (p. 310) and show that children who saw school as a happy environment and who had a sense of ownership there go on to do well in society.

However, this is easily said than done when dealing with the conflicting pressures of the classroom as pointed out by many New Zealand researchers (Alton-Lee (2003), Hawk & Hill (1998), McAlpine (2004) and Nuthall (2007). Pasifika and

Māori children are found to play down their success in order to stay with their peers than to be up with the accelerant classmates. It is as Nuthall (2007) alerted us to take note of, the strongest influencer in the classroom comes from the peer group of the students, and especially he found this to be so in secondary schools.

In Fletcher et al., (2009) findings, the importance of establishing parent-school partnerships but also of building partnerships with the churches of the Pasifika communities was strongly emphasised. However, it was noted that one of the Pasifika parents told the researchers not to ask NZ-borns for their input as “they didn’t know much” (p. 31). What this parent’s comment highlights is a difference amongst Pasifika peoples themselves over what the needs of their children represent. For Island-born Pasifika parents, there is the feeling that they value education of their children more than the NZ-born Pasifika parents or that those needs are different is incorrect for in actuality, both still highly value education.

In taking notice of just the Island-born migrants is what Fergusson et al., (2008) cautioned against, those myths found in the education system such as assuming that all Pasifika students are recent migrants and that all schools are good. This eventuates in a watered down version of a one-size-fits-all. It also has a knock-on effect for those NZ-born Pasifika students who go unrecognised and rendered invisible. With no support from teachers to reinforce their understanding and knowledge of their home-island cultures, these students adopt whatever culture they deem as preferable which gives them a sense of identity and belonging, their own youth culture, associating with their Māori peers and ending up being labelled as such.

Researchers Hattie (2003, 2003a), Stanley (2003), and Macfarlane (2004) amongst others all point to the role of teachers as being the hope for such students. Effective teachers from their research shows that they know the dynamics of the classroom, the personalities of all the students in their care and how to cater to their learning needs that produces the most success.

### **1.5 Culturally responsive practices in schools: Te Kotahitanga**

In New Zealand a number of initiatives have been developed in schools with the intention of being culturally responsive to diverse students. Te Kotahitanga is one programme. It is a Māori initiative, for teacher professional development,

designed to improve educational outcomes for Māori students (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Richardson, 2003). This outcome for raising Māori student achievement has resulted in raising the level of all students (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh & Teddy, 2007). It began in 2001 with researchers attempting to step into the minds of young year 9 and 10 Māori students in order to learn how school can become a more positive and successful learning institution for them.

From the interviews with students and their whanau Bishop et al., (2003) co-constructed an Effective Teaching Profile (ETP). The ETP identifies that effective learning contexts for Māori students are those where teachers create culturally appropriate and responsive learning environments in their classrooms.

The term 'effective' teaching that is described in the ETP is derived from what the Māori Year 9 and 10 students deemed to be 'effective' teachers. It is based on those teachers who use interactive strategies for learning and teaching rather than traditional 'chalk and talk' practices having the power to create. The power of the classroom is shared, where students can initiate learning, where students' world views are represented and where students are legitimated. Young (1991) calls such contexts 'discursive classrooms'. Key to discursive classes is the teachers' beliefs about students and about learning that shape these contexts.

The ETP is not just about teacher pedagogy but also about teacher positioning, which requires teachers changing their mindsets and thinking, to looking at their practice from the perspective of their Māori students. An examination of the ETP indicates that it addresses those very questions that were so significant in my own educational experience as I discuss in Chapter 3:

- Assumptions of deficiencies in minority ethnic children;
- The importance of teachers' expectations of students;
- The equally important matter of establishing and maintaining caring, respectful relationships of trust within the classroom; and
- Teachers understanding the world views in their classrooms.

### *1.5.1 Te Kotahitanga's ETP: Positioning and Pedagogy*

Te Kotahitanga's ETP is as much about positioning as it is about pedagogy. Positioning in the ETP context is a matter of continuous re-examination of a

teacher's core beliefs and philosophies surrounding their practice. African-American educationalist Gay (2000) posits that "Whilst most teachers are not blatant racists, many probably are cultural hegemonists. They expect all students to behave according to the school's cultural standards of normality" (p. 46). In terms of teacher positioning and re-positioning of beliefs, with support based on evidence on their practice related to Māori student academic achievement and daily reflection changes in mindsets can occur.

Challenging notions and thinking is what the process of repositioning involves and this is done by critically reflecting upon one's classroom practice. By reflecting upon what took place in their classroom observations during the feedback session with their facilitator, feelings of 'dissonance and disequilibrium' (Timperley et al., 2007) is created where the teacher can critically check their beliefs against their actual practice.

Students are the most discerning consumers and are adept at sizing-up their teachers and they will engage with the learning if they feel that their teacher has belief in them and their ability to succeed (Fraser, 2005). There's a saying that goes, 'students are not interested in learning or how knowledgeable their teacher is until they know how much their teacher cares for them as people'.

## **2. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD**

### **2.1 Overview**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology and methods used, the rationale for choosing them and how they relate to my research topic. It outlines the research sites and the participants in this study. This chapter also describes the data analysis as well as all ethical considerations undertaken.

### **2.2 Rationale for research methodology and methods**

This is a qualitative study where my positioning is subjective rather than objective. I have a dual role as participant and researcher, an insider as well as an outsider. I purposely positioned myself into the personal narrative as the storyteller of our stories for in the FaaSamoa context there is no concept of ‘me’ only ‘we’. I use here the metaphor of a finely woven mat (ie foga) to illustrate that my own schooling experiences represent but one strand within that mat. If you punctured a hole into the mat you affect at least two strands and before long the mat would fall apart and disintegrate. In this regard my story or my strand is the stories of my schooling experiences against which I foreground the experiences of the students interviewed.

As the researcher I am consciously aware of my role as the mouthpiece of my narrative and the students’ reports of their experiences, I am not the authoritative expert, or as my parents and aiga have sought to remind me, I am but one voice not the voice.

It was essential to collect data that would enable me to answer the main research question. The most obvious way to answer this question was, firstly, to set out an account of my own educational experiences in the form of personal narrative and then to conduct and analyse a series of interviews with Pasifika students.

#### ***2.2.1 Culturally Appropriate***

I have deliberately attempted to take a culturally appropriate approach to my research. I am also aware of the cautionary reminder from Tamasese Efi’s (2004, as cited in Anae, 2010) to Pasifika researchers investigating better schooling in New Zealand, advising against adding to the mounting research ‘clutter’. For this

reason I have taken and adapted two already existing culturally appropriate models as my methodology

In terms of Samoan cultural practices and protocols I consulted my own parents, both my first cousin who is NZ-born and married to a Samoan-born matai (Samoan chief) from a well respected family strong in their village and church life and is also a well known lawyer in the Samoan community in New Zealand and in Samoa. All were consulted in matters surrounding FaaSamoa culture and protocols, such as in the FaaMatai village system of governance especially as it pertained to the role of men and women, youth and children. They refreshed my understanding of the practices amongst others, of feagaiga which is a relational covenant between siblings, and the epistemological concepts of tautua (service ethic, secular power), faaloalo (respect), alofa (love and spiritual intelligence) and agaga (spiritual power and accountability).

### *2.2.2 Culturally Responsive*

The research methodology is qualitative in order to compare experiences in depth. I have tried to adopt what Heshusius (1994) describes as the process of ‘participatory mode of consciousness’ with participation through collaboration. In this way the power relationship between the researcher and the participants is level. To interview students I chose a focus group approach, with semi-structured and broad open-ended questions to allow free-flowing conversations as based upon Bishop’s (1996) spiral discourse.

Bishop’s spiral discourse has the same conceptual and metaphorical understandings as the pua (frangipani flower). The pua metaphor is similar to the koro (New Zealand silver fern) as both symbolise new beginnings, new life and new relationships. As told to me by my parents, when the pua falls from the tree trunk to the ground it spirals releasing its scent as it does. It is also the preferred flower of choice for making lei which is symbolic of welcoming another into sharing their relational spaces (va). Samoan playwright and poet Albert Wendt (1996) describes these spaces of va are not empty or as spaces that separate but rather spaces that enable people to relate to each other. He describes va as ‘the betweenness’ of relationships that connects people to people in the present, past

and future. Likewise when you wear a lei, it is traditionally gifted to you where you bow, lower your head into it so to speak.

Two other Samoan terms describing this action is *va fealoaloi* and *va tapuia* (sacred spaces). Tuala-Warren (2002) states:

One of the most significant concepts in *faasamoa* is the one of 'va'. Samoans conduct their lives according to unwritten principles of 'va' which in its simplest form means, the maintenance of relationships between people themselves and *Le Atua*.

... maintenance of these connections between people is the prime motivation behind the *ifoga*. *Ifoga* are conducted to heal any breaches in the *va* between different people, *aiga* and villages (p. 4).

Again as relayed to me by my parents the concepts of '*va fealoaloi*' and '*va tapuia*' are usually manifested through *tautua*, which translates to mean acts of service but in this context of enacting them, the meaning of *tautua* goes deeper. There is an old Samoan proverb, *o le ala i le pule o le tautua* (the way to power is through service). The power spoken here is not prestige or position but a translucent emotional state called *filemu*, which is usually translated to mean peace and harmony, but in the context of village governance, it is the absence of contention. *Filemu* is the only emotion that has no counterfeit duplicate and thereby in terms of discipline or justice, hospitality and friendships or in the *va* relationships, it is the most prized. *Filemu* can be likened to Freire's notion of Utopia where it is both the goal of becoming and is never fully reached but is remembered in the living memories of our hearts and minds. Going back to the metaphor of the frangipani lei, in the same way it is bestowed or gifted to you from another, you in turn can bestow it or gift it to another and thereby welcoming them into your *va* and creating new relationship memories.

In telling of my understandings in this study what I am trying to do is to give service to my people by showing nuances in these epistemological concepts so that, in turn, teachers can better support their Pasifika students in their learning.

I have chosen to fuse two approaches, both Health models, into my narrative method. The first health model is Durie's (1994) *Hauora* (well being), entitled *Whare Tapa Wha* which translates literally to the 'four walls of the house' and as pictured below:



The second is an adaptation of the Matalafi Matrix project which is an approach taken from a Pasifika perspective of mental health. The Matalafi Matrix is an investigation of the spiritual dimension of mental health which is the ‘Tupu Assessment’ (2007) used by the Pacific Mental Health and Alcohol and Drug Service at the Waitemata District Health Board.



NPS photo by National Tropical Botanical Gardens

[http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/basch/uhnpcescu/htms/npsapl2/fish\\_pops/rubiaceae/psyinsular3.htm](http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/basch/uhnpcescu/htms/npsapl2/fish_pops/rubiaceae/psyinsular3.htm)

In adapting both models I sought to find the taken for granted differences and similarities of metaphors within the two models and applying it to the schooling, notably the classroom context of Aotearoa New Zealand and as it would relate to

the students and their cultural world views. I began this by breaking down the models separately, inserting epistemological understandings of faaSamoa, Māori and Hawaiian and then reconstructing them again as one. From Durie's whare tapa wha (1994), I began with the unseen elements and broke it down as follows:

- Whenua (fonua) – the land nourishing the roots of the tree from which the whare (house) is built is the metaphor for identity, the blood ties and blood lines. You need a strong sense of self, a strong foundation, or else the four posts will fall down. From the roots is found the whakapapa (genealogy and blood ties to the land). A deep understanding and knowledge of one's whakapapa ensures that likewise the cultural identity of the strong.
- Aroha (Aloha, Alofa) – love which is unseen but nonetheless ever present in the land, the sky and in the cosmos that surrounds and runs through the whare. My parents describe alofa as the most powerful energy source in the cosmos and like the heart the more proactive you are the stronger its life giving source. Likewise, when someone is passive or submissive its energy source diminishes. However, alofa is a spiritual power where spirituality is linked to accountability and therefore the collective. It cannot operate singularly so vainglory seeking or egocentrism is not alofa or love, which is its counterfeit, lust. Hawaiian Manulani Meyer (2005) describes 'aloha as intelligence' in that it underlies all epistemological thinking, and in this respect it becomes both a verb and a noun.

Using both the heart and the stars as metaphors where both are strengthened by energy, the opposite of love then is not hate, it is apathy – for even hate requires energy to exist, apathy does not. According to Nga Tahu born artist John Scott as told to him by the great Tuhoe leader, John Rangihau, when he was a young man and which has become a defining moment in his life, “the true meaning of aroha, if you want to get inside the skin of Māori, is that you should never leave anyone worse off for having known you” (McRoberts, 2006, p. 32). Thereby, all those involved in the interaction come away elevated and edified individuals as a result of their encounter with each other. This is aroha.

From these three perspectives then, alofa, aloha, aroha, is a spiritual power or energy source that's dual purpose is to edify, ennoble and uplift individually and collectively.

Understanding that the purpose of aroha as accountability, accountability to each other, to our ancestors and to Atua, the context of schooling or education also changes. Applying this understanding to Bishop's spiral discourse, the frangipani, the learning and teaching becomes interactive; dialogic and spirals; where participants are connected to one another through the establishment of a common vision (Bishop, et al., 2007, p.6). That common vision would be the edifying, uplifting and ennobling of all individuals and is this not the true meaning of educate, to draw out.

For the Matalafi matrix model the importance of a service-based research is the significant focus. The matalafai (mata = seeing / lafi = hiding or hidden) plant is a wild coffee plant on the islands of Samoa. The root words are mata meaning to see or seeing and lafi, meaning to hide or is hidden. The plant was believed to hold supernatural qualities insomuch that if a person went looking for the matalafi plant and was not respectful, the plant would hide.

In terms of research, the Matalafi approach simultaneously signifies and legitimises (Sualii-Sauni, 2008). If there is no rapport, no reciprocity, no respectful relationship, no alofa between the researcher and the participants, then the researcher walks away empty handed (though sometimes without ever realising it). This is because of two frequencies of talanoa (conversation, talk) occurring and even if there is constant exchange of ideas if there is no rapport, no trust, it would have occurred on two parallel frequencies, of what is both hidden and seen. As mentioned by Manulani Meyer (2005) the 'frequency of vibrations' which, when both frequencies come into sync, when there is respectful and mutual trust, the matalafi will come out of hiding. The Matalafi Matrix has four domains

1. **Aiga** (family): ethnicity, religious affiliations, marital status, age, gender, employment status. Hence I was sure to ask after their family backgrounds because I realised that they represented three sectors, themselves as Pacific Island Year levels, their school but mostly their families (this includes ancestors, and so on).

2. **Tino atua fa'aloalo** (respect for the whole of the body as the body houses the spirit): in term of behaviours, dress, demeanour = revered, respectful 'presence'
3. **Lagona** (mood, rapport, social-emotional confidence) – always speaking of another as if they're within earshot
4. **Ava, Aganu'u** (attention span, respectful attitude, perceptions/discerning, insights and cultural considerations)

Simultaneously adapting and expanding the four walls of Durie's model with the four matrices of the Matalafi matrix (Sualii-Sauni, 2008) the methodology outcome is as follows:

1. **Tino atua fa'aloalo (Physical)** – literally translates to mean 'respect for the entire body physical' and this means taking care of the inner vessel as well as the outer. From Samoan mythology we (humans) are spiritually begotten children of Alii, the heavenly stars where we once resided with the gods and where our ancestors return and our future children await their earthly experiences. Thereby we are spiritual beings having earthly experiences clothed in physical tabernacles. Respect for the body begins with care of the inner vessel and therefore one must live one's life as though you've just had a heart attack or as if your physical meeting with someone could possibly mean the last time you were to ever see them. In terms of research I wanted my physical demeanour to reflect with my words by saying what I meant and meaning what I said. In research this relates to the students' perceptions of effective teachers, those who were 'present'. Likewise in my approach my aim was to be 'present' with the other participants in that there was a sharing of ideas and to assume that these would be the very last words someone gifted me. Respect for the whole of the body as a tabernacle of our mana (essence).
2. **Ata mai (Knowledge)** – using the village fale as a metaphor, the house is only as strong as the next storm and in this respect all knowledge has a half-life – being wise does not safeguard you against making wrong choices. The Samoan proverb '*e poto le tautai ae se lana atu i ama*' translates to mean that the navigator is wise but can also be wrong. It is what you do with the knowledge you have that equates to turning knowledge into wisdom or a

future lesson to be revisited to be learnt. Knowing that knowledge has a half-life, you yourself will need to engage in continuous learning or ako, a'o where the researcher is both the learner and the teacher in order for talanoa (reciprocal talk) to occur.

3. **Lagona (Social/Emotional)** – nothing builds confidence better than hearing the praiseworthy words spoken of oneself from someone who is in authority or that you deem as noble. In Samoa, the fale have no walls and as such the villages have no secrets. The negative to this is that everybody knows everybody's business or dirty laundry. But this is not so much a negative because the positive is exactly the same; everybody knows everybody's business and therefore all laundry is aired. In research terms this means allowing the participants to use humour and the researcher using self deprecation to show the interviewees that their researcher is neither above nor below in status.
4. **Agaga ava (Spiritual/Accountability)** – As stated in tino atua fa'aloalo (physical body), the body houses the spiritual essence or our mana. One's mana is enhanced when s/he is involved in the service of elevating another. You account how well your spirituality is by living your life as if you are scheduled with a face-to-face interview with your participants' tipuna or Atua reflecting on what service you would give account of. Accountability then is synonymous with spirituality and tautua (service) is how one's spirituality is manifested. The greater the service the greater the mana of a person, their family and their village. Therefore this research has a strong service ethic component.

Some Pasifika researchers have advocated making research culturally appropriate, responsive, respectful and accountable to the participants (Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2002; Fa'afai, Parkhill & Fletcher, 2005; Koloto, 2003; Mahina, 2004; and Vaioleti, 2003). In this respect the research methods carried out here were conducive to the needs and sensitivities of Pasifika participants to allow for and to encourage the fullest Talanoa, which is talk, conversation, and reciprocal dialogue (Vaioleti, 2003).

### 2.2.3 *Personal narrative design*

The use of my personal narrative positions myself into storyline and the stories of the students that will follow on. The purpose of narrative is to look for ‘likely particular connections between two events’ (Bruner, 1986) in a way which seems plausible. In other words, making sense of the uncertain this becomes the actual stories we share from our interpretations of socio-emotional, intellectual and spiritual experiences encountered with each other. The convert Paul in Romans 14:7 (KJV) reminds his congregation, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself”. We are interconnected and interdependent upon one another in order to live. Mair (1988) describes this process:

Stories are habitations. We live in and through stories. ... We do not know the world other than as story world. Stories inform life. ... Any understanding we have of reality is in terms of our stories and our story-creating possibilities. (p. 128)

In this thesis I use narrative as a method for identifying and reconstructing ‘turning points’ (Bruner, 1990) or defining moments as they occurred in my schooling experiences. Reconstruction is first done by recognising the turning point events as significant triggers.

From the narrative triggers or turning points I gathered themes into a framework against which to compare current students’ experiences.

## 2.3 **Selection of sites**

I chose to carry out interviews in two schools for a number of reasons. They are as follows:

- I was aware that Te Kotahitanga’s Effective Teaching Profile was implemented differently in different schools so it was important not to restrict my work to just one school.
- Time restrictions meant that I was limited in the number of schools I was able to visit and conduct interviews that did not disrupt the students’ curricular learning. Two schools were the most that I could fit in within my timeframe.
- The contrast between perspectives from two different schools in very different socio-economic circumstances had the potential to give a range of interpretations of what it is like to be a Pasifika student.

- I chose two schools with which I was familiar with each culture of the localities. I was raised in one area and attended church in the other. Likewise, my primary schooling was at a disadvantaged socio-economic area and my secondary schooling was at that time, middle to upper class socio-economic area. So the two school sites were just that, one from a low decile and the other school middle decile rated.

## 2.4 School Data and ERO reports

I obtained the latest Education Review Office (ERO) reports regarding the school and from this identified school demographics, but not so much detail as to identify the school. I also gained an overall picture of minority ethnic students' achievement in these two schools from the ERO reports.

ERO (2010), is a government department that reviews and reports publicly on the quality of education in all New Zealand schools and kura<sup>8</sup>. Generally ERO reports are conducted on schools and kura on average once every three years. The *overarching evaluation question* of ERO is: how effectively does the school's curriculum promote student learning – engagement, progress and achievement?

## 2.5 School 1 background

From the most current ERO report for this thesis (2007). School 1 is a decile 1 full secondary school. The combined total of Pasifika students totals to 38%.

For the achievement of the Pasifika students in this school it was shown that although Pacific students had made good progress in overall Level 1 NCEA, their overall pass rates for all three Levels of NCEA remained well below decile and national average percentage pass rates. It was also noted that fewer Pacific students were stood down and suspended in comparison with the rest of the school.

Also noted in this ERO report was the establishment of Year 9 and 10 Samoan bilingual classes in 2005.

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<sup>8</sup> Kura is the shortened term for Kura Kaupapa Māori schools

## 2.6 School 2 background

School 2 is a large multicultural co-education urban school. Approximately 20% of students identify as Pasifika (ERO, 2009). Of the 28 students interviewed in School 2 there were four immigrants and the rest were NZ-born first, second and one third generations. This equates to 25% of the students interviewed compared to 50% in School 1.

### 2.6.1 ERO findings: School 2

According to the ERO (2009) report, School 2 has good systems for monitoring and reporting on the impact of its school initiatives on Pasifika students where there is a strong focus on academic success. Achievement information clearly demonstrates that students, including Māori and Pacific, make significant progress in their learning. Analysis of achievement data for 2006 to 2007 found the numbers of senior Pasifika students achieving NCEA Level 1 and 2 improved and fared very favourably against national averages for Pasifika students.

## 2.7 Selection of students

In both schools I planned to interview a sample of students, representative of the following groups:

- One focus group in each of Years 9 to 13 to consist of up to 6-8 students:
  - Students who self-identified as Pasifika peoples, to include any island nation of the Pacific Ocean, whether they be Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori, Fijian, Niuen, Kiribats, Tuvaluan, Islands of French Polynesia, Hawaiian, and other Pacific peoples.
  - Both boys and girls.
  - Both NZ-born of first, second and third generations and Immigrant Pasifika students.
  - Preferably students who had been in classes taught by teachers in Te Kotahitanga.
- Students from all five year levels were chosen to offer a range of experiences.

### *2.7.1 The students: School 1*

All students' names have been changed. Of the 13 students seven were NZ-born and were all first generation NZ-born, and of the six island born students, only three were recent arrivals being less than five years.

### *2.7.2 The students: School 2*

All students' names have been changed to conceal and protect identities of the students as per School 1. 25 students were interviewed in School 2.

## **2.8 Interview process**

On arrival the students were asked to write their full names, Year levels and home addresses on a sheet of paper. This served two purposes of firstly, having the correct spelling of their names and secondly, at the end of the interview, having their permission (or not) for sending them their transcripts in providing clarification, confirmation or withdrawal.

All sessions were audio recorded where the students were asked to identify themselves by name purely for the purposes of identification when transcribing. As stated, all names of students, their schools, teachers and location names were changed for purposes of confidentiality.

### *2.8.1 School 1*

In School 1, I was already in contact with the Lead Facilitator on a regular basis. I was given a list of potential interviewees to contact, which I did. The sample of students who agreed to be interviewed was opportunistic (Creswell, 2005, p. 206) rather than random because only five to six students in each Year group gave their consent. I faced a number of other challenges in carrying out the interviews:

- Even though I had obtained full permissions for the study from the principal and the school board of trustees, and the Te Kotahitanga facilitator had agreed to act in a liaison role, in practice it was very difficult to make prior arrangements for appointments that students would actually keep.
- A member of the senior management team co-opted student volunteers where potential interviewees were absent on the day of the interview. She completed the ethical procedures in liaison with the students' parents/caregivers.

In School 1 I began the focus group discussions by showing the students sets of national statistics indicating the achievement of various ethnic groups. My rationale for doing this was to make the best use of my limited time with the students in getting them to know me and me them. As was stated earlier in the methodology that in the Samoan village the fale (houses) have no walls and in this respect, secrets for the most part are unacceptable to certain extent. I also provided lunches and again this is deemed culturally appropriate and not as a bribe or means of interview prompts.

### **2.8.2 School 2**

In School 2 as in School 1 I was in regular contact with the Lead Facilitator as well as the Deputy Principal who in turn relayed to the principal and Board of Trustees who I was and what my intentions were. The lead facilitator and deputy principal liaised with the Pasifika Counsellor of the school in charge of the Mentoring programme for the Year 11 to 13 Pasifika students as well as the teacher in charge of the Pasifika Homework Centre of the Year 9 and 10 Pasifika students. The students in this school were selected for me.

With the exception of one year group having seven students, each year group had six students. The setting was culturally appropriate being set in the Pasifika fale and having a round table so that we could all see each other and were all on equal footing because there is no head of the table being round.

In School 2, for reasons discussed in the Findings I did not show the students the National results but rather shared these findings verbally within the interview discussions about Te Kotahitanga in answer to question 1.

## **2.9 Focus group interview questions**

In the focus group interviews it was important to cover areas that I knew from my own experiences that were important as well as issues that raised in the literature:

1. What do you know about Te Kotahitanga?
2. What is it like being a Pacific Island student at this school?
3. Tell me about your effective teachers – the teachers whom you feel you learn from.

- What is it that they do that helps you learn?
  - How do you know that they have been effective for you?
4. Tell me about the leaders in your school – who are they? What do they do?
  5. What are your goals for the future?
    - How does what you are doing now at school (your subjects) reflect what your goals are?
    - How are you going? How do you know this?
  6. How does your family know what is going on at school?
  7. What things are you involved in and what responsibilities do you have outside of school?
    - Do you associate your outside activities with school or do you keep them separate?
    - Do your teachers know about the things you are involved in outside school?

I deliberately made my questions broad so that if conversations went off on various tangents and directions of thought, we would explore those paths. In this way it would be so as to have the students drive the conversations rather than me imposing my positioning onto them.

All focus group interviews were audio recorded with permission from the students and their families. The interviews were later transcribed ready for analysis. When the transcripts were ready I carried out a member check with the students to ensure that they were satisfied that I had transcribed what they had intended to say accurately. I enabled the students to add or modify any of their comments and to add clarity.

In both schools within all interviews I made a conscious effort to be aware of the language and terms used to ensure that I was myself practising culturally responsive actions. For example, if the students referred to themselves as ‘Pacific

Islanders’, ‘PIs’ or ‘Pasifika’, I would in turn respond likewise (Glynn, Wearmouth & Berryman, 2006).

Using the matalafi plant as my metaphor for purposely but respectfully seeking out hidden meanings, the other area where I attempted to be culturally responsive and aware was in introducing ‘elephants’ that entered into the conversations. For example, whenever I overheard murmurs or mutterings I verbally acknowledged what I overheard by repeating it and thereby introducing the elephant in the room. Again this was not done to embarrass the individual student but to make them aware that their words and thoughts carry a lot of power and to have them understand that I was not looking for ‘one’ particular answer or response but the ‘truth’ in whatever form that looked and sounded like.

## **2.10 Interview analysis**

When I had completed all the focus group interviews at both schools I transcribed the interview material.

Once I had carried the member check I then carried out a thematic analysis (see Aronson, 1994). Mutch (2005) describes eight steps in the thematic analysis process which are as follows: Browse; Highlight; Code; Group and label; Develop themes or categories; Check for consistency and resonance; Select examples; and report findings. I kept in mind what she reminds researchers conducting thematic analyses that it is most important they keep an open mind when browsing or viewing the text and to not go in expecting to find something specific but to let the text “speak for itself” (p. 130).

In School 1 I was able to put all 13 students on a single excel spreadsheet with their names and school year levels down the y-axis and along the x-axis the categories. I ordered the names and year groups in the order that I conducted the interviews and the order in which the students were seated in each interview clockwise. In doing this I was able to recapture in my mind the events and happenings of the time more easily. At the bottom of each y-axis I recorded my reflections of what the individuals said as a group and the main themes, ‘discussion turning points’ coming out of our conversations.

For School 2 I repeated the process of listing the students in order of how they were seated around me clockwise with the students in their respective Year levels with the students listed down along the y-axis and the categories across the x-axis. Owing to the number of students I put each year group on separate spreadsheets. Again, the last row at the bottom of each year level under each category that had been commented on I noted my own personal reflections of the themes derived.

In deciding what the structure would be of my thematic analysis with the headings and categories to be used I went back to my personal narrative first and then to the interview questions. I began the analysis with the easier categories being the obvious such as names, gender and island(s) ethnicity. I then grouped in my mind the following sections starting with the main theme and then sub-themes. I found that there were two main groups. The first main group was based around their family backgrounds or familial relationships and the second being their schooling experiences. In the end I had 15-16 categories with nine in the first group and six in the other (see Appendix). They are listed as follows:

- Family background;
- Schooling experience;
- Out of school responsibilities and interests;
- School image;
- Internal perception;
- Public portrayal of Pacific Islanders;
- Reciprocal humour (self deprecating humour) and laughter in the interview;
- Perception of Māori and other PIs in New Zealand;
- Te Kotahitanga / Effective (ineffective) teachers;
- School structures and systems;
- School achievement;
- Goals and aspirations;
- Role models and leaders; and
- Other.

In completing the thematic analysis I began by numbering the conversational sequence flow of each interviews as they occurred which appeared to be as if I

were re-transcribing the interviews. But this process which can be likened to making up a jigsaw puzzle using the picture in my mind of what it looked like, allowed for the surest way to gauge what their truest perceptions were. In doing this I got to know the interviews very well. I italicised the text and coloured the font red to make it clearer in my mind for analysis as to who was speaking and when the turning points of conversation occurred or began to occur. From here I was able to truly gauge when, how and sometimes why the talk was being driven by them.

In completing this thematic analysis chart I also discovered that the answers to the questions did not 'flow' readily. Questions 1 and 3 being, 'what they knew of Te Kotahitanga' and 'effective and ineffective teachers' respectively, flowed more naturally from the initial discussion. Furthermore, Question 2 of 'what was it like to be a Pacific Islands student in the respective schools' was found to be an awkward interruption.

From here I returned to the interview questions and answered them once again but this time working backwards, inserting my reflections from each category as beginnings of the findings and what the students said as the examples cited. I also revisited the personal narrative to see if indeed I was comparing experiences. In seeking clarification with regards to the cultural understandings pertaining to FaaSamoa and only for the Samoan students I interviewed I consulted my aiga, first my parents and then my cousins for clarification on concepts and terms that the students used.

## **2.11 Ethical Considerations**

The final step in my methods is also the key driver of this study and that is accountability to the students, their families and in turn accountability in terms of tautua, returning service to my peoples, and I am purposely positioning myself within this statement as a member of the Pasifika peoples community. I wholly recognise that these students vicariously represent the hopes and aspirations of their ancestors, their living families, their school, and their fellow Pasifika students in their respective year levels as well as their local communities. I wholly understood that I was being placed in a privileged role in being allowed to

interview them. With regards to the rights of the students and their families, I intentionally sought to get this matter correct.

I began by gaining permission to interview the students in accordance with the ethical procedures of the University of Waikato. In the application I stated the purpose and the research activities and processes of this study and this was included in two letters of information, one to be sent to the principal and the Board of Trustees and the other to the students' families/caregivers. The letters outlined the three-fold process of the study being: (1) introducing myself and the purpose and aim of my study; (2) seeking the permission of the school via the principal and Board of Trustees, and the students' parents/caregivers to conduct the interviews; and (3) the interviewing process and what would occur with the information gleaned both during and in its aftermath. I also outlined to the students and their families what possible outcomes of the information supplied such as being left to rest in a bookshelf or to be published for whoever was interested to read. Included with the information letters were two consents for both the students' parents/caregivers to sign as well as the individual students themselves. The students and their families received photocopies of their consents. The originals as well as the electronic audio recordings have been securely filed.

In all areas with the interviewing process I endeavoured to be transparent, keeping in my mind the fale metaphor or having no secrets, no unwelcomed surprises and with keeping the students 'in the know' and thereby safe. In terms of being culturally respectful as in following the Matalafi concepts of agaga, va tapuia and va fealoaloi, or listening for the unspoken words I found that when I asked the questions in chronological order, I laboured more to get the participants to open up or and were less forthcoming 'to come out from hiding' so to speak.

Although this may imply that I went in with preconceived ideas of what their answers would be, the idea that I was therefore prompting for answers already made up in my mind would not entirely be untrue. For to say that I was going in 'blank' and without any expectations, without any ideas of what the answers would be is both naive and disrespectful. Applying the concepts of alofa and a'o/ako I went into each consecutive interview consciously aware that each one of

these students was someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, grandchild and therefore the children of promise. Understanding what I had learnt from the previous interview or question but also open to what was to come in the next or with my next question I entered each interview as much a learner and teacher, in the sense of modelling respectful relations. In using semi-structured interviews as a method I was able to amend the both wording and the order of my questioning to allow the conversational lines of thought to flow more readily.

### *2.11.1 Anonymity in a transparent setting – a cultural oxymoron*

With the exception of my immediate family members as mentioned in the personal narrative all names, surrounding geographical areas and the locations of both schools, have been substituted with pseudonyms in this thesis to conceal the identity of the students.

I headed this section as 'A cultural oxymoron' and this seems to be an underlying recurring theme for Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand. In FaaSamoa there are few secrets and those matters that are secret are sa (sacred or tapu). However the use of anonymity in this research is to protect rather than to hide.

### *2.11.2 Final rights of Agency*

Included in the information letters were a complaints and withdrawal clauses should the student be unhappy with the interviewing process or felt unsafe at any time. At all times I endeavoured to ensure that the students were aware of their power of agency in that they had the right to refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the research at any time up until the end of the school term when the interviews took place. Also they, which included their parents/caregivers, were free to ask further questions about the research that occurred during their participation and that the students would be given access to the findings from the research at its completion.

In all areas I sought to be transparent and kept in the forethought the returning of service or accountability to the students, that this research was not a purchase but an ongoing transaction that finishes when it finishes. In the ifoga, the problem is the problem and it is over when it is over. Such is the case with this study.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### 3a Part A: Personal narrative - Positioning myself in the story

For me the journey of this thesis began well before my wanting to find out about the experiences of current Pasifika secondary school students. I was in the second year of my primary teaching degree, in a compulsory course called, *Working with Cultural and Linguistic Diversity*. A question posed to us budding teachers had two parts, why are cultural differences seen as deficiencies? And, why can't they be just as they are, different? It made me start to think about my own experiences in education.

When I reflect on my own experiences of being a first generation NZ-born Samoan in the New Zealand education system I realise that there are a number of significant and very important experiences that have affected my personal identity. Some of these experiences were positive but some were very negative and could have damaged my sense of self to the extent that I might have been put off the idea of striving for any formal educational qualifications, or believing that I was even allowed such aspirations. As it happens this is ironic because high educational aspirations are pivotal to the 'migrant dream' of many, if not all, Pasifika immigrants to New Zealand.

Let me begin by picking a starting point that triggered the memories of my schooling experiences and I choose the first of two poems by Karlo Mila (2002, as read on Tagata Pasifika) that encapsulates this, my story:

I am the seed of the migrant dream (ruia-mai-i-Rangiatea?)  
The daughter who is supposed to fill the promise  
Hope heavy on my shoulders  
I stand on the broken back of physical labour  
Knowing the new day has been raided  
And our milk and honey dreams are linked to obesity and diabetes  
And our hearts are drowning in buckets of povi masima  
And we are told that we're all too fat  
Fat linked to poverty  
Vomit on my fingers ...  
And I wonder in this blue eyed world where will I find  
Shoes that fit my wide feet  
That aren't jandals

Karlo Mila-Schaaf has gone on to refer to this ‘seed of the migrant dream’ as the ‘migrant dream discourse’ (see Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010) and this is also how I have interpreted it in the context of this thesis.

### **3a.1 First-hand exposure to racism and discrimination**

The very first incidents of discrimination that I ever experienced were at two levels; by the government against Pasifika people as a whole, and by a peer against me as a Samoan. From them I learned the power of governments to use their authority, for good or ill, the power of a peer to hurt through the use of words, and the power of family support to nurture and heal. There is an untapped power to be found in our schools, the power of teachers to get involved and become interconnected in the lives of their students. As Bruner (1996) states, schools are a part of society and how society educates its young people in its schools has a great deal of influence over the role they play later as adults.

#### ***3a.1.1 Discrimination by the government***

The ‘new dawn’ of the migrant dream discourse in Mila’s poem refers to what has become known as the Dawn Raids of the early 1970s where Pasifika peoples living in New Zealand were targeted as over-stayers by Muldoon’s government, and deported back to their island homelands. The significance of this overt act of discrimination was not lost on Pasifika peoples, considering the largest over staying population were British citizens who were not deported (Anae, 2009 *Te Ara – the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/samoans/1>). These were dark days for many Pasifika peoples and as a first generation New Zealand-born Samoan, eight year old girl, growing up in Otarā<sup>9</sup>, South Auckland, I was an active participant.

#### ***3a.1.2 Discrimination on a Thursday, 1974***

With regard to the second incident, I remember the day clearly, it was definitely on that Thursday in some forgotten month in 1974 when my child-like world came to an end and the cultural climate changed. I was in Standard two and on a Thursday morning, Tony Shepherd, a half-caste Māori boy, twin brother of Deborah who was one of my best friends, called me a ‘Coconut’ and an ‘S.O.S’

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<sup>9</sup> Otarā at that time in the early 1970s had a negative public image of low socio-economic status and high levels of domestic violence where the majority of Pasifika and Māori ethnic groups resided.

(Samoan over stayer). He and his friends, Rolly from down the road, Sonny Taeo and Tony, all Māori boys, began their teasing and taunts, telling me to ‘get back on my banana boat and go back home’, and he wasn’t referring to 24 Velvet Crescent (my home address).

So at morning interval I went looking for my older brother<sup>10</sup> who was in Standard three, to come and “smack Tony’s smart mouth.” However, on not being able to find him, I found my big sister instead. She was in Standard four. Her advice to naive eight year old me, was to fight Tony myself, and to fight him at lunchtime. So I did.

The fight was only that in name as it hardly drew a crowd, just one girlfriend Beverley, a Pākehā<sup>11</sup> girl. And there was Tony, alone this time without his friends. He initially said that he didn’t want to do it as he ‘didn’t hit girls’. But somehow I assured him that this was not going to be a ‘hiding’ but a real fight, so he reluctantly agreed. I honestly believed that it wouldn’t be too hard; after all, I was Samoan and fighting was supposed to be in my blood.<sup>12</sup>

Of course I lost! Three seconds was all it took. Just three quick leg trips, 3-2-1, winded, flat on my back! No punches. Not even a bloody nose. Just hot tears of embarrassment streaming down my face, anger directed toward my sister not Tony, because it was her dumb idea that I fight this boy in the first place.

The aftermath splits into two stories at this point. Fortunately Tony and Beverley never mentioned the episode to any of our classmates so both his and my reputations remained intact. But I still continued punishing myself for not listening to that small voice in my head that told me not to fight this boy.

I was the sick child in my family, ma’i sela, the asthmatic, and unbeknownst to me at the time, was perceived by my brothers and sister, especially my sister, to be the favoured one.

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<sup>10</sup> In FaaSamoa culture, there is the feagaiga which is a sacred covenant of bond between siblings that brothers and sisters will honour each other and that brothers especially will protect their sisters as women, notably young women, as seen as the life source of the family line (motherhood).

<sup>11</sup> In those days I used Māori terms interchangeably with Pasifika terms. I remember an American visitor to our home asking my younger brother what a Palagi was, to which he answered, “A Palagi is Kiwi for Pākehā!” In this thesis I have used all terms Pasifika, Pacific Islanders, and PIs as descriptors for peoples from the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

<sup>12</sup> The stereotypical Samoan is supposedly good at fighting and all things physical

No wonder my own sister didn't stay behind after the 'fight' to help me back up, to see how I was. But I got her back. I made myself sick by running all the way home, so that by the time I got there I was wheezing – albeit a slight wheeze, but enough for my mother to send me straight to my room where I eagerly awaited for *my Daddy* to get home.

When my father came home I put on the crocodile tears, telling him how at school I was teased and beaten up by a boy who had called me a 'coconut'. My sister was in the kitchen helping my mother and cousins prepare dinner and I could feel her evil stares burn through me.

My Daddy called not only my sister but all of us to the dinner table. After lotu (karakia, blessing on the food) I eagerly awaited his public chastisement of her. But instead my father proceeded to tell us of the virtues of the coconut tree. In storms, we were told, the tree is sought after by the islanders and some mothers would tie themselves and their baby children to the tree so that they would not get blown away. I remember we all laughed at this. We were told that the coconut tree was the 'life source' of Samoa, without it her people would die, for it is used as food, drink and for all its resource materials, every single aspect of it is used. The husk is used to ignite fires, for making rope, the palm leaves for building thatched roofs, sails, for fine mats, shelter and clothing and even the stalks of the palms are used to make the salu (broom) for sweeping. The coconut oil especially is used to keep us healthy, young and strong, and kept our young men, the manaia (village princes) to the tau le'a le'a (which are the untitled men of the village) looking handsome and all of our women forever beautiful. More laughter. He also told us how the coconut could traverse many seas, guided only by the tides, and would embed its roots deep into the sandy foundations of its new island homeland and there grow tall and strong enough to withstand storms. "Where there are Coconut trees, there is life," he said.

Although my family were bilingual in our home, we children always replied in English as it was encouraged at that time, and so whenever my father wants to make a point he counsels us in his broken English so as to be sure that he is understood. Therefore, on that Thursday night, at our family dinner table my

father, the patriarch of our home, exhorted in his FOB (Fresh Off the Boat) English accent, “Why you cry? No more cry. We smile now. We all Coconut!”

### **3a.2 High School junior years: From Coconut to Potato Girl**

Fast forward six years to my high school days, where my family had since moved from Otara to more middle-class Ellerslie and then in 1976, to the neighbouring Mt Wellington. With this physical move to a higher economic location came more of the personal name-calling associated with socio-economic status, but this time from peers steeped in the discourse of stereotyping and discrimination and also, perhaps more surprising, from a teacher. At the same time I was also to learn that individual teachers can make a difference for the good to children’s lives in schools.

My parents believed the idea that middle-class schools would be better in terms of academic achievement and opportunities than the perceived lower-class schools of Otara. They could not have been more wrong on the last one.

At the start of my fifth form year I found myself once again being called another member of the plant world, and once again the name was applied with the same disdain and in the same derogatory light. The plant name this time round was the ‘Potato’, meaning that although I had brown skin, inside I was white.

The stigma of the name runs alongside the Samoan ‘fia-Palagi’ (wanting to be white) label that is associated with all the negative connotations of capitalistic Western society such as materialism, being ego-centric, extreme feminism that includes verbal male bashing as opposed to the patriarchal FaaMatai system of village governance, all immoral and sexual perversions and basically all that is associated with the individualistic and competitive, hedonistic and self indulgent – as opposed to collaborative and collective Samoan society which is socio-centric.

However, this time round, the taunts did not come from any of my Māori and Pākehā peers, but from amongst my own fellow Pacific Island mates and also one Palagi teacher. It was this teacher in particular, who had spent two years prior to coming to our school, teaching in Tonga, on a church labour mission. When referring to the ‘Pacific Islanders’ in our class, he called us Potatoes, ‘especially Annie’ he said, and that we wouldn’t last one whole day back in the islands.

I do not know why I was singled out but I am assuming it was because I did not speak with a FOB or a 'fresh' 'Boonga' accent. But why would I? I wasn't born in Samoa and at that stage in my life had never even been there. And even though my parents, grandparents and cousins all spoke Samoan to us at home, we children had always replied in English – in fact speaking English was actually promoted and pushed by my family elders so that we children would be more successful in our school work (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). Gagana Samoa (speaking and understanding the Samoan language) was believed to be something we children could instinctively 'pick up' when called upon to speak it, because it was believed to be innate. It was only at church that I was ever expected to speak Samoan and this was just for Bible memory texts recitals. There was never a need for us to converse in Samoan when everyone could understand English.

Because of this, I did not run home crying to my father. After all, what was I to tell him? This time I felt this particular teacher may have been right!

Also at the start of my fifth form year my parents finally got rid of our rusted Holden Kingswood car, and our family got a new car. And by new, I mean the latest model new, new car – a bronze coloured Holden Commodore V6 station-wagon. Not since Grandpa Asotau had anyone in our whole family got a *new*, new car.

However, with the new car, and with the new neighbourhood that was predominantly palagi at that time came a whole set of misconceptions of us. Somehow our family's socio-economic status had mistakenly become elevated as a result of this car. Even my friends at school starting calling me a *Potato* and 'rich girl'!

Another interesting point that has only come from the luxurious gift of hindsight is the supposed association of material success with academic success. Coincidentally at the end of my fourth form year my school marks were fairly good as was reflected in my school reports. At home my family knew that my school marks had nothing to do with our economic status but more with the fact that my still being classified as the ma'i sela, the asthmatic, I was excused from doing any physical fe'au (chores) and instead I was sent to my room to study or the kitchen table to write up my homework. My fe'au then was to do my

homework so common sense would mean that of my siblings, of course I received the better school grades. Also from hindsight I do not actually recall any of them doing their homework for the kitchen table which acted as my desk, was always filled with my books. Although I did not realise it at the time, succeeding at school was my family's expectation of me.

As a result of this, my Potato label took on a new level of meaning in that material success should equate with academic success. I understood fairly early that yes, you were allowed to be smart but on the condition that you did not show anyone else up in the process. Otherwise, this was perceived as being a *fia-poto*, someone who thinks that they know-it-all. Although I never recall being called either a *fia-poto* or a *fia-palagi* by anyone at school, my teenage sensory radars alerted me that when I was asked by my teachers to read aloud in class, to problem solve aloud, it was best to play the 'class clown', 'play dumb', 'play down your successes, both material and academic' and to go for the 'funny effect' than to showcase your best efforts.

But I was proud to be a Coconut, or so I thought. Ironically, this new Potato label had planted the seeds of doubt in my mind and I began to question my cultural identity of who I was and more importantly, who and how I wanted to be known as by my family, but even more than them, my peers. So to rid myself of becoming a 'fia-palagi', 'Miss Potato', I played up. Just as I had done in primary school with turning on the crocodile tears and faking an asthma episode, I began wagging<sup>13</sup> random classes every so often – not the same ones so as to be detected by teachers and my family, but enough to be noticed by my peers.

However, my budding career as a juvenile delinquent was brought to an abrupt end by the teacher in charge of lunch time detention, a Maths teacher called Mr Johnson (pseudonym). This man metaphorically saved my life and fortunately, rescued me and my wagging companions, from academic suicide and short sightedness.

Mr Johnson's lunch-time detentions were different. He told us that during our time together, we weren't to pick up litter as this, he said, was to be done on our own time. Furthermore, we were told we weren't there to write "insincere,

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<sup>13</sup> Wagging is a colloquial term for missing or cutting classes.

tokenistic, apology letters” to the teachers whose classes we had wagged. If there were apologies to be made, then we were to ‘man up’ and go in person to apologise. And if that wasn’t humiliating, or humbling enough, as well as the face to face apologies we were to further ask those teachers what it would take for us to appease them, to make it right with them once again. This behavioural expectation was not unfamiliar to us as we were versed in the ways of ifoga (Tuala-Warren, 2004), which is the Samoan disciplinary restorative practices of the FaaMatai system of village governance. Mr Johnson’s disciplinary methods resembled methods already known to us, of restoring the calm, righting wrongs and re-establishing filemu<sup>14</sup>.

Mr Johnson’s practices went further than this. Detentions, he told us, were not just about making behavioural and disciplinary changes. School detentions are about learning, he said, and since he was a maths teacher, that is what he would do, and in turn we would learn to love learning by learning maths. He promised us that by our attending his lunch-time detentions, we would be able to double our maths scores. I remember all of us snickering at this preposterous proposal, for even though my mid-year maths exam score was a mere 23%, I knew his promise of doubling it would still equate to a big fat fail for School Certificate Mathematics. In my mind I replied, “Thanks, but no thanks!”

So the very next day at lunch-time, defiantly my friends and I wagged detention, jumped the school fence, hopped into a mate’s car and went up the road to the *Georgie Pie* fast food outlet. Between the four of us we had enough money to share two lunch specials, two large cheese and mince pies with two buzz-bar sundaes. We were about to return to school but I had the bright idea to eat the food in the car park and to ditch the litter evidence there. No sooner had we got our food and driven to a shaded car park when Mr Johnson pulled up alongside us.

Calmly, he announced his new terms of condition for our lunch-time detentions, which included two options, the first being compulsory attendance until further notice or a second option, where he would escort us, right then and there, to our parents’ workplaces to explain in person the reason for our unannounced visits.

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<sup>14</sup> Filemu is peace, harmony, sense of assurance, confidence, sense of community and lack of contention. Filemu is only obtained through combined acts of service where everyone in the village plays their part in righting wrongs, respecting our elders, parents, those in authority so that the va tapuia, the relational space of re-establishing and observing respectful relations with each other can take effect.

Obviously we chose the first. As well as this new condition, he also amended his previous promise of doubling our mid-year maths scores to tripling or quadrupling them. And so began our attendance at Mr Johnson's maths learning lunch-detentions where he was true to his word.

One could argue that Mr Johnson had a captive audience in that we were semi-blackmailed into attending, but this is far from the truth. He loved ironies and one of his favourite quotes was, 'There are no prisoners in detention'. We all have choices, he told us, and as long as there is ability to exercise choice, no matter how limited, we were free. An example of this was when Janet got a Rubik's cube for her birthday, the ipod or mobile phone equivalent of my day. Calmly he presented her with two options of putting it away in her bag or handing it over to him to be picked up at the end of the week. Just as he had done with us outside of *Georgie Pie*, Janet chose the former.

We soon discovered that his maths lessons were different compared to our usual maths classes. There were no worksheets, no talking over our heads like some of our other teachers, who used fancy jargon to make them sound 'flash', where no one understood and then resorting to condescending put-downs and impatience when we asked them to explain. In his class we felt like adults, his equals, not so much in terms of expertise but in the way he spoke to us, never raising his voice. He never blamed others for what we knew or did not know like other teachers who kept on at us, 'You're in the fifth form now, you should already know this'. It was his job, he told us, to show us how really smart we were. I would not go as far to say that he was our 'mate' but he was someone who, over time, we grew to respect because we knew that he cared for us.

Mr Johnson's first so called 'learning to love learning' maths lesson was on the true meaning of numbers. He began by asking what number we were in our families. Again when Janet answered that she had no brothers and sisters, he latched onto that point and asked us if her having 'zero' siblings meant she was inferior to us. Of course we answered no and voiced how in many ways she was luckier than the rest of us, for she did not have to suffer waiting in line for food, for the toilet, for the bathroom, there were no 'stink' birthday presents of already worn, hand-me-downs, or last season's clothes, there were no annoying or bossy

siblings, and so the list went, on and on. Numbers, he explained, are just like families where each member of the family has a unique personality, a unique way of contributing to their family, so too was the case with each number in any given equation, each has a unique 'place value', even zero. But how? we asked, still not making the connection.

Mr Johnson taught us how to think about thinking by making us look at the value of each number. With values come responsibilities, he continued. Zero's responsibility then is always to show the meaning and the purpose of that 'place value', what it truly means to be called Zero. Therefore if an answer has no value the answer is not Zero, it just means that there is 'no value' for that particular problem at that particular time. Numbers cannot lie, he said, they are what they are – the language of truth. I honestly believe that Mr Johnson had a maths story for everything. He could always explain the most complicated equations in the simplest and clearest of ways by connecting it to something we were familiar with and getting us to see it in a new light. So not only did he have us think about our thinking, but more so turning these thoughts into feelings and in turn, turning our feelings into real life observations and actions.

In recent years I have come to understand much of Mr Johnson's pedagogy and his very positive way of relating to his students. He had mastered the balance between soft and hard caring that maintained the boundaries between us as his students and him as our teacher. All these attributes, especially having us make familial connections as in *whakawhanaungatanga*, high expectations for both our learning and behaviour in a caring respectful relational manner as in *manaakitanga* and *whakapiringatanga*, I have come to realise many years later as the elements in *Te Kotahitanga's Effective Teaching Profile* (Bishop & Berryman, 2006).

Towards the end of the year, however, we, yet again, became lax in our attendance, arriving each day later and later, to where we were almost wagging his detention sessions, but not quite. Then from out of the blue, Mr Johnson unexpectedly rang my home doorbell one night and asked to speak with my parents. Miraculously, fortune was on my side because it was I who answered the front door where incredibly both my parents were at church for Wednesday night

prayer meeting. He then turned to leave and as he waved goodbye, he called out, “See you tomorrow at 12.31, sharp!”

And that was all it took. Immediately I was on the phone to the others and from there on in, we never missed his or any other classes for that matter, and we were never ever late again. Because of him, all four of us solidly passed School C Maths and those of us who went onto sixth form, passed UE<sup>15</sup> Maths too. I myself did not take seventh form Maths, mainly because Mr Johnson left at the end of my sixth form year (my first time around in the sixth form) and I did not trust myself to handle calculus without him. He also was instrumental in getting us part-time work as school cleaners where the conditions of our employment were full class attendance and passing school grades. Because we were cleaners of the school, we took pride and a new found sense of ownership in keeping our school looking smart and tidy. This new attitude carried over into my academic school work as well.

### **3a.3 High school senior years: Not a Coconut, not a Potato, what then?**

Two final schooling experiences that are relevant to this narrative occurred after the 1981 South African Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand, the historic event that has been described as dividing the country. This was when I was a senior at high school. Here I describe how I acceded to peer pressure in failing to fulfil my academic potential, how incessant support and pressure from parents determined that their daughter would succeed, how parental support finally won through, but how the racial labelling and stereotyping never really went away while I was in school.

The year was 1982 and it was my second attempt at going for my University Entrance certificate. I had only passed two subjects, English and thanks to Mr Johnson, Maths. My other two subjects, History and Economics, were both fails, being 49 and 48 respectively. I did pass my fifth subject, Shorthand and Typing, but this pass was not counted as a UE pass because Shorthand and Typing was not a University subject.

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<sup>15</sup> School C and UE are shortened colloquial terms for School Certificate and University Entrance and the equivalent of Year 11 and 12 in the New Zealand secondary school system.

I do not wish to make excuses for failing because I have come to understand that ‘failure is feedback’, and for me perhaps the best teacher of such lessons, however the real story behind my failing History and Economics was not due to University Entrance exams being academically difficult (the excuse I gave my family), but the truth was that my peers and I, in sitting those examinations, did not complete the entire test papers. Arrogantly, we had other more important priorities, or so we thought. So as soon as the first allowable exit came around, we headed off into town to catch the mid-day movie sessions, which had half priced tickets before 4pm, and therefore we were still able to make it back for our after school cleaning jobs. I had miscalculated how much to do on the test to pass and this gamble was one, in fact two, that I lost.

Unfortunately obtaining University Entrance back then was not a ‘big deal’ for me, for all I wanted to do was to start earning money. My friends and I felt justified in this as we had passed School C and three of the four of us were the first in our families ever to do so. And although our parents had educational aspirations for each of us to go onto to university to become ‘doctors and lawyers’, we naively, stupidly believed we knew better.

It was never my choice to return to school after passing School Certificate, just as it was never my choice to go on to seventh form and because I had taken two years to do sixth form, returning as a seventh former to appease my parents meant that I was the oldest in my year group, the nana of my year. This was shameful, but is evidence that my parents and Pasifika parents do value education and will keep their children in school for however long it takes for them to gain qualifications, not realising that such expectations can have negative social-emotional consequences. As Nuthall (2007) notes, ‘peer culture’ of the students has the most currency and influence over academic outcomes in the classroom, more than the home culture of the child or even a match with the culture of the teacher. This was especially so for me in my seventh form year, where, in another of my desperate and foolish attempts to save face, I again reverted to delinquent habits pretending that I was not that interested in school and believing that I had a natural talent for passing exams. How very wrong I was.

Although I did not physically wag or miss classes, I made no attempt to exert myself mentally when I was not engaged or motivated. By the time end of year exams came I realised that I didn't know enough to pass and as a result my highest qualification was my Higher School Certificate for having completed seventh form. As always when there is regret I sought to blame others for my own failings and in this case it was my parents, reasoning that had I been allowed to have gone to university instead of wasting an entire year at school I would have finished one year towards a university degree. But this is not the true case for I remember how adamant I was against becoming a lawyer or a doctor and that it was I who agreed to remain at school to have time to persuade my parents otherwise. My parents wanted me to stay and strive for the highest school qualification, an 'A' Bursary, so that I would have better chances of getting into Medical and Law Schools - there was a mismatch between my family and myself of educational aspirations and belief about the purpose of school.

But I am jumping ahead of myself. Because I had passed UE Maths and English, returning to re-sit my sixth form year meant that I was put into the top streamed classes. I retook History and dropped Economics and took up Classical Studies instead, which I was so glad about because I absolutely loved it. By that time Mr Johnson had left the school and so too had my detention buddies. Before he left he tried to reassure us all that we would be fine if we stuck together, supported one another and stopped believing the paranoid, negative self-talk, self induced lies of our own making, of our internal dialogue.

Shortly after Mr Johnson left, one of my wagging buddies quit our after school cleaning job because our boss implied she had been stealing. We knew she was innocent but egos and tempers flared, resulting in her and another wagging buddy walking off the job. The remaining two of us soon became just me when Janet announced after Christmas break that she was pregnant and would not be coming back. So I began that year at school friendless.

Senior school was totally different to junior school as it was like an entirely separate, elevated culture. Notably the teachers of senior classes were the biggest difference. We were treated like fellow humans instead of subordinates. I

enjoyed the new, almost luxurious position of authority, of what being in senior school meant.

However, being one of a handful of brown faces, you became a somewhat unwilling role model. I remember as a seventh former, being taken unawares when I was asked one day by the senior mistress to stay back and introduce myself in junior school assembly. What she wanted was for me to share with the junior students was a type of ‘rags to riches’ story with an underlying theme of ‘bad girl made good’. Because I was put on the spot, what they got instead was a splattered mixture of nervous giggling mingled within a speech filled with lots of “I, I, I’s”, “my, my, my’s” and “me, me, me’s”.

As a result of my poorly executed speech, the Potato label returned, not just the socio-economic aspect of the label, but mixed in with it the stereotypical belief of academic success, the misconception that meant being in the top classes I was the exception to the rule rather than the norm for Māori or Pasifika peoples. And this time the label was given me by the juniors, who were my younger brother and his mates of the fourth form, all of whom were Māori or Pacific Islander.

### **3a.4 The return of the Coconut**

Also as a senior, the Coconut name returned, and this time was from the top-down in the guise of Mr X, who was both my little brother’s Music and vertical form teacher. He asked James if we (referring to me as well) would like to join in the school musical, *The King and I*. When my brother said that neither of us could sing nor play any musical instruments, Mr X replied with, ‘But aren’t all you coconuts naturally musical?’ When James told me what Mr X had said, I confronted him the very next day.

This was not because I saw myself as some sort of freedom fighter, but because I wanted to share with him the true meaning, the true ‘place value’ of what it is to be a coconut, like my father and Mr Johnson had shown me. I had also been suffering guilt pangs from not standing up for my two wagging mates who had walked off on our after school cleaning jobs. Even though both were at the time working in real jobs and making real money in the real world, I still thought that I owed it to them and to my brother to say something.

The conversation went like this, “I’m not racist!” he said. “In fact I protested against the South African Springbok Tour. I was an actual protestor. So how can you think I’m racist? No, I’m not racist!”

“Sir, that may be so”, I said, “but just what did you mean, when you said ‘all you Coconuts’?”

“What?” he said, his face and neck all coloured red.

“Young lady” he continued, “I was only using the very words your brother and his mates used to refer to themselves. Those were his words first so if anyone’s racist, it’s your brother and his, his, his mates, don’t you think!”

I was then dismissed, told to leave. I could tell from when he hesitated and stuttered on the word ‘his’ in his response, it was because what he really wanted to say in referring to my brother’s mates was ‘*his* Hori’ and ‘*his* Coconut mates’ but he didn’t.

That was also the first time I had ever openly challenged a teacher, someone positioned in authority, and a male teacher at that. The same false sense of confidence, that same false courage that had come from believing the narcissistic lie that being a senior, I was an exception to the rule, just as quickly left me and I felt ill at what I had done.

To make matters worse, James went home from school extremely angry at me and told my parents how I was “a real fia-poto!” I was sorely reproved by them, albeit only verbally, for being disrespectful to my teachers. And as for my poor brother, although he has never said it, that on that day, I had virtually signed his academic death warrant for he never did complete his fifth form year. I remember in James’ final year at school, he told us at family dinner how Mr X conducted the whole school assembly in singing, *Free Nelson Mandela*. I remember thinking it ironic.

After my pitiful altercation with Mr X, James had ‘somehow’ gained a classroom reputation of being disinterested, of being a trouble maker and instigator of distracting others, and of hanging out with the ‘wrong’ kind. This was all far from the truth for even now my brother James is described by all who know him as the quiet, softly spoken, gentle soul of our family. He was a very good long

distance runner at school but somehow he was always in lunch-time and after-school detentions, and his chances of trying out for any school athletic events were forfeited. But most of all, there was no Mr Johnson there to rescue him, to speak up for him and to be his advocate.

So my parents took James out of school near the end of 1984 and he went to work in our neighbour's son's business as a factory hand – the very work place that my late Grandpa Asotau Malopito, had exhorted us against entering. Our beloved Grandpa who had said his legacy to us was that he would work the factory floor so that his children would work office jobs, which they did, and that their children, we his grandchildren, would go on to better theirs. In so doing, my grandpa's migrant dream became my brother's living nightmare.

### **3a.5 High school hindsight**

In hindsight I see now what a truly effective teacher Mr Johnson was. To me his spontaneous home visit that Wednesday night was an unexpected surprise, but looking back the reality of it was very much a well thought out, well calculated and executed strategic play on his part. Because of the many conversations in which we had shared about our families, the 'place values' in our homes, he knew us well, so much so to know that my parents with my younger brother and cousins would be out attending mid-week prayer meeting. He would have also known that my older siblings would have been out working in their part-time jobs, thereby leaving me, the obvious person available to answer the door, for I would be left at home supposedly doing my homework and tending to my invalid nana upstairs. Putting all probable pieces of his mathematical equation together and in context the answer pointed to me as the obvious outcome to answer the door.

Although his arranging for my wagging buddies and me to get cleaning jobs may seem like deficit theorising and reinforcing the stereotype that Māori and Pasifika youths are only suited for physical and more menial jobs, the responsibility of honest work, no matter what kind, should never be undervalued or underestimated. For this job not only provided us with pocket money, a social outlet and a sense of independence that was separate from school, home and church, more importantly it gave us a sense of ownership of the school with the care of its grounds and property. No longer was the school the cold prison-like

institution it had been in my third and fourth form years, now with mop and broom in hand, it became my place of belonging.

I think the biggest lesson learnt from Mr Johnson was that whatever ‘place value’ was ours in life, we were to understand and portray what that was and what it meant. My ‘place value’ in life then was and still is that I am of Samoan heritage and therefore in my life I am to find out what that means and to live up to my privileges and responsibilities that this entails. I am still working on this process.

### **3a.6 The contradictory role of church**

For my parents having us attend a Samoan-speaking church served two functions, first being the spiritual nourishment and admonishment of the gospel, and second, first hand exposure to their home island culture and language in a socially safe setting. I saw the first part as including Sabbath day meetings and our daily family loto which I deemed acceptable because it aligned to what I had read from the scriptures. The latter however, the social and cultural aspects, I considered tedious and meaningless and when more time and more money was required to fund such activities which contradicted in my opinion the teachings of the Saviour, the more disinterested I became.

I would often use ‘homework’ for not attending the weekday services or caring for my nana as an excuse for not attending Sabbath day services. When I turned 15 years of age, I used not understanding the language as my excuse for not attending, opting to again look after Nana or feigning a wheezing episode. By the time I was the 6<sup>th</sup> form I was no longer attending any church services regularly.

### **3a.7 High school aftermath**

I did go on to university, just as I had stayed on as the oldest seventh former in my year, again to appease the will of my parents. I did all right academically during my first year at university but I ‘bombed out’ in my second year. My parents, especially my mother, wanted me to become a lawyer but my marks were never good enough so I bided my time and took English and History papers instead, working towards a BA in History. I found university a lonely place where all my friends from school had taken either Accounting or Computer studies, whose schools were at the other end of the university campus, and where our lunch or

free period timetables never coincided. Although still living at home at the time I had decided that I did not wish to attend church anymore.

The family expectation of me as the ma'i sela, being housebound in a way of sorts, was to become educated – to go onto university and to become qualified to the highest possible degree. Back then it was to become either a 'doctor' or 'lawyer'. I, however, believed that I did not have the aptitude or attitude to see it though.

In the middle of my second year I found part-time work at McDonalds Queen Street, and this was where my social and financial needs were met. The work was exciting in that it was very social, constantly surrounded by people, loud talking, fast moving people and this was fun. This was what had been missing from my childhood. When I dropped out of university I was not worried because I knew I had this job to fall back on where I was duly promoted to a salaried managerial position once I became full-time. It was then that I moved out of home and went flatting with friends from work.

However, the Rogernomic days of the 1980s with the 'think big, spend big and buy big' that resulted in the 'Crash' of 1987, became a hard reality for me, losing the house in 1990 that my flatmate and I had bought three years prior to that, because our pay cheques were no longer adequate to afford the mortgage. My new managerial position was no longer the fun and exciting time it had been when I was a crew member working the grill or front counter. In my new position I constantly found myself out of my depth making decisions about ordering supplies, meeting staffing needs, and having to put in long, demanding hours to keep above the red line on the profit and loss sheet. My dream of making 'real money' became a rude awakening as I soon tired of the thankless, 'fire-fighting', unrealistic, burdensome expectations placed upon me. My long hours did not pay off as I got very run down and ended up sick in hospital, with a real asthma attack this time. All these events and bad decisions resulted in losing the house.

Anae's (1998) poem describing her feelings about being a NZ-born Samoan sums up how I felt once I had finished high school and entered the 'real world' of life. Here the meaning of palagi is foreigner, taken to mean a foreigner in both this

country, the land of my birth and in the home island of Samoa where my parents were born:

I am – a Samoan, but not a Samoan  
To my āiga in Samoa, I am a pālagi  
I am – a New Zealander, but not a New Zealander  
To New Zealanders, I am a ‘bloody coconut’, at worst, a ‘Pacific Islander, at best  
I am – to my Samoan parents, their child (p. 2).

With the loss of the house I felt like the prodigal daughter and although I did not return home, I did return to my family values, which meant a return to the Lord.

In 1991 I tried going back to university to finish my Bachelors degree in History and English. However, without the support of my family and their constant watchful eye, along with working full-time and still being very much immature in the areas of self discipline and motivation, I failed. I vowed that that would be the end of any educational endeavours. I wanted to escape all expectations of me, family, work and even my new church, so the following year I left to go on my big OE, but upon meeting up with friends my first port of call, Brisbane, I went no further. In Brisbane I remained for the next 11 years. It was there that I was befriended by people in the education field and it was through their persuasion that I finally broke my vow of defiance and returned to pursue my teaching degree in 2003. I did not wish to return to Auckland because of my bitter-sweet schooling memories, so I chose the University of Waikato because it is less than two hours from my aiga, most of whom still live in Auckland, should a fa'alavelave<sup>16</sup> arise.

### **3a.8 Lessons I learned from my own schooling experiences as a NZ-born Samoan student**

In summary, the turning points in my own narrative that, for me brought about new understandings of education and my own position as a Pasifika student are:

- First-hand exposure to racism and discrimination;
- Pejorative labelling, even by peers that I considered as ‘mates’;

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<sup>16</sup> Fa'alavelave is the opportunity for family members to provide service to one another, which could be both happy as in the case of family births, weddings (fa'aipoipoga) and milestone birthdays (aso fanau) or solemn such as funerals (maluu). Members of the family are called to the family patriarch's home, the matai, to offer support in terms of time shown in service (tautua) and more latterly in the offering of monetary gifts.

- Stereotyping as a tough, fia-malosi, fia-toa<sup>17</sup> Samoan fighter;
- The importance of family support;
- Expectations arising from the ‘migrant dream’;
- Survival in finding a ‘place of belonging’ by living down to low expectations – peer pressure;
- Achievement through support from a very caring teacher, one in particular;
- The contradictory influence of church; and
- Challenging authority resulting in sabotage of my brother’s educational future.

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<sup>17</sup> Fia-malosis is wanting to be stronger, staunch, by puffing oneself up. Fia-toa is wanting to be a warrior

### **3b Part B: Student Interviews**

I have reported in the introductory discussion how this thesis is not about Te Kotahitanga itself or the ETP. This thesis is specifically about the educational experiences of myself and Pasifika students in two schools which are trying to be culturally responsive. However, having said this, there are points within Part II of the Findings below I have used terms from Te Kotahitanga because those terms have very specific and very appropriate meanings at the points at which I have used them.

For this Findings section I will follow the most common direction in which the conversations flowed. I answered Question 1 followed by Question 3, which asked about Te Kotahitanga and the ETP respectively because of the logical order in which the ETP follows on from knowledge of Te Kotahitanga, for you cannot talk about one without referring to the other. This will be followed by Question 5, which asked the students about their goals and hopes for their futures. This question of course answers the underlying question of this study, the migrant dream discourse. Questions 2, 6 and 7 respectively will be answered in that order: schooling experiences of Pasifika peoples, school communication with parents and out-of-school responsibilities. This leaves Question 4: whom the students perceive as school role models and leaders, to be answered separately. This is because Mr Johnson had such a big influence on my own schooling experience and I wanted to know if the students had similar key people in their lives today. For as Stanley (2003) pointed out, in order for children to succeed in school, they “need to be connected and they need to feel that they belong, and this requires reasonably ready access to a responsive and reasonable adult” (p. 26). But more especially, I wanted to know if teachers in these schools were those ‘responsive and reasonable’ adults who empower their students with that ‘connectedness’, that ‘sense of belonging’ not just in and out of their classroom relationships, but life beyond the school gates and into their futures.

I have also included a final segment headed as ‘Other: Evidences of inter- and intra-discrimination’ which describes this surprise finding from both schools. I had been aware of racial discrimination against me as a student at school but had not experienced it as me being the perpetrator, the offender against someone else.

## **1. What do you know about Te Kotahitanga?**

### **School 1: Q1**

None of the students knew of Te Kotahitanga and how it operated within the school, with the exception of two boys in Y9 and Y10 respectively.

### **My personal reflection regarding this question for School 1**

My final day at School 1, I showed the students the Te Kotahitanga brochures at our shared lunch, notably the section showing the statistical evidence comparing the achievement of Māori students against all other ethnic groups, including Pasifika students.

When I reached the final graph which shows the percentage increase for Pasifika students surpassing all students including Māori, they reacted in spontaneous merriment. With loud cheers, jeers and cajoling, rolling their fists, slaps on the backs and doing semi victory dances, they proceeded in giving each other congratulatory high-fives. At first I too joined in with their excitement and enthusiasm for I remembered how happy I was when I first heard these statistics. But when their behaviour turned to mocking, and where that mocking was obviously targeted against the Māori students, I took the brochures away from them and told them to settle down.

## School 2: Q1

Knowing what I knew and had learnt at School 1 and the students' perception of Māori at that school, I decided against showing the Te Kotahitanga brochures to the students in School 2. In the end, with time against me, I did not have the time to do so anyway.

Only two students, one Y9 male and another Y10 male respectively, knew that Te Kotahitanga was a programme to raise the achievement of Māori students in their school. One Y9 girl knew of it because her best friend was Māori and the Y10 girl also knew that the Māori bilingual class was involved with it somehow. The others knew of it once I reminded them of the Te Kotahitanga facilitators standing in the back of their classes observing. There was a mix of perceptions of what the students assumed the Te Kotahitanga facilitators were observing or looking for. Some believed them to be observing their classes for the purposes of solely improving behaviour and discipline matters. Whilst others knew they were observing their teachers teaching and this was only gauged from the way some of their teachers reacted in being observed.

*Y11 John: I thought that they were watching us 'cause we're naughty.*

*Y11 Girl: I thought they were watching our teachers, see how he teaches and stuff.*

A surprise finding which was not evident in the initial responses at the interview but was more realised in the transcribing and creating the thematic analysis was in the students' apparently rather negative perceptions of Māori. This was noted throughout the entire interview and began with the very first question. I will follow this theme later in the Findings.

**Tell me what you know about Te Kotahitanga?**

*Y12 girl: I don't know anything.*

*Twin: Me neither*

*Y12 girl: It just sounds Māori*

*[Group laughter]*

**#3. Effective teachers. Tell me about your effective teachers – the teachers who you feel you learn from.**

- **What is it that they do that helps you learn?**
- **How do you know that they have been effective for you?**

**School 1: Q3**

The students at all levels began answering this question citing examples of their intermediate and primary teachers as those who were effective. At all year levels they said they preferred their primary-intermediate teachers to their secondary teachers not because of the individual teachers themselves but because they had more time to build up a relationship with their pre-secondary school teachers, a bonding relationship that was reciprocal and where those teachers knew them. As did all the students in all year levels, initially responded to this question abstractly identifying attributes and characteristics that effective teachers practised.

*Nita: Strict! I like it when they're strict to keep you on task*

*Sina: but not too strict, borderline strict, cool strict,*

*Sione: being fair strict,*

*Lalo: keeping their rules constant and applying it to everyone not just one*

*Sina: Someone who's funny and who knows what they're talking about, being experts in their subjects*

I believe that in referring to their teachers abstractly had more to do with respecting the authority of teachers for they were also reluctant to refer to them by their subject as I had asked them to do so. The students understand authority and what it means to be respectful of it but they also understand the responsibility of those in authority in terms of a'o, ako in Māori. Sione offered an insightful explanation of a'o, of reciprocal teaching and learning, for which his teachers needed to practise. Lalo reinforced Sione's explanation of a'o, by adding that teachers needed to be patient, to slow up the pace to take the time to listen to what their students were saying and asking, and not be in such a rush to teach:

*Sione: It's like a'o; so when a teacher talks the students listen, and when the students talk, the teacher listens. It's both being engaged and both being understood. Like working together with each other, so it makes the teacher's work easier and the students will gain more skills and knowledge*

From Y9 to Y13 students preferred teachers who invested the time in forming trusting, caring and respectful relationships:

*Y9 Junior: at intermediate I did [have an effective teacher]. He didn't yell at us or demanded that we do our work. He was very quiet and patient, when he saw us struggling with our work, he came up and helped us. He acts like one of us, like a little child, he related to us*

*Y13 Jordan: I prefer the intermediate way better, having the one teacher who never forgets your name and who knows you as an individual [Y13 Jeremy and Y13 Xena both agree]*

*Y12 Lalo: [teachers] knowing their students. Getting to know what their students are like.*

*Y12 Nita: someone who's understanding.*

Fundamental to establishing this relationship of respect and trust was that it had to be reciprocal, where the dynamic occurring was two ways, free flowing between teachers and students. Junior described his effective teacher as being patient, not demanding and discerning. When he says that the teacher acted like them, this does not mean that his teacher ceased to being his teacher, for there are dangers with becoming too familiar with the students. What Junior means here is that their relationship had become familial. However, this reciprocal relationship also has conditions, the difference between 'familial', rather than 'familiar' as the Y12 students tried explaining to me:

*Nita: And when she [a teacher] talks about other teachers, she goes*

*Sina: she goes, "They need to keep it professional!" [To me] Do you get it? Teachers who try to relate too much to the students they end up acting like students and hating on other students and treating them unfairly*

What Sina, Nita and soon Sione were trying to tell me was the difference between familial and familiar relationships between teachers and students, teachers and teachers, and between students and students. Sina did not like this teacher judging her or her judging her fellow colleagues of how Sina should be acting because it did not fit the teacher's perception of how Pasifika girls should behave and act. Sione explained further the invisible boundaries associated with familial relationships. In this respect the teacher is the friendly leader and guide rather than just another friend who just happens to be a teacher.

**So you're saying that you don't want teachers to be like you, you want them to, to what?**

*Sina: Yeah, not be another teenager*

*Sione: But sometimes it's cool having teachers who are like you, like my volleyball coach and my Economics teacher, they're good. Because when it's not school time, they just know us as people and friends, but when it's at school, class time, they're back to being the teacher*

As the interview progressed, as with the other year groups, students began giving more concrete examples of the makings of both effective and ineffective teachers. The common denominator in being effective teachers were the elements that I would associate with effective teaching myself, and two teachers in particular, referred to as Mr S and Mrs M in this section of the study, deemed as being effective were cited as examples in all year groups. One strategy, although I use

that term ‘strategy’ tentatively, that both Mr S and Mrs M did was that they both shared stories, or rather storytelling, of themselves, their family backgrounds, their hopes and teacher beliefs and the reasons for them entering the teaching profession. They used storytelling as a means for both establishing of and encouraging respectful and trusting relationships with their students. They used stories to show what high expectations meant and entailed both academically and behaviourally, and how the students would be able to recognise it. They also shared stories of how their lessons were planned and prepared for so that the students would realise and appreciate how everything is interconnected, and therefore would not take for granted the many seemingly little things that go into creating learning and teaching both in the classroom and in life.

Likewise Y9 Junior is also inspired and motivated by the humorous yet ‘real’ stories Mr S shares of his own troubled youth, being involved in gangs and overcoming that lifestyle to become a teacher. Mr S is an effective teacher for his students because they can relate to him as someone who shares to a certain extent, the same world view or experiences as them. Although Mr S shares personal stories that are familiar to the students he never pushes the boundaries of over-familiarity with his students. There is never any doubt in the minds of the students who is the teacher, the leader and the guide in the classroom:

*There’s these gangsters in my class and Mr S helps them to change their ways because he understands what it’s like to be a gang member. Because he said he used to be in the [gang name] over on the [geographical location] and he said he killed someone. And he made the little gangsters’ scared.*

In sharing these sometimes very personal stories of their lives, students in Mr S’s and Mrs M’s classes were given vicarious opportunities of safe access into the social-emotional worlds of experienced adults. To the students these were not just interesting stories of their teachers’ lives, upbringing and family backgrounds outside of school but useful insights for navigating their own futures. Using this approach of storytelling and sharing their teaching beliefs and philosophies and being unashamed of showing empathy and understanding of what life may be like for the students, both teachers were able to effectively encourage and inspire their students. Sometimes the best way to describe something is to say what it is not rather than what it is and the students had many examples of ineffective teachers

of what not to do. This was the case with the two Y13 boys shared the opposite of encouragement and inspiration of what teachers should not share:

*Y13 Jacob: [teachers need to] be **more** there for the students, be **more** involved with the students, get to know them **more** [bolded for emphasis as this was the word he stressed]*

*Y13 Jordan: over the years some teachers think of us just as a pain, they even told us that, that we're just a pain and it made class dull and put us down. So people who encourage us **more**.*

I found that Y9 Fijian-born Alana gave the clearest definition of what the Y13 boys meaning of 'more' meant in her description of Mrs M. Mrs M is someone who is 'there' in the present when she comes into class. Being 'there' meant that the students were made to feel with every lesson that Mrs M had come especially for them. Mrs M often shared inspirational, philosophical advice with the students which readily resonated with Alana, giving her hope and increased self confidence to cope with an unknown future:

*Y9 Alana: I reckon the only effective one I had was Mrs M. Like she doesn't just come to school to teach, she's comes and she's 'there'. It's not just a job, it's like it's her hobby, her passion or something, so it's cool. She's always smiling too and it's like she really cares about you.*

*She was cool because she understood the students and she knew that students aren't always going to work every day. They have lazy days and she understood that. She was my Art teacher; I did like the subject but just because of the teacher was why I really liked it.*

The students also view his disciplinary measures of 'hitting them over the heads' as friendly banter, similar to that of their own older brothers elbowing them signalling them to remember what is expected of them and to act accordingly with self-correction. It is by no means considered unprofessional or inappropriate behaviour by the students. Key is the relationship Mr S has with his students that has been purposely developed and nurtured with each class lesson spent together with them.

*Y11 Louise: [regarding Mr S's hitting] but that's in a good way not a bad way*

*Y9 John: yeah, it makes them laugh instead of crying [laughter]*

Again, both these teachers have familial relationships with their students, not familiar ones. Alana also mentioned Mr S and described his disciplinary means in the class as teaching lessons on correct etiquette to becoming civilised and culturally aware global citizens. She did not take his corrections as condescending or demeaning but like Mrs M she came away feeling elevated and uplifted:

*Y9 Alana: He's like strict but in a cool way. Like he tells you, except how he does it is that he makes it fun so students will like it. Like he's strict but he's funny as well. It's not like fun as in fun and games, but it's fun cause it's not boring, because you're involved and you have something to do with it. You're not just sitting there going, what's going on? He actually asks you and explains and then he asks questions to make sure you understand. He doesn't teach in that way where he does all the talking, he actually involves you in what he's saying, so that's cool. He'd ask questions about what your parents do and all that. He's really nice; if there's a problem he sorts it out then and there and all that.*

Both teachers are practising what I had experienced from the teachers who had helped me, aroha (alofa), where both the teacher and students come away from their interaction together edified and elevated beings.

### **School 2: Q3**

In answering this question students in School 2 described both effective teachers and effective structures within their school. Partly because of the way in which the students answered this question I have chosen to answer it in the same manner, addressing the effectiveness of the school's structures that were specifically mentioned by the students as they pertain to effective or ineffective teachers. Although the school has several structures and programmes operating, for this question the only ones that will be discussed at length will be the Homework Centre for the junior school and the Mentoring Programme for the seniors. The school's pastoral practices of Restorative Thinking Programme (RTP), Academic Counselling and to a lesser extent, their involvement in *Polyfest*<sup>18</sup> will also be discussed, especially RTP as it pertains to the students' ineffective teachers sending them there. These structures and systems will also be revisited more fully in Question 2, what is it like being a Pacific Islands student at this school?

The main reason why I have chosen to include effective structures under this Question 3 is because of what was said to me by Mrs Fiafia (pseudonym) who is the Mentoring Programme co-ordinator and Pasifika Liaison officer. From a conversation we had during our shared lunch I mentioned how the students so far had spoken very highly of the teachers involved in the Homework Centre and Mentoring Programme and of her especially. I do not believe that her reply was one of fishing for more compliments when she said it had nothing to do with her or the programmes but the classrooms that had the real effective teachers. When I reiterated that the students had specifically mentioned the Centres, she stopped me and said emphatically that the primary role of these two programmes, as with all the structures within the school, was to act as 'supports' to the teaching taking place in the classroom. The teachers involved in these two programmes, I was told, were not there to 'supplant' the classroom teaching and learning, rather to act as resources and supports to them. All the structures centre on the classroom where the classroom itself is learner-centred. I was told in asking about the effective teachers I assumed that the teacher role was for adults. These two

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<sup>18</sup> *Polyfest* is the largest Māori and Pacific Islands' cultural festival in the world involving 60 competing secondary schools and 9000 students. In 2009, the year the interviews were conducted, the festival attracted over 90,000 spectators

programmes are helping the students to become better teachers themselves so that when they return to their classrooms the focus is more centred on self-directed learning. Likewise, in building stronger classrooms it enables the classroom to support the teaching and learning within the homes of the children thereby strengthening the homes leads to a rippling effect of strengthening the community and into wider society.

I was humbled by her remark for she was right; I had assumed the role of effective teachers to be that of the adult teachers in the school. It brought home to me the importance of reciprocal learning and teaching.

One such teacher who is also a student is Y13 Louise. Like Alana in School 1, I learnt so much about effective teaching from what they shared. Below is Louise's commentary on both effective and ineffective teachers she has had during her time at School 2:

*You can just tell the teachers that go the extra mile to like make like handouts and make extra sheets and stuff. Those are the ones that want you to do well and those are the ones where I do do well in. But in other classes where the teachers just, like you have the manuals and they're like, ok work out of those pages from that and you don't get it. And it's like, well I don't get that but they don't really do anything extra and they just like write things on the board or like, I don't know.*

*My history teacher, she like does heaps of different things like she changes her lessons every week and she like plans them out so everything has an order. She writes on the board what we're going to do today and then she makes like handouts. And like yesterday, she makes it fun as well, like just yesterday we did a play sort of thing, everyone had a part and it was just about King Charles and stuff like that.*

*My chemistry teacher last year as well, his theory thing was like, as long as everybody like understands, we won't move ahead until every single person in the class understands like why we're doing this and what it means and stuff. [Group: yeah he's good!]*

From Louise's comments on her teachers there were the same common denominators as those found in School 1, primarily was that effective teachers were those who the students knew that they truly did care for them as fellow human beings. These teachers showed this by being present when they entered the class, by being prepared with extra resources that had been lovingly prepared outside of class hours which enhanced the teaching and learning in the class rather than substituting it. All of the elements of the ETP were described by Louise and as she showed from her description that there is not just one thing that teachers do that makes them effective, but a whole lot of things working in synergy with each other that in the end as Louise began, you can just tell.

All the students at School 2 considered the majority of their teachers to be effective, particularly the Pasifika teachers. However, those Pasifika teachers and other teachers involved with offering their services to the Homework Centre for the junior students and the Mentoring Programme for the senior students were deemed as highly effective. Both programmes are held in the school's newly refurbished *Fale Pasfika*. At the time of the interviews the Fale was still fairly new, furnished with a modern yet modest kitchen, large round tables and freshly laid carpet, which the students knew to remove their shoes upon entry. It very much reflected the students' Pasifika cultures appropriately. All students enthusiastically attended the Homework Centre and Mentoring programmes and many attributed their academic success to them.

*Y11 Group: We do like mentoring too. Yeah like have heaps of programmes to help Islanders, like that's pretty cool.*

**So you learn Science in your Mentoring programme, is that what you're saying?**

*Y11 John: Yeah! That one. We don't understand, cause when she teaches us, and then gives us the notes but doesn't explain it to us so we don't know what she's on about. And that's why we come to Mentoring to try and learn from the other teachers.*

This Homework Centre programme is coordinated by a young NZ-born Samoan teacher of English whom the junior students considered as highly effective. What makes her teaching practice effective is her balance of soft and hard caring with the students. Where on the one hand she has worked to establish caring and respectful relationships with her students, and has visibly planned for lessons and prepared well for them, on the other she has high expectations for both their learning and behaviour. The students see her as well prepared, relational as in she is 'not so serious' but firm and fair.

*Y9 Lisa: our English teacher ... she's an islander too and she like encourages us. We have seating plans and she's usually like joking around and like if someone mucks around, then like she'll just get serious as, like with this one here[pointing to Bob].*

*Y9 Bob: no! ... Maths, maths is like the best! I like Miss [Tongan name, NZ-born Tongan teacher]. I like maths, that's why and the teacher, it's our form teacher.*

On the other hand the Y10s, when describing an ineffective English teacher as 'boring', who 'just gives [them] handouts', the students are clearly frustrated for they have witnessed him teaching them well when he was observed by the Te Kotahitanga facilitators. Had he been just as ineffective when being observed by the facilitators, the students would have been more understanding. This act alone means this teacher has lost their respect. As it turned out, they did all that they could to passively resist and make his job difficult. When Marcia describes his

teaching as never really being taught, it clearly indicates their teacher's mind is elsewhere. He is not 'present' for them. Jaime describes a maths teacher in similar terms. This time it is a woman who just writes on the board and does not explain:

*Y12 Jaime: My maths teacher, like I don't think I've learnt anything. Oh wait I have, but not much! She just doesn't care and you can tell. She'll just write it on the board and then sit down and like do her thing the whole lesson and just like, yeah.*

The Mentoring Programme is coordinated by one of the Pasifika Liaison Officers, Mrs Fiafia, who like the lead facilitator, does not directly teach any of students. However, she is also considered to be highly effective and a great role model. I will discuss what the students said of her under Question #4 on leaders and role models, which appears in the second to the last question discussed in this chapter section.

The students believed the reason for the effectiveness of their Pasifika teachers was because of the same cultural understandings they shared where these teachers in particular related to what it is like for them at home. A Science teacher who is described as an 'islander' was deemed to be effective because the students related to him more as a surrogate older brother, where they described him giving them a 'clip across the ears' if they played up in class, joke along with them and who understood their sense of humour.

*Y11 Jude: my maths teacher, she explains everything in detail!*

*Y11 Cynthia: She's Tongan.*

*Y11 Annabel: I love my Science teacher. He's the man! He's Islander too! He's my biology teacher and he's like so cool. He explains everything thoroughly so that we can understand it. ... It's like the Islander teachers help everyone as well and it's cool as! Yeah and we like just relate to them and like he still hits us on the head, but it's funny. Like if we say something naughty, and we'll like ok because we're used to it. And he'll reward us if we win the quiz, it's cool as!*

*Y11 Lizzie: yeah, you get chocolate.*

*Y11 John: I had him last year and he taught us in a fun way. We always had quizzes and we always looked forward to it, our class, and he says, the faster you finish your work, the faster we can do it so everyone was keen as on learning.*

However, ethnicity is not a prerequisite for effective teaching including Pasifika people's ethnicities. Students in each year group interview soon came to this realisation, some faster than others. Their acknowledgement of effective teachers who happened to be Tongan, Samoan, Fijian filled them with a sense of pride (and rightly so) because their individual achievement became everyone's achievement. Soon they began giving examples of effective teachers from all ethnic groups.

Very important was the relational side where they had a sense of humour and able to laugh at themselves and laugh along with the students. In other words, these teachers were able to relate to them as family:

***Y9 Rangimarie:** [economics teacher] is laid back too. Oh man, when she taught me she was all good. Yeah, and if you ask or tell her to help you, she will!*

***Y9 Bob:** She tries to help you. She pushes you too, she's all good!*

***Y9 Sina:** because if they want to learn then she'll help them. But those people who don't want to learn, she just leaves them*

***Y9 Bob:** yeah, to rot and die! [laughter] yeah, she tries to help us and that. ... Yeah and I like my Dean when we had Science; he was cool as, yeah he was cool because he wasn't serious, he joked around and was relaxed*

On the other hand ineffective teachers, the students deemed to being 'too serious, too strict, did not smile, who sent them off to the school's disciplinarian department, Restorative Thinking Programme (RTP), not as the last resort but as the teacher's first port of call without really listening to what the students had to say. Ineffective teachers were the ones who did not revisit their material and when the students did not understand what to do, and expected the students to do it themselves after one time telling and not checking for understanding. Students said that these teachers were not helpful and came across as 'mean' and 'lazy' rather than as having high learning expectations – this was because of the absence of respect and caring on the part of the teacher. Ineffective teachers were also seen by some students as racists.

At each year level racial discrimination was mentioned with regards to ineffective teachers and not just from the teachers discriminating against them but also by themselves, usually in retaliation for the way they had been treated. Using the matalafi metaphor, whenever I overheard murmurs I openly acknowledged them to seek out the 'truths' as much as possible. Going back to the above example in the first interview with the Y9s when Rangimarie muttered that perhaps Lisa's social studies teacher was racist, I asked Rangimarie to explain herself.

[To Rangimarie], You said he's racist

***Rangimarie Y9:** Oh did you hear that? Some teachers are, like my English teacher, she was a racist for a little bit*

What makes you say that?

***Rangimarie Y9:** because she only picked on me! Ok not trying to be racist, but a lot of my class are white, and sometimes I'll walk in and with like these two girls and she'll like immediately turn to me, like I made them late. And it's really annoying!*

To Lisa, do you think your social studies teacher might be that way?

***Lisa Y9:** Sort of*

Sort of?

*Lisa Y9: Yeah, because there's mostly white people in my class like she said, but some Islanders. Mostly he picks on the Islanders but not the white people and it's quite confusing cause I'm trying to learn and he's always picking on me.*

The Y12-13s commented how ineffective teachers were the ones who did not value their out of the classroom responsibilities. In particular the Y13 student leader who was in with the Y12 girls gave a lengthy report about how one of her teacher told her she must choose between service and school. Finally the rest of the Y13s described ineffective teachers as those who did not make concerted

Students feel that they are unable to take their concerns regarding their ineffective teachers' mistreatment of them home to their families or even to the Pasifika teachers in the Homework Centre or Mentoring Programme.

*Y11 Lizzie: Like I try and tell them [her aunties] but I can't coz I get in more trouble, because they're the teachers. ... And that's why we come to Mentoring and we ask the other Science teachers to help us. And they tell us, the other Science teacher, tells us ... don't worry, just try to learn.*

**Do any of you, anybody else, tell your parents that your teachers are**

*Cynthia: I told my Dad that my maths teacher's a bit [pokes her tongue out making a farting sound followed by group laughter]*

**Yeah, and what did he say?**

*He just told me to take a spoonful of cement and harden up, and I was like, eh? [Group: yeah hard out!] Like it's your fault and your teacher is there to teach, so listen!*

Some students gave examples of how they covertly confronted acts of bullying and racism head on, even though they knew that in the end the teacher would come out ahead. An example listed below is from Y9 Lisa:

*Y9 Lisa: And I got angry this one time because he wouldn't help me so I told him straight up! And he said to go to RTP, and I go, I'm sick of you not helping me and here I am trying to learn, just for my education and that, and trying to do my goals and that, and all he said was, 'do it yourself' and gave me an RTP warning for no reason, just for telling him straight up. And he got angry and sent me outside.*

**Is it just you in that class that doesn't like your teacher or?**

*Um it's all the Islanders and the Māoris*

**How many Islanders and Māori in your class?**

*Four, three and one of the Māoris is my best friend, she's always picked on, and one of the Indians is my best friend, and he's always picked on too!*

Still referring to the same teacher, Lizzie referred to herself and including all Pasifika peoples (and most likely Māori too), as 'the black people, the black people!' John reacted defensively to this and I could tell from his body language that he no longer wanted to be a part of that conversation, where he folded his arms and backed his chair away from the table. It was obvious to me that he thought that the girls had gone too far with this accusation that this one-off ineffective teacher. For inferring that he was racist, thereby the same assumption could be applied to all ineffective teachers. As I continued to monitor John's

reaction, I noticed that from that point thereon in the interview, he went on the defence, defending all teachers, exclaiming that they were all effective. In so doing he was insinuating that the girls needed to look at themselves and their roles in the 'racist' equation as to why their teachers were perceived in this discriminating light. When I asked about his effective teachers, he vehemently answered, 'All of them!'

**Y11 John:** All of them! All of my teachers are effective; it's just me, I have to listen! Like my Geo teacher, she's always organised and if we're away, she gives you the notes that you missed the day before.

In response to John's comment on all their teachers being effective, the girls went on the defence and turned the issue of race into one of gender. They argued that the boys did not understand their predicament because teachers tended to favour boys over girls. Two different examples show how both John and Jude reacted to the girls' accusations with indifference:

So your family Lizzie, I'm hearing, they only hear about the bad stuff not the good stuff?

*Lizzie:* That's all they do focus on the negative

Is that the same with all of you?

*Girls:* Yeah

*John and Jude:* No, no

*Annabel:* Cause you're boys! Nah!

What reasons Lizzie?

*Lizzie:* I just hated her! She always picks on the girls not the boys

Is that true John?

*[John rolls his eyes and shrugs his shoulders]*

*Lizzie [to John]:* Yeah!

*Francine:* Yeah, that's why I left

## #5. What are your goals for the future?

- **How does what you are doing now at school (your subjects) reflect what your goals are?**
- **How are you going? How do you know this?**

### School 1:Q5

All the students held high educational aspirations for themselves with making their families proud and happy as the prime motivation in what and how they did in school. The students were very clear on this point, again beginning in answering this question in an abstract manner, giving their educational philosophies or rather, the educational aspirations of their families. I could feel their reverence in their responses to this question:

*Y12 Nita: I was brought up knowing education is the key to life. It always ends up trying to impress your family. You're doing it for your family,*

*Y12 Lalo: education is like a dream for my parents. Back in the Islands, school is not as good as what we have here, so education right now is everything because if you have qualifications you can get anywhere, money and stuff, because that's basically it, it's money cause without it you can't survive. And another thing our parents don't want us to work in factories and stuff, like hard labour for less pay, qualifications that can get your somewhere*

*Y12 Sione: my family they're not rich and they're not poor too but I want to be wealthy and that's why I'm trying my best to get a good future and help out my parents. It's about giving back to your parents especially because my dad, like both of my parents, giving back what they gave us and for all their hard work, because if it wasn't for them I wouldn't get a good future.*

*Y12 Sina: yeah because I get blessed heaps from my parents because I'm the youngest, I get a lot so I try and give it back by doing the school work.*

*Y13 Xena: My goal is to make my parents happy*

With such high educational aspirations I wanted to know what happened to families when their children did not meet their parents' expectations. What happened when children wanted to go into professions not associated with tautua (service) or fit the doctor-lawyer domains of the 'migrant dreamers'? The following examples are taken from families where the students' older siblings are succeeded in non-academic fields or have not succeeded in school at all. Ulala's older siblings who have made their mother proud and as a result of their success in non-academic field, she has found that she has much more freedom with the choices of career path she wants to pursue compared to her peers.

*Ulala Y11: don't really know. One of my ambitions is to be a dance choreographer. I kind of want to be like my brother because he made my mum proud; he's a rapper. I have another goal as well. I love acting so I think my drama teacher knows [of my goals]*

On the other hand, Ulala's colleagues whose older siblings have not achieved in any area at school, not just the academic one, the 'migrant dream', becomes

almost a nightmare. But it is definitely a weighted burden as they are now expected to achieve on behalf of the whole family as well as acting as a role model for any younger siblings or extended family. Listed below are three examples beginning with Lillian who is the middle child with 13 siblings. Her school grades are average and she is involved in sports. Her approach to school is ever hopeful where she views winning a school scholarship as the answer to the migrant dream.

*Lillian Y11: basically making my parents proud, giving them what my older brothers and sisters didn't give them, setting up a brighter future, make it easy for me in the future, living life happy. Getting scholarships is big as to my parents. A university scholarship would be major. I'd like to do travel and tourism*

The next two examples are of the youngest members in their families, where older siblings have been unsuccessful in the eyes of their families at school, so it is left to them to carry the 'migrant dream'. Although they understand their position and their responsibility to lift their families out from poverty, they are not without hope. They believe they have the support of parents to see them through:

*Y12 Lalo: I come from a family of six, no there's seven of us. I'm the youngest. .... My two older sisters, they are useless, just like what Nita's going through, so now there's all this pressure on you from your parents. But the support from my parents is awesome because they know I'm the only responsible one for what their dreams are. But their support is good.*

Students found innovative ways of expanding the expected and approved lawyer-doctor domains that Pasifika families aspire for their children, reaching happy compromises where both they and their parents were satisfied.

*Y12 Lalo: I want to be a professional rugby player and academically, to get a degree in physiotherapy. I chose that because I love my sports and that's what's keeping me going for my goal for physiotherapy. I'm taking bio, physics, PE and English and I'm taking Samoan for my credits. I'm going good in bio and physics, not the top of class but I'm still there. PE is going good, that's a fun class.*

Students were very clear in their minds that the business sector was where they desired to go.

*Y12 Sione: My goal is to go to University and go for a Bachelor of Commerce and study economics. I'm taking economics, accounting, maths, English and PE.*

*Y13 Jordan: my goal is to be an accountant for the family business which is selling panitete (Samoan donuts) in front of the market in Samoan [laughter]. Yes, but really, to fulfil my parents' dreams of me becoming an accountant.*

All the students believed it to be a good idea to share their educational goals with their teachers and those that had done so found they were more successful in those subjects because their teachers could give them directed guidance and advice.

Do you think it's a good idea to tell your teachers about your goals?

*Lilian Y11: Yes! Because they can give you advice and because they can help you*

*Ulala Y11: Yes! Because then what's the point in not letting them know if you want advice in achieving your goals*

Although students wanted to please and honour their families they also talked about feeling burdened by these same high aspirations and expectations of them which were confounded and seemingly unrealistic especially when older siblings failed at school which meant that now the hopes of all rested on them.

## **School 2: Q5 Goals and aspirations**

The feelings of the students in School 2 are almost identical with those of School 1 where the migrant dream discourse comes out strong and clearly. Breaking them down into year level responses, the Y9 students viewed the purpose of education was to equip them for getting good jobs and all had specific vocational directions which were directly designed to fulfil family expectations. This topic of conversation was not fully addressed with the Y9s as they were more focused on sharing their experiences of transitioning into secondary school. However, they all were adamant that they would be staying on to the end of their Y13 days and to heed the advice of their older siblings and extended family members attending the school to make the most of all the School has to offer them in receiving help with their school work.

Two Y10 students however, like their peers in School 1, had examples in their families of older siblings who had not succeeded academically and thereby felt the added pressure of fulfilling their families' expectations shifted onto their shoulders. Yet such examples did not deter them as all six students had set goals in staying on at school to Year 13 and to all go on to tertiary education.

*Are you planning on going to University?*

*Y10 Group: Yeah, hell yes!*

Likewise the same desired goal of financial security was what motivated the six Y11 students, and placed above personal pursuit. Those who did have a natural flare for subjects that yielded uncertain vocational prospects found innovative ways of reaching a healthy compromise that enabled them to use their talent and still meet family expectation. Cynthia was one such example where she is a talent for art. Knowing her family's reaction to her becoming an artist was not a real option for her so she has used her artistic gift in choosing vocational subjects such as architecture, graphics and fabric design. Lacey in Y10 also is choosing to do likewise with focusing on directing her artistic ambition in the field of makeup and design in Television.

The three Y13 students were similar to the two Y10 students whose older siblings had been a disappointment to their families' hopes and aspirations for them. Although they have made it to Y13, none of the three had any real set direction of

what they wanted to do once they went to university, just that it had to yield the most money.

*Y13 David: To do really good in the externals, go to University, get a good job! To do? I want to work in Law, Commercial. Yeah, that's the big bucks!*

*Y13 Rachel: kind of looking into medicine. So you're definitely going to university? Hopefully I get in.*

*Y13 Miriam: [My goals] well the same as these guys, go onto university and get a degree*

The final year group for this section are the Y12-13 girls who all were clear in what their direction of their educational goals were but more importantly why and how they were going to achieve them. They all realised that their educational goals are linked directly to their achievement and that homework is specifically linked to their achievement as well. Y13 Louise summed up the 'migrant dream' in her story about her parents and the impact of the recession on their lives. She cited the example of her parents as her role models, especially her mother, whose strong service ethic provides her with inspiration and drive.

*Louise: She [her mother] went to work like with tonsillitis and like everything like she's just real hardworking. She always just pushed us and when I was little I was like, she's such a cow! [Laughter] but now, I'm like I wouldn't be where I am today if she didn't push me hard and stuff. ... And now that I'm older like I get on with her like way better.*

The choosing of future vocations for Louise is driven by a moral service purpose where she eventually wants to become a paediatrician, but firstly wishes to work through the ranks in the community to help Pasifika and Māori peoples.

*Louise: I wanna be a doctor. I wanted to work with kids like be a paediatrician but that's like a long, long term goal. My kinda medium long term goal is just to be able to work in like communities where health care where like people can't afford it and stuff and like work with the Pacific and Māori communities, 'cause like my sister is like doing nursing and she told me that like a lot of reasons why Pacific people don't like access their health care is because they don't know about the risks of not doing it and like they're lacking education in it. And when I like take my nana to the doctor's like she can't speak English and so like I see like the barrier it has in her receiving the best health care so that's what I want to do and maybe after a little while, specialise in Paediatrics and I take Bio, Chem, History and Stats! Do any of your teachers know of your goals? I think all of them, yeah or three out of five.*

Louise's stories gave Janice the confidence to share her reasons for choosing to become an accountant as a career choice.

*Since I was like Y9 or something, my mum and dad were like we want you to be a lawyer and all this stuff and then when it came to, oh 'cause in Primary, they don't have those sorts of subjects, and since Y9 I started learning doing accounting and I liked it and I used to always study it and only do accounting. And my mum was like, she started, oh. And I started opening up to my mum because I'm close with my dad, we always talk through things, and my dad still wants me to be a lawyer and stuff but my mum's like, oh you do what you think you can do best.*

## **#2. What is it like being a Pacific Island student at this school?**

### **School 1: Q2**

In School 1 in answer to this question, ‘what is it like being a Pacific Islands student in this school?’, their answers were much fuller than their School 2 colleagues. Therefore in applying the Matalafi matrix to their fuller responses, for my personal reflection I summarised their overall responses and purposely looked for contradictions and taken-for-granted viewpoints in their responses. Once I had done this exercise, I noticed that the students answered this question in two parts. First, by describing the school and their perception of the school so in this way, this was their initial ‘polite’ response. Their authentic responses had to be fished out of their entire responses where I had to use what I knew as an insider as a NZ-born Samoan female who was raised and schooled in the area and therefore familiar with a little of its history and culture, to really listen for the spoken and unspoken words coming from Alana.

### **Alana: Personal thoughts on the overall interview**

Alana is a Fijian-born Indian who self identifies as being Fijian. Her family migrated to New Zealand 10 years ago. When he was made redundant her family moved into the area where she attended the local primary and intermediate schools. She is in the Y9 accelerant class and has been all throughout her schooling experience. She feels that equality exists between students and from teachers to a certain extent. She views violence in the school with fighting as nothing out of the ordinary. She prefers her Primary-Intermediate schooling days to secondary where she found the teacher-student relationships to be more inclusive. Her responses indicate two findings, one being her taken-for-granted outlook on violence in the school, and second, her perception of the way in which teachers might gain the most out of Pasifika students:

#### **What do you think people think about this school?**

*Really bad things, they just judge it just because they see a fight and see people gathering around a fight, it's really only two people fighting and not the whole thing, so they have low expectations of this school but I don't think they should judge it 'cause they don't go to this school*

#### **What do you think will help these teachers get more realistic expectations of you?**

*I think they should actually talk to the students about what they want to learn and explain why we have to learn it, because they're always like, you need this in life and not why you're going to need it. We're not Einstein, or anything like that and I reckon they should stop yelling. That's not going to get anywhere. That's like parents hitting their children, that aren't going to get them anywhere. Their children will just end up hating on them. But if they explain things to them in a firm voice about why they don't want you to do that and then that will be more effective.*

### **Miriam: Personal thoughts on the overall interview**

Miriam is a Y10 NZ-born Tongan student from a large family. She is the middle child of 14 siblings but has a room to herself because she is a good girl. Miriam is not involved in any school activities, clubs, or sports because she is shy but she and her friends are good at sports. The main finding from Miriam's responses of what her schooling reality is like is that she values making her family happy and this comes from her portraying herself as the 'good' 'shy' submissive and dutiful student and daughter. Her family spend a considerable amount of their time devoted to church, especially her parents. Miriam helps out in the home by being obedient.

*Everyone else shares even the ones older than me, they still share, but I'm by myself because I think my parents trust me because I always clean my room and the others' rooms are always messy*

When discussing what her perception of effective teachers to be and their classroom practice, a surprise finding was her perceptions of the Māori students in her school and of Māori people in general. This finding is discussed in Question 8.

### **The mixed-interview Year group interview: Personal thoughts on the overall interview**

Junior is in Y9 and already he is saying that he has no time for homework. He likes to take part in sport.

*There's a lot of expectations, because when you think of an Islander you think of somebody that's fast and strong. I'm not that strong, but I'm good at sports. I play rugby for [School 1] sometimes. I'm trying to trial for volleyball, trying to get into all sports.*

He showed me his school socks where the bottoms are threadbare so he wears two pairs of socks to school, his casual socks to keep his feet warm and his uniform socks over the top so that he won't get into trouble. Like his school colleagues, he prefers his primary-intermediate schooling days to his secondary ones.

Victor is in Y10 and describes Pacific Island students sporty, honourable, great, and held in high respect and regard because of their sporting achievements:

*I'm into soccer, hockey, volleyball, basketball, it's all around us. It's good being a Pacific Islander playing in a group because there's a lot of people looking up to you and respecting you. It's like an honour, it's great!*

Like Junior, Victor has hardly any time for homework due to working his part-time job at the local supermarket to help out with home<sup>3</sup>. There was no mention of a father figure in his home just his older brother who was previously a student at the school and has gone to university studies. Victor is proud of his older brother and hopes to follow his lead and go on to doing tertiary studies. His mother works as a teacher aid at the school so he admits that he unable to ‘muck’ around. On the topic of church attendance, Victor admitted to daily prayers but that it was nowhere near the extent of the others in the group. Again, this topic is discussed under Question 7.

Y11 Lillian is the older sister of Miriam and she too is one of the middle daughter’s of 14 children. Unlike Miriam Lillian talked of having no real family support when it came to homework where she gets to do it late at night, sometimes being near 11 o’clock. This is because of the amount of time Church activities take up as well as her involvement with netball. Because of this, Lillian has taken it upon herself to being a role model for her younger siblings, homework.

However, as with her sister, Lillian’s responses regarding interaction with non-Pasifika students contained trace elements of mistrust and caution.

*I’m in netball, it depends if you’re the only Islander in a bunch of y’know then it feels weird, but if you’re with other Islanders, you blend in and have fun. In my netball team it’s good, they’re all Fijians and I’m like the only Tongan*

Y11 Ulala was in the accelerant class as a Y9 student but confessed to slackening off in her efforts during her Y10 year. She is motivated to do well in school and is well supported by a strong family network with four older brothers being 10 years her senior and who all attended School 1. The Deputy Principal remembers her brothers and her older brother where she spends her weekends, asks for weekly reports on Ulala’s progress. Ulala’s only complaint was being misunderstood when trying to explain things because of her accent but she did not have any hint of a FOB accent and I took this to mean her referring of her peers and friends.

*I think it’s good being a Pacific Islander because when you achieve something everyone respects you, but it’s kind of hard when you try to explain something to a teacher and they don’t understand, when you don’t know how to say something and that’s kind of the downer*

### **Y12-13 Group Interviews: Personal thoughts on the overall interview**

These two year groups, made up of accelerant Y12 students and three Y13 school students, occupy what they perceive as ‘privileged’ positions within the school.

*Y12 Nita: I actually like it because I feel privileged, because it's easy to be in a higher class than with other PIs because you get to compete against the white people to be more determined!*

Nonetheless each one of them still had to face their individual struggles of balancing demands from family expectations and responsibilities which mainly are to do with their church involvement, part-time work for the boys, sporting responsibilities and school leadership commitments.

You can often discern the most from what has not been said. All students in these two year groups mentioned how they preferred their primary schooling days to secondary school. None of them mentioned knowing how school structures and systems worked therefore their perception of schooling was based primarily on their association with classroom teachers and for those involved with sports, with those staff members. Because no real information was afforded to me by the Y13s I do not wish to misinterpret by speculating. All the senior students with the exception of Y12 Sina and Y13 Xena, had strong affiliations with gatherings and attendance and again this is discussed in Question 7.

## School 2: Q2 What is it like being a Pacific Island student in this school?

In answering this question there appeared to be two levels, a superficial stock answer and the real answer found deep in their experiences and interactions with others in the way that the question was answered it was clear to me that the students interpreted what I had asked as referring to the school's image and reputation in their eyes and those of their families.

Below are examples of the first responses compared to how later on in the interviews they changed. Some changed contradicting their initial responses Students' actual words are in italics and my reflections of the differences are in upright font:

Year level Student	Initial superficial response	Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses	Later authentic response
Y9 Rangimarie	<i>It's like a privilege, because like other Pacific Islanders they don't have the opportunity to come here and have an education like us.</i>	The question posed did not mention the topic of racism but nonetheless it came up regardless. Such is the case when I was at school, race or racism is always the real question asked when asking about ethnicity	<i>Well some teachers are, like my English teacher, she was a racist for a little bit because she only picked on me. Ok, not trying to be racist but a lot of my class are white and sometimes I'll walk in and with like these two girls and she'll like immediately turn to me like I made them late and it was really annoying</i>
Y9 Lisa	<i>Proud! Like standing up for your culture and being proud of your culture</i>	Lisa's pride in her culture comes more in the form of resistance and defensiveness rather than in admiration and influence. In her 'standing up for [her] culture' she is most likely seen by her teacher as enforcing the stereotype that Pacific Island students are	<b>Do you think your English teacher might be that way, racist?</b> <i>Sort of, yeah because there's mostly white people in my class like she said, but some islanders. Mostly he picks on the Islanders but not the white people. And it's quite confusing 'cause I'm trying to learn and he's always picking on me.</i>
Y9 Group	<i>It's cool! It's the bomb!</i>	There was a definite feeling of school spirit present in the interview where the students felt privileged to be a part of the school.	<b>Before coming here, what did you think?</b> <i>Twins: Scarey because it's so big, but exciting. Lisa: I was alright because I have heaps of cousins who come here. Boys: its middle, it's all right, just middle.</i>

### Overall reflection of Y9 interview for this question

The Y9s found their transition to high school life not as difficult or scary as they first perceived. On the whole, they enjoy being at high school as it has fulfilled their expectations of what school is like. From their older siblings and relatives who attend or who have attended the school the students now perceive Y9 and Y10 to being the 'kickback' years before serious study takes place in Y11 for NCEA. Overall they are enjoying their schooling experience in School 2 although

they believe they would enjoy it more when their teachers practise inclusive practices.

I have commented on students apparently racist comments at the end of this chapter.

<b>Year level / Student</b>	<b>Initial superficial response</b>	<b>Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses</b>	<b>Later authentic response</b>
Y10 Faith	<i>Everyone's like laid back, like they can join in no matter what culture you are, Chinese, Indian, whatever, you just join in</i>	Faith's responses contradict each other. She associates the Palagi culture that defines success and it is the dominant default culture to which all others are measured against.	<i>Yeah my form class is like 70% all white people. <b>How do you stay true to yourself without becoming a fia-Palagi?</b> I don't really hang out with them. I hang with my Island mates. I don't act like one, like do you know, they're like poshy and stuff, they're like always in your face, and we're like under the radar, kind of, we don't really talk! Because lots of people say Islanders aren't like brainy but Palagis, but if you get in a higher class like them, then you see I'm brainy, Islanders are brainy</i>
Y10 Jacob	<i>Respectable. Everyone treats everyone the same</i>	Jacob changes track from everyone to just the students, indicating that unequal and inconsistent treatment stems from those above, being the teachers	<i>Just the students treat students the same.</i>
Y10 Pale	<i>Proud! You're proud to be a PI ... it's cool!</i>	Pale's sense of cultural pride comes in the mode of resistance and self-determination. Yet when discussing about underachievement in his class, he refers to Pacific Island students as 'naughty' – the connotations surrounding this description do not constitute proud actions.	<i>You want to prove them wrong and you're like representing like your culture. <b>The ones that aren't achieving, are they Pacific Islanders?</b> I'm sure they are. <i>The naughty ones.</i></i>

### **Overall reflection of Y10 interview for this question**

Cultural identity for the Y10 students is based more upon external sources such as achieving reputable status. They all have their ideals and examples that have reinforced those ideals of what the school is like for them

<b>Year level / Student</b>	<b>Initial superficial response</b>	<b>Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses</b>	<b>Later authentic response</b>
Y11 Lizzie	<i>It's fun [being a Pacific Island student at this school] Funny!</i>	Although Lizzie gave an initial 'polite' non-committal response similar to answering someone's greeting about the weather, this is not what she meant at all. Her real meaning of funny would be 'ironic' as seen in the later response.	<i>And it's funny how when you do something bad, then they send a letter home telling them that you're bad but when you do something good, they never do. ... That's all they do, focus on the negative! (8b) I'm sure they think in a good way that they want me to do good.</i>
Y11 Cynthia	<i>And it's pretty cool, how there's all the different cultures of Islands here, like Tuvaluans, Samoans, Tongans, Nuiens, Cook Islands, yeah it's pretty cool</i>	At first Cynthia talks about the diversity of the cultures in the school but is still inclusive. Then she cites her maths teacher who picks on them because of ethnicity	<i>The thing is, he's not strict, not strict at all! He's just annoying! He picks on the Islanders. [Lizzie interjects: The black people, the black people!]</i>
Y11 John	<i>Is your Dad on TV? Yeah [local community] TV. Yeah he does his advertising on there. Is that a Pacific Island TV channel? Yeah, but not all the time. Don't you get it? No ... I don't even get the Māori channel or Prime, just 1, 2, 3 and C4 [laughter] Do you get Sky [TV]? No I can't afford Sky! [laughter].</i>	Not all the questions came from me. The students also posed their own for me to answer and respond to. John's questioning of me comes with the preconceived notion that I have Sky TV. The students found it very amusing that I did not.	

### **Overall reflection of Y11 interview for this question**

Like the Y10s the Y11 students, the girls in particular, seem to take for granted their privileged position of being able to experience the diversity of cultures and peoples who attend their school. The girls compared what they knew and perceived of other Pasifika students from both the neighbouring areas and those in other localities of the city against their own, often misinterpreting the reality of their judgements because their sources of information are based upon what they have experienced second-hand, usually the media.

<b>Year level / Student</b>	<b>Initial superficial response</b>	<b>Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses</b>	<b>Later authentic response</b>
Y12 Twin(s)	<i>[silence]</i>	At first the twins did not really respond, agreeing with the rest of the girls in the group. But as the interview progressed, they shared how they had been to several schools before School 2. They liked the feel of School 2 best of all.	<i>It's different here. We used to go to [another local school] and like all the schools we went to were like packed with Islanders. Then you come here and there's not that many, but I reckon it's good!</i>
Y12 Janice	<i>[silent]</i>	Like the twins Janice remained quiet and when the first question was asked about Te Kotahitanga.	<i>I came to [School 2] because, well, I live out of the zone from [School 2] but my mum wanted me to come to [School 2] because she didn't want me to go to [another local high school], cause she said it was [Group: Hori! It's a bad school! *laughter*]</i>
Y12 Phillipa	<i>I like it here because there's heaps of like different people, like different cultures. You see a person you've never seen before like every single day. Yeah that's cool!</i>	Phillipa never did answer my question of what she meant by 'your own'	<i>I think in Y9, you just hang out with you like, your own ... But then you just get comfortable and it's real easy to make friends here and like everybody's just cool</i>

### **Overall reflection of Y12 interview for this question**

Initially the group had an ethnocentric view of Pacific Islanders that associated ethnic and cultural identity to economic status and privilege. The all female group considered their school as being inclusive and multicultural where the twins commented on how School 2 had more white people attending than their previous high school which was in the same neighbourhood. The twins found School 2 to be friendlier and more inclusive, more multicultural. As with the year levels before them, the students knew that they were in a privileged position to be coming to their school as opposed to the neighbouring high schools. However, privilege is a precarious position to be in as school spirit and pride can easily turn to arrogance, vanity and complacency if left unchecked. The turning point with this interview that shifted it from going along the same lines as the other interviews pertaining to this question was due to two factors: the first being impact of the economic recession on their lives and second, Louise's courage in

sharing the realities of her home life enabled the others to open up and do likewise. Below is a snap shot of how Louise responded against the others' responses.

### Y13 Louise

<b>Initial superficial response</b>	<b>Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses</b>	<b>Later authentic response</b>
<p><i>Yeah in Y9, it's like, yeah, you just hang with your own. ... Like, like I thought I was cool in Y9, like 'I'm Samoan' *laughter* Like whatever! You're not Samoan, so don't talk to me! *laughter* But you just get over it, and then the next year I'm like, what a Loser! How embarrassing! But yeah</i></p>	<p>Louise's ability to laugh at herself affords her a likeability that draws others to her. The reality of the recession has hit her home with her father's job loss. She is encouraged by her mother's strong work ethic and determination and her father's sense of responsibility. Their examples show that they are not driven by pay cheques but by finishing and fulfilling responsibilities.</p>	<p><i>Probably my mum cause she's like real, I don't know, she came from Samoa and she didn't have like much but she like always worked like so hard and she always says to us, like we're never allowed to go home from school. We always had to go to work and she said the only time that we're not allowed to go is if we're dying. <b>It must have been hard especially when your dad lost his job and stuff?</b> Yeah. Like now, she's been working to be a personal banker and so like she like hates her job right at the moment. She said it's so hard but she just has to keep like doing it every day because my Dad doesn't work and stuff like that. He's still looking for like a new job and stuff but like even his job that he does, he's only paid 16 hours a week but he ends up doing more than that but the church can only afford to pay him 16 hours. Both of them like always work so hard but always like make us work as well.</i></p>

A fuller account of the above Y12-13 students' responses, with my reflections is fully discussed within the Discussion chapter of this study.

### Y13 Group

<b>Initial superficial response</b>	<b>Personal reflection on the differences between initial and later responses</b>	<b>Later authentic response</b>
<p><i>Y13 David: I reckon it's a really good opportunity because they've got programmes like [Mentoring Programmes] and like we can go on like camps and stuff, like Dream Fono. Dream Fono was this leadership camp and it was like schools from all over [the city] that went to Rotorua for 4-5 days and then basically we were just learning like how to step up and stuff like that, like making the right decisions and goals and stuff. ... Camp is just for the Y12s and Y13s. And the opportunities given, like all the support systems and stuff ...</i></p>	<p>Of all the students' responses, David's remained fairly consistent all the way through. He began highlighting the virtues of the structures and systems within the school. These school structures are seen as being <i>done with</i> and are therefore participatory in nature.</p>	<p><i>We have like an academic counselling where the teachers like tell you, tell the Deans where they think you can get credits and stuff. ... Yeah, they bring us together like Y13s or whatever year, like I think it's twice a term or twice a year and then they just tell us like evaluate our goals and like check where our credits are and where we're at and what we wanna do and then see if we've achieved what we did from our last academic session.</i></p>

All three Y13 students are all involved in these systems especially the Mentoring Programme, where the majority of their socio-emotional needs are met. It is as Louise pointed out earlier, the level of positive involvement is what establishes and cements that sense of belonging within the school. According to David, Pasifika students in the school that achieve academically is a result of them feeling included and in gaining a sense of belonging which is due to the all the school systems and structures.

## #6. How does your family know what is going on at school?

### School 1: Q6

The Y12 students responded tentatively to this question:

*Nita: Yes. They're really supportive, a bit too supportive. It's really annoying where they're like watching your every move and if you do a mistake it's like dam, where's the belt! But it's good just annoying sometimes*

*[Laughter]*

*Lalo: But then they just expect you to do good and to keep on doing good and when you fall down, you get the [signals to his shoe] ... yeah, I can't say it!*

*[Laughter]*

*Nita: yeah, they bash you eh*

*[more laughter]*

*Sione: That's just how Pacific Island life is ... it's like nothing*

With regards to communicating openly with their parents and families about how they were going in school or if their respective families enquired at the school directly, most of the students admitted to sharing with their families only on good reports. Just a handful of the students said that their families proactively sought to know of their progress direct with the school itself. These students were: Y11 Ulala whose older brothers rang the school and communicated directly with the school deputy principal; Y10 Victor whose mother worked as a school teacher aide so he had no option but to behave; and Alana whose parents communicated with Mr S on her progress and suggestions for her future. Other students waited to be invited by the school before asking after their children's progress. The only three students, whose families did not ask after their progress, explained to me that this was due to their families being preoccupied with other pressing matters. These preoccupations or distractions included matters and responsibilities to do with church and family.

*Y11 Lillian: I pretty much depend on myself since my brothers have gone overseas and my parents were raised in Tonga and they don't know stuff about what we learn nowadays. So I rely on myself and being a role model to the little kids. ... I do my homework late at night when the little ones have gone to sleep, probably about 11 o'clock.*

## **School 2: Q6 How does your family know how you're going in school?**

In School 2 most student outcomes were very favourable. Students answered how they openly shared their successes with their families and kept to themselves or were nonchalant about those that they did not wish to divulge. Compared to their School 1 colleagues the students at School 2 found it harder to keep their school matters quiet or secret with such people like Mrs Fiafia who had asked to meet with families and who often acts as mediator between school and many Samoan families. Mrs Fiafia, being Samoan herself, is in a notable position as a faletua (wife of the minister of a local Samoan-speaking church). She is therefore already known to the local school community and held in high regard.

*Y11 Jude: I had an interview with Ms Fiafia once. It was like a parent-teacher interview but with Ms Fiafia.*

When asked about what they did if they felt teachers were treating them unfairly, the students gave mixed responses. As with the students in School 1, respect for authority, especially the authority that the teachers hold is also given high importance to the students' families in School 2. However, I wanted to know how the students reported their grievances and if there was anywhere they could go for help if needed. What I wanted to know was if these students felt safe to in doing. From what the senior students in School 2 where for the most part, Pasifika students felt safe. However, from Junior whose father was very proactive in emailing the school for progress on him to the examples listed below ending with Louise who considered her mother her closest friend, it sounded as though little had changed since my days at school where the rights of the students seemed to have reached a plateau. For from what their responses indicated, their families were not in the right head space to hear about disappointing school reports:

**So how else do your family know how you're going in school?**

*Y12 Twin: They don't know! [Laughter]*

*Y13 Louise: Yeah I tell them if I get a good mark. I go home and I'm like, guess what! And they'll be like, good, good, good. But I don't tell them if I fail [Laughter]*

David's mother, a first generation NZ-born Samoan herself took a rather different approach:

**So how else do your family know how you're going in school?**

*I don't usually like talking about school with my family, just my mum. Yeah, my dad asks but I'm just like, yeah I'm doing good! But if I usually get to my report before my mum does then I don't give it to her [laughter] Like I only went to one parent interview with my mum this year.*

**How was that?**

*Oh My Gosh! My [form] teacher was saying bad stuff after bad stuff and I was just like whaaa ... But my mum, she believes me.*

**What's it like for you in terms of school work and stuff?**

*It's alright cause my Mum, cause my Mum being the NZ-born, she's always like school first blah, blah, blah, so that's why I always get my work done cause my Mum. Yeah my Dad's like, usually he usually asks me about school, but it's usually just my Mum cause she understands it more*

However, not all families received favourable reports from school as Lizzie tried to tell me:

**So how does your family know how you're getting on in school, Lizzie we'll go to you first**

*Y11 Lizzie: They think that I'm naughty*

**They think you're a Māori? \*laughter\***

*[Lizzie is visibly offended gives me an unimpressed look]*

**Oh you're naughty; your family think you're naughty! Sorry I thought, sorry**

*Annabel: [to Lizzie] speak up!*

**So why?**

*Lizzie: [mumbling] Cause I got so many letters sent home and I got in trouble on Monday*

**What do your Aunties, what do they try to do, how does that make you feel that they think that you're naughty? Because that must,**

*Cynthia: Suck!*

**...especially when you know you're not [trying my hardest to win her engagement back]**

*Lizzie: Like I try and tell them but I can't cause [unable to understand rest of her words]*

**#7. What things are you involved in and what responsibilities do you have outside of school?**

- **Do you associate your outside activities with school or do you keep them separate?**
- **Do your teachers know about the things you are involved in outside school?**

**School 1: Q7**

From my own schooling experience I understand how much time church takes up. The only allowable outlet for most of the students is their involvement in church activities such as youth groups, choir, scripture classes, and church fundraising activities.

Outside of school girls are discouraged from having any part-time work that would infringe on their academic learning. The boys are usually expected to find part-time work to help with family finances as well attend to school sporting responsibilities but mostly church attendance. John is encouraged by older siblings to stay in school. All the senior boys with the exception of Sione had part-time work. Sione's family appeared to be in a financial position that allowed him time to do his school work each night and a quiet room to do so in.

*Sione: I need my parents to be supportive of what I'm doing even with the things that I'm supposed to be doing and they are. They do things so that I can study. There are six in my family including me. I'm the oldest, two of my sisters here and my little brother's at primary. It's good being the oldest because it helps you; it gives you motivation because you want to be a good role model for your little brothers and sisters and then you do good so they can look at you and do the same.*

With regards to church attendance, Sione reported to the envy of us all how his family had lotu<sup>19</sup> each night but his church services on Sundays required only one hour.

**Do you have family lotu?**

*Sione: Yeah we do that [lotu] every night as a family but we only go to church on Sundays, that's it!*

The church schedules for the others in School 1 ranged from several hours during the weeknights and most of Sunday Sabbath days.

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<sup>19</sup> Lotu is family prayers which usually are accompanied by singing hymns or Primary children's songs of praise and worship. Some lotu involve family counsel usually delivered from the father or head of the household. Some lotu worship is a few minutes with the offering of a prayer or an hour.

*Y11 Lillian: Church, all day Sunday and Wednesday meetings and we have these occasions like conferences and all of that. We have family worship meetings on Sunday mornings, yeah and that's too much. Saturday's my day off.*

A surprising finding to this question came from Xena whose parents came to New Zealand motivated by the migrant dream discourse with the exception of making education and only education the primary focus. They have removed the responsibility of attending church and replaced it with a pseudo church-like gathering between their family members. To her peers in the interview, this is the ideal environment for studying.

*Y13 Xena: its changing now, school is a priority. It's my pathway to my future. My parents have instilled these values in me because that's the main reason for them bringing us here. I got to Y13 through hard work and determination and to please my parents.*

*My weekends I usually spend my time doing homework, probably the whole of Sunday and have Saturdays off unless it's really big and also if there's no family events going on, like birthdays or anniversary celebrations. We usually have two maybe three a month – they're annoying at times because you tend to see the same people. You would be lucky if it's just once a month!*

*My weekdays I try to focus on my homework and I spend about four to five hours on both study and homework a night.*

Y9 Junior's outside school activities also appears to be an absence of church attendance. This would be most likely due to the fact that his parents are away in Tonga and most likely his other siblings may have to work weekends as well. Like Xena's family, there is a strong focus on family but his differs to hers in that he acts as secondary caregiver to his nieces and nephews.

*Y9 Junior: I look after my nieces and they can be real loud. I like to sleep a lot and so I try to take them some place where it's quiet where they can't talk, I take them to the [local] library and every Friday there's [externally run youth programme], a place where there's volleyball and rugby and they love to go there and play stuff and I make sure they stay under control and not get too cheeky. But they get cheeky anyway. I look after them every day, they go to sleep about 8pm, my brother cooks for them but if he goes to work then I cook for them.*

The final student who did not attend church was that of Y11 Sina's where the reasons offered were similar to John's, being the busyness of everyday living.

## School 2: Q 7 Outside responsibilities

Besides their involvement in *Polyfest* where mainly the junior to Y11 girls were involved in, Sports with the boys and part-time employment for the senior students, the topic of Church was a heated issue for all students.

The Y9 students felt strongly about the amount of time and money their families gave in church offerings and donations and complained that attending boring activities took away time for their school work:

*Lisa: Church every day! I go to [Samoan speaking] church. Yeah [it takes up a lot of time] and I can't do my homework anymore this week because my Uncle passed away and he was like my grandpa, so we like are busy with that so I can't do any studying and that*

*Rangimarie: A lot's got to do with church. And honestly, it's like so boring. Even some like elders fall asleep, like you can hear them snoring real bad. But like now, I don't really go because there's like no point if I can't even understand it.*

The girls do not have any outside school responsibilities, apart from church which they said takes up a large part of their out of school time, except for one in the Y12 group:

### How are you coping with this recession?

*I work as well so I don't rely on my parents too much for money. Yeah so if I didn't have my job then it would be like real hard, 'cause like me and my sister both work so we try not to ask our parents for money too much because my Dad's wage has gone down heaps 'cause he used to get like quite a bit.*

### 'Cause like 16 hours is like less than half employment!

*It's almost like how much I work and I go to school as well, so yeah. But my brother always asks for money, like all the time, and I'm like, shut up Murray (pseudonym), stop asking them!*

The Y12 students complained about not having a social life because of their church attendance and school work. One student mentioned that she went on *Bebo* all the time but other than that, she too attended church activities:

### Any other responsibilities you're involved in outside of school?

*Group: Church / Church / Church / Church / And sometimes sport  
We don't have a social life!*

#### **#4. Tell me about the leaders in your school – who are they? What do they do?**

##### **School 1: Q4**

The Y12 students remarked on how the school student leaders were lacking in reputation, both good and bad, as well as in good standing. Sione compares the school's current leaders to his previous high school in Samoa to illustrate this point:

*Sione: It's funny how most students don't know our head boy because compared to my old school in Samoa we all know our head boy, their last name, their family, heritage, their village, everything. How they act around us, they would stand out and they step into their job like being a good role models for young people, ours never do that.*

*Nita: Yeah our leaders never do that*

From their responses it became clear that the students weren't so much engaging in fault-finding of their student school leaders but rather, criticising that particular method within their school system as it pertains to choosing leaders in their school.

*Lalo: Like what Nita says, we should let the students choose the leaders, who they see in school as role models, then the teachers can vote after that. Right now it's who the teachers favourites are in their class, they had them ever since Year 9 and they think that's the one. It's always like that!*

*Sina: and if you're not one of them you're never going to get it.*

*Nita: No one knows our head boy and head girl*

As for the adult role models and leaders in the school, again the students at all year levels knew who these individuals were as to their job titles, but that was as far as it went. Their real school role models are those teachers whom the students deemed as effective which numbered a quarter of the teachers in the school.

Students cited their family members as being their true role models and motivation to do well in school. Again, applying the matalafi matrix to what the students have said to what they really saying and sometimes without them realising this difference themselves. An example of family members being the unacknowledged role models and leaders comes from Y9 Junior's recollections:

*Y9 Junior: [In my family] it's just me, my brother, his girlfriend and my sister. My parents have gone to Tonga for a few months and I have to look after my little nieces and nephew, they're under five. My brother's girlfriend looks after them during the day, she's 23, same age as my brother. I don't have time to do my homework because I have to look after them [nieces and nephew] and do the dishes and stuff. My brother and sister are a lot stricter than my mum and dad, they ask me every day if I have homework and if I don't, then they tell me to go on the computer and do something, like research or stuff like that*

I asked Junior what advice his siblings had given him about high school being a Y9 student. This is what Junior's brother advised him to do when in 'certain' teachers classes: Junior must 'not to stir up trouble'; he must learn 'to fly under the radar'; and above all he must 'keep his mouth shut'. His siblings had told him that education was too important to waste spent outside of the classroom in the dean's office for something as dumb as loud talking, not having the right uniform, or even a losing a pen. They more or less threatened Junior against turning out as they had, without qualifications, doing long thankless shift work hours just to make ends meet. Junior was told in no uncertain terms that he was not to end up like them, that he had to make it to Y13 and then go onto university. Junior then showed me his socks and explained how they had been his brother's uniform socks even though his brother went to another high school but the socks matched. Blessings, he exclaimed! The bottoms of the socks however were threadbare so Junior wore another pair underneath to keep his feet warm, exposing the correct top uniform bit. The threadbare uniform pair were his only pair.

## **School 2: Q4 Leaders and Role Models**

In School 2 all 40 student leaders, of which nearly a quarter are of Pasifika peoples' descent, are held in the highest regard by all students and by most of their teachers. There are two types of student leaders in the school, the class representatives for the junior school and the prefects, or the church jacket wearers as Y10 Jacob refers to them. Student school leadership did not come up with the Y9s but did so in all the other year groups.

The most common theme regarding leaders and role models in School 2 was that leaders needed to be confident, and this confidence was coupled with forbearance. Y10 Marcia is a somewhat reluctant school leader which stems from her not fully attending to her school responsibilities because she has not been going to all her meetings and is therefore unsure of what needs doing. When Lacey begins criticising the junior leaders as counterfeit leaders, meaning those leaders who are tokenistic and merely there for the sake of having student leaders in junior school, Faith comes to Marcia's defence. Faith reports that the main reason class representatives are not recognised as leaders comes back to the familial and familiarity debate where there is a fine line between showing off and showcasing talents.

What Marcia does not yet understand is that her lack of confidence in her leadership role stems from feelings of guilt, not from lack of capability and natural talent, but, rather, from her shortfall in time and effort she has invested to this role with stop-start, sporadic attempts to meet her obligations. Marcia misunderstands that difference between talent and availability. She has not yet made the connection that her peers are not interested in her talents but in her availability to serve. This was made evident when I asked her for her depiction of an outstanding role model and leader, she referred to a prefect from the previous year, a Māori boy who was not afraid to shine and showcase his talents.

*Marcia: I don't know [why I'm a class representative]. I haven't been going to the meetings. Not this year but last year Jonah (pseudonym) was good*

*Group: who's that? The dancing one, he danced everywhere, the Māori one!*

*Marcia: Yeah him, because he wasn't afraid to do stuff he wanted. He was confident and he was just showing his talent*

In the mindsets of Marcia's peers, junior leaders have not yet had the opportunity to prove themselves to their peers. The conversation changed course to the

difference between showing-off one's talent that is, without putting forth the behind-the-scenes efforts results in an inevitable fall from grace whilst showcasing is the product of hard work and effort and results in inspiring others. This is clarified by Jacob who gives his rationale of why the student prefects are highly regarded. The key point for him is that they are qualified by their acts of good deeds not their talents:

***Jacob:** People with the black jackets on, like the church jackets on. They're qualified to be like role models for kids and stuff. Yeah because you never see them do anything bad.*

Without question, Mrs Fiafia and her roles as the Pacific Island Liaison officer and in the Mentoring Programme, was held in highest esteem by all the students at all year levels, especially the senior school students. The Y13 students gave examples of her relationship with them which they describe as their 'mum at school':

***David:** I reckon the counsellors, the Pacific ones like Ms Fiafia. She's like the biggest one. She's always onto us. She's really strict on us. Always! She's like whoever's applied for university, oh no, you're all applying!  
But it's really good because like most the time she's like, whoever is going, oh no, you are all going, I know you're all going and we're like, oh what! She will chase you up for all these forms and she'll like follow up on you like how you're going in school and stuff. And she'll come growl you like, why did you fail that, like a mum at school, why aren't you achieving?  
**Miriam:** No hot food for you tonight,  
**Rachel:** just fruit! [laughter]  
**David:** Yeah hard out!*

Again from another of our shared lunch conversations I understood why Rachel's 'just fruit' remark was hilarious to the students. The students shared that they knew they had 'done good' in class because they could smell the aroma of Mrs Fiafia's cooking wafting up from the Fale Pasfika which was her treat for when there was 100 per cent attendance to both classes and other school obligations such as sports meetings. The aroma of hot food meant that they had succeeded as a group. The absence of 'hot food' meant that someone had let the team family down.

As with School 1 the leaders and role models that the students looked up to were the ones that exercised what they understood to be alofa and fa'aloalo, always leaving the other person better off from having engaged with you and the golden rule of respect. They were inspired by such role models not because of their

breath of talent or credentials but because of their willingness to get involved in causes that better the lives of others as pointed out by Y13 student leader:

**So how does one get to become a prefect? Make it to Y13, what?**

*... get involved in things in the school and like yeah, get involved. Show like leadership, like I was a student leader in a World Vision group and like different things. And they look for all rounder abilities so it's like getting involved in like all the different things, not just sports. Yeah, not like all sports. But like all community groups and I think involvement like with outside of school too.*

School leadership, especially promoting student leadership is important to School 2 and is promoted as one of their school goals. However, not all teachers have bought into this notion of student leaders:

*One of my teachers at the beginning of the year, because prefects do heaps of like leadership, like training days and stuff, and one of the times I was away for like a week on that and then I was like to him, oh what did we do last week? Oh no, we were having a test coming up and I was like, what sort of stuff is in the test? And he was like, you were away last week. Maybe you should give up the badges! [Group: woah] And he's like, I'm not gonna help you. You should just give up the badges!*

The students came to realise that there are different ways of thinking of leadership and its purpose. For this teacher, it is about privilege and prestige, but for the students and for me it is about responsibility. This point will be discussed further in the Discussion section of this thesis. As for the students involved in other activities which take up much of their time outside of school, notably their involvement with church and part-time work responsibilities, this has been discussed more fully under Question 7.

## Other

I found it disturbing how easily some students in both schools cited race and class whenever they were referring to what they deemed to be disagreeable situations such as ineffective teachers, Māori students and peoples and even fellow Pasifika peoples who did not live on their side of town.

## School 1: Q8

Most students view the dominant Palagi culture as the norm and the default for the school against which everything else is measured. They were quick to point out that their immigrant teachers should not try to push their culture onto their collective school culture but did not view that their behaviours were any different and that they should learn to speak English as their accents were seen as a barrier to learning.

Can you give me an example of this as I don't quite understand what you mean?

*Sina: Like my maths teacher, from an Indian perspective that when an elderly person talks, PIs too, you listen to hear if what they say is right. She believes all students should behave like they're in the army, sit up straight, and don't talk. She's just real uptight and strict!*

*Nita: Some teachers won't let students talk about their personal problems and see it as stupid, and we get the feeling that they're racist or something. But they're not, but the way they show it is messed up.*

*Sina: And some teachers believe that some Māoris will probably slap them and think that all of them are like that because that's how they've been brought up to think, that Māoris are like this and PIs are like this, and then they bring it into school and treat all the students that are that race the same, when not everyone is.*

One student in particular was oblivious how offensive her deficit theorising and negative stereotypical comments regarding Māori were. I found her perception of Māori students in the school fell into two categories, those in the school's bilingual unit and those in mainstream. She distinguished the Māori students in the school's Māori bilingual unit by the unit's name and those in mainstream school as 'Māoris', showing that there was a clear division and distinction between the two. Those Māori in the bilingual unit she considered to be better than their peers in mainstream school, however, not better than any other ethnic group, just Māori.

Do you think your knowledge of Māori people would be the same as the rest of your class members? Like if I was to ask your class what they knew about Māori peoples and culture, what would they say?

*They will say they know some Māoris cause when they see some people in bare feet, with the wrong uniform, they say, that's a Māori, saying like they're Hori*

When I later asked her if she knew any Māori students or peoples personally, she answered no, that within the school both Māori and Pasifika students for the most part rarely associated with each other and kept to their own ethnic groups.

I chose not to probe this point further because I could feel her shutting down and withdrawing from me and as a researcher, I needed to keep her safety uppermost in mind and to be understanding of her.

It is interesting that, despite the apparently racist comments of the younger students, by the time students had reached years 12 and 13, they have matured and are able to mingle with peers regardless of ethnicity:

***Y12 Sina:** I think it's good because our school's dominated by PI and Māori students, so being PI in this environment is good because you blend in well. Whereas if I went to a white school, not a white school, but a school that was richer and had a lot of fair skinned people, you'd feel really out of place and not perform as well in class. So just having people that can relate to you culturally I guess is a good thing. That's the positive; the negative is just getting mocked [laughter]. But I don't get mocked!*

***Y12 Sione:** Being Pacific Island students in the top class, you feel out of it for a bit and then you just focus on the school work because there's nothing else to do and then that just helps you and motivates you to improve on school work*

## School 2: Q8

The few students in School 2 were not as vocal in their views of racism as those in School 1 but racism was nonetheless present:

*Y9 Rangimarie: not being racist or anything (it is interesting that she has a Māori name being half Māori herself)*

I did not detect it in the Y10s when a female Māori student mistakenly walked in our interview but listening back on the tape I noted that the students were tentative and cautious to her at first:

*Y10 group: She's Māori, Māori yeah, she is [in a whispering tone]  
She's Māori! [in a threatening tone when a female Māori student mistakenly walked on into the interview]*

With Lizzie I misheard her referring to her own self as 'naughty' not 'Māori'. Just this one slip-up on my part nearly ruined the repoire of our interview and I had to work hard to win back her trust. Luckily I had the help of Annabel and Cynthia who recognised that the group laughter was not aimed at Lizzie but at my slip of the tongue. But upon reflection I did see that Lizzie who often wanted to be the clown of the group did not appreciate the laughs from being referred to as Māori. I also found it ironic that this misunderstanding came about because of her accent, the very thing that she had been teasing her Brazilian teacher of.

In summary, out of the student interviews, informal conversations and lunch time discussions from both schools these are the main themes that arose:

- High educational hopes and aspirations arising from migrant dream;
- Strong sense of family responsibility, support and service to them;
- Contradictory nature of the church in relation to achieving educational aspirations of the migrant dream;
- Effective schools structures and programmes;
- Effective teachers, role models and leaders; and
- Inter- and intra-discrimination perpetuating classism and division.

I will take these through into the following Discussion section.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

This section begins with a discussion of main themes that arose from the student interviews as noted in on the previous page. The migrant dream is used as the background of all the findings discussed in this section as well as the matalafi matrix probes that scrutinises the answers of each question.

### **4.1 High educational aspirations arising from the migrant dream**

Question 5 of the student interviews is closely aligned to the ‘migrant dream’ discourse where the students from both schools wanted first and foremost to please their families and their high educational aspirations for them to go on to become ‘doctors’ or ‘lawyers’. The children of both schools seem to have found a new profession that meets with favourable light their families’ educational expectations, that of the area of commerce. Although this profession seems to be in a path that is directed away the service professions of which lawyers and doctors are perceived to entail, the children have managed to convince their parents that these professions are necessary for the financial security of their futures. The other acceptable profession is teaching and the police for law enforcement – again because of the service element tied to them. However the teaching profession, with the exception of a couple of girls, one from each school, did not meet the fancy of most students. Again the reason for both girls wanting to become teachers had social justice and service elements associated with it, notably so that their negative schooling experiences would not be repeated for their future generations.

I found the Business sector which is outside the ‘lawyer-doctor’ domains but has become increasingly popular and acceptable as a career an interesting choice. I did not notice this at first but discovered it once I had heard all the interviews from both schools that this became apparent. Although the Business sector is not perceived as a service profession per se, the motives for the students choosing this profession such as helping out their families financial positions justified entry into it.

With the uncertain economic climate as a backdrop to these interviews, gaining or maintaining financial security was a primary motivator for the students and was

the impetus for many of them pursuing high dollar paying vocations as found in the business, commerce sector. Compared to my generation, leaving school without the highest qualification was not a priority.

In terms of those industries that seemed to yield no service back to their peoples, such as the Arts and Entertainment Industry, Tourism or Marketing, just a few students wanted to pursue these areas because they found they had a flair for these subjects. But knowing that such pursuits were against their families' hopes for them, these students have succumbed by taking these subjects as backups to pursuing the lawyer-doctor routes.

All students expressed how their educational goals were directly tied to their family's expectations of them. Students shared how when older siblings had failed to meet their parents' or families' high expectations of them, they felt weighed down with the added burden that the migrant dream was now all up to them to fulfil, and that somehow their family honour was up to them to redeem and restore. For me, the fact that I was asthmatic meant that the expectation to succeed at school where my older siblings had not. When my younger brother was taken out of school, this unspoken expectation was further made to feel obligatory with my being the only one with a university entrance certification. Compounded was the fact that I had no real interest in attending university or pursuing the fields of either law or medicine.

Despite this pressure I knew, as do the students in both schools, that with family support, their faith in Atua, the migrant dream can and will be achieved.

#### **4.2 Strong sense of family loyalty and service ethic**

At both schools, students gave clear reasons as to why they had chosen the career paths that they had. Fulfilling family expectations and aspirations were the main reasons as to why they wanted to do well at school, to make their families 'happy' that they had achieved. Another strong motivation was the means of giving back, of returning service for their gratitude to their families. All students felt their achievement in school was a direct result of strong family support.

Applying the two main metaphors of this thesis, the coconut and the matalafi plant, I wish to illustrate how each portrays different aspects of the migrant

dream. First, there is the coconut which represents the hopes and aspirations of the migrant dreamers. In coming to a new land the coconut which was previously adrift at sea being carried by the ocean tides, wonders if the land of Aotearoa to where it embeds its roots will be welcoming or hostile. Second, the matalafi plant as an evaluator of how well the hopes and fears of the coconut plant have been addressed, how well it has conducted itself, whether it has offered up its truest value and presence be known or whether the realities of the new world have hardened it's shell and soured the living milk contained eventually shrivelling up and leaving an empty dried up vessel.

### **4.3 Contradictory nature of the church**

The world of church plays an enormous part in the lives of the Pasifika students in both schools, even in those who have chosen individually or within their families as a unit, to no longer attend.

However, their strong religious affiliations brought to light a contradiction in terms over the role of the home island-speaking denominational churches for these students compared to their parents' understandings. What was found to being the case for both them and for me was a mismatch that between the gospel teaching and learning associated with church as opposed to the role of churches providing their children first hand exposure to their home island culture and language. For this reason, church was deemed the only allowable social outlet for many students by their families. The only other acceptable out of school responsibility was their involvement in *Polyfest* but church took precedence over their involvement even though some senior students could gain extra school NCEA credits.

Church attendance was the enforced will of their parents who have high educational aspirations for these girls and thought it best that they have no outside work commitments so that they could concentrate on their school work and go onto university. Parents also see church as the only acceptable social outlet for the girls but if church is boring in that the youth programmes offered are poorly organised, the girls will mistake wholesome activities as boring and if not careful, will seek other avenues to get their social and emotional needs met.

In relation to my own experiences with church attendance when I was at their age, some students view this social aspect of church, too restrictive, too time-consuming and not fulfilling my spiritual needs. In two cases, the students referred to their church commitments as being 'not good' for them or their families, where they saw the church creating further financial burdens.

#### **4.4 Effective teachers and learners, effective school structures**

The next major theme is that of effective teachers and leaders in the school, or as the students in School 2 responded, effective programmes in the school. What was made clear was that School 2 in particular understood what life was like at home for these students and created 'spaces' within the school, during school time, to enable these students to fulfil their educational responsibilities. But even more so, the students in School 2 were aware that their school had purposely set these systems and structures in place on their behalf and this created in them a stronger sense of school spirit.

The findings by Fergusson et al., (2008) of the perception that New Zealand schools were far more advanced than those in the home islands was believed to being the case by the students in both schools in terms of resources, structures and in the range of specialised expertise of their teachers. Likewise, they understood that certain schools in the city were more successful than others and in School 2, some students associated the school demographics of the student population to be a main factor. In other words these students considered their school to be the best in the local area and likewise, the schools in their area to being superior to those on the other side of the city to where School 1 is located. At the same time students in School 1 acknowledged that their school was not perfect but that it was far superior to the schools back in the islands. If this assumption was held by the students in both schools then likewise, it was held by their families.

However, better resourced classrooms does not necessarily make for better schools if those resources supplant rather than support the learning and teaching taking place in the classroom. This point was hammered home to me by Mrs Fiafia at School 2 who saw a fundamental flaw in my questioning of effective teachers. She pointed out that I had overlooked or forgotten the authentic

meaning of aoga (schooling and education), a'o, ako in Māori (reciprocal learning and teaching).

Just as there is only one word for teaching and learning, the same is the case with only one word for schooling and education. These institutes are one in the same. Mrs Fiafia reminded me that with my questioning I was looking in the wrong place because I had assumed that the effective teaching only came from the adults, the classroom teachers, but with aoga and a'o, the students are teachers also. In terms of the matalafi matrix, you get what you ask for and in this case I was looking in the wrong place.

Rather than looking externally for other such institutions, namely the church and local community centres, the way other schools run their Homework Centres in the hopes of creating community support, School 2's centre works well because it has been set up in school, for the school, and by the school to support the learning needs of each individual student. They did not look externally to change but rather made the changes from within first. The senior students told me that the mentors who were the university students were only useful for administrative purposes such as taking away some of the mystery which comes with transitioning into university. The real strength of the centres lay in the fact that their own teachers, the deans, and Mrs Fiafia and the Pasifika liaison staff all *knew* these students well.

In my day it was so much easier to separate and compartmentalise the worlds of school, church, home and play at bay and I know that I managed fairly successfully. But in so doing, it has resulted in the slowing up of my own educational progress which is partly due to the socio-economic climate of my youth compared to the students at the time of the interviews for this study. We live in two different worlds even though we share many commonalities. In my day, if one had School Certificate, it meant one could land an office job without any problems. NCEA level 1 guarantees no such promise but merely a chance at passing NCEA levels 2 and 3.

#### **4.5 Inspirational leaders and role models**

Compared to School 1, Leadership in School 2 is a prominent feature of the overall school culture and school spirit for both the student leaders and the adult

leaders. Leadership, in the form of service and responsibility is promoted in order to equip students so that they can contribute positively to society. The other adult leaders and role models are the Pasifika liaison officer, notably Mrs Fiafia also in charge of running the Mentoring programme, and the Homework Centre co-ordinator who is a teacher of English.

It is interesting to note that those teachers who the students deemed as effective were the ones that had inspired them and this was gauged by the impressions these individuals left in their lives. For me it was Mr Johnson, who of himself was not the most charismatic or sociable teacher I had, neither was he the most authoritarian or fearsome. My wagging buddies and I respected him because we believed him to be genuine in his interest and care of us and this was made manifest by his unrelenting determination to share his passion of maths with us and that we would achieve. Despite our best efforts to run and hide, he never gave up on seeking us and returning us to the classroom. It was this one attribute of consistency that eventually won us over.

This finding was reaffirmed by the students' choice of role models and leaders in School 2 where Mrs Fiafia and the school's student leaders were deemed as inspirational leaders. In School 1 Mr S and Mrs M, two option teachers, were singled out as role models because of how they inspired the students with real life examples and who made themselves available by being 'more' than just the classroom teacher. I found Y9 Fijian-born Alana gave the clearest definition of what the Y13 boys meaning of 'more' meant in her description of Mrs M. Mrs M is someone who is 'there' in the present when she comes into class. Being 'there' meant that the students were made to feel with every lesson that Mrs M had come especially for them. Mrs M often shared inspirational, philosophical advice with the students which readily resonated with Alana, giving her hope and increased self confidence to cope with an unknown future:

What these individuals have in common, in common with Mr Johnson, is their passion for bringing out the fullest potential of the students. The seniors spoke of Mrs Fiafia as someone who believes their going on to do tertiary education as givens, as matters of *when* they go, not *if* they will. Mrs Fiafia's approach is a

balancing act between soft and hard caring where the students may not necessarily always understand her but there is no doubting that none misunderstand her.

Common to all year levels was that none of the students were really sure who their student school leaders were and if they did know, they were not so sure of how or why they were chosen or what their responsibilities were. ... When they did go on to describe the characteristics attributed with effective leaders, they outlined the traditional leadership responsibilities of a matai (chief) where 'service' and accountability are paramount. The matai must 'walk the talk' and therefore is a role model of active service. In School 1 the fact that their head boy is Samoan means little to the students because they know nothing of his deeds, of his service to them.

#### **4.6 Challenging traditional family and cultural norms**

My own experience of challenging the authority of a male teacher at school resulted in what I believed to be the end of my brother's schooling. After listening to the experiences of both junior and senior students, namely Sina in School 1 and Lisa in School 2, as they subversively tried recalling their rights for fairer treatment by bullying teachers, I was fast becoming agitated and losing hope that nothing had changed. As the interviews proceeded, their experiences of being marginalised, having no real rights on their own accord and therefore, no means of justice other than taking matters into their own hands began to sound all too familiar. However, when at my very last interview Y13 David from School 2 shared his experience of challenging school authority being his form class teacher at the parent teacher interview, unlike other parents, his mother supported him.

Perhaps David being in Y13, his final year of schooling, perhaps that he is male, perhaps that his mother is NZ-born, all play in why this outcome was his and not mine. But I also feel that Pasifika families are now realising that schools are to be supporters of the home not disrupters to it and moreover, are to be accountable to them and not the other way round.

## 4.7 Intra- and inter-discrimination, perpetuating division not diversity

*When the watering hole gets smaller the animals get meaner (African proverb)*

I began *our* narrative with a story describing how the outcome of a government policy in 1974 that associated differences with deficiencies could have resulted in my feeling that being Samoan I was somewhat deficient or flawed. Had it not been for the love, support and educational hopes of my family, with their ‘migrant dreams’ for me, combined with the foresight of a wise and caring school teacher, I no doubt would have believed such to be true. From what the students in both schools said, it was education that brought their families to Aotearoa New Zealand and this also was my own experience and that of my parents when my grandfather, my mother’s parents, first came here 60 years ago.

What my grandparents and parents knew personally of the peoples occupying New Zealand was very little, especially that of Māori. Moreover, what they thought they knew also differed to what the reality was. In School 2 the Y10 and Y12 students seemed to contradict themselves where on the one hand they described their school as being multicultural and inclusive yet none associated with Māori students. The Y12 girls admitted that during their time in junior school they tended to keep to themselves, as within their own ethnic groups, but as their confidence grew, they began to associate with different Pasifika peoples. However, both Year groups, being 12 students, admitted to not associating much with either Māori or Pākehā peoples but they considered themselves friendly to them. In School 1, the percentage of Palagi students is low but still the students made no mention of going out of their way to befriend their Māori peers. They too admitted to keeping to themselves and associated with other Pasifika peoples.

In terms of the students’ apparent racism in School 1 it was not until later on the final day being stuck in Auckland traffic on my drive back to Hamilton where I got the opportunity to reflect on my whole experience at School 1, but particularly that last experience at lunch. I was able to put it in context against the experience with showing the brochures the day before, and against the interviews from the past two days. It was then that I began to understand why it I had felt so disturbed and uneasy by their reactions over the graphs. If anything it was unnatural and

almost desperate. Their reaction to this last graph was far too quick and aggressive, too contrived and given with too much nervous energy. The uneasy feeling reminded me of sporting pep talks, where it had that same puffed-up arrogance of thinking of the other as your opponent, your competitor, thinking of them (Māori in this case) as the objective other and thereby, your enemy.

In School 1 only two students claimed any association with Māori socially; whereas the others admitted to only having Pacific Island friends who were of different island ethnicities to themselves. They perceived Māori students as having a tendency to associate amongst themselves, perpetuating the stereotype as Māori being inhospitable and not worth their efforts to befriend. None had Palagi friends and when referring to Palagi, perceived them in terms of authority figures within school leadership.

Often upon reflection, within the luxurious position of hindsight, I lament over how easy it is to forget, or to remember to remember, which I have come to believe is the biggest barrier to change. Remembering such motives of why my grandparents and father first decided on coming to Aotearoa New Zealand. Another name for this remembering to remember is being agentic, for it is being responsive to the things that you do have control over rather than shifting responsibility onto others (Bishop, et al., 2003). Understanding that with such agency we possess the keys to being proactive participants in the change process that create and shape our lives, rather than being subject to them.

This same lack of knowledge of Māori was found to be the same with the students of both schools where only a small handful associated with Māori on a regular basis. As Tapu Misa as cited in McIntosh (2001) noted, Pacific Islanders and Māori somehow knew they were related but were not sure as to what to do with this relationship. What my grandparents knew of Māori came from external sources such as television, radio, newspapers and magazines. For the majority of the students in both schools, what they knew of Māori again came from external sources, sources controlled by a particular cultural group, the Palagi.

The finding that Pākehā culture being seen as the dominant one by Pasifika peoples and thereby the norm, the default so to speak, against which all others are measured against is not a new discovery. However, the assumptions surrounding

this finding need to be revisited because of the associated responsibilities with *remembering* and consequences of *forgetting* such knowledge.

The biggest assumption that Pasifika peoples hold regarding Pākehā and Māori is that of the two, Pākehā are the dominant culture, are therefore the hosts of this land. This assumption is perpetuated by the lack of knowing the history of New Zealand and the partnership clause of the Treaty of Waitangi by all peoples. Slowly, that mindset is changing as more of the children of the migrant dreamers are learning this history in schools and in universities but their parents still are unaware of 160 years of colonial oppression for Māori. As McIntosh (2001) states:

Where, for many migrants, the situation of Māori was a consequence of Māori failings, it is seen by many of their children as a consequence of colonialism. While marginalisation was an unthinkable fate for many migrants, their own children are often able to see parallels between their situation and that of Māori. Migrants too may be revising their views. Those who earlier criticised the Māori for the loss of their language and cultural knowledge, now see the same losses occurring among their children and grandchildren. This new awareness may lead to a rethinking and reconstruction of the relationship between them (p. 152).

Again from McIntosh (2001), the school text books used in the home islands were from the 1960s and provided a distorted picture of life in New Zealand, using ambiguous language that perpetuated the hegemonic practices of dominant culture of the time.

Students in both schools clearly compared all their successes and failures against the Palagi norm. Likewise, in doing so with academia they also measure all other aspects of the lives against Pākehā norms. Students who were in the accelerant classes in School 1 prided themselves in being able to compete against their Palagi peers. In School 2, there were no streamlined classes but the students were aware of how they performed against their Pākehā peers.

In terms of my own schooling experience, I did not hold as high educational aspirations as the students I interviewed. Compared to this generation mine existed in a time of financial security where I knew I could get a job because I had passed my School Certificate qualification. In my schooling days I was the opposite and associated with both Māori and Pākehā alike. I did have two Samoan girlfriends both of who were NZ-born but other than my close circle of friends, the only other Samoans I associated with were at church. The main

difference for me was that in my day, being a Pacific Islander meant I was the bottom of the food chain. For the students of today, this no longer applies.

Although the explanation, ‘you do not know what you do not know’ seems derisory and offers little comfort for the past mistreatment of Māori and the seemingly inevitable fate of many migrant children today, it is a good start. The fact that some students in both schools appeared to be oblivious to their discriminating behaviours makes me question my own role as the insider-outsider researcher. Maybe I had behaved exactly like them when I was their age and my actions have only become obvious to me now from this retrospective privileged viewpoint. Showing how I used the Matalafi matrix in my findings, I ask you the reader to decide if I had exercised fa’aloalo (respect), acted with accountability but more importantly with alofa so that what has been recorded also legitimates what was meant with what was said.

In terms of Pasifika peoples’ identity, the migrant dream is about both being and becoming (Nakid, 2003). In both schools attempting to becoming and being culturally responsive, this means accepting responsibility of all the students in their school. However, this responsibility is interpreted differently depending upon the perception from where one is posited. Perhaps the best marker of an equitable society is the way in which it treats the least in its midst, children and marginalised peoples. In respect to New Zealand society it is the indigenous peoples of the land, the tangata whenua, Māori peoples.

#### **4.8 Comparison between my experiences and those of the students**

Overall it was very clear to me that these students were happier and far more confident than I was at school, thereby enabling them to take up risks and challenges in their learning. There were however, a number of similarities between their experiences and mine also.

##### ***4.8.1 Racism, national and local***

The outright racism from central government that I witnessed has disappeared. No longer can Pasifika peoples be deported for no reason and this in itself has made families feel safer. Overall the students seemed to be more confident than I ever was. The apparent racist comments by younger students were no repeated by

older students who all expressed the view that they blended in with their peers like everyone else.

#### *4.8.2 Negative stereotyping*

In School 1 the students were aware of the perceived negative public image their area held, as a place of violence and a place of crime in the same way that the area that I was brought up was viewed. At the same time, however, students in both schools were proud of whom they were and in this way things have changed, for in my day, I knew that being a Coconut did not always feel safe.

#### *4.8.3 Family support*

Family support was what pulled me through by reinterpreting negative labels into positive attributes and by never giving up on me. However, along with this support come the responsibilities of family duty which can detract from the time spent on school work. This still continues today with most students.

Like mine there were many families who had not reached the stage where they could support their children's education directly. However, all these families wanted their children to achieve and were supporting them in other ways. Students in School 2 particularly, spoke of support coming from within the school and reaching out to supporting the home – namely through the work of Homework Centres, Pacific Liaison officers and the school deans with providing academic counselling.

#### *4.8.4 Submitting to peer pressure*

For me peer pressure meant living down to low expectations, for these students, however, the norm seemed to be a determination to reach the highest level of achievement academically.

#### *4.8.5 Support from teachers*

The teacher who stands out for me is Mr Johnson because he understood me, my background and my family's hopes and aspirations for me and went out of his way to ensure that I was successful at school however hard I fought against him. For these students also, there are numbers of teachers who care for them in the same way. They are fully aware of this.

#### *4.8.6 Outside school pressures*

For me church activities took up a great deal of my time and I was often frustrated by this. Many of these students were ambivalent about church where it was almost a love-hate relationship. There was a difference of opinion over which provided the greater tie to the home-islands: church or Polyfest. In the end, church always won out.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What I have tried to do in this thesis is to compare two generation's schooling experiences, understand them and work out what might be done to continue improving the lot of Pasifika students in Aotearoa New Zealand schools from here on in. The purpose of telling our narratives is that of tautua, of 'giving back' and in this respect this thesis becomes our mealofa (gift) to our people.

In a study of the views of Pacific Island students and their families and communities Fletcher et al., (2008, 2009) concluded that a number of practices are conducive to the learning of those students:

1. Culturally responsive and culturally inclusive, such as students expressed the desire for resources that reflected their own culture, eg. Authentic Pacific perspectives and celebrating the life of Pacific Island communities;
2. Pacific Island students writing their own cultural experiences within their lives (such as using Prior Knowledge);
3. Regular feedback and feed-forward or quality feedback and feed-forward which was specific and transparent (in that students saw the purpose in needing to know about what and why they were learning and teaching certain concepts and ideas);
4. Teacher awareness of bullying (racism) and the need for it to be removed from both in and out of the classroom;
5. Good class management; and
6. The importance of employing a Pasifika Liaison person to bridge the language barriers, someone who could speak the home islands language.

Whilst I agree that these factors in all probability will support better learning by Pasifika students, there is still missing the sense of community, the sharing cultural values and shared histories such as School 2 were trying to recreate in their Homework Centre.

In the literature review I mentioned Tui Atua's wise counsel. How can this be adhered to if the adults, that is the matua tauhi in the form of parents, elders and I would add, educationalist leaders and teachers, do not fulfil their responsibilities of nurturing their children's souls with the rich treasures of their past? Tuagalu (2008) discussed how the church in New Zealand has replaced the village but this

does not necessarily work in the same context as back in the home village because of the transient nature of church congregations, including ministers and church locations. Therefore, it is my opinion that all schools need to step up in terms of pastoral care and in providing pseudo structures that resemble village communities to provide a context in which students can learn and feel safe.

The difficulty with going externally first is that the transparent village systems of governance in the Islands do not necessarily work in the New Zealand context because the houses here have to have solid walls which people cannot see through and therefore it is easier to keep matters hidden or secret.

One role of teachers and educational leaders then in relation to the underachievement of Pasifika students in mainstream schools is to rise with the call of being ‘matua tausi’. In FaaSamoa culture, the matua are held in high esteem and respected, adhered to and listened to by all who are their junior regardless of gender or marital status. The word ‘tausi’ means to guide, comfort, at times to persuade, encourage and support. The best way to tausi then begins with anti-deficit theorising and agentic thinking.

For me the single most important lesson that came out of my own educational experiences is how important it is to have caring, responsive teachers who have the highest expectations of both the behaviour and the learning of their students. Not just one or the other but both. Had it not been for Mr Johnson, a responsive adult in the school, someone with the authority to speak on my behalf, I do not believe the educational aspirations of my family for me could have ever been fully realised. For these students too, it is clear that they were aware of whom their effective teachers were and that these effective teachers understood them and in this way were this generation’s Mr Johnson.

## **5.1 Diversity is the reality of society. Unity needs to be its goal**

Although I have stated all along that this thesis is not an evaluation of Te Kotahitanga within the two schools, in the end, I find myself returning to the meaning of its name, ‘unity of purpose’, ‘bringing all peoples together as one’. Being ‘one’ in this instance does not mean identical, or mono-cultural, but rather, being of one mind, one purpose and of one heart.

I began with a story from my father who like my younger brother, they are not men of many words so when they do speak, we listen. Before concluding I wish to share one more story of my father's advice to me regarding education, notably the teaching profession. In writing this thesis, there was many a time when I wanted to 'run away'. I remember one such night moaning on the phone to him, trying to rationalise my giving up and returning home. "Annie", he said, "Teaching, she is heart work."

Getting frustrated with his insistence on speaking English but more with his seeming to not listening to my woes, I corrected him rather insolently, "D-D, leai, o le upu, faigatā. It is Hard, with a D not T, not heart! D, like D for Daddy!"

It was then when that deafening silence came over our phone conversation and I knew that I had over stepped the line.

Softly, this time, I asked, "Tamā, are you there?"

Again in English so as not to be misunderstood, "Teaching is heart work."

## 5.2 A new dawn of the migrant dream

Let me conclude where I began with the second of Mila's poems.

**For Ida** (first Pacific woman judge)  
by Karlo Mila (2005, pp. 33-34)

Once I wrote

That we are the seeds of the migrant dream  
the daughters supposed to fill the promise  
hope heavy on our shoulders  
we stand on the broken back of physical labour  
knowing the new dawn has been raided

But

We are the seeds of a much greater dream  
that goes back across oceans of memory  
a vision still held in the hands  
of humble men buried in humble villages  
who chant clear our paths  
with every lost breath.

Ida, you have spoken of the sacrifice  
of language lost, and the cost,  
of success in the palangi world  
and you have wrapped your son safely  
in fa'asamoa  
he rests in a nest of language  
learning to tame words

that flew like wild gulls  
far beyond our understanding.

'This is the sacrifice of my generation'  
you said  
'but it will not be his,  
this is where the sacrifice stops.'

The gulls circle  
and nest  
and our sense of selves  
rests.

You touch a vision  
clasped to the breast  
of humble women buried in humble villages  
who still sing  
across oceans of memory  
in words that our children will be able to hear.

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## APPENDIX

Following shows a sample of the thematic analysis process used for this thesis. This spreadsheet I did for each year level at School 2 and for School 1, managed to fit them all on the same page. Each spreadsheet shows how I followed the conversation flow where I plotted with numbers when the change of conversation occurred. This was especially helpful with the tracking of the ‘talk’ in focus group interviews where at times the students talked over each other.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	Name	Ethnicity /Gender	Census status	Family background	Schooling experience	Out of school responsibilities/interests	School Image	Internal Perception	Te Kotahitanga / Effective Teachers	Public portrayal of Pacific Islanders
1	Francine	Samoan / female	NZ-born	Mum and Dad, adopted siblings, two older sisters and one older brother and three younger siblings. Father is an accountant in the city, mum PT at Countdown. Parents schooled in Samoa					(4) The other thing like when you call him [ineffective teacher] up to help you, like he comes up and tells you the answer instead of helping you, and then he ruins it for you (4e) Any effective ones for you? Not really, sometimes, but most of the time if we're even 1 min late, he tells us, get out of his class, me and this other girl, and we're always late to every class cause we go running around. And when he's like angry-angry, he doesn't teach us. He tells us to 'get lost' but when he's in a good mood, he teaches us good. (7e) OMG Maths! He's not helpful. And for Accounting, I just, we just, like the group, we just started settling down so we're kind of like getting it. And like for fabrics, the teacher's too busy with like, there's a whole lot of us, so you have to just learn it on your own and do your own thing.	
2	Jude	Samoan / male	NZ-born	Nana, two aunts and mum. Oldest, younger brother and sister. Family attends Samoan Congregational church.		no out of school responsibilities because he is concentrating on NCEA			(4b) And you Jude, is it the same for you? Yeah but I don't have any problems with her. Do you just fly under the radar, so to speak? Yeah (4d) [Effective teacher] He's like my maths teacher, Ms L, Lizzie, and she's like Islander too! (4g) <i>Any effective teachers for you?</i> Yeah my Maths teacher. She like explains everything in detail. Cynthia: She's Tongan!	
3	Lizzie	Samoan / female	NZ-born	(2) Yeah I live with my Nana and Aunt and I have two brothers and one sister and they're younger. <i>Is that church?</i> Christian. <i>Local one here?</i> Yeah, in Mangere [laughter] <i>Is it Samoan speaking church?</i> It's like mixed like Samoan and English.	Often kicked out of her classes especially Science because she mocks the teacher's accent. Only class she doesn't get kicked out of and where she behaves is for her English teacher.			(3) Funny! (8) How does your family know how you're getting on in school? They think that I'm naughty cause I got so many letters sent home and I got in trouble on Monday, this week [Jude: yesterday]. That must really [Cynthia: suck!] especially when you know you're not. Like I try and tell them [her aunts] but I can't cause I get in more trouble, because they're the teachers.	(4) The other thing he does is he puts the answers on the paper and when we ask how to do it, he says, look at the answer and then try to work it out. (4b) And she sent me out for one week, for nothing! and I asked for all the books to copy off and then she wouldn't give it, like do it yourself! (4g) <i>Tell us why your English teacher is effective for you?</i> Because I understand him. He never picks on me like all my other classes and I'm quiet in there too. Like everyone talks, and it's just me. I'm quiet for him. (7c) Mj [Accounting] teacher's a bit, she's cool, but her mum's got Cancer and whenever she gets angry, she talks about her mum and like how [she's] leaving her mum at home to come here. <i>Sugal! Where's your Christian Love?</i> [laughter] But like, she does it all the time! And she gets annoying. She does it all the time and then everyone starts talking like her, starts them moaning. But she's alright now.	(6) Is that like your parents [to John], do they keep the peace in the family? John: Not really. Cynthia: Hard, we've sorta like 3 girls and when 3 of us get together, it's like scratch each other's eyes out. Lizzie: That's Samoan!
4	Annabel	Tongan / female	NZ-born yet identified herself as being 100% Tongan	(2) Mum and Dad, two younger brothers, oldest. My mum doesn't go to work, like she stays home and my Dad, he works at Health Support, I forgot the place. They supply all the supplies for like hospitals and stuff <i>like for prescription medicines, hospital drugs?</i> Yeah. My mum, she was studying here in NZ and then she went back for her high school years back to Tonga and my Dad, he was just studying in Tonga and then he went to Uni in Aussie at Sydney. Family are Seventh Day English speaking church because it's a mixed [ethnic congregation] church. ... Girl: ah, so you're like Muslim? No! [laughter]				(3) I guess it's like for us Pacific Islanders, like PIs, like it's different from, like we don't say we're racist or anything, but we're different from, cause in here, there's like the Asians, the Whites, the Maoris and then like PIs and its like we're different from them. We're, let's just say all PIs are family, that's how we act around each other. We're all like families. But to like White people and stuff, we're just like, well, we all get along really well but we're just not as close to them as we are to PIs	(4b) She's [Science teacher] like ineffective at times. I don't know what's her problem. We don't know 'cause when we try and learn, we usually just talk, and stuff 'cause we don't know what she's on about. She writes up whatever on the board, and we're copying it down and so, what are supposed to do? And she's like, just read it! And we're like, age? And that's why we come to mentoring and we ask the other Science teachers to help us. And they tell us, the other Science teacher, tells us we're running too fast and we're already over there, and the 10s are still at the back. And we're not going as far and the other Science teacher said, don't worry, just try to learn. We do try to do that but sometimes, it doesn't work, and sometimes, we have to keep quiet and do what she says. ... Yeah, she [Lizzie] could only come to class to collect her work then she had to go to someone else's class. ... When we do Science, we teach her English. She's Brazilian and sometimes that affects our learning because we don't even know what she's on about. (4g) My dance teacher, I reckon she's the man! I've had her for 3 years now and she's like strict, but in a good way. And when she's onto something, she's onto it! And she wants us to understand too and the thing I like most about it is that she pushes us to get what she wants to do, and like what we can achieve, which is really cool!	Do you get Skj [TV]? <i>No! Can't afford Skj!</i> [laughter]. (7b) especially Pacific Island youth, keep kids out of the streets and stuff ... Not be criminals
5										

## Where the students spoke as a collective

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
6	Cynthia	Tongan / female	NZ-born also identified herself as being 100% Tongan	(2) Mum and Dad. Middle child of three daughters. Older sister at school, younger sister still at primary. What do your parents do? I fully don't know what they do. Mum works at Westside Clinic, it's like a nurse, doctor thing. Dad sort of like this manager thing at Mitsubishi. My Dad went to Tonga High then he came here and went to Rangiora, that's somewhere near Christchurch somewhere and my mum went to school in Tonga too and then went to AGGs. Family are Methodist, Tongan speaking church.				(3) And it's pretty cool, how there's all the different cultures of Islands here, like Tuvaluans, Samoans, Tongans, Niueans, Cook Islands, yeah it's pretty cool (5) Is it hard being her sister at this school? I'm sort of the rebel in the family. I've had so much principals. I always get compared to her like from her friends as well, like, why don't I play that much sport, why am I not into Netball and I'm like, because I'm not like her. ... Cause I remember everyone used to say, oh you're Rachel's sister and I was like, I have a name! OMG yeah! Jo-Lynn's sister yeah, that's what it's like for me and I'm like, ok cool, Jo-Lynn's your sister and I'm like, gep sweet!	(4d) [Effective teacher] I love my Science teacher. He's the man! He's Islander too! He's my biology teacher and he's like so cool. He explains everything thoroughly so that we can understand it. ... It's like the Islander teachers help everyone as well and it's cool as! Yeah and we like just relax to them and like he still hits us on the head, but it's funny. Like if we say something naughty, and we'll like ok [about the dip on the head] because we've used to it. And he'll reward us if we win the quiz, it's cool as! (8) <i>Do any of you, anybody else, tell your parents that your teachers are...?</i> I told my Dad that my maths teacher's a bit ... <i>And what did he say?</i> He just told me to take a spoonful of cement and harden up, and I was like, eh? [Group: yeah hard out!] Like it's your fault and your teacher is there to teach, so listen!	
7	John	Samoa / male	NZ-born	(2) Mum and Dad. Three boys, two older sisters, one older and younger brother, second to youngest. Mum works in a bank and Dad runs his own business. Dad was schooled in Samoa then he moved to Fiji to get his Uni degree. Mum went to school first in Samoa then she came to NZ but I can't remember the school. Family are Catholic, mixed Samoan and English.	Plays for 2nd XV and North Harbour. Father in regular contact with his Dean			(4a) Cause he has like Parkinsons (4g) <i>Any effective teachers?</i> All of them! All of my teachers are effective; it's just me, I have to listen!	(4d) I had him last year and he taught us in a fun way. We always had quizzes and we always looked forward to it, our class, and he says, the faster you finish your work, the faster we can do it so everyone was keen as on learning. Lizzie: and you get chocolate. (4g) <i>Any effective teachers?</i> All of them! All of my teachers are effective; it's just me, I have to listen! Like my Geo teacher, she's always organized and if we're away, she gives you the notes that you missed the day before.	<i>Is your Dad on TV?</i> Yeah Triangle TV. Yeah he does his advertising on there. Is that a Pacific Island TV channel? Yeah, but not all the time. Don't you get it? <i>No! Live in Cambridge, I don't even get the Macc Channel, just 1, 2, 3 and C4 [laughter]</i>
8	Group	4 Samoan / 2 Tongan	All NZ-born					(3) What's it like being a Pacific Island student in this school? Cool! Fun! (4a) <i>In your class how many Islanders, Niueans and Palagi?</i> I think the majority is Palagi. If there's like, in the back, it's like all the Islanders, quarter Islanders, yeah quarter. <i>So even with the Palagis he's still not great?</i> Yeah, but we're just worst for him.	(f) Nothing, yeah nothing! Do you know Miss [Lead Facilitator]? Yes. (1a) What do you think she's doing? Girl: Observing. John: I thought that they were watching us 'cause we're naughty. Girl: I thought they were watching our teachers, see how he teaches and stuff. How do your teachers act when they come in? Girl: They were trying to be all professional and stuff. Girl 2: but when they leave they're like, changes, they're different. Girl 3: they're like organized, but they were yeah a bit over organised when they were there and then like sometimes, when they're not there, like ok like they forgot what to do this day and stuff. But when they're there, they're like over organised. Girl 4: and they start writing stuff on the board and you're like, what? You weren't doing that before! Do any of you tell the observers that? No, because they wouldn't, they don't actually talk to us. They're just at the back and we're all trying to be good, to make the teachers look good. What do your teachers tell you why they're there? John: Nah, they never tell me. Lizzie: Nah, my teacher told me Miss [Lead Facilitator] was there to watch her. (4) Tell me about your effective/ineffective teachers? Maths [teacher is ineffective], he never writes any notes on the board. He'll just like do it on the board and he'll be like, yeah, he expects us to just like know. He thinks we know and just do it and sits on his chair and that's it and we'll be like, OK? Is he strict, ... good strict or bad strict? He's like bad. The thing is, he's not strict, not strict at all! He's just annoying! He picks on the Islanders. The black people, the black people! Jnr: Wooooo. Jo: Even if someone like whispers, he'll be like, can you shut your trap! Like that's what he actually says to us and you're like, um, ok? He always sends us out of the classroom as well, like we just got sent out of a test, just like for talking. (4) So on average, how many of your teachers would you say were effective/ineffective? I've only got two, I love all my other ones. Yeah, I think it's just our Maths teacher that's, everyone else is good. I guess it's the subject we struggling with. Yeah it's those teachers. (8) Do any of you, anybody else, tell your parents that your teachers are...? I told my Dad that my maths teacher's a bit ... And what did he say? He just told me to take a spoonful of cement and harden up, and I was like, eh? Group: yeah	

At the bottom of each category I reflected on what the students had said and from here gauged what the main themes were.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
8	Group	4 Samoan / 2 Tongan	All NZ-born						<p>(3) What's it like being a Pacific Island student in this school? Cool! Fun! (4a) <i>In your class how many Islanders, Maori and Palagi?</i> I think the majority is Palagi. If there's like, in the back, it's like all the Islanders, quarter Islanders, yeah quarter. <i>So even with the Palagis he's still not great?</i> Yeah, but we're just worst for him.</p> <p>(1) Nothing, yeah nothing! <i>Do you know Miss [Lead Facilitator]?</i> Yes. (1a) <i>What do you think she's doing?</i> Girl: Observing. John: I thought that they were watching us 'cause we're naughty. Girl: I thought they were watching our teachers, see how he teaches and stuff. How do your teachers act when they come in? Girl: They were trying to be all professional and stuff. Girl 2: but when they leave they're like, changes, they're different. Girl 3: they're like organised, but they were yeah a bit over organised when they were there and then like sometimes, when they're not there, like ok like they forgot what to do this day and stuff. But when they're there, they're like over organised. Girl 4: and they start writing stuff on the board and you're like, what? You weren't doing that before! Do any of you tell the observers that? No, because they wouldn't, they don't actually talk to us. They're just at the back and we're all trying to be good, to make the teachers look good. What do your teachers tell you why they're there? John: Nah, they never tell me. Lizzie: Nah, my teacher told me Miss [Lead Facilitator] was there to watch her. (4) <i>Tell me about your effective/ineffective teachers?</i> Maths [teacher is ineffective], he never writes any notes on the board. He'll just like do it on the board and he'll be like, yeah, he expects us to just like know. He thinks we know and just do it and sits on his chair and that's it and we'll be like, OK? Is he strict, ... good strict or bad strict? He's like bad. The thing is, he's not strict, not strict at all! He's just annoying! He picks on the Islanders. The black people, the black people! Jnr: Woooo. Jo: Even if someone like whispers, he'll be like, can you shut your trap! Like that's what he actually says to us and you're like, um, ok? He always sends us out of the classroom as well, like we just got sent out of a test, just like for talking. (4f) So on average, how many of your teachers would you say were effective/ineffective? I've only got two, I love all my other ones. Yeah, I think it's just our Maths teacher that's, everyone else is good. I guess it's the subject we struggling with. Yeah it's those teachers. (8) Do any of you, anybody else, tell your parents that your teachers are ...? I told my Dad that my maths teacher's a bit ... And what did he say? He just told me to take a spoonful of cement and harden up, and I was like, eh? Group: yeah hard out!</p>
9	<b>My Thoughts and Feelings</b>	4 girls / 2 boys	All NZ-born	Two of the six do not live with both parents and both are the oldest in their households. Jude especially, is the only male in his household and therefore has his mother's, nana's and aunt's hopes on his educational future - to provide for the home. The two Tongan girls are fairly well off as is John whose father owns a business which advertises on the local TV channel. These three's parents have professional vocations. Francine sounds like she comes from a blended family where the main income source is from her Dad, an accountant	All are apart of MFP2 programme and enjoy this immensely, seeing the teachers here as more effective than their usual core teachers eg. Science and Maths. Believe the school to be multi-cultural. Overall, these are happy students	None of the students have out of school responsibilities - although John has sports - all are concentrating on school work. Contrast this with the Y10 boy, Y13 boys from School 1, who all had jobs or were expected to have jobs. The girls did not seem to have this expectation put on them in School 1.	Diverse cultures. 'White', Palagi are seen as the norm to compare themselves against. Students don't realise how happy they really are.	(4) One girl refers to PIs as 'the black people, the black people' so that it's a us and them not a 'we' thinking	(1)(1a) First they answered that they knew nothing about Te Kotahanga but all of them as with the Y10s knew Miss [Lead Facilitator] by name and the basics of the teacher observation. (4) Girls call ineffective teacher racist. John thinks this is too extreme. (4a)(4b) both ineffective teachers have physical signs of weaknesses, Maths teacher, his Parkinsons and their Science teacher, her Brazilian accent that the girls mock. This is definite signs of the Culture of Abuse where Lizzie, who has the most Island accent of the group is the one mocking her Science teacher. Teacher retaliates by sending her out of the room, at times for the whole week. Only Jude is empathetic to his Science because his grandma speaks 'Fobby', plus his educational goal is to become a doctor or a nurse so he 'lgs under the radar' in class. As for the Maths teacher and the class's Rectorative, his actions of 'tic to tac power games can be seen with the children mocking his Parkinsons. (4d) When discussing their effective teachers they mentioned two Island teachers, Maths and Science, and compared these two to their ineffective teachers as being those who explain the work with patience and pitched at their level. The students also talked about their being Islander as well made it easier for them to relate to because they were understood. Students mentioned how their Sci teacher would clip them across the head if they said something naughty - this is seen as friendly gesture, friendly banter, just like an older brother would do at home. (4e) Francine talked about the mood swings of one teacher that depicted his effectiveness. (4f) Group decided that the majority of their teachers were effective, only in those subjects that they were struggling with were their ineffective teachers. (4g) Lizzie associates 'being quiet' with being good - could this be the stereotypical idea of the Pacific Island girl? (7c) Lizzie has no compassion for her Accounting teacher's sorrowing because of her sick mother.
10									

For each year group I categorised them into 11 areas.

	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
	Perception of Maori	School achievement	Goals and aspirations	Role Models and Leaders	Other		
1		(7e) <i>What subjects are you taking to help you get there?</i> I'm taking fabrics, accounting, maths, science and English.	(7e) I'm not sure what I wanna be when I grow up. I'm really into fashion, design and I'm into Accounting as well. Lizzie: NZ's next top model! [laughter]	(5) I don't know, I think Ms Fiafia [Pasiika a fale woman, Mentoring Programme Coordinator] is a good role. She's always there for us. I'm not sure eh, I reckon my Grandma 'cause she's like kind of like the one that keeps the family together.			
2		(7d) So how're you going in Maths and Science? Good, yeah.	(7d) I wanna go to uni and become a doctor-slash-scientist Group: Wooo. <i>A regular doctor?</i> No a surgeon. Group: even harder!	(5) My family, probably my Nana. Like she always wants the best for me, tries to get me to do stuff.	(8a) I had an interview with Ms Fiafia once. It was like a parent/teacher interview but with Ms Fiafia. [Lizzie: she says good stuff] Yeah. [John: and she don't look at your credits and stuff] ... And reports get sent home and that's about it.		
3		(7c) Accounting is alright but my teacher's a bit [pulls a funny face, laughter], she's cool ... <i>Are you achieving?</i> English, yeah everything's all right!	(7c) I wanna go to uni and become an Accountant. (8b) <i>Are you going to go to Y??</i> Yes!	(5) And we miss Mr P too [also from the Fale]. My Nana and my Aunt.	(8a) <i>[Pie: Communication with home]</i> And it's funny how when you do something bad, then they send a letter home telling them that you're bad but when you do something good, they never do. ... That's all they do, focus on the negative! (8b) I'm sure they think in a good way that they want me to do good.		
4		(7b) How you going with your subjects? I reckon I'm pretty alright. Have you chosen the right subjects? Oh for this year, I don't think, I guess so. I just made up my mind a month ago but for next year, I've chosen my subjects that I wanted to do and will be heading towards it. So I'll probably take history, geo, business studies next year and English and Maths.	(7b) Yeah I wanna go, when I get out of school, to Uni. I wanna go to uni but like I wanna do Social work and work with youth, especially PI youth, to keep kids like out of the streets and stuff. You know, not be criminals. But right now, I'm just aiming to get my NCEA level 1, and then go to uni and probably do like a Bachelor of Arts or something like that, but other than that, I like school. It's alright eh! ... I'd like to go into schools like something to do with youth. <i>Are you going to be a teacher?</i> No! Teachers is just not my thingee. I kind of see like what Ms Fiafia is doing, that's like kinda what I wanna do	(5) Yeah I see her as a role model as well [Ms Fiafia]. [Mr P] was like a mean, this Islander man. He's just like Ms Fiafia, like he organises the PIs and stuff but now he's gone.	(8b) [Pie: Family expectations] But one thing you can't get through is like sometimes, they expect so much of you but then when you try to tell them, oh it's just not going to happen, and they're like, yeah sssshhhhh.		
5							

