

# **Lost in Cultural Translation: A Reflective Journey**

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## Abstract

This research explores the ways in which high school boys who identify themselves as being from the Pacific Islands make sense of their educational world, and how they navigate through a small city high school in the North Island of New Zealand. Using semi-structured interviews, information is collected about the lives and experiences of the boys and some of their parents and teachers. When their narratives are analysed, three themes emerge: expectations; barriers; and navigation.

During the thesis process my focus shifts to include reflections from my own life history to provide additional insight. This leads to the discovering and adding of *voices*, all different but all mine: The Pacific Islander, The Academic, and The Obedient Puppet. Within and alongside these voices, the revealed presence of hegemony, cultural capital, and deficit theorising make themselves felt. Collectively, all elements contribute to understanding the boys' journey through high school.

The findings suggest that the parents of boys currently at school possess or are gaining insights into the workings of education. As a result, they are more able to assist their children than those of my generation. Alongside this new parental knowledge the boys are also making changes in how they navigate and utilise strategies through high school. The school itself is making fewer changes than either the parents or the boys, and the changes that are taking place are dependant on the presence or absence of initiatives by innovative teachers.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction – pull up a chair**

This research is about identifying strategies that allow Pacific peoples to be successful in the classroom and in their lives.

*We dream; we need strategies to make those dreams a reality; this research seeks to expose the strategies that are working for the boys I worked with.*

By using “we” in the sentence above I show that I have my origins in the Pacific, and that my dreams are not mine alone. Throughout this writing I use language that slips into the idiomatic because the flow is more natural for me and because translation into formal language would lose meaning. I use italics to indicate when I am using this deliberate ploy.

As the New Zealand population increases, the number of Pacific people in New Zealand also increases. With this increase comes economic growth and this centres on school education. Every person in this Nation has a role to play. Pacific peoples struggle to be successful in the classroom, yet every grandparent and parent wants their grandchild or child to be successful in school. This thesis investigates the experiences of Pacific Island boys who attend a rural Bay of Plenty high school in New Zealand.

In the first part of this thesis I write about my struggle to find voice. I feel, and have always felt, secure. I grew up in a happy home with both parents born in the Cook Islands and was relatively successful at school and involved with school life. In my adult life, my late beloved wife, Te Aomihi Mereana (Ngati Porau, Ngati Whakaue), and I raised three treasured children in a world where we were immersed in the lives of our extended Pacific Island and Maori families in a rural North Island city. During my career I have carried my particular love of sport into my work as a teacher and latterly a teacher educator. The academic work of writing this thesis showed me that I am able to take part in many, very different conversations, using many different voices: but I struggled to

write in the way my supervisors expect in a thesis. The greatest challenge to me was to move beyond my emotional responses and to adopt an academic voice. When first confronted with this challenge, I began seeing the academy as alien and Pakeha (Western) and thesis writing as something to be endured, as a task to be done, some hoops to jump through. But writing this thesis has changed how I think about myself – my identity is changed – and I see that I can use an academic voice and at the same time retain the voices that have served me well through my life. For this reason, I am showing more than one voice as I write – sometimes I insert words into paragraphs, sometimes I write complete paragraphs in italics. I include imagery and poetry in various ways – and at others I use two or more ways of writing. This thesis celebrates a variety of voices or ways of speaking and ways of being heard.

I found as I worked through the process of writing that I began to reflect upon and analyse my own experiences in ways that were new to me. My roots, my family stories, and my patterns of learning as a second generation New Zealander whose parents emigrated from the Cook Islands provided insights into the experiences of the boys and their parents. This thesis, therefore, views the experiences of Pacific Island boys through the lens of my own experiences. I want to find out and seek to identify strategies that will work toward achieving our dreams.

I enjoy people. Being born to parents who provided me with a loving and happy upbringing; going to and enjoying school; going to university and training to be a teacher, has given me knowledge of how it may be for other Pacific peoples. And I may have something to add to the kai table (educational world) when this thesis is completed: by writing about my educational experiences, reading and listening to other Pacific researchers, and adding to the growing pool of Pacific researchers looking at Pacific peoples' issues.

As the Pacific population increases in New Zealand it becomes more important that these people understand and utilise the educational system, to make an economic contribution to their families, to their People, and to New Zealand. The sooner they create successful

working models, or strategies, and place them into their families and communities, the sooner they will be able to stand alone and become successful contributing members of New Zealand society.

### **Pull up a chair**

I call this chapter "Pull up a chair" because I want to invite a particular kind of reading of this work. I am trying to create a space where I can share significant experiences and insights that have shaped me as a person. The aim is to see how memories from my own life impact on my understanding of the literature I read and the conversations I have with the Pacific Island people I talk with in this study.

Pulling up a chair suggests a shared conversation. Tufulasi Taleni (Samoa) tells about the importance of having time to carry out a conversation. Fa'afaletui is a process where Matai (Chiefs) gather to "slow think" or slowly mull over current concerns. In conversations like this, stories have meanings that are both subtle and deep. Careful listening is needed:

As a youngster growing up in the village, I often experienced a group of matai walking towards my house in the early hours of the morning. When my father saw them, he asked my mother to get morning tea ready for the fa'afaletui. These matais are coming for fa'afaletui. Each matai brought with them a handicraft to do while talking. These can be the knitting of a net, or the making of string from the coconut husks. This fa'afaletui can go on for the rest of the day and it can go on for a whole week.

(Talen, 2010, p. 2)

The following two anecdotes are important to me because they point to hard work and the idea that if we can make our dreams work then success can follow. Anecdote 1.1 occurred in early 2002 and shows the possibility of transference of skills for a group of people. Applying the same skill and dedication to a given task, and applying it to another.



Similarly, anecdote 1.2 which occurred in 1984 shows that with the same application and envisaging a future, you can achieve your dream. My parents left the Cook Islands with a dream of better things and times, and this inherited ability to dream has helped me focus.

***Anecdote 1.1 Laden sports bag story: Successful strategies***

*The local Pacific Islands senior high school students gathered for a motivational day, run by an educational group, and facilitated by a Pacific Island singer, Lapi Mariner. The second speaker strode to the lectern with his laden sports bag. Placing his bag by his side, he started to speak. He opened his bag and held a rugby ball in his hand, saying, "We play with this ball very well, and we are successful." Then he tossed the ball into the gathering. He repeated this act with a netball, a basketball, and a volleyball. Next he pulled a pineapple from his bag and held it up, saying, "We can plant this and grow it very well too." And he gingerly lobbed the pineapple into the gathering. It was well received. Next he held up a taro, and said the same. Once the fruit had flown into the gathering, the speaker pulled a school exercise book from his sports bag, and held it up. "We struggle to grow this and we struggle to be successful in the classroom." The speaker quickly wrapped his speech up by saying, "We need to use the same strategies that make us successful on the sports field and in the garden, to be successful in the classrooms." The audience slowly nodded and their eyes looked in a knowing way.*

***Anecdote 1.2: Bath story: Winning thoughts***

*I am sitting in the family geothermal pool, one week away from the New Zealand championships, with the thermal heat enveloping my body. I am dreaming: wouldn't it be exciting to win a New Zealand high school championship? To be the best in the country! To play in front of lots of people! To have people say nice*

*things about your players. To have parents who are watching, to be proud of their team, their sons, the hard work and level of achievement.*

*The championship winning point is scored; the whole team would jump with huge smiles, celebrating victory. Celebrating the best team in New Zealand! They would be so proud of their efforts, New Zealand champions!*

*Winning on the court is great but how can I transfer the winning strategies to the classroom?*

*I get out of the pool.*

*Seven days to go.*

These two stories are both about envisaging a successful future. Envisaging a successful future is an important strategy for me. This thesis explores other strategies I have developed and compares these with the strategies currently being used for and by high school boys who identify as Pacific people. The aim of the thesis is to identify strategies that allow Pacific peoples to be successful in the classroom, and in their lives.

### **Pacific peoples**

I use the term "Pacific peoples" to refer to diasporic Pacific (immigrants) and New Zealand-born Pacific people (Anae, 2007). The boys in this study have family links to Samoa, Cook Islands, and Tokelau.

The term Pasifika is foreign to me. Prior to my masters study I was not aware of this term. I am comfortable with "Cook Islander" and "Pacific Islander". Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt Samu, & Mara (2008) state that the term "Pasifika" continues to be problematic and challenging. Living in New Zealand and wanting to maintain your cultural identity will get you siding with a "name" that reflects your mum and dad and their Pacific Island. Being Tongan you may be happy with Pasifiki. Or if Samoan, you may be happy with Pasifika. Those of us who have ancestors from the Pacific Islands belong to the sea of New Zealand, and wanting a term that satisfies me and my "new" island, New Zealand, I

have settled on Pacific peoples and variations such as Pacific parents, Pacific families, Pacific high school boys and Pacific boys.

### **Setting the scene**

After the Second World War my parents migrated separately to New Zealand. Anae (2006) tells of the years following the Second World War, when Pacific peoples immigration to New Zealand increased, reaching a peak in the 1960's and early 1970's. New Zealand encouraged this trend as Pacific migrant workers provided a necessary pool of labour for its expanding industries. Yet by the 1970s the then Government, National, was blaming the Pacific peoples for overloading social services, and portraying Pacific migration as a "brown epidemic." At the time, Politicians labelled them "Islander" and "overstayer", creating an unsavoury image of Pacific immigrants. In 1986 there were 125,850 Pacific peoples resident in New Zealand, of which 65% lived in Auckland (Legat, 1988). Legat points out that in this ever expanding population, it is the 15-29 year age group that is increasing at the highest rate, and that this group are the most disadvantaged, with the lowest rate of educational achievement, and highest level of criminal offending.

In Ta'afuli Andrew Fiu's autobiography *Purple Heart* (2006), Andrew (as he is now known) tells of a classroom situation in which all the pupils are given new names: "to help us know you better!" This is stolen identity, where a foreign name is forced upon a child, suppressing their parental given name. Maybe creating a culturally schizophrenic child, lost in two worlds:

One day just before the lunchtime bell rang, an exasperated Sister Mary called twelve of us to the front the class. Standing among the twelve was me, Ta'afuli. There was also Tanielu, Makerita, Sosofina and Matapuata, Pancrazio Massimo, my Italian next-door-neighbour, and his twin sister, Annunziata. Sister Mary addressed us as a group. "Today, we will give you new names from the holy bible. This is to help us know you better."

In one swift movement Sister Mary whipped out a bible from her habit, slamming it on a desk in front of us with such ferocity I truly expected Jesus to spring out from behind the blackboard. Maybe it was a sleight of hand or the sheer force with which Sister Mary slammed that bible down, but the pages parted somewhere near the middle and her bony finger was out like a divining rod. Eyes closed, she planted it in the pages and said loudly, as if she was calling for the parting of the Red Sea itself, "Tanielu, you will now be Israel." Her finger flipped a page and planted itself again. "Sosofina, you are now Ruth." This continued down the line. Makerita become Esther, Matapuata became Zacharias, Pancrazio became Joseph, Annunziata was magically transformed to Sarah. Then Sister Mary randomly opened another page and with exaggerated flourish, that finger did its magic and I became Andrew. (Fiu, 2006, pp. 15-17)

Challis (1973a) describes the young Cook Islanders as follows:

As a pupil the Islander is generally welcomed by his classmates and included in all activities readily, because he is characteristically cheerful, generous, friendly and courteous as well as excelling in sport. He is often courted by the games organisers of the schools because of his skill and strength. (Challis, 1973a, p. 54)

Here Challis is describing an obedient and compliant Cook Island pupil, who exhibits all the features of a successful product of the New Zealand school system and who has taken on all the traits of the ideal white New Zealand student. As Jones (1991) cites, in the Fairbairn-Dunlop study Pacific parents demanded the following behaviours from their children while at school: "Be good. Listen; Watch the teacher and do whatever he says; Work hard; Don't get smart. Just do it.; and Obey the teacher." It is no surprise that the Island pupils in the past did as they were told when they arrived at school.

### **First and second generation**

When the Pacific peoples started arriving after the Second World War, they created communities around families and church. Inside these families, the parents wanted "a better life and education for their children." *This involved creating a Pacific world inside home with your family members, sending the kids to a Palangi school, working for money in a Palangi world, giving some of your wages to the Palangi shops, paying for your*

*house, feeding the family, and sending some money home to the Pacific. While all this was happening, the new Pacific family was trying to make sense of all of this, trying to understand and survive and create a future. Inside this future, the outside world is constantly changing, leaving the past in the past.*

With inter-marriage there is now a "muddled gene pool." Perrott (2007) reports that in the Richmond Road School year-ones class he investigated, there are 24 faces belonging to second or third generation New Zealand born Samoans, with only 4 being "full blooded" who are in their first year at the Samoan bilingual unit. The faces arise from Danish, Vietnamese, European, and Samoan parentage.

Here, with the bilingual unit, parents are putting something back into their Samoan culture. The unit's teacher, Tuai, speaks of her worry for these children being raised by first generation New Zealand Samoans whose parents arrived with high hopes and a desire for their children to fit in and succeed. This was achieved by setting aside their language and encouraging English at all times. This de-culturalisation led to a lost people and culture. Tuai continues:

I know that most, if not all, the parents in my class are trying to find themselves in the Samoan culture because they've lost touch with the culture from when they were younger...the majority of the parents in my class cannot speak or hold an every day conversation in Samoan, and if this is the case, how hard is it for the child to maintain the language and culture if it is not fluent at home? (Perrott, 2007)

Second and third generation Pacific peoples are constantly making sense of their ever changing world.

Anecdote 1.3, from the 1960s, shows that my school conveniently and systematically swallowed me up as a Pacific Island pupil and clumped all the brown students as one, thus denying me my birthright and my cultural identity.

***Anecdote 1.3: Misplaced pupil (Lost in cultural translation?)***

*The setting is the local high school prize giving, at the end of the school year, in the local town hall. The announcement is made: "and the prize for the top Maori pupil in the fourth form (Year 10) goes to Phillip George."*

*The same scene was played out twelve months later with "and the prize for the top Māori pupil in the Fifth form (Year 11) goes to Phillip George."*

*I was thrilled to receive the acknowledgement from the school of my achievements in the classroom. My parents were also thrilled that their New Zealand born Cook Island son had achieved in a New Zealand school.*

*But to be identified as a Maori! To this day I have never asked Mum and Dad how they felt to have their son recognised as Maori.*

### **Insider-outsider researcher**

In this research I see myself as being both an insider and an outsider. This places me in a unique and complex position. I have been born of Pacific Island parentage (Cook Islands), brought up in New Zealand, educated through the New Zealand system, gone to university, and trained as a high school teacher. I became fully immersed into the secondary system: teaching, guiding, and coaching sports teams. Now I teach university graduates who want to be high school teachers. I am looking back at my footsteps, while looking at the stories of Pacific high school boys. These lived experiences provide an insight into the lives of my subjects, as they travel the education route. Through one approach, as an insider, I will look at my parents' arrival to New Zealand; and with the other approach I am an outsider, looking as objectively as possible at the students.

*My parents arrived separately into New Zealand from the Cook Islands when they were young adults, Mum from Rarotonga and Dad from Aitu. Both my parents had rarely attended school, with Mum being kept at home to look after the younger kids, and Dad left to look after the animals and the plantation.*

*Now, I am looking around, with memories of being a New Zealand born Pacific Islander, a Pacific youngster growing up inside a large family, a Pacific high school student, a student who struggled to make sense of the world being created by his parents and his environment -- and now a practicing high school teacher, a sports coach, a friend of many students, and a parent, who wants his students and own family to engage in successful strategies to make it through life in New Zealand.*

*I am able to walk many paths and view through many lenses as I wander as an insider-outsider researcher, being privy to stories and insights of my subjects, and viewing from the outside.*

### **Kai (food) and sharing**

*Taau raurau, e taku raurau, karaua meitaki ta taua, ei angai I te iti tangata  
Your food basket and my food basket, we will be able to feed the people.  
(H. Graham, personal communication, February, 2010).*

This Cook Island saying tells of the coming together of food, knowledge, and the act of sharing. We share what we have, there will always be abundance. This saying serves to highlight the value of kai, and sharing of everything: knowledge, stories, work, hardship, and kai.

In the Cook Islands kai plays an important role in the culture, with links to status and wealth; hospitality of hosting; an opening; respect and love; and Chieftain Title Investiture. There is always an abundance of time and income devoted to its preparation and eating.

Food is given along channels of blood and friendship, bringing families and communities together, and providing a wide network of mutual obligation that provided social security for those with temporary problems or shortages.  
(Ta`irea, 2003, p. 163)

Once the feast is completed an important act takes place: the left over food is then divided up and parcelled, and given to the guests as they leave. This thesis is a sharing of anecdotes and stories (kai). I share what I can and trust that my contribution to knowledge will provide fresh insight for my readers.

Pull up a chair. Our discussion is around the question of how to enhance the opportunities for Pacific peoples to achieve well in Aotearoa New Zealand. What insights can we gain from exploring stories from my own experience and by investigating the ideas that some Pacific boys, their parents, and their teachers share with me?

### **Overview of chapters**

This thesis begins as I tell stories that provide possibilities of success for Pacific peoples and describes a setting in which Pacific peoples find themselves in New Zealand. In chapter 2 the methodologies used are discussed along with the *voice* that I created to provide me a place to speak of silent things. Chapter 3 examines my upbringing for possible structures and routines that may have contributed to my lens on life.

What was it like for Mum and Dad, and me, as Pacific peoples venturing into the new world that New Zealand provided? In chapter 4 I provide an insight into how the world occurred to Pacific peoples when they first arrived in New Zealand. In chapter 5 literatures are reviewed, mainly pertaining to Pacific students in secondary schools and interesting research regarding reading for younger children. In chapter 6 I engage in critical academic terms that have influenced my view of education.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 are analyses of the material from the narratives and interviews, drawing out themes as I discuss and seek the students understanding of their educational world.

Finally, in chapter 10, I point out the limitations and implications of this research.



## Chapter 2: Methodology- finding a voice

About my supervisors

*Why don't they give a set of templates and crayons  
and tell me colour these areas in?  
Yellow for here and green for there.  
Make sure you don't go over the lines!  
What happens if I do go over the lines, will I be punished?  
Are we all colouring in, with the same colours?  
I should do as I am told.*

*Why?*

When I began writing this thesis I thought all I had to do was do as I was told. What I got from the process was a greater awareness of my “self ” and the freedom and confidence to speak of my silent world. My parents had taught us kids to be silent and only to speak when spoken to. So, doing as you are told is the world I live in. This thesis has given me a *voice* whereby I am able to utter my silences and be heard. Finding their voices is, I can see now, one strategy for Pacific peoples to use as they engage in the changing cultural landscape of New Zealand.

### **In the process**

I have found that this research has led me to explore my own voice and history. When I planned it, it was about the Pacific Island boys, and it still is. Each time I looked at the boys and thought, “Why is this or that happening?” my personal history would quietly and suddenly erupt like a burst of thunder as my life reappeared. This thesis has forced me to quieten the thunder by exploring my own ways of being and thinking.

Very recently while quelling troubled waters, I asked a question of myself about my departed Mum, “Why did you send your three sons to Auckland to be with Reverend Challis, 50 years ago?” As the puzzled pieces clumsily fell into place, my eyes welled with tears - years of misunderstood stories - years of seeing the not seen. For many years I had puzzled over why my Mum and Dad had sent their three boys to stay with Reverend Challis. It was to give thanks and show them off to Challis, as it was him who had encouraged Mum to emigrate from the Cook Islands to New Zealand.

*I can see Mum smiling and saying "didn't I do a good job...thank you," nodding at Reverend Challis.*

I have thought about the experiences of my parents and seen with different eyes and looked closely from a distance, as if seeing my early life on stage with actors who do not know each other, and the light changes colour. The same actors, playing the same roles, but now they are different. The light has changed; the new light is sneaking through once sealed cracks.

*This has been a journey in which I have been challenged for complying, for silencing myself and biting my lip. I developed real confidence that whatever I do it will be listened to, acknowledged, and respected. I am able to be more me because even when I cannot explain what I am trying to say, I describe what I am seeing in my head, telling of the movie that is now showing, without fear of ridicule. This film technician (a supervisor) became known to me during my master's programme in the Word Jungle Gym of Canterbury University. As I grimaced and contorted my mind, the technician smiled and pointed and uttered a word. In time more light chased away the shadows.*

In what ways might these insights echo in my data and inform my analysis? When I gathered the data I did not have the insights to explore these ideas so my writing in this thesis tracks the transition from having a fixed position related to learning to a more fluid position where I see knowledge as changing. In the past I would flick to the back of the book for the answers, where now I am able to think and be creative: I think differently!

## **Research methodology**

This research sits within a qualitative paradigm and I call on ethnographic, narrative and autobiographic approaches. Qualitative research, as a set of interpretive activities, privileges no single methodological practice over another. Qualitative research seeks to understand an individual's perception (Bell, 1993). It has no theory or paradigms that are distinctly its own. Qualitative research does not have a distinct set of methods or practices of its own (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The writers are saying, that there are no set in concrete guidelines or boundaries, it moves and has flexibility to suit the research.

An ethnographic approach is a method that is favoured amongst Pacific researchers. Anae, Coxan. Mara, Wendt – Samu, & Finau, (2001) discuss a "life story" model of information gathering, where the interview is "conducted and organised according to how the issue has been experienced or perceived throughout the different stages of the interviewees life" (p.31). This model lends itself to my purposes for the interviews with the high school boys.

Also important is the concept of decolonizing research. Smith (1999) writes warningly of experiences had by Maori communities in New Zealand where researchers' philosophies and beliefs vary greatly from those of the community. Similarly Anae et al (2001) advocate the need for researchers who research Pacific subjects to have an understanding of things Pacific. With this research project I, as a New Zealand born Cook Islander researcher, interview Pacific Islanders. Yet I am not only a Pacific person, I also live in a Maori world, and the world of Aotearoa New Zealand. No labels limit me.

Qualitative research relies on critical approaches to social science endeavouring to grasp social life and the ways subjective meaning is individually constructed. This includes the processing or interpretation of events by learning about a setting from those in it (Neuman, 1997). Data gathered is typically "rich in description of people, places, and conversations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2). Research design evolves as the researcher

comes to know his or her subjects and settings; the design is therefore flexible and planning decisions are ongoing (Janesick, 1994, Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Janesick (2000) views the qualitative researcher as studying “a social setting to understand the meaning of participants” lives in the participants’ “own terms” (p.51).

Psathas (1973) informs us that qualitative researchers in education are continually asking questions of the people they are learning from to discover what they are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences, and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live. The researchers are wanting to be in the subject’s world, and seeking their understanding of that world. Making sure they are capturing their perspectives accurately (cited by Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

Ethnography is thick description. When culture is examined from the ethnographic perspective, researchers are faced with a series of interpretations of life, of common-sense understandings, that are complex and difficult to separate from each other. The ethnographers goal is to share in the meanings that the cultural participants take for granted and then to depict new understandings for the reader and for outsiders (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.28).

I use an ethnographic approach as it enables me to listen to the students’ stories and understandings in order to achieve a fuller more contextualised understanding of their lives. While undertaking this research my memories of similar situations smash into me, demanding to be told and released, leaving me no option but to tell both stories.

### **Research design**

Displayed below (Table 2.1) is a table of meetings with participants and timeline. I tape recorded most meetings and transcribed by hand onto a notebook and then computer. One example is included as Appendix 4 where I show my transcription of a conversation with student Ina on 30/8/2008. I visited one high school, with the teachers, students, and parents originating from that school. For the meetings that were not taped, I relied on

note taking and memory, transcribing directly to computer. Every time I met with the students I provided healthy snacks, and on two occasions had kai at my home with some parents and students. Providing food is a demonstration of generosity and kindness, and a way of saying thank you.

**Table 2.1 Table of meetings with participants and timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Attended</b>	<b>Kai</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Where</b>
14/22008/	Students: Fiti, Duane ,Michael Seti.	snacks	taped	school
24/2/2008	Students: Mata ,John ,Michael, Falima,Taz,Tui, Ina, Fiti.	snacks	taped	school
20/7/2008	Students Joe, Falima ,Seti, Michael, Fiti.	snacks	taped	school
22/7/2008	Students: Fiti, Michael, Duane.	snacks	taped	school
17/8/2008	Students :Michael ,Sina, Fiti.	snacks	taped	school
17/8/2008	Parent :Mala.	nil	chat	school
17/8/2008	Parent: Tasa.	nil	chat	phone
17/8/2008	Parent: Mala.	nil	chat	phone
18/8/2008	Parents: Siva, Pupa, Mati Sina, Tui.	Kai at home	chat	home
18/8/2008	Student: Tui.	Kai at home	taped	home
30/8/2008	Parents: Siva, Pupa Seti, Hemi, Ina.	Kai at home	chat	home
30/8/2008	Student: Ina.	Kai at home	taped	home
15/10/2009	Teachers: Rita, Puti.	nil	chat	school
15/10/2009	Teacher: Puti.	nil	taped	phone
16/10/2009	Teachers :Cathy, Kate, Vaughan, Anne Arapera.	nil	chat	school

## **Interviews**

The interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights into the way subjects interpret some piece of the world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.95). Whyte (1984) emphasises that a good part of the work involves building a relationship. Getting to know each other, and putting the subject at ease (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.95). Researchers often make many visits to

agreed locations or to his or her subjects in order to build a relationship; or to create an informality that lends to a good atmosphere between interviewer and subject(s) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). One group of boys I visit five times, with one encounter being shared kai.

Good interviews are those in which the subjects speak freely from their points of view (Biggs, 1986, as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.96), with the interviewer demonstrating personal interest in the subject by being attentive, nodding their head, and using facial expressions. A good interview is when the subject speaks often and longer than the researcher, creating a rich layer of interview material (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.100).

Depending on the flow of communication, different types of interviews may be implemented: free flowing exploratory interview to create a wider perspective of a topic; or structured interviews to gather comparable data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003p. 96).

Semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to gather comparable data across subjects, but the opportunity to understand how the subjects themselves structure the topic at hand is lost (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.96). Different types of interviews can be employed at different stages of the same study. At the beginning of the project, for example, it might be important to use the free-flowing, exploratory interview because the purpose at that point is to get a general understanding of a range of perspectives on a topic. After the investigatory work has been done, you may want to structure interviews more in order to get comparable data across a larger sample or to focus on particular topics that emerged during the preliminary interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 96).

In depth interviewing is sometimes referred to as "unstructured" or "open-ended", "nondirective", or "flexibly structured", where the researcher is determined on understanding, in lots of detail, how their subjects think and how they came to hold such perspectives. The researcher spends considerable time in the subject's environ, asking open-ended questions. Open-ended questioning allows the subjects to answer from their

own frame of reference rather than from one structured by pre-arranged questions. This structure allows the researcher to get the subjects to freely express themselves (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p.2-3).

*I was talking to Michael and we spoke about his golf with his Nana then about his Tokelauan dancing. His eyes seemed to light up. I said: "Tell me about your Island dancing." Michael smiled and spoke lovingly of his dance.*

Human beings are complex, and their lives are ever changing: the more methods we use to study them, the better our chances to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell us about them (Fontana & Frey, 2000, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 668).

### **Case study**

With a group of secondary school Pacific Island students this can be seen as an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2000). Case study allows the collection of in-depth data that is particular to the group or situation being studied. Generalisation to the wider population is not a goal of this approach, although it is likely that some of the themes that emerge will have more general implications.

Although I am not claiming expertise in these styles, as a Cook Islander I feel more honest in honouring the oral traditions of the Pacific that values the subjective voice rather than the objective, which positions people and people's stories at the heart of social knowledge.

In broad terms, this research falls into the category of case study, looking at a group of young Pacific Island people and some of their parents and teachers, to understand how they position themselves for success in schooling. As is the case of all case studies, it doesn't represent people as a whole or the population of young Pacific Island people as a

whole, but there are themes that emerge that will have applications generally, as to be applicable to this group.

### **Pacific approaches**

In addition to the Western traditions of qualitative research I draw on a Pacific approach to knowledge.

The Tongan word *Talanoa* means to talk (in an informal way), to tell stories or relate experience (Vaiotele (2006)). *Talanoa* methodology allows face-to-face dialogue, sharing ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal - a gathering of people conversing collectively about everything and nothing in particular.

*Tivaevae* is a Cook Island patch work quilt. To create this special quilt, one person has the design for the *tivaevae* and allocates the different roles and responsibilities to other women. Each woman has specific tasks to perform and complete. In research the allocated tasks could be gathering data; reviewing data from focus groups and interviews, and preparation of data for analysis (Mau-Hodges, 2000, cited in Koloto & Sharma, 2005)

In the Tongan context *Kakala* refers to a royal garland, as well as the fragrant flowers used in the garland. The *kakala* making involves three processes: gathering the flowers (gathering and selecting the data); making or weaving the *kakala* (weaving together of the collected data); and giving the *kakala* away (the presentation of the report) (Koloto & Sharma, 2005).

I utilise parts from all three Pacific approaches; *talanoa*; *tivaevae*; and *kakala*, with the addition of *kai* at every gathering. On one occasion some students and parents came home for *kai*. As they arrived some contributed food to the meal and assisted in its preparation. When the *kai* is placed on the table, a *karakia* was said over the food and to



its providers. We all sat around eating and chatting about everything and nothing in particular. Similar activity revolved around the clearing and washing of dishes. As taught by my parents, providing kai is an act of giving and serving others and a gesture of your generosity.

*in talanoa*

*tivaevae*

*kakala*

*and umu making*

*provide me places*

*in which I am at peace*

*I am ME*

*Not needing to explain*

*justify*

*or provide reason*

*I am me.*

### **Critically reflective practice**

To become critically reflective, we need to find some lenses that reflect back to us a stark and differently highlighted picture of who we are and what we do

(Brookfield, 1995, p.28-29)

Combining a little of each of the Pacific approaches and the spirit of critically reflective practice, I create a release valve, a reflective voice, another lens, as Brookfield suggests. At times it is *an italic voice that interrupts in an irreverent way* – and at times it is a conversational voice in which I talk to you as though you're sitting here with me. This provides an outside voice, aside from the academic voice. I will not be tied to an academic voice because, as I show in later chapters, it can distance people.

## **Narrative approaches**

This work has been informed by narrative approaches to research which “has become a fashionable term in educational research and practice” (Saito, 2009). I did not set out use a self-study approach because my interest was in the experiences of the students I was interviewing. I found that by telling my own story I was able to understand more about the “self” who was doing the research. This enabled me to understand the implications of the critical theory from the academic literature. Zeichner (2007) points out that self-study research has struggled “to establish legitimacy as a valid form of research within the academy” (p.40) and that a lot of attention has been paid to methodological justification of the approach. The justifications (such as in Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001) assume that self-study stands alone rather than being a support for another investigation as in this case.

Saito (2009) criticises the idea of writing narratives that “drive us into a narrowly self-focused mode of talking and writing about ourselves” (p.264). This article is called “Ourselves in Translation” (which fits what I am feeling about this thesis, I am in translation from one way of thinking to another) and it also calls the silenced child (which is a theme of this thesis):

Philosophy as autobiography will call for an education that kindles the light of the light of the nonchalant boy and the silenced child in the classroom. ...  
[Philosophy as autobiography’s] foremost task is that of rejoining the child’s voice in the language community so that he can (re)discover his place in culture and community.

(Saito, 2009, p.265)

Saito (2009) calls on ideas from philosophy that are beyond the scope of this thesis. It is enough to know that the kinds of experiences I have talked about in this thesis are being discussed in the philosophical literature. My narrative helps me to understand both the nonchalant boy and the silenced child: my puppet can take on many forms.

## **On breaking out of the mould**

In the past I have succeeded because I complied, but my supervisors would not allow this. I now need to succeed by not complying; I need to succeed on my own merits. This means I need to rebel a little.

Supervisors comment: I have worried about the impact of forcing you to change your voice and write in ways that suit the thesis mould. I fear that voice will be lost in translation (to play with a phrase you have used). I see that to say “my mother” is to you quite a different thing from saying “my mum” or “my Mum.” You need to be sure, however, that you are consistent, and that you justify whatever you do. (Elaine, email communication, 20/11/2010)

This thesis writing is a combination of my newly rebellious self and my formal writing. Where I have resisted changing “my Mum” to “my mother”, it is deliberate. Creative approaches to non-formal academic writing have emerged over the last decade (see for example, Mayo (2003) who bases her break with traditional writing on the work of Lather and Smithies (1997).

### **Learning by honouring my reflections**

Throughout the thesis process my thoughts have spoken to me and at other times yelled at me, as I struggled to silence the cacophony of bewildering words and instructions that live within my compliant world. (*I cried as I wrote this.*)

*I struggled to silence*

*Inside of me wants to babble a million miles an hour, to satisfy my mind, but as I babble, who will understand me? Just me? Then why speak? I will remain silent.*

*the cacophony of bewildering words and instructions*

*My outside world is full of words, signs, noises, signals, and people pointing and telling. Which shall I listen to? That one? Or that one? Which one is the right one to listen to? Who is the boss one? I will listen to that one.*

*that live within*

*I live in a noisy silent world. Inside it abounds with conversations wanting to be conversed, to hold hands with another conversation, to be listened to. My face says "sorry, there is nobody home today."*

*my compliant world*

*Yes Sir. Yes Sir. Yes Sir. Sorry Sir. Sorry Sir. Is this right? Sorry Sir. Is this right? Make them smile. Make them smile. If they are smiling they will ask no questions. Did my Mum and Dad do a good job in teaching me to be compliant? Putting smiles on strangers faces? I have had a lot of practice, a life time. My face again has checked out, but somebody lives inside.*

### **Journal keeping**

I kept a journal in which I wrote end of interview observations, thoughts of what I was thinking about and what my critical friends were saying about this project. On one occasion after interviewing a teacher, I wrote in my journal:

*Is it that this tension: the Island world at home and the NZ world in the schools, and the PI boys being bewildered. Or, they are just standing up against authority, the first in a long time in their upbringing. Or, this is their attempt to understand the "new" world, which is not working. (My journal, 17/10/2009)*

On another occasion while grappling with my data analysis I chatted with my bother Pupa. I explained what I thought were the emerging themes, and he threw in Stuart Hall and Reception Theory. I was excited; I had a new theorist and theory to talk about.

*Brother Pupa sent an email to me about Stuart Hall. Hall talks about cultural identity and the thing that got me buzzing is Reception Theory. It is where our many layers of experiences of "materials" (visual and written) are interpreted, to our peculiarities. It is how we can re-examine text to suit our "peculiarities". So, with this in mind I will re-visit my text with Janinka's directions in the background. (My journal, October, 2008)*

### **The journal writing**

Journal writing allowed me to build on previous insights in an iterative sort of way so that it became a partner for me in fostering "collaborative slow thinking" - with my diary recording my inner conversations, my positioning on an academic situation, and where I had been.

### **Analysing my data**

In qualitative research analysis is not separate from data gathering, so my analysis began during my data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Every interview with the students, parents, and teachers was tape recorded, and transcribed by listening and writing what was said. Each page of written notes was coded and categorised for themes, with each theme written on paper and sellotaped to the wall This was repeated five times or more (see Appendix 2: My Journal).

### **Ethical approval**

In interviewing human beings, researchers must take extreme care to avoid harming the objects of our inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I am also aware of Pacific research

ethical principles: Relationships; Respect; Cultural Competency; Meaningful Engagement; Reciprocity; Utility; Rights; Balance; Protection; Capacity Building; and Participation (Ministry of Health. 2004).

Before I proceeded with the interviews I sought ethical approval from the University of Canterbury and gained informed consent from all the participants. I also felt bound by Pasifika code of ethics that says I have to be true to the voices of the participants and the goals of my work should be about capacity building (Refer to appendices to show evidence).

Pen names (pseudonyms) were allocated to the participants and schools and any others referred to in order to provide anonymity. My three brothers and one sister were excited to have their own names used.

### **Writing**

The process of writing was a far greater burden than I could have imagined but at the same time it freed me. I have learnt that other people have broken the mould of writing in highly organised, very formal ways and have included different voices in their text. I am not alone in this world. In this spirit, I present the Pacific parents' and students' dialogue in the present tense, because to me these conversations are continuing, present, alive.

*At times the past and present collide as puppet gets involved with the past.*

## **Chapter 3: What I learnt by writing my story**

As I reflect on my upbringing I am proud of what my parents provided and taught us. They set rituals around kai time (meals) and taught the family about sharing and giving. Going to school was another ritual, and I have written about my encounters with some teachers. My Mum was always defending her children whenever they encountered trouble. I did not know how hard it must have been for my parents to cope financially, but they did. Books and the church played major roles in our house. Realising that there was no other class after Form 7 (Year 13) I left home and headed to Otago University to become a teacher. In my writing of my story I tell of why I am researching and provide summaries of what I think were my parents' plan in raising us, how I passed along in school, and how I can pass along success.

My story is included as Appendix 1. This story is the data that I needed to write in order to notice the patterns I report below.

### **My parents' plan**

On reflection I see that my parents had a plan in raising their nine children. Both of my parents arrived in New Zealand at a young age: Mum at about 14 years old and Dad at about 18. Inside their Cook Island upbringing was a solid foundation of church activities stemming from the missionaries and the teaching of Christian values. From that Cook Island context came also the strict disciplinarian ways in which they were parented. This included three phrases or catch phrases that would have been utilised by their parents, which lived "loudly" in our well run and disciplined home. First phrase: "Respect your elders"; second phrase: "Do as you are told," and the third phrase: "Don't answer back." Whenever you were disciplined, verbally or physically for the boys, you were expected to stand there and take it. There was no discussion! I think our parents' parenting was measured by what "others" saw in the family's outward appearances and behaviour. And if you got to see their house, outside or inside, it was another measure. With Jim and I

being the first two born, we were expected to assist around the home. My parents were proud of their orderly and clean home, and of their kids, all nine of us.

With this foundation of order, respect, and discipline, came another part of the plan. My sister Vaine once asked Dad, "Why didn't you speak our Cook Island Maori to us as we grew up?" He replied, "Reverend Challis said to us to speak English to you kids and education is the way forward." From that one person, possibly, came my parents' whole parenting plan. Challis represented the church, and whatever he espoused was taken as gospel - the truth. Also his mention of speaking English and education would have left my parents in no doubt in what direction to head.

My parents had a plan in raising their children and their expectation of us kids was to do well, whether in the classroom or the sports field. I played rugby and cricket at school so every Monday the local paper had the results. And whenever my name or the others appeared in the paper, Dad would cut it out and place the cutting neatly inside his favourite book, the Bible. It was not till his death that one of my sisters came across his "collection" inside his Bible. He was very proud of his family.

### **How I journeyed through school**

On reflection, this is how I journeyed through school and my teenage years. Inside the strictly and efficiently run house of the George family lay the clearly defined structures in which we lived our lives. Like prayers every morning and night, sweeping and wiping the floor on our hands and knees, organised kai routines and eating times, and set tasks for outside the house jobs: loading the fire wood box; picking up the small chips of wood from the chopping of the wood; and keeping the back yard tidy. And every Sunday was the Sabbath, a day of rest and praise of my parents' god. Also Mum and Dad modelled the expected behaviours everywhere and rarely quarrelled in front of us. This solid, organised, and modelled microcosm of a Pacific family living in New Zealand provided the boundaries in which we lived. It did not mean we stayed inside those bounds, we wandered at times.



Once identifying our boundaries, we were prepared to work inside of them, yet we were willing to give it a go outside the boundaries and pay the price if we landed in trouble. Our parents always gave "directional" assistance, such as: "get to school" or "go and do your homework." We also knew being successful in the classroom pleased our parents. So we listened, we followed the rules, were nice boys, did averagely at school, and endeavoured to put smiles on our parents' faces.

### **What strategies can I learn about from our success?**

Before starting this investigation I wondered how it was for the boys I was enjoying time with at school and how they could successfully navigate their way through high school. I was coaching the 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby team and the senior boys' volleyball team and we were winning rugby matches against more fancied opponents and winning New Zealand championships in volleyball. I could see the boys working their hearts out to be the best in the land. How could these boys use the same attitude in the classroom? How could I create strategies that would put them into winning positions in the classroom and their lives? During both codes, I encouraged the boys to be creative in designing their "flash" moves to score a point or a try. Could these boys dream up their own learning strategies to "score" in the classroom? I was constantly feeding the boys verbal feedback and technical corrections to make them more skilful and individually competitive.

What happened when they went home? Did they receive positive feedback from Mum and Dad? Or did they receive the "finer" points in learning at home? Sometimes away from training certain staff members would approach me, complaining about one of my boys. "He didn't come to class today," or "He is not working in my class, can you chat to him?" Had this staff member ever watched this boy train or play? Had they seen what made these boys smile? Had they changed the way they teach? During my team trainings, I was always encouraging individual and group thinking, heading towards creating "universals": meaning a non-specialised player who is able to play in multiple

positions. When they leave training, who was thinking for them? Were they capable of thinking for themselves? Were they encouraged to think for themselves? I wondered.

### **Insights and strategies from my story so far**

What is hidden in the above story is foundation. Like the home in which I was raised with routines, and the virtues instilled in us (like respecting your elders and doing as you were told). A strong foundation provides the steady base on which you will be able to build your individuality.

*To sit and dream and sense the winning or special occasion, is to allow for your spirit to alight any place you choose. It is far easier and quicker to arrive at a destination of a dream, providing you a goal, an insight of where you want to be. Like Mum and Dad they started with a dream and stories of New Zealand.*

*In receiving knowledge you must also give. Early one morning when my children were about to be delivered to school, the phone rang. "Is that Mister Phil George the volleyball coach? My name is Deano and I'm from USA and I coach volleyball...." This led to Deano staying at my home for 4 days, swapping, writing, and talking volleyball. I arranged for a free trip back to Auckland with a truckie friend. I have a similar friend living in Ireland who coaches rugby (Tony Smeeth, Trinity College, Dublin) and we got to meet by billeting him and his American rugby team 22 years ago. Tony has stayed with me many times and we still communicate and swap analysis on our rugby teams. Providing a roof and kai may also bring knowledge to your door.*

*Allowing children to be children, to play and have fun like other boys. One day the older brother of two came to me. "Sir, can you not pick Jason in the A team, because our family cannot afford it." The team were about to travel to the New Zealand championship. I replied "You just go and play and I will worry about the money." This family were struggling financially and I had the "words" to put them at ease. Just imagine the courage to come and ask, and this direction would have come from home.*

*When things did not go well on the sports field, I never berated the players. They would never look at me after an error, but eventually they would. I would look at them, smile, and give them a look of "hard luck." If I berated them, was I replicating home? Had they already been scolded for misdemeanour at home, now would their coach do the same? No.*

*I always expected the players to train as they played, maximum effort. Once that work ethic was achieved the intensity of training would permeate through the team. Then the players would drive each other, pushing the level of expectation. They played for each other, and me, for the possibility of success, for the feeling of winning.*

*Whenever the sports teams trained, we respected that area. The boys had duties to perform –the volleyballers had to mop the gym floor before and after training and put the net up and down. The rugby players when playing away always left the changing shed tidy, swept and rubbish in the bin. It taught the players to respect all property, theirs and other people's.*

Those things that are counter to the above stories could be considered barriers. A person without good foundations in their life may be building on sand. Being not willing to share and give to others may not attract many friends. Not having a dream with a lazy work ethic may leave you aimless. The barriers could be of your own creation and only you can do anything about it. I have always advocated in sports teams for players to be universals, players who have the ability to play more than one position. Like life, you need to devise strategies to cope with the ever changing world.

In the next chapter I explore in more depth some of the influences that shaped my assumptions about myself and which may be shared by the Pacific families I interview. I also get to see how the world may have appeared for Pacific people as they engaged in life in New Zealand.

## **Chapter 4: The view from the Pacific window - good puppet**

As Pacific peoples landed on the shores of New Zealand, what did they see? How did they feel? What did they encounter? As they engaged with their new surrounds, whilst making sense of New Zealand. The Pacific peoples arriving in New Zealand had high expectations as they dealt with barriers that impeded their movement, and navigated themselves through or around obstacles. And what lay behind the white curtain on the Pacific window?

How did two young Cook Islands immigrants make sense of New Zealand, as they settled in Bay of Plenty? *I am honouring my parents by providing their full names and villages.* Upokoina Poona Ian David George (Areora Village, Atiu, Cook Islands) and Martilda Akenanua Tarapoko Wichman (Arorongi Village, Rarotonga, Cook Islands) arriving separately and at different times, would have been frightened. As teenagers they may have missed their parents and other siblings. Missing their culture, their language and food. The work environment would have been daunting, interacting and communicating with Pakeha in English (if they could even speak the language), while in the evening they would not be able to return to their village and family. Life in New Zealand presented barriers to these teenagers as they decided to settle and engage in a new life.

### **Church and family**

Church and family are the two biggest foundation blocks in formulating our family. *It could also be viewed as the two biggest millstones that stifled and chained me to a loud silence, unable to speak the thoughts of a thoughtful person. Does this power over me, pervade over others? It is not just me? (Is this an example of hegemony? see chapter 6).* The family structures provided the sustenance for me to grow, allowing our culture to be acceptable, creating wings for my thoughts *(Is this my cultural capital? see chapter 6).*

My parents were raised and influenced by hundreds of years of missionary teachings that also fell upon me.

The London Missionary Society introduced Christianity to the Cooks in the early 1800s. In the 1940s and 1950s most New Zealand Cook Islanders joined the Pacific Islanders' Congregational Church. People looked to their churches for welfare and guidance. (Te Ara, 2010, para. 9)

This informs me that the London Missionary Society laid a Christian foundation in the Cook Island many years ago. And this influence has permeated from my grandparents (Cook Island, Scottish, American, German, and Tahitian) to my parents, and onto their children. It was the church's teachings and Christian values that we were brought up with.

Our family home became a Cook Island church for many of its people, who would meet once or twice a month, and enact the church ceremonies. Mum and Dad carried out their churchly tasks diligently and respectfully. As the church proceeded, we, the kids, were quietly corralled at the other end of the house - under instructions to be quiet!

The family day always started and ended with prayers. Every time kai was eaten, a karakia was said over the food. Sundays were about keeping the Sabbath holy. You were not allowed to do work, play sport, or make too much noise. It was a sedate day. Dad always controlled the Sunday bible study and prayers at home. It was always quiet, solemn, organised and long. We boys always clock watched during these occasions, hoping the clock would jump forward and we would be free of this. But we would never complain. Never!

As we three boys became teenagers, we started seeing the world differently. Jim was into his music and started reading about dead Black Panther activist George Jackson. Ian was passing out Progressive Youth Movement (PYM) pamphlets in town and being issued infringement notices. And I was playing for the 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket and the 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby team.

I think we started to see that we were the only brown faces in the congregation that we attended, or were directed by our Dad. We felt uncomfortable. Our parents provided us with very nice jackets and shirts and ties, so clothes wise we fitted, but we did not fit. They attempted to mould their sons into "like them" sons, as they only wanted the best for their children. We never complained to our parents, never!

In Pacific peoples' church history, Reverend Challis was a major architect and influence on many Pacific families both in New Zealand and in the Pacific. My Mum and Dad always talked of "Reverend Challis", to us he was a Pakeha church minister. He was an English clergyman, observer, and an academic writer of Pacific affairs. He was a missionary in the Cook Islands from 1933 – 1947 (Cook News, n.d.), and in 1947 requested to:

Undertake work with the 3 Pacific Island congregations at Beresford Street Church – Niueans and Cook Islanders who hold services in the hall next to the Church and the few Samoans who meet in the basement of the hall. (Newton PIC, n.d., p. 1)

His work was commemorated with the naming of Challis House in Ponsonby, Auckland. I have credited Challis with passing onto my parents the "white print" of our upbringing.

On one occasion we three boys were sent to Auckland for a holiday with Reverend Challis and Mrs Challis. Here were three Island boys about to spend time with a white notable church man! This white man, this English clergyman, was a colossus in the Cook Island community. Why were we being sent to him? Have we been naughty? Are my parents in need of a rest? Many years later, inside this project, I had conversations with my mother's older sister, who helped pay for her fare to New Zealand. She said Reverend Challis had recruited my Mum from the Cook Islands under a New Zealand government scheme, to come to New Zealand. I think my Mum was showing her three little boys off to the great white chief.

As I reflect, if prizes were being presented for perfect hegemonic students, Mum and Dad would have both received prizes. They did as they were told by the white church

minister, put aside their culture, and created three little white brown boys, who attended church and Sunday school every Sunday. *Good puppet.*

As the family aged and changed, so did our family rituals. They started with firm boundaries and slowly morphed, depending on where and how pressures were being applied. Tivaevae (Cook Island quilt making) is a traditional way of quilt making. My Mum made them to be given to her grandchildren, as 21<sup>st</sup> gifts. These quilts take an immense amount of time: designing; allocating tasks; patterns; cutting; and sewing together. (Now, this process "tivaevae" is an accepted methodology in research (Mau-Hodges, 2000). Likewise with "kakala" (garland making) and data collecting methodology (Koloto & Sharma, 2005).) Every family occasion (birthdays, Christmas, New Years, farewell, welcome home, passing School C., and Christenings) Mum and Dad organised an "umu" (cooking in an earth oven). Like the Tivaevae and Kakala, it involved all the family members (and sometimes relatives and friends) in its preparations and the feasting. Here traditional protocols or rituals were maintained, while allowing the specific Pacific Island characteristics to live, and morph as time changed.

Writers Hill and Hawk (2003), Fletcher et al (2005), and Fletcher et al (2008) mention the importance of the church in Pacific families' education. This was not true of the boys of my family. I cannot recall one situation whereby our educational success was initiated and driven by the church. Since leaving home, none of the boys have ties with a church.

### **The good Christian missionary puppet**

The identity I took to school grew from Cook Islands influences on my parents and their parents, back to the missionaries in the Pacific. Colonialism always entails unequal rights (Bullock & Trombley, 2000, p. 418). Under this influence we kids were expected to behave and do as we were told, or face disciplining.

Our parents always directed us towards the school buildings, and I say that because they were not able to help us in any of the set school or homework tasks. They would say "go and do your school work" and gave you time to do it. Like most Pacific Island parents, Mum and Dad had high expectations of us to do well at school.

The persona I exhibited in the classroom was the obedient Christian missionary puppet. Always doing what was asked of me: "Sit up, be quiet," "do as you are told," and "don't answer back." During class I never initiated communication with the teacher, fearing an incorrect response. I silently sat and did as I was told. In the evenings my homework routine was going through all my school exercise books and remembering all my work by writing out my notes. If I did not understand it, I would still memorise all the notes and diagrams. *Good puppet.*

In one class fun broke out! *The puppet smiled, no more church?* Mr. Andrews put life into the lessons and read complete plays. Reading all the characters and giving them life and he was a good reader too, unlike me. There was also Mr. Wilson, my biology teacher, who was kind and funny. I remember a science project that I did on blood. I went in search of materials and diagrams from our home encyclopaedias, town library, and school text books. I wanted to do well for Mr. Wilson. He marked my assignment A plus! Because I liked Mr. Wilson, and the relationship we had, I put more effort into my work.

A teacher asked me "What do you think...?" My last year of high school and somebody asked for my thoughts! *The puppet smiled.* Mr. McHugh, a Welshman, was my English teacher. He would read poetry to us, and ask what imagery it evoked for us! Mr. McHugh had allowed me to think! And there was my 1st XV rugby coach and my PE teacher. He was a combination of all: fun; boundaries; hard work; personal humour; allowing you to create your own moves; and relatable. He would create special moments, just you and him, while he coached or taught. And in that special moment, he would pass on a piece of his knowledge. To me it was gold! He was giving this to me! You felt as though he loved and cared for you, and would protect you from harm.



The teachers I connected with, did they accept me and my culture? Was there something in what they were doing that attracted me? Was it cultural capital? (see chapter 6).

### **High expectations**

Mum and Dad were the foundation of our family and from that solid beginning; the successes that did come were due to this strictly run family home. Our Mum was a disciplinarian. She ruled us and the house with an iron fist, with us kids doing chores every day, to her high standards. It was no different when our school results would be waved in contempt at her sister-in-law, my father's sister, our auntie. My Mum was really saying, without saying a thing, "my kids are better and brighter than yours" by asking "have you got the kids' exam marks back yet?" Both Cook Island Mums were guilty of high expectations of their children.

Inside the strictly run family was education, which was an important part of our parents high expectations of their children. With Mum being the link with school, every School Report meeting Mum would take the list of our teachers and head to the meeting. She would stay all night until she had seen every teacher, then return home to tell us of the good and not so good comments. On occasions she went to school with a bee in her bonnet, and sought a meeting with the principal. Once she complained when my older brother had been verbally slighted by a teacher. Mum also shifted my sister from a school because she had disagreed with the principal. She always defended her children and she wanted the best education for them.

Having only one wage to provide for the family, my Mum and Dad worked tirelessly to create a unified family. The family never went without. As I reflect back, I cannot say we were poor, or that we always wanted for something. We were always well clothed and fed and every time we ate the family gathered around the table. Kai time was a military operation, whereby Mum and Dad did most of the preparation and cooking and serving. Following a prayer over the food, kai was eaten. If friends or visitors arrived a plate would be presented to you, and you were squeezed somewhere around the table. Once the

family had eaten and dishes done, Mum and Dad ate. I can never remember them saying "don't eat too much; we don't have enough kai to go around." Our table always overflowed. When visitors left, Mum and Dad would walk them out, say good bye, and would always say "well you know where we stay, if you ever want a bed you know where we are." That was Mum and Dad, always giving to others.

### **Expectations from the Pacific**

Living in New Zealand, as seen by my parents' Pacific relatives, meant you were rich. So, send us some money! My parents were facing a crisis, a cultural dilemma: do I send money home (to the Pacific), or do I keep the money for my family? In our culture we are taught to give to others and especially to family.

Mum and Dad's home was used as a half way house for our Cook Island relatives. Throughout my upbringing I can remember relatives living in the Bach. It was a normal practice for our relatives to come from the Islands to work for a lengthy time, then return to the Cooks, with their accumulated wages, for a family project. Or, our house was used as a stepping stone for settlement into New Zealand. We, the kids, would get annoyed at the relatives, as they acted as if we were their servants! We would never utter a word of complaint towards Mum or Dad. We would have got "respect your elders!" and that would be that. So, silence prevailed.

### **Reading books and comics**

Mum and Dad never read stories to us at bedtime. The only reading was the Bible and that was only on Sundays. However, one of my parents must have worked out that reading was important for our education and so they provided us with reading. Fridays was comic day. Mum would do the family shopping and amongst her returning goodies would be a bunch of comics. We salivated after those comic images: Johnny Cougar; Roy of the Rovers; Phantom and Mr. Walker; Mandrake; and I can only remember the girls' comic as being called June, ours was the Lion and Tiger. And there was a strict order to

what you could and couldn't read. Girls read June first and only when they had all finished was it our turn, likewise with our Lion and Tiger. Mum purchased for her the Truth newspaper, which had a reputation of sexy stories and court news, plus a romantic story, Mills and Boon. Once my Mum purchased me a small set of Hardy Boys books, which I thought was special for her to do that for just me. In the book shelf in the lounge was a set of rarely used encyclopaedias, along with Dads' well read and handled big Bible. That was all, the sum total of printed material of our house. I think they contributed to our relative educational success. As Fletcher et al (2008) state, the Pacific student feels more comfortable in their literacy skills when their culture is acknowledged at school and home influences align with parental commitment to learning.

### **Social and economic pressures on families**

What follows are the socio-economic statistics of the Pacific peoples. It presents a gloomy picture and gives an insight into where these boys rise from. Inside an educational system in which the privileged hegemony is promulgated and their cultural capital served, the Pacific Peoples are constant losers.

From Statistics New Zealand, the Pacific Progress (2002) report, we are informed that the Pacific population grew from just 2,200 people to almost 234,000 between 1945 and 2001, making up 6.5 percent of the total population. Samoans numbered the highest with 115,000 in 2001. Cook Islanders were next highest with 52,000, followed by the Tongans 40,700, Niueans 20,100, Fijians 7,000 and Tokelauans 6,200. 58 percent of Pacific people living in New Zealand in 2001 were born in New Zealand. Pacific peoples have a much younger age structure than the total population of just 21 years in 2001 compared with 35 years for the total population. The medium age for New Zealand born Pacific people is just 12 years. (Statistics NZ, 2002)

Pacific Progress reports, amongst many other interpretations, that the central role of family in Pacific communities is living together, in the same house. In 2001, 82 percent

of Pacific people were living in a family situation, compared with 77 percent of the total New Zealand population,

Pacific peoples are spending longer in formal education and attaining more qualifications than in the past. Pacific children tend to stay at school longer than others, with 64 percent of Pacific 14 year olds staying at school until age 17 in 2001. However, they leave with lower qualifications than others, with 26 percent leaving school with no qualifications in 2001.

Unemployment is higher among the Pacific population than the total population. It peaked at 28.8 percent in 1992 but has fallen to 11.2 percent, still nearly double for the total unemployment rate of 5.7 percent.

The medium annual income level of Pacific peoples in 2001 was still below that of 1986. In 1986 the medium was \$17,200; in 2001 it was \$14,600.

The proportion of Pacific people living in housing owned by a member of their household has decreased from 51 percent to 38 percent in 2001.

Pacific females have a life expectancy of 76 years, while Pacific males have a life expectancy of 70 years. These are both 4 years lower than the figures for the total population.

Statistically the Pacific peoples are on the lowest rungs of the socio- economic ladder. To move upward, strategies need to be devised and implemented, with the first move being towards the classrooms of schools.

### **Mask switching into the future**

While making and raising a family in New Zealand, many Pacific Islanders still made financial contributions to their Island based families, their Mums and Dads and brothers

and sisters, financially supporting two families on a low wage. I remember Mum telling me about Dad sending money home (the Cook Islands) until she told him he had to choose: your family here or the family in the Cooks. Like Cooper's sculpture, my Mum was trying to make sense of her new world while maintaining her Island culture and moving into the new world.

Richard Cooper's (2003) sculpture, He Taonga Hirangi Whanau Whanau, symbolises families and societies living within the fast paced world of today. With my parents being raised in the Cook Islands, New Zealand would have looked like a "fast-paced world" when they landed in Rotorua: lots of people, many shops, new food, fair skinned people, movies, and Elvis Presley was Mum's favourite singer. I can just imagine Mum trying to take it all in, understanding it her way, and responding to it, making sense of her new world, whilst creating family.

Albert Wendt's writings "The Coming of the Whiteman" (1999) and "Robocop of Long Bay" (2002) depict the Pacific Islander's struggle to also make sense of his new world. Am I an Islander or am I a Palangi? How do I act or behave? Wendt uses the term "practical schizophrenia", where identity mask-switching is constant. On a visit back to the Cook Islands, my Mum needed to mask-switch.

***Anecdote 4.1 My Mum visits her home island.***

*While walking around the village centre, she noticed and heard these young Island boys talking. The boys must have gotten smart to my Mum, hiding their cheek under their Cook Island Maori language. Mum understands and speaks the language fluently. She heard them say "Who is this white lady?"*

*She replied in Cook Island Maori: "Don't you worry about this white lady, I am from here!" The boys ran off.*

Like my Mum, Cooper, Wendt, and myself, mask switching was difficult initially, wearing one mask at all times. At times the mask was uncomfortable. Navigating in this new world a glory box of masks is needed.

The white curtain fluttered in the fresh winds. *Puppet wriggled his hips.*

### **Summary**

Pull up a chair. Our discussion is around the question of how to enhance the opportunities for Pacific people to achieve well in Aotearoa New Zealand. What insights can we gain from exploring stories from my own experience and by investigating the ideas that some Pacific boys, their parents and their teachers share with me? What strategies might we use?

Puppet is me in two guises – *good puppet* and *bad puppet*. Puppet is useful as it provides me with another voice to inform you of my inner thoughts. Good puppet is the external *voice* that informs me of what I should be doing, not what I want to, and comments “*good puppet*”. It is the compliant and obedient person. When puppet exhibits human traits – smiling, wriggling – the inner and real person appears. In the next chapter I introduce “*bad puppet*”, who is struggling to be himself and must bite his lip and comply.

## **Chapter 5: Literature review – the voices of others**

In this chapter I review and discuss research into Pacific Students in learning situations. During this reading of the literature we hear the sound of new "voices": The Observational; The Parental; The Students; The Clash of Cultures. These voices illuminate the discussion of findings in this study (expectations, barriers, and navigation). I examine Hill and Hawk's research project AIMHI (Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools) which provides an insight into high schools, and look at research concerning the learner. Agencies outside of high schools also provide a viewpoint along with the Educational Review Office.

### **Literature Review**

Jones (1985) observes high school aged girls of both Pakeha and Pacific ethnicities, in the same Girls High School setting. He observes and records the girls' actions, reactions, and responses (alongside the teachers' actions) as the girls go through their daily school lessons. Reading Jones strikes a chord with me, as it reminds me of similar situations in my schooling days. In observing the girls Jones notices the classroom interactions between the teacher and Pakeha and Pacific Island girls are markedly different. For Pacific girls, being asked a question as an individual can be excruciating. Fewer questions are asked of them and less attention given to them, thus aiding in the girls' underachievement. Why does the teacher not use any other methods of engaging the Pacific girls? Is this the only practice once noting the lack of responses: don't engage with that girl? In questioning the girls, has the teacher not observed how the girls respond, excruciatingly shyly? The teachers are teaching cardboard cut-outs, objects with no feelings and thoughts. As Jones suggests, and I agree, the teachers aid the girls' underachievement by their limited teaching strategies and lack of understanding of people.

Jones (1991) informs us that when School Cert year (Year 11) arrives, the girls know that this will be their first taste of external examinations. The girls know and link education with hard work and qualifications which might get them a good job. Here are the girls' responses to returning to school:

**Mele:** I think we've got a better chance staying at school instead of going to work or staying at home, because we have to have qualifications.

**Elizabeth:** I want to get my School C because I want a good job when I leave school.

**Soana:** Well, you have to come to school. It's good to be at school. At least if you do good at school, work hard, and if you've got the brains you know ...If you get the qualifications then maybe, maybe! You get a good job.

**AJ:** The school gives you that chance?

**Soana:** It could. It does, but you've got to work for it.

**Mele:** I didn't want to be a bum. [I came back to school] to get a better job, something I enjoy, not something that's just there, and I can earn money. Now I am here, I've got the chance I've got.

***Bad puppet –***

*My supervisor says I should not put in lots of data from other people's research - but I want to – I need to show how my thinking relates to what these girls said.*

***Bad puppet!!!!***

(Jones, 1991, p. 45)

All the girls agree that staying at school betters their chances of "getting a better job." Also in the background I hear: hard work; staying at school; and if you've got the brains. It seems to me there is a deficit feel about the dialogue: "this may be too hard for us." Where is this arising from? Is this dialogue in the classrooms or through the teachers' actions? There seems to be no enthusiasm in their dialogue to return to school, and by returning to school for one more year, they may accidentally end up in a good job. It



seems to me to resemble a factory production line. Moving along the conveyor belt with additives being stuck on to you, no choice, and at some time you fall off the belt either into a good job, or staying at home.

Jones also finds there is intense desire on the part of parents for their children to do well, which manifests itself in fear and perceived threats. The girls' dialogue:

**Mele:** My parents want me to come to school to get a good education and for the future...they push me too hard and they want me to get School C just like in the first year [the first attempt]. But they can't force people to get that you know things are too hard from now on.

**Noeline:** What's going to happen if you don't pass? Some girls I know if they don't get their School C they get a good hiding.

**Elizabeth:** My dad just sort of threatens me, but he doesn't...

**Elizabeth:** Sometimes it's because kids are scared of their parents that they don't pass and instead of doing their school work they're busy worrying about whether or not they are going to pass...

**Lilly:** My mother wants me to go to university. I said to her if I pass school C and I'm going in to 6<sup>th</sup> form and if I get a chance of a nursing course, I'm going to take it and she told me to go university and sit your degree and that.

(Jones, 1991, p.56-57)

I think these threats may be inherited from their parents' parenting, veiling their desire for their children to do well, the high expectations. I think the parents' lack of educational understanding has them seeing education as a conveyor belt: in one end out the other. They threaten the girls along the way in the hope of scaring them into success. Hearing

my Mum talking about our exam results and knowing she was showing us off was another manifestation of her high expectations of her children (Appendix 1).

Jones (1991) continues, telling of Pacific high school girls as they are caught in hard to understand robotic classroom strategies. Jones comments:

Much of this anxiety seemed to me be an inevitable corollary of the strategies of "hard work" which the 5 Mason girls had learned and practised in the classroom. Having worked hard at "getting down" the teachers knowledge, these girls then have to face their incomprehensible notes. (Jones, 1991, p. 167)

Jones observes how "hard" the girls work in getting down the teachers notes. Notes no doubt made up by a university graduate, written onto a blackboard, with the students "told" to "copy this down!" The girls would feel pleased to have gotten the notes written down. The teacher would be pleased in seeing the girls all copying from the blackboard. The girls now have "perfect" notes. Perfectly useless to them as they attempt to understand "Miss's" notes at home, or prepare for examinations. This boring teaching strategy is good for class control and boredom, but contributes very little to the learning of the "notes." Teachers talking (and teaching) to cardboard cut outs, inert objects, that are silently controlled. No noise: the perfect class.

The girls have a divine safety net should they fail at school:

- AJ:** So why won't you get School Cert?
- Cherie:** People get given different sorts of things to do. When God gives out our gifts, he gives differently to everyone.
- AJ:** Why would God give those in top stream girls more of what it takes to get School Cert?
- Cherie:** I don't know ... [she is irritated at the impertinence of the question].
- Mele:** Who cares? It's just life.
- Rapeka:** God wants us all to be good at something. It can't always be school work you know.

(Jones, 1991, p. 167)

Jones is mentioning the Churches influence in Pacific Island life, right through to the classroom. To me, it displays the lack of understanding of the educational system, and my referencing it as a "conveyer belt" surfaces again. If the girls just attend school, or go to church and pray longer or harder, things will turn out ok. No understanding of what is going on, and no accountability. If the girls understood "how it worked" maybe they would be accountable and influence the outcomes?

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1981), (as cited in Jones, 1991), investigates more closely by moving into the Samoan families and talking to the parents of children who attend primary school. The parents acknowledge the relationship with education and economic mobility. The parents describe their interactions with their children:

We say to them, "Do you want to spend the rest of your life in a factory like us? Then go to school."

He comes home. I say, "What did you do at school today? All they do is sing songs. I say, "That's no good. You go for a job...you can't sing a song."

(Jones, 1991, p.56)

Many parents in this study want their children to go to university and get professional jobs. They do not want their children to end up in low paying jobs like themselves, in factory positions. The parents use that to encourage their children onto greater heights in education. But do the parents understand the educational process? It is more than entering the school gate, in through the classroom door, and being seated at a desk, in front of a teacher. Do they think it is like a factory: in one end and out the other? Not understanding the educational school process leads to the parents questioning the validity of the children's classroom activities. The parents' desire for a better life for their children must be admired. My parents also pushed going to school, but never painted a picture of what the "goal" looked like (see Appendix 1).

Cahill, (2006) in her work "Crossing the Road from School to Secondary School", privileges the voices of participants, Samoan parents who raised concerns about the "taken-for-granted assumptions that leave Samoan children disadvantaged within the New Zealand school system" (Cahill, 2006, p. 57). Cahill presents her data by re-presenting the parents' "voices" as the parents speak on various topics:

**Parent:** We want them to get qualifications and get good jobs and secure themselves for futures. We want them to get higher qualifications-educational qualifications – and ...uh...get good jobs instead of what we are doing, because... uh ...we haven't been educated well.

I think most parents do have very high expectations of their children when they attend school because of the qualifications that the parents never had. They did have qualifications but comparing to the children in other countries it's quite ridiculous. I think how it is for most of the parents that were educated in Samoa. I don't mean getting the degree, but basic schooling. Here their children attend school. That's the reason for the expectations that were born here get higher education than parents, which is my aim too for my boys.

They [children] also carry on what their parents...um...expects of them to be at school. It's something that our people thinking of. Parents, they so relying on bringing their kids in school, and they're expecting of learning.

(Cahill, 2006, p.62)

Like all parents they want their children to be successful in the classroom and to gain the highest possible qualification. Cahill continues by re-presenting her data in a way that also provides the parents understandings of the educational setting that their children occupy. My Mum and the school always knew where each other stood, especially if one of her kids had skirmished with authority (Appendix 1).

Parents' experience how the limits of their own education influence their expectations of their New Zealand-born children. For example, this is what many Samoan parents expect of teachers: teachers are responsible for keeping up the children's motivation while they are at school; they ought to be approachable and provide encouragement when students are struggling; teachers should deliver to students on promises made to parents. Parents

understand the role of teaching to be an extension into the educational arena of the kind of care and attention they themselves give their children at home; parents believe teachers are racist and discriminatory in their treatment of Samoan students; and parents believe teachers are insensitive to, and either ignorant or dismissive of, Samoan cultural traditions.

Cahill is presenting the voices of the parents, who are lost in understanding the teachers' world. Their expectations of what a teacher should be doing and not doing are, from their cultural perspective, not being met. At the same time, the teachers do not understand the Samoan world, which leads to a clashing of two worlds and loss of respect and understanding.

Cahill describes the two worlds that the Samoan student must travel as "less a road than a perilous, uncharted ravine" (Cahill, 2006, p. 68): the continual crossing of home (Samoan world) and school (palangi world), and back again. I, with Cahill, endorse the assertion of Neville-Tisdall (2002) that teachers need to be trained as inclusive communicators, culturally aware, genuinely relational in their attitude to students, and enthusiastic, flexible and creative practitioners (Cahill, 2006, p.69). That is a good statement, good headlines, now what does that look like? What actions are required to make it happen?

Fogarty (1992) investigates the concerns of adolescent Samoan girls in a New Zealand high school. A strong emphasis is placed on how the girls experience the tension between the two cultures, with close attention to school, home and family life, and language and culture.

A lot of the girls experience some form of racism: colour being laughed at; teachers preferring Palangi; negative stereotyping; being called names; and "no response" given: they remain silent. The girls also told of poorly explained "new topics", hurried teaching, language too difficult to understand, and being too scared to ask the teacher for help. Fogarty also found that the girls worry about homework, followed by the commitments

around the family home, the cooking and cleaning, and looking after younger children and helping relatives.

Forgarty is telling how it is for the Pacific Island girls, as they encounter Pakeha culture inside a school setting, being exposed to name calling, bad teaching, and total disregard of their culture. Guessing that the girls would be compliant, with their silence and obedience, the teacher then marches in and overpowers them with one way teaching: me to you and be quiet!, having no understanding of the student's lives, the student family commitments after school, and developing no relationship with their students.

In her study of immigrant woman, Jansen (1990) cites Petelo:

"I have in my arms both ways. I can see the Tokelau way, it's good. I can see the papalagi way, it's good. I don't want to put one down, and lift the other up. I can carry both of them." (Jansen, 1990, p.51)

Jansen provides a lens into Petelo's life and not the writer's interpretation. Petelo is able to articulate the two worlds she encounters, in which she values both worlds. Not wanting to choose one over the other. Is she afraid the one she chooses may be the lesser one? Or, will the newer one be grasped because it is unknown and perceived to be necessary, while she is already conversant with her Tokelauan culture.

Nakhid (2003) acknowledges the underachievement of Pasifika students in New Zealand schools in her study of finding out the perceptions that Pasifika students and teachers hold of themselves and each other. She finds that the conflict between the perceptions of the students and teachers results in a number of institutional practices that adversely affect the academic achievement of these students.

Nakhid (2003) states that researchers have put forward numerous explanations for the poor academic performance of Pasifika students: limited English skills, lack of parental interest, and low socioeconomic status. Through these perceptions, institutions and

schools fail to recognise and value Pasifika students. For example, teachers say that Pacific Island students prefer “one-to-one”

**Researcher:** The teachers say Pacific Island students prefer “one-to-one”.

**Tavita:** Nah. That’s when you get stuck and you don’t want to say anything.

**Researcher:** What do you mean?

**Tavita:** Like cos teacher’s near you and you can’t find the words.

**Joseph:** Nah, that’s good. Cos like last time they said like they always get like shame talking in front of the class, so it’s good if you get to talk just to the teacher, cos then no one else can...

**Tavita:** One-to-one, you’re too scared to make mistakes and the teacher’s like...

(Nakhid, 2003, p. 219)

The teachers are surprised that these Pasifika students do not like “one-to-one” teaching, and are uncomfortable in the presence of the teacher. The teacher may be thinking: "I am giving personal attention to this student; I am making them feel special", while not realising that they are attracting unwanted attention to the student, and making the student fear that this act is signalling to the others "I am dumb and the teacher is helping me."

Through "mediated dialogue" methodology, Nakhid is able to provide a space for teachers and students to "dialogue" with each other. I like having the key voices of the process (in the classroom) where we are able to get closer to the original sources for the "voices." What would happen if this process was quickened? If it did not need the meeting time to closely inspect the "voices." Then both "voices" could make adjustments sooner and be more responsive and understanding of each other. Unlike my school life, in which there was no "mediated dialogue" to find out how it was for me (Appendix 1).

Fitzpatrick (2005), in "Hauora and Physical Education in New Zealand: Perspectives of Maori and Pasifika Students", argues that the inclusion of student perspectives is needed in this particular debate, and that "it is students' experiences, thoughts, reflections and

actions that should sit at the heart of education" (Fitzpatrick, 2005, p. 40). Like Jones (1991), Fitzpatrick believes that the agency the individual brings to their learning experiences allows them to succeed at school despite exclusive and exclusionary cultural norms. As Nakhid and Fitzpatrick say, allowing the students to speak for themselves gets us to a closer understanding of the learners world.

Fletcher, Parkhill, and Fa'aoi (2005) look to identify the literacy practices and other influences that support Pasifika students who are achieving at average or above-average in reading and writing. The researchers are able to create a list, in order of importance, of empowering variables:

The centrality of parental support and love.

The maintenance of cultural identity for Pasifika people.

The importance of high expectations from school staff and parents of Pasifika Students' success.

The importance of home-school relationships.

The central role of the church.

The value of an ICT-supported learning environment.

(Fletcher et al, 2005, p.7)

Fletcher et al. (2005) list strategies/practices and influences that support Pacific Island students who are achieving at average or above-average. It is good to see that they have high expectations and are focussed on average and above-average achievement, and with a list of positive actions that parents and care-givers can utilise.

Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'aoi, & Taleni (2008) tell of our ever increasing and changing world in which minority groups sit, underachieving in literacy, and exhibiting disengagement and alienation at school. In an attempt to understand the realities they face, researchers need to listen to the voices of these minority groups as they endeavour to become literate. What the researchers find is that the Pasifika students feel more secure and confident in their literacy learning in school settings that acknowledge their culture and seek



alignment between school and home. "We deem home influences highly important to the acquisition of the students' literacy skills, and urge schools to consider these when seeking partnerships between home and school" (Fletcher et al, 2008, p.8). These influences include:

- An emotionally secure and positive home environment, with time and space to study quietly.
- Acknowledgement of the role the church plays in Pasifika students' literacy learning through the recitation of texts from the bible.
- A high level of commitment by parents to their children's learning.  
(Fletcher et al, 2008, p. 8)

This is similar to my home environment when I was young, where both parents worked as a unit to provide a secure and loving home for their kids. There may have been 7-9 kids in the house (depending on who had left home), but there was always a place to be found to study. Plus the church's influence had a major role in the workings of the home (Appendix).

Fletcher et al (2008) also create a list of favourable school practices, after comments from and discussions with the students, the parents, and the Pasifika communities:

- Effective classroom management
- Decreasing and discouraging instances of bullying both inside and outside the classroom
- Provision of more culturally inclusive resources
- Opportunities for students to read and write about their own culture
- Quiet classrooms when students are writing and reading
- Not forcing students to read aloud in a reading group or to the whole class

- Teachers providing more explicit scaffolds for writing
- Teachers developing the ability to actively engage all students when they (the teachers) read aloud
- Teachers providing more detailed feedback and feed forward on the students writing.

(Fletcher et al, 2008, p.8)

The writers conclude by saying that as the classroom ethnicity grows, so does the skills of the teacher in their abilities to organise, to respect, to value, and to encourage students to know that their cultural beliefs are central to their learning.

Jones cites Douglas Barnes (1976), who argues that talking is a central ingredient in learning, that through talking we re-make knowledge for ourselves. The more the learner is given the opportunity to think aloud, the more she can formulate explanations and interpretations, and evaluate her own knowledge. Talking is an important part of the New Zealand education system that students need to master. Barnes' re-making of knowledge by talking, I think, fits people in general. When you observe any high school student at interval or lunchtime, what are they doing? Talking and playing. By bringing those two factors into the classroom, you are bound to engage the students. And I think Pacific Islanders love to be together, and to talk and talk. Now the teacher needs to engage the students into classroom talk.

With Barnes (1976), Fletcher et al (2005) and (2008), researchers have provided lists of possibilities and actions to move our Pacific Island students forward. I have also noticed Pacific Island researchers in two of the research teams. Have they provided another lens on the same situation? Or, are these researchers Pacifically sensitive, and are the research designs getting closer to the students world?

Jan Hill and Kay Hawk (1998) led a research team for a project called AIMHI (Achievement in Multi-Cultural High Schools), that looks into raising the achievement levels of the students in eight low-decile high schools with high ratios of Pacific Island

and Maori students. The outcomes of the research show a number of powerful influences on student achievement over which schools have no control. Many of these are linked to poverty: parents and caregivers without jobs, poor housing conditions, lack of disposable dollars to provide basic gear and equipment that middle class students take for granted, and family dysfunction. To unpack these individually and discuss separately is difficult, as they are inextricably interconnected.

It is helpful to stand in the students' shoes in order to understand their reality, to have an understanding of the worlds they inhabit and move between, and to have an understanding of the strategies they use to cope with the conflicting values, expectations, and pressures of the different worlds. Most of these students live in five or six worlds. (Hill and Hawk, 1998, p. 1)

The students learn to live in these multi-worlds, with their numerous cultures and gatekeepers, while the parents are only familiar with three worlds: family, cultural, and church. Difficulties arise for the students when two or more of these worlds are in conflict with each other. For example, in the family and church world children do not challenge or question either. Whilst at school, the students are encouraged to question as part of the learning process.

Jan Hill and Kay Hawk (1998) note that to have learning occur, students must present themselves in the teachable state. Being in a healthy and teachable state is a prerequisite for effective learning. Lacking breakfast; poor vision and hearing; sexual health problems; rheumatic fever and skin diseases; poor dental health; and smoking and substance abuse all help in feeding underachievement in the classroom.

Hill and Hawk provide a list of personal attitudes and attributes that teachers exhibit which help students learn: showing respect for the students and treating them as individuals; being able to relate to cultures other than their own; being able to relate to them as young adults; maintaining confidentiality; a commitment to preparing well for lessons; and a sense of humour. This is similar to my experiences with the teachers I engaged with.

Also listed are pedagogical knowledge and skills that assist the students learning: being firm; being fair; making the curriculum real; explanations in everyday language; making lessons interesting and varied; group work; multi-level teaching; encouragement; and non-confrontational behaviour management.

Plus the not so nice bits about teachers that hinder students learning: lack of commitment or unprepared lessons; negativity; anger; put downs; racism; favouring certain students; lecturing, talking too much; getting students to copy and summarise; moving on too quickly; actively discouraging students from asking questions; excessive control ; and not understanding non-New Zealand teacher accents.

Hawk and Hill (1998) also looked at the implications for schools and teachers in multi-cultural schools. In the students' world most of these factors: family; culture; school; peer; work; and church, are outside the control of the school, and affect the teachers and students daily. As the students encounter this multi world, Hawk and Hill suggest strategies that may help the student: induction programme; horizontal forms; home rooms; longer periods and block teaching; holistic care; formative assessment; a parent booklet; using Pacific radio; employing community liaison staff; Homework Centres; Student support centres; and a learning diary. These "implications" arise from Hawk and Hill listening to the Pacific Island community and "walking" in their shoes, to gain an insight into the needs and wants of the school communities. Not an observer's point of view but a Pacific Island point of view.

Continuing on from AIMHI, Hill and Hawk (2003) add the importance of the attributes and skills of the teachers. The major cog is the relationship between the teacher and their students. Inside of this relationship are the following aspects: understanding the worlds of the students; respect; caring; being fair; giving themselves; perseverance and patience. It is a complex world and when you attempt to identify or name a fragment of a possible strategy involving a teacher and a Pacific Island student it is fraught with the danger of

getting it wrong. What I appreciate with Hill and Hawk is that they have attempted to "itemise" a possible strategy and provide a starting point.

Hawk, Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland's (2001) presentation tells of the dominant theme that emerges from the three research projects: relationships. The relationship between the teacher and the learner, and when that exists, students are more motivated to learn, and more actively participate in their learning.

From the "voices" of the teachers and students emerges attributes that are perceived as important in a relationship: empathy; caring; respect; going the extra mile; passion to enthuse/motivate; patience and perseverance; and belief in their ability. The quality of the relationships is not so important in higher decile schools (cited Hill and Hawk, 1998) as the students will achieve in spite of their relationship with their teachers. Unlike Maori and Pacific Island students, where the relationship is so important, Pacific Islanders love people and being with each other. They enjoy serving people, making them smile, and taking care of them. Taking this into the classroom, as a teacher and as a school, would put smiles on lots of families. If I enjoyed being in class with that teacher, as a student, I would go that extra mile in my work.

Ferguson, Gorinski, Wendt Samu, & Mara (2008), in their research of "Experiences of Pasifika Learners in the Classroom", explore what works for young Pasifika learners in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in primary and secondary education. What the study reflects is an increasing recognition that collaboration and effective partnerships amongst Pasifika parents, families, and communities, and teachers in schools, is one of the most effective ways forward in terms of maximising Pasifika learner achievement levels.

Teachers found the importance of understanding both the environment and cultures of the parents of their students. One teacher says "...it's about finding that common ground...gaining trust...and being totally open..." (p. 51). Another teacher tells of their liaison between home and school to assist a student:

[A boy had problems] I would always go there personally to ...have a chat...to share with them [his family, his parents] the positive things the boy had done...because they always seemed to hear from the school about the negative things...[They live] just across the road...[his/her intention was casually popping in to share positives]...so that sharing with the family would permeate in his home...I needed to create a smoother...different energy between the mother and myself...I would just casually, informally drop by...[it's about] relating to people...cutting through the crap...I know that for him that would have such an impact on the way that they treat him at home and when he comes back to school the next day...he is heaps better. (Ferguson et al, 2008, p.52)

There are five important messages that came from this study:

- One, establishing clear communications between all parties involved in the educative process and addressing contradictions as soon as they arise
- Two, the need to take cognisance of the linguist diversities of Pasifika learners, as individual communities push for Pasifika inclusion into the curriculum and classroom
- Three, identifying the mechanisms within the teaching and learning process that improve teacher-Pasifika learner interactions
- Four, teachers being pedagogically effective and creating a culturally validated classroom and practice
- And five, creating effective family-school relationships

The messages are about listening to each other and working together. Valuing each other's culture and holding hands, with a new understanding, to move forward together.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is an international standardised study that assesses and compares how well countries are preparing their 15-year-old students to meet real-life opportunities and challenges. What PISA finds is that

there are Asian, Maori, Pakeha-European and Pasifika students who perform at the highest level of scientific literacy. However, Pakeha-European and Asian students are more likely to be at the higher end while Maori and Pasifika are over represented at the lower end.

Utilising PISA as a measuring "world" tool to see how we (the many cultures of New Zealand) situate in the world, and for it to be used regularly, is fine as far as it goes. But how relevant is it to the understanding of our New Zealand cultures? How does this "world tool" recognise and understand the numerous cultures of the World or relate to our struggle to understand Maori, let alone Pacific Islanders?

Auckland University's Starpath Project's (2008) aim is to identify critical transition points at which under-represented groups of students in tertiary education fail to progress along the educational pathway. It also looks at understanding the barriers that stop these students. The key barriers identified are: the organisation and use of student data information systems; decision-making concerning course choices leading to qualifications; university admission processes; and the nature of academic support programmes and their status in institutions (Executive Summary, p. 4).

What they find is that more informed adult guidance is required in the students NCEA subject selection. McKinley, Starpath Director, says, "Parents need to get themselves educated about NCEA early on in their child's secondary career, and that means by the end of their first year in high school. If they leave it until Year 10 or 11 it is often too late" (McKinley, 29/06/09). Also, "credit gathering" or taking "easy" or fewer "academic" subjects, may create barriers later on, as the student progresses on to tertiary.

What they find early on in the project is the lack of long-term data on student progression, both in particular schools and across the educational system. Having that data provides a starting point and target for the student. Also knowing how key barriers impact on student pathways is very helpful. Knowing that data, Starpath have created strategies to intervene and move the student forward. Having academic counselling and

target setting interventions has led to raising Pacific and Maori achievement. As has restructured parent-teacher interviews, whereby each parent is sent a letter, giving a brief outline of the academic counselling programme, emphasising the reasons why the school wanted the parents involved with their schooling, and allocating an appointment time with their student's Form Teacher.

Starpath's Director says, "Parents need to get themselves educated ...", adding that the parents need to be more informed about NCEA (McKinley, 2009). Inside of this comment lays the real crux: parents need to become involved with their children's education, not just by sending them to the "buildings" of the school, but by learning to assist in the whole learning process. My parents just directed the family towards the school site, not being able to assist in the learning side. I am left wondering what could have been possible if my parents were educationally aware.

In 2004, The Educational Review Office (ERO) looked into schools in Auckland and Northland which had Pacific Island students, seeing that seventy three percent of all Pacific students in New Zealand attend schools in this area. In evaluating the schools, the ERO asks four questions:

- What do schools know about the achievement of Pacific students, and how do they use this information?
- What do schools know about attendance, retention, suspension and stand-downs of Pacific students and how do they use this information?
- What initiatives do schools have in place to improve outcomes for Pacific students?
- How do schools engage with Pacific families and communities?

(ERO, 2004)

The ERO report concludes that the assessments needs more breadth and analysis, which means the collection of information, to be useful, needs to have more depth. The ERO does not have enough information to make solid suggestions. Were the questions that led



to this conclusion too vague? Maybe a working relationship with the intended group before evaluating may have been useful.

In 2006, the Educational Review Office reports on how effectively schools are responding to the needs of Pacific students. The ERO findings state the percentage of schools that achieved the tasks that were evaluated. I have gone in the opposite direction and look at what percentages of schools failed in the evaluated task. For example, sixty eight percent (68%) of schools had collected useful information about the achievement of individual Pacific students and groups of Pacific students. Thirty two percent (32%) did not collect information! Another example: seventy five percent (75%) of schools had not put in any specific programmes to improve Pacific student achievement. Only twenty five percent (25%) did implement programmes!

The ERO is playing with numbers to paint a "nice picture," attracting as little attention as possible. If 75% of schools had not implemented any improvement programs, and I was a parent, I would be very upset and would create a stir.

The ERO "measures" what is happening in schools at the moment. What amazes me is the lackadaisical way in which schools record the academic passage of Pacific Island students. There seems to be no concerted effort and care to record and monitor Pacific Island students. Even when schools are requested to complete certain tasks, there is not a full hearted response. If that is the response to the ERO, how is it for the students in the schools? Without good data to show where the student is currently at, how can you move the student forward? Something is missing at the chalk face. I reflect back to when I was presented with "the top Maori Pupils Award" and I was a Pacific Island student!

### **Summary**

Our discussion is around the question of how to enhance the opportunities for Pacific people to achieve well in Aotearoa New Zealand. What insights can we gain from exploring stories from other people's observations and by investigating ideas that some

Pacific boys, their parents, and their teachers share with me? What strategies might we use?

By listening to the Pacific students we are able to hear how they interpret their world and get an understanding of their culture – how home functions, who lives at home. Here I introduce *bad puppet*. Bad puppet is helping good puppet to see two worlds – and that both puppets are one – sometimes good puppet needs to be quiet in order to let creativity and fun emerge. By silencing bad puppet perhaps good puppet is actually a form of hegemony and needs to be named as such (see next chapter).

*Puppet grimaces.*

## Chapter 6: Cultural context

### Introduction

I have called this chapter "Cultural context" to provide "my" context, in which this study is situated. Inside of this chapter, I have created three parts. One: Hegemony, where I look to see what this term means and how it works in the educational system. Two: Cultural Capital, where I investigate how it is being utilised as a tool in the educational system. Three: Reversing Deficit Conceptualisation, where I suggest the rejecting of deficit thinking approaches.

As I explore ideas from the literature about hegemony, cultural capital and deficit theory, I recognise that this writing is of a particular, specialist, somewhat alien kind. I am not used to reading these technical terms. It is hard for a practitioner like myself to understand what these ideas mean. In this chapter I show that the difficulties I have had in grappling with this material are echoes of my own difficulties at school. *I use italics to report on my reactions and recollections.* I shall show how I see my own story being repeated, now, as I explore these ideas. This experience gives me insights into how I can address the hegemonic structures that surround me. My discussion of hegemony, cultural capital and deficit thinking in relation to my own learning gives me insights into what to look for in the data from my discussions with Pacific Island boys, their teachers, and their families.

### Hegemony

*I discovered Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970) in the Masters program. The book or the author did not mean a thing to me. Maybe it was about something "oppressing." I purchased the little red book (actually, red and yellow and black) and struggled to read and understand it. With words like objectivize, subjectivism, necrophilous, and antialogical action, it was not bedtime reading. With it generating interest in my class, I decided to read it.*

Freire, cited by George (2004), argues that the lack of knowledge and real interest are a direct result of economic and political domination by majority groups. Utilising the education system in preserving a culture of silence and dominance as the dominant group's culture and values are imposed on minority groups, which assists in preserving the status quo (George, 2004, p.37).

"Lack of knowledge" may also mean they are not aware of what is happening. Or the dominant system has done a good job in silencing the minorities. "Lack of real interest" may also mean the dominant group is winning by years of training that the minorities think that this is normal, as it is, the status quo. "Domination by majority groups" signifies they are already in a superior position and will continue to drive and lead the system.. They control the system therefore they control the game. "Culture of silence" is where the system is not questioned, and a silent air pervades the dominated groups. Where the dominated accept the current situation as normal, and continues on in silence. And "preserving the status quo" means to me that nothing changes and it re-births itself. The schooling process with its predetermined outcomes continues on producing the same outcomes, preserving the status quo.

I fight the system with my tooth pick, poking it in many positions to create a slight irritation, or to create a small seeding place to grow a doubt or a thought. Hoping it may one day give rise to another irritation or thought, and another. The boys and parents are oblivious to the silent war, as they have rushed in, with their parents' and grandparents' encouragement, and become part of the transformation factory, being compliant minorities, marching to the beat of the dominant drum.

*Hegemony would be spelt **hedgemoney** by me, because it sounds like hedge-money. I had no idea what the word looked like, or its meaning. Later my brother started enlightening me about his favourite literacy advocate Paulo Freire and the term hegemony. It opened my eyes and I saw the world differently. The unseen forces that controlled the educational and economic systems of our country.*

Apple (1979) talks about schools and its hegemonic purposes.

...one of the ways schools are used for hegemonic purposes is in their teaching of cultural and economic values and dispositions that are supposedly "shared by all", while at the same time "guaranteeing" that only a specified number of students are selected for higher levels of education because of their "ability" to contribute to the maximization of the production of the technical knowledge also needed for the economy. (Apple, 1979, p.61)

"Shared by all" implies everyone gets a fair share or portion of the shared "thing". You, the neighbours, your cousins, all get a fair share of what is about to be divided.

"Guaranteeing" to me means everyone will receive an equal, if not fair, share of what is being shared. "Ability" refers to ones skills or cleverness in given situations. Pulling these phrases together into a school setting, in the hands of dominant classes (leaders or ruler), I would think everyone gets their fair share of what is being shared. Apple mentions "guarantee" in which he means the dominant class will "guarantee" that "their" youngsters will receive **all** of the "shared by all" and they will ensure that according to "ability" they will exclude the lower classes. Here the school is covertly utilised to promulgate the aspirations (hegemony) of the dominant class.

Eisner (1998) provides a view of a school and its workings on a normal day, as he casts his mechanical eye over proceedings.

The day is uniformly ordered so that at any given time one can know just who is where doing what. Yet this order has consequences as well. Students in high schools move every fifty minutes, seven times a day. They have six minutes to get from one location to another. When a secondary school has fifteen hundred or more students, the movement between classes is reminiscent of a game of musical chairs or a moving conveyor belt. Punctuality is important. It becomes necessary for students to turn their attention on and off on a basis of clock time, rather than psychological time. Shifting cognitive gears from math to history, from history to science, from science to art, from art to French, from French to physical education is something that students must learn to do – or at least to appear to do.

(Eisner, 1998, p.74)

Eisner is looking and seeing young students, humans, being mechanised onto a factory conveyor belt. And like clockwork everyone changes after fifty minutes, students and teachers. Also the brain has to switch from one subject to another, but only after the clock

says so. The human element has been eliminated and the mechanical clock decides. As you get accustomed to one teacher and their habits, it is time to move on to another teacher. This quick- fire relationship building routine is repeated six to seven times a day, five days a week, forty times a year.

*I found a strategy in dealing with the "factory" and teachers; I kept quiet and did not open my mouth. Minimizing the possibility of looking dumb, getting the answer wrong, upsetting the teacher, or getting into trouble. I was silent. I was compliant.*

Eisner now questions whether the curriculum allows students to practice what has been learnt.

Does this curriculum afford students opportunities to practice the skills they have learned, or are these skills left to atrophy after they have been introduced.

(Eisner, 1998, p. 76)

Eisner's question about practicing skills has two sides to it. One, the learned skills came from outside the classroom and with the student. So the cultural capital of the student is recognised and shared. Two, the learned skill was introduced in class as part of the "introduced" curriculum of which the student has no choice in its learning. The "learned" skills may have been mastered, only to be made more difficult by being asked to sit an entry examination, a dominant class cultural hurdle, to move to the next level.

*I remember being excluded from a class, and felt I had been wronged. I had worked diligently for two years, only to be refused entry. If my parents had been privileged to the hegemony "knowledge", they could have guided me through to the next stage.*

Brookfield (1995) in citing Antonio Gramsci, describes hegemony:

The process whereby ideas, structures, and actions come to be seen by the majority of people as wholly natural, preordained, and working for their own good, when in fact they are constructed and transmitted by powerful minority interests to protect the status quo that serve those interests.

(Brookfield, 1995, p. 15)

"...as wholly natural, preordained, and working for their own good..." to me means that most of the world is viewing the educational process as natural and preordained, and this is the way things work. Brookfield follows up with these words: "...in fact they are constructed and transmitted by powerful minority interests..." informing me that there are a small number of people controlling a lot of people, for their own ends. That is a deliberate act to dominate and control minorities.

*That is big stuff! How do you "see" what you cannot see? How do you look behind the machinery of society with all its "smaller" machinations contributing to the whole picture? How do you find whose interests are being served, and who they are? How do you counter this? Create another hegemonic machine that competes against or with the dominant interests? Or, inform the minorities?*

### **Cultural capital**

*My brother used the term "cultural capital" once when we were talking about my studies. I had not met the term before. I wondered, was this a city, a capital city, or the town where most Maori live? Or was it a capital letter? Was the culture Maori, or Pacific Island? I investigated and found Lareau (1988) which discusses Bourdieu and cultural capital. I have broken one passage into three parts.*

The first part of this discussion is about the different cultures that exist between home and school. Lareau (1988) explains ...

(I) ... that schools draw unevenly on the social and cultural resources of members of society. For example, schools utilize particular linguistic structures, authority patterns, and types of curricula: children from higher social locations enter schools already familiar with these social arrangements. (Lareau, 1988, p. 73)

I take this to mean that children from higher social locations are already used to the social arrangements of schools when they enter school. They are familiar with the language, the rules, and how teaching and learning would take place. I was not. I was placed in a bottom class when I entered school, but as I got used to the rules and what was expected I

drifted to the top of the class and over several years was promoted until at the end of the fourth form I was told that I would be in the top class in the following year. Initially I did not have the “cultural capital” that was valued by the school. Over time I developed the necessary skills and knowledge to be able to succeed in culture that operated in ways that I did not initially understand. The concept of cultural capital gave me with a lens on the lived experiences of the boys I interviewed: in what ways did the “linguistic structures, authority patterns, and types of curricula” they experienced at school match their home experiences?

*Lareau uses the words "Higher social locations" which sounds like a formal occasion that I would never be invited to. Higher? Really? But is one culture higher than another? More powerful, yes, but higher, no! And "social arrangements" - I envisage something that has been pre-arranged and I have no control over. A puppeteer in action?*

The second quotation points to the cultural experiences in children’s homes.

(II) Bourdieu maintains the cultural experiences in the home facilitate children’s adjustment to school and academic achievement, thereby transforming cultural resources into what he calls cultural capital. (Lareau, 1988, p. 73)

"Cultural experiences in the home" for me means whatever is happening in the home. Whatever culture, race, or religious following you are, is fine. "Facilitate children’s adjustment to school and academic achievement" means little changes will be needed to fit into school, and this will lead to academic achievement in school. And "cultural capital" meaning if you bring home experiences to school, make little changes in fitting into school, your schooling will flow from there.

*If I make the changes and follow the other children of the school, I will be successful, and maybe one day I will be top of my class.*

The third quotation mentions the impediments to children’s education.

(III) Bourdieu's analysis points to the importance of class and class cultures in facilitating or impeding children’s (or parents’) negotiating of the process of schooling. (Lareau, 1988, p. 73)



"Importance" means it is very important, it must be understood. "Class and class structures" has an unreachable sound about it, as though it is fixed, immovable.

"Facilitating" conjures up helping, arriving at the crossroads and someone is there to point you in the right direction. "Impeding" sounds like stopping someone or something, or making the journey more arduous. And the "process of schooling" sounds like all the moving parts and non-moving parts that make up a school.

*If I take Bourdieu's analysis, which would show me where the hurdles or the obstacle are, I will be able dance around those areas.*

Bringing Loreau's (1988) passage together, I find that I had to fight my way through school, and realised some factors stacked against me. I was born to ethnic minority parents, Cook Islanders. When I attended school, it did not resemble my home life or my parents' cultural upbringing. When I did well at sports, regional coaches would ring my Dad asking if I would represent the region. Coaches wanted me because I was a talented player (even though my Dad would not allow me to play on Sundays. The Sabbath was a day of rest and praise for my Dad's Lord). When I did well at school, teachers did not ring home saying, "Phillip did extremely well in exams!" When I did do well and won a place in the top class, as promised by the principal, my name was missing from the roll.

*It's not fair! I play to their rules and win, and then they change the rules again. Shall I keep playing?*

Lamont and Lareau (1988) continue on with "cultural capital" and talk about schools. I have broken one passage into two, for me to better understand. The first quotation informs us about schools.

(I)...schools are not socially neutral institutions but reflect the experiences of the "dominant class." (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 155)

"Not" to me means not allowed, not part of the game, no you cannot do that. "Not socially neutral institutions" means to me schools are a good place to be at. I can remember when I ran and skipped to primary school without a care in the world. Wanting to meet my friends or to play in the sandpit. Now I am informed it is not a neutral happy place where we all have fun. Parents are oblivious to the hidden workings of the school, and unwittingly usher their children towards to schools of transformation.

*If I take on the "dominant class" characteristics, could I become a transformer?*

The second quotation points to not achieving natural familiarity to the system.

(II) Although they can acquire the social, linguistic, and cultural competencies which characterize the upper middle and middle class, they can never achieve the natural familiarity of those born to these classes and are academically penalized on this basis (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 155).

"Can acquire" means with no work, or little work, or lots of work, you can get what you are aiming for. If you do the study, the rewards are there for you. And "can never achieve" means no matter how much work or study you do, you will never ever ever pass. If your parents are not from the chosen class, your chances of success in this educational system are nil!

Bringing the quotation together, the system is stacked against the minority. To me it is there to protect the dominant class and to keep the minorities away from their playground. By being left out of the top class after topping the class; and being placed in subjects that reflected my parents' profession, or social class: Pacific Islander, Mill Hand: woodwork, technical drawing, and book keeping, the dominant class maintains its superior position.

*If I let the system take care of me, by doing nothing, what could I do if I did something? I could choose subjects that "they" chose, and beat them in the classroom.*

Lareau and Horvat (1999) indicate that the more "cultural capital" you have the more advantaged you will be in school and leaving the lower classes behind.

One of Bourdieu's major insights on educational inequality is that students with more valuable social and cultural capital fare better in school than do their otherwise-comparable peers with less valuable social and cultural capital. (Lareau & Horvat, 1999, p. 37)

My parents came to New Zealand knowing the schooling system was far superior to their Island schools. With hard work, anything was achievable and the world would be at your feet. Anything was possible. They arrived, bore children and sent them to school, not knowing how cultural capital worked, let alone knowing the term. Their children were being blindingly led by ignorance and hope.

*My Dad always asked the question: is he a good person, or is this good. Always trusting in people and government. If my Dad was alive today and he knew about cultural capital, what would be the answer to his question?*

*Seeing Dad is not here, I would learn the skills of the new game.*

Bernstein (2003), Lamont and Lareau (1988), and Lareau and Horvat (1999), mention the transmission of codes.

Class relations generate, distribute, reproduce, and legitimate distinctive forms of communication which transmit dominant and dominated codes and that subjects are differentially positioned by these codes of acquiring them...codes are culturally determined positioning devices. (Bernstein, 2003, p. 13)

"... codes are culturally determined positioning devices." You cannot change them; you are born into your position. These are devices that cull out and prevent infiltration by the lower classes. During school I topped my class. The further I climbed, the more difficult it became. Missing out on the top class, working to get into university, sitting exams at university, these steps or devices are designed to keep you out and the dominant classes in control.

*If I treat each "device" as a realignment check: understanding the classroom material; learn to use "their" language; do well in exams; be friendly with the teacher; have lots of "them" as my friends, I should do ok.*

Giroux (1988) adds his "cultural capital" into the educational mix by informing us how schools institutionalize behaviour.

The concept of cultural capital also represents certain ways of talking, acting, moving, dressing, and socializing that are institutionalized by schools. Schools are not merely instructional sites but also sites where the culture of the dominant society is learned and where students experience the difference between those status and class distinctions that exist in larger society. (Giroux, 1988, p.5-6)

Now we have school rules or cultural capital rules, which inform us how we speak, how we walk, how we dress, how we think, and how we work. It is a place where the dominant culture instructs and models the desired behaviours. This resonates with my experiences at school and school sports visits. At school I experienced a classroom that did not look like my home, and being billeted on a school visit was very uncomfortable. I remember sitting at the dinner table and being asked a question about my family, and I responded with a lie, to fit into my "new" world.

*If we ran our own schools, we would have control of them. We would be the dominant group and would teach our curriculum, and we would teach our ways of talking, acting, moving, and socializing.*

Walker (1991) writes about Te Aute College and the school principal who introduced a new curriculum.

In the dismal scenario of Maori schooling, there was a beacon of success in the Anglican school of Te Aute College. The school principal John Thornton believed in educating able Maori students to take their place in the professions of medicine and law. To this end he instituted an academic course that prepared promising boys for the matriculation examination of the University of New Zealand. The outcome of Thornton's programme was the first wave of Maori graduates in Apirana Ngata, Maui Pomare, Peter Buck, Tutere Wirepa and Rewiti Kohere (Simon, 1990:95). Although the efforts of these men to uplift the Maori have been lauded by Pakeha commentators and biographers, essentially they constituted a threat to the Pakeha monopoly over the power of knowledge. Moves were made

by Pakeha power-brokers to quench the academic flame they had lit for Maori people.

The Department of Education zeroed in on Te Aute College with the object of persuading it to replace its academic curriculum with agricultural training. (Walker, 1991, p. 5-6)

School principal Thornton had high expectations of his students and devised a programme in which they would compete on equal terms with their fellow New Zealander students. And he was successful, only to be thwarted by the Education Department. Inside this story, I think, may be one strategy to provide an alternative to wrestle with the dominant class.

*We can fight every turn of this educational process, or join "them" and beat them at their own game, as principal Thornton did.*

### **Reversing deficit conceptualizations**

*Deficit conceptualizations is a stolen term from Greenwood and Te Aika. I know about debt, I think, lacking money. Deficit, it is also about "lack" and "deficiency." In reversing deficit we get abundance and positivity and anything is possible.*

Greenwood and Te Aika (2008) are telling of the importance of deconstructions of colonialism and deficit conceptualisations. Stressing the need for educators and educational systems to unpack teaching strategies that configure Maori students as needing special attention because of their prior shortcomings in subject or cultural knowledge. Instead they ask us to focus on the range of personal and cultural predispositions and skills Maori bring (Greenwood & Te Aika, 2008, p.11). The writers are asking the educationalists and institutions to stop identifying and labelling what Maori students cannot do, and focus on what they can do. Stop creating a storm when they are matched against some "other" yardstick in which the Maori will always come second.

It makes sense to me to provide schooling situations that fit the "cultural predispositions" of the students in the class. Not to see what they struggle with, and then to repeat the same dose again, making the students feel inadequate. If you cannot see the point of what is being learnt, or it is obscure, you are going to disengage. I remember my English teacher falling in love with sentence structures, drawing lines through segments and giving them foreign names. It made no sense to me. I struggled with reading English, let alone trying to deconstruct a sentence. Two periods of this and I was in space. Actually I was in orbit as the first words fell out of his mouth.

*If I was given something I liked doing and could do, I would do it all day. How come in school we do our best to make it miserable as possible for the students. And wouldn't it be nice to continually hear: "Manu, you are doing a great job, now see if you can..." instead of "You failed Manu, you are always failing. Can't you ever...?" Which one would you like directed at you?*

Peterson (Peterson, 1993) tells of a teacher, Maria Shaughnessy, who taught students with different abilities in writing, and constantly reflected and agonised on "seeing" them as "meaning makers" and "knowledge builders". She commented that the students were sophisticated in their native speaking and grammar, and emphasized that "most of what they need to know has already been learned without teachers" (Peterson, 1993, p. 129). Rejecting deficit models that centre on what students do not know or cannot do.

I wish Peterson was my teacher; she would have always made me feel special and capable. I would have danced and skipped all through school. I remember another English teacher, Mr. Andrews. He would read all the parts of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Speaking like a lady (Eliza Doolittle), talking like a high society person (Professor Higgins), and another high society man Colonel Pickering. He was a one man show with all the sounds, as I sat transfixed and engrossed in what was happening in my class.

Davis and Grose (2009) tell of rejecting deficit approaches in their writing from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context.

The core to this process is understanding and valuing that it is in the classroom, the teaching space where most success occurs. Harnessing the power that already exists within the teaching fraternity means community infusion, two ways learning is easier to attain as teachers break from expert or silo model of education and embrace the role of facilitator of learning, creating spaces and time for dialogue with community. Here teaching space becomes de-mystified and quality teaching and learning frames can be successfully delivered in any school context, whether urban, rural, or remote. (Davis and Grose, 2009, p. 14)

To me this phrase "understanding and valuing that is in the classroom" means having full comprehension of all that is in the classroom: the physical features of the teaching space, the students, and what the teacher brings to the class; also the manner in which the teacher acts, in facilitating the learning process. By doing this, the classroom becomes a pleasant non-threatening learning and gathering room.

*A good teacher with personality and a caring nature can do wonders to a classroom. If you like your teacher and was taught in a barren room, you would still enjoy the teacher and the classroom, I think.*

Peachy as a school principal, and teacher, has always pushed piffle aside and created new boundaries. In his book, Peachey (2005) advises schools to "forget the tired old excuses that come out to justify under-performance by too many schools, forget the myths of decile ranking and all that political stuff: academic achievement comes down to having high expectations, outstanding teaching and no excuses" (Peachey, 2005, p.24). Here Peachey strips all the political rhetoric and academic jargon away and exposes the basic elements of good schooling, "outstanding teaching and no excuses". I like that, simple and concise with nothing hidden. It is not about the newest laptop computers, or the flash whiteboards, or the internet connections with the other side of the world. It is high expectations and good teaching.

Durie (2002), in "Herbison Lecture" advocated for Maori research that was proactive and not reactive, and rising from a Maori place (turangawaewae).

Unless Maori research is premised upon Maori experience there is a risk that research which focuses on disparities will restrict the horizons to a model of deficit rather than development. (Durie, 2002, p. 73)

To me Durie is saying that Maori research should be telling of things Maori and not comparing Maori with non-Maori. It only leads to highlighting the differences and leading to deficit thinking. Our eyes should be on what is possible and looking to move forward.

*In considering Maori, I could substitute Pacific Island or Cook Island research, in Durie's text, while not changing the essence of the message. We need to develop "our" own models of research and "our" own quest towards the future and cease looking at "them."*

*Weaving Peachey's philosophy of no nonsense teaching with high expectations, and Durie's stand in possibility, whilst leaving deficit theorizing in the dust of yesterday, could lead to colourful and memorable sunrises.*

The announcer clears her throat. "The winner of the New Zealand Championship for the third year in a row is Rainbow Lagoon High School." The team proudly steps forward, accepting the applause and the Kohitere Shield. The team members' smiling with satisfaction and looking amongst the crowd for family faces.

*The team is not dissected for its racial ethnicity, or scrutinized by accountants and sociologists for socioeconomic status, or asked if their parents have tertiary qualifications. They are not compared with other teams against an imposed label. They enter the biggest competition and play to the best of their abilities, and win. Likewise the Pacific Islanders need to enter the biggest competitions and compete.*



## **Summary**

We have looked at the term hegemony and saw how it applies in the education system. Cultural capital provided an insight and awareness of its usage in education and society. Lastly, rejecting of deficit theorizing as a measuring stick provides the possibility of positive futures.

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## **Chapter 7: Expectations – taking their culture and accepting the bumps**

Three main themes arise from analysis of the data: expectations; barriers; and navigation. With each of the themes I see the mingling of two or three of my new words: hegemony; cultural capital; and rejecting deficit theorising. As I discuss each theme, I will explain how these concepts are inter-twined.

I discuss the three themes in the order in which my parents and new arrivals from the Pacific Islands would have engaged with them, as they settled. The families would have arrived in New Zealand full of high expectations to do well. In pursuing their expectations they would have encountered barriers as they joined New Zealand society. Once in daily life Pacific families would navigate around problems as they arose, creating a path for their children and their children's children.

As Pacific Island families arrived in New Zealand and re-established their family structures and networks, they also placed high expectations upon their children. They wanted their children to be school teachers, lawyers, shop owners, and church ministers. After a successful school life they would find paying jobs that would provide an income for them and their extended family. They were going to live the dream in New Zealand.

Living in New Zealand the Pacific Island families did not want to abandon their cultural identities. They did not want to leave their stories, their dances, their food, their language once landing on New Zealand shores. They wanted to bring their cultural identity, their cultural capital with them.

Pacific Island families did not arrive in New Zealand saying: "we don't speak English very well, we will struggle," or "we are going to find it difficult here," or "the schooling looks hard" or "if it gets too hard we will return home." The families rejected thoughts of failure and held high expectations for their family members. They did not see themselves as deficient and they believed that, provided their children learned well in school, they

would be successful. They did not realise that their cultural capital, the strength of their traditions would ensure that their children (like me) would learn to be compliant –grand parents being taught and disciplined by missionaries - and would struggle to think independently in ways their teachers would expect. As I have shown, during the writing of this thesis I have grappled with understanding how what I see as alien (Western) constructs have provided me with tools to understand more about my own understandings and attitudes. As I write about the stories of the young men and their families who are currently at school, I am reporting on how hegemonic assumptions that I have been exploring have been addressed and how they continue to impact on the boys and their schooling.

### **The boys' expectations**

The boys I interviewed report a range of expectations of their schooling. Some of those expectations come from their parents, some from the church, some from their wider community, some from previous schooling and some from their own perceptions about the demands of future economic imperatives and their own emerging life vision.

Mum and Dad was always telling me how important it was to go to school and do exactly what the teacher says...because they wanted me to get a better job than they had been able to do, and I owed it to my family. (Falima)

The boys report high expectations from their parents which often translate into pressure to fulfil those expectations by doing well at high school. "Make sure you do as you are told", "You listen and obey", "Do your school work", and "No answering back" are recurring themes in the boys' discussions. Similarly, Fiti says, "Mum told me we came to New Zealand to get an education for us kids."

Duane knows his mother has high expectations of him, because of her actions of collecting resources and directing him to his room for study:

My mum had collected a lot of old school reading journals, like the ones we had at primary school, from around town, and made a pile in my bedroom. Sometimes at night she would send me to my room and say to me, "go to your room and read the journals" (Duane,).

It is interesting to note that the journals are old ones and that the mother has no particular strategy or means of checking if the reading happens or how well her son can read. But the action of collecting the journals from around town is an indication of her passionate desire to help her son and so puts pressure on him to rise to her expectations.

Pressure sometimes takes the form of threats. When Taz sees the "stick" he knows that it means he has to correctly answer his timetables otherwise he is "whacked." It informs him that his parents want him to do well. Taz explains:

Every night my mum would help me with my school maths tables. Like times table things. She would sit next to me and we would go through the tables. Every time I got the wrong answer I got "the stick." That's why I am good at maths. I got to thank my mum for that. (Taz)

This shows that while the action is punitive the son understands that it demonstrates his mother's belief in the value of education, and he adopts that value.

While the boys' parents expect them to do well at school they often have no clear idea of what doing well might be. For example Tui explains that his mother tells him, "Just write down what the teacher says." As Jones (1991) finds in her study of Pacific Island high school girls, the student has no comprehension of what is copied. They just do what is asked and what their parents have directed.

The boys know that attending school and being successful provides for better job prospects:

I need to go to school so I can do well later on in my life. To do what I want to do. I want to be a carpenter, or a mechanic, or a PE teacher. To do that I need to work hard, do well in maths and stuff to be a carpenter. Like wood tech, go to University to do the courses based on what I want to do. (Fiti)

The boys know they have to go to school to do well in life. Fiti knows what has to be done at school to achieve one of his targeted professions. Michael also knows the value of education and its possibilities:

I need a good education then I will go to Uni, get a higher class job, and then I can get anything I need. Money is powerful as ... get the money ... sweet as. I have to work harder at school. (Michael)

Ina tells of his life plan:

I want to study radio broadcasting, so I have to get into more English and do more Journalism. Go to Broadcasting School after high school. I also like photography at school, so I may also follow photo journalism. (Ina)

Through a school Academic Dean and parental chats, Ina is able to plot a possible life plan. Starpath Project 2008 advocates for parents becoming familiar with NCEA and embarking on academic and career conversations. (McKinley, 2008)

Tui's personal expectation is driven by knowledge of the statistics of Polynesian educational failure.

Why not? Why can't I do it? I don't want to be a statistic...so I can do anything. This is in my head as I leave school. I am not afraid of work. I will clean toilets, I will clean tables, and I will wait tables. I won't be labelled. I won't be a statistic. (Tui)

Tui knows of his people's low economic and educational status, attainment, and employment, and uses this as an extra driving force to find employment, no matter what the job is.

Fiti talks about the value of a good education in being able to look after his family, particularly his parents:

My Dad said for me to try my hardest at school and get a good job, so you can look after Mum and Dad when they get old. (Fiti)

Fiti's Dad is passing on that cultural knowledge, the caring for ones family (especially the elders), to his son, with special emphasis on Fiti's education.

I wanted to do well at school. I sensed Mum and Dad were proud of our every success. I wanted to please them. Like the boys, we wanted to do well at school. (Fiti)

The rejection of deficit theorising, the abandoning of blaming "other" factors for the possible lack of success, leads to an optimistic future for Pacific peoples in the schooling system and in New Zealand life. By accepting notions such as "life is harder here", or "Pacific Islanders struggle in schools", a mill stone is hung around the Pacific peoples neck, impeding possibility in their lives, in a world where they plan on getting a good education and job.

### **The parents' expectations**

The parents interviews also tell of their expectations. Parents speak strongly of their hopes for their children's success at school and of their determination to promote their commitment to learning. They talk about wanting to give greater educational opportunities than they had themselves and the hope that this "new" country will provide these opportunities. They speak of their hopes that their children will eventually bring back the results of their education to help their family and that they will hold fast to their

Island identity and heritage as well as learning new ways. They also reveal their anxiety that they can not help as they want because they do not know how western schooling and study really works. For example, Mala explains how her parents constantly articulated their expectations that their sons would do well in school:

My brothers were on the receiving end of Dad's fatherly chats and a constant reminder of why we came to New Zealand, for a better life and a good education for us kids. (Mala)

Mala is telling of her Dad's expectations of his children and the reason why they relocated to New Zealand: better life and good education.

Mati reports being verbally forceful in directing her boys to school:

I tell them "Get to school!" And they go. (Mati)

Timo is also directive, verbally encouraging educational advancement by demanding "more study, more homework" of his boy.

The parents' forceful words are words of noise and emptiness. They do not provide instructions on how to achieve their demands, only volume and gesturing. Maybe this is a method they inherited from their parents, and that they do not understand the New Zealand educational system. This "fire and brimstone" method may be a carry-over from the Pacific trained church ministers, whose oratory was loud and persuasive. (Perrott, 2007)

Whether they were themselves born in New Zealand or not, all the parents I spoke with had struggled economically as they grew up. In a number of cases they or their parents had come to New Zealand to find work, usually in factories or other tough and poorly paid jobs. They all wanted better opportunities for their children. Siva says his Dad worked in a wood factory:

I would walk with my Dad to the factory and be there again, as he returned. We would meet him because he had been injured in a car accident and had difficulty in walking. We also kept a vegetable garden and all the boys had to spend time working in it. Financially it was hard for our parents, so the garden was a necessity. (Siva)

Mata spoke of his Dad bringing fire wood home from the mill every day:

Dad always arrived home from work carrying a sack of wood on his shoulder. Every day without fail. It took me a few years to appreciate what he was doing. Saving money or making ends meet so we could eat. (Mata,)

Siva and Mata tell of the sacrifices that their parents endured to provide for their children, by carrying out extra tasks to make it easier for the families. With the parents setting up their families, they were willing to ensure that their children were provided for by saving money through growing vegetables and picking up off-cut timber from the mill.

Several parents who are second generation New Zealand-born had a good education and remember the sacrifices their own parents had made for them. Mala tells of her parents stories:

We were brought up to listen and obey. I always had that. If I did not listen, or if I was not where I was suppose to be, I got a smack. Dad would then remind us why they came to New Zealand.... "for you kids and school". (Mala,)

Mala is also emphasising that her parents had decided that the Pacific Islands were not the place to raise a family and that they needed to go elsewhere, so they chose New Zealand, believing they would be better looked after than in their home Islands.

Sometimes the parental hopes expressed include an expectation that the boys will pass on the benefits of education to the family as a whole, particularly to younger brothers and



sisters: and that the boys will be able to provide for their siblings and their parents, as they grow older. Fiti describes his father's chat:

I want you to try your hardest at school...and get a good job...so you can look after Mum and me when we get old. (Fiti)

Fiti's Dad is passing on the family values of life long care of family, and especially your elders. By being successful in school, you are able to secure a good paying job, and with the money you can spread it around the family, and look after Mum and Dad as they age.

In many of the interviews the move to New Zealand is described specifically in terms of providing better educational opportunities for the children. Mata tells of his parents' education in the Islands:

Mum was always looking after the younger kids and hardly went to school, and Dad was the youngest, so he did not have to attend and spent time in the plantations and looking after the animals. They were lucky to pass through primary school. So when Mum and Dad came to New Zealand, they pushed education ....Dad worked long hours in the taro plantations and said it was tough, and he didn't want us to being the same sort of work. So, education was the key from getting out of "plantation" work. (Mata)

Siva explains why his parents immigrated to New Zealand.

I was born here in New Zealand and my brothers in the Islands (Tokelau Islands). With the Island crowding and fewer jobs, Dad decided to bring the family here to New Zealand. Here were more jobs and with good schooling so you could get a good job. (Siva)

Each of the boys tells of his parent's decision to come to New Zealand and each tells of the difficult situations in their home Islands that culminated in this move. Each parent

realises that their upbringings were tough and that in moving through this difficult patch, education provides a way forward.

It is interesting to wonder whether their expectations of better opportunities were based on unsatisfactory educational opportunities in the Islands or a blind belief that education must be better in New Zealand because it is a Palangi country.

I know Mum and Dad were proud of educational success that came the family's way. They would tell other Cook Island families of our successes and would keep prodding us to do well at school.

The Pacific peoples had their way of doing things. Like language, the way they danced and sang, the way the villages have run for many years, the way children are educated. This is their cultural capital. Adopting some of the cultural capital of the Pakeha to co-exist in New Zealand may be beneficial.

### **The church**

Their churches also have expectations of the boys. A number of boys report that while their churches and communities generally reinforce the message to do well at school they also present a number of competing pressures. For example, Joel is the only piano player in the youth group, and regularly travels long distances to ensure the group always has a piano player for the church youth group. Michael always goes to church when his Nan calls for him to get up on a Sunday. He would not think of saying "No Nan, I am not coming to church today." Mia helps his aunties when they need someone to look after the younger kids during midweek church activities. Or Ina helps with his Dad in the local church in handing out the church notices and hymn books. Each of these tasks centres on the church, with the expectation that the boys attend to and complete them, without discussion.

It interests me, however, to note that the boys I talked with seemed to have less pressure from the church than is suggested in the literature (Fletcher et al., 2008., Fletcher et al.,

2004., Hawk & Hill, 1998), in which time is shown being taken up through participation in home bible reading and church activities. In Rotorua, the Pacific Island church goers are the older generation. (Siva, personal communication, January, 2009)

*A reflection as I write this thesis: The church played a large part in our upbringing and family life, with Mum and Dad modelling Christian living. As we three boys become teenagers we started seeing "the church" differently and slowly moved away from church activities. If Mum and Dad could read this, they would be saddened.*

This research shows that Pacific Island peoples living in New Zealand are becoming more distant from the church and more able to manage their lives, breaking the churches hold over them. This hold is an example of hegemony. Through many years of churches and missionaries working in the Pacific Islands, organising peoples lives and running the islands, churches have created this power, this hegemony, over Pacific peoples.

### **Don't forget your Island culture**

In all my interviews with parents it is evident that they take it for granted that their children will retain a strong sense of Pacific Island identity as well as acquiring the means to be economically successful within a Palangi world. Moving to live in New Zealand is a relocation of Island life rather than an act of severing all cultural connections with their roots. Siva tells of his son Michael and his ties with dance and the language:

I think culture plays a huge part as well. Umm...Michael is quite friendly with many Tokelauans. He has a good relationship with them and Michael takes part in a lot of Tokelauan community events. He loves his dancing and performing in the Tokelauan culture. It was unfortunate Michael was unable to carry on with the language when he was younger. He is not fluent but can understand what is being said and could respond "yes" and "no" if my parents were talking to him. So, I think culture played a lot in terms of my expectations. I would have loved for him to learn the language, but as you grow up in a family whereby the language is not

spoken as fluent or as common as it has been when we were growing up, then it is a shame, as it is actually being lost. (Siva)

Siva laments:

Yeah, yeah...I just wish he was able to speak the language. I am still hoping that one day he will speak the language, and learn more about our culture. (Siva)

Mati reflects:

Ahh it would be good to see my kids doing Cook Island dances. The boys and the girls ... (Mati)

Perrott (2007) reports a Samoan-Chinese and English bilingual primary teacher experiencing a similar situation, with New Zealand born Pacific Island parents having high hopes for their children succeeding and fitting in by setting aside their own language. Both Siva and Mati look at the possibility that their children, having gone into the educational process as "Pacific Islanders", could come out as Pacific Islander and Palangi. Instead, the boys are perceived to be coming out more Palangi than Pacific Islander.

Some parents regret that they have not been more active in developing cultural knowledge and have expected their children to pick it up instinctively. For example, Siva expresses regret that he has not sufficiently passed on cultural knowledge to Michael. He says:

I probably regret not speaking to Michael in my Tokelauan language. He understands what is being said but cannot speak the language ... ahh ... I know he is proud of his Tokelauan side more than his Maori side. (Siva)

Parents want their cultural identity, their cultural capital, maintained and nourished.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: Mum and Dad worked hard to bring us up as English speaking church attending English boys, when dressed for Sunday church, we fitted in, visually. I thought on numerous occasions "I don't fit in here." Yet every Sunday the ritual was repeated.*

*The home was full of English, with Cook Island Maori reserved for private conversations between Mum and Dad. Looking back, I would have loved to speak my language.*

*Who am I?*

This research shows that Pacific peoples want the best of all worlds, not just both worlds. They desire success inside the Pakeha world, while maintaining their cultural heritage. Being able to keep and practice their cultural capital and to perform to the highest levels in the "other" worlds. Adopting only one world leads to being a cripple in the "others."

### **The schools' expectations**

I am placing The Pasifika Educational Plan, 2008-2012 (2008) at the beginning of this paragraph as it is the government that indicates and initiates its educational plan. Inside is the government's expectations of Pacific Island students. It states:

The government is committed to making sure that Pasifika students achieve and succeed in education.

This Pasifika Educational Plan takes a more concentrated and collaborative approach to improve Pasifika outcomes. Pasifika success is critical to New Zealand's success, to our families well being and our sense of national identity.

(Ministry of Education, 2008, Wall Chart)

Further into the document "What are we seeking to achieve?" describes what the government is seeking from high schools:

- One: Increased engagement and achievement in secondary education so that young people stay at school longer and leave with higher-level qualifications.
- Two: More successful pathways into tertiary education and work.
- Three: Higher levels of learning and achievement in tertiary education by the age of 25. (Ibid. Wall Chart)

In the interviews, not one student, or one teacher, or one senior teacher speaks of the Pasifika Educational Plan. It seems that government officials are speaking amongst themselves, or that the message is being lost in transmission.

It appears to be widely accepted as a fact that Pacific Islander people have a physical disposition that leads to success in sport, and teachers' often focus their discussion about Pacific students' success in terms of sport.

The teachers reinforce that expectation, and that it might be expected that sports would constitute their main schooling success. Mata remembers his parents meeting the school principal after a rugby game: he told them that their son was a very good sportsman. The principal did not mention the son's classroom work, or academic achievements, but solely talked about sport and their son being in the top rugby and cricket team. Did the principal have the expectation that Pacific Island boys were just good at sport?

Siva tells of entering the school gym to wait for his older brothers:

When me and my cousins finished school (intermediate school) for the day we would walk to the high school, wait for our brothers to finish volleyball training. I remember seeing my brothers training and some of my cousins too. They were running and doing volleyball stuff. While the bigger boys were practising, the teacher came over and started talking to us. He showed us some things to do with the ball, and left us, returning to the big boys. Then he would come back again and tell us some more stuff. So, while the big boys played, we played on the side of the gym, waiting for our brothers to finish. (Siva)

The sports coach assume that all Pacific Island boys are good sportsmen and he wants to start training the next generation of brothers; or he is keeping the boys occupied; or he is interested in the families. He is creating relationships which form the basis of good educational learning (Hawk et al., 2001) and role modelling good adulthood (Hill & Hawk, 2003).

Teacher Vaughan recalls seeing two Pacific Island brothers, Patrick and Eddie:

These brothers were big and agile and quick. They had good hands and they always listened. I thought these boys could be very effective in the first XV rugby team, running with the ball and scoring tries. (Vaughan)

Teacher Vaughan sees two big Pacific Island boys and immediately thinks he has a wrecking machine that can cause havoc for the opposition, not thinking of the brothers other possible attributes.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: School was a place where you followed "their" rules, did as you were told, and did not answer back. It was a constant battle to think "what am I supposed to do?", always hoping you got it right and did not get in trouble. Otherwise Mum and Dad are going to find out! It was a place of fear.*

This research shows schools are slow in dancing with the Pacific peoples, and it will take time and courageous teachers to lead the way in change. As these teachers reject deficit theorising in their practice, so will other teachers, other departments, and eventually schools. Schools not breaking the hegemonic hold, however, will create angry and culturally isolated students, whose anger will lead to more school failures.

## **Summary**

All the boys agree that they are aware of their parents' expectations to do well at school, while remembering to keep alive the Pacific Island way of life. All the parents agree that

they have at some time communicated to their sons that education was the base for a better life and job opportunities that they themselves never had. When the boys attend high school, there is an automatic assumption that these boys will excel in sport. The government's educational message seemingly not reaching the teachers of Pacific Islanders is also hindering the boys' advancement in school. The following chapter further explores barriers the boys encountered in their education.



## Chapter 8: Barriers – stopping success

As the boys who participate in this study engage in educational life, barriers loom to knock them back and keep them down. On entering schools they encounter a world foreign to them with words and topics of which they have no prior knowledge. They enter a world that is puzzling, new and Palangi. They also engage with people who say and do things that make them feel uncomfortable.

### Schools

Over the last thirty years New Zealand education has moved from monocultural and British based to being somewhat more bi-cultural in its content and attitude and more global in its attention to goals and assessment. However, in many parts of the country the subject content and teaching strategies that reflect the cultural character of other student groups (such as Pacific, Asian, or recent refugee groups) do not reflect this.

In the *forward* of the new curriculum, Secretary for Education Dr Maris O'Rourke states the Government's expectations of schools: to have effective assessment procedures; creating new emphasis in learning areas that are important to New Zealand; that it be gender inclusive; that it acknowledges the Treaty of Waitangi; and that it allows the freedom of schools to develop programs which are appropriate to the needs of their students (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The one school in which the teachers are interviewed, while acknowledging the government's direction, also discuss the necessity of staffing the plan. A senior staff member says:

Now we have to find the balance between the needs of our students and staff." She specifies that they can get the staff required to meet the expectation of being inclusive and appropriate to the needs of all students. But failing to find appropriate staff, they will have to make adjustments to what is offered. In staffing the school, the senior teacher

continues, they will always consider locals first, then Pacific Island, Maori, and others. The school will endeavour to staff with Pacific Island or Maori, but I think with the school's rural location and lack of Pacific communities, Pacific staff will be a rarity. The school has one Pacific Island teacher employed to start next year, teaching English.

The Pacific boys I interviewed noted that their culture was invisible in the school (except in the presence of other Pacific Island students). They talked about the absence of Pacific Island teachers, the lack of opportunities to study Pacific languages and the absence of any Pacific Island content. This is an example of hegemony, where the way education is organized in New Zealand (and has been for many years) is the Pakeha way, for Pakeha people. To the Pacific peoples students it is very unlike a Pacific setting. Jacob points out:

Our classroom lessons have no mention of the Pacific Islands, no mention of where I was born. I feel stink. We are learning about other people, not about us.  
(Jacob)

Falima suggested:

Island subjects for the whole school, so they will know what we are about, and have an understanding about us PI's. They could ask us questions and we would answer them. That would make us feel cool. (Falima)

A number commented on the lack of Pacific Island things within the school environment, classroom, and lessons. Taz also points out:

We study other countries like Japan, Russia, Egypt, and Great Britain. Why can't we study one of the Pacific Islands? It would be good for the whole school if they could learn and they would get to understand us. They could ask us questions. That would be cool. We get NCEA credits for doing English and Maori, so why can't we get credits for Pacific Islands subjects. (Taz)

The implication here is that, as the participants perceive it, teachers and the school system expect them to be the same as everyone else and to succeed within an existing conceptual framework. Including the Pacific Island boys' interests into history, geography and other lessons would make them feel part of the class and part of the wider community. Hill and Hawk (1998) inform teachers of the need to: show respect to the students and treat them as individuals; be able to relate to cultures other than your own; relate to them as adults; show kindness and caring; make the curriculum real; explanations using everyday language; make lessons interesting and varied; use group work; be encouraging; and be non-confrontational.

Anne, a senior teacher, says there is no specific policy for Pacific Island students, but it is covered under the term "cultural diversity." The school uses this term to address the needs of Pacific Islanders. For educational convenience, Pacific Islanders are squeezed under cultural diversity, which also means they do not stand alone, or are not specifically recognised. Anne continued:

The school recognises Maori, with the Akoranga unit; it recognises Pakeha with the current system; it recognises the accelerant students with the Wero program; it recognises the differently behaved with Te Ruinga Pai program: yet it fails to recognise the Pacific Islanders in the school. (Anne)

Maybe it is time to recognise the Pacific Island student with their own identity within the school structure.

When asked about her concern for the Pacific Island and where it comes from, Anne replied:

For me it is personal, I have family ties with the Pacific Island community. It is also guilt. There should be more accountability in the education of our Pacific Island students, and of course for all our students. (Anne)

The 2006 ERO report reported that in Auckland seventy five percent of schools had not implemented any programmes to improve Pacific student achievement. Had this school followed the majority and done nothing?

*A reflection as I write this thesis: My school did not reflect my home. It was not a friendly place and some teachers were bullies. They made life horrible and learning difficult.*

*It was a place of fear.*

This research shows that the New Zealand way of “doing things” is and always was unusual to the Pacific peoples. The hegemony of the New Zealand’s government’s educational directives do little to enhance the learning lives and successes of Pacific peoples. Only one set of cultural capital values is being utilized: the privileged values. Rejection of Pacific peoples’ cultural capital leads to alienating the learner and building resentment.

### **Deficit thinking**

Thinking or saying students are unable to complete tasks is referred to as deficit thinking. Some teachers hold negative thoughts about Pacific Islander students, and vent their feelings at them; while others simply lack strategies for engaging the students. Some students tell of being abandoned and regularly left to copy from the blackboard. Tama reports:

They don’t teach us they just say copy this. We just seem to write and write. And if you don’t understand it the first time, hard luck, the teacher won’t teach it again.  
(Tama)

One student tells of sensing that the teacher does not care for their class, leaving the class feeling lost and awkward. Taz describes one teacher having a bad day:

Being grumpy and yelling at us. There was this time Sir couldn't get a boy back to his seat, and he started to nut off at him. There was lots of loud yelling, from the teacher to the boy. It was not a nice feeling in class when this is going on...embarrassing...yuck. (Taz)

Some teachers verbalise their disappointment about how the boys engage with school life, not coming to class and wearing incorrect uniform. This is an example of deficit theorising: the incorrect uniform makes them conclude the students are not capable academically. This teacher undermines students' abilities, or always expects a minimal effort from them:

They lack motivation, they don't turn up to class, and when they do, they don't want to be there. One boy hardly ever comes to class, slips away from school during the day. I think he might have a part-time job. He is hardly at school yet deciding to come back next year. (Skinn)

During the week, school days, they are always late for school or absent. When they do get to school they are in incorrect uniform. They don't have the right jersey on, they don't have the correct polo shirt on, they don't have the correct socks on, and they don't have the correct footwear on. It is a continual battle to get them dressed correctly for school, to teach them pride in the uniform and pride in the school. They are neat kids, neat socially, they call out in town "Hello Miss", but keeping them on track at school is hard work. (Puti)

Maybe the boys act out in response to the teachers' thoughts or words. The boys may be lost in two worlds (maybe more): school and work. They have to decide whether they attend school full time or go and find employment, not both at the same time. Maybe their parents think that walking through the gates of a school constitutes an education. As

Hill and Hawk (1998) identified, the students live in "five or six worlds," with these teachers only recognising two.

Some of the boys are finding it hard to bring the two worlds into one. At home will be a Pacific Island atmosphere, while the school environment has a New Zealand atmosphere. Making them one and the same, or achieving a quick transition between them, may be proving difficult. A senior teacher mentions disappointment in the different behavioural and learning styles of "today's" Pacific Island students:

The Pacific Island students of my school years were good people. They were held in high esteem by their class mates, by their teachers, and by the community. But they struggled with classroom work. Now, the reverse is happening. We are encountering behavioural problems with more disruptions from the Pacific Island students, yet academically they are succeeding. (Arapera)

The Pacific students are held in high esteem by their classmates and teachers, but seemingly they are engaging in behavioural problems, which do not affect their academic achievements. Being disruptive may eventually upset the relationship with their teachers, creating a barrier to learning. The balance between personal development and the learning student has been upset, where more emphasis is being placed on one and not both simultaneously, causing the reversal. Is the classroom gaining more emphasis than the sports field? Or, are the multiple worlds of the student (Hill & Hawk, 1998) going unrecognised by the teachers?

The school's direction, as indicated by the Board of Trustees' actions, is highlighted in the following conversation with senior teacher Anne:

I had mentioned we needed a Pacific Island representative on the Board of Trustees, to make the Board aware of Pacific Island families concerns. We chattered and decided on putting forward Moni and Taasese, two Pacific Islanders, for Board selection. They missed out. (Anne)

The Board of Trustees is not listening to their Pacific Island communities. If we listen (Fitzpatrick, 2005, & Nakhid, 2003) to our communities, add cultural elements to our school (Giroux, 1988), maybe we will enhance the learning environment of many.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: For me school to 6<sup>th</sup> form (Year 12) was full of scary teachers, whose job seemed to make life hell for me. My job was not to get into any trouble, so school life was spent walking around on egg shells, and trying to pass exams.*

This research shows some teachers are lacking in teaching strategies in the classroom, not just with Pacific peoples. They are also crippling themselves by not listening to their students and thinking positively. The governance of the school could take the lead and show publicly that they have a Pacific people's voice. Distancing governance and teachers from a large growing segment of society could cause disruptions.

### **Cultural capital**

By recognizing your students' experiences, their ethnic backgrounds, their stories, you are acknowledging the student and what they bring to the classroom. You are acknowledging their cultural capital.

Arapera uses her own initiative to add a Pacific element into her lessons with school journals, and her writer friend Talo Talavae adds life and authenticity into lessons.

Arapera says:

Introducing Maori literature to classrooms, we have Europeans mangling the language and raising the hackles of some Maori. They, we, have done it back-to-front. We need to bring in the authentic writers and poets into the classrooms. Not having others doing it. (Arapera)

Arapera is voicing her displeasure at the way Maori and Pacific Island literature and language is handled and delivered in classes. Literature delivered by teachers who are not ethnically linked to the writings, creates an inauthentic learning experience for Pacific students. She wants to utilise Pacific and Maori writers and poets in the classroom, creating authentic learning experiences for Pacific students.

Fiti tells of his admiration for sporting stars of his ethnicity that he sees on television:

It is pretty good being an Islander, because there are heaps of other Islanders doing well around the world...like singers and sports people. When you think of rugby league stars like Sonny Bill Williams, Jarryd Hayne and All Black Tana Umaga and all that, and the kids know that you are an Islander, they think you can play like Sonny Bill Williams, Jarryd Hayne and Tana Umanga and all that. Run like him, tackle like him, pass like him, and make big hits like him. (Fiti)

Fiti is telling of the "stars" he sees in the media, but will never get to meet - and who will never give him advice or listen to him or hug him. These sporting stars are barriers to the students' success, as they offer fleeting satisfaction when their images flash across the screen, but will not be there to guide the boys through school life and later. They will not be there after school or in the weekends, or to help with homework. What the Pacific student sees is one aspect of the person, his sporting abilities, nothing else.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I knew I was a New Zealand-born Cook Islander, but did not have the language and dances. Around me at home were Cook Island parents speaking English. Where did I fit: Pacific Islander or Pakeha? What I looked for in my classes was caring, friendliness, helpfulness, and smiling faces.*

This research shows that a small number of teachers are recognizing the students' life experiences once the student enters the classroom, by incorporating student's stories and sometimes culture into the lesson. By acknowledging students cultural capital, you are creating a good base for a relationship, hopefully leading to a good learning experience.



Not acknowledging students previous experiences will lead to alienated and unhappy students, causing disruption and difficult relationships in the classroom.

### **The other side of Cultural capital**

Bernstein (1973) and Bourdieu (1973) discuss the idea of cultural capital as the notion that there is a body of knowledge and values that gives those who own shares in it power and operational capability. In this case the cultural capital that holds currency within the schooling system does not match the capital in which the Pacific Island family holds significant shares. As the students' and parents' comments indicate, many Pacific Island families do not have ready currency within the context and content of what happens in schools.

Taz reports that Samoan is not available in his school curriculum, even though the choice of English, Japanese, French, Spanish, and Maori are all available in the school. Having a subject or a Pacific Island relatable topic in the classroom would create an instant link to the Pacific Island students.

Some boys speak of the unease in attending school. Falima tells of his experience:

When I am in school, in my classroom, I feel lost. I don't feel at home. I don't trust anyone. School doesn't feel like a family. (Falima)

Michael reports of his large size and shyness and his multiple excuses to evade doing tasks that expose his frailties. He continues:

I speak Maori in my Maori classes, English in my English classes, and Tokelauan with my Tokelauan Nan. It would be good to speak Tokelauan in Tokelauan class. (Michael)

The boys are speaking of their unease and discomfort as they participate in life as a high school student. They feel exposed and vulnerable that their feelings and thoughts as a Pacific Islander are being confronted. They are being forced to adopt a non-Pacific Islander awareness, to be a Palangi, to be something that is alien to them.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I struggled my way through school, even though I passed exams. It felt like a constant battle, never winning, but crawling across the finish line, only to have another official (teacher) pointing in another direction. At certain places the official held signs "NO ENTRY."*

This research shows that the hegemony of the privileged exists, as revealed by the slow, if not non-existent, changes being made in the curriculum in order to accommodate the Pacific peoples. This will lead to frustration and upset, with the learner being lost in the classroom. Loss in the classroom for a Pacific student is a win for the hegemony of the privileged, where the status quo is maintained.

### **Money woes**

Mati shares her financial woes of paying for sports uniforms for her 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby and 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket sons, while raising a large family. Mati also explains the large number of family members in the house as members seek jobs and incomes to send money back home (Pacific Islands):

I got 7 kids in my family. Two boys play in rugby teams, and one of them plays rugby and cricket. Another plays hockey. When they go on school trips...it costs lots of money. Paying for their uniforms also costs a lot of money. Saving money for the kids is hard. Me and my husband also save and send money to the Islands...to my husband's family...that makes it hard...saving for the kid's education...for the kid's sports...and for our families back home. (Mati)

Mati is also providing an insight into the family's financial situation, of the elements that require money, of the cultural pull of saving and sending money back to the Islands. All of this is providing an economic barrier to getting ahead in New Zealand.

Mala explaining that she was brought up by her older sister, as her two parents were too busy working and making an income for the family. This role-modeling of parenting, inside a frantic and economically stretched home, makes for a difficult start for Pacific youngsters:

My parents did not look after me, they were too busy working. It was my sister "T" who looked after me. After school it was always "T" who was there, telling me what I needed to do...like what jobs that needed doing around the house before mum and dad got home from work. "T" is who I learnt from...not Mum and Dad...because they weren't there. (Mala)

Mala is explaining how life was for her, how the role modelling had come from her older sister. Mala's parents were too busy working and gathering enough money together to make ends meet and raise their family. Lack of money has created a barrier for Mala's social development by having "T" as a significant adult role model, substituting for the absence of Mum and Dad (Hill and Hawk, 2003).

*A reflection as I write this thesis: Money was tight in our home. The following factors didn't help us: parents arriving from the Pacific; crowded house; single income family; make ends meet (money wise); and staying at school. Having more kids at school meant more money into education and only my Dad's income to sustain the house. The three oldest boys stayed at school till Year 13. There must have been an enormous strain on my parents, thinking how they were going to cope raising and educating our large family. I am amazed at what Mum and Dad did.*

This research shows the hegemony of the privileged is winning. Looking at the statistics, we see that the Pacific peoples are sitting on all the lowest rungs of the government's

calculations. To get to this low position requires constant failure, beginning in schools and continuing to fail from there on in. And who runs schools? The privileged.

### **Peer pressure**

Pacific People's whanau is very important and therefore Pacific students feel the impact from their peers. The boys I interviewed report the impact of pressure from peers in a number of ways.

One way is the experience of Akama (feeling inferior) and taakama (to belittle). Some of the boys enjoy success on the sports field, which makes them feel good as players and team members, but once in the classroom, with book work, things change. Sina relates his sporting prowess and classroom engagement:

On the rugby field I can run through heaps of players. Just crashing into them. It is easy. I feel like a big sports star. Some of the teachers are thinking of me as a future 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby captain. That makes me feel good. But once I get into the classroom doing my subjects...I find it hard. Sometimes I don't understand...sometimes the teacher is talking too fast...or changes to another thing. It's hard. I am good in sports, but not in class...that makes me feel funny. Like when I play sport, I am the man! My mates think I am really good. Also in class my mates expect me to be the man! I am not as good in class...I try hard...I feel stink. Wish I could be good at both. (Sina)

Sina is aware of the expectations to do well from his Pacific Island cousins as he plays rugby, and feels similar expectations while in his classes. Experiencing the highs and lows of both, Sina feels the pressure from his peers to excel in all areas.

Working in groups with your buddies or classmates on a class topic or project can make the learning process easier and enjoyable. Unlike exam time, where exams are completed individually and not as a group. Pacific children like group activities, and struggle to

handle this quiet and individually focused assessment system. Fiti tells of his classroom experiences:

When you get to school, or class, we are not allowed to talk. You have to be quiet...silent. Sometimes in class we are allowed to talk ...to your mates, and make some noise. Then when the exam comes, no talking! Why can't I talk? Why can't my mates help me? (Fiti)

Fiti is experiencing two cultures squashed into one: the communal learning that is taking place where your mates can help and the other, the Palangi assessment world. Here his individual abilities are being assessed, not his Pacific Island skills, or ability to work with others.

Another form of pressure comes from the pressure to wear patches or colours that identify individuals with their local street, immediately placing them on the other side of the fence of school authority:

As soon as evening practice is finished, off come the costumes and on goes the bandanas and scarves. (Puti)

Puti also describes the struggle of pushing the Pacific boys' identities into "appropriate" times, the time for Pacific Island Performance practice. When the item is "Cook Island dance" they become Cook Islanders, when the item is a "Samoan dance" they become Samoans, and when they finish for the night, they are required to dress as Kiwis. Some leave as gangsters. One of the boys of the group, Tama, says, "it is fun to be us (Pacific Island Performance group) ... PI's ... then get dressed into our street stuff and play some more with our mates."

The boys are seeing and experiencing many situations and pick various roles to act out. Here, they are performing for the Pacific Island Performance group, inside of a New Zealand high school context. They are Pacific Islanders and don't need to "pretend" being Pacific Islanders. After the practiced item, they revert back to themselves, awaiting the

next "item." Once Pacific Island Performance group finishes practice, they dress in their normal clothes and head their own ways. The barrier is that the Pacific boys are switching on and off from being a Pacific Islander and being New Zealander. They are not one ethnic identity, but an ever changing identity.

### **Family pressures**

Boys feel heavy pressure from various sections of their community to become involved with activities that erode their time to study, such as family commitments, looking after nanny, young brothers, church activities, and cultural group. Student Joe describes family commitments of walking his sister to school and preparing the vegetables for the evening meal:

Every school morning I have to walk my young sister to school and pick her up after school. When I get home I have to get the veges ready for kai, and whatever Mum says to get ready. Wednesday night is when we have the church meeting. I have to go and help Nan and Pa get them ready and do jobs for them. On school nights, after doing my house jobs, I have to do my school work too. (Joe)

Joe's life as a Pacific Islander going to school in New Zealand is a very busy life, over which he has no say. It is tough being involved with chores around the home, looking after the younger sister, seeing to the commitments of the church, and fitting in school work. This creates barriers to succeeding at school.

Student Tui remembers looking after his Nan, who had Alzheimer's and needed close attention every waking moment:

When we went to town we would take her, but needed to hold her hand so she wouldn't wander off. If we met some of our cousins and they spoke to her, she would say "haven't seen you for a long time" with a big smile. But she only used that line, over and over again. Also, one of us had to be at home all the time; she could not be left alone at all. One morning she was not in her bed. We all

panicked. We all rushed outside...looked along the river bank...called the police. She was found inside somebody's house, safe and sound. But living with Nan with Alzheimer's and having the family around was hard. (Tui)

Tui is explaining how one aspect of life, Nan with Alzheimer's living at home, compounds the demands on a functioning family. In Pacific Island culture it is usually the family that takes care of their elderly parents, who are not farmed out to be cared for by others.

Student Mata looks after his Nan, who has diabetes and has trouble walking, by being around the house while Papa attends church. He also tells of having to attend bible class and church every Sunday, coupled with family bible readings in the home. Sundays, says Mata, are a long day. Mata also speaks of being placed in-charge of the kids, if his parents need to leave the house, or need to attend a Pacific Island function. Mata speaks of the cultural group practicing midweek, which takes time out of his school work:

Dad has always encouraged me to go to our Tokelauan culture nights. It is fun...but if you are behind in your school work and you go to practice...you fall further behind. I hate being behind in school. But I know Dad likes me going...so...sometimes it is hard to make the decision to go or not to go. (Mata)

All the pressures, community and family, being exerted upon a young Pacific student, compresses and magnifies the complexities he must handle and rise above, to succeed (Hawk & Hill, 1998). This is similar to my own experiences with a packed home life and "Proud Mums" (chapter 3), using school success as weapon of "king of the castle."

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I felt that the family was constantly on show. Our parents proudly standing and pointing to us, saying "aren't those kids good?" They were obviously proud of their life time's work.*

This research shows that family life is very important to the functioning of Pacific peoples' lives. It is also is the foundation to good education, without which the student

will struggle. It also highlights the interconnectivity of home and school. They both impact on each other. The running of home and looking after extended family nibbles away at school time, and this clash causes upset. Both parents and children know school is important, but who is going to take Nan to the doctors, or is going to pick up little sister from primary school when Mum and Dad are working long hours in lowly paid jobs?

### **Pressure from success at sport**

Success in sports need not be a barrier to academic success. In fact in ideal circumstances success breeds success, and physical and mental growth can facilitate each other. However, in some cases Pacific Island success in sport interferes with academic work. This takes a number of forms. Seti recalls when he played in the "A" senior boy's volleyball team:

We trained three days a week with a club game on Monday night. Boy did we work hard. We also got the results. Unbeaten here and we went to the New Zealand schools championships. That was cool meeting all those different schools and teams. Should have put the same effort into my school work. (Seti)

Seti is describing the many practices that must be attended to achieve a championship team, and maybe if he had known of the time commitment he might have not played volleyball, and given more time to school work. Or, his school work may have improved if he had known how to use similar sports tactics in the classroom.

Student Joe speaks of teachers who follow the 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby games when they are played at the school. How they interact in class and comment positively on the game and his performance. He also speaks of teachers he does not get along with:

Miss came to practice once and asked why had I missed her class? I hate her subject. And I saw her talking to the coach. I think she wanted him to pressure me to class or do homework or something. (Joe)



Attempting to get the best from the Pacific student on the sports field and in the classroom requires a gentle mix of "push and hug". If you push too hard and are relentless in getting things done, you risk the possibility of the student giving up. While if you are too caring and not pushing for work being done, the student may see you as a pushover, and will be in cruise mode while in your subject.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I loved playing sport at school. At home, the family always had a game of something going on -rugby on the front lawn, running around the trees, or cricket on the lawn by the road. We were always competing.*

Rejecting of deficit theorising in sport with Pacific peoples thrives. This research shows Pacific boys are always welcomed to a sports training, with their size and athleticism being a cherished asset for the team. Being at team practices also impacts on home and school, causing a squeezing of limited time resources. Where does the student pinch time from: home or school? In sport, most Pacific peoples love to run and play, and be with friends, it is what they love to do. This is what they have done for many years, this is their cultural capital. Taking one away from the other will impact the other.

### **How do I get there?**

Despite all the interviewed parents' expressed commitment to their children's success in schooling, and the desire to succeed the boys report, many parents do not know enough about the Palangi education system to be able to identify a strategic pathway to such success. Consequently, most of the boys lack strategic guidance from home even though they have lots of exhortation, encouragement and support. Student Mata imitating his mother pointing and saying "get to school...get to school" ; Fiti's Dad asking his son to do his best at school; and Duane's parents reminding him of why his grandparents settled in New Zealand, "to give you guys a better education than we had in the Islands." Parent Mati continues:

I hardly ever went to school ... my mother used me to look after the younger kids ... I hated that ... always working. My husband he did not go to school ... he worked in the taro plantations ... no time for school. Now with my kids ... I want them to go to school. Every day ... and learn ... and get a good job. (Mati)

All the parents and grandparents want their children to do well at school. All the students also want to do well for their parents and grandparents. All the words of encouragement and gesturing mean good intentions. But how do they *do* "do well"?

This is similar to me wanting to do well, to please my parents. I did not meet my grandparents. To do well, how do I do it? What does doing well look and feel like? What do I do, how do I navigate around or through these barriers to do well?

*A reflection as I write this thesis: Mum and Dad were always encouraging of us kids in doing well. I cannot remember them showing us how to do any school work, we persisted on our own. I can still remember my Mums refrain: "get to school...get to school."*

This research shows that most parents do not have the knowledge to assist their children into and through school. It is difficult for kids who lack understanding or miss receiving information, because their parents don't understand. This places the students at a disadvantage, in an institution that is successful in failing Pacific students. Breaking the clutches of hegemony is a barrier for Pacific student success. Parents have to become more knowledgeable in their children's schooling. Parents have a choice: take on the cultural capital of the privileged, or don't.

Taking on the cultural capital of both cultures prepares the student to be more mobile in their new world.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have shown how the concept of cultural capital and hegemony impacts on Pacific people's education, and their struggle to find success inside the Pakeha system.

If the Pacific peoples could harness the understanding of these terms, what would be possible? This question forms the basis of the next chapter.

## **Chapter 9: Navigation – through the rough waters and away**

As the previous chapter has shown, the boys have a strong awareness of their parents' expectation that they will do well in their education, and they are willing to achieve those expectations. It is also clear that there are a number of obstacles and barriers that the boys encounter. This means that to be successful the boys have to come to terms with living in an environment where their view of the world is different. Some of the boys' language, the way they study, and the way they enjoy being together is dissimilar to their non-Pacific peers. The boys also need to adapt to how life is conducted in the Pakeha world: wearing school uniform, being punctual to school, learning about mysterious subjects, and sitting still for an hour at a time. So how do the boys navigate through this foreign territory and around the obstacles they encounter? What strategies have parents, teachers, and the school also developed?

### **Boys' navigational strategies**

Whenever I interview the boys, there is always a big and friendly smile on their faces. In this, they immediately exhibit one of their navigational skills to me. Michael tells of his easy going nature:

Cool being an Islander in school...because everyone thinks you are funny and strong and stuff...with the Toke boys (Tokelauan). It is easy getting along with other people because we can make them laugh by speaking "fobbie" (fresh off the boat language) language...talking like the Samoans...there are these different languages...ones who can't speak English properly. (Michael)

Humour knocks over barriers and brings young people together, allowing them to gently make fun of each other, yet respecting each other: strategically navigating around sensitive racial situations. Michael is acting out his "fresh off the boat" character, while firstly mocking his own ethnicity, then his Samoan buddies. All with big smiles and lots of laughter. Fiti also tells his humorous stories:

We don't get mocked heaps...like getting smart about our race like saying racist stuff. No one speaks mean to us. Our friends try to be funny with their comments, but they are not serious. (Fiti)

Like Michael, Fiti is using humour to open people up, creating a freedom to act and speak with their mates.

Being humorous is a complex tool, that can be fantastic when it mysteriously works, or a disaster when it implodes. A Pacific Island student can tell jokes about Pacific Islanders or current affairs and everyone will laugh. But if the joke is told by a Palangi about Pacific Islanders, or if it is hurtful, or the subject is not current, the joke's humour is lost, creating an embarrassed silence. Humour can be part of the learning process (Hill & Hawk, 1998) where the funny side of a subject is incorporated into the classroom. Humour can also be used by the student to deflect attention or to hide behind. By turning a solemn situation into a humorous one, the centre of attention is averted. Walker (1987) in one line from his "Being Polynesian", writes "Being called a coconut and pretending to be happy about it" describes the pretence when humour fails. Here the Pacific student fakes laughter at a funny punch line. The humour is not amusing, but he laughs to avoid embarrassing the jester. Using humour helps students survive immediate challenges, but can lead to undermining the respect of others -- like class mates and Palangi teachers --if used as a weapon. That is, when it is used to gain superiority.

Many of the students love participating in some form of sport and the gymnasium provides the space for them. There they can "disappear" from where they should be. Hemi describes his gymnasium:

I loved being with Mr. Carter. When you were in the gym, he didn't ask lots of questions about school and class, it was into training...into fun games...into doing things. He could also make it hard with lots of running...getting us ready for tournaments. We played club volleyball...and Bay of Plenty tournaments... He would organise tournaments for adults...seniors...and he would enter us into

them. We would get smashed (beaten)...but it got us ready for the school champs. The speed of the ball when spiked by adults was faster, so we got us used to it. But being in the gym with Mr. Carter and my mates was fun. I loved being with my mates, having fun, playing games, having competitions with each other...seeing who was the best... We always came to training...we would never miss training...we loved being there...like home. (Hemi)

Mr. Carter seems to have created a "home" for these students to escape to, or hide in, or a place of work and fun. Maybe it is the students' other home, a home away from home. They get to "play" inside of what Mr. Carter has planned in putting the volleyball team together. When certain skill drills are designed, they are created inside a framework of the boys "playing" and having fun. The boys are able to manoeuvre to a "safe" place inside the school, like another home.

Here, Mr. Carter is creating important relationships with the students (Cahill, 2006; Neville-Tisdall, 2002; and Hawk et al., 2001) and being a good human being (Ferguson et al., 2008). He has provided a safe place, his place, the gymnasium, for the students to meld into whatever is happening. There may be a Physical Education class they can join, or free gymnasium space for the students to utilise. In chapter 2, I have told of my close relationship with my 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby coach, where he was very nurturing and protective of his players.

Utilising family members as role models encourages student sporting achievements. Fiti tells of seeing his uncles' photographs in the trophy cabinet.

When my mates see the pictures in the trophy cabinet, and they see the last names, my uncles' names, they come up and ask if I am related to them. They see the team records losing one or two games a whole season. They think I can play volleyball like my uncles. When I see those photos, it makes me feel proud, seeing my uncles and dad, and knowing I could be like them. If you know your

family has done well and you want to be like them, you don't want to ruin it.

Even the teachers know my family and keep mentioning my uncles' names. (Fiti)

For Fiti, seeing his uncles' photographs and their playing record acts as an incentive to do well. It lifts Fiti's expectations of himself and provides mana amongst his friends.

Teachers knowing the family acts as a further incentive to achieve. Navigating through family, peer, and teacher expectations, leads to awareness of what lays ahead. It also provides significant male role models to demonstrate the way. Bringing together a student's love (such as a sport, a subject, or a cultural event) and adding history, enhances the school environment to ignite passion and add drive to the student's learning.

Finding help from those who have already mastered the system is another strategy used to navigate around a demand of schooling. Fiti seems unorganised with his home study, and when asked why he explains that his sister organises him:

She said every day after school, come home and read all your work and write down all the stuff you remember. Also, I read all my other stuff, doing the same thing. I do it most days after school (Fiti)

Michael uses mind maps for his learning:

When I am studying at home, I revise the basics and write out my notes. My teacher taught me how to use mind maps, I read them and my notes that are given to me. (Michael)

Michael seems to be an organised student who voluntarily does regular home study. He revises basics and re-writes his notes. If this is done on a regular basis, in all subjects, some understanding and learning will take place. Utilising the learning tools at home is a measure of success. The students are displaying that they understand the tools given to them, whether it is by their teacher or cousin or uncle, and displaying understanding by

applying that understanding. This is similar to my own experience of being organised with my homework, where re-writing my school exercise notes indicated learning to me.

Being on the good side of your teachers ensures a better journey through school. Ina explains:

I stay on the good side of teachers...not too good otherwise they will expect too much from you...just good enough to not upset them. If I have a really good relationship with the teacher, they might expect me to work really really hard. So, I just keep on the good side and no more. (Ina)

Ina has developed the teacher-student relationship so that he benefits. He gets close to the teachers, without being so friendly as to allow the teachers to raise their expectations of him. He is able to cruise inside of the teacher's expectations and stay on the good side of the teacher. This strategy works for Ina, but it does not push himself beyond his personal boundaries and may teach him to be lazy. He is able to observe and move with the teacher. Executing all the correct behaviours in the classroom. Being extremely cautious not to step over any boundaries and upset the teacher. The teacher observes a very nice Pacific student who is never in the wrong place, does all his work, and is an excellent class member. The student has fully observed and understood the teacher, not the other way round.

Ina has learnt and utilises his strategies for learning:

I find ways that is easy for my learning style. I like walking around the classroom while the lesson is going on, and have... sometimes... Chinese steel balls in my hand. Just playing with them...quietly. As long as I don't interrupt the class.(Ina)

By the relationship created with the teacher (Hawk et al., 2001) Ina is able to learn his way. He enjoys not being tied to the desk and being able to roam quietly around the classroom, plus having his hands occupied with the "Chinese steel balls." Ina has also



learnt effective learning strategies and adapted it to his personal learning. He tells of his liking for A3 sheets of paper:

I did graphics a couple of years ago and bought a heap of A3 paper. It was beside my bed and I put it on my table. I found out that if I work on these A3 sheets of paper, it is so cool. Even the sound of the felt pen on the paper sounds cool. It keeps you going. It's those small things that keep you going. Like just being able to... (Ina gestures writing on paper)...and saying wow! That is much better than doing a little scribble on normal paper. Like A3 paper is amazing invention, it is better than A4, you can write big as you like. Sometimes I draw on half of it and I doodle on the other half. It doesn't work for everyone, but it did for me. (Ina)

Ina is able to understand what strategies of learning work for him and the environment in which he lives: the classroom and his bedroom. His quiet wanderings around the classroom and the strategically placed A3 sheets of paper by his bedside allow him to successfully navigate his spaces. With this personal insight and the teachers "listening" of Ina (Fitzpatrick, 2005; Fletcher et al., 2008) he is able to maximise his learning potential.

Michael mentions that he utilises his golfing strategies in dealing with his teacher.

If I see Miss and want to avoid her, I will, just like golf, hit a ball just short of Miss. So I don't have to talk to her. Then I will get out my pitching wedge club, and pitch it over her, missing her by heaps. Then I have an easy shot at the green, avoiding Miss. See, I don't even have to talk to her. (Michael)

Michael combines his sporting strategies and tactics to avoid a sticky situation with Miss. Avoiding strategies can be utilised around the school and in life. To navigate successfully around school and life, you need to practice your shots. You cannot pull out your long hitting driver and out distance trouble if you have not practiced. You will still be in trouble.

Going and doing homework at the homework centre is more fun than doing it at home, as Michael and Fiti inform us:

Working with my cousins and mates is the funniest. It takes your mind off the work, but it is not the best way...it's fun. We also go together to the homework centre for tutorials and school work. It's more fun with your mates and my cousins. With your mates you be yourself...be funny...have a laugh...and not be worried of what people are thinking about you. I went to the homework centre in the first two terms, doing all my work and staying up to date. It was a good feeling being up to date (Michael)

I go to the home work centre with my mates. I like going because my mates go...and it is fun. Sometimes we do heaps of work if we don't laugh too much. I went there heaps...four times a week. We all sit together and do work. (Fiti)

When asked why he attended the homework centre, Fiti replies, "Miss M told me to go." It is a relationship that is developing between teacher and student, where there is trust. When trust is there, the student will work harder to return the trust.

With Michael and Fiti going to the homework centre with their mates and cousins, it adds familiarity and a feeling of family for the students. The way their "outside of school" life looks and feels like, with hilarity and mates, is mimicked inside the homework centre. The boys navigate into a learning area, the homework centre, which suits them. Also there is Fiti's trust of his teacher, Miss M. Because of her encouragement and direction he trusts her and responds by attending the homework centre.

Continuous talking and copying from the text book will not keep students engaged and interested in a lesson. Taz tells of a classroom experience:

Miss just seems to talk and talk, then write and write, then she says copy this down. Sometimes it is copying straight from the textbook...I still don't

understand what's going on. I hate it. If I listen to her, read and copy the text book, I will get there. (Taz)

This boring teaching style, talking and copying, is sending Taz to sleep and distraction. It is not engaging and does not lead to good student-teacher relationships. But if he does what he says he does: reading and copying, he will pass. Taz puts aside his "dislikes" and navigates around a boring teaching strategy to enable the possibility of passing this subject.

Some students report teachers not asking questions of all class members. Ina recalls a teachers questioning technique of only asking questions of the brighter students, and how he utilises it to elicit the "teacher's correct responses" in his exam preparation.

After a few terms teachers find their favourites and they kinda exclude everyone's ideas. When they ask questions in class, they ask the same students...all the time. If you put your hand up, most times they don't ask you. They seem to ask the same ones...again and again. It stinks...makes you feel your answers are dumb...so you just sit there. Then you learn to listen when the teacher is asking the clever ones...those are the answers that the teacher wants...in the exams (Ina)

Teachers have a big influence in students' lives, and their shortcomings or teaching strengths can either hinder or accelerate the learning. In Ina's world, the teacher's exclusionary questioning style impacts negatively ("it stinks" and makes Ina feel his "answers are dumb"). By understanding and utilising the teacher's shortcomings, however, Ina is able to use it to his advantage.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: As I moved through school, I had worked out how to be least noticeable and be a goodie good, stay quiet, do my work, and try hard in exams. It worked. But trying hard not to get into trouble required a lot of work.*

This research shows students are becoming more sophisticated in utilising knowledgeable people, be they cousins, clever classmates, or friendly teachers. When needing to

complete a task, the students seek the most able one to assist them. The students are also making use of the school's after school option, homework centre.

Are the students abandoning their Pacific Island side, by taking on the cultural capital of the school? By taking on how school is organised and how teachers teach, the cultural capital, students will be able to dance in both worlds.

### **Parents' navigational strategies**

The interviewed parents tell many stories of being severely disciplined by their own parents. It seems to have been an accepted method of disciplining. Mata tells his story:

If I had upset Mum by being naughty, I was told "wait till your father gets home!" ... and if this bad thing happened in the morning, and Dad did not come home till late, it was a long long wait. Once Dad got home...Mum would tell him of my misbehaving, and he would call out "you ... in the bedroom." Our father would hit us with his belt. (Mata)

The saying "spare the rod and spoil the child" was often embodied in practice. Parents tell of being physically handled by their parents and receiving the "whack", the "stick", or the "belt." Mata vividly remembers the long long wait and the belting from his dad. All the parents are navigating away from the harsh parenting practices of their parents and grandparents, creating strategies that fit today's world: talking taking the place of physical punishment. This is similar to my experiences of being on the receiving of my fathers "belt" discipline, yet I have raised my children by talking to them and the occasional "hand to hand" smack.

Mala reflects back on her sister receiving a whack:

My parents did not look after me, they were too busy working. It was my sister Tina who looked after me. I was the youngest and I think I was the spoilt one, because I was sickly. I didn't have to do anything around the home. Once I saw

Dad hit Tina around the legs with a broomstick. They had come home and Tina had cut her fringe! It is tapu. Girls don't cut their hair...it's an Island thing. So she got the "whack" with the broom. So, when I had my hair cut while on school work experience, the hairdressers where I was working cut my hair. When I got home I was racing my parents' home, in case they saw I had cut my hair. I raced home and put it into a ponytail, hiding the length, and avoiding the broomstick. (Mala)

Yet all of them are modifying their parenting ways, with the "hand power" being minimised and the spoken word being maximised. Some are developing change in their parenting methods and understanding of what their children need to do at school.

Siva uses his insights in education with his parenting strategies of explaining "how it works" and "how to use it" and "how to move forward":

Education is important and we need it to move forward. With my job in education dealing with students kicked out of schools, I see all the negative sides of no education or lack of education. I am so grateful about the opportunity my family has had, especially with Michael and learning values from caring for his grandparents. Being with brothers and uncles...yes education is important. Being NZ born has allowed me to understand the education system and teach Michael the "ins and outs" of it, unlike my parents, who had no understanding and would only say "get to school". (Siva)

Siva is using his vocational insights into education and applying it to Michael's upbringing; adding these insights to his own parents' "no nonsense" parenting, and applying it to today's world.

Pupa tells of meeting Ina's school dean, as he works on a closer relationship with his son's teacher and school:

Once we were called into school because Ina's marks were slipping. We had a meeting with the school dean about keeping him on track. Ina's Mum knew the dean through previous school matters. We, along with Ina, created a check list of

things that he had to do to keep him on track. We all kept track of his times and dates of assignments. Keeping good relations with his teachers is very important; attending study classes during the holidays; and attending the learning centre once a week. We kept an eye on him and he seemed to be following the program. It seems to be working. (Pupa)

Pupa is choosing to work with the school in getting Ina up to date and back on track. This educational relationship, parents and school, works when both parties work towards a common goal: Ina's educational success. The school shows Ina's grades and works out strategies to improve them, with Pupa adding to the strategic plan by checking on what has been agreed on, and task completion. Pupa is navigating around a problem through an alliance with the school and teachers.

This differs from my Mum's meeting with the School's hierarchy. She would march up to school to defend her children at the slightest mention of trouble and to fight for her children. Maybe schools were more reactive then and not proactive.

Speaking and listening to the boys' parents, I hear a change in the parenting methods, the putting aside of the "stick", the "hand", or the "belt" that their parents used. Now a new Pacific parent is evolving. Siva talks about his parents and parenting:

I have been thinking about Mum and Dad a lot (both parents have recently passed). I look at the different ways Mum and Dad brought us up. If I did not do what was asked of me, I was punished...the hand. With Michael, I think, it is not punishment, in a physical way. I take things away from him. Like golf, things he enjoys, or something else. I have changed my ways of bringing my kids up, different from Mum and Dad. I don't use excessive force, a little slap. (Siva)

Siva is replacing the "hand" with taking things away, things Michael loves, his golf clubs. He is hoping his son learns the "lesson" without his resorting to his parents' parenting methods.

Pupa tells of seldom being disciplined by his Dad because he was a good child. He had seen his older brothers physically hit but employs different methods with his own children.

I was never disciplined; I was so good (he laughs). Dad would give me a hard whack for breaking things like furniture and windows. With my kids (one teenager and two younger ones) I have always given them a whack on the bum, now and then, till they were 6 or 7 years old. I stopped. Now I talk to them. My Dad never beat us, he didn't use the "four by two" (long piece of timber) to discipline us. (Pupa)

In parenting his own children, Pupa has moved from employing the "whack" to talking to his children.

Mala speaks of her parenting and the eliminating of physical punishment while disciplining her children:

I tend to talk a bit more than using the slap. Except I didn't use to discipline "A" and he is the worse one now. I didn't smack him at all and he is the hardest of them all. When I was having problems with him I would smack his hand or bottom. My husband tended to be too aggressive and used his belt. I used my hand. Now I do the disciplining. I use words and not my hand. (Mala)

Mala had observed her husband's physical disciplining style, which may have reminded her of her parents, and opted to curtail the physical nature and revert to "words." This change may have been prompted by her memories of being on the receiving end of such physical encounters. Now Mala is navigating around the old strategies of disciplining and moving to using words.

Tasa tells of her homework routine of being with her children as they engage with their homework, and not sending them away to a room on their own.

I definitely believe that the parents need to do their kids homework with them and not just sending them to the room. Also, to be open to questions about the homework, and for the parent to ask questions about their school work and homework. When I am in the room with them, I ask questions about what they are doing in each subject. I like to know what they are learning and to see if they can remember what they have learnt today. Just keeping up with my kids. (Tasa)

Tasa may have learnt from her school days the importance of staying up to date with school work, helping by questioning her children, being in the "homework" room, and by showing an interest in their education through her questioning. She shows her love by wanting the kids to do well.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I can remember waiting all day for Dad to come home from work, because Mum was going to tell of my misdeeds. And what usually followed was "Phillip...come to the bedroom." Here, his trouser belt would be used on my bum.*

This research shows all the parents had experienced the heavy hand of their parents, but as this new era was dawning; they are adopting newer disciplining strategies. Lessening the hand to more talk and withdrawing of privileges. Parents are making changes that fit the new world, and maybe they remember the beatings.

### **Teachers' navigational strategies**

Some of the interviewed teachers tell of recognising and acknowledging their students cultural diversity, and adding it to the lesson:

We are always talking about writers who are dead or not brown in the curriculum. I decided to add a Pacific Island part. I know Talo, so I invited him to class to read his material. The kids loved seeing a living talking writer reciting his own writings...not a disconnected reader. (Arapera)



Speaking to a live writer is more fun than trying to guess what a dead writer was trying to say. English teacher Arapera adds Pacific Island writers to the English curriculum, and invites Talo Talavae, a Pacific Island writer, to class! By having a component of the lesson that is culturally relatable, and alive, the students become engaged and better able to add to their knowledge.

While many of the staff in the school do not utilise different teaching strategies for Pacific Island students, a small number take on a positive stance and add a Pacific Island component to their taught curriculum. Most create their own Pacific Island teaching initiatives and topics. Whether it is with a Pacific Island greeting, sharing kai, meeting as a group at homework centre, each teacher creates their own positive initiative.

Art teachers Robyn and Rita both confirm, when spoken to, that in the junior art program students are introduced to Pacific Island art, tapa cloth printing. Seniors are introduced to Pacific Island artists like Fatu Feu'u, Ian George, Shane Tufferey and Michael Tuffery. Making the subject matter meaningful for the Pacific Island students (Hawk and Hill, 1998). Rita shares her tapa cloth story where she meets a student's uncle and purchases a length of tapa cloth:

I have a part Island-part Maori boy, Matt, in my class. He is a good boy. We were about to start a tapa cloth unit and I got into a conversation with Matt, about how his family had some tapa cloth at his uncles home. Following the conversation, I arranged to meet Matt at his uncle's place, to chat about purchasing some tapa cloth. I managed to purchase some cloth and used it in our class. I told the class of its purchasing through Matt and brought him into the lesson. It made him feel important. He had this smile on his face, it made him feel important, it seemed to lift him. The kids in the class turned and looked at him. The tapa cloth and Matt's uncle's story made the lesson and I think changed the dynamics of the class and Matt. (Rita)

Rita is telling of how she brought the community into her classroom with the tapa cloth, and incorporated it into the lesson, creating a link with the community and the school. It

starts with Rita talking to Matt during class, part of an evolving and developing relationship.

Social Studies teacher Kate explains that the curriculum does not specify Pacific Island topics, but teachers are able to incorporate into wherever they are inclined. Physical Education teacher Skinn answers "Maori stick games", when asked if any cultural topics or units are provided in Physical education classes. While English teacher Arapera, who is Maori, answers simply "No." Arapera explains the term "cultural diversity" and how it could be used to add Pacific Island content, and describes her use of School Journals:

There are no specific topics identified, but under "cultural diversity" you are able to incorporate things Pacific. I used the School Journals for my sources because in there were Pacific Island kids writing about themselves, and Pacific Island writers. I used Talo Talavae, the poet, because I met him and got to know him. This is the way we need to go, bringing in the Pacific Island writer, poet, into the school, into the classroom. (Arapera)

One initiative in the school was the establishment of a Homework Centre that operates after school and is manned by willing staff. One teacher comments about encouraging a couple of students to bring their friends along:

I saw a couple of Pacific Island boys come together to the homework centre. I kept a distant eye on them. Moving close by, but not too close to bother them. Slowly, I started talking to them. I started getting on well with them. Then I started asking them to get their mates to come along. Soon, there was a good group of them. They always seem to be laughing and having fun. It was good seeing them as a group - they seem to work differently. (Kate)

When this teacher shows an interest in these Pacific Island boys, they return an interest in what the teacher is saying. Forming meaningful relationships is worthwhile for both parties. (Hawk et al, 2001)

Kai is provided at the beginning of each Homework Centre's day. This provides an initial incentive, plus sustenance, to attend the centre (Hawk et al, 2001; Hawk & Hill, 1998; & 2003). The teachers who man the Centre show which ones are "going the extra mile", giving of themselves to the students (Hawk et al, 2001).

Art teachers Robyn and Rita both add Pacific Island topics to the art curriculum (tapa cloth printing and mentioning and profiling Pacific Island artists). Social Studies teacher Kate personally incorporates "migration" into a Social Studies unit. Teacher Kate says:

You can tweak the curriculum to add a Pacific Island component. I added "migration" to my topic and was able to incorporate the Pacific basin and its Pacific Peoples. Here, we start tracking the migration of the Pacific Peoples and it gives an opportunity for the Pacific Island students to contribute to the lesson. It gives them a "voice" in class. I also know I have Pacific Island students in my class and I am interested in them. (Kate)

If students can relate to lesson material through their personal stories and culture, and display this knowledge in front of their friends, the student has a sense of pride. By teachers being flexible and creative (Cahill, 2006; Neville-Tisdall, 2002; Hill and Hawk, 1998) they are able to instil self pride. The added curriculum content which acknowledges the cultural backgrounds of the students (Bernstein, 1973; Bourdieu, 1973) also enhances the learning experience.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: During my years at high school, I cannot remember one piece of Pacific Island curriculum content being taught to me. My memory may have faded.*

Some students comment that there is "nothing" to do at school, or "nothing" with a Pacific Island connection. This perceived "nothing" may relate to not understanding the current classroom topic; being behind in class work; or not doing the necessary homework. Equally, it may relate to the topic lacking a Pacific Island element to engage

the student; or that when the teacher's initiative has incorporated Pacific Island elements into their curriculum, the content is not taught effectively to the student – where the lesson content is taught and the relationship is neglected. It may also be the student's choice to dis-engage with school and learning, hiding behind "nothing." This presents a barrier for the student. Part of the learning process is that the learner must present themselves in a teachable state. (Hill & Hawk, 1998)

In my first two years of High School, I chose to be at school and presented myself in a "teachable state." I had followed my parent's expectations of being a good boy at school and doing my homework, and good exam results followed.

*A reflection as I write this thesis: I passed through school knowing that I was a Cook Islander, closer to being Maori, but not a Pakeha, but still culturally un-identified by me. The teachers or lessons I loved were friendly and kind teachers, and the ones who read to the class or told stories.*

This research shows that some teachers are recognising the cultural identity of the class and teaching to it. While it is not been a school directive, some teachers are following intuitive leads. This creates a start to a learning relationship that may last their whole high school life. These relationships also contribute to the running and feel of a school. If students are happy in the classroom and contributing to school life, the school is a wonderful place.

### **School's navigational strategies**

If we look at ERO's 2006 Report, we will see a large number of schools failing to record and track Pacific students' achievements. Rainbow High School also fits into that category. With the school not having a specific Pacific Plan and no push for Pacific curriculum elements, it is left to individual teachers to make Pacific educational additives, or not. A senior teacher comments that the school does not have a "specific Pacific Island policy", but is able to cover all things culturally under the umbrella label of

"cultural diversity". With that teachers personal links with the Pacific Island community, she was sympathetic to Pacific Island students' possible engagement into aspects culturally linked to them, inside the curriculum. In other aspects (as Siva reports) the school is creating home-school partnerships with internet emailing between school-parent, and parent-school (Ferguson et al, 2008).

Teacher Puti organises and controls Pacific Island Performance club because of her personal connections to the Pacific Island community. She is Maori and has lived in Tonga, and facilitates the Pacific Island Performance group, as they practice and prepare for the local Inter School Pacific Islands Festival. All groups present a 20 minute program that incorporates a minimum of 4 different Pacific Island cultures. Teacher Puti supervises the sessions as the group "practices" being Pacific Islanders, and comments that, although they are "nice boys", they are "naughty". The Pacific Island performers are placed into a "multi-world" situation: their world; the school world; and the performers' world. In the performers' world they are adding four other cultures to their already complex world Hill & Hawk (1998). And Puti deems them naughty! The Pacific boys are not disrespectful or malicious, but playful. Playing well inside the set boundaries so as not to offend Puti.

Rainbow High School does not track Pacific students' exam results. It tracks their ethnicity. Being able to track and provide feedback and feed forward is essential in guiding Pacific students through high school and on to an appropriate career. It is useless to not know where they are currently situated academically, then to jump in and move them forward. Constant monitoring throughout their school life is a must.

## **Summary**

The boys, parents, teachers, and school all utilise strategies to navigate themselves through the education system. The boys use humour, find safe places in the school, and learn to stay on the good side of teachers, understand themselves as learners, attend the homework centre, and listen to the teacher. The parents modify their disciplining by

using more "talking" and less "hand." The teachers add Pacific Island elements to the classroom and their lessons, while schools squeeze Pacific elements into the curriculum under the umbrella of "cultural diversity."



## **Chapter 10: Conclusion – now off to school**

As a sports coach, teacher, husband, father, I am always thinking about how to do things better and smarter. Always asking, "is there another way?" I coach throughout the year and on most occasions there is a result. Wanting to win every contest, there is a lot of thinking, planning, and strategising for the next contest. This thinking eventually flowed into the classroom and onto my students. Being a New Zealand-born Cook Islander, I settled on thinking about enhancing the opportunities for Pacific people to achieve well in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This thesis caused me to reflect on my life history. Revisiting my Mum and Dad's arrival into New Zealand and piecing together how life may have been for them. Asking questions that cannot be asked of them – was it difficult living in New Zealand after leaving your Cook Island family? Did you mingle with the Palangi? On sending your children to school, what did we say after our first day or week of school?

It also made me reflect on my educational journey from primary school to Pacific Island researcher: recounting my earliest memories of school, about being at the sandpit on my first day of school, about to be isolated as my older brother is ushered away from me to another classroom. Leaving me alone! The silent days at high school: being compliant and staying out of trouble; being successful on the sports field as I played rugby, cricket, table tennis and soccer; travelling to Dunedin to attend Otago University. That is a long way from home, but scarily exciting. Far enough to not be noticed by Mum and Dad for any misdemeanours, yet free to be me, away from judging eyes and caring parents.

Teaching in high schools became fun once you mastered its skills and gained the students confidence. Having those eyes trained on you is a privilege. Being able to dance with their minds and bodies, and knowing you can make a difference in their lives. Taking these experiences into teaching initial teacher education provided me with background knowledge of teaching. One of my many messages to my students was "know the impact



of me, over there" – I need to be in the shoes of the school students to know how the teacher is impacting. Not staying in your own mind and thinking "what a great lesson I am teaching." As a New Zealand-born Pacific teacher, going to school here, I am able to bring experiences to initial teacher education. I have also had time to reflect on the required readings for the program, noticing a lack of Pacific Island educational material.

Before the thesis came the Masters papers. One day a lady from Christchurch College of Education (Dr. Carol Mutch) happened to be walking by in my town and she asked about my upgrading my qualification for professional development. She said College would pay for my Masters Degree. I pondered...free degree...no cost...that is cheap, and replied "I am in." Inside of the Masters program I found I was allowed to think, where my thoughts were appreciated. A special teacher unlocked a dusty cupboard. Thank you.

My research centred on the question of how to enhance the opportunities for Pacific people to achieve well in Aotearoa New Zealand. What insights can we gain from exploring stories from my own experience and by investigating the ideas that some Pacific boys, their parents and their teachers share with me? What strategies might we use?

Starting this research required lots of reading providing knowledge, guidance, methodologies, and other people's experiences. Reading and actioning the research were two different experiences. Once the planning was completed – submitting a research proposal, ethical clearance, and planning – it was time to meet the boys, Pacific Island students. With neophyte enthusiasm I rushed in – interviewing the Pacific students – once in the room I felt lost, a new boy in class. Not knowing the students and wanting a quick permanent relationship, so that we could talk for hours and gather thick descriptions. It did not happen. I was too quick, intruding on their space and creating an uneasy atmosphere. My lack of interviewing skills led to one word, one sentence replies: leaving lots of silences and very little data. Plus my initial recording devices were large and cumbersome.. Settling on the smallest and simplest – a hand held Sony Cassette-Corder TCM-150 with built in microphone. Transcribing was repetitive and laborious as I held the tape recorder to my ear and wrote what was said into my notebook. This method

allowed one hand to work the buttons (stop, rewind, and play) and the other to write the dialogue.

Creating relationships with the parents was fun as they were keen to tell stories of their parents, their own education, and of the parenting of their boys. They all treasured education.

I lacked "critical friend(s)" to buddy up with me as my thesis journey began. Being a distant student I missed participating in academic conversations that were present during some of the Masters papers in Christchurch. I needed to have face to face chats to consolidate my thinking. I also needed time to think. Brother Pupa filled the void and we became fortnightly critical friends, discussing what we had read and the questions and challenges my supervisors had posed.

I thought that to complete the thesis all I needed to do was follow the instructions, follow the template. Wrong! Not understanding the system made me cover more ground, not that the extra coverage was bad. I got to see the expertise of my supervisors as they guided from the side, allowing growth.

This research is important as it provides an opportunity for a Pacific researcher to investigate Pacific people, adding to a growing pool of researchers. The research also mentions Pacific methodologies, providing an opportunity to write of Pacific research approaches in the Academy's arena. It provides another insight into Pacific people who live in New Zealand. Understanding their culture and how they learn can lead to integrating Pacific topics into the curriculum. With learning, how can teachers create an inclusive homely learning environment?

This research is also important as it is seeking to investigate how Pacific students respond to today's school environment. How interacting with school and class, the curriculum, teachers, and if their background influences their achievement. It is also important to see how students adapt to their learning environment.

Further investigations into the "workings" of education for Pacific people are necessary, but will never be enough. With the constant listening to "students" of education – whether compulsory or tertiary – researchers will be able to hear the need for adjustments. Listening to the students who are interfacing and engaging with education allows for a futuristic adjustment, not a journey of nostalgia and loss. There is a call for aspects of culture to be retained – language, dance, and crafts – while at the same the students' futures are not hindered.

Investigations into the teaching of Pacific students needs further work, to provide teachers with necessary and new skills to engage the learner. Admittedly the student needs to present themselves in a "teachable state", allowing the teacher better chance of engaging the student.

If Pacific students' exam results are not recorded, tracked, and strategised for success, it is a waste of time. The results become a clump of meaningless numbers. A simple system whereby marks are recorded, tracked, and academic plans created, needs developing. From here, with data (exam results) you are able to feedback and feed forward on possible academic pathways.

Parents need to educate themselves about the educating of their children. Becoming conversant with how the school systems work, how do their children progress from one level to another, and how do parents better prepare them for school, while at school. Also knowledge of NCEA, to guide the children onto tertiary or further learning.

With this knowledge – school workings, homework, exam results, parent-teacher meetings, and academic plans – how do we bring these two groups together often and simply? Further exploration is needed. Following the methods of communication used by young people may be a solution – texting, Facebook, emailing.

Advice to the Pacific youth: adapt quickly to your ever changing world. Use the same savvy in classrooms as on the streets and playing fields. Learn to love education. Failure to adjust may lead to distrust and anger.

While at school aim for a lofty occupation - information technologist, lawyer, teacher, entrepreneur, doctor, business owner, economist. Also, understand how you learn, reflecting on how you take in new information. Whether you enjoy making notes, drawing diagrams, listening, or reading more about the topic, know how you learn. Don't be afraid of creating good relationships with your teachers as they hold the knowledge you require.

Advice to teachers: create relationships with your students by getting to know them outside the classroom. Find out what school activities they participate in and go and watch them practice. Look out for them during lunchtime and strike up a conversation. You may want to find out what after school activities they are involved in or watch them play on a Saturday. Showing a little interest in your student now could pay bigger dividends later. My advice to training teachers: if you coach a school team, show enthusiasm, those players will carry your banner. Meaning, by giving time, coaching, and showing enthusiasm, you may win the students confidence and in the playgrounds of the school they will tell nice stories of you and it will spread. Winning students' confidence is a key task. When teaching, relate the new material to a situation that the student identifies with, anchoring the new knowledge to something already known.

I would advocate more Pacific research topics with the outcome of increasing Pacific researchers and a closer understanding of Pacific peoples. Aligned with that strategy would be the use of Pacific methodologies in research becoming part of the mainstream. Once locating your research area-topic, listen attentively to the people who are involved. It is their experiences that speak the loudest, where you seek understanding.

Encourage academic language that is inclusive and not exclusive will encourage greater membership. Once speaking the language, more Pacific researchers can and will aid in the continual unravelling of the magic of the Pacific Islander.

### **Strategies in moving forward**

Dreaming – and finding ways to put our dreams in place. Allowing our children to dream the wildest and silliest dreams: to be Prime Minister, or an All Black, or a rock star, or a Rapper. Allowing the freedom to dream is the first step in moving forward.

Finding our voices – and learning to use different voices in different contexts. It is these voices that speak the inner thoughts of the next generation. If they are silenced and never heard, our children's aspirations will die. Our people will die. Allowing more than one voice will lead to a choir of people informing each other.

Learning Palangi ways and becoming educated about critical theory so that we can challenge hegemony, claim our cultural capital, and reject deficit thinking. We need Palangi tools to re-assemble the Palangi way, allowing for the new Pacific-Palangi (PacPal, or Langific) methods.

Understanding the educational system and getting involved with your children's education. Know what is happening at school and why, and supporting the children's learning by being an excellent role model. When your children see you doing good things, they will mimic you, saving heart ache later on from lost teenagers.

Learning ways of supporting our children in learning as we support them in other areas so that we can demand opportunities for collaborative support and slow thinking to be used in classroom settings as well as in our culture and the sporting field.

Working with schools so that we teach them about Pacific ways of caring for all, of being together, of caring. Boost the cultural capital of other New Zealanders.

Having political clout is useful. In the current Parliament there are 5 Members who have Pacific blood, but they do not wield sufficient power. The attempt to sway parliamentarians would require them to be Pacific Islanders who understand Pacific peoples' reality, and/or who would be swayed by the incoming information from the Pacific communities. This information would be: listen to the Pacific voices as they speak of education and employment; also listen with Pacific ears as and not Palangi ears; and encourage adaptability, making Pacific people agile and mobile.

### **The finish line**

The genesis of this thesis lay in my desire to explore the possibility that Pacific students could take the strategies and disciplines which they used to achieve success on the sporting field and use them to equal effect in the classroom. Given that it was a study conceived in future notions of possibilities and potentials, it seems contradictory that the past and the present have been such pre-eminent forces in this thesis. On one level, however, the collision of past/present might be seen as inevitable: interview research confirm and taught me to express in formal academic terms what instinct and experience might led me to expect: more of the same. The familiarity and past reminded me and parents with present students speak of - racist stereotypes and assumptions (valued sport dismissed academic) culture clash (not realising demands church and family; girls quiet shyness ignored or dismissed by teacher) clumping (no tracking process exam marks; half century culture, language and history not established part curriculum; only appear on whim good graces individual teachers, umbrella generic 'cultural studies.) despite gestures inclusiveness gatekeeping mechanisms experienced first Pacific Islanders took hopes 'go to school'; ensures cultural currency dominant (palangi) class remains at a premium. In same vein cultural influences colonial past might be said continue serve constrain and hamper Pacific peoples efforts successfully navigate way through New Zealand education and gain benefits.

We have seen how the past impacts on and informs the present for Pacific peoples: but both the exploration of the past and the interviews in the present are defined by a sense of

expectation and aspiration. It is important not to overlook one most important outcomes of this research - multiplicity of strategies with the fusion of past and present pointing to future.

Puppet smiled. *Good puppet.*

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## **Appendix 1: My story**

### **Mum and Dad**

My parents Upokoina Poona Ian David George (Areora Village, Atiu, Cook Islands) and Martilda Akenunua Tarapoko Wichman (Arorongi Village, Rarotonga, Cook Islands) arrived separately into New Zealand from the Cook Islands. Both parents rarely attended school, with Mum being kept at home to look after the younger kids, and Dad left to look after the animals (horses, pigs, and chooks) and the plantation.

My Mum arrived as a 14 year old in New Zealand and worked as domestic help for a wealthy family. This was a government scheme allowing single young Cook Island women to immigrate to New Zealand (Te Ara, 2010). By fleeing her demanding mother, and encouraged by her older sister, who paid for the flying boat (aeroplane) fare, Mum headed to New Zealand (S. Wichman, personal communication, June 5, 2010).

My Dad was a little older, 17-18 years old, when he arrived in New Zealand. He told me he had been reading a letter from his older brother, who was living and working in New Zealand. The letter sounded interesting, as it told of making money, living by yourself and going to the movies. My father thought, how could I get to New Zealand? He devised a plan whereby he travelled to Makatea Island, in French Polynesia, to work and make money on the rock phosphate island. Eventually he saved enough money for his boat fare to New Zealand, and had also saved money for his Mum, which he sent home to the Cooks Islands. That was my Dad, always thinking of his family first and him self last. I remember the door step lecture-advice given to me by Dad as I headed to university, 'Remember when you are at university your god, your country, and your family.' Ahh my Dad.

My Mum stayed home and raised the family, while Dad worked in the local timber mill. Both parents were hard working and raised their family through Christian values. Before the family shifted house to the city of Rotorua, the family had grown to 7 (3 boys and 4 girls), soon to be 9 with brothers Pupa and Derek. I can remember Mum was always busy in the home with the children: cleaning, feeding, and disciplining us. As the two oldest boys, Jim and I had to sweep, wash, and mop the floor every morning. The girls were too young to contribute to the house keeping. In disciplining, if we did anything wrong, Mum would say 'Wait till your father gets home!' If we had erred in the morning, it was a long wait till Dad returned from work. When he did return Mum would fill him in on the details of the misbehaving and we were promptly called to their bedroom for the



'belting.' This involved Dad taking his belt from his work trousers and using it on whichever of the boys needed their bums warming for the day's misdeeds. But Dad was not a brutal man, for once you released your tears, he softened and stopped the 'belting.'

### **Kai time**

Any mealtime in the house had simple routines. When the food was prepared, the whole family were called to the table. Here, we waited till grace was said, then we ate. Mum and Dad always supervised and ate after everyone else had eaten. You ate what was on your plate. If visitors arrived, even with the large numbers already at the family table, Dad or Mum always gave them a plate and squeezed them in. Food was always the first offering from my folks, and as you left the house, my Parents would walk you out, and their parting comment to you was, 'If you ever need a bed you know where we are.' That was Mum and Dad, always giving to others first.

At every family celebration, like a birthday, a Christmas, New Year's Day, or going away of a family member, my folks always created a feast. A big meal and this was usually accompanied with an umu, or hangi. This made it easier to cook the quantity of food required. With Mum's directions over food preparations, celebratory feasts were always successful. And when you left, Mum always had a well wrapped parcel of leftover food for you. It was Mum' and Dad's parting gift of generosity from them to you.

### **Going to school**

Going to school was just part of our life. Not that we ever thought of not going! Our parent always directed us to the school buildings, and I say that because they were not able to help us in any of the set school or homework tasks. It was more of 'do it' and they gave you time to do it. That is, time away from house chores or going to a church based activity. That was a double bonus, getting out of a church activity and doing homework.

In the classroom I was shy, doing what our parents had always asked of us, 'Sit up, be quiet, and do as you are told.' Also in there would have been 'Don't answer back.' In class I rarely asked or answered any questions, fearing failure or ridicule from the teacher. I silently did as I was asked and was never a disruption.

### **Teachers**

After school, in the evenings, I had a homework routine. This was self initiated. I would go through all my school exercise books and try to remember all my work. Rote learning it, and if I did not understand the work, I would re-write it. When I was in 'love' with

school and school work, it was fun. One of my favourite teachers was a Mr. Andrews, my English teacher, because he would read all the characters parts of Pygmalion, creating all those strange accents. I would run all the way from my lunchtime rugby game, to get a seat, close to the front, to listen to Mr. Andrews read. Seeing I feared reading out aloud, it was an added bonus. There was also a Mr. Hewitt, Mister Magoo or Molecules, the science teacher, who was very strict and funny. In his classes there was a time to play and a time to work, and you quickly learnt which was which. I remember a science project that I did; you had to take a cross section of ground and count the insects or grass species. I ran my cross sectional line across a worn path behind the shops. Did the counting and the drawing and wrote up my project. I got an A! Because I liked the teacher, I put more effort into my work.

I liked the boundaries and the work ethic you developed, and got a sense of satisfaction when a task was completed. In my final year my English teacher was Mr. McHugh, a Welshman who encouraged and allowed me to think. Not to remember his notes or what he had said, but what I thought! Wow, to say what I wanted to say. Such freedom. I still remember the poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by T.S. Eliot. And there was my 1st XV rugby coach, also my PE teacher. He was a combination of all: fun; boundaries; hard work; personal humour; creating your own rugby moves; and relatable. You felt as though he loved and cared for you, and would protect you from harm.

In the first two years of high school I was put into higher achieving classes, after most exams. This was fun. At the end of the second year of high school, I was invited into the top class for the third year (Year 11). Wow! I was proud of what I had done, but mainly my Dad would be pleased with me. He always talked about doing well at school. Come the beginning of the third year, my name was not on the class list! I was devastated! I felt cheated. I had worked hard to be in that class, and now the principal had gone back on his word.

### **Mums at war**

In the high school I attended there was one other Pacific Island family that I knew of, the Hagan's (our relations) and one boy Cedric, who were of Cook Island descent. Otherwise the school of 800 pupils was Pacific Island student free. Back to the Hagan's, their mother and our father were brother and sister, so the shared dreams of Pacific Islanders was magnified as the mothers of each family duelled for which family was the brightest. School test results were compared, school progress was compared, and sporting achievements were compared. The educational battle waged on for years, all unbeknown to the educational participants, us kids. But it was for them who wanted the best for their own children in their new land: they had high expectations.

Nevertheless school for me was a happy time and I was living out my parents' requests, dreams and expectations of going to school and doing well. I was also active on the sports fields and successful. I eventually headed to University and teaching.

### **Mum marching to school**

Every 'meet the parents-teachers evening' my Mum was there, gathering all the appropriate stories to retell or redirect her children. They were usually good stories, but if you needed a telling off, you got it from Mum ('blimming kids!' she would say). And if she thought her kids were being slighted in anyway at school she would be down at the school, lining up to see the principal. She was a fearless defender of her children.

One of my brothers was racially ridiculed by a teacher. Once the story reached Mum, she was off to see the principal and the teacher concerned. She was off to do battle. Likewise with the girls, she marched off to the local girls' school to confront the principal, withdraw my sister, and enrol her in another school. All in a day's work for a Mum who wanted the best education for her children.

### **Living on one wage packet**

I can remember lunches. Having jam sandwiches where the jam had soaked into the bread and resurfaced on the other side. Making it look unpalatable. The re-using of our waxed lunch paper wrapping for the whole week! By Friday it was tattered and torn, lucky to hold another set of jam or peanut butter sandwiches. And when eating your lunch with others, you hid it, not allowing them to see your ugly sandwiches and your tattered lunch paper wrapping.

The family clothes were always clean and well presented. We had to stay in that set of school clothes all week, and not get them dirty! I would not play rugged games in case the clothes were to be pulled and stretched or ripped or dirtied. Staying clean for one school week was difficult, but it kept our Mum happy and quiet. On one occasion, while at school, I brushed past a bent nail and snagged my school jumper, pulling a stitch or piece of wool out. I was upset! This jumper had been hand knitted by my Mum, and took many hours to knit. She knitted all of our school jumpers. I felt I had let her down.

I had no idea what it must have been like for my parents, trying to make ends meet while stretching my fathers wage packet to feed and house a large family. In my eyes, we never went without. We did not feel poor, or like we were missing out on something. There was always food on the table. As we got older and were attending high school, I tried not to make too many money requests of our parents, knowing it could be a strain. I remember

making the 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket team, and I was excited! Mum and I went to buy my first set of long white playing trousers. One of the boys! Later I realised it was costly. I never asked for another pair of playing trousers again, sucking in my tummy, or pulling to the extremities of the waist band, to last out my school cricketing days.

## **Books**

I remember our Mum going to town on Fridays to do the shopping. We knew Mum would arrive back with the comics. Oh, how we longed to read our comics. Mum's pile would comprise of: a Mills and Boon book for herself; the Truth paper, for her only; the Auckland Weekly with its glossy pictures in the middle, for all of us; the Mandrake comic, for all of us kids (but she also liked it); the Phantom comic, she loved Phantom, plus it was for us; the girls had a girls magazine (can't remember the title); and the Tiger and Lion comics for boys, and that was for the boys only. My favourite comic strip was Roy of the Rovers. The girl's comic had to be read by the girls first, and until the three girls had read it you couldn't read it. It was a long wait. Similarly with the boys Tiger and Lion comics, boys read it first, all three of us, and then it was the girls' turn. One time my Mum purchased the Hardy Boys especially for me, by saving her money and paying by instalments. It must have been a big financial sacrifice for my Mum. The Hardy Boys was my favourite crime solving books. Besides Dad's big Bible, the other treasured books in the house were a set of Encyclopaedias, which stood neatly and tall on the bookshelf. They were purchased by Mum and Dad, from a travelling salesman, to add to their family's tools of possible educational success.

## **The church**

This is the context in which my parents were raised, that is, it was greatly influenced by the missionaries: 'Christianity was introduced into the Cook Islands in the early 1800's by the London Missionary Society. By the 1940's and 1950's most Cook Islanders had joined the Pacific Islanders Congregational Church. Pacific peoples looked towards the church for welfare, guidance, and help'. It was from here that my parents took their guidance and listened literally to every word that came from a churchman's mouth, being compliant, being obedient.

Every two to three weeks we kids were ushered down to the other end of the house, while the local Cook Islanders conducted their church service in the lounge. The local Cook Islanders (who lived from up to one hour's drive away) would descend upon the house, to worship their god. Prior to the arrival of the local Cook Island congregation, Mum and Dad would make the house presentable: my sisters doing the vacuuming, Mum making Island doughnuts, and Dad making sure outside the house was tidy and presentable. Mum

would also prepare the Holy Communion tray of small glasses and the make-believe wine, raspberry cordial. Having the look-a-like communion tray and wine made my Mum proud. If there was any 'wine' left over, we were not allowed to drink it, because it had been blessed. Once the parishioners had left, we were allowed to tuck into the remaining food.

The family's Sundays were one whole day of keeping the Sabbath holy. It started with a prayer, like every morning, and grace being said before eating any food, and a lengthy bible session for the whole family in the lounge. This could last for about an hour. During that whole time we would not murmur a word out of place. We dared not.

Between prayers, the family were not allowed to play or watch sport. Many a time representative sports coaches rang my dad asking if one of the family was available to play sport on that Sunday? The answer was always NO! The girls of the family were not allowed to do house work after early morning duties had been completed.

The whole family were involved with some sort of church activity. During the week, three of the boys were involved in Life Boys and The Boys Brigade, while in the weekends everyone went to Sunday school in the morning.

As we aged we were able to manipulate our father into not going to church. Our parents always pushed us towards school, that is, in the direction of the buildings. We would never think of not going. But come the Sunday rituals of attending Sunday schools and church, we could say 'Dad I need to complete some school homework, can I not go to church?' After a short pause he would say 'OK.' By this time, as teenagers, we were recognising that we were the only brown faces in a sea of white faces in church. We felt uncomfortable; we didn't belong in this building or gathering.

Our Dad had hoped that one of the boys would enter Seminary school and study to become a church minister. Mum and Dad also shared stories of how family members had joined the church, in the hope of one of us would join. None did.

### **Reverend Challis (The English missionary and churchman)**

My Mum and Dad always talked of 'Rev. Challis'. To us he was a pakeha church minister. He was an English clergyman, observer, and academic writer of Pacific affairs. He was a missionary in the Cook Islands from 1933 – 1947 (Cook News, n.d.), and in 1947 requested to:

*undertake work with the 3 Pacific Island congregations at Beresford Street Church – Niueans and Cook Islanders who hold services in the hall next to the Church and the few Samoans who meet in the basement of the hall (Newton PIC, n.d., p.1).*

His work is commemorated with the naming of Challis House in Ponsonby, Auckland.

One school holidays, we three boys, Jim, Ian, and myself, were bussed off to spend a little time with Mr. and Mrs. Challis. I cannot remember any final instructions from our parents, but can imagine them saying: 'do as you are told'. 'Make sure you say your prayers every morning and night', 'make sure you make your beds every morning', or 'remember your manners.' One day we went on a tour, a car ride through the Auckland Domain. As we tripped around Auckland, we stopped for ice cream. As Rev. Challis returned to the car with three coned ice creams, I noticed each cone was covered with a tissue. I thought 'why the tissue? I will see what they do first with their ice cream.' They licked their ice cream, we licked ours. They licked again. We licked again. Now they had finished the ice cream, but not the cone. They wrapped the cones in the tissues: they had finished their ice creams! We looked on with puzzlement! Not eating the cones? What shall we do? Follow them or eat our cones?

We ate the cones.

### **University.**

At university, I took my shyness, my 'just enough to pass' attitude, and my 'who am I?' from school. Life was different in the University City, with lots of pakeha faces, larger classrooms, and living in a flat with new people. I hugged the skirting boards of academia classrooms and party houses, being too shy to openly participate. If I was late for a lecture, I would stay outside, too shy to enter the room. When results were posted, I always ran my finger from the bottom up. Passing the 'did not pass', the 'specials', the 'C-', and the 'C's'. This is where my academic results lived, at the bottom of most results lists. I would look once everyone had disappeared; too embarrassed in case I failed. Humiliating.

I passed the university course.

After university I trained to become a high school teacher, not knowing that later I would be stepping onto the 'other' side of my educational life, to research it.

### **The teacher**

As a 15 year old, I remember my Mum and Dad being really excited about the night visit of the Premier of the Cook Islands, Sir Albert Henry. She was fussing over the familys' appearance, making sure our family were presented as a good 'picture' of a Cook Island family functioning well within New Zealand. The government cars arrived at our house, and the Premier stepped inside. I can remember him saying to me, 'What do you want to be when you leave school?' I replied: 'I want to go to university and become a teacher, then come to the Cook Islands and teach.' Was it here that the seeds of wanting to be a teacher were sown?

At my second teaching job, Rainbow High School, I had plenty of role models. The two that I followed were Bruce White, the Deputy Principal, and Dick Gordon, the Head of Department of Physical Education. They were both hard working, well organised, and gave loads of time to the students and school co-curricular activities. They were always involved with the students, so, I think, I followed them.

Once in the thick of things, teaching, coaching, and organising activities, I became more confident in my abilities. With the competitive sports coaching, I was constantly thinking of strategies to out fox my teams' next foes, and planning interesting lessons.

In the sports teams I coached (rugby and volleyball) the students were predominantly Maori and Pacific Islanders, with the latter being in the volleyball teams. The volleyball team had a culture of family members. One family supplied me with 5 sons! They arrived at different times. Were the students attracted to me, or to the sport, or to me as a Pacific Islander? Or, did they love being together as a group, like a large family? My teams enjoyed working together and I planned fun activities, to ensure a fun time. I always had strict routines: starting time; ending time; and respect for gear, other people, and your body.

Now, I am looking around, through the lens of a Pacific Islander, a Pacific Island youngster growing up inside a large family, a Pacific Island high school student, a student who struggles to make sense of the world being created by his parents and his environment. And now a practicing high school teacher, a sports coach, a friend of many students, and a parent, who wants his students and own family to engage in successful strategies to make it through life in New Zealand.

I am able to walk many paths and view through many lenses as I wander as an insider-outsider researcher, being privy to the stories and insights of my subjects, and viewing from the outside.

## **Why am I doing it?**

I love teaching, I love coaching, and I love people. That sentence tells it all. Also, being born to my parents and having a happy upbringing, enjoying school, going to university and becoming a teacher, has given me knowledge as to how it may be for other Pacific peoples. And I may have something to add to the Pacific Island educational world, when this is done, by writing about educational experiences. I am also reading and listening to other Pacific researchers, and adding to the pool of Pacific researchers looking at Pacific peoples' issues.

## **Second and third generation Pacific peoples: making sense of it all**

Second and third generation Pacific peoples are trying to make sense of this ever changing world. Asking questions of them as they attempt to make and create a future for themselves and their families. Let me take you back to my Mum and Dad, when they were parenting us, to show my parents slowly changing with the times:

I was a school prefect in my last year of high school. It was the prefects who organised the school annual ball. Deciding on its theme, setting up the school assembly hall for decorating, advertising and selling tickets. On the night before the ball, most of the prefects remained at school to finish decorating the hall. During this evening, the guys decided to buy some beers and go somewhere for a drink. I naively volunteered my outside the house bedroom (the Bach). The other prefects and I quietly arrived and moved to the Bach to drink our beers. My parents didn't drink, and I was not a drinker, and to have these teenage boys drinking at my parents house, what was I thinking of? Or *not* thinking. At the end of the evening the boys took their empties with them, leaving the Bach clean but smelly (of beer). My parents did not say a word the next day. Not a word. For Mum and Dad to have alcohol around the house was unheard of, yet they tolerated my behaviour. Were they slowly adjusting to the social climate of New Zealand? Did they have confidence in their son to behave correctly? Or was it blind trust in their son? Looking back, I admire their changing view of the world.

The Bach again, but this time my younger brother Ian. By this time I had left home and gone to university, leaving the next oldest son to occupy 'the Bach.' My parents would never consider allowing the girls to live in 'the Bach.' Ian was attending Teachers Training College in Hamilton and travelling backwards and forwards to Hamilton. Soon he was in a serious relationship with his girlfriend, who at times stayed in the Bach with him! I can only imagine the anguish my parents were going through, in reconciling with the changing standards of morality in their own family and in New Zealand. How should



they respond to this? Again Mum and Dad silently looked on, not tearing their son to pieces, but allowing time to solve it. My brother and his girlfriend eventually married and had three children.

When Mum and Dad disciplined us, the boys ended up with 'the belt', and the girls got Mum's tongue. As we aged they became softer or more tolerant in their parenting solutions. My brothers as parents are talkers and my three sisters use the 'Mum's tongue' method.

Church and church activities were very important in my parents' lives, to the point where the entire families' life revolved around the church activities. Dad was the one who pushed and acted out the Christian values and readings of the Bible. He led the family, with Mum following and us kids doing as we were told. Good Pacific Island children, doing as they were told. As the older kids moved away from the family home, at certain times in the churches calendar, Dad would say, 'Phillip, I think you should come to church.' And I would go, in respect to my Dad. In my own family we kept minimal church rituals, mainly karakia (grace) and tangihana (funerals). My adult children don't attend any church. My son's wife is Japanese and carries out some Buddhist rituals.

## Appendix 2: My Journal

### Coding..what am I doing? (October, 2008)

When lost I always call Janinka to seek advice. I ask 'what do I do to code?' She informs me to start cutting and pasting the transcription, literally. 'Get a large piece of paper (butchers paper), pin it to a wall, cut up your data, whilst looking for themes. Blue tac the data onto coloured paper, keeping the themes (coloured paper) highly visible. Have 6 – 10 themes, no more.' So off I set.

I went back to my transcript and re-printed it. Doubling the font size and spacing to provide higher visibility, for me.

While cutting up, I am seeing themes emerge, making the process enjoyable. It kept me looking for other possible themes. Once colour coded and blue tacked, I created a summary of the common themes and again placed the summary at the end of the coloured theme. Leaving it for another time for a think.

Now I have sellotaped the butchers' paper first onto the spare room wall, followed by the colour coded data. It is looking very flash and academic. I am proud of what has been produced so far. I will re-think the themes and summaries in a couple of days.

Hi (email to janinka)

i have cut and pasted onto a spare wall in the house..

main themes..

teachers,measured success,parents,school,classroom

inside the teacher theme, i looked at it from: personal(the teachers personal attributes) and outside the teacher(possible learnt techniques).

inside the 'measure success' theme, i looked at it from: the students perspective;teachers; school; and parents.

inside the parents theme, i looked at it from: what parents do;what they say; their past.

inside the school theme,i looked at it from: the hierarchy and teachers.

there are minor themes:identity;mentors;you;reading;and chat with the PI teacher.

comments please

Janinka's reply..

Sounds good so far, but I encourage you to keep developing new thematic groupings and moving the pasted materials around/

For instance at the moment you seem to have grouped according to whose point of view and the surface content.

Next you could start looking at themes that emerge

Eg only (I don't want to influence your own interpretation of the data – you have to pick your own themes)

However eg:     Pressure to do well  
                  Being treated like a slow learner  
                  Being directed to sports rather than scholarship

Etc

Etc

You will probably have to cut up your quotes into smaller segments, and sometimes copy and paste in two columns (this is why your colour coding is so important)

Eg also what does Identity break up to? Look at your data.

Hope this helps move you forward

Janinka

Ahhh! Do it again and again and again!

Brother Bruce sent an email to me about Stuart Hall. Hall talks about cultural identity and the thing that got me buzzing is Reception Theory. It is where our many layers of experiences of 'materials' (visual and written) are interpreted, to our peculiarities. It is how we can re-examine text to suit our peculiarities. So, with this in mind I will re-visit my text and with Janinka's directions in the background.

hi..the looking at the undercurrents to the surface of phil's data..

i talk of my masters journey with my younger brother 'pupa' at my departed parents home, most weekends. i told him of your push for me to see below the surface data. he shared our conversation with a work colleague, peter. peter said have u heard or read of stuart hall, to pupa, who relayed the information to me.

stuart hall has ties to the 'reception theory.' it states that the 'text ...be it book, movie, or other creative work...is not simply passively accepted by the audience, but that the reader-viewer interprets the meanings of the text based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. in essence, the meaning of the text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader (wikipedia).

wow! that got me going again, as i started to re-look at the data as a 'poor island boy.'

the themes that emerged were...

1. the PI's treated as non-entities
  - ..culture not recognised or acknowledged
  - ...teachers are unprofessional
2. parenting in the stone age
  - ...fire and brimstone methods
3. silenced majority (students)
  - ...the students are not listened to, or do not have a voice
  - ...verbals and the 'knuckle' head their way, but no one to talk to.

comments...please

Hi Phil

1, re the reception theory – this is one expression of widely held body of theory that talks about the importance of positionality and the inevitability of subjective interpretation – starts with that Granddaddy of theory – Derrida, and goes on to lots of people.

But I agree it's a powerful and useful conceptualisation

However – don't overdo the 'poor island boy' –it's just one of your personal repertoire of lenses – you can also use successful sports coach or comfortably established Pasifika academic, husband of recognised artist, or ... .. (the list goes on) - so yes use the lens for what it offers, but don't over-indulge.

2. your list - I think it's a great list – see what clusters of data you get.

3. Then try another lens – and see what emerges from your data- there'd be some quite different conceptualisations

So what does that say to you????

## **Appendix 3: Transcription of conversations with Ina (30/8/2008)**

**Tell me about what your parents expect from you while you attend school.**

**Ina**

My parents lately have become quite oblivious to my entire life, they are ignoring me but are oblivious to what's going on in my life, at the moment. I think it is a normal thing for a 17 year old.

**By oblivious you mean they don't know, or they don't want to know, or you have not told them?**

..ahh a bit of both, and I haven't told them.

**Which is the biggest portion?**

I haven't told them, but in that context, they have not said anything. My mum said it would be good to take a gap year. She thinks it is a good idea. Get your reins on what the real world is like. So don't go into uni (university) with the expectations that while I am still at school to behave completely as an adult, where probably I am.

**So, there is an expectation to go to university?**

Yes, there is that expectation to go to uni, but after a gap year.

**How did you take that expectation?**

Yeah, I am in agreement with them...ahh I am really into where I want to go before uni. I want to see if I can make some connections in other places. You know...get more practical work, rather than college. Like the music side...being a musician or producing music. Like getting into audio...ah maybe something to do with radio, radio music sort of side. I like playing music. I like making music or listening to other peoples music being made. I like making it. I am into the media side, filming...film side. So, just the entire media side.

**Tell me about the film side.**

I have got a family background that is in films, film arts, the arts pretty much. Been in there a while and I guess it took time to become involved.

**Is film an expectation or an interest?**

Totally me, I am addicted. I am not doing it to please my parents.

**So, you don't like pleasing your parents?**

No, I think in the end they are going to be happy if I just get anywhere, or just get somewhere in life. I think they are concerned that I get somewhere rather than no where in life.

**Tell me how you were told that or how you picked it up.**

Umm I don't think they have to say that, they ahh because once in a while I tell them what I am thinking of doing. They don't question it, they don't say you shouldn't be doing this or that.

**Is it a trust in you?**

Yeah, it is a trust.

**You mentioned 'connections' in your gap year, tell me what you mean.**

I am all for learning and I like learning things.

**Where did that 'learning things' come from?**

Well, without learning you are not going to get anywhere. Like learning is like teaching yourself, you are learning there. I am learning to play the guitar by teaching myself. I like that. Learning is not always a piece of paper, or listening to someone speak, it can be practical work, like working on a film set, playing with a couple of lights on a set. I consider that learning. I like learning.

**Tell me more about your connections.**

There is that saying 'It's not what you know but who you know' and I have a huge belief in it. In the media business it's a lot about whom you know and a lot about favours and lending a helping hand. In the film industry, my cousin Rob, his friends are all film makers. When each one has a project, they will all chip in to help, and in return help each other, and form kinda this support system. It is all about helping and the more people you know and help, the more are going to help you out, when asked. Like Rob, who has a couple of mates who make feature films and work in those areas, help Rob out with gear. Like getting gear at a cheaper rate, helping out financially and in other ways they can.

**Tell me if church has any expectation or pull on you?**

No. It doesn't seem so. Like, I know my mum is religious in the Maori spiritual aspect, where she believes that there is something beyond. Me, I like to keep my options open. I don't want to be pulled down and stated this is what I believe. If I did have a belief, it would be that really anything is possible...we don't know...do we. I have been to church before, like... I wouldn't say it was of my own free will. I wouldn't say I was dragged

crying to the alter to throw holy water over me. Nah, I wouldn't go this Sunday or the next Sunday to church. It would be more like umm my aunty of mine who has died and they were having a church service. I would go for her rather than for myself.

**Anything else that drives you?**

I think family is a big thing to do with it. And family is any one with a title of uncle or auntie, which is numerous amounts of people. Whether they are blood related or really close friends of my parents or mine...umm...yeah...I really...family and close friends of mine...like I will think 'oh well you have been a really good friend of mine for many years...thank you for that...you are sometimes pretty much better than some of my cousins'. I guess family is just some one who does not see in a value in you, but sees you.

**Tell me how does family help and support you, to move forward?**

They are always there to support you, like uncle P, he is always there, always pushing me to keep going. I don't think it is a bad thing at all. I have numerous amounts of cousins, ridiculous amounts of cousins that are always nagging me. Like cousin Katrina, Leilani, and Sarah if she was here in New Zealand, they can be a handful, but in a loving way. Your family is always interested in what you are doing. Like pushing you, but lovingly, they comfort you through. They are always the one you go back to and say 'I had a stressful day today' and I know I can go and hang out with them. It wouldn't be like this friend, you can't really hang out with this friend, this time, because I know how they are. Not like I can be with family, they take you in no matter what and ask how you are and distract you from everything, just to make you comfortable.

**Tell me how you utilise family to move forward?**

I don't see them as some one like a stepping stone, to get some where I want to be. I see them as a helping hand, always having a smile and wanting to pull me to this place, saying this is the place. More like a helping hand than a stepping stone. Maybe we can open the door for you, but we can't pull you in.

**Tell me what stops you achieving at school?**

My school is based loosely on morals, I guess, like we really are all quite independent at our school, like every teacher is not an asshole, or they are really cool. There is not always the same style, but the same criteria that always brings back their teaching, that in the end you may be an awesome person, but because of the way people want you to teach, you are a crap teacher. Like I have this English teacher, he pretty much has no control over class. Like, we like him. We want to talk to him everyday...like talk...we don't want to learn. I think he would be better as a history teacher. As an English teacher he kinda loses that sort of back bone. He can't really threaten us...he seems to...relate to us too much. The teacher has to have a balance between being able to relate to us the students and be able to push yourself away. Saying 'No! This is the way it has to go and

you have to do it now!’ But then I contradict myself and say I also like a teacher who has a little sympathy when in that position saying no.

**Tell me, anything else?**

Lots of threatening, like if you don’t get these credits your life is stuffed! In our school community everyone gets on so well, there are hardly any conflicts. At a schools like AB and CD (names two schools), they have fights every day. At our school we probably have one fight a year. We are so excited, ‘oh my god there is a fight! Come on everyone lets go and watch it’. Then some one will run between the fighters and say ‘Come on guys we can all be friends.’

Year 9 I didn’t know what to expect, and people talked about exams all the time. I would be like ‘oh my god I am not ready for exams. I had only been speaking and writing English for two years, now to do an exam in English, oh my god...

**If the school system had been explained, would that have helped?**

It was a common thing for a student to go through the entire hysteria of exams in college, ‘oh my god I can’t go through that.’ And find out later that those exams don’t start till now, Year 13, and why was I worrying so much and you now appreciate those years. But back then I was totally scared out of my mind. You think every test is going to affect your life, but really until Year 11, you are doing nothing.

After a few terms teachers find their favourites, and they kinda excluding everyone’s ideas. They never get heard because...say Johnny and Patrick are sitting next to each other. Patrick has got an awesome idea, but before hasn’t had any good ideas. It is the first time he has not been chosen. Unlike Johnny, he always puts his hand up, always has on the spot answers, and they both have their hands up to answer. The teacher calls ‘Johnny’, instead of saying ‘Patrick, I haven’t heard from you before, what is your idea?’ Maybe Patrick got it wrong the first time, but he may get it right this time. The teachers assumption can quite ruin the entire school life and the class too.

**Tell me about the family influence.**

Teachers calling back home...(laugh)...you know that’s a big thing. The end of semester reports and ...ah...here it comes. The calm before the storm. It isn’t too calm...(laughs).

**Is that stopping you?**

All my family are quite supportive. I never hear like that...you probably get the occasional like ‘my son is this and this and this,’ and sometimes both kids are there, but apart from that its fine.

**Anything else?**



Money umm I guess. The thing about school and money, they never go together. Because it is practically...ah school is suppose to make you ready to get money. But they still never go together. Like I had a job at a restaurant and I worked from 5pm till 1am. That morning I would wake up at 7am in readiness for school. I would be tired the whole day. I would have made a killing, but, you know, I was dead the next day.

### **Anything else?**

Self. There are always those common points where you get stretched...by TV, or the latest video game, or viewing a video or dvd, or shall I go onto the internet. Apart from that no,

### **Tell me about your school buddies' influences.**

I found this year I had lost all interest in school. Like I was holidaying and snow boarding, and I was talking to graphic designers and promotion mangers. They would say 'I found school worthless', and 'I left in the Year 11.' The love of school was slowly being chipped away. I would be left with a small morsel to last a week, maybe. They weren't in school, they were far away.

The way you make through school is...ah...when push came to shove, it was always down to me and study. I guess every last four weeks of the year...I am going to pull it all out and it would work. And this year I am hoping for the same, because I have had a lot of help from the teachers. They have put a lot of faith in me by saying 'you know I have seen students in the same position and we have let them go. But we think you can make it.' That sort of faith keeps you going. Especially with teachers that you have good relationships with. Like one of my teachers ,Mrs B, she is a great teacher, a great calculus teacher. I didn't do calculus this year. I wish my two favourite subjects PE and calculus didn't clash on the timetable. Mrs B is also academic director; she would come and see me. She would say 'I am disappointed with you and I know you can do better. I have known you for 3 years, I know you can improve these marks.' It is her positive belief in you.

School may be hard, but it isn't that hard. Like if you try you can pass. Like I spent two weeks filing for my mum. I would rather have been doing school work. I would have to say, I would rather have gone to school doing workshops, and spend four hours talking about how a movie is made, how scatter graphs work, how I can find...something. At least it would keep my interest, unlike here is a file for Sally...

### **Tell me about you and study.**

Well, I found out that a messy area does not help. But, also a too tidy can be distracting as well. You know, I have my desk close to my bed, which is always nice. I come to bed and then I see a piece of homework next to my bed, on my desk. And it would be like 'you don't want to go to sleep just now, do you?'

### **Is this a conversation with you?**

Yes.

No, I don't have to go to bed right now...I am on a comfortable bed though...then I could do that while writing a paragraph or an essay. I will stay for 45 minutes writing monologues or essays. I find that works, especially with a sheet of A3 paper and a felt pen. It feels much better than just writing. Even the sound sounds nice with the felt pen on paper. It keeps you going. It's those small things that keep you going. Like just being able to...gestures writing on A3 paper...and saying 'wow!' That is much better than doing a little scribble on normal paper. Like A3 paper is an amazing invention, it is better than A4. you can write big as you like . Sometimes I draw on half of it, and I have doodles on the other half.

### **A3 suits you?**

I did graphics two years ago, that was great fun. I brought back a heap of A3 paper. I was planning and found my pile of A3 paper, beside my bed, so I put it on my desk. I had some homework one night, and thought 'what could I do?' I got a felt and started to write. It worked! You know...I am not saying 'hey everyone, go buy a big pile of A3 and a felt pen and do your homework.' It doesn't work for everyone, but it did for me.

### **You found something that worked for you?**

Lets say, I am quite an artist of procrastination, and the last point is your point B. There is a point A and that is when you get out of there to point B, and getting there, my parents will see some homework on the desk, and ask, how did that get there?

### **How do mates fit in, getting through school?**

Mates are a huge part of school. I have mates who have left school and I have hardly seen them. I have mates who go to school and I see them every day. It keeps you connected. School, it gives you five good years of staying with people you might not see for the rest of your life. You have a better chance of meeting back with them with technology of the internet. You are always going to be in touch. Your friends keep you in a place where you want to be. If you have tons of friends outside school, maybe I will think about leaving, going to get a job. Mates help you get through.

I was Year 12, with my mates, and going into student leadership. I was thinking ' I could leave school right now. I could take a uni course right now, or get a job. Also have free time to do what I want to do, rather than having to come home at 4pm and do a whole bunch of homework till 7pm.or, I could be part of student leadership.' I chose one more year of school.

I guess the best moments of school were with your mates and I did not want to miss out one more year with my mates. An awesome time with my mates. So, I stayed at school. It

is only one more year, not the rest of your life. The rest of your life is from that and in school we are going to take from that and you are going to learn a lot after school. When you leave school.

The end of your schooling life, you find out there is more to life. It isn't during school, you don't go 'oh! I am learning so much' and when you are in school you are regretting it so much. Like...man I wish...I wish...I wish I didn't take this class...I don't even like the teacher.' After, you are like 'wow! I have learnt a lot, and you start to find things in life that are relevant to school, even though there are so many things that school teaches are relevant to life. But English, it is probably the most ridiculous subject ever. They make it compulsory to Year 12, but it is the most ridiculous subjects you can take. It has no usefulness. Yeah, like you are going to learn to write an essay. Who is going to ask you to write an essay on Arthur Miller?

**Looking at you, as you are about to enter high school, what would you tell you?**

Slim up...(laugh).I think I would tell him to enjoy the years, first. Don't go 'ahh this isn't going to add to my life.' Enjoy the years. Keep in touch with all those people you know. Like I had a friend, a Brazilian guy, a great guy, but I did stay in contact with him. Just get to know these people and really I would tell myself...no I would threaten myself, and say 'work hard.' If there is anything I regret is not putting in 100%. There is always times when you wished I had put in 100%. So, enjoy yourself.

## **Appendix 4: Information for participants and consent forms**

**Letter to Principal and Board of Trustees**

**Information Sheet**

**Parent Consent Form**

**Student Consent Form**

### **Letter to the School Principal/Board of Trustees**

19 Whittaker Road  
Rotorua  
New Zealand

Kia Orana

I work as a Lecturer at the University Of Canterbury College Of Education and am also studying towards a Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchLn) degree. I am about to commence my dissertation under the working title of: **Pacific Island Boys negotiating their passage through a New Zealand secondary school.**

To help me with my research, I need Pacific Island boys who attend high school and are willing to tell me how they have undertaken their respective educational journeys.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your willingness to be a participant in my research project.

The entire interview will be face-to-face, group, and tape-recorded and later transcribed. After the collection of the data, a copy of the transcript will be provided to you to allow

you the opportunity to check the text. Should you wish to clarify, change or have any part of the text deleted; this will be accommodated at your request.

Once the interviews have been conducted and transcribed, there will be confidentiality of data, with all data being recorded and locked away in the researcher's office.

No participants' names will be used in the material that is written about the research.

I will use this research for my masters study and I may use it for conferences and publications.

All information related to this study will be securely stored either at the University Of Canterbury College Of Education (Rotorua Campus) or at my home (19 Whittaker Road, Rotorua) until the successful completion of my work. For auditing purposes, the data will need to be kept until this requirement no longer applies. At this point, the data will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do choose to participate you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**The University of Canterbury Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.**

#### Complaints Procedure

The College requires that all participants be informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to:

The Chair  
Ethical Clearance Committee  
Christchurch College of Education  
P O Box 31-065  
Christchurch  
Phone: (03) 345 8390

If you want to communicate directly with my supervisors, to answer any concerns, please feel free to do so.

Supervisors:

Dr. Janinka Greenwood



University of Canterbury  
College of Education  
P.O. Box 4800  
Christchurch  
[janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:janinka.greenwood@canterbury.ac.nz)

Dr. Elaine Mayo  
University of Canterbury  
College of Education  
P.O. Box 4800  
Christchurch  
[elaine.mayo@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:elaine.mayo@canterbury.ac.nz)

Thanking you for considering this research project.  
Phil George.  
19 Whittaker Road  
Rotorua

Phone 07 3478184  
Email [phil.george@canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:phil.george@canterbury.ac.nz)

### **Information for the Participants**

My name is Phil George and I am a Lecturer at the University of Canterbury College of Education. I am researching Pacific Island students and I would like your help

I will be asking for your responses about learning and what you do at school. I really want to know what you think, so all your answers will be important.

I will be recording our interview on an audio tape to help remind me of your responses when I write my report. You will all have code-names so no-one else will know what you said.

If you agree to take part in the research, please sign the consent form. I have also sent your parents/caregivers a letter and consent form to sign.

If you have any questions about this project, you can talk to your parents or caregivers or to the Senior Dean Mr. Shelford. You can also ask me any questions when I come to



interview you. If you change your mind about sharing your ideas  
All you have to do is say so and you can go back to your classroom, too.

Thank you for thinking about helping me. I am looking forward to meeting you.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*University of Canterbury College of Education*

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

**Title of Project**  
**Pacific Island boys negotiating their passage through a New Zealand secondary school.**

**Parent/Caregiver Consent Form**

I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the project,  
**Pacific Island boys negotiating their passage through a New Zealand secondary school.**

I have read and understood the information given to me about the research project and what will be required of my child/the child in my care.

I have discussed the project with \_\_\_\_\_ and am happy that he/she understands what he will be asked to do and that he can withdraw at any stage.

I understand that anything my child says during this research discussion will be treated as confidential. No findings that could identify my child or his school will be published.

I understand that participation in this project is voluntary and that I can withdraw my child or he can withdraw from the project at any time without repercussions.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

*Please return this form along with the student's consent form to Mr. Shelford.*

## **Student Consent Form**

The Senior Dean and I have talked about the Pacific Island project that Phil George is working on this year.

- I have read or heard the information and am happy to take part in this project.
- I understand that comments I make may be written down and used in presentations and reports.
- I understand that my name will not be written down next to my comments and that my name will not be used in any presentations, or reports.
- I understand that I do not have to participate in any part of the discussion or audio taping if I do not want to.



Name:

Signed:

Date: