families commission
kōmihana ā *whānau* / **pasifika**

REPORT TWO

pacific families now and in the future:
a qualitative snapshot of household composition, wellbeing, parenting and economic decision-making among Pacific families in Auckland, 2008

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DISCLAIMER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This qualitative study is a companion report to *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing, 1981–2006* quantitative analysis (Cotterell et al, forthcoming).

The study was funded by the Families Commission to provide a snapshot of how three different Pacific ethnic family groups experienced and perceived changes in their household composition and wellbeing around May and June 2008.

The three different groups were Cook Islands Māori, Samoan and mixed Pacific ethnicities. The qualitative findings detailed in Section 3 of this report are organised by these ethnic categories. All families were based in the Auckland region.

The themes explored with the family participants were family composition and changes, household economics, parenting and family wellbeing.

In summary, the following findings emerged:

The talanoa (narrative or conversation-oriented) method offers a culturally appropriate approach to collecting sensitive qualitative data from and about Pacific families.

> The experiences and perceptions of the three ethnic groups on the four key themes of household composition, household economics, parenting and family wellbeing were more similar than they were different.

> For all 12 Pacific families, financial management and decision-making for the household was primarily the responsibility of the head or heads of the household, usually the parents. In couple-based families this responsibility was usually shared between the parents. In some families, especially single-parent ones, this responsibility tended to be shared with older children.

> Mothers were named as the main decision-makers in most of these 12 families. However, in the more 'traditional' Samoan and Cook Island families, the ultimate decision-making power lay with the father.

> Eleven of the 12 Pacific families spoke of financial difficulties, some of which were the result of having to juggle the household expenses with the obligation to give to family or cultural community events. Strong beliefs in cultural obligations made it difficult for many of these families to save money.

In all 12 families, the parents took responsibility for parenting. There was some sharing of duties between the mother and father or extended family members, especially sisters and grandmothers.

Where physical discipline was used it was generally provided by the father, while the mothers tended to give day-to-day parenting advice and instruction.

The fathers of all the families were known to their children. The fathers of the children in the three single-parent families (who were primarily cared for by their mothers) continued to play a role in their children's lives. Additionally, their children had older male siblings and uncles who offered male role models or father-figures in the home.

For almost all of these families, church and ethnic affiliations were important conduits for the continuity, expression and celebration of their Pacific cultures and identities. Happiness included continuing links with extended family members, especially grandparents. Here the relationship between children and their elders is believed to be a sacred one that underpins the belief that elders give blessings.

All 12 families aspired towards providing or supporting:

> a good education for the children

> good career positions for the parents, caregivers or heads of household

> good communication between children and parents or heads of household

> good links with cultural and church communities.

The qualitative findings do not represent Pacific families nationally as they are only a snapshot of families' voices in a single region on the themes studied. While the data cannot be generalised to the Pacific population, they do facilitate understanding of the experiences of Pacific families and highlight issues for further quantitative examination.

The companion report Report One, *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing, 1981–2006* (Cotterell et al), provides representative findings on changes in Pacific household composition and in the number of children living in those households over the period from 1981 to 2006, in addition to reporting changes in wellbeing over a 25-year period for the overall New Zealand Pacific population using a series of wellbeing indicators derived from New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings (census) data.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Pacific families and households – defining key terms and phrases

Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand

New Zealand has had a long affiliation with the island countries of the South Pacific region (Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2000), formerly as a coloniser and more recently as a key aid-donor. The term 'Pacific' denotes a region reaching from the larger islands of the western Pacific such as Papua New Guinea to those more in the centre such as Samoa and Tonga, to those in the east and north Pacific such as the Marquesas, Guam and Hawaiian Islands. However, when used in Aotearoa New Zealand, 'Pacific' refers mainly to immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Fiji, Tokelau and Tuvalu. Other smaller Pacific immigrant groups from the western and northern Pacific, such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Palau, Guam, New Caledonia and Tahiti, are also included but are significantly smaller in numbers.

The phrase 'Pacific peoples' has undergone various relabelling processes over the years. As documented by Koloto and Katoanga (2007, p. 9), "the terms 'Polynesians', 'Islanders', 'Pacific Islanders' and 'the Pacific Islands community'" are earlier phrases. More recent are the labels 'Pacific nations' and 'Pasifika peoples'. These modifications mark changes in political sensitivities and preferences. Notwithstanding, as Koloto and Katoanga note, "whatever the [Pacific] label used, it is acknowledged that it is used [in New Zealand] only for convenience and does not [necessarily] imply Pacific unity and homogeneity" (2007, p. 9).

While becoming increasingly inclusive of any group that self-identifies as being 'of the Pacific', the label 'Pacific peoples', when used in New Zealand, tends to exclude the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. To complicate matters, the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand (tāngata whenua) trace their cultural history and identity to forebears from the Pacific region (Buck, 1959). The linguistic similarities between the Māori language and other Polynesian languages, especially Cook Islands Māori, suggest strong ancestral and cultural links between them. The Māori concept of whānau, for example, has many similarities, philosophically and in practice, with Pacific peoples' notions and practices of family – aiga (Samoan), kainga (Tongan), kopu tangata (Cook Island) and magafaoa (Niuean).

Pacific understandings of family and household

Koloto and Katoanga's *Diverse Forms of Pacific Families and Their Financial Decision-making Approaches* (2007) defines a Pacific household as "a household that has at least one person of Pacific descent living in it" (p. 6). They define a Pacific family as inclusive of the Tongan concept of api (home) and the Samoan notion of aiga (family – extended and nuclear) (p. 6). They also discuss the notion of a "family group". Drawing on definitions from the 2001 and 2006 Censuses and the 2004 National Survey of the Living Standards of New Zealanders, Koloto and Katoanga (2007) note that a family group can be treated as an "economic family unit" (p. 5) and that these family units are a "subset of households" (p. 6).

There is a distinction here between family and household, in terms of census definitions: the former is contained in the scope of the latter. In other words, there may be more than one family living within a household. A household is the total unit of people (families or individuals) living in a home.

A household is defined by the Samoa Bureau of Statistics as "a group of persons who live together, eat and sleep together. The persons living in a household may be related or unrelated. A household has a head figure that is in charge of the household chores and household activities. In Samoa, most household heads are the matai [chiefs], or the oldest person in the household. A single person living alone and looking after himself/herself will also be called a household" (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, 2006, p. 2). The notion of groups of persons in a household 'sharing the same kitchen' is emphasised in the Samoan-language explanation of one of the household types coded for the 2006 Samoan Census.[3] Moreover, the Samoa Bureau of Statistics, in their instructions to 2006 Samoan Census enumerators (2006) further notes that a Samoan household is often made up of extended family groups. In a statement on the increasing household size in Samoa, they suggest that this may be due to "the continuous extended family formation in Samoa whereby

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3   There are four different household types recognised by the Samoan Bureau of Statistics. In their instructions booklet for the 2006 Census instrument, they define in Samoan the "private household living in one or more houses" type as follows: "O se Auaiga e iai le faia a le toatele o tagata, pei o Matua ma fanau ma le auaiga ae e iai foi ma nisi e leai se faia, e tasi pe sili atu o latou fale mautu, <u>ae tasi le ogaumu e gasese ai meaai</u>, ma e nonofo ma aai faatasi i aso uma" (2006, p. 3). The translation for this Samoan excerpt is quoted above. The translation provided does not make specific reference, however, to the sharing of a kitchen. The underlined section of the Samoan language text in this footnote is where the idea of a household sharing a kitchen is found. The literal translation of 'ogaumu' is oven; "tasi le ogaumu e gasese ai meaai" literally means "sharing one oven to cook their food".

married sons and daughters can still live together with their parents, grandparents, uncles or aunties and their children" (p. 5).

Pacific cultural notions of family and household prioritise proximity of contact. For Pacific peoples, 'family' traditionally meant belonging to a close-knit unit of members with close and continuing relationships. The Samoan concept of loto-i-fale, a term often used to describe the cultural imperatives and boundaries of a Samoan household, loosely translates to mean "from within the immediate circle of their/a household"[4] (Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese, personal communication). It points to the idea of more than one family group living and moving within a 'circle' of houses (which usually share one kitchen). In traditional times the realities of living on small Pacific island countries or in remote Pacific village settings meant that families survived better if they lived and worked together.

In these traditional Pacific settings people developed socio-political structures, cultural and religious frameworks and economic and parenting values largely based on a belief in the sacredness of genealogical ties between people (past, present and future), between them and their environment and between them and their gods (Narokobi, 1989; Sua'ali'i-Sauni, Tuagalu, Kirifi-Alai & Fuamatu, 2009). Extended family-living provided access to the kind of labour needed for the production of food, the building and maintenance of homes and social interaction and childcare services. In the late 1960s the World Council of Churches (World Council of Churches, 1969) found that the "isolated nuclear family – father, mother, and children only – which is so widespread in the Western world, is still the exception in our [Pacific] cultures" (p. 26). During the 1980s, anthropologist Joan Metge (1995) found that, like Pacific families, many Māori families still engaged in cultural and economic obligations to kin beyond the immediate nuclear family group. The importance of kinship ties and their sacred dimensions to Pacific peoples in New Zealand is reflected in the continuing existence of extended family households and their belief in and support of extended family, church and traditional cultural obligations. In New Zealand most Pacific people hold religious beliefs (83 percent) and of these, 97 percent identified as Christian.[5] Many, despite their Christian beliefs, continue to subscribe to indigenous values (if not to an indigenous religion) (Tui Atua, et al., 2007).

Other family types, such as 'reconstituted' or 'blended' families, offer useful examples of the limitations of defining families or households as those living within a single house or unit (Families Commission, 2008). Blended families, which can move between two different places or homes, are families where parents have remarried and want the children and partners from their earlier marriages or relationships to continue to live together or be substantially involved in each other's lives. What the blended family and loto-i-fale cases highlight is that there are family and household types in Aotearoa New Zealand that do not accord neatly with conventional New Zealand Census categorisations of family or household. While the extended Pacific family household arrangement (where kin live together in a number of houses next door to each other) does exist in New Zealand, like the blended or reconstituted family type, it is difficult to count as one household for census purposes.

Demographers, using census categorisations of families and households, note a nuclearisation of Pacific household compositions (an increase in households of couples with children only) over time (Callister & Didham, 2007; Krishnan, Schoeffel, & Warren, 1994). This is based largely on census data where families or households are limited to the people found within a single house or unit. Because of this the census can only pick up on possible extended family living using a count of multi-family households. The quantitative arm of this study (Cotterell et al, forthcoming) found that while couples with children made up the largest proportion of households from 1981 to 2006, there was a steady increase in multi-family household types, particularly in 'two-parent family + one-parent family households', over the same period.

In sum, Pacific families and households can be broadly defined as social, political and economic units (both extended and nuclear units). These units are made up of individuals who live together in one or more homes and share an emotional bond brought about by kinship or friendship ties. These individuals share cultural values that define obligations to extended family and other significant communal organisations such as home country, island, village or church institution (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). Although the demands of day-to-day living in modern urban communities can weaken obligations to extended family and other communal

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[4] Milner (1993) records this term and translates it as "immediate family circle" (p. 113). The term loto also refers to 'the heart' or 'affections'; fale refers to 'house' or 'home'; i is a preposition.

[5] See: http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006censushomepage/quickstats-about-a-subject/quickstats-about-pacific-peoples.aspx, accessed 5 August 2009.

organisations (Gershon, 2001; Krishnan et al, 1994; Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998), the pull on Pacific peoples to belong to and support a kin network remains strong (Liki, 2008). Narrative studies of second- and third-generation New Zealand-based Pacific peoples in edited collections such as those by Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003) and MacPherson, Spoonley, and Anae (2001) support this finding.

1.2 Social and demographic context

In 2006, Pacific peoples made up 6.5 percent of the total New Zealand population. The largest Pacific ethnic subgroup was Samoan (49 percent of the total New Zealand Pacific population) followed by the Cook Islands Māori group (22 percent), Tongan (19 percent), and Niuean (eight percent). The remainder, in order of size, are Fijian, Tokelauan and Tuvaluan.[6]

Most Pacific peoples (67 percent) live in the Auckland region, with one in three living in Manukau City. In 2006, Wellington held the next largest subset of the Pacific population with 13 percent. Only seven percent lived in the South Island, mainly in Canterbury and Dunedin, with the remainder living in the rural areas of the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Manawatu-Wanganui, Hawke's Bay and Northland (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

Pacific peoples are a young population group. Their median age in 2006 was 21 years (compared with 36 years for the New Zealand population as a whole), although there has been an increase in the number aged 65 years and over since 1996 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Pacific females live longer than Pacific males by approximately 10 years. Compared to the rest of New Zealand, the Pacific population is young and predominantly urban-based. Predictions suggest that in the next 50 years the Pacific population, with its high fertility and population growth rate, will double (Cook, Didham, & Khawaja, 2001).

1.2.1 Work and income

In 2006, 65 percent of Pacific adults (aged 15 years and over) were in the labour force. More of them were men (71 percent) than women (29 percent); and most were in full-time employment (81 percent in 2006).

Pacific men were likely to be labourers (23 percent), machinery operators and drivers (21 percent) or technicians and trades workers (20 percent). The

types of occupations held by Pacific women were more diverse than those of their male counterparts; they ranged from clerical and administrative workers (19 percent) and labourers (19 percent) to professionals (15 percent) and community and personal service workers (15 percent).

The median annual income for Pacific adults in 2006 was $20,500 – $3,900 lower than the median annual income for New Zealand as a whole.

Pacific peoples' main income sources were wages, salaries, commissions or bonuses received from employers (2006 Census, Statistics New Zealand). Very few earned income from savings accounts, bonds, shares or other assets of this kind.[7] The second and third most common sources of income for Pacific peoples were the community wage and the Domestic Purposes Benefit (Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs & Statistics New Zealand, 2002). An Auckland Regional Council report (2007, p. 26) noted a "relative overrepresentation of Pacific peoples on benefits as an income source".

Pacific household spending prioritises extended family and church obligations, sometimes before immediate household needs (Cowley, Patterson, & Williams, 2004). Remittances to the islands from New Zealand Pacific peoples continue to be quite high (Cowley et al). Living costs such as accommodation and childcare are easier to meet in multi-family households if they can be shared (Korn, 1975).

1.2.2 Education

Between the 2001 and 2006 Censuses there was an increase in the percentage of Pacific peoples holding post-school qualifications. However, despite this improvement, Pacific peoples have continued to be overrepresented in low literacy statistics (Comparative Education Research Unit, Ministry of Education, 2004), low high-school and tertiary-sector completion rates (Strategy and System Performance – Ministry of Education, 2007; Tertiary Education Commission, 2004) and high truancy rates (Strategy and System Performance – Ministry of Education, 2007) compared with other New Zealanders.

Throughout the Pacific, the notion of a child's home environment having a significant impact on their progress at school is widely accepted (Thaman, 1987).

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[6] See: http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2006-census-data/2006-census-reports/pacific-profiles-2006.aspx, accessed 5 August 2009.

[7] See Treasury report on Pacific peoples and superannuation by Teuila Consultancy (2003) for a useful discussion on Pacific cultural beliefs and attitudes to saving for retirement. *Private Provision of Superannuation – Pacific Peoples*. From http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/reviews-consultation/prg/background/prg-tc-ppspp.pdf, accessed 5 August 2009.

The pull-factor for many Pacific immigrants to places like New Zealand is still the hope for better education opportunities for their children (Sundborn, et al, 2006).

1.2.3 Housing

Pacific peoples value having housing suitable to meet their health and lifestyle needs (Koloto and Associates Ltd, New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, & Gray Matter Research Ltd, 2007). Pacific households are likely to include extended family members. In 2001, Housing New Zealand introduced the Healthy Housing Programme to address health and overcrowding issues. In 2006, Bernacchi noted that one in 66 Pacific children was affected by meningococcal disease by the time they turned five, and that household crowding was "the most important risk factor for meningococcal disease in Auckland children during the current epidemic" (p. 1). He noted that Pacific families aspire to own their own homes but are restrained by their income levels. With rising housing prices, Pacific home-ownership rates are declining and the proportion living in rental accommodation is increasing (p. 2).

Cultural factors significantly affect housing arrangements for Pacific families. Cultural expectations include offering accommodation for visiting relatives or friends from overseas, especially the islands.

1.2.4 Health

Pacific health is improving but not as fast, it seems, as that of other New Zealanders (Ministry of Health, 2008). Programmes to improve Pacific peoples' access to health services are being implemented, addressed at the community, GP, primary health organisation and district health board levels.

Pacific mortality rates are still disproportionately high compared with the rest of New Zealand (Blakely, Tobias, Atkinson, Yeh, & Huang, 2007). These rates are linked to their lower socio-economic status – the Ministry of Health describes the comparative poverty of Pacific peoples as affecting in particular "their ability to make healthy choices and prioritise health care for their children" (2008, p. ix). High rates of obesity and being overweight in Pacific children and adults, acute and chronic respiratory and infectious diseases, serious skin infections, hearing loss and poor oral health, and preventable hospital admissions, are each noted as being of public health concern (2008, p. ix).

In terms of mental health, Māori and Pacific peoples have a higher 12-month prevalence of mental disorder than the general population (Baxter, Kokaua, Wells, McGee, & Oakley Browne, 2006; Wells et al, 2006). For Pacific peoples the excess burden of mental illness can be attributed to the age and gender structure and the socio-economic correlates of the Pacific population (Foliaki, Kokaua, Schaaf, & Tukuitonga, 2006). However, rates of accessing mental health services are low for Pacific peoples compared with those for Māori and the rest of New Zealand.

1.3 Report overview

This report highlights key themes arising from the talanoa sessions[8] held with 12 Pacific families. The findings are snapshots of family perceptions and experiences recorded at particular points in their lives. They are not representative of all Pacific families in New Zealand or in Auckland in 2008. Rather, they offer insight into some of the 'on-the-ground' experience of Pacific peoples in New Zealand, on four themes: family or household composition; family and household economic decision-making; parenting, especially fathering; and family wellbeing.

A companion report – *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing, 1981–2006 (Cotterell et al, forthcoming)* – provides representative findings on changes in Pacific household composition over the period from 1981 to 2006, and reports changes in wellbeing over a 25-year period for the overall New Zealand Pacific population, using a series of wellbeing indicators derived from New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings (census) data.

1.3.1 Reporting of findings

The story of each family is made up of two main narratives: the narrative of the parents and that of the children. While it must be remembered that each family is different, there are some general things they share. Some of these things pertain to attitudes, others relate to experiences. It is the object of this study to bring out some of these differences and similarities, and this is done using the key theme areas.

Adult participants talked not only about their immediate family lives but also about their own childhood

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8 See section 2.1 for an explanation of a talanoa session.

upbringing. This provided some context to the values they held about family life, parenting and cultural responsibilities in particular.

The 'main decision-maker' or 'head of household' or person responsible for the household budget was, more often than not, an older member of the household, one of the parents or grandparents. There was only one case of a shared decision-making role between a parent and child. This involved a single-parent family where the daughter (an independent) was in paid employment and shared with her mother a lot of the economic responsibilities for maintaining the family. Participants spoke of parent-child relationships even when the 'child' had a family of their own. In multi-family households in particular there could be three parent-child relationships, with four generations, living under the same roof.

2. METHODOLOGY

Pacific understandings and experiences of family are changing and are considerably more diverse today than 25 years ago. These compositional changes reflect wider structural socio-economic changes and can affect the ability of Pacific families to cope with parenting and economic pressures. Both are important elements in the formation of youth identity and responsibility, and responsible parenting – two key themes in this study.

The households in which a child is reared can have long-term influences on their development. This research aimed to gain insights into the following themes:

(a) Pacific household decision-making and resource-management dynamics

(b) parents' and children's experiences of parenting (especially fathering)

(c) the effects of household changes over time on family wellbeing.

Talanoa sessions were conducted with Pacific households in Auckland in May and June 2008.

One of the aims of this qualitative research was to contribute to the building of Pacific researchers' capability, using Pacific research methodologies where possible. The decision to use the talanoa research method was based on attempts to address this aim.

2.1 Talanoa

For the qualitative arm of this research project, we utilised a talanoa or conversational approach (Prescott, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006) to gather information about household composition and wellbeing for Pacific families. The talanoa approach sits within a number of iterative research stages:

> determining and recruiting the population of interest

> determining themes of interest to be investigated

> constructing the instruments to gather information

> designing the overall framework and tools for analysis, gathering the information within talanoa conversations

> adding extra themes of interest based on informal feedback emerging from the researchers' observations on the talanoa sessions

> using these themes as a conceptual net or framework for analysis of the data during the analysis stage and the report writing.

In the theme-analysis stage the researchers examine the conversations for commonalities, recurrences and novelties that might correspond to the predetermined themes. These talanoa conversations have an open nature and, as a result, other unforeseen but relevant themes may emerge. From this content-analysis framework emerges a larger picture of the social, economic, spiritual and ethnic-specific life experiences, observations and circumstances of the study population.

According to Prescott (2008) there is a difference between talanoa and unstructured interviews. The difference lies in the ontological and epistemological starting points. He argues that in talanoa "the researcher and participant are regarded as being equal and inseparable. They both contribute to the discussion and therefore both benefit from the understanding gained from the experience. The talanoa cannot take place if a condition of the inquiry is that the researcher takes a neutral or distant position" (p. 131). A traditional interview, he says, "is based on the researcher seeking knowledge from the participant by asking questions" (p. 132) and "compared with interviews … a more frank and open discussion can be achieved through talanoa" (p. 132).

The significance of using talanoa here was reflected by the response generated when participants were told that we were conducting talanoa rather than interview sessions. The two researchers conducting the talanoa sessions observed that participants were immediately less anxious when told that the session involved engaging in talanoa rather than an interview. The concept of talanoa – 'talking stories', where sharing views rather than taking views is promoted – was immediately appreciated by participants.

To help the two talanoa researchers[9] process the talanoa approach, the focused interview technique guidelines provided by Rubin (1983) were adapted to fit the talanoa philosophy. These guidelines offered our two researchers some step-by-step information on how to actually carry out the talanoa approach. Learning

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9   To keep the distinction drawn here between interviews and talanoa sessions, the report uses the term 'talanoa researchers' rather than 'interviewers' to refer to those conducting the talanoa sessions.

how to undertake qualitative focused interviews or talanoa sessions takes both time and practice, and there are no strict rules governing procedure. However, the talanoa researchers were encouraged to keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Understand the participant's motivation.

2. Understand that the physical setting of the talanoa session, and the social and cultural status of the participant and the researcher, can influence the way the participant will interact with you and vice versa.

3. Ensure appropriate recording techniques are used and consent from the participant is received.

4. Understand the scope of the topic and reasons for exploring it before going into the talanoa session.

5. Keep a balance between ensuring conversational flow and gaining relevant information.

6. Ensure that the talanoa environment is safe by constantly checking that the participant is comfortable with the process and by offering encouraging but probing statements, questions and follow-up comments.

2.1.1 Considerations, critiques and positive outcomes

Consideration must be given to the dynamics of the interaction of component parts in the talanoa process. This might include the power dynamic and relationship between speakers. Influences on this dynamic include the perceived status of those involved; the number of speakers engaged in the talanoa; the genders, ages and general social positions of speakers; and knowledge of participants' and interviewers' particular social networks.

Of note was the impact of the presence of parental figures in nearby rooms on talanoa sessions with some of the youth respondents. In a couple of talanoa sessions, youth were conscious of the presence of their parent in the house and this was believed by researchers to have sometimes stilted conversations. While care was taken to hold talanoa sessions with parents and their children on separate days and in different venues, in order to maximise opportunities to involve both types of participants, it was sometimes easier to accommodate those families who wanted their talanoa sessions to be done on the same day, one after the other, by conducting them at their home. This was the most convenient option for most of the participating family members.

In one case the young person's uneasiness at the presence of his parent in a nearby room was particularly felt. That case involved the parent deciding to have the talanoa session at a relative's house and suggesting that both he and his son have their talanoa sessions there (either together or one at a time) as the relative and his family would not be home. The two talanoa researchers who attended this session explained that they would like to speak to the parent and child separately and so the sessions were conducted simultaneously in nearby rooms but by different researchers. Unfortunately, the setup of the relative's house was such that the only appropriate rooms to use were very close to each other. The uneasiness of this young person during his talanoa session may also have been a result of cross-gender dynamics, since he had a female researcher. This may also have heightened the youth's awareness of his father's presence, as some Pacific parents still frown on young males and females talking in a room alone.

Because respondents' participation and convenience were prioritised, and the researchers were new to negotiating the talanoa process, the potential for things to not go as planned was high. What seems appropriate at the outset can prove challenging 'on the ground'. In hindsight the researchers could perhaps have been more insistent on separate venues and times for the parents' and children's talanoa sessions, but given time constraints and the desire to gain as much family involvement as possible, the compromise of conducting separate talanoa sessions on the same day but in different rooms seemed reasonable. Reflecting on these methodological challenges will help in the further development of the talanoa method. The most helpful reflection that this case presents, methodologically speaking, is that negotiating an appropriate talanoa venue requires careful planning, taking into account possible scenarios that can challenge the process and working on strategies to address them.

The prompts utilised by the talanoa researchers to generate further dialogue are also methodologically valuable. The narratives of both the participant and the talanoa researcher combine to produce the overall talanoa transcript, all prompts, side comments and jokes included. All that was spoken of and gestured towards during the talanoa session by both researcher and participant is part of the talanoa; the interchange of views and sharing of information generates a rich dialogue. The participant's comments must be read

with this in mind. The researcher must be careful, however, not to bias, impose or lead the participant to his or her point of view. They must be able to correctly gauge the personality of the participant and continually keep a check on his or her engagement in the talanoa so that the participant's views are kept genuine and to the forefront of the conversation. By the same token, they must also find ways to build trust, so participants feel that the process is not just about the researcher taking information for their purposes, but is about the participant and researcher learning a bit about each other and finding mutual benefit in their talanoa.

The talanoa approach to gathering information gave us very rich and relevant observations on life for a number of Pacific ethnicities and family types. It is an approach that seems to work best where the talanoa researcher and the participant can find common ground early on. Matching for ethnicity, ethnic language competencies, gender and age were considered important where possible. The two talanoa researchers were matched with participants for ethnicity and ethnic language competency.

The sequential but interrelated approaches of Western and Pacific research methodological approaches found in this research project resulted in a useful and replicable research model. Information sheets, consent forms, facilitator training guidelines and contact process guidelines were provided.

2.1.2 Sampling of participants and data collection

A selection of 12 families was chosen on the basis of ethnicity and household type. Because of time and cost constraints the sample focused on the two largest Pacific ethnic groups, Samoan and Cook Islands Māori. The likelihood of finding suitable families from these two ethnic groupings was higher than for the smaller ethnic groups because of their size. To offer other Pacific ethnic groups a voice in the project, a third group of 'mixed ethnicities' was chosen.

The parenting theme suggested by the Families Commission for this qualitative study meant that the household types needed to include those with children. The household types selected were based on the types used by the larger quantitative research accompanying this report (Cotterell et al, forthcoming). In that study there were four main household types of significance: couples without children; single-parent families; other one-family households (usually couples with children); and multi-family households. However, because this

qualitative study sought to capture the experiences and views of parents and their children, the four categories of family chosen did not include the couples without children family type. Instead the four family types used were: single-parent families; one-family household of a couple with dependents; one-family household of a couple with independents; and multi-family household. This provided the ratio of ethnic groups to family types. Four family types and three ethnic groups meant a total of 12 families.

With each of these 12 families, at least two separate talanoa sessions were held in order to gain an overall picture of how the four themes (household composition, household economics, parenting and family wellbeing) resonated within each household. The study required holding talanoa sessions with the person or people responsible for household decision-making and those mainly responsible for parenting duties. In all cases these turned out to be the parents. A separate talanoa session was held with one of the young people living in the household. This gave rise to at least two talanoa sessions per household, a minimum total of 24 talanoa sessions. To try to capture a mature group of youth participants, young persons aged 16 and over were sought where possible.

For the purposes of this study, 'independents' refers to those persons living in a household, usually young unmarried adults, without children, earning a personal income and able to contribute to household expenses. 'Dependents' are usually children, unable to earn a personal income or contribute in any substantive way to household expenses. Those with severe physical and mental health needs may also be included in this group. 'Parents' were also widely interpreted to include grandparents, aunts, foster-parents and other members of the family who had responsibility for the care and wellbeing of dependents. Mixed-ethnicity families and households were those with at least one adult member who is of Pacific (mixed or single) ethnicity and one other member (not necessarily an adult) of a different Pacific or non-Pacific ethnicity. The final selection of participants is outlined in Table 2.1.

The research team, in consultation with the advisory group, created a list of community groups from personal and professional networks (such as Pacific churches and professional or club organisations) and drew from this a more specific list of possible families who fit the selection criteria. A contact protocol was developed by the team in consultation with the advisory group before making

contact with families or households. The idea was that once the first family from each of our four family types was identified and successfully interviewed, the snowball method (Walter, 2006) would be used to identify the next three within that family-type subgroup. By and large this was what happened. However, what also occurred was that families recommended other suitable families, not only outside their family-type group but also outside their ethnic type. For example, a Samoan couple

with children was able to recommend a mixed-Pacific single-parent family. In order to gain a wide mixture of demographics in the study population, a number of eligible recommendations were not taken up.

All data were anonymised and stored in a secure database. The taped data were transcribed (and translated where necessary) by the two talanoa researchers. Translations were checked by relevant Pacific language experts.

TABLE: 2.1 Breakdown of participating families by ethnic group, household type, gender, religious affiliation and location

Participating families (& ID No.)*	Ethnicity	Household type	Gender	Religious affiliation	Location
1. **Single mother & daughter (CKI01)**	Cook Island	Single parent with children	Two females	Presbyterian	South Akl
2. **Couple (father & mother) & son (CKI02)**	Cook Island	Couple with dependents & independents	Two males + female	Assembly of God	South Akl
3. **Couple (father & mother) & daughter (CKI03)**	Cook Island	Couple with independents	Two females + male	Presbyterian	Central Akl
4. **Couple (father & mother) & son and partner (CKI04)**	Cook Island	Multiple family	Two males + two females	Presbyterian	South Akl
5. **Single father & son (SAM05)**	Samoan	Single parent with children	Two males	Catholic	West Akl
6. **Couple (father & mother) & daughter (SAM06)**	Samoan	Couple with dependents	Two females + male	Seventh-day Adventist	West Akl
7. **Couple & younger brother (SAM07)**	Samoan	Couple with independents	Two males + female	Presbyterian	South Akl
8. **Couple (father & mother) & two children (SAM08)**	Samoan	Multiple family	Two males + two females	Presbyterian	South Akl
9. **Single mother & daughter (MIX09)**	Mixed – Fijian & Palagi	Single parent with children	Two females	Catholic	South Akl
10. **Couple (father & mother) & daughter (MIX10)**	Mixed – Tongan & Samoan	Couple with dependents	Two females + male	Presbyterian	Central Akl
11. **Couple (father & mother) & daughter (MIX13**	Mixed – Samoan, Tokelauan & Palagi	Couple with independents	Two females + male	Presbyterian	South Akl
12. **Mother (MIX12)**	Mixed – Niuean & Cook Island	Multiple family	One female	Theist	South Akl

* Families are referred to using these ID numbers in the quotes throughout Section 3. The talanoa researcher is referred to by 'TR' followed by a number to distinguish different researchers, eg TR1, TR2. Parents and youth participants are differentiated using the family ID code and then the initial 'P' or 'Y' representing 'parent' or 'youth', eg CKI01P or CKI01Y. Where a distinction is drawn between the mother or father participant then the following codes are used: CKI01F representing Cook Island father from Family One or CKI01M representing Cook Island mother from Family One.

2.1.3 Analysis and coding

The qualitative data were thematised using the NVivo 7 software. The data were coded into 75 themes, initially using the four main theme headings as first headings, and then subheadings, which were then analysed further and condensed into four main theme areas with 10 subthemes for actual discussion. The data were organised by ethnic group – each of the final theme and subtheme areas, as noted below, were organised first in terms of the Cook Islands family data, followed by the Samoan and the other Pacific ethnicities.

The theme areas were:

> family composition and changes
  > changes in family or household makeup
  > changes in living arrangements

> household economics
  > financial management and decision-making
  > non-financial household management

> parenting
  > decision-making processes
  > parenting together
  > fathering

> family wellbeing
  > aspirational goals
  > ethno-cultural identity
  > cultural responsibilities.

Translations were provided of Samoan and Cook Islands Māori text, within the text, and checked by a language expert. Retaining some original Cook Island text gave indigenous language readers access to the cultural nuances of what was actually said.

2.1.4 Ethical procedures

The research team sought ethical approval from The University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee at the end of 2007. Ethical approval was given before commencement of interviews (Ref No. 2008/083), and usual research ethical procedures were followed. Participants were given information sheets (see attached copies, youth and adult, in Appendices A and B) explaining the aims and objectives of the research. The talanoa researchers met with each participant to explain in person the aims and objectives of the study and to answer any questions. Once participants agreed to participate in the study a suitable time for the talanoa sessions was arranged. At the first talanoa session, participants were also asked to sign a consent form for the purposes of the study (see attached copies, youth and adult, in Appendices C and D). As described in Table 2.1, the anonymity of participants was protected in all reporting documents through deliberate and careful use of coded and generic language.

For ease of general public reading, most Pacific ethnic language was translated, but where possible, Pacific terms or phrases were retained to maintain cultural nuances and meanings.

3. FINDINGS

This section describes the findings from the talanoa sessions with all participants, organised by ethnic grouping. It begins with the Cook Islands families' talanoa, followed by those of the Samoan families and the mixed-ethnicity families.

A brief and general profile of each of the four families in the different ethnic groupings is provided at the outset, followed by a descriptive account of the key findings under the four theme areas:

> family or household composition, living arrangements and changes

> household economics

> parenting (including fathering)

> family wellbeing (and what makes for a happy family).

The talanoa of each of the families in this study offer some rich food for thought about family life in these three ethnic groups, concentrating on the thematic areas noted above. The detail offered in this section is limited to that received during the talanoa sessions. By design the information gathered during talanoa sessions would not necessarily be as systematic in its coverage of key theme and subtheme areas as desired, as coverage depends on the direction of the unstructured talanoa.

A general summary of the key findings is provided at the end of this section.

3.1 Cook Islands families' talanoa

3.1.1 Family-group profile

Most of the participants in this group of Cook Islanders came from the island of Atiu, with others from Mangaia and Rarotonga. Nine of the people in this group were parents or older adults and three were young people. The young people were single, and two of the parents were a young couple with a toddler, living with the male partner's parents. Of the three single young people, one was still in high school, another was at university and the third was in full-time paid employment. The child of the young couple living with parents had a heart condition, so the mother stayed home to look after him while the father worked. Of the other parents, five were

in paid employment and two were full-time caregivers in the home.

3.1.2 Family composition and living arrangements

Family One

This was a single-parent family living in South Auckland. The mother had been a single parent since she separated from her husband seven years earlier. The father had a new family but still lived in Auckland. Four people lived in this household: a mother and her three children (a daughter and twin boys). They had lived in a three-bedroom house before moving to their five-bedroom home, which they were renting. There were two older sons who had moved out of home but regularly visited their families. The mother had decided to move house so that her five children could have more bedroom space. However, shortly after the family moved into their five-bedroom house, the two older boys moved out.

The daughter was working full-time and helped her mother with household expenses and supporting her younger brothers. The mother and daughter agreed that it would be more economical to rent a house with fewer bedrooms, but because they had settled into their home and enjoyed having the space to accommodate the older boys and their families when they visited, they decided to stay in their home, at least for as long as they could cope financially. The twins were students in a sports academy and contributed only when they could to household expenses. Extended family members sometimes visited. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the mother and her daughter.

Family Two

This family was a couple with dependents and independents. They lived in South Auckland. There were eight people in this household, living in a four-bedroom house: the parents, five children and the mother's adult sister. The parents and children had previously lived with the paternal grandparents in South Auckland for 18 years before moving into their new home, which they bought, and for which they were paying off the mortgage. This family had always had relatives and friends staying with them temporarily; it seemed that when one relative left, another arrived. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and the son who was still at high school.

Family Three

This family was a couple with independents. There were five in this household, and they lived in Central Auckland. They had lived in a three-bedroom home before moving into their four-bedroom home to accommodate their children. They also shifted locations – from one part of Central Auckland to another – to be closer to a university. The parents were born and raised in the Cook Islands. The father migrated to New Zealand and had initially lived outside of Auckland before moving there for work. He returned to the Cook Islands and met his wife. They then decided to migrate back to New Zealand to educate their children. They took out a mortgage to purchase a home. Relatives and friends visited frequently from across New Zealand and the islands. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents together and then their daughter separately.

Family Four

This multi-family household was made up of two couples with children. The two couples were related biologically. The father and mother (Couple One) lived with their son and his wife (Couple Two) and their child. Couple One's other children also lived with them. They had lived in a three-bedroom home in Central Auckland before moving to a four-bedroom home in South Auckland. They had to move locations in order to be able to afford to buy their own home – one that the parents considered a bigger and better home. A total of 10 people lived in this house: the couple, four children, the partner and child of one of the sons, a nephew and sister-in-law. Two of the four children were adopted. The family home had always been full, even with added bedrooms. Extended family and community members visited regularly, sometimes staying for a period of time. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and the son and his partner.

3.1.3 Household economics

Household management and decision-making

For all four families in this family grouping, the financial management and decision-making fell on the shoulders of the parents, with some responsibility also shouldered by the oldest child living at home. For the Cook Island single-parent family, the oldest child living at home was the daughter, and as the only steady income-earner, she took on most of the financial responsibility for

paying bills and keeping the house running smoothly. When asked about her input into household decision-making, she replied: "Yeah, well mum, she kind [of] like, she stresses out easy now, and she gets worked up over little things sometimes, and I try and calm the situation down" (CKI01). For her, shouldering most of the financial burden was what seemed to help calm the situation. The mother admitted that her daughter shared the decision-making for their family:

> TR1: …Okay so I'm talking about who does the groceries, who does all the work to make the house run smoothly.
>
> CKI01P: Oh, that between me and my daughter.
>
> TR1: You and your daughter?
>
> CKI01P: Yes, usually she is the one who say what to get and all that… (CKI01)

The mother and daughter of this single-parent family were conscious that in order to help the younger boys succeed they needed to cover most if not all of the household expenses. The two younger boys were attending a sports academy full-time and so had little or no income. The mother and daughter wanted the boys to succeed in their sporting goals and so had given them some space from any financial obligations so that they could concentrate fully on them. The daughter rationalised this as part of being in a family.

Each of the Cook Islands couples spoke of how they tried to share the financial costs between them or between them and those household members, including their children, with incomes. However, each of these different households found it difficult to chase up tardy family members for overdue payments. More often than not, the parents or heads of households made up the shortfall.

In two of these four families the mothers were not in paid employment. In one of these cases, the mother had contributed to the household income by selling baked goods at local fairs when necessary. She was considered a very good cook and was encouraged by her husband to use her skills and time at home, while the children were at school, to contribute to the family income in this way. The father said this was not anything to be shy about, and that in order to survive families had to do what they had to do. He admitted this ability to just 'get on with things' was helped by

his personality; he was the kind of person who was not afraid to ask for anything. He noted, "If I think it's something that's of benefit to the family, I ask" (CKI01).

The parents of all four Cook Islands families thus tried to share the decision-making responsibilities between themselves or between themselves and their adult children. If Family Two could not meet their weekly or monthly financial commitments, then they met as a family to discuss how they would address the problem:

> CKI02M: Who holds the power? Both of us! Financially, we [parents] both work together, because, yes, we have a system in place – what you get a week goes on this, but then at the end of the day, if we don't make those needs, then we talk about it. How are we going to meet those needs, so we're very tight on our financials… (CKI02)

Parents consulted with children about anything from how much board to contribute to what they would like to eat for dinner. In most of these families, because their financial situation was tight, the choice of what they would like to eat was limited to what they could afford.

In each of these four families, parents spoke of the need to ensure that there was enough income for the family to cover basic household expenses. One family had managed to cope with only one income; the rest had needed at least two incomes. There was recognition of the need to share responsibility for household expenses among those who could work. In two of these families, one parent would organise the household budget and the other would ensure that the bills actually got paid. In the single-parent family, mother and daughter worked together to organise and pay for their household expenses. Only one parent spoke about using a credit card to pay for household bills, but did point out that this was done only as a last resort.

Although there was the suggestion in the talanoa that they were struggling to make ends meet, they also talked about finding positive ways to cope. The mother who sold cakes at local markets to help supplement the family income was one such example.

A number of parents said they had worked two jobs to get their family to a point of financial security, but the price had been losing out on spending enough quality time with their children. This was the regret of

the working mother who stated that: "…that's been part of my regrets, if I had to change, yeah, I think time with growing and being together as a family is more important with their upbringing" (CKI03).

Juggling household expenses

Within each of the four families there was a constant juggling of household expenses. This mainly involved mortgage repayments or rent payments, food expenses, children's educational expenses, travel costs and church, family and community obligations. The four families used different strategies to cope. One kept a tight watch over the food budget. The mother of this family stayed home and so was able to keep a close eye on what her family spent on food for the week or month. Another family had to sacrifice (according to the youth) school uniforms, books and, on some days, even school lunches.

One young person in this family group spoke of the value of pooling together household resources to make sure that the basic expenses were met, such as the mortgage, power, water and telephone bills, and then to also have an emergency fund for unexpected expenses, such as cars suddenly breaking down.

The decision-making processes for easing the financial commitments of this group were multi-pronged and usually involved weighing up a number of factors. In the single-parent family, both the daughter and mother understood that their financial burdens would be lessened if they rented a smaller house, but the convenience of their five-bedroom house in terms of size and location made it difficult to give up. The way this family juggled their financial obligations was explained by the daughter:

> TR1: Do you budget properly between the two of you?
>
> CKI01Y: One week I'll pay rent 'cos I get paid fortnightly, like she'd [mother] do one week's and I'd do the next. And, then I'd try and pay the people at Sky, with my own money … and [pay for] my own loan, as well as for the car. At the moment it's going okay. Sometimes you want to spend some money on yourself.
>
> TR1: How's that going?
>
> CKI01Y: Yeah. Not as much as I'd like to but I got to take care of other things first…

TR1: …What part of the budget do they [younger brothers]…

CKI01Y: I don't really like to ask them to help out 'cos they don't get as much. When they feel like it or we desperately need it, need extra money then they can help out.

Budgeting, saving and investments

The juggling process was constant for these families. Little saving was being done and investments seemed out of the question. This was reflected in the comments of the working daughter of one family, who admitted: "definitely, I could save a bit more, [but] every time I try to save, something happens…" (CKI01).

Notwithstanding, one family saw value in seeking professional household budgeting advice. The parents recognised that they needed to change their spending habits and control their finances better:

CKI02M: We went to see professional people in budgeting, we just did that today, so there will be big changes in our spending habits.

TR1: So you can save more?

CKI02M: Not only that, but to reduce some of our bad spending, and to have the extra saving for rainy days, and we're looking forward to paying off the mortgage and [try to] halve the term … instead of the full term. So that was a big call and that's why we went to seek professional advice, we're talking about professional advice [where] I'm prepared to pay. Because in my experience, the free advice from people who have no experience in that area, it's free … some free things are good, but the only thing is now you have to spend to get the best advice.

Another family had a club account (run by family) that they put into for family holidays. They saw this expense as a necessity rather than a luxury: it gave them something to look forward to; a reward for working hard. At the time of the talanoa the club was planning a trip back home to the islands.

Of these four Cook Islands families, three owned the homes they lived in and one of the three had an investment property, a townhouse in Auckland city. The parents had bought it for the family, and as an investment for their retirement. This couple had been encouraging their children to consider investing with them.

Cultural obligations

Each of the four families – but especially those where the fathers had leadership roles in their Cook Island community – spoke of the difficulties of juggling household expenses and giving to community events (particularly to events that were not expected). Participants also spoke of the pressure on household budgets when relatives visited and stayed for a while. It was culturally difficult to turn relatives away or ask them to pay for the cost of accommodating them. When the talanoa researcher asked one family whether they could pull out of these cultural obligations, the husband replied with a rather emphatic "No!" His wife, however, was more circumspect, suggesting that while the community obligations were important, meeting them came at a price:

TR1: …When the children were at school, going back how many years, about five … because families they have hidden costs, like you know, schooling, school fees and trips and stuff like that. Then out of the blue you have a village fundraising to pay for. For me personally, it has been a struggle sometimes, like you said, we have got to get on with it. Either that or pull right out of it … do you two agree?

CKI03F: Pull out of it?

TR1: Yeah, pull out of it…

CKI03F: No, myself, no, I can't!

TR1: No, that's part of our culture. So how did you manage that? Like the unplanned expenses?

CKI03M: It's always hard. But then you make do. But I feel sorry for my children; they have missed quite a lot with everything. There are times I could have got them a new set of uniforms, or I could get, you know … there are things they did go without. At times we [are] paying for our mortgage and we are a new family, have just come from the islands, and we have to buy new things. It took us a year to get into this situation, and it was go, go, go … with all this hidden cost and unexpected community costs. I suppose we were lucky, I've got accounting experience, but that depends on a whole lot of things, and how you run your household is the key to that. If you have to live on a limited amount of money, then you learn to budget with it.

The problems surrounding this issue were evident in the talanoa of the Cook Islands parent from Family Three. This parent recognised that now and again things arose that were not budgeted for and which ate into their household budget, making life difficult. However, he believed that once he and his wife had committed themselves to giving to something, it would be highly inappropriate for them to withdraw:

> CKI02F: Now and again we have emergencies that arise, like the church, the communities, because we have a lot of involvement in the various groups. It gets tough sometimes, but the priority is the family. If we can help those groups that we are involved with, which we try to be committed to, sometimes, our family needs come last…

> TR1: Pardon?

> CKI02F: Sometimes our family's needs come last … it's not the right thing to do, but once we're committed both of us, it's very hard for us to say no … that's just the people we are, even though we have nothing … it's the people here, it's hard for us to say no … for the community, even the church.

The cost of meeting cultural obligations can be considerable, especially if travelling to the Cook Islands and back is required. But parents talked about how they were brought up watching their own parents juggling their household financial commitments alongside cultural obligations and how, despite the struggle, they could, in the end, make ends meet. What drove this giving, according to some, was the point that although it is hard, giving to those you love makes you feel good and is part of Cook Islands tradition: "yeah, our traditions, it's hard but at the end of the day, if we have done something to help, we're happy … we are people who love to help, whether [it's] small or big" (CKI02).

Education expenses

Providing a good education for their children was considered important by all four Cook Island families. Meeting the full expenses of this education, however, was not always possible for all of them. In one family the parents paid for their daughter's university fees for two years. In the third year, they could not afford her tuition fees and she took out a student loan. They felt this would teach her to appreciate the help she received:

> CKI03P: Another reason why we want her to go through a student loan, [is] to experience that … we don't want somebody, your own child, just to take it for granted … I want her committed, to know this is life.

The daughter worked part-time both to help her family meet their household expenses and to provide herself with some income while she was studying. She liked being independent but admitted that she knew that if she was ever struggling she always had her family to fall back on. She highlighted the significance of family as a constant safety net when she said: "if you're capable of being independent, you can, but if you're struggling, you can always go back to your family" (CKI03Y).

Household chores

The four families' household chores were usually organised by the mothers, but as with financial decision-making, responsibility for ensuring that the chores were done was shared between the parents, and with the older children. In each of the families, it was emphasised that all children, regardless of gender, participated in doing all chores – from cooking through to mowing the lawns and doing the washing. One young person said: "sometimes, even the man has to take on the ladies' job as well" (CKI02Y).

3.1.4 Parenting

All parents in this group took primary responsibility for parenting duties. In practice, however, the actual parenting sometimes tended to fall more on the shoulders of the parent at home than on the one who worked. Nevertheless, all couples agreed that parenting responsibilities must be shared. These responsibilities included making sure that their children could fend for themselves within the home: that they could do household chores (such as cooking and cleaning) without supervision, take themselves to school if need be, assist with paying bills if appropriate and so on. Teaching her children these life skills was, for the single mother, part and parcel of being "a good mother".

The daughter of the single parent jokingly pointed out that her mother's style of parenting was more like a dictatorship: "Mum's got a pretty, um, kinda dictatorship role [laughs], you know, what she says goes", but then she added that "at the same time, we can always talk to her; it's not that much of a dictatorship that you can't voice your opinions". She

stated that she did do her share of "voicing [her own] opinions" when she felt she needed to.

Parents in the Cook Island group openly worried about how to keep their children safe. One couple did not allow their children to sleep at other people's houses. One father preferred that if his children were to drink alcohol, they did so at home, where the parents could supervise. In terms of binge drinking and taking illegal drugs, the youth participants raised the point that sometimes their peers could get involved in these things as an escape from the pressures of their home lives, or just everyday living:

> CKI03Y: I think parents should have ... should be [of an] open mind in terms of alcohol ... you can't really just prevent people, your children from doing it. [They should] teach them to control their behaviours ... drugs, that's different, I don't really think that should be tolerated at all, it doesn't really help. Alcohol, people use alcohol as an escape, it's just an escape from their lives, their everyday lives. That's not a bad thing. It's just how you control it; really don't drink too excessively, you know.

The parents of the four families spoke about the importance of building open and honest communication with their children to counteract the pressure to drink excessively or take drugs. Youth participants from the families with two parents suggested they could talk more openly with their mothers than their fathers. The fathers were considered the discipliners, while the mothers were good listeners. One son spoke of how his father was a "straightforward" man but not always easy to talk to. In this household the children would go first to the mother if they had a problem, before taking it to their father. The mother acted as mediator between the father and children. If the problem was serious, the mother would likely raise it with the father privately; otherwise it would be raised as part of their regular weekly family meeting. This family often used these family meetings to sort through any family issues. A young person in this family found some wisdom in getting to know his parents, to understand "the good, the bad, the pros, the cons" and to know where the limits were. He related:

> CKI02Y: In our house we share things ... you don't bring anything that would disrupt or make our mum and dad angry. We know our limits. You don't want to go too far, then if you go too far, who are you

going to turn to. No one is going to take you in. Yeah, they're [the parents] a good couple, strong bond, but then we always were the funny family.

Another youth suggested that one of the barriers to open and honest discussion between parents and their children was the inability of some to accept alternative points of view. This was raised in relation to parent-child discussions about tertiary study. His parents wanted him to undertake studies at university, but at the time he wanted to focus on raising his infant son and providing for his young family. In his talanoa this son reflected on his upbringing and found a gap between the way of parenting that his parents practised (where the "parent tells and children do, no matter what the age"), and what he understood was the New Zealand way of parenting, where parents and children talk things through – the parents often still make the final decision, but there is more talk.

Part of the island way of parenting was also to raise benchmarks in their own lives, especially the hardships they experienced living life in the islands, as markers for what one should be grateful for. However, according to this young person, without actual experience, this kind of benchmarking can create misunderstanding and resentment rather than appreciation. For young people, stories about island life are difficult to connect with unless they have had first-hand experience of it:

> CKI04Y: I think that's one of the major things with my upbringing that I would definitely change ... because it hindered me growing up, because parents come from the islands, and there are certain ways that they brought us up ... but also living a New Zealand way of life, really ... you get your parents saying: 'you know when we were little, we only had one jandal a year, and we worked hard...', you know. Hearing all of that, we don't understand that. But yet, I don't think our parents understand our side of things, where we are coming from ... trying to find my identity in a Pākehā world, especially in my teen years. And, you know, it came down to communication. My parents are older and I think they have learned to listen a lot more.

Another expectation implicit in the notion of 'island parenting' is the idea, often seen as a cultural expectation, that children should take care of the needs of their parents, especially when they can no longer work. During the talanoa session of one family,

however, the father cautioned against this expectation, suggesting that it was the parents' duty to look after their children and to give them every opportunity in life. He stressed that while he did believe that his children should care for their parents, especially their mothers, it should be a joy rather than a burden. In fact, it was his preference that his children develop a duty of care more to each other as siblings and be there for each other – to do things for each other without expectation of 'repayment' – more than anything else. He stated:

> TR1: …When I was little I used to think, when I work, I'm going to give my parents some money … do you think our kids will do that?
>
> CKI02F: No, I don't.
>
> TR1: You don't? Why is that?
>
> CKI02F: I told my kids, I don't care about anything, but your mum. She does everything for you, look after you, carry you for nine months, wash your clothes, prepare your food and you just come home … I always remind them of that, [so] don't forget your mum. I always remind them till they get sick of me.
>
> CKI02M: That's something we always do, we always talk about it…
>
> CKI02F: Help each other, even [child], help out your younger brothers, when you grow up, no matter what your profession, make sure you look after each other, and don't ask for payment.

Another cultural expectation of parents was to ensure that their children did not marry or have sexual relations with their cousins. This issue was raised by a couple of parents in the Cook Islands group, who stressed the need for their children to get to know their extended family for fear of cousins marrying or forming sexual relationships without knowing. Intermarrying between kin within Polynesian families is considered tapu, or a breach of sacred covenants between family members. In order to avoid marriages between kin today, continuing contact with extended family members through family reunions, for example, was seen by these parents as something to be encouraged.

Most parents in this group believed that they needed to display the same kind of values and behaviour in public as they did in their home, both as parents and as husband and wife. One father pointed out that the relationship between husband and wife was important for the stability of children, because if the marriage was not happy, it would resonate through the household and affect the way they parented. He spoke openly about enjoying working with his wife, even to the point that when they needed household chores done they would often call on each other rather than their children for help. This kind of parenting by example he implied was desirable for all parents.

For single parents, the burden of parenting can become onerous. In these circumstances, access to good support networks, such as the church and its youth groups, or friends and family members, became important. This was the case for the single-parent family in this group. The daughter highlighted the importance to her of her church youth group. For another youth participant, the first port of call was his paternal grandmother. She gave him advice and would talk to his parents on his behalf if need be.

Only one parent, a father, felt strongly that it was his role to make decisions on behalf of his children, especially while they were young. He believed that while children might have "good ideas", they were not old enough to make decisions for themselves. Unfortunately he did not discuss what age or life-stage would be appropriate.

Pocket money was raised as a parenting issue. In one family the children wanted pocket money but the parents, especially the mother, opposed it. Her argument was that pocket money was not a basic need and that basic needs had to be taken care of first. The fundamental role that mothers played in the lives of the youth participants of this group was explicitly and lovingly raised by one youth, who said:

> CKI02Y: If I won some money, I would like to buy my mum her own house. To see her in her own house and not to have to worry about anything. No more paying rent. I've seen her pay for heaps of things, even if she would struggle just to put bread on the table each day, just to keep us alive. Yes, she sacrifices a lot.

Discipline

The fathers in this Cook Islands group of families were the main discipliners, and physical discipline was the main form used. The parents in all four families learnt how to discipline their children by observation, basically

by observing how their own parents raised them and their siblings. Physical discipline was spoken of as the norm in the islands but not in New Zealand. One of the three Cook Island fathers spoke about trying to talk things through with his children to get at the heart of the problem rather than using physical discipline as the first resort:

> CKI02F: We talk, go over the boundaries, then the physical thing comes in. I still apply that in my family. I can't listen to the law of the country, because I know my kids better than the government, but I don't discipline them in a way like abusing, no, it's about discipline. I know the boundaries. They know if they break the boundaries, they'll get the discipline.

> TR1: You have boundaries?

> CKI02F: Got to have boundaries…

The parents of this family believed strongly in making the boundaries clear to their children. They also believed that children could understand financial constraints and that parents needed to be transparent about this. This, they believed, could help to encourage better communication and trust between parents and children:

> CKI02F: …but there are areas we struggle with. For example, financials [sic] 'cos they always see some of the cousins, when they celebrate birthdays and things, I talk to them. I show them my pay slip then I go over with them the details, this is how much is going there. I [give] them my slip to show them, this is what I pay to survive this week. Very interesting when they understand, they're not demanding, and they just accept the fact that dad is doing this because this is how much dad is getting and mum is not working. We don't celebrate birthdays, all we do is take them to McDonald's and we spend $50 for family of seven. And they're happy. But sometimes they've not got enough; especially the two older ones … they have to learn and sometimes they want something and I'll say, what for? I always ask questions. I need to know to understand.

> TR1: And also by you asking the question, and from your explanation, they understand, then they decide and they have to learn to decide for themselves.

> CKI02F: Yeah, and sometimes they copy their

friends and that's what I don't want them to do. And all their friends go [to get] expensive shoes, and I say, what's wrong with a $20.00 [pair of] shoes? Dad is not a millionaire, you can buy a $20.00 [pair of] shoes and they look as good as your friends'. A black shoe is a black shoe. Those are some of the little things that we try and explain to them.

Similarly, the mother in one of the other Cook Islands families found that establishing rules when children are young and sticking to them is very important for gaining children's trust and minimising disciplinary dramas later:

> CKI03M: It makes your job a lot easier if you establish rules when they're quite young and then you just keep at it and they do help me as they get out of line; I just override that and just remind them that I'm the boss.

This mother also recognised, however, that parenting is a two-way relationship: "…it's a two-way thing; if you don't earn that respect from your children, they'll just ignore you, and walk right out" (CKI03M). She recalled having a strict upbringing, some of which she felt was unfair. She reflected, however, that ironically some of it helped her to survive the harshness of life.

Attempting to be open with children and gaining children's trust is perhaps more critical for families with little social support, as they have only themselves to rely on, than for those with extended family, church and other networks. For single-parent families, engaging with community, church or extended family groups can offer support not only for the parent but also the children. This was certainly the case for the single-parent family in this ethnic grouping.

Discipline 'island-style' meant for the single mother that the parent was the ultimate boss. She would tell her children in no uncertain terms that as long as they were with her, "they have to listen to what I have to say" (CKI01M). Her Samoan ex-husband had a similar approach when they were together. Their daughter remembered that her father was very strict with them when they were growing up, especially regarding drinking and smoking. Neither she nor her siblings drank alcohol as a result.

The young people in the Cook Islands families suggested that sometimes their parents could be a little judgmental when giving advice to their children about

parenting. The daughter of the single mother said she sometimes felt that her mother should hold back from giving parenting advice to her brothers, even if she was just doing it as a way to stay involved in their lives, as it could be more negative than positive:

> CKI01Y: Yeah, but sometimes when mum tries to tell them not to do things, sometimes it comes off like they've been bad parents and things like that. I try telling her, like 'let them do their own thing, don't say anything'…
>
> TR1: And how do your brothers react?
>
> CKI01Y: …they just try to ignore her.
>
> TR1: They must be good kids for your mum. Some would probably turn around and say, mum you forget…
>
> CKI01Y: I think she just misses them, I mean she loves her grandkids and she just wants to [be involved]…
>
> TR1: I think she just needs to let go. She's the nana…
>
> CKI01Y: Yes, she found it hard, when they moved out. She wanted them around.

Fathering

Fathering, according to these Cook Island participants, was the active involvement of the father of a child in the upbringing of that child. The daughter of the single mother spoke of how her father continued to be a part of her life even though he was no longer with her mother. She found that in general, when parents separated, it did not mean that they were no longer your parents.

One of the fathers spoke of wanting to "be a better father" because if he wanted his sons to be good husbands to their wives then he had to give them a good example. He observed that "it's not good just preaching to them and the action is not there [laughs]" (CKI02F). He also wanted to make sure that his children always had access to him. He stated: "I want them to grow up and say my mum and dad were there [for me], my dad was there from day one." He believed strongly in being a role model for his children. Everything he did, from his attitude to work to his relationships with his children and his wife, he did with the thought that his actions and words were being

monitored and observed by his children and used to guide them in their lives. He believed that he did put his talk into action. "Just to put the point to the kids that this is what I mean; what I taught them I have to put it into practice, to make them understand" (CKI02F). His son said that his father was "hard-working" and "didn't like to gossip". He noted that his father "wants us kids to stand on the right side of the road, he doesn't want us to go anywhere near where it's bad, or dangerous or cause harm" (CKI02Y).

This same son had a lot of pride in being his father's son, and noted that many of his cousins looked up to his father and saw him as their own. He stated that "when other kids get jealous of me 'cos of my dad, [it makes me] feel special" (CKI02Y). This youth believed that his father was a role model to him and that his father's positive attitude and leadership inspired him.

Another Cook Island father also talked openly to his children, especially about the problems of drinking alcohol, cautioning them about "the fast life". This father preferred that his children drank at home, in front of him. He reasoned that "I don't like my son drinking at this young age, but then when you stop him, he's going to go somewhere else and probably get bashed in the head. I don't want someone else telling me what happened to my son. So I'd rather he drinks in front of me, where I can see him" (CKI04F). He was put off drinking by witnessing how his father beat his mother when drunk, and decided "I'm not going to touch that stuff". The son, who had become a father himself, understood his father's desire to do the best for his children because he wanted the same. Although his relationship with his father had been challenging, he was beginning to understand his father more and wanted to find ways to communicate, and to be open and honest with him.

Friendships, including relationships with the opposite sex, were another discussion area raised by the fathers in the group as important to discuss with their sons. One of the fathers would talk to his sons about relationships with the opposite sex. He would caution them not to rush into anything and to be careful about who their friends were. His son admitted that he had done some foolish things and not listened to some of his father's advice, and then regretted it. He liked the proverb "give a man a fish, feed him for a day, teach him how to fish, feed him for a lifetime" (CKI02Y),

which his father would share when trying to remind him that he needed to take responsibility for his future.

3.1.5 Family wellbeing

What makes for a happy family?

When the Cook Island talanoa participants were asked "What would make for a happy family?" they replied by highlighting three main things:

> a family where members respect and communicate well with each other

> financial security

> quality family time, which the family spends playing and being together.

For the single mother, a happy family involved two things: a family where members supported each other; and having enough money in the home to make sure all the living expenses were taken care of. She placed more emphasis on the first criterion. Like her mother, the daughter believed that a happy family was one where the members were "all together, you know, especially with everyone". She agreed that money was important but also that being "tight" as a family was more important. She noted that when her parents separated it was made a bit easier for her and her brothers by good friends from church who helped them through it. The separation was hard for all the children, but especially, according to the daughter, on the boys. She noted that "not one of my brothers were taking it quite well … they were just against … anything my dad did" (CKI01Y). They all eventually recognised that for their mother to be happy (and by implication for their family to be really happy) she needed to "get over" her marriage breakdown and move on. This would in turn help them to rebuild their relationships with their father.

The parents of one of the four families took their family on holiday. They found that this not only forced the family to spend time together but also gave them something to look forward to.

A young person from another Cook Islands family noted that on Sundays everyone was at home, there were no obligations and family members could just enjoy each other's company. She enjoyed Sundays because the family would spend time together.

The importance of being together as a family was reiterated by another mother who told of how leaving one of their sons to live with his grandmother in New Zealand while she and the rest of the family moved back to the Cook Islands temporarily was a tough decision for her to make. Having your children separated from you is not right, she argued, and should be avoided. Having one's children together, all living together as a family was, for her, what made for a happy family. Regular family meetings helped to keep communication channels open between parents and children, reducing the risk of conflict and misunderstanding. Good communication for some meant prioritising and putting God and family first; having prayerful lives; "having children who listen to their parents" and show loyalty to family members; and having children who show respect to parents and to each other. Each of these factors contributed towards a happy family, or at least towards what one father described as a contented family. In this case, a happy family was considered an ideal, whereas the contented family was one that accepted their lot in life and made do.

Generally speaking, balancing financial and cultural commitments and gaining quality family time were important for family happiness and stability, according to the Cook Islands families. One father stated: "if we don't meet that breadline, we always struggle and stress". But he also stressed commitment, and "keeping the commitments, and all the things that we all agree upon – a father to the mother and a parent to our children. And if we maintain all that we all agreed upon, then we should have a happy family, I believe" (CKI02F).

Family aspirations (secure identity, good friends, strong culture, supportive church)

The different individuals who participated from each of the four families had aspirational thoughts on education, career prospects, gaining strong cultural identity and having good peer and community support and meaningful links with extended family.

Education and career

Most parents spoke of wanting either themselves or their children to succeed academically, to attend university if possible and gain professional degrees. The young people spoke of wanting to have successful careers, but not necessarily in the areas their parents wanted them to go into. The university student in this family grouping understood why her mother wanted her

to take a commerce degree but spoke of a preference for the arts. A girl living with her in-laws spoke of how her own dreams for a career did not match those of her parents, and how she rebelled. She eventually dropped out of university because she was unhappy. This made her parents very angry and sad, and their relationship had become strained.

The parents noted that they pushed their children to do well in school because of the choices it gave them. Some pushed the elder ones especially because they believed that if the older ones did well then the younger ones would follow. The father of one family aspired to go to university some day, but for the time being wanted to give his daughter the opportunity to go to university and succeed. When their children did well at school these parents believed that they too had done well.

Each of the young people in this group aspired to a good job or career. The daughter in one family wanted a career in the travel industry, and found her employment at the airport a step in the right direction. Another young person had received a scholarship to do an art course. His parents were fully supportive of his talent and choice of career. In both cases the parents had supported the directions their children wanted to go in.

Extended family

All members of the four Cook Island families raised the importance of knowing and maintaining contact with extended family members. For one young person extended family get-togethers were times of celebration and feasting. Parents especially wanted their children to know their close cousins to avoid inter-marrying, as well as to just understand their genealogical connections and roots. One youth spoke of how keeping close ties with extended family was central to his family's philosophy about the importance of kin. They encouraged maintaining close links with their relatives because the family was the bedrock of their identity, society and culture. This was why they did not turn away relatives who came to stay with them. The father said he knew that housing relatives could sometimes be a burden on his family, but it also gave a lot of joy when they all got along: "that has always been in our culture and it brings us together" (CKI02F). The father's status in his family and cultural community also made it difficult for him to turn people away.

It was also considered important that in-law relationships were nurtured where possible. One wife was thankful for her long-term relationship with her mother-in-law, who helped her settle in to family life in New Zealand as a fresh migrant.

Personal and cultural security

All four Cook Islands parent-groups wanted their children to be personally secure. They all believed that if their hard work (such as working two jobs or being strict with their children) helped to make their children's lives easier in the future (when the parents would no longer be around), then it was not in vain.

The parents also wanted their children to join their local community cultural group, or high school or tertiary cultural group, to help them learn or retain their knowledge and understanding of Cook Islands language and culture. One family was heavily involved in their island community group and were very proud of it. The father explained that the reason for the establishment of their island-specific community group, for which he had leadership responsibilities, was "to teach our kiwi-born kids our culture and to learn te reo, Cook Islands Māori language" (CKI02F).

The University of Auckland's Malaga summer school course, which was run in 2001, was mentioned by a youth participant as a part of what triggered her interest in her Cook Islands heritage. She explained that the course taught the participants about Pacific cultures, and provided an opportunity for them to perform in a large-scale show about the migration of Pacific peoples to New Zealand.

Having good peer and other support networks

The parents and children of these four Cook Islands families believed that good peer-support networks go a long way towards strengthening families. The support offered by the island-specific youth group that one family attended, and by the church youth group to the single-parent family (especially during the early stages of the parents' separation) was praised by the respective families as invaluable.

The son who attended the island-specific community youth group spoke highly of both the cultural and Christian programmes it offered. He spoke about wanting to understand his indigenous values and appreciated the time he spent with his community, learning about his island heritage. He had done this

since 2005. He recalled a moment when he had performed in a Cook Islands dance group for an Auckland University of Technology graduation and witnessed a Cook Islands man graduate – he was at that moment proud to be a Cook Islander, and the experience made him appreciate his youth group and the support they gave him even more. He believed that youth groups like his could help keep youth out of trouble:

> CKI02Y: …sometimes from what I've known from friends, they test themselves drinking, just to impress some of their friends, when they do, their own friends are not there to support them with their drunkenness, 'cos it's not their own family, you just let them do whatever they want. Even your own friends, they don't cover your back when you're drunk. That's quite sad. What's the meaning of friendship? So yeah … if you're looking for friends, not all of your friends are perfect … if you're looking for perfect friends then you're not looking for friends at all. Your friends are not perfect at all, there's always bad stuff, then … a friend is a person who puts a friend back on track. So yes, I've got friends like that, so I'm really grateful.

3.1.6 Summary

Of these four Cook Island families, three owned their own homes, although they were still paying off mortgages; the other family was renting. The family renting was the single-parent family. All four families had had relatives and friends living with them on and off over the years and accepted this as part of their cultural obligations – especially to family. The smallest number of people in one house was four and the largest was 10. All four households had a lot to do with their respective Cook Islands communities in Auckland.

In all four families the financial management and decision-making responsibility fell on the shoulders of the parents, with some responsibility shouldered by the oldest child living at home. For the solo parent, the oldest child living at home was the daughter and she shared a lot of the financial responsibility for their household. Saving money was very difficult for all four households. They all spoke of the difficulties of juggling household expenses when unexpected events came up, such as cultural fundraisers or visits by relatives.

All of the parents took responsibility for parenting, with mothers especially also continuing to give parenting advice to their children who had themselves become

parents. The couples spoke of how they tried to share the financial costs and the parenting responsibilities, but found that sometimes the sharing was a little uneven, with the parent at home shouldering more responsibility for parenting. It was possible in some of the families for the financial expenses to be further shared with other working family members. However, the parents in these cases noted that they could not always rely on their family boarders to make regular board payments, or on extended family to make fair contributions towards shared family expenses or commitments.

Those responsible for the decision-making and parenting in all four families recognised the importance of building open and non-judgemental communication pathways with their children. Couples mostly took care of parenting together. The solo parent, although her children had mostly become adults, had had primary responsibility since separating from her husband.

The fathers of all four families were the main discipliners. The father-figure role was taken up by the mothers where the father was absent. Having a strong male figure within the home was important for all the participants but if the father was not present, as in the single-parent family, this role was taken on by another respected male family member in this case, the older brother. The characteristics of a good father according to both the fathers and the children of this family group were twofold: having the skills to communicate effectively with their children; and being present for their children while they were growing up. These qualities were also expected of good mothers.

Saving was something that all four families wanted to do, but struggled with. They all saw the importance of meeting their household bills and having enough on the table for their children to eat. The older members also saw the importance of contributing to community cultural events and extended family obligations where possible. They saw these cultural responsibilities as part of what made them 'Cook Islands people'.

Gaining financial security was a goal for all four family groups, and they saw it as a core part of achieving family happiness. One family, as well as owning their own home, had an investment property. Another family had used professional budgeting services. All families saw sense in having financial security. However, two couples cautioned that financial security often came at a price – working long hours meant spending less

quality time with family. In answer to the question of what makes for a happy family, all four family households spoke of finding balance between having enough money in the home to take care of basic needs and having good communication and rapport between all family members.

The idea of respect among family members, between parents and children and vice versa, was also raised. Overwhelmingly, the need for family members to spend time together, and to do things as a family, was considered a priority.

In summary, parents and children in the four families shared four main beliefs and values: their Cook Islands identity, and the value of the Cook Islands culture and practices, such as language and dance; the value of family, immediate and extended, and the importance of actually getting together; the value of teaching children to honour and respect parents, and encouraging parents to actively listen to their children, and build relationships of care and trust; and the value of encouraging responsible independence in children, so that they can fend for themselves and achieve their aspirations and still find pride in being of Cook Island descent.

3.2 Samoan families' talanoa

3.2.1 Family-group profile

There were four Samoan families involved in this section of the study. Among the four families there were seven adults and five young people. All five young people were single, three of them were at high school and the remaining two were attending a polytechnic and a private music course. None of the children were yet in full-time paid employment. In one of the Samoan families there was a paternal uncle living in. Three adult participants were beneficiaries; the rest were in paid employment. All participants were linked biologically to the other members of their household.

3.2.2 Family composition and living arrangements
Family Five

This family was a single-parent family living in a four-bedroom home in West Auckland. The father had separated from his wife a few years earlier; they had seven children together. There were seven people living in the household: the solo father and his six children. The older daughter was living with the father's sister.

When the parents were together they had lived with the paternal grandparents until their third child was born, when they moved into rented accommodation of their own. Since the separation, the father had been staying home to look after his children and receiving a single-parent benefit from the Government. The children sometimes visited their mother, who lived nearby. The family was Catholic and the children went to a Catholic school. The father kept visitors to the home, including relatives, to a minimum. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parent and his eldest son, who was at high school at the time.

Family Six

This family was a couple with dependent children, living in West Auckland. There were five people – the couple, their son and daughter and a niece – living in a three-bedroom house. The parents migrated to New Zealand separately; they met in New Zealand and married. The mother had two children before this marriage, a son and a daughter. The son was raised predominantly by his maternal grandparents; the daughter was raised by her father and his family. The children had both become adults and were living independently at the time of the talanoa. This family lived first in New Zealand; they moved to Australia for a few years, and then returned. They moved to Australia to help look after the maternal grandparents and be close to the mother's older son. The father and daughter returned first to New Zealand because of his father's illness. The son came next, then the mother a year or so later. The family owned their own home in West Auckland and had another that they rented to family. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and their youngest daughter, who was at high school at the time.

Family Seven

This household was made up of a couple with independent children. There were five people living in this household: the couple, their two children (a brother and sister) and the husband's brother. This family had recently shifted from one part of South Auckland to another. The new home was owned by the mother's family; it was their family home, where she and her siblings had been raised. Her brother, who had been living there with his family and with their mother, wanted to move and so was looking to sell the family home; this couple bought it so that it stayed with family. The house was bigger than their former home and as

their family needed a bit more space, the couple felt that buying the family home would serve two purposes. They also thought of it as an investment. The husband's brother had moved in with them because his mother and grandmother, with whom he had been living, had both died; he was living in the sleep-out at the back of the main house. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and the husband's brother, who was at the time a polytechnic student.

Family Eight

This was a multi-family household. They lived in South Auckland. They had renovated a three-bedroom house (which they owned), turning it into a seven-bedroom home; there were 12 people staying in it. There was the couple (older parents) and their four children. One of the sons had a wife and they had four children of their own, all living with the parents in this home. A relative also lived with them. The family had previously lived in a three-bedroom house, with more or less the same number of people. The father's mother, his sister and brother all used to live with them; at the time of the talanoa, the brother was living in a rest-home and the grandmother and sister had died. With relatives and church people visiting now and then, the house was always full. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and two of the children, a son and daughter; the daughter was at high school and the son was attending a private music course.

3.2.3 Household economics

Financial management and decision-making

The single father, since separating from his wife, had had to take on the responsibility for managing their household budget and organising appropriate childcare. His oldest son, who was still in high school but was considered quite mature, helped his father with the care of his younger siblings. The family had struggled since their mother left. The father talked of how his children's school fees were constantly in arrears, even with time-payment arrangements. The father received a benefit, which had been transferred to him from his ex-wife after she left and he assumed primary responsibility for the children. The son noted that there was some sharing of decision-making between him and his father when it came to household chores and looking after the younger ones. He helped his father out with meals as well as looking after the younger siblings. The son also noted, however, that his

father had control over the household budget and the final word on what he and his siblings could and could not do at that stage in their lives. The son remembered that when his mother had still been with them, she had made most of the decisions regarding the running of the household, and especially the finances.

In the three remaining Samoan families, both parents took responsibility for managing the household budget and making household decisions. Mother and father were considered joint heads of household. In one family (SAM07), the financial side of the household was managed by the mother, but in discussion with the father. In most cases, the process of "just talk and talk and finally we come to an agreement" (SAM07) seemed to resonate with all three couples.

One mother noted that often if the father was not around then she would make the decisions, and vice versa. It was only when they were both not home that they then designated one of the older children to take over and make the decisions on their behalf. Only in one case – that of the student mother – did the husband look after the family finances all the time, from organising a budget to making sure the bills were actually paid.

Involving children in the decision-making process over household or family affairs was a new practice, according to another Samoan parent in this group. This parent, a mother, was undertaking a child counselling course at Unitec and was persuaded by theories that advocated more participation by children in family decision-making processes, especially where it directly affected them. She and her husband therefore attempted to involve their children, who were teenagers at the time, in decision-making processes. She noted that "we want to hear their opinion in our decision-making" (SAM06).

The parents of the family with independents said that there were times when it was appropriate to consult with their adult children and times when it was not (SAM07). For example, renovating their home so as to accommodate other family members – which included a paraplegic uncle – was only up for discussion insofar as all who were part of the family had a right to voice their views; ultimately the decision of what to do was made by the heads of household – the parents. They explained: "because if we don't have a house to live in, if they take the house … then we'd have to go sit under the banana tree" (SAM07P).

The main expenses for each of these four Samoan families included household maintenance bills (such as mortgage repayments or rent payments), power, water, telephone and car expenses; others were church and their children's education expenses. One set of parents noted that despite talking things through before making a final decision about what should get paid for and when, often their budgeting got hijacked by unexpected family obligations, such as a family funeral. This was echoed by another couple in this same grouping – they found unexpected events – faalavelave[10] – not so unexpected. They did acknowledge, however, the amount of pressure that Samoan families can face when such events occur within extended family and church settings all at once. Despite this, like the Cook Island father, the Samoan mother of one family suggested that giving to family obligations was part of being Samoan; "only natural" and "embedded in our [Samoan] lives" (SAM08M).

The son and daughter in the multi-family household expressed ambivalence over the financial demands and practices adopted by their parents. The sister found that with large families such as theirs, there were stresses in the family, especially financial stresses. Her brother felt that these expenses were brought on or exacerbated by giving to family obligations, such as funerals, that happened unexpectedly, and especially when families like theirs, borrowed money they couldn't really pay back in order to fund such events. He stated:

> SAM07Y: There's um, [things that] affect our family … so they are all stressed out, working overtime and also finding, like in Samoan culture, like no one can predict when a funeral's about to happen and coming up with money for the funeral means overtime … which makes Islanders go apply for loans and loan interest… I'm not too happy with that.

This young person believed that for their large household (of 12 people), there needed to be at least two steady incomes to help make ends meet. He saw how hard his father worked, with long shifts, and how his older brother, who lived with them with his partner and children, was also struggling to make ends meet for his young family.

The children of this family group each affirmed that it was generally the parents who took responsibility for managing the household finances and making the major decisions on behalf of the family. All five young people perceived, however, that while the parents or main caregivers did consult one another in the decision-making process, ultimately the decision usually fell on the father, especially on more contentious issues.

The young man living with his older brother and his family contributed to the groceries and helped out with childcare:

> SAM08Y: [I] provid[e] groceries, and also lunch for my niece and nephew and on some occasions I help out with transportation, which is gas, for the car; also looking after my niece and nephew after school, taking them to and from school … cleaning up and making food.

The Samoan families recognised that as the cost of living in New Zealand rose, making ends meet became more difficult, and so having the help of relatives could sometimes make a huge difference to the smooth running of the household, alleviating some financial and emotional stress. This was one of the attractions of having live-in relatives.

To help alleviate family stresses parents also relied on the counsel of trusted people from support places, such as church groups, and also from other parents they knew. Most couples recognised that their financial management skills and juggling practices were usually mirror reflections of what their parents did, and that living in New Zealand meant having to adjust a little to new budgeting, parenting and family decision-making approaches that sought to be more inclusive of everyone, including children.

3.2.4 Parenting

Parenting was considered to be mainly the responsibility of parents by all four Samoan families. The single parent usually drew on the help of his older children or his parents and siblings. His older daughter had gone to live with his sister and her family, because, in his words, "she's getting older". He acknowledged that being a single parent, "sometimes I get depressed, you know, being in my situation" and "lonely and sad, things like that, you know, that's the main thing that gets me … is loneliness" (SAM05). This father had

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[10] This Samoan term is used to refer to family events such as weddings and funerals. The term lavelave literally refers to the idea of an interruption or imposition on the ordinary flow of one's day. Faa means to do something.

been solely responsible for raising his six children since his wife had left them. He had had a partner since his ex-wife, who had children herself from a former relationship, but it did not work out.

This single father received a lot of help from his own parents with raising his eldest son. When the son had been younger, the family had lived with the father's parents. Now the family was spending a lot of time looking after them in their old age; they had since gone to live in a rest home. This father believed strongly in nurturing the bond between the young and their grandparents, which he believed was a special relationship. If children treated these relationships with love and honesty, he believed that they would be blessed. This was affirmed by the other three Samoan parents, who also encouraged their children to be with their grandparents. All four sets of Samoan parents allowed their children to either be raised predominantly by their grandparents or to be active members of their grandparents' church.

Spending time with family elders was something that the single father had valued while growing up. He had fond memories of elders in his village in Samoa, for whom he would do kind deeds, and they would often bless him. He also thought that the popular belief held amongst Samoans that children were the parents 'superannuation' was wrong. He pointed out rather emphatically that sometimes parents placed unfair obligations on their children, expecting them to shoulder financial burdens they themselves had created, and then calling this the children's duty. He stated:

> SAM05F: …nah, no good, 'cos straight away, you've added, you've put your load and added on to him, before he even got out of it, you know … they go and make a loan [and are] depending on the boy that is gonna leave school, gonna grow up and pay it – it shouldn't be like that. He [the son] shouldn't do it [pay for the loan].

This parent made a comparison between what he perceived were the expectations of Samoan and Palagi (New Zealand European) parents. Much of the difference, in his opinion, centred on this unfair expectation that some Samoan parents thought their children should shoulder their financial burdens. This was something he did not want to place on any of his children. He wanted them to go through school with as little distraction from their schoolwork as possible.

Interestingly, however, he also talked about there being no such thing as 'independence' for Samoan children. When asked what he meant he replied:

> SAM05F: Our [Samoan] culture is different to me, I believe that there's no such thing as independence … you see [you] depend on your parents; [we] depend on our aiga, in whatever we do. We didn't have the education, things like that. From the beginning it's all we need [each other; depending on each other]. [They would say] 'oh, go and tell your uncle to find you a job'. So you went there and you got a job. You know, that's how all Samoans got their jobs … not from education.

Financially burdening children and young adults seems to also run contrary to what another Samoan couple expressed as their principle for parenting: "you do for the future of your kids" (SAM08).

All the parents in this group reported rearing their children as best they could with the knowledge they had. They had gained most of this knowledge from observing their own parents and others in Samoa, as well as from church and biblical teachings. Before attending the social work course, the student mother had been very authoritative with her children. Since being exposed to the teachings of the course on parenting, she had recognised that there could be value in a more democratic parenting approach. Both she and her husband had adjusted their parenting approaches to include more interaction and dialogue with their teenage children. So far they had seen a positive change:

> SAM06M: You can see the change in the kids' attitude. Instead of responding in fear, they respond, you can see the change that they really want to respond, according to the different approach…

This mother spoke of making sure she built a good relationship with her daughter, so that her daughter could feel safe talking to her about anything. She wanted this kind of relationship with all the young girls in her family:

> SAM06M: …because I have talked to some of the girls in our family and they are very scared to share with their parents and that's very, very sad. They will share with my daughter and my daughter will share with me, and tell me what's going on and that's where my heart is yearning,

is willing to help to touch them with love. But if the kids have that feeling, they can't share anything, how can we live, when they are shut in, you know?

Her daughter named her mother as the main person she shared with, but acknowledged that she also had a close relationship with her father. She saw her mother as a role model (SAM06Y).

Peer pressure was raised by one of the Samoan couples as something for parents to watch for. Encouraging an open communication path with their children was believed by this parent couple (SAM08) to be a way in which parents could help their children deal with negative peer pressure. For one of the Samoan young people, having parents around full-stop would have helped (SAM08Y). Another young person (SAM06Y) implied that having enough money to take care of the children's basic needs would have helped – a point also suggested by her mother:

SAM06M: So the way to avoid that [the child getting into trouble] you have the money to buy what your kids want; that's the only way to get away from it; 'cos you can teach them. You can only teach them as much as you can; but not every kid's gonna turn their hearts to the Lord … but that's what I think.

Both the parents and the children of each of these four Samoan households spoke of the support they gained from their Christian faith when times got tough.

Discipline

All four families in this group noted that both parents were the discipliners in their households. The single father recalled how strict his parents had been and how physical discipline (sometimes in the form of a beating) had seemed the norm during his upbringing. Obedience to one's parents was then considered one of the great virtues expected of Samoan children and to gain that obedience, parents would often not spare the rod. There was no talking back or asking why; one just did as one was told. That, he contended, was life in Samoa. His son, however, believed that there were better ways to discipline children than through physical punishment. He advocated more talking and listening to what children had to say, and less demanding things from them:

SAM05Y: I think there's better ways of disciplining kids, like if you talk to them, I guess you kinda

respect your parents more and in that way, you would want to listen to them more.

In his opinion, confrontation and violence begets more of the same:

SAM05Y: …and just someone who's always angus [angry], and stuff like that, like of course you wanna fight back against someone like that.

Another young person commented:

SAM08Y: …it all comes down to common sense, being that … you know the kid is young, so [you] wouldn't physically abuse them quite a lot…

And yet another pointed out that while physical punishment was important, "not to the extent that one almost kills their children. That's abuse."

Education

Each of the parents in this group believed in the importance of educating their children well. One father in particular wanted his children not to work in manual labour positions, and so he pushed them to do well in school. For the son of the single father, doing well at school helped him to cope with some of the pressures of his family life. Through the struggles of his family he learnt to appreciate the simple things in life. He loved school and wanted to do well, and his strong Christian faith also helped him to get through the rough patches. He attended a Catholic school at his father's insistence. His father argued that a Christian education could provide his children with character:

SAM05F: Yes, very important to me. It's one of their main, it's one thing that I stress first … because it's got to do with their character really. You can't really, you can't be successful person if you have no idea where your heart's gonna be, then you're not gonna be any better than the others. Don't want [him] to be a selfish man…

Childcare

One couple argued that they needed two incomes in order to parent well. This meant that they had to place their children into paid daycare or in the care of family members. In another household most of the parenting during the children's early years was done by their grandma and aunt, both of whom had lived with them while they were alive. The daughter noted:

SAM07Y: They [her parents] really didn't raise me, it was my grandma and my aunty. They used to look

after me when I was little. I didn't really know my mum and dad, because they were working for the family, for heaps of people in my house, and how it was packed and that. My aunties and different families. Yeah, so my mum and dad used to work like hard out, and us little kids, oh, my grandma and my aunty used to look after us.

Her brother talked about how he, too, always wondered when he was younger why his parents were never around. His father, who had been stricter on them than his mother, was always working. This son then spoke of how he wished he could help provide for his family so that his father could rest.

Childcare and parenting responsibilities for children from earlier marriages were sometimes difficult. In such situations the grandparents or other relatives often become main caregivers. One Samoan parent spoke about her children from an earlier marriage. When she had remarried, her son had gone to live with her parents, while her daughter had gone to live with her ex-husband. Because of her parents' control over her son, she found it difficult to discipline him. From this experience she believed firmly that although grandparents can be helpful, the primary responsibility for raising children should remain with their biological parents.

Fathering

The single father recalled how he used to sneak out of the house and get into mischief without his parents knowing. When his own boys tried to pull something on him, he would tell them: "bro, I already know that" (SAM05F). This father believed strongly in doing the best he could as a single parent. He wanted his children to continue to be educated at their Catholic school so that they can build their moral character. He did not want to burden them too much with his problems and encouraged them to do well at school so that they could build themselves a good future. He also looked after his elderly parents and took his children to see them so they could build a close bond with them. This, he believed, was where children got their blessings – from the care and love they gave to their parents and the elderly. This was a Samoan value that he wanted his children to appreciate and practise. He also spoke constantly to his children about having faith in God, and was pleased that his eldest was very strong in his Christian faith. He saw this as his duty as a father. His eldest son said that while family life was a

struggle, he felt for his father and the responsibilities he had in looking after him and his five siblings. He noted that although his father was easily angered, he and they were learning to cope.

The brother and sister from the multi-family household agreed that it was "good to have a father figure at home, 'cos he makes the decisions … he's like the man of the family; he's the leader; he lead us…" (SAM07Y). Even if he could not spend a lot of time with them because he worked long hours and even though he was at times strict and dictatorial (according to the teenage son), both children understood that their father worked long hours and was the way he was because of the obligations he shouldered. The son remembered the brief moments when he was able to share with his father and how his father would always motivate him to keep trying at school. For this son, this was part of the role of fathers: "the son will need someone to look up to and yeah, just need motivation to help him go further in the future" (SAM07Y). He also acknowledged the teachings his father gave him about faasamoa (the Samoan way) and noted how he had had to turn down his father's request to become a family matai or chief – at least for the time being. These anecdotes pointed to a strong father-son relationship.

All three Samoan couples and their children believed in the importance of having a father around. The daughter of Family Seven appreciated the time she spent with her father when her mother had been living in Australia. Although she missed her mother, her father was able to care for her during her mother's absence (SAM06Y).

One Samoan couple concluded that it must be hard for children who have no parents or only one parent. The father stated: "Like, you need a father for anything. Yeah, for example, you need two hands to be working together and save up for the family. A family, you need a mother and a father working together for the future of the kids. Family is very important" (SAM08F). However, one young person noted in his talanoa that while it is ideal to have a father, people can and do survive without them (SAM08Y).

3.2.5 Family wellbeing

What makes a happy family?

For the parents of these four Samoan families, putting God first, communicating together as parents and children, giving service to family elders, "winning lotto" (having financial security), good health and 'cultural

wealth' were listed as important features of a happy Samoan family.

The single father believed strongly in God and the value of putting oneself in God's hands. He believed that having faith in God and giving service to one's family elders and parents made for a happy family.

Effective communication between family members was important, whether between husband and wife, or between parents and children. To achieve this, the parents of one Samoan family encouraged the development of good listening skills. Financial security and "working hard for the future of your kids" were two things another Samoan couple thought would make for a happy household.

The father of the multi-family household believed that while having money was important, so too was having traditional Samoan wealth, such as fine mats. He argued that it was important for one's cultural sense of belonging and understanding of things Samoan. He also raised "good health" and "standing in unity" as a family as being important.

The Samoan young people expressed similar views to those of their parents on what makes a happy family. The son of the single parent talked about the importance of his Christian faith and of having his own space at home. He was grateful for any small blessings he received: "I know it's not perfect but it's getting there. So I guess, I dunno, I'm grateful for how my family is already. Anything that comes after that, is just, you know, all blessings that we get" (SAM05Y). He was optimistic, and this optimism was helped by his youth group and his Christian faith: "…it's helped my faith grow … it's sort of like another family, where everyone's there for one another and helps you. 'Cos they are like a family to me – my other youth. So I go to them if I feel down and that, so I think they're a big part in getting through and that…" (SAM05Y). Implicitly, he highlighted the importance of a support group for young people that could help them get through the rough patches in family life. He suggested that a happy family required happy individuals and they needed their space within the family in order to grow.

The young people of Family Seven found that family happiness came about when they obeyed their parents, shared family chores more equally, had more Sunday family get-togethers or, in the brother's words, had "more family interaction, not only within my household but within other households within my [extended]

family" (SAM07Y). The young boy in this household found that a "loving household" was important but that financial security was as well. He was quick to point out that "money can't buy love". On a more serious note, he believed that many Samoan families were stressed and overworked, often because they had too many faalavelave (cultural obligations) to give to, but that most, such as theirs, could be happy when there was more loving interaction and less financial stress. Ultimately he felt that the importance of financial security for securing family happiness was unquestionable.

Family aspirations (secure identity, good friends, strong culture, supportive church)

Faalavelave and the faasamoa

The fathers of at least two of the four Samoan families were matai (family chiefs). As with the Cook Island fathers who had chiefly status, the cultural obligation on these Samoan chiefs to contribute to family faalavelave was strong. In New Zealand this contribution extended not just to family events but also to village and church events. The cultural wealth that one father spoke of was critical for the fulfilment of these chiefs' roles and duties. Participating in the faasamoa and faalavelave was important to the Samoan culture and, according to one father, should be passed on to and practised by future generations to keep it alive. Taking part in cultural obligations could be expensive and so needed to be negotiated carefully by matai to make sure they did not blow the family budget. This was one of the responsibilities of taking on chiefly titles.

In one of these four Samoan families, the son noted with disapproval that his brother, who lived with their aunt and uncle, was forced to take a matai title. He implied that taking on a chiefly title should be a matter of choice – the recipient should actually want it, at least in part because he will be responsible for making decisions for the wellbeing of the family, both immediate and extended, and so will need to be fully committed to it.

The parents of all four Samoan families in this group understood the faasamoa (Samoan customs and culture) and the cultural obligations associated with faalavelave (family and other community events such as weddings, funerals). The single father tried to help out with faalavelave whenever he could; he talked about how he was responsible for rounding up his siblings to provide their share of the family contribution on behalf

of their parents. When going around collecting his siblings' contributions, he would remind them that their mother and father were not only his parents, but theirs also.

Aspiring to maintain one's Samoan cultural identity means maintaining links to the faasamoa and the practices of faalavelave. One of the young people from this group talked about growing violence in the neighbourhood – it seemed senseless to him, and mainly the result of alcohol abuse. To protect and encourage safe neighbourhoods this young person suggested stronger families could give young people like him pride in their cultural identities. Finding strength as Samoans could help them to have strength in themselves as people and as family units.

Education

All of the Samoan parents were focused on the educational success of their children. The single father spoke of wanting his son to do a PhD. His son expressed a desire to attend university and was so far enjoying school. One of the mothers who had returned to formal study was enjoying the opportunity and hoped that her daughter would also undertake tertiary studies. Similarly, the daughter wanted to make her parents proud and so was trying hard to get good grades at school. This was the general sentiment of the parents and the children in all of the Samoan families.

The son in one of the families spoke of how happy he was that although his father wanted him to be a mechanic, he allowed him to do what he wanted, which was to study music.

Another issue raised was the importance of a good high school. This was picked up by one of the five young people in this group, who spoke of how the school zoning system could be unfair for some who wanted to attend an out-of-zone school. This young person argued that his experience at a Central Auckland school gave him first-hand insight into the quality of education in other places outside his part of South Auckland. He suggested that a child's schooling made a big difference to their future life-choices and that access to good schools was a step forward towards these choices.

Financial security

All four Samoan families aspired to financial security. Some of them spoke of the need for the New Zealand Government to give more support to struggling families. Australia was cited as having the kind of government

help that they wanted to see made available to families in New Zealand.

3.2.6   Summary

Of these four Samoan families, three owned their own homes, although they were still paying off mortgages. The single-parent family was renting. All four families had had relatives and friends living with them on and off over the years and accepted this as part of their cultural obligations, especially to family. The smallest number of people in one house was five and the largest was 12. The household of 12 lived in a seven-bedroom house, while the family of five lived in a three-bedroom house. All four households, including the young people, had a lot to do with their respective church communities in Auckland. In one of these families, the young people went to their grandparents' church, which was a different one from that of their parents.

In all four families, financial management and decision-making responsibilities fell on the shoulders of the parents or parent. In most cases there was some sharing between parents and children, with parents wanting to be more inclusive of their children in decision-making approaches. The idea of "just talk and talk" until they "come to an agreement" was adopted in one household; in another it was more that the parents would decide what was appropriate to consult the children on and what was not. In the main, the children, especially the older ones, were appreciative of being included in family decision-making processes. For the parents of all four Samoan families, including their children in the decision-making process was somewhat new but something they admitted they were learning to adjust to.

The young people found that the impact of faalavelave on household budgets was huge. The unpredictability of family faalavelave (especially funerals) and the cultural obligation for heads of households who were matai to contribute made it doubly difficult for families to stay within their limited budgets. All of the heads of households within the four families said on the one hand that they needed to keep a check on these contributions; but on the other, in reality they found it extremely difficult to not contribute something. There was a definite awareness among the children and young people of their parents' financial struggles. The young people talked about the economic sacrifices that they had had to cope with as a result of being part of their Samoan family.

While saving was not something that was discussed by these four families, it was clear from each of their financial situations that if they were struggling to meet their daily expenses, carrying out a savings plan would be mere wishful thinking.

The three Samoan couples each took care of parenting duties together. Grandparents also shared in parenting duties in some cases. The discussion on parenting centred on three main themes: physical discipline; preparing for the children's future; and Christian beliefs. The Samoan parents and children believed in the importance of education for ensuring a secure future. They also believed strongly in the power of prayer and the importance of their church family in helping them to get through tough times. There were mixed feelings, however, about physical discipline. The parents talked about the changes in legislation concerning the discipline of children; some were adamant that smacking should not be outlawed and that it was the right of the parent to discipline their children however they liked. Others were more accommodating of the 'anti-smacking' position, wanting to develop alternative ways to discipline their children.

The characteristics of a good father in the view of all four Samoan families were threefold: someone who was present in the day-to-day lives of his children; someone who could communicate well with his children; and someone who could provide well for them. These traits were considered equally relevant for mothers. While the children in this group of Samoan families spoke about understanding why their parents worked such long hours, they did wish that they could spend more time with their parents. Two of the five young people, who were raised by their grandmother and aunt, spoke of having more emotional bonds with those relatives than with their parents. Notwithstanding this, all five young people raised the importance of having parents present in their day-to-day lives, even if for only a few hours in a day.

Their ideas of what made for a happy family included: good communication between family members; faith in (the Christian) God; a secure financial foundation to meet day-to-day family expenses; and spending time together as family members. For parents and heads of households, involvement in Samoan cultural affairs was important because it was part and parcel of being Samoan. They juggled this alongside other commitments to family.

A couple of young people spoke about the benefits of large families and keeping in close contact with extended family members through such events as regular Sunday dinners together. These informal family get-togethers, which could include friends from church or elsewhere, provided natural in-built peer support systems for both parents and young people. Without this kind of support, as one of the Samoan young people in the group suggested, it was not possible to have the kind of happy individuals one needed to make a happy family.

3.3 Other Pacific families' talanoa

3.3.1 Family-group profile

Like the other two groups, the mixed-ethnicities family group involved four families in the talanoa sessions. The ethnicities captured in this grouping included a Samoan-Tongan mixture; a Samoan-Tokelauan-New Zealand European mixture; a Fijian-Palagi mixture; and a Niuean-Cook Islands mixture. There were six parents or older adults and three young people; all three young people were single and attending high school. One family in this group included two paternal uncles in their household. All of the parents were in full-time paid employment. All participants were linked biologically – they were either parents or children of the parents.

3.3.2 Family composition and living arrangements

Family Nine

This was a single-parent family from Fiji, living in South Auckland. The mother was of mixed Fijian-Palagi (New Zealand European) descent and had been a single parent for a long time. There were two children and one adult in this household. The mother had an older daughter who had her own family – a husband and child – and lived on the North Shore. She had three children in total. The family had been living in New Zealand since migrating from Fiji over 10 years ago. The couple had separated not long after arriving in New Zealand, and the father was living in New Zealand with his new family. The mother's sister and her family lived near them and helped to care for the two younger children, who were still in high school, when the mother was at work. The family owned their home; the mother was working to pay the mortgage. They had a three-bedroom house where the third bedroom had previously been the garage. The family had moved from one part of South Auckland

to another to be within walking distance of the young daughter's school. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parent and her daughter, who was at high school at the time.

Family Ten

This Samoan-Tongan family was a couple with two children. They also had a nephew living with them. They had lived for some years in South Auckland, before moving to Auckland Central, both for work reasons and to give their children access to what the parents considered to be good schools. They had always had other family members staying with them over the years and had recently had a nephew from Fiji staying with them. They had a sleep-out at the back of the house where relatives and friends stayed when they visited. This family owned their own three-bedroom home. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and their daughter, who was at high school at the time.

Family Eleven

This Samoan-Tokelauan-Palagi family was a couple with three children plus a nephew who was living with them because his family home was overcrowded and he needed some space. They lived in South Auckland. They had also had a niece staying with them for almost a year before the nephew came to stay. Relatives were frequent visitors to this family and many stayed for a while. This family had lived earlier in the house next door to their current home. They had shifted to their current place because it was bigger, even though it had the same number of bedrooms, and because they were given the opportunity to purchase it. When they took the new place, other relatives moved into their former house next door. The talanoa sessions with this family involved the parents and their daughter, who was at high school at the time.

Family Twelve

This Niuean-Cook Island family was in a multi-family household. It comprised a solo mother who was Niuean and her four children; one of the four children had a partner who also lived with the family. The mother's two brothers also lived with them; they had both recently separated from their partners and both had children. Their children visited sometimes during the weekends. The mother and her children had recently moved from one part of South Auckland to another; they did not want to move out of South Auckland. The mother had been with her ex-husband for 15 years before their marriage ended, and the father had since formed a new family. Even before the separation, the family had always had relatives living with them, from both sides. At the time of the talanoa, they were living in a rented five-bedroom house. It was not possible to undertake a session with one of the young people in this family as planned because of time constraints.

3.3.3 Household economics

Financial management and decision-making

As in the other two ethnic groupings, the parents in this group of mixed Pacific families were joint heads of household and took responsibility for managing family finances and looking after general family wellbeing.

The single working mother of the Fijian family household took care of all the financial management and decision-making for her family. To save for a deposit to purchase their New Zealand family home, she had sent her children to live with her mother in Fiji while she worked both in New Zealand and overseas. Working in a profession with high international demand, she could gain a good income to support herself and her children well. Her situation was helped by the fact that her extended family, notably her siblings and parents, were also financially secure. She explained that her system for keeping on top of her bills included paying the mortgage first, which took half of her fortnightly wages; the rest she used to pay bills and make sure the children's needs were taken care of. She had a very systematic approach to paying bills and made sure she paid on time so that she did not incur penalty fees. She had always been very careful with her finances; even before she separated from her husband, she had made sure that their family finances were managed properly. Before they separated, she and her husband would look after their own finances but come to an agreement about how much they would each contribute to different household expenses.

The parents of Family Ten took joint responsibility for the financial decision-making and upkeep of their household. They noted that with rising costs of living it was imperative that their family had two incomes; they simply could not survive on one. The mother spoke of the importance of making sure that there was enough money to meet basic living expenses, but this was not always easy to do.

The mothers of Families Eleven and Twelve took most of the responsibility for managing their families' finances. The young person in Family Eleven noted that usually her mother consulted with her father on whether something should be done or not, but that often her father "just agreed" with whatever her mother wanted. She also noted that sometimes her older sister helped her mother juggle the finances and maintain a clean and happy home environment – certainly more actively than their father, from what she could see.

The mother of the multi-family household, who was now also a single parent, recalled spending far too much on unnecessary things during her marriage, and regretted this. Her ex-husband had been the main income-earner for the family and when he left she had to learn to manage her family's finances. It was a struggle at first but they managed to come through. She regretted not having had a savings account during her marriage, but was looking into setting one up at the time of the talanoa. The mother spoke of being cautious about buying things on hire purchase, and she worried about her son getting into too much debt, especially with his proposal to buy a house with his partner without much of a deposit. Recently, this same mother, who had her two younger brothers living with her, had had to call a family meeting to get her household in line so that all who worked could pull their weight with the chores and meeting the bills. She expected her brothers to contribute but knew that they were also struggling and so ended up covering them. Her children, she believed, were self-sufficient. She expected her boys to be able to do all jobs as well as her girls. Whenever things got too tight and she felt that others were getting slack, she called a family meeting to sort it out.

Three of these four mixed-Pacific-ethnicity families had relatives visiting and staying for long periods of time. Two of these three families had family boarding in their homes. In both households the family boarders were not very good at making regular payments. This often meant that the persons responsible for the household budget had to shoulder the financial shortfall.

Contributions to extended family events

The two mixed-Pacific-ethnicity families with some Samoan heritage spoke a lot about juggling household expenses and extended family and church contributions. Both of these families had a lot of people in their homes most of the time, both living and visiting.

This, as one parent noted, can place a "stretch on your finances" (MIX10). Another pointed out: "Yeah, so money is always a problem, when there's an extra person in the household, especially if that person has no income."

The single Fijian-Palagi mother was adamant that extended family obligations should not be burdensome. She neither asked her family for money nor expected them to ask her. Because her parents and siblings were themselves financially secure it was highly unlikely that they would draw on her for help in the same way that the other three families experienced. Moreover, because of her work schedule, she was unable to attend many family and Fijian community events.

The Niuean-Cook Island household contributed to extended family events only where they could. The priority for the Niuean-Cook Island single mother, as for the Fijian-Palagi mother, was ensuring the wellbeing of her immediate family and household.

3.3.4 Parenting

For the four families in this grouping, parenting involved ensuring that the emotional, cultural, spiritual and physical needs of their children were met. All parents believed that it was the responsibility of parents to look after these needs. They argued that traditionally, in the islands especially, the "old-fashioned way" of parenting meant that the parents made all the decisions and the children merely obeyed.

The mothers spoke of valuing their children's input into certain issues, and the importance of listening well to their children's views, especially where, as in one case, the older children helped out considerably with the care of younger siblings, household chores and expenses (MIX11). However, one mother suggested that while it was important to acknowledge this, it was also important that while children were minors, parents retained ultimate decision-making authority over them, and sometimes one had to be strict in order for children to learn appropriate boundaries, values and behaviours; that was a parent's duty. She talked about how in her case she had to "be strict" with her children to ensure that they knew right from wrong. She admitted to being the main user of physical discipline, and had given her children "a hiding"[11] as she put it, now and then. She noted that her husband seemed to have the patience to talk the issues through with his children, whereas she was often too impatient.

Learning to parent was something that another mother suggested was often done ad hoc. She spoke of how her teachers were her own parents. In her own parenting attempts she had tried to repeat what she thought had been good and avoided what she had found not so good. She spoke at length about how hard her parents worked and how they were heavily involved in church life, to the point that she and her siblings were cared for day to day by relatives. She had grown up having extended family members always living with them in their house, which she implied had its pros and cons.

Childcare was an issue for two families in this group of four. The mother of one family found it morally difficult to take her children to childcare centres and after-school care but had no choice. The single Fijian-Palagi mother had been able to rely on family – namely her sister and her family, who lived nearby – to help out with childcare. As the children were getting older she could have them stay home with each other for a few hours, with her sister or brother-in-law checking in on them every now and then. She noted that the children could get themselves home after school to their aunt's place, which was within walking distance of their home, and they usually stayed there with their cousins or had their cousins come back with them to their own home. They did their homework and household chores, and would then relax. This childcare arrangement had worked well for her and for her sister. Her main worry with her children was her teenage son's growing truancy problem. She noted that he had done much better at school in Fiji, and she reflected that perhaps it would have been better for the children to have remained in Fiji with her mother for their schooling. She had had to contact her son's father to ask him for help. She told of how when she initially separated from her ex-husband, she had sent her children to Fiji to live with her mum, and, when the children were growing up, she had little responsibility for disciplining them – that was what her ex-husband did. Her son, she noted, had an attitude problem and she suspected was not being challenged enough at school. She did not know where he was most of the time and worried for his safety. She had brought them to New Zealand because she believed that they would get a better education. She was not so sure anymore. She stated that it

seemed that she, and her career, had benefited more than her children had from the move.

The single Fijian-Palagi mother found it a constant struggle to balance the demands of her work with those of being an active parent – one who could be present in the everyday lives of her children, especially after school. She said:

MIX09M: …because I work Monday to Friday, I don't really have time, although it sounds bad. I'm supposed to find time, to go, but I've spoken to them [the school] over the phone and I've asked if they can direct him to careers … but just two weeks ago they said no, we'll help you, we'll get someone to come and talk to you and talk to your son … but I'm still waiting, they haven't come … I said I need all the help I can get.

The multi-family household mother echoed the point that parenting was not easy. She found that maintaining open communication with her children as best she could was usually the key to understanding where they were at in their lives. She used family evenings every Monday night to engage in dialogue with her children and other household members; they would come together as a family to share about their week and raise any issues they might have. She stated:

MIX12M: It's what you believe in; it's what you value … what you, something you want your children to be … you can't force that on them, you show them, you talk to them about things, you discuss things with them, that's how I've brought up my children. There's a lot of discussions, we talk about issues, we talk about things that happen during the day, we talk about things that are coming on TV, we talk about something you don't like on TV … sometimes, listening for me is active listening … me and my children talk about that all the time, because sometimes my little one, just does not hear what I have to say…

This mother encouraged her children to be independent and to have their own views, but noted that they had to be respectful in the way they expressed those views, and in their caring for each other. She pointed out that really "there is no [one] right way to parent" (MIX12M). She suggested that one just did the best one could.

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11   The participant did not elaborate on the severity of this "hiding".

Discipline

In these four families child discipline was primarily the responsibility of the parents. When children were in the care of extended family members, such as aunts, uncles or grandparents, disciplining responsibilities would also extend to them. For most of the four sets of parents in this group, physical discipline was still the first rather than last resort. All four, however, spoke of real attempts within their families to talk more with their children and to understand their perspectives better before reaching any conclusions. In discussing physical discipline, the Samoan-Tokelauan mother talked about the difference between 'abusive' fasi (hidings) and fasi (hidings – suggestively non-abusive). Her Palagi husband supported smacking, but only at home, never in public. The mother found smacking an effective disciplinary tool. She believed that sometimes the child needed to know how far they could push their parents. She shared:

> MIX11M: I try so hard to discipline, and the only answer I know that will help is to … [smack] … because if they are like that, then we are stressed, then our family would be so full of unhappiness, e misa (fight) and that, if I yell, my voice, if I yell at them, then he [husband] gets angry at me, because that thing, that thing inside…

This Samoan-Tokelauan mother found that sometimes when she was angry at her children they needed to know that it was not a good time to argue or 'answer back' to her. She pointed out that they would not be able to talk properly at that time and that the children should wait till she has cooled down. For this mother there was a 'time and a tone' that had to be considered by her children when talking through sensitive issues with her. She said:

> MIX11M: …sometimes I think they are trying to express how they feel. But then it comes to me, um, it's that, yeah … I put it in a different way – that they are answering back. But to them they are just expressing their feelings. So I try to say there is nothing wrong with that, but don't try and express it at that time. There is a time, eh? ... and there is a tone, and the tone of your voice, that if you want to express how you feel, that's how you bring it out. But if I'm angry, for example, and they're trying to express to me, it's like – lea cheeky mai [they're

trying to be cheeky] … but maybe later, later on ona sau lea faapea mai [they can come and say], um mum, about what we talked about … eh?

These sentiments were echoed by the single mother of the multi-family household, who believed that there were some things that should be talked about with her children, to seek their perspective, and other things that should not. This mother had boundaries that she made clear to her children. As her children were getting older, she found that there was less need for physical discipline and more need for talking:

> MIX12M: …parenting skill is such that it is challenging all the time, [but] because they're getting older, they're a lot more verbal and so you can discuss things more with them.

This mother took on primary responsibility for parenting even when she was together with her ex-husband because he would work long hours and so she was often the only one around to deal with the children, and she preferred to do it face to face. She noted that her eldest was now 19 years old, an age where she felt she could begin to "relax the reins", as she put it (MIX12M).

Value of respecting elders

The single parent spoke of how important it was to pass on to one's children the value of respecting one's elders. This included making sure they never cursed or swore at or in front of elders, and offering to help an elder whenever they required it. This value was particularly the case for one's grandparents. All parents in this group wanted their children to build close bonds with their grandparents, to show respect to them and give them service – for example, by mowing their lawns, or spending time talking with them. The cycle of family looking after family was deemed important by one couple. The mother stated:

> MIX10M: It's good too, 'cos we get to see mum and dad, as well, you know, so we get the kids to go there … to mow the lawn … I said to her [the daughter] 'in the holidays you should go help nana, 'cos they are older'. It's time for them [the grandchildren] to look after mum and dad…I suppose that's probably going back to our parents; and grandparents; that [was] how we have been brought up, you know. It's always been a family

looking after a family. When they [the grandparents] were young they could remember when their [grand]parents [were] looking after [them], you know, nana and papa, and when they grow up, everyone tends to do the same thing, you know – because, it's just the way that we [are] brought up.

Each of the parents recognised that with the busyness of life it was difficult to expect grandchildren, and even children, to care for their elderly parents. This, said one couple, was evident in the number of elderly Samoan people being placed in rest homes. To alleviate the burden of the aged on families, one couple spoke of the increasing need to save for one's retirement. One mother stated:

> MIX10M: You know, I want my kids to grow older and get a job and look after themselves and hopefully that [my husband] and I will have done enough to look after ourselves and to let the kids go and have their own lives.

Developing respect for elders and for money were two key principles the Fijian-Palagi single mother lived by, and she hoped her children would follow. "Keeping a lid on" cursing, she argued, was one area that was part and parcel of teaching the value of respect. Her son, she knew, cursed a lot, but not around her. When talking to close friends and even her son about his ways, they all replied that it was just a teenage phase. She hoped so.

Household chores

For this group of families, responsibility for ensuring that the household chores were done again lay with the parents and sometimes the older siblings. In the multi-family household, it was the mother who took care of making sure that the household chores were done. Always having a tidy, clean house was important to her, and she would prioritise it. Since separating from her husband she had had to learn to relax in this area and allow her children to help out. However, often she would have to redo their cleaning chores because, in her opinion, they did not always do a good job. She admitted to being fussy about how she liked to clean her house.

Doing household chores was expected of the three young people that the talanoa researchers spoke with. Only one young person – the single Fijian-Palagi parent's child – spoke of getting pocket money from doing chores, but usually only when she did them well.

Fathering

The two fathers in this family grouping were of Tongan and New Zealand European ethnicity. The Tongan father believed that good parenting, including good fathering, was about building good communication links with his children. He played a supportive role to his wife and daughter and was a male role-model to his son. He shared equally with his wife in any decision-making affecting their family.

The Palagi father also provided support to his wife and children. Although he did not attend any church group, his wife was thankful that he did not prevent them from attending and participating in their church. His daughter noted that she did not know what it was like not to have a father around, but felt that it was important for all children to have both a father and a mother.

In the multi-family household, the children did not spend a lot of time with their father because he was always working. However, according to the mother, the children did get to see their father every now and then. She noted that her brothers – the children's uncles, who lived with them – together with her eldest boy offered older male support and role-models for her younger sons. Her younger boys loved their big brother and he had been a great support to them. The mother related how when she and her husband separated, her oldest son had stepped in and given his younger brothers a male role-model figure. This helped fill the vacuum left by her ex-husband. But, as she pointed out, he did not replace their father.

For the single-parent family, the father was the discipliner before the parents separated. The children still had contact with their father, and would ring him every now and then to talk to him. According to the mother, this often also involved asking for money. She indicated that as she was having problems with her son, she wished she had a stable male figure in the home. To meet this need, she sometimes called on her sister's husband, who lived nearby, to come and have a chat with her son. Her son loved rugby and she hoped that that would keep him out of trouble. She worried that he was drinking alcohol and smoking – things he hadn't done in Fiji.

3.3.5 Family wellbeing

What makes a happy family?

What made for a happy family for this group, as for the other two family groupings, was financial security, children and parents listening to each other and "good family bonding – a family that plays, eats and talks together".

For at least three of the four families, keeping close extended family links was important, especially in times of hardship. For the single Fijian-Palagi mother it was about having financial security and children "who listen". Bonding with cousins kept her daughter happy. Going on family holidays and having Sunday family get-togethers were seen by two daughters in Family Eleven as important for maintaining family unity and, by implication, happiness. One of these two daughters raised the point that families who talk and play together are happy families. She loved Sundays because her family would get together to eat and to just be a family. She suggested that it was not only the children who needed to listen, but also the parents. Her only desire for her family was for her father to come to church with them and believe in God. Respectful relationships were implicit in each of these comments about 'talking' and 'playing' together.

Financial security was a goal for all four families. One of the families spoke of how when "the financials" were upset by unexpected family faalavelave, the family's happiness was affected, and stress ensued when they had to balance competing obligations:

> MIX11M: …our finances run smoothly [most times] but, um, as soon as faalavelave, whether in Samoa or over here, a funeral, a wedding, or whatever, that comes up, or the budget for the week or the month, goes down in the drain. Because you have to send this money to Samoa, you have to put in a collection for anything e happen iinei [here] … we try to put in what we should put in, but I feel sorry for the lotu [church] sometimes.

In rationalising their giving to their church and family obligations, this family believed that whilst money was important it was more important to have a loving, caring and respectful family environment:

> MIX11M: Money, I know money is a big help to a family but if we are poor and our kids, we have that loving, caring, respecting, between us, then I'm

sure we'll be a happy family. Yeah, whether we are poor or not, we'll survive. You know what I mean…

The single mother of the multi-family household merely hoped that her children would "contribute to society" and be "happy children": "as long as the individuals are happy within themselves, then the whole family is happy" (MIX12M). In her talanoa session, this mother and the researcher agreed that "a family that plays together is a happy family".

Family aspirations (secure identity, good friends, strong culture, supportive church)

Role-models and support networks

All four parents within this mixed Pacific group aspired to good role-models and supportive networks for their children. The young daughter of one family spoke of sharing with her mother and how her mother was her role-model. Another described her brother and cousin as her role-models. The mother in another family, who worked for Youth Justice, saw how every day many young Pacific people struggled to find happiness in families whose lives were filled with unhappiness. She hoped that she and her husband could offer their children a stable and loving family environment.

The mother in the multi-family household wanted her children to develop good moral values and believed that they could learn them without necessarily going to church. She recalled growing up in a strict Christian environment where she had had to go to church and had not liked it being imposed on her, and she did not want to impose this on her children. Having good role-models within the family can buffer the need for role-models from outside.

However, church was a big part of the lives of two of the four families. The mother of one of these two families would have loved to have her husband join them at church and be part of their church family, but respected his decision not to. She spoke of even being willing to change their family church if the father had had a different church he wanted to go to. But she was happy that he didn't stop her and her children from attending their church. The young people in these two families enjoyed church youth groups and found that they offered good peer-support networks.

While aspiring for respectful children and good communication between parents and their children was something raised by all four family groups, this family

grouping was unclear about how they might achieve these aspirations. By implication, parents, church and youth peer-support groups each had important roles to play.

Cultural identity

Having an affinity with one's ethno-cultural identity was raised as being important by all four families within this grouping. The Niuean-Cook Island single parent noted that wherever possible she would like her children to know both their Niuean and Cook Island sides. For the Fijian single parent, her relationship with her sisters and Fijian mother was the closest she came to feeling a sense of belonging to the Fijian community. Her own mother, she noted, did have a close relationship with her Fijian community and sometimes she was able to get involved through her, but because of her work schedule she was often unable to. She was aware of a Catholic Fijian community in New Zealand but had next to no contact with them. This mother identified herself and her children as Fijian and wanted to go back to Fiji to live.

Being competent in their Pacific languages was the goal of the Tongan-Samoan family. The parents of this family wanted to be able to speak their native languages to their children, but unfortunately had not been able to pass them on. The mother's spoken Samoan was not as fluent as the father's Tongan and both found it easier to speak to their children in English. They hoped that one day their children would learn to speak Samoan and Tongan. This was something that could well be made possible if the daughter's wish to visit Samoa and Tonga came to fruition. She said that she could speak a bit of Tongan and Samoan and noted that she was named after her Tongan grandma. She was proud to be both Samoan and Tongan. Similarly, the daughter of the Tokelauan-Samoan and Palagi parents was proud of her mixed ancestry.

The Niuean mother could speak one of the Cook Islands dialects well because she worked in a Cook Islands childhood education centre. This was useful for her, given that her children were part Cook Islanders.

Sport is another area where cultural communities can come together to play and renew or forge links. The Niuean mother belonged to the Niuean touch rugby community and engaged her family in kirikiti (Samoan cricket) as well. The Tongan father enjoyed coaching his Tongan rugby team as it helped him stay in touch with his Tongan community.

The lives of each of these four mixed-Pacific families incorporated a number of ethno-culturally specific aspects, from language use to engagement in ethnic sports and church-based activities.

Education

All four families in this grouping aspired to give their children a good education. One couple had received a university education (although for the mother it was at the insistence of her mother) and saw value in aspiring for their children to also have this as a life goal. One of the three young people in this group said that she wanted to go to Auckland University of Technology once she left high school. The other two children were not yet thinking that far ahead; they were merely trying to get through high school, although one did note an interest in working at a crèche as she loved being with little children. The other high school students were finding school quite difficult.

3.3.6 Summary

Three of these four mixed-ethnicity families owned their own homes, although they were still paying off mortgages; the multi-family household was renting. Three of the four families had had relatives or friends living with them on and off over the years. Two families accepted this as part of their cultural obligations – especially to family. One family had little to do with their extended family and more to do with the mother's immediate family, mostly her sisters and mother.

The smallest number of people in one house was three and the largest was eight. The family household of eight lived in a five-bedroom house, while the family of three lived in a three-bedroom house.

Two of the four households had a lot to do with their respective church communities in Auckland, both parents (but not the father of one family) and children. All four families had religious affiliations; the two that were not regular church-goers believed in the Christian faith but were not practising. In one of these families, the children went to their grandmother's church and the parents had their own. These children, like the children of one of the Samoan families mentioned earlier, were encouraged by the parents to spend as much time with their grandparents as possible,

and attending church with them was one practical way to do so.

As with the other two ethnic family groupings, the financial management and decision-making in all these four mixed-Pacific families fell mainly on the shoulders of the parents. The mothers were named as the main decision-makers in these four families, and this included parenting decisions. This family grouping had two single-parent families, although one of the two was also a multi-family household type. In these two single-parent families, both mothers were working. One had a well-paying job and came from a financially stable family background, and so could give financial security to her children despite raising them on her own. She drew a lot on the support of her sisters and mother for help in raising her children. Her eldest child had a family of her own by this time. The other mother had the support of her older son and his partner, and also her two younger brothers who lived with them (and had families of their own but were separated from their spouses). This latter family had relative financial security also, and were starting to seriously contemplate saving for the future.

Parenting responsibilities, in particular caring for the day-to-day needs of children, fell mostly on the shoulders of the mothers in this group. However, they fell in different ways across the four families. Two families were solo-mother families and so the mothers had to take primary responsibility for parenting, although they were greatly assisted by extended family members. The couples with dependent and independent children had fathers who were supportive and helped out with 'on-the-ground' parenting wherever they could. In one of these latter two families, both parents were working full-time and the children were placed in after-school care. Where after-school care was not possible, extended family members or older siblings helped out with childcare.

The ex-husbands of the two single-parent families stayed in touch with their children. Both had new families of their own. One of the ex-husbands had been contacted recently by his ex-wife to help with their

wayward son. The young people who lived with their fathers talked about not knowing what it would be like not to have a father, and thought that a loving father was something that all children should have if possible.

The need to save was mentioned by the two single-parent families. One of these two families had been able to do this for a while, whereas for the other, it had only more recently become something to seriously consider. The other two families wanted to save but, as for the Samoan family group discussed earlier, the unpredictability of family and church faalavelave had upset the family budgets. The main difficulty surrounding the contributions to faalavelave can be found in the cultural and emotional pull that they have on heads of families who control the family budget.

The two families with boarders had problems getting board regularly and found it difficult to raise the issue because the boarders were family members. They found ways to accommodate the shortfall and look towards creative non-monetary ways for them to contribute to the running of the household, such as childcare services or being present to give emotional support to the main caregiver or parent when required.

For all four mixed-ethnicity families, as for the other two ethnic family groups, the criteria for a happy family were mainly financial security, spending time together where parents or caregivers and children could openly talk and share and having children and parents/caregivers respect each other. Some of the mechanisms used by this group to ensure families talked and got together included having family meetings, having Sunday dinners and going on family holidays.

All four families in this group, like the other two family groupings, wanted a good education for their children; good career aspirations for the parents, caregivers or heads of household; good communication between children and parents; and, for at least three out of the four, good links with their cultural or church communities.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Summary of main findings

4.1.1 Overall Pacific family-group profile, household composition and living arrangements

The 12 families of this qualitative study comprised four Cook Island families, four Samoan families and four mixed-Pacific-ethnicity families. All of these families lived in the Auckland region.

Of these 12 Pacific families, nine owned their own homes and all nine were paying off mortgages. The remaining three families were renting. Of these three, two were single-parent families and one a multi-family household headed by a single parent.

Among the 12 families, the smallest number of people in one house was three and the largest was 12. The family of three lived in a three-bedroom house and the family of 12 lived in a seven-bedroom house. Common reasons for moving from one house to another included:

> the desire to purchase their own home and one that was 'bigger and better' (had more bedrooms or was more 'up-market') than the previous one

> the need for more space for their growing family

> the desire to be closer to the schools or university campuses that the parents wanted their children to attend

> the desire to live independently from parents or grandparents.

Each of the 12 families had moved at least once for one or more of the above reasons. Of the eight families based in South Auckland, seven had moved from one part of South Auckland to another. Three of the seven had moved within their South Auckland suburb. The remaining South-Auckland-based family had moved into South Auckland from Auckland Central. The reason for their move was the affordability of houses – they wanted a 'bigger and better' house at a reasonable price and could only find one in Mangere. One of the two West Auckland families had been boarding with the husband's parents in Auckland Central before he moved with his wife and children to West Auckland. The other West Auckland family had lived in West

Auckland since migrating from Samoa. Of the final two Central Auckland families, one had moved from South Auckland to Auckland Central for work and better high school zoning possibilities; the other had moved within Auckland Central, again with the view that they were moving into a bigger and better home and one that was closer to the university for their daughter.

All 12 Pacific households had a lot to do with their respective cultural communities in Auckland. The Samoan households, including the two mixed-family households that included Samoan ancestry, had strong church ties. In two of these Samoan families, the young people went to different churches from their parents – namely to the church of their grandparents. This was seen as one way for the grandchildren to bond with their grandparents.

Except for one family – the single-parent Fijian family – all of the families had had relatives and friends living with them from time to time, sometimes for over a year. These families accepted this as part of their cultural obligations, especially to family members. Similarly, each of these 12 families – although on the face of the talanoa session it seemed less so for the Fijian family – upheld their ethno-cultural identities as Samoan, Cook Island or a mixture of these and other ethnicities, as important. Each family recognised that continuity in their Pacific identities across generations would require active participation in and promotion of Pacific values and practices.

4.1.2 Household economics: financial management and decision-making

In all 12 Pacific families, financial management and decision-making responsibilities for the household fell on the shoulders of the parents, with some responsibility shouldered by the oldest children or relatives living at home who were adult and earned a personal income of some sort.

Mothers were named as the main decision-makers in most of the families. In the more 'traditional' Samoan and Cook Island families, however, the ultimate decision-making power lay with the father.

In those cases where there was some sharing between parents and children, the parents spoke openly of wanting to be more inclusive in their decision-making approaches. The children who participated in the study, especially the older ones, were appreciative of

being included by their parents in the decision-making process. For most of the 12 parent-groups in this study, including children in the decision-making process was relatively new and something many were just learning to adjust to.

4.1.3 Single-parent families

While the study aimed to find three single-parent families (one from each of the ethnic groupings targeted), a fourth single-parent family emerged from the recruitment process. This fourth family also served as a multi-family household type because there were at least two families living in the household at the time of the talanoa session. Of this group of four single-parent families, three comprised single mothers and the other a single father. Three of the four single-parent families were renting and the other owned their family home.

The single parent who owned their home came from a financially secure family background. The single mother in the multi-family household had relative financial security but since separating from her husband, who had been the main income-earner during their marriage, she had had to consider budgeting more carefully and perhaps even saving. The other two single-parent families were struggling to survive financially, one more so than the other. The single father coped with the help of extended family; the single mother coped with the help of her older children, especially her daughter. This daughter took care of most of the financial responsibility for their household (which comprised herself, her mother and twin brothers). She reasoned that this was part and parcel of being a family. She believed that her twin brothers would be able to help out when they became successful rugby players, or went into full-time work.

For these four Pacific single-parent families, parenting responsibilities were juggled alongside providing for their children's physical and education needs and household expenses. This often left very little room for these parents to engage personally in ethnic or church community events. For the single-parent family in the multi-family household, it was a little easier to organise the family to attend social, cultural and community events, such as their different ethnic sporting events.

4.1.4 Saving, budgeting and investing

Saving money was difficult for all except one of the 12 Pacific families and households involved in this

study. The Samoan and Cook Island families all spoke of the difficulties of juggling household expenses when unexpected events came up, such as cultural fundraisers or visits from relatives. Contributing to cultural events was considered central to what made them Cook Island or Samoan.

Two single-parent families spoke of the need to save. One of these two families had been able to do this for a while, whereas for the other it was a need that was more recent. Both had the financial ability to save. For the other two single-parent families saving was out of the question at the time. Another family had used professional budgeting services. This, they hoped, would bring them one step closer to saving for their future.

Only one family had an investment property, which they had purchased in preparation for their retirement.

4.1.5 Cultural obligations

Cultural obligations, which the Samoan families called faalavelave, were considered by each of the Cook Island and Samoan families simply to be part of being involved in their respective traditional communities. The parents and some of the children of all 12 families, including the fathers who were family chiefs, understood the burden that contributing to these faalavelave could be for families who were not financially secure. The young people of these families found that the impact of faalavelave on their household budgets was huge and the brunt of it was often felt by them. As one young person said, "the effect was going without a school uniform, school equipment or even lunch".

The unpredictability of faalavelave (especially funerals for extended family or church members) made it difficult for the family to budget. The emotional pull on the traditional heads of families was obvious. In the words of two different mothers: "only natural, it's embedded in our lives" and "we try to put in what we should put in, but I feel sorry for the lotu (church) sometimes". The obligation for heads of household who were matai (or Samoan chiefs) or Cook Island chiefs to contribute was unquestionable according to one Cook Island father, who replied with an emphatic "No" to the question of whether he could forego his contribution if times got tough. All of the heads of household in the more traditional families talked about the need to keep a check on these contributions, but found it extremely difficult not to contribute something.

Five families (including the three multi-family households) spoke of having family members board with them and the difficulties of relying on them for regular financial support. In these five cases the parents or heads of household would often make up the difference and hope that the boarders would be able to repay the arrears or assist in other areas.

4.1.6 Parenting

All 12 parent groups took responsibility for parenting. There was some sharing of duties between mothers and fathers and extended family members, especially sisters and grandmothers. When physical discipline was used the fathers were generally responsible, while the mothers tended to provide the day-to-day parenting advice or instruction. Older siblings also played important roles in caring for younger siblings, especially in the single-parent families.

Those responsible for the decision-making and parenting in all four families recognised the importance of building open and non-judgemental communication pathways with their children.

There were mixed feelings about physical discipline. A number of parents talked about the changes in legislation regarding physical discipline of children (which they referred to as the 'anti-smacking' legislation; namely, the Crimes Amendment Act 2007). Some were adamant that smacking should not be outlawed and that it was the right of the parent to discipline their children as they wished. Others were more accommodating of finding alternative ways to discipline their children.

The children of one family spoke about understanding why their parents worked such long hours, but they did wish that they could spend more time with their parents. According to some participants, the emotional bonds between parent and child were greatly weakened when there was no quality time together.

4.1.7 Fathering

The fathers of all the 12 families were known to their children. The fathers of the children in the three solo-mother families continued to play a role in their children's lives. Additionally, these children had access to older male siblings and uncles who offered male role-models or father-figures in the home. All 12 families spoke of the importance of having a strong male figure within the home. The characteristics of a good father, according to both the fathers and the children of all the families, were having the skills to communicate effectively with their children; and being able to be present for their children, wherever possible, while they were growing up. These qualities were, however, also expected of a good mother.

The couples with dependent and independent children had fathers who were supportive and helped out with 'on-the-ground' parenting wherever they could, but mostly they worked long hours. Where both parents worked long hours, care for the children was trusted either to after-school care (in only one case), or relatives (for the rest).

4.1.8 Family wellbeing – what makes for a happy Pacific family?

All 12 Pacific family households spoke of the importance of having enough money in the home to take care of basic needs; having good communication, respect and rapport among all family members; and spending time talking, playing and eating together. Regular family meetings, having Sunday dinners and family holidays were suggested as different ways to spend quality family time together.

In almost all 12 families, church and ethnic affiliations were important for the continuity, expression and celebration of Pacific cultures and identities. Continuing links with extended family members, especially with grandparents, were considered culturally important for both the Samoan and Cook Island families. For Samoans, the relationship between children and their elders is a sacred relationship that relates to the belief that elders give blessings.

Church youth groups provided invaluable peer support for some of the young people in the study, especially for those in the two single-parent families during the time of their parents' breakups. Without this kind of support it is not possible, as noted by one of the Samoan young people in this study, to have the kind of happy individuals one needs to make a happy family.

All 12 families aspired towards a good education for their children; good career aspirations for the parents, caregivers or heads of household; good communication between children and parents; and, for at least 11 out of the 12 families, good links with cultural or church communities.

4.2   Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the talanoa approach to gathering information provides a rich source of data despite the difficulties associated with the use of a new and innovative methodological approach. The use of the talanoa approach promotes an environment where respondents and the interviewer participate in a more equal exchange, with the opportunity to explore issues in depth.

The findings in this qualitative study show that the experiences and perceptions of the participants in each of the three ethnic groupings (Cook Islands Māori, Samoan and mixed) on the four key theme areas of household composition, household economics, parenting and family wellbeing were more similar than they were different.

The qualitative data produced by this type of study do not replace survey data or methods in which results are statistically analysed, compared with normative groups and extrapolated to represent entire populations (or in this instance the companion report (Cotterell et al, forthcoming) findings). Therefore, the findings in this report should be viewed as a small, snapshot providing some richness to the subject of family wellbeing, as it is only the voices of a small specific Auckland-based group. The findings do not represent Pacific families nationally and cannot be generalised. As the companion quantitative report shows, there are variations in the wellbeing of different groupings (ethnic, regional, place of birth) in the Pacific population.

The quantitative analyses of changes in Pacific-family wellbeing over time provide the contextual background which allows understanding of why these families face the particular challenges highlighted in this qualitative report. These challenges are evident in the wellbeing indicators reported in the companion report at a national level across household types and ethnicities.

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APPENDIX: A

Youth participant information sheet
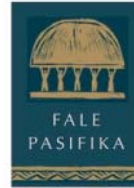
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF ARTS
NEW ZEALAND

FALE
PASIFIKA

YOUTH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: 'Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing–A Qualitative Snapshot in 2008'.

To: Participants

Talofa, Kia Orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Malo e lelei, Vinaka, Warm Pacific Greetings!

My name is _____. I am a researcher at the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Our research team are doing research on the make-up and wellbeing of Pacific families/households in New Zealand. We are interested in how these may have changed (if at all) over the last 25 years and the effect of these changes on Pacific families/households.

This research is being funded by The Families Commission.

We would like you to take part in our research. We feel your perspective as young Pacific people is very important. We want to talk with Pacific families/households of different types to get a picture of some of the differences in their experiences of (a) parenting, especially fathering; (b) household/family economics (i.e. how families handle their resources); (c) family wellbeing; and (d) overall impact of changes in household/family composition on each of these factors.

To encourage our young people to be as open as possible, we would like to have individual *talanoa* sessions with you. We may need your parent's permission to do this.

You are not obliged to talk with us if you don't want to. Your conversation or *talanoa* session with us will take about an hour. We will come to a place that suits you, at a time suitable to you. We would prefer to record your session using a tape recorder but this would only be done with your permission and the recorder can be turned off at any time. Also you can withdraw information any time up until 30 May 2008.

We expect to carry out mainly English-language interviews but our Cook Island and Samoan facilitators are able to speak with you in the Samoan or Cook Island language if you prefer. If you want a copy of your *talanoa* session, please let us know and we will give a copy of the tape directly to you. At the end of our project we will send you a copy of the final qualitative report.

If you do want to talk with us, please let us know by filling in a Consent Form and giving it to me or the Pacific interviewer. We plan to draw from your *talanoa* session for our final report to the Families Commission. We may also draw on your information for conference papers. No information used in any report or conference paper will be able to be traced back to you, unless you give me permission to identify you.

If you agree to have your *talanoa* session tape-recorded, we will store these tapes in a locked cabinet. The electronic files holding your information will be protected using a secure computer drive with password protection. The audio tapes will be destroyed once the transcription process is completed. We will keep the transcribed data for a period of six years.

As a gesture of appreciation for sharing with us your time and family story, we would like to offer you a small gift of a movie voucher.

We thank you very much for your time and kind participation. If you have any queries or wish to know more please make contact with me or one of our team by phone or email (these are given below).

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office - Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Tel. 373-7999 extn. 87830.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Research Team

Families Commission 'Changing Pacific Family/Household Compositions – Qualitative Study' Project.

Principal Investigator:

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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 16 April 2008 for a period of 3 years, from 16/04/2008 to 15/04/2011 Reference 2008/083.

APPENDIX B:

Participant information sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: 'Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing—A Qualitative Snapshot in 2008'.

To: Participants

Talofa, Kia Orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Malo e lelei, Vinaka, Warm Pacific Greetings!

My name is _____. I am a researcher at the Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. Our research team are currently conducting research on household composition and wellbeing for Pacific families in New Zealand. We are interested in how this may have changed (if at all) over the last 25 years and how Pacific families/households have experienced these changes. This research is being funded by The Families Commission.

You are invited to participate in our research and we would appreciate any assistance you can offer us.   As part of our work, we seek to talk with Pacific families/households of different types to get a picture of some of the differences in their experiences of (a) parenting, especially fathering; (b) household/family economics (i.e. how families handle their resources); (c) family wellbeing; and (d) overall impact of changes in household/family composition on each of these factors.

We would like to talk with you but you are under no obligation at all to talk with us.   Your conversation or talanoa session with us will take about an hour and would be done at a time and place convenient to you. We would prefer to audio tape your session but this would only be done with your consent and the recorder could be turned off at any time or you can withdraw information any time up until 30 May 2008.

To encourage our young people to be as open as possible, we would like to have individual talanoa sessions with them. We may need the parent's permission to do this.

We expect to conduct mainly English-language interviews but our Cook Island and Samoan facilitators are able to speak with you in the Samoan or Cook Island language if you prefer that. If you want a copy of your talanoa session, please let us know and we will give a copy of the tape directly to you. At the end of our project we will send you a copy of the final qualitative report.

If you do want to talk with us, please let us know by filling in a Consent Form and giving it to me or the Pacific interviewer. We plan to draw from your talanoa session for our final report to the Families Commission. We may also draw on your information for conference papers. No information used in any report or conference paper will be able to be traced back to you, unless you give me express permission to identify you.

If you agree to have your talanoa session audio-taped, we will store these tapes in a locked cabinet. The electronic files holding your information will be protected using a secure computer drive with password protection. Following full transcription the audio-tapes will be destroyed. We will keep the transcribed data for a period of six years.

As a gesture of appreciation for sharing with us your time and family story, we would like to offer you a small gift of a $20 petrol voucher.

We thank you very much for your time and kind participation. If you have any queries or wish to know more please make contact with me or one of our team by phone or email (these are given below).

For any queries regarding ethical concerns please contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office - Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Tel. 373-7999 extn. 87830.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Research Team

Families Commission 'Changing Pacific Family/Household Compositions – Qualitative Study' Project.

Principal Investigator:

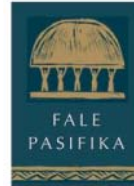Tamasailau M. Sua'ali'i-Sauni (Dr)
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APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 16 April 2008 for a period of 3 years, from 16/04/2008 to 15/04/2011 Reference 2008/083.

APPENDIX C:

Youth consent form

CONSENT FORM FOR YOUTH

Research Title: 'Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing–A Qualitative Snapshot in 2008'.

This form will be held for a period of 6 years

Principal Investigator:
Dr Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni, Deputy Director, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland

Duration of Project:
February - July 2008

Project Funder:
New Zealand Families Commission

I have read the information sheet explaining this project or have had the project explained to me. I understand what the project is about, its aims and objectives. I understand what is expected of my participation.

I understand that taking part in the project is dependent on my consent and that I may withdraw my involvement in the project up until the 30 May 2008.

I agree / do not agree that in order to do this talanoa, sessions may need to be audio recorded as I understand that my comments need to be captured accurately.

I understand that taking part in this project is confidential and that no information that could identify me will be used in any reports on this project.

I have had time to consider whether I should take part or not.

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the project.

I have had the opportunity to discuss the project and ask questions. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.

Statement by Youth Participant: (Please circle relevant answer): *I hereby consent / do not consent to take part in this project:*

_____   (full name of youth participant)

----/----/--------Date

8*I hereby consent / do not consent to having comments audio recorded:*

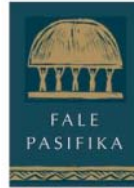_____   (full name of youth)

_____   signature

----/----/--------Date

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 16 April 2008 for a period of 3 years, from 16/04/2008 to 15/04/2011 Reference 2008/083.

APPENDIX D:

Consent form

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF ARTS
NEW ZEALAND

FALE
PASIFIKA

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Research Title: **'Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing–A Qualitative Snapshot in 2008'.**

This form will be held for a period of 6 years

Principal Investigator:
Dr Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni, Deputy Director, Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Auckland

Duration of Project:
February - July 2008

Project Funder:
New Zealand Families Commission

I have read the information sheet explaining this project or have had the project explained to me. I understand what the project is about, its aims and objectives. I understand what is expected of my son or daughter.

I understand that my son or daughter taking part in the project is dependent on my consent and that I may withdraw his or her involvement in the project up until the 30 May 2008.

I agree / do not agree that my son or daughter/s comments need to be captured accurately. In order to do this the talanoa sessions may need to be audio recorded.

I understand that my son or daughter taking part in this project is confidential and that no information that could identify him or her will be used in any reports on this project.

I have had time to consider whether he or she should take part or not.

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the project.

I have had the opportunity to discuss the project and ask questions. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.

Statement by Parent of Youth Participant: (Please circle relevant answer): *I hereby consent / do not consent for my son or daughter to take part in this project:*

_____   (full name of youth participant)

_____   (full name of parent/guardian)

_____   signature of parent/guardian

----/----/--------Date

Statement by Parent to audio-recording: (Please circle relevant answer): *I hereby consent / do not consent to having my son/daughter's comments audio recorded:*

_____   (full name of parent/guardian)

_____   signature

----/----/--------Date

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE on 16 April 2008 for a period of 3 years, from 16/04/2008 to 15/04/2011 Reference 2008/083.

Pasifika

1/09   *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Changing Pacific Households*

Changing pacific household composition and wellbeing 1981–2006: Gerald Cotterell, Martin von Randow, Stephen McTaggart, Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni, Daniel Patrick, and Peter Davis, November 2009.

A qualitative snapshot of household composition, wellbeing, parenting and economic decision-making among Pacific families in Auckland, 2008: Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni, Stephen McTaggart, and Martin von Randow, November 2009.

2/09   *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Pasifika Youth in South Auckland,* Dr Camille Nakhid, Tupetoa Ronji Tanielu and Efeso Collins, November 2009.

3/09   *Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Living the Tokelauan Way in New Zealand,* Gina Pene, Philippa Howden-Chapman, Marisa Peita, Helen Viggers, and John Gray, November 2009.

These reports are available on the Commission's website www.nzfamilies.org.nz or contact the Commission to request copies

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