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being a single mum:
pacific island mothers' positive experiences of parenting

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Discussions about parenting often cast single mothers in a negative light. They are viewed as creating an environment that is not conducive to raising healthy, happy, well-adjusted children who go on to achieve well in life and contribute fully in society (Edin & Lein, 1997; Reekie, 1998). Their circumstances are pathologised, and they are understood in terms of a deficit model. In New Zealand this is very much the case for young single mothers (Pittaway, 2005) and Māori or Pacific Island single mothers (Todd, 2008).

Research aim and objectives

This research project aimed to see beyond the abovementioned negativity about single mothers and explore some of the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and the importance of culture in framing these experiences. There were four objectives:

> describe the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand

> gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent'

> gain an understanding of obstacles to and systems of support for successful parenting by Pacific Island single mothers (in particular, those systems that facilitate strengths and develop or maintain resilience)

> give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining and developing strengths and resilience.

Study context

This research took place in the Manawatu region and Palmerston North City. Since Pacific Island people have been migrating to New Zealand the Manawatu region has seen the arrival of people from all Pacific countries, and the region has not been dominated by one particular ethnic group. Given this specific study context the results should not be seen as representative of Pacific Island communities in New Zealand. Because this was a small pilot study which sought to obtain baseline data, the Palmerston North context and a pan-Pacific approach was considered acceptable.

Methods and key findings

This qualitative pilot study drew upon relevant literature and primary data from interviews with 12 Pacific Island single mothers and five key informants, as well as a focus group feedback session involving members of the Manawatu and Palmerston North Pacific Island community, primarily Tongan. The focus group feedback session consisted of a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation to the audience articulating the rationale for the research and the aims, objectives, methodology and initial findings. The findings were discussed and the resulting ideas were then integrated into the final report. Comments made during this feedback session tended to confirm what had been found.

Advice from two cultural mentors was also used to develop the initial proposal and then to develop the interview schedule, pilot the questions, discuss the data collection process and clarify interpretations of the findings. The cultural mentors also provided an element of quality assurance. A Pacific researcher also brought cultural expertise to the methodology and analysis.

The processes through which the participants entered single motherhood were diverse and complex. The majority had begun the journey to parenting in established relationships. This is contrary to a popular view that single mothers become pregnant for the purpose of receiving welfare payments. Moreover, while single motherhood could suggest disconnectedness and isolation, this was not the experience of the participants in this study, who were well connected to family, friends and cultural and community organisations.

The participating single mothers and their children were not ostracised or marginalised by their family members or their Pacific community – they valued themselves, and were valued by their family and their Pacific community. They were seen as more than the label 'single mother' – they continued to be recognised for their various roles and the contributions they made to their families and communities. This lack of labelling, combined with connectedness and a sense of purpose and worth, has perhaps led to single parenting being a mainly positive experience for these participants.

To be a successful parent, according to the participants, is to position one's child as the primary focus; apply reasonable boundaries; engage in self-growth and improvement; seek assistance and utilise support as required; maintain balance and harmony;

and have cultural connections. The systems of support that facilitated their strengths and helped them maintain and develop resilience were having a cohesive and fluid extended family; having an obvious and acceptable family value system; and involvement by a male relative.

Family is clearly at the very core of Pacific Island frameworks. This commitment to family could be seen in the way that participants' family members job shared and rearranged roles and responsibilities; this was an expectation, and helped the status and good of all members of the family to be ideally and practically maintained. Other systems of support were connections with institutions and groups such as church, early childhood centres and state services such as Work and Income New Zealand; an authoritative parenting style (see Baumrind, 1978; 1991) and connections with a cultural framework were also fundamental.

A number of obstacles to successful parenting by single mothers were mentioned: lack of money and resources; the attitudes and approaches taken by some social service providers leading to stigma and discrimination; beliefs about styles of parenting; personal issues; and paradoxically, the extended family (the very system that could also provide them with the greatest support). One key informant saw the extended family as sometimes fostering dependency; it was also noted that the extended family could be a site of conflict.

It was clear from all these findings that culture was fundamental to the parenting experience of these single mothers.

The endurance of culture meant the participants were embedded in a wider extended family network where household boundaries were fluid, so while some physically lived with only their children in a particular house, members of their extended family could move in and out of the house as family needs changed. Children could also move between the houses of their mother and their grandparents (or other relatives). A family could sit across households or be multi-household.

A number of cultural values held by the participants' families and communities ensured that they and their children were valued rather than stigmatised and marginalised: being proactive in support of the family; maintaining balance and harmony within the family and relationships; showing respect and giving support to sisters; showing forgiveness; meeting obligations, and doing duty or service; being compassionate; demonstrating love, concern and Christian behaviour; and attributing value to small children.

Such cultural values and the desire to connect with cultural frameworks and institutions also ensured these participants were supported as single mothers every day. As mentioned above, a commitment to ensuring the wellbeing and welfare of all family members prevailed; this undoubtedly helps explain why these single mothers saw themselves as successful parents and why their parenting experiences were for the most part positive.

While it is true that in some instances cultural values and beliefs may be shifting and evolving, Pacific Island values and beliefs and norms of behaviour endure, especially in relation to the family, thus better ensuring the welfare of single mothers and their children. Social policy and programmes that seek to work with Pacific Island single mothers must build upon the basic assumptions that family is at the very core of Pacific Island systems and that Pacific Islanders are committed to ensuring cultural values, beliefs and norms of behaviour permeate everyday life, regardless of the changes that can be seen.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Single mothers[1] are often at the forefront of public debate and moral arguments about changes in or the decline of the traditional 'nuclear' family (Sidel, 2006; Wilson & Huntington, 2006; Woodward, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2001). These arguments tend to be split between liberal and conservative viewpoints. The liberal viewpoint is inclined to accept the changes in family structures, while conservatives tend to decry the decline in marriage and the rise in divorce and cohabitation, arguing that motherhood should occur within marriage and anything outside of this arrangement is somewhat deviant (Cherlin, 2005). Further debates have focused on models of welfare delivery and notions of entitlement, and whether single mothers are 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of support. This notion is underpinned by the premise that in many instances single mothers, especially those on welfare, are supported by a 'nanny state', and that they are unproductive and do not contribute to society. Productivity and contributions made to society are understood in relation to economics; hence, not only are they deviant, irresponsible and lazy, above all they are living off the hard work of others (Sidel, 2006, p. 1; Todd, 2007, p. 1). The following statement found in a letter to the editor of the New Zealand *Sunday Star Times* epitomises such ideas:

> I was intrigued by last week's editorial headline 'Solo parents deserve better deal'. For something to be deserved it must be earned – New Shorter Oxford, 'deserved: Rightfully earned, merited'. So what is it that solo parents have done to earn a better deal and make them deserving? Nothing, so far as I can see. The thrust of the editorial was that they needed a better deal, not that they deserved it. Is need enough to take from the productive to give to the non-productive? (Harry Field, Parnell, Auckland; *Sunday Star Times,* 2008, p. 3).

Single mothers have also been seen as lacking parenting skills. It has been suggested that they raise children in the midst of breakdown, chaos and deprivation in an environment of maternal neglect, where behavioural problems flourish (Reekie, 1998).

Much of the research on single mothers seeks to pathologise their circumstances and explain their situation in terms of a deficit model (for example, see Jaffee, et al, 2001 for adverse outcomes for children of single parents in later years; Keown, Woodward, & Field, 2001 for language underdevelopment in pre-school children of single parents; Statistics New Zealand, 1998 for sole-parent family income). Any positive examples of parenting by single mothers in the literature tend to be based on intervention – for example, the idea of providing schools for teenage mothers (Baragwanath, 1998; also see He Huarahi Tamariki, 2008) with the underlying premise that single mothers, particularly young single mothers, are in need of intervention or rescuing. Any dialogue or discussions emphasising what single mothers have done or are doing well outside a deficit or interventionist service-provision model is given little positive attention (Swain & Howe, 1995).

While there are certainly situations where the experience of single mothers and their children may not have been positive and single parents have been less than successful, if we are to have a well-balanced picture it is also important to unpack what single parents are doing well. This research is therefore orientated towards trying to discover positive representations and experiences of parenting by single mothers.

Some concern about single-parent families stems from the fact they are on the increase. In New Zealand this is particularly so for Māori and Pacific Island families. The increase of single-parent families in the late 1980s was more pronounced among Māori and Pacific Island children than among European and Asian children. In 2006, 42 percent of Māori children, 36 percent of Pacific children, 22 percent of European children, 18 percent of Asian children and 27 percent of children from Other ethnic groups were living in one-parent families (Ministry of Social Development, 2008, p.12).

Current official family statistics remain inadequate in terms of what they tell us about single-parent families. They do not, for example, account sufficiently for step, blended and extended families, which single-parent children may also be part of (Statistics New Zealand's Social and Population Statistics Group, 2007, p. 9).

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1 For the purpose of this research 'single mother' is understood to be a woman who is primarily responsible for bringing up a child or children and who may have limited or no support from the biological father in terms of the day to day raising of the child/ren. This lack of support may be due to having never married, being divorced or separation and in the case of two of the participants, due to geographical separation. They may also have limited or little support financially. In this study women self identified as single mothers, while at the same time not labelling themselves as single mothers. It is important to note that 'single mothers' are not homogenous, rather their situation and thus experiences are diverse, dynamic and multifaceted. However as argued in the literature review 'single mother' is all too often assumed to mean a young woman, who became pregnant outside of wedlock or an established relationship, and is receiving welfare.

...New Zealand and international household official family statistics are bound by the use of household as the measurement entity, and the underlying family nucleus concept. It is now widely recognised that the household may be a less useful boundary for family-centred analysis and policy provision ...household data are seriously limited in the insights they can give us about families... They provide no insight into the lives of children who live in two households... (Ministry of Social Development, 2004 cited in Statistics New Zealand's Social and Population Statistics Group, 2007, p. 9).

Statistics also tell us nothing about family relationships that extend across households (Statistics New Zealand's Social and Population Statistics Group, 2007, p. 10), and very little about family functioning. Family functioning as opposed to structure incorporates:

Parenting skills, relationships and communication skills, social participation, and safety within families... A number of aspects of family functioning contribute to the wellbeing of the members of a family – both adults and children. These include family routines, the quality of the parents' relationship, the quality of the parent-child relationship [and between other members if we consider extended families], care and supervision of children, household management (including money), and family communication. (Statistics New Zealand's Social and Population Statistics Group, 2007, p. 13).

Finally, statistics on ethnicity are considered to be problematic: "Ethnicity is a particular challenging area for family analysis in New Zealand, given the growing degree of ethnic diversity, increasingly permeable ethnic boundaries and the number of individuals with several ethnicities" (Statistics New Zealand's Social and Population Statistics Group, 2007, pp. 11–12).

1.2 Study questions and objectives

Against the background mentioned above, the overall intention of this research is to understand the parenting experience of Pacific Island single mothers outside of the normative rhetoric and stereotypes which seek to problematise this population group.

This research asks:

What are some of the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and what is the importance of culture in framing these experiences?

There are four objectives:

1. Describe the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand.

2. Gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent'.

3. Gain an understanding of obstacles to, and systems of support for, successful parenting by Pacific Island single mothers (in particular, those systems that facilitate strengths and develop or maintain resilience).

4. Give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining and developing strengths and resilience.

1.3 Study context

This research took place in the Palmerston North (Te Papa-i-oea) area. Palmerston North is the main city of the Manawatu-Wanganui region of the North Island of New Zealand. It is an inland city with a population of 75,540 (www.stats.govt.nz). Census figures show that 20.2 percent of families in Palmerston North City are one-parent families, compared to 18.1 of families in New Zealand (www.stats.govt.nz). Palmerston North's ethnic makeup is (national figure in brackets): 71.4 percent European (67.6 percent); 15.4 percent Māori (14.7 percent); 7.4 percent Asian (9.2 percent); 3.7 percent Pacific Islanders (6.9 percent); 1.1 percent Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (0.9 percent); 12.5 percent 'New Zealanders' (11.1 percent); and 0.05 percent other ethnicity (0.04 percent) (www.stats. govt.nz). Palmerston North has a relatively pan-Pacific population – since Pacific Island people have been migrating to New Zealand the Manawatu region has seen the arrival of people from all Pacific countries and the region has not been dominated by one particular Pacific ethnic group. The results of this study should not be seen as representative of Pacific Island communities in New Zealand. Finally, because this was a small pilot study which sought to obtain baseline data, the Palmerston North context and a pan-Pacific approach was considered acceptable.

1.4 Definitions

Two key concepts are fundamental to this research: positive parenting and culture, and are discussed below.

1.4.1 Positive parenting

While this study sought to discover what the participants thought positive parenting was, a useful framework is Baumrind's taxonomy of parenting styles. Drawing upon observations and in-depth interviews, Baumrind (1978, 1991) identified four fundamental components to parenting: disciplinary strategies; warmth and nurturance; communication styles; and expectations of maturity and control. She went on to argue that the majority of parents display one of three parenting styles – authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting and permissive parenting – incorporating different blends of the components mentioned above. Maccoby and Martin (1983) suggested a fourth style: uninvolved parenting.

Authoritarian parenting is a style of parenting whereby children are expected to follow strict rules with little explanation or negotiation. Failure to follow parental instruction usually results in punishment. Parents typically have high demands and are not responsive to their children or children's needs, and can be seen as punitive and aloof. Parenting is very parent-centred. Their children may be obedient and proficient; however, they identify as less happy and socially competent, and report lower self-esteem (Baumrind, 1991).

Similarly, authoritative parents establish rules and guidelines that children are expected to follow. They are, however, neither punitive nor aloof; rather, they develop rules and boundaries for their children and are affectionate with them. Authoritative parenting is said to be a child-centred approach that holds high expectations of maturity and compliance with parental rules and directions, while allowing for an open dialogue about those rules and behaviours between the parent and child. Parents are responsive and willing to listen to questions. Children are encouraged to be independent, but at the same time limits and controls are placed on their actions and behaviours. This approach enables children to learn and gain independence through safe decision-making and supported problem-solving; they grow up to be happy, assertive, socially responsible, self-regulating, co-operative adults (Baumrind, 1991).

Permissive parents, who are sometimes seen as overindulging their children, have few demands and rules. Children are rarely disciplined because parents have low expectations in relation to maturity and self-control. Children are often left to self-regulate and parents avoid confrontation. While parents are responsive to children and do communicate with them, they do so as friends rather than parents (Baumrind, 1991). According to Baumrind, children raised in this way report lower happiness, and because they lack the ability to self-regulate they have less self-control, meaning they may have issues with authority figures. They tend to perform less well in school and later in the workplace.

With regards to Baumrind's taxonomy, indications of successful parenting may be that children have a nurturing relationship with their parents, they are achieving academically, they are involved in their community as well as in school activities and they have meaningful, supportive peer relationships. Children can also resolve conflict and problem-solve; they have adaptive coping mechanisms or are resilient. They can respond to the risks and vulnerabilities present in their environment. They possess self-esteem, self-efficacy, a sense of purpose, autonomy, a critical consciousness and optimism.

It is also important to remember that optimal child development can follow many paths, and that outcomes that might be considered successful in one culture may not be seen the same way in another. In many Western cultures, for example, children are encouraged to become independent, self-sufficient and autonomous beings making their own personal choices, while in many non-Western cultures the focus is more on interdependence. Thus "the primary goal of raising interdependent children is for them to be part of a larger system of relationships – to depend on others for wellbeing" (Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006, p. 4).

1.4.2 Culture

Culture is not just about ethnicity or race (Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006, p. 3). This study draws upon ideas from the Pacific literature and how culture was understood and articulated by the research participants. Culture is understood as "a set of values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society, are shared by and

transmitted across members of that society and dictate behavioural transactions within that society" (Weiss et al, 2005, p. 137). As noted by well-known Tongan scholar Konai Helu-Thaman (2003), culture is a way of life of a specific group, which includes a language, a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. Culture is central, therefore, to understanding familial relationships and why people do what they do for each other. Values governing the ways in which people fulfil responsibilities and obligations to each other may include – for example – respect, compassion, love of family and kinship ties, sharing and giving, and maintaining reciprocal relationships and harmony (Koloto & Sharma, 2005).

This study also recognises that culture is multifaceted, dynamic and fluid, meaning it is not something that is fixed in the past. Rather, it is open to influence and change; what is good can be strengthened, and what is not so good can be changed. Rather than being static and potentially an impediment to good parenting, culture is viewed as multidimensional, creative, constantly evolving and having potential for understanding and addressing varied situations.

1.4.3 Culture and parenting

Culture is important to parenting for various reasons. Firstly, parenting is a key mechanism for passing on cultural values and practices between generations – for example, awareness of and connection to genealogy and how it can shape the present and future; values and practices relating to roles, functions and responsibilities; and spirituality and cultural identity.

Secondly, ideals, values and beliefs can shape our parenting style and the choices we make, either positively or negatively, and parenting, which is culturally bound, can shape the future outcomes of children (Keller et al, 2004, p. 25). To elaborate: within any culture children are shaped by their physical and social setting. They are shaped by culturally-regulated customs and child-rearing practices and culturally-based belief systems (Harkness & Super, 1995). Culture determines communication patterns and behaviours, including non-verbal and verbal communication strategies. It also determines what behaviour is acceptable from children. If a certain behaviour is acceptable parents generally encourage

its development, and if it is not they will seek to modify it. How they will seek to modify or discourage this behaviour may also be culturally determined (Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006; Rubin, 1998, p. 612). Cultural values and tradition can influence discipline strategies – for example, where respect for elders is important, shaming can be used to promote it. Culture also influences bonding behaviours. In cultures with large extended families, parents will encourage children to bond tightly with multiple people. Family structure and roles are also culturally defined and different cultures define family differently, so in some instances the extended family is normative and its members (which may also include the wider community) are responsible for children, and can be involved in decisions on parenting and child-rearing (Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006). Culture also plays a critical role in the goals parents set for their children. In some cultures, for example, independence is a goal parents may have in mind for young adults, whereas in other cultures the idea of interdependence is emphasised (Keller et al, 2004, p. 26).

1.5 Overview of this report

This qualitative pilot study drew upon the literature and primary data from interviews with 12 Pacific Island single mothers and five key informants, as well as a focus group feedback session involving members of the Manawatu and Palmerston North Pacific Island community. The data collection for this research took place in the Manawatu region over the months of November 2008 and February 2009. The introduction to the report has stated the background to this research, the aim of the study and the research questions and objectives. The study context has been briefly described and rationale for this chosen context given, and important definitions have been articulated. The next part of the report is a review of the literature, which occurs in two parts. The literature on single mothers is considered first, and the literature on Pacific Island families and culture second. This is followed by a discussion about methodology, which outlines the approach taken to data collection and analysis. The key findings of the study are then presented and discussed. The report concludes with implications for policy and further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a plethora of literature about single mothers and the problems they face raising children. There are also a number of alternative viewpoints which draw upon case study materials to highlight instances where single mothers are parenting successfully and their children are doing well. There is also a solid literature which highlights the advantages and benefits of the role of culture and cultural values in parenting. This literature review will be presented in two parts: firstly, the prevailing ideas that single mothers are problematic will be discussed in detail. As part of later discussions, however, it will also be noted that while having children outside of marriage is not generally culturally condoned in Pacific communities, the value accorded to children and commitment to family overrides any idea of wrongdoing. Single mothers are therefore generally not seen to be problematic or stigmatised or ostracised by their family or their Pacific community. Secondly, Pacific Island families and culture will be discussed so as to provide a context for the role of culture and cultural values in parenting, as discussed in the introduction. This discussion will also consider the role of culture in the parenting experience of Pacific Island single mothers.

2.1 Single mothers as problematic

In New Zealand, the rates of single parenthood are high (McLaren, 2002, p. 58) by OCED standards. With single-parent families reported to be 26 percent in 2006, New Zealand ranked second only to the United States, which recorded 28 percent, and higher than the United Kingdom with 24 percent and Australia and Canada at 20 percent (Ministry of Social Development, 2008, p. 12). While 'single parent' is not a homogeneous category (each situation is one of diversity, multiplicities and complexities, having come about for various reasons such as death of a spouse, divorce or separation or pregnancy outside of a 'relationship'), there remains a strong inference that single parent means single mother.[2] Often, a single parent is assumed to be a young single woman who has become pregnant outside of the traditional family unit. Contrary to this popular stereotype, most one-parent families are headed by women who have been previously married or in a serious relationship (Parker & Patterson, 2003, p. 2). Regardless of this, the aforementioned stereotype prevails and it is this representation of single motherhood which is seen in terms of oppositional binaries such as good or bad parents and deserving or undeserving of support.

While the idea of good or bad and deserving or undeserving may not be publicly stated, the underlying premise remains. Thus it is seen as acceptable to assist 'fit and worthy' women, such as 'white widows' (Sidel, 2006, p. 1), but not those who are unfit or unworthy. Sidel (2006) relates that in her experience of growing up in a single-parent household her father was never criticised. Rather, he was widely admired and praised. Notwithstanding the fact that Sidel's sole-parenting father also had numerous supports, with a housekeeper, older sons and female friends, "he was seen as caring, self-sacrificing, truly committed to his family. No-one suggested … that he should work or not outside the home … or not leave me in the care of others to go on vacation" (p. 20).

During the 1970s single mothers became increasingly 'problematised' when the concept 'feminisation of poverty' materialised from debates in the United States about the rise in single mothers, predominantly black women, who were on welfare (BRIDGE, 2001, p. 1; Momsen, 2002, p. 145). Diana Pierce developed the term 'feminisation of poverty' to describe the fact that women not only bore a disproportionate share of poverty but also carried the burden for managing it at the household level (Chen, 1995, p. 23). Studies emerged demonstrating that lone-mother households were disproportionately disadvantaged in comparison to other households, and that their numbers were growing. Globally, single motherhood was nominated to be the 'new poverty paradigm' (Thomas, 1994; also see Chant, 2003, p. 2).

Single mothers, especially those who are young, are generally seen as being of low socio-economic status (Baker, 2008; Edin & Lein, 1997) – poorly educated, and therefore unskilled and lacking employment (Gendall & Fawthorpe, 2006; Goodger, 2001). The perception is that many rely on welfare, with the acquisition of welfare argued to be a career option for most. President Reagan famously labelled poor American single mothers as 'welfare queens' and then cut social services and welfare to them (Sidel, 2006, pp. 1–2).

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[2]   It does need to be noted that lone parenting is very much gendered – that one-parent families are more likely to be headed by women (Parker & Patterson, 2003, p. 3). In New Zealand, most children living in one-parent families usually live with their mother. In 2006 the number of dependent children living with a sole mother rose from 14 percent (1986) to 22 percent (2006), while the proportion living with a sole father went from two percent (1986) to four percent (2006) (Ministry of Social Development, 2008, p. 12). What is not accounted for is the number of children who spend time in multiple households (*ibid*).

Drawing on evidence also from the United States, Edin and Lein (1997) argue that reformers need to move beyond the myths of welfare dependency if any real gains are to be made. The hard reality is that in many countries labour markets are extremely unrewarding. The lack of affordable health insurance and childcare for single mothers who work, and the true cost of daily living, indicate that those who work may have more income, but costs are far greater (Baker & Tippin, 2002). At the end of the day, therefore, many women who work are worse off.

Single mothers often tend to work part-time or in menial positions because of the need to be flexible with work hours in order to manage children. While these part-time or menial jobs are seen to have less stress and lower expectations, they are poorly paid and offer few benefits or job security (Todd, 2008, p. 3).

Focusing on increasing the employability of single mothers downplays the structural unavailability of work in the economy, family responsibilities that might interfere with full-time employment and the availability of childcare and social responsibility for children (Baker, 1997, p. 37).

Some single mothers also make an informed choice not to work. They take the view that their children are their major priority, and that the opportunity to care for children on a low-income benefit is a better option than working for low wages and having to worry about supervision of one's children (Baker & Tippin, 1999; Edin & Lein, 1997).

While single mothers experience disadvantage in the workforce, it is argued they are also time-pressured because of their double day and lack of support in the home, meaning they have notably less available time to spend with their children.[3] Conversely, Kendig and Bianchi (2008) argue that, while many single mothers may lack a large support network, work longer hours and earn less money, in comparison to their married counterparts they still manage to spend a good amount of time with their children meaning despite the fact married mothers have more time they don't actually spend that much more time with their kids. At 10–17 percent less time the difference is much less than we are lead to believe.

Stereotypically, even single mothers who are educated and employed are still seen to be disadvantaged because their household relies on one income (Thomas & Sawhill, 2005).

2.1.1 Representations of single mothers

With the assumption that single mothers are poor comes the assumption that they are perpetuating a cycle of deprivation and disadvantage for children; as a unit they are seen as wholly dysfunctional, especially so if they are coloured or black (Pittaway, 2005). The media frequently publishes editorials framing single mothers in derogatory ways and reinforcing stereotypes about them (Sidel, 2006; Swaine & Howe, 1995). It is as if the label (single mother) itself provides "the diagnosis of a problem and proposed a solution: no further investigation is needed" (Connelly, Murray, MacDonald, & Parpart, 2000, p. 23). It also appears to name a family or household with a similar 'problem' – no man present – when actually the experiences, resources and the cultural context of these households imply diverse predicaments, or, no predicament at all (Connelly et al, 2000, p. 23).

This is not to say that there is no evidence that single motherhood can be linked to poorer or negative outcomes, such as children having higher than average risks in relation to crime, poor health (mental and physical), and behavioural problems. Overemphasis of such problems, however, leaves little space for other perspectives. The idea that single mothers engage in poor parenting practices and make poor lifestyle choices for themselves and their children becomes a given.

Alternative arguments suggest that single mothers demonstrate resilience, successfully manage the complexities of life, have extremely adaptive parenting patterns, make good parenting choices and raise 'successful' children (Sidel, 2006; also see Juffer, 2006).

As has been shown by psychologist Peggy Drexler, boys raised by single mothers can do just as well as, if not better than, boys raised in households where fathers are present throughout childhood. In contesting the growing concerns about the damage being done to boys by the lack of male role models in the house, Drexler undertook a longitudinal study which illustrated that sons from these families were growing up emotionally stronger, more empathetic and more well-rounded than boys from 'traditional' mother-father families. She argued that while being more in touch with their feelings, these boys remained boyish and masculine in all the ways defined by culture (Drexler & Gross, 2005). The lack of

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[3] Double day refers to the idea that while women have been entering the workforce over the last 30 years they still remain responsible for the majority of the household duties and childcare. Even though men are sharing these tasks, more women continue to be primarily responsible (Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2005).

a male role model was not, therefore, a key factor for determining the outcomes of boys in these households at all. Rather, factors such as the child-parent relationship, parenting style, and approach to communication were more important, so perhaps rather than talking about good mothering or good fathering, we should be concentrating on good parenting.

Focusing on single-mother households as problematic also presupposes that fathers contribute emotionally, physically, socially and financially in two-parent households, or that women in two-parent households have an equal share in the power, resources and decision-making. Ultimately it presupposes that a two-parent household can be equated with a healthy, positive, successful parenting approach, which is not always the case. Indeed, as argued by Fergusson (1998), many dual-parent households have problems, such as low income, family dysfunction and stress, before separation and divorce occur. The causes of disadvantage are more complex than whether or not the household is run by a single parent.

Florsheim, Tolan and Gorman-Smith, (1998) argue that risk factors such as lack of family warmth and cohesion, lack of discipline and parental supervision, and parental absence, which contribute to the occurrence of poor outcomes, can be generalised to both single-mother and two-parent families. They go on to report that risks associated with single motherhood can be offset by a structured family environment, positive male role models or effective disciplinary strategies. In support of this view, the Families Commission (2005) states "those singleparents who have a good education, good coping strategies, and positive support from extended family members are likely to be as successful as two-parent families in having good outcomes for their children" (p.63).

There is evidence to suggest that certain family arrangements may indeed be beneficial to single mothers – specifically, the extended-family arrangement (see Deleire & Kalil, 2002 with reference to adolescents; see Stewart-Withers, 2007 on single mothers in Samoa). In New Zealand the extended-family arrangement is a cultural norm for many Māori and Pacific Island families. Before the benefits and drawbacks of the extended family are explored, however, the situation and position of Pacific Island people and families in New Zealand will be discussed.

2.2 Pacific Island families and culture

2.2.1 Pacific Island families in New Zealand

Pacific people feature significantly on New Zealand's ethnic landscape, and despite the fact that they tend to be grouped together in research and policy (even by the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs), Pacific people are not a homogeneous group. As noted by Macpherson (1996), Pacific migrants to New Zealand have been grouped together and forced to adopt the label 'Pacific Islanders' as a result of migration to New Zealand and in part as a result of colonial processes. According to the 2006 Census, Pacific Island people constituted 6.9 percent of the New Zealand population (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). Samoans made up the largest group at 49.6 percent, followed by Cook Islands Māori (22.7 percent), Tongan (17.6 percent), Niuean (8.7 percent), Fijian (3.0 percent), Tokelauan (2.7 percent) and Tuvaluan (0.8 percent) (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

There are also subgroups within the Pacific Island ethnic groups based on place of birth. Firstly, there are Pacific Islanders who were born and raised in the Pacific Islands and who have migrated as adults. Secondly, there are Pacific Islanders who were born in the Pacific Islands but then raised from childhood in New Zealand and thirdly, there are those Pacific Islanders who were born and raised in New Zealand (Mafile'o, 2005). There are also people born in the Pacific Islands who are not ethnically Pacific Islanders, such as Indo-Fijians. It is easy to see that the category 'Pacific Islander' is very diverse.

Despite various economic and educational opportunities, Pacific people remain disadvantaged in New Zealand. There is clear evidence to suggest that Pacific people are disadvantaged socio-economically, with many experiencing real hardship (Koloto & Katoanga, 2007; Koloto & Sharma, 2005). They have lower workforce participation, lower median incomes and restricted access to owning property; they can live in overcrowded conditions, and are less likely to be aware of or draw upon welfare entitlements (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). They also face numerous social and health issues (Poland et al, 2007), all of which can have ramifications for family functioning.

2.2.2 The extended family

Poland et al, (2007, p. 2) note that while in New Zealand most families reside in a nuclear arrangement "a significant minority live with extended family members". They go on to say that as of 1996, "there were 67,068 extended family households in New Zealand accounting for 7.1 percent of all families" (Statistics New Zealand, 1998, cited in Poland et al, 2007, p. 2). As many Pacific Island single mothers live in extended-family environments, it would be fair to suggest that before one can make assumptions about Pacific Island single mothers it is important to also understand Pacific Island extended families.

Living in an extended-family situation is very common among Pacific Island people, who are three-and-a-half times as likely to live in an extended arrangement as other New Zealanders (Statistics New Zealand, 2002). Extended-family arrangements come in three main forms. Firstly, there are those that contain one generation, including siblings and cousins. Secondly, some contain two generations, thus accounting for siblings, cousins and their children. Thirdly, there are those containing three or more generations: grandparents, parents and children. The most common extended-family type in New Zealand is the third arrangement (Statistics New Zealand, 1998, cited in Poland et al, 2007, p. 2). As noted by Koloto and Katoanga (2007), a further eight forms can be seen in Pacific Island extended families, illustrating "the range of relationships that do exist with Pacific 'api' or homes" (p. 25).

Generally speaking, a number of positive experiences can be observed in extended-family arrangements. Living costs can be reduced, specifically rent and utilities such as phone, heating and lighting. There are more hands available to assist with housework, meals and the care and support of children. Having more adults around to engage with children and assist with homework and after-school activities can make for easier parenting, as parents are less pushed for time. With other adults in the house parents can also have more time to themselves without having to pay for babysitters, which can be expensive; and because there are more adults undertaking household chores, parents may have more time to engage socially with their children. Those who are working may also have better systems of support for children outside of school

hours, meaning they do not have to rely on paid childcare after school or during the holiday periods. All of these factors can go a long way towards reducing parental and family stress (Baker, 2001; Poland et al, 2007, p. 2). Families with children can benefit enormously from living with extended-family members. Grandparents can have a direct impact on "child development as sources of attachment, affection and knowledge" (Tinsley & Parke, 1984, cited in Poland et al, 2007, p. 7).

Conversely, living in an extended-family arrangement can also have negative effects. Crowding and conflict over household roles between the differing generations – for example, between mother and daughter – can be reasons for real concern. Furthermore, if members are not contributing to the smooth running of the household and one or two people are left to run and pay for the household and manage the children, regardless of whether there are other adults around, this can be an enormous source of discontent and conflict. This can result in adversity for members of that household, particularly children. There are also health issues associated with overcrowding (see Pene et al, 2009, p. 8).

2.2.3 Families and culture

Regardless of migration to New Zealand, and the growing number of Pacific Island people born in New Zealand, Pacific values, tradition and culture remain strong and active in most Pacific Island communities. Pacific peoples generally hold culture and family in high regard, in the homeland and whilst away (Barcham, 2005). The notion of family is the key driving force. Drawing on the case of Samoa, one needs to start with the 'āiga (family) rather than rank and status to understand fa'asamoa (Samoan culture) because the 'āiga "motivates all behaviour, including purposes involving rank and status" (Maiava, 2001, p. 79). Fa'asamoa means that everybody understands what is expected of them in the family, and of major importance is the notion of service: "service is the way family ties and feelings of identity are nurtured and is the major means for status-raising" (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2000, p. 99). It also ensures that people understand what is expected of them – "o Samoa o le atunu'u ua 'uma ona tifi" (Samoa is an already defined society), meaning every member knows their place, the expectations on them and their duties (Lay et al, 2000, p. 15).

With reference to Tonga, anga fakatonga is taken to mean culture or tradition. It is said to capture all that is Tongan in values and behaviour. The main points of anga fakatonga that have stayed strong throughout the generations are song, dance, gender roles and the importance of respect and commitment to the church and family.

As stated by the Families Commission (2005, pp. 63-64) in speaking about families in general:

> Families are sustained by their security in their cultural identity and by their belief in themselves and the value of the family unit. The skills they have acquired in managing time and resources, the access they have to services, as well as the quality of their interpersonal relationships and their understanding of the developmental needs of their children, also contribute to their wellbeing. Strengthening their hand in all these areas and promoting a social environment in which families have priority and can flourish will enable more families to achieve the successful outcomes to which they aspire.

Using the example of Samoan culture, fa'asamoa articulates belief in, and makes clear the importance of and value accorded to, the family unit. Fa'asamoa outlines the way in which families work together, obligations to wider kin networks and the community and ultimately family wellbeing. This commitment to family is what ensures the wellbeing and welfare of all members.

These points are also supported by the Families Commission (2005, pp. 7–8):

> Cultural values have a significant influence on the way families work together. They have an impact on the kinds of knowledge, values and attitudes that families seek to pass on from one generation to the next.

For many families, cultural values imply mutual obligations among wider kin networks that may enhance or constrain the aspirations of individual family members. Strong cultural connections can strengthen individual and family wellbeing, and families can work effectively as "nested wholes" (Families Commission 2005, pp. 7–8). This is understood to mean a socio-ecological approach to families, acknowledging that the elderly and others

both within and outside the family influence and nurture children and fulfil caregiving roles, both full-time and part-time. It is about considering the family in terms of wider and richer sets of connections than merely the household (Gander & Shepheard, 2004, p. 10). But in some situations, such as where families emigrate into a different majority culture, cultural values may produce stress, disruption and conflict between family members. It is not always possible or easy for family members to pass on knowledge, values and resources, or to provide continuity for other family members over time.

So while most Pacific Island families have clear cultural frameworks with which they can identify, it also needs to be noted that some are struggling to negotiate the changes resulting from being a Pacific Islander residing in New Zealand. Specifically, some families have issues with managing the challenges occurring between the first, second and third generations, and this plays out in the ways they engage and behave. This has ramifications for parenting – for example, whether children can challenge rules set out by parents if they feel they are unfair. To challenge parents or grandparents may be seen as behaving disrespectfully. Moreover, there appears to be some conflict between first-generation and second- or third-generation Pacific Islanders over commitments and obligations to family and tradition, cultural values such as service and respect, and commitment to cultural institutions such as the church and notions of spirituality (Tiatia, 1998).

The Families Commission (2005, pp. 7-8) has also noted, however, that "where families have strong spiritual beliefs, these are likely to be a source of family strength… Participation in social institutions such as churches, for example, may generate positive values for some family members." Attending church provides a social framework, which can enhance social support, extend cultural knowledge and experience and provide meaningful relationships at the personal and community level.

2.3 Reflection

The Families Commission highlights the importance of valuing parenting, noting that most parents do the best they can to raise their children in strong healthy families; this value placed on parenting should also apply to single mothers. Parenting happens within a

number of diverse arrangements, meaning there is a need for good information about different groups and types of families if good advocacy and sound planning for policymaking are to occur (Families Commission, 2008).

The above discussion has shown that while the structure and function of the Pacific Island family may be changing, the fact remains that the Pacific Island family is still the central point of social organisation, providing social networks, close interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging. The importance of culture is articulated through values and morals that are expressed and behaviours that are played out. The commitment shown towards tradition, obligations towards family members, the church and the wider community as service and respect are also evidence of this. The fact that many Pacific Islanders express concern for the breakdown of culture is also evidence that culture remains of utmost importance. The importance of culture and how it affects various family types and parenting styles therefore deserves greater understanding.

3.   METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As the intention of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and explore the meaning of parenting successfully within a cultural framework, a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate. This section outlines the methodological approach to the research, data collection and analysis methods, commencing with the ethics process.

3.1 Ethics application

An ethics application was made to Massey University and was granted on 17 September 2008 (see Appendix 1). The research was judged by the ethics committee to be of low risk, so a full human ethics application was deemed unnecessary.

Even though this research was deemed by Massey University to be of low risk, some organisations, such as those holding contracts with the District Health Board (DHB), forbid interviewing practitioners or even placing flyers advertising the study and calling for participants. The DHB has its own internal research policies that make gaining permission to undertake research more complex and lengthy.

Alongside procedural and institutional ethics requirements, and the requirement to gain informed consent and ensure confidentiality, of equal importance is the idea that for many cultural groups, ethics is not something separable from everyday life. For example, reciprocity sits at the core of Samoan society, and to be reciprocal is therefore ethical behaviour. Filipo (2004, p. 184) argues that cultural practices which govern relationships must be considered. Examples include fa'aloalo (respect, politeness and reverence), loto mauālalo (being humble), momoli (providing assistance or expressing solidarity), alofa (compassion, love and concern), feālofani (getting on well with each other), 'āiga (kin group or family), feagaiga (agreement and relationships) and tautua (service). Adhering to the practices and principles which govern relationships is therefore fundamental to ensuring the research process

is ethical. Similar concepts can clearly be seen in many Pacific Island communities (also see Nabobo-Baba, 2006 with reference to Fiji; Helu-Thaman, 2003 with reference to Tonga).

3.2 Fieldwork preparation

As part of organising the ethics approval process and the fieldwork, specifically the data collection, various documents were prepared:

> an information sheet for participants, explaining the study and their rights as participants

> a participant consent form

> a covering letter and an information flyer, for mail-outs and hand deliveries to Pacific and community-based organisations

> community notices for papers and radio.

A mobile phone was also set up as a means of contact.

3.3 Participant recruitment

Participants were recruited in various ways:

> Community notices were placed in the local papers, the *Manawatu Standard* and the *Tribune*.

> A community notice was submitted to Niu FM, the Pacific radio station, and was read out over the week targeting each Pacific Island community.

> Covering letters and flyers were sent and hand delivered to various Pacific and community-based organisations and institutions around the Manawatu region, including Birthright, Whakapai Hauora (a charitable trust providing healthcare), the Samoan Assembly of God Church, Malamala Laititi (Tongan early childhood educators) and Massey University Pacific Fono. In most instances follow-up phone calls were made, with dialogue also occurring via email.

> Connections were made at the national level with those who had the relevant expertise to find potential key informants and give people the opportunity to be involved if they so wished.

While the approach to recruiting participants used a snowballing technique, where the researchers asked people to recommend key people for information-rich

cases, this occurred in a purposeful way rather than just one of convenience. We were presented with a wider initial sample and then sought to select 12 participants from this wider sample, thereby ensuring the most information of greatest utility: "purposeful strategic sampling can yield crucial information about critical cases" (Patton, 2002, p. 242).

3.3.1 Participants: single mothers

Demographic diversity was also sought during the recruitment of participants. Factors considered included the following:

> age

> level of formal education

> employment

> marital status (whether they had never married, or were widowed or divorced or separated – this was the only criterion that was fixed)

> level of income (paid employment or government support)

> geographical location (whether urban – living in the city of Palmerston North – or living in the surrounding rural areas of the Manawatu, including Foxton, Woodville, Shannon, Fielding, Levin or Wanganui)

> household arrangement (embedded in a wider family network, or living in a lone-household arrangement)

> ethnic identity (Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Niuean or Papua New Guinean).

This research interviewed a total of 12 single mothers who identified with a Pacific Island nationality. Two participants were in New Zealand temporarily while studying. Nine participants were born outside New Zealand, but all nine had permanent residency and had arrived in New Zealand sometime after the age of 12 but before the age of 25 years. The final participant was a third-generation New Zealander of Niuean background. The participants ranged in age from 20 to 46 years of age.

The ethnic breakdown of the participants was as follows:

> Samoan – three

> Fijian – two

> Tuvaluan – one

> Papua New Guinean – one

> Tongan – four

> Niuean – one.

The final participant, a third-generation Niuean New Zealander, belongs to a group (second-and third-generation) on which further research should occur. All the other participants had come to New Zealand for various reasons – to study, to visit family and to holiday, or with family as migrants. All but two now see New Zealand as their home base and refer to themselves as New Zealanders while still identifying as Tongan, Samoan or Fijian. Full characteristics of the participants interviewed can be seen in Table 1: Primary research participants (single mothers).

3.3.2 Participants: key informants

Five key informants were also interviewed (Table 2). The role of the key informant interviews was twofold. Firstly, they were interviewed because they were able to provide detailed information and thus a rich perspective on the topic, and opinions based on their knowledge about a particular issue. We sought their opinion on what constitutes being a successful parent, and what obstacles and systems of support single mothers may face and use. We also sought their expertise on what culture may have to offer to single parents. Key informants were people from the Pacific Island community (for example, an early childhood educator), or people working with single mothers (such as a midwife with a high percentage of Pacific Island mothers on her caseload), or people who worked primarily with single parents (for example, a social worker with the organisation Birthright). People with parenting expertise or cultural expertise were also sought, in particular people who were available to provide cultural advice during the research process and while the interview schedule was being developed. As stated before, while there were five different key informants, some covered several bases – for example, a Pacific person and an early childhood educator.

TABLE 1: Primary research participants (single mothers)

	Code	Age	Marital status	Whereabouts of partner	Level of education	Employment	Family type	Location of main family members	Number of children	Children in the H/H	Ethnicity	Generation since migration to NZ	Attends church	Recieves government support
1	A1	33	Divorced then separated, remains single	1. Unknown 2. Unknown	Degree	Social worker	Extended	Local Tonga	2 children 15 and 9 years old	2	Tongan	First generation, came with parents aged 22	Yes	Yes: WFF (Working For Familes)
2	B1	38	Separation due to migration	PNG	PGDip	Student	Single	PNG	2 children 4 and 2 years old	1	Papua New Guinean	First generation, came to NZ to study	Yes	No but NZAID (New Zealand Aid Student Scholarship)
3	S1	40	Separation due to migration	Tuvalu	PGDip	Student	Single	Tuvalu	3 children	2	Tuvaluan	First generation, came to NZ to study	Yes	No but NZAID
4	S2	43	Was in arranged marriage in Fiji before arriving in NZ. At 22 married then separated, remains single in NZ.	Local	Finished high school Fiji	At-home mother	Single	Fiji Australia	2 children 15 and 13 years old	2	Fijian Indian	First generation, came for a visit aged 25	No	Yes: DPB (Domestic Purposes Benefit)
5	K1	46	Divorced then separated, remains single. Came to NZ in early 20's	1. South Island 2. Unknown	Certificate	Student	Single	Samoa	3 children Adult children, and 11 years old	1	Samoan	First generation	No	Yes: DPB
6	K2	29	Separated, remains single	Local	Studying towards degree	Student	Extended	Local Tonga	5 children 9 years old to 10 months	5	Tongan		Yes	Yes: DPB
7	A2	33	Single adopted	N/A	PGDip	Early childhood teacher	Extended	Local Tonga	1 adopted child 8 years old	1	Tongan	First generation, came to NZ aged 18	Yes	Yes: WFF
8	S3	27	Never married, remains single	Local	Degree	Nurse	Extended	Local Samoa Australia	1 child 10 years old	1	Samoan	First generation, came to NZ aged 12	Yes	Yes: WFF
9	S4	46	Divorced, remains single	Unknown	Certificates	Caregiver	Single	Local Fiji	4 children 20, 18, 12 years old 1 child died at birth, would be 22	1	Fijian	First generation, came to NZ aged 20	No	Yes: WFF
10	K3	24	Never married, remains single	Local	Nil	At-home mother	Extended	Local	1 child 4 years old	1	Samoan	First generation, came to NZ aged 16	Yes	Yes: DPB
11	C1	40	Never married, remains single	Tonga or Auckland	Certificate	Secretary	Extended	Local Australia	1 child 14 years old	1	Tongan	First generation, came to NZ aged 12	Yes	Yes: WFF
12	S5	20	Never married, remains single	Local	Nil	At-home mother	Extended	Local	1 child 6 months old	1	Niuean	Third generation, grandfather came from Niue; mother also single mother	No	Yes: DPB

3.3.3 Cultural mentors

Two people were also designated as cultural mentors, one from the Tongan community (a woman) and one from the Fijian community (a man) (Table 2: Key informants). They gave guidance on the initial proposal, on the interview schedule and the pilot questions, on the process that was being followed in the middle of the project, and at the end to clarify interpretations of the findings. The third researcher, the Pacific researcher, also provided cultural expertise when it came to methodology and analysis.

TABLE 2: Key informants (including codes for feedback group and cultural mentors)

Code	Posistion
KI:B	Social worker, parenting organisation
KI:K	Educator, parenting organisation
KI:S	Independent midwife
KI:P	Support worker, parenting organisation
KI:A	Early childhood teacher
KI:FG	Focus group feedback session
KI:CM 1 KI:CM 2	Cultural mentors x 2 (Tongan woman and Fijian man)

3.4 Data collection

Data were primarily collected through one-to-one in-depth interviews, following a semi-structured outline. While the semi-structured interview questions had some predetermined order to ensure that the key areas were addressed during the interview, they also allowed for flexibility as to when a question might be asked. This allowed the interviewers to pick up on a thread or follow a lead that was relevant.

Open-ended questions were posed in order to stimulate discussion on the topics of inquiry and ensure that the voices of the participants were heard. This approach was considered to be the most effective way to make obvious the multiple voices of the research participants and their multiple realities, and also ensured that the participants held some control.

Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, and participants were provided with morning or afternoon tea and a $30 petrol or grocery voucher to compensate

for their time. The time and place of the interviews varied according to preferences of participants: some occurred in a participant's home and some at Massey University when participants preferred to concentrate on the discussion away from children. Some interviews also occurred outside of office hours or at weekends as was required. Most interviews were taped and notes were also taken during the interview process. Participants were offered a copy of their transcriptions and the opportunity to make adjustments, and none did.

Two participants and two key informants were not interviewed in person. Instead they responded via email because they wished to participate but did not have the time to be involved in the interview process. Responding by email meant they could answer the questions over a period of time as they were able.

3.5 Data analysis

The data were analysed following a process outlined by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, (1995). The process calls for close reading of and reflection on notes and transcripts, followed by analytic coding, where notes are first categorised into different themes, ideas and issues and subsequently re-examined according to a smaller number of central ideas. The central notion is that the process is not linear but is cyclical – it moves constantly between reading and coding and note-taking as ideas emerge and evolve. Focusing on the perspectives of the participants upholds the idea that they have expertise in the matter (Guba, 1990, p. 27). Various steps were taken to ensure the credibility of the findings, including seeking feedback from the participants. As mentioned earlier, a consultative feedback process with the local Pacific Island community was planned, alongside the advice of the cultural mentors.

Various secondary sources were used to analyse the data in terms of the findings, including government reports and policy, statistical reports, reports from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), academic publications and the popular media. The literature reviewed included sociology and social policy, feminist literature and health science. While the wider global literature was also accessed and reviewed, the New Zealand and Pacific literature was of particular focus and importance.

3.6 Group feedback process

The group feedback process was arranged to follow a Sunday church service. Invitations were given to the participants and the session was advertised with flyers in much the same way as the recruitment was, and with similar community agencies and people. Afternoon tea was also provided. Approximately 16 people attended the feedback group. Most of the participants did not attend for various reasons. Participants confirmed that they were happy with the process and the initial outcomes thus far. The feedback session was held at a Tongan church, and it is possible that this influenced who chose to attend.

A 20-minute PowerPoint presentation was given to the audience accompanied by handouts, articulating the rationale for the research, and the aims, objectives, methodology and initial findings. The session was also translated into Tongan. There was a good balance of gender and age, and positions ranged from church leader, academic, single mother and educator, to parents and grandparents. The forum was then opened up, and sound discussion occurred. Detailed notes were taken and the session was also taped (consent had been given for this). The feedback has been integrated into the findings of this report.

3.7 Limitations of the research

Given the small sample size, a limitation to this study is that the specific findings cannot be generalised to the wider population in the same way that population-based research or an epidemiological study can be. Additionally, the participants who expressed interest in being part of this study may have done so because they were articulate, had strong opinions and were comfortable with their approach to parenting and their experiences as single mothers, presenting further difficulties in generalising to the wider population. However, this is a qualitative study and the intention of qualitative research is to study people in their natural setting while attempting to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). The resulting research provides rich detail in terms of participants' voices. When these ideas are placed in the context of other studies[4], it is clear that the material that emerges out of this study holds relevance outside this small group of participants. It is also important to think about these findings alongside ideas articulated by the Ministry of Social Development – specifically, the importance of positive parenting as a key influence on child development, and how resilience might manifest itself or already exist within families (Ministry of Social Development, 2003; 2004). Finally, this research needs to be seen as a pilot study which can be built upon.

The fact that all but one of the participants were Pacific Islanders born outside of New Zealand may have some bearing on the results. To extend this research geographically outside of Palmerston North to Auckland or Wellington, where Pacific Island communities have a larger population-base and where single mothers may be born in New Zealand and may be less connected with a cultural framework, would be beneficial. It would be important to consider the same research questions with a much younger target group, such as single mothers aged 16 to 20. As noted in Section 3, Pacific Islanders are not a homogeneous group, and to really gain a more nuanced understanding of the importance of culture each cultural group needs to be explored in detail. Finally, given the specific geographical context (Manawatu Region, Palmerston North City) in which this study took place, the results cannot be seen as representative of other Pacific Island communities in New Zealand.

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4   For example, Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Report Two: 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, Martin von Randow. Families Commission Pasifika 1/09, November 2009. This study analysed changes in Pacific families, including family wellbeing indicators; and Pacific Families Now and in the Future: Report One: Changing Pacific household composition and wellbeing 1981–2006. Gerard Cotterell, Martin von Randow, Stephen McTaggart,

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Twelve women aged between 20 and 46 years of age and five key informants were interviewed for this pilot study. Analysis of the interview transcripts produced a number of themes, which will be presented with reference to the research questions. While the findings are discussed in the light of each research objective, there are notable overlaps, and sometimes a particular theme had relevance to more than one objective. The key question was:

What are some of the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and what is the importance of culture in framing these experiences?

There were four objectives:

1. Describe the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand.

2. Gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent'.

3. Gain an understanding of obstacles to and systems of support for successful parenting by Pacific Island single mothers (in particular, those systems that facilitate strengths and develop or maintain resilience).

4. Give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining and developing strengths and resilience.

4.1 The experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and their systems of support

4.1.1 Becoming a single mother

The process of becoming a single mother is varied. In this study there were nine participants who became single mothers through separation or divorce. Despite being currently single, all of these nine participants started the journey to parenthood in established relationships – even the youngest, who at the time of the research was 20 years of age. So five participants are separated or divorced, having been married, and four participants were in relationships planning marriage when their relationships broke down. Of the remaining three participants, B1 and S1 are separated geographically by migration but remain in relationships,

while A2, who has never been in a permanent relationship, adopted the child she is parenting.

Two of the participants who arrived in New Zealand in their late teens or early twenties found coming to New Zealand something of a 'culture shock', and they felt this was relevant to them becoming mothers. They stated that they had come from fairly controlled living environments, where they had attended faith-based schools or village schools, and family, such as older sisters, aunts or male cousins or brothers, would chaperone their social activities. Once in New Zealand they found themselves in a less restrictive environment:

> I came to New Zealand, my parents were already here – I came to study at Massey. It was a big culture shock. I [previously] went to an all-girls' school and 'the culture' was established there, the importance of family too. It was a good school, lots of responsibility as a young woman to learn the culture. I came from a very Christian family so it was a bit of a clash here in New Zealand. While I had had a big focus on culture in my life, the other side of me said 'oh, enjoy'. It was a bit of a muck-around year once I got here. I knew what my parents wanted me to do, but this is what I wanted to do and so I did it. (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

S4 also spoke about coming to New Zealand as an opportunity to enjoy oneself and a place to find some freedom:

> I came from a small village and it was my uncle who brought me over here. I found it hard to adjust to New Zealand, I didn't really feel like I was fitting in but I had some freedom too. I had my first boyfriend, he was from home, a Fijian guy, and then I fell pregnant. (S4: Fijian, 46 years old)

As mentioned, except for A2, B1 and S1, the participants started out in established relationships and for various reasons these relationships broke down. Reasons ranged from husbands or fiancés having affairs, to relationships not continuing because the family disapproved of the choice of partner:

> I met this guy from X, he was also studying here, doing an MBA. My father was okay with this but not my mum. He [my fiancé] came back from X for our wedding; we were going to get married but mum wouldn't let us get married, she was against this. So I thought well, so what, I will be with him anyway. I was planning to go back to X with him but then I

found out I was pregnant. My mum wanted me to have an abortion, she even sent me to Auckland, but I didn't do it. I just came back to Palmerston North and said I am keeping this baby. I thought about going to X to be with him but my parents wanted me to stay here. They said he should just come here and see the baby, but for me not to go there. (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

A1 goes on to recount that the father of her child, whom she had married, unbeknown to her, was also married in his home country, and thus was engaging in bigamy:

I was here in New Zealand and he was back home and just before my daughter turned one year old he came here. I didn't know he was married already …he had married back home a month after I had the baby. And then we got married in October of this same year. We were staying in this hostel in Wellington and he was out and I found this marriage certificate in his backpack. As soon as I saw this I was in shock. I called my family and they all banded together to help me. They came to get me and we changed address and reported it to the police. This is bigamy.

Some participants also spoke of having to leave a violent relationship or relationships where drugs and alcohol featured:

We don't really have that much to do with each other, his mates made it difficult, drinking and other stuff. He wasn't working so it put huge pressure on us. I don't really know what he is doing. But I have my mum and his family, they're there for me and baby. (S5: Niuean, 20 years old)

This is also seen in the case of K1, who spoke about the breakdown of her relationship with the father of her youngest child, an 11-year-old girl:

I just went. I have no relationship with her dad, he is gone. I don't know where he is, we lost contact. I had enough of all this drinking. I don't mind alcohol but there is no need to be with someone like that. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

K1 also had two children from a previous marriage, and the children (who are now aged 22 and 20) were living in the South Island with their father. This relationship had dissolved because her husband had an extramarital relationship:

My husband [father to K1's 22- and 20-year-old children] had an affair. This is why the marriage broke up. He had someone else in his life when I was married to him. I tried to make this work but you can't have your cake and eat it too. It was a difficult thing for me to form another relationship because the pain was still there. Even more so now [referring to the father of her 11-year-old child]. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

An extramarital affair was also noted as the reason for K2 and S2's marriages finishing:

I went to Tonga to visit family, and we [K2's parents, sister and all the children] came back early thinking it would be a surprise. Well, what a surprise for me. Hello, he was there with her. My dad was really calm, [but] me and the kids were crying, I felt such shame and such surprise. So I decided to take myself and my kids away from this lifestyle. I changed my circumstances and became a single mother: this was a good parenting decision. I'm happy, my kids are happy. I think he was dealing some drugs and drinking. It was a good decision. I took myself and my kids away from this before it could impact on us. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

The stress of caring for our special-needs daughter led to the breakdown of our marriage I think. My focus was on X so much and he had an affair. (S2: Fijian, 43 years old)

An independent midwife who over the years has had a high number of Pacific Island women on her caseload also noted that Pacific Island women were usually in established relationships when they conceived and when they gave birth:

In my experience women are generally not single when they have their baby. This tends to come later. (KI: independent midwife)

This point was also emphasised by a support worker from a local parenting organisation – that most Pacific Island women they engage with, in the first few years of the children's lives, tend to be in relationships:

Here at X we tend to see mainly Pākehā single mothers. The Pacific Island women that we see are generally in relationships and if they aren't they always have extended family support. Offhand I can only think of a few Pacific Island single mothers, that's not to say there aren't more, but, well, we

don't see them so much. (Key informant: support worker, parenting organisation)

As mentioned above, the only participant who was not in a prior relationship was not the biological mother of her child; she had in fact taken on the baby of a single mother straight after birth and was raising this child as her own:

> I have one son; he is adopted. His mum, a relative, gave birth in the hospital and then they separated the next day so he has been with me from birth. It is no different, the only thing is I didn't carry him for nine months but I still have to be the parent. (A2: Tongan, 33 years old)

Apart from A2, the participants in this study did not set out to be single parents. If we think also about the two participants separated through migration, the intention is usually to raise their children in households made up of two parents and other members.

4.1.2 Single parenting: a positive experience

Cultural perceptions about single mothers

Despite generally negative societal attitudes about single mothers, rather than being in a situation of isolation and marginalisation, on the whole the participants spoke about their parenting experience as a positive occurrence. They attributed their positive experience to the fact they were not labelled and judged as single mothers by their Pacific community in the longer term. Once family members came to terms with their pregnancy, any negative attitudes tended to settle down; their children were valued and they were not negatively labelled as single mothers by their community or family members:

> Regardless of being a single mother, in my family you're the darling of the family. (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

Values such as doing service, behaving respectfully towards one's parents and the community, attending church or contributing to social events and being committed to education typically overrode any prior 'wrongdoing'. Indeed, in some cases the participants were looked up to, and they were seen to be a resource for their extended family and the community.

Being more than a single mother: multiple roles

Despite the fact that single motherhood is not culturally condoned by most Pacific Island ethnic groups (Naseri,

2001, pp. 135–142; O'Meara, 1990, p. 105; Stewart-Withers, 2007, pp. 236–239), these participants continued to be positioned according to cultural frameworks and according to cultural values. They were still seen as granddaughters, daughters, eldest sisters, aunts, nieces, professionals, financial providers, church-group leaders, community leaders or students. The multiple roles held by Pacific women have been noted by other authors (see Koloto & Sharma, 2005). The participants also saw themselves in terms of their multiple parenting roles:

> I am a parent who wears many hats. I'm a mother, a father, a doctor. I make sure the kids are looked after when they are sick. I am a counsellor, a police woman, a teacher, an accountant, a time-keeper and a student. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

The extended family as a system of support

The importance of being embedded within the family, often having a co-residential living arrangement amongst family members, made the experience easier and therefore positive. As mentioned in the literature review, the extended family is a normal arrangement for many Pacific Island families, although it is not usually considered normal for Pākehā. All of the women in this study who had extended family in New Zealand named family as their main support, but they also observed that the type of extended family they drew upon was one which was dynamic and fluid. The family was able to adjust to meet the various needs of members. As noted by the Families Commission (2005, p. 7), "the importance of a family structure that can adapt to or provide for the needs of all family members as the family moves through various stages" is fundamental.

Because of the inclusive, fluid and dynamic nature of their extended families, participants received support with living arrangements, day-to-day activities such as household chores, with parenting and with financial assistance. S3, a 27-year-old woman with a 10-year-old son, related:

> I live with my parents and my brother. They always helped with my son, especially when I was at UCOL [a tertiary training institute] and when I was doing my clinical placements. I think this is just what the Samoan family does to help each other. It's not unusual to live with your family. I work shift work now so they are always here. There is always

someone at home to get him from school. My mum finishes work at 2.00pm every day. (S3: Samoan, 27 years old)

K2 noted:

My sister comes and picks up the kids from school and then I can stay late to do my study. I might come home about 6.30 to 7.00 o'clock, she is really good. She has food ready, the kids are bathed. At the moment my situation is where the greater need is … with a baby, my study and no husband. It won't always be like this. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

When my baby was first born I lived with mum. Later I set up my own place and my cousin came to stay with me. Mum has moved in and out of living with me a couple of times. (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

K2 went on to say that her family was made up of three households – the households of her mother and father and her sister, as well as her own:

Our household is about our family rather than a particular household; it is my sister's house, my house and then my mum and dad's house. My children move between these households – not in a crazy way though. Like the younger kids stay at mum and dad's every Wednesday and Thursday night because of my classes. My sister is here maybe every Monday night because I am home later. Stuff like this. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

Participants also spoke about the ways in which parents adapted their own lives to accommodate their needs and the needs of children:

I take my hat off to my mum – she moved her own hours of work to the morning to be home for my kids after school. (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

It is clear that the parenting experience was made easier and more positive by this connection with family and the family's ability to adapt to the circumstances.

An important aspect of a successful extended family is that it needs to be positively cohesive, because not all family cohesion is beneficial. As mentioned in the literature review, families can also be enmeshed and dysfunctional. Extended families that supported participants well tended to have a shared belief system and a common direction shaped by culture. Members were also clear about family roles:

We are clear in my family about the roles of each member. My brother plays a particular role, so does my dad. In terms of my son, so does my cousin and nephew. Overall my father makes the family decisions and I accept. In terms of my son my father often says you need to do this and this – he just looks to guide me. He tells me try this and this. And then I do because I think, well, I am so close to him it takes someone a bit on the outside to see another perspective. (A2: Tongan 33 years old)

A clear means of communication was also considered important to family functioning. Communication was argued to be effective if things worked in terms of not only everyday family functioning and decision-making, but also when dealing with crises and seeking to manage conflict.

The majority of participants who had family members in New Zealand thought there was a strong emotional bond between various members that gave them a collective strength. This strength either helped them to collectively meet a challenge or gave them support as an individual to rise and meet a challenge.

Finally, the women talked about having hopes and dreams, and being driven ("I am driven to see another human, a little human be successful, this drives me" – A2: Tongan, 33 years old), persevering, and being confident of doing a good job ("I am doing a better job than many others, many two-parent families" – also A2). Gaining positive recognition or feedback from family members relating to their hopes and dreams and the job they were doing in turn also gave them drive, helped them persevere and helped them feel confident.

Support by a male relative

Participants also spoke of the importance of male involvement, whether it be by the biological father or another male relative, such as their own father, a brother, an uncle or a cousin. None of the participants in this study spoke of male involvement coming from a new partner; rather, it was always a relative or the child's father. This male involvement occurred through relatives either living permanently or temporarily in the household, or through regular contact. Male involvement occurred either directly or indirectly. Direct involvement was when men sought to actively engage in the children's daily lives. This was done through caring for the children, disciplining them, teaching and

learning or provision of other support, such as attending rugby games or events at school, or taking children to extra-curricular activities such as swimming or karate. Indirect involvement refers to men undertaking tasks such as lawn-mowing, or a certain role such as providing economic resources which would alleviate pressure being felt by the participants:

> Sure he does not have a father, but I have my father, my brother and my nephew. In the beginning my brother would step in. I was only getting $150 a week allowance when I was studying so my brother would pay for formula, diapers, electricity. He just did it, and it didn't matter how many times I would ask, he just did it because we are a close-knit family, especially us kids. My son to my brother is always number one. For his first birthday my brother and his wife did everything. They said to me, don't worry about his birthday party, we will throw it. They did the cake, the food, everything. He knows how to play his role as an uncle and he plays it well. Also in our culture you can't talk to certain people about things to do with your body. My son can't talk to my brother because he is my brother. Generally you would ask your husband or partner to do these things with your son, you know, about physical or private body things. My father or my nephew takes on this role. We all know our roles, so in fact my son has many men in his life. (A2: Tongan, 33 years old)

However, male involvement of relatives has to be understood in relation to a parenting style where a woman and her father, uncle or brother were not in conflict (see discussion to come about applying reasonable boundaries and negotiating with one's parents to let children have more of a voice), or where parents were able to work with children in a productive way rather than a destructive one (see also upcoming discussion in Section 4.2.4 about maintaining balance and harmony through not engaging in conflict with ex-partners and husbands):

> It is hard to bring up a child by yourself, on your own. I can see the difference between the child brought up with more than one voice and one which isn't. To have more than one voice in their life is important. For my kids it was important to have a good male voice, which was their father. But we had to work at this. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

Connections with institutions or groups as systems of support

This research has shown the extended family to be a key protective factor for Pacific Island single mothers, and what seemed to make the parenting experience easier and more positive was involvement with and connections to culturally-based institutions, such as the church, Pacific-run education centres, Māori health providers, cultural groups and providers of tertiary education which were based on a cultural framework, such as the wānanga, or which provided a place to gather such as a 'fale' room.

Women sought these organisations and spaces out because they argued that they were more likely to find others like themselves, and to be less judged and be given greater understanding and support about their situation as a single mother:

> I use the healthcare services at Whakapai Hauora. The costs are lower and they let you pay it off. (S5: Niuean, 20 years old)

> The staff are very supportive at UCOL. I can bring my daughter to the 'fale' room. They understand. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

> I go to the wānanga because of the hours. They seem to understand. My course starts at 9.30am and finishes at 2.30pm. I have some time to also do some of the other things that are important. Like the dropping off at school and picking the kids up and taking them to activities. Most of my class are mothers … so yeah, we're happy about the class times. That's why I chose the wānanga. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

Early childcare centres, specifically, Pacific Island childcare centres, were seen as fundamental to women's ability to juggle work or study along with parenting:

> I used the Tongan Early Childcare Centre on Vogel Street. My girl heard the language from home, all about her was stuff that was Tongan. She saw the pictures, clothing and handcrafts. She heard the music, would sing the songs and she also learnt about dancing. She learnt about the routine, the values that are important to us as Tongans. She learnt about rules; this helped me at home as a mum. (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

Early childhood centres are fundamental to the lives of Pacific parents. Yet we are often poorly funded and rely hugely on our communities to support us. You might get a lesser ratio in terms of teachers. We really rely on our Pacific community. The government packages to parents can be useful to support parents who support us. We provide so much. We offer a language immersion space; we offer care and education in our language. We seek to emphasise not only the experience of the child but culturally specific experiences. We engage in cultural-related activities such as music, dance and song. The environment is supported with lots of visual things, charts, pictures, posters, handcrafts and clothing. We teach about the spiritual aspects, religious practices. We teach values – such as respect and helping each other. We are about caring but also about providing discipline, rules and routine. We encourage the presence of family members, grandparents and parents can stay and they do stay, sometimes they stay all day. What we provide is interconnection of education with the community and family. (Key informant: early childhood teacher)

These cultural connections are also reiterated clearly in Section 4.2.5.

As previously mentioned, the women spoke of being connected to various faith-based institutions such as the church and church associations like youth groups and mothers' groups. In most instances women were regularly attending church, and they saw it as making a positive contribution to immediate family life. Religious involvement seemed to encourage supportive and responsive relationships because through attendance at church people found themselves to be better connected:

> There were times when I would find things stressful being on my own with no family nearby. So I started going to church, so as to belong somewhere. We would do things together. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

These connections also gave them an opportunity to socialise and reinforced their shared culturally-bound value system. They also found increased access to social support or childcare through these links to others. Those who did not attend church regularly still continued to have faith in the church or at least faith in spirituality:

> Yes, I am a Seventh Day Adventist. I am not really hugely committed to attending church but I am still very spirituality orientated. For sure church is good because it helps us grow but sometimes I just stay home with my girl and we do our own thing. My commitment is to helping people and in return they help me. This is what being a good person is about. This is what being spiritually connected is all about. (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

Those women who did not have the family or cultural connections were more inclined to be connected to government or community services for support, such as Work and Income New Zealand, Plunket, community-based playgroups or Birthright. The experiences women have connecting into state systems of support will be discussed in more detail later in the report in terms of obstacles to parenting (Section 4.3). The general perception was that family offered a more stable connection and that other systems of support were only sought if there was no other option:

> Even though my husband left I am still a good mother. This I attribute to my parents, to my sister, not to any institution, not any services out there. The services will go away, they don't stay forever but your family will always be there for you. Every day they are there for you and with you. This is just what the Tongan family does. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

Seeking assistance

As will be discussed in detail shortly, being a successful parent was taken to mean positioning one's child as the primary focus, but this primary positioning should not occur at the mother's own expense. The participants thought it was important to find ways to gain space and engage in self-care, and for this to occur one may sometimes need to seek assistance or utilise support:

> Many parents are doing it 24/7, 52 weeks of the year. It is important for parents to be able to get respite care from children; this can take the pressure off and make a significant difference for many families. Particularly if a family does not have good family supports. It allows for breathing space and allows the family unit to be stronger. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

Seeking assistance and utilising support could be understood in terms of accessing formal institutions and figures such as Work and Income New Zealand,

Plunket, Parents as First Teachers (PAFT), GPs, health providers, early childhood education centres, the church or less 'formal' institutions such as young mothers' groups or family and friends. It is important to note that the family can also be considered a formal institution. This is not something that was explored in detail for this research, however. What did come through was that commitment to the family and family members is formalised by cultural values:

> To behave like a Tongan person is important. Every time, even if we disagree, my family will come. They have an obligation to me. Call it love. When I had my husband I could rely on him but now that I have no one to rely on I have them. It doesn't matter if we had a fight yesterday, if I need, say, my sister, she will come. (K3: Tongan, 24 years old)

> I have always stayed connected with my family. Even when married I moved when my family did. We were in Auckland and then when my family came here I came too. I have others looking out for me. I have an uncle in Australia, he is always calling … come here, he tells me. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

> My own parents needed this extended family support. My mother was very sick and for four years we stayed in Tonga separated from our own parents. Maybe it looked like we were neglected but they were always thinking of us. Having to do all this travelling from Wellington to Auckland with mum being sick all the time, needing treatment, they thought it was better for us to be in Tonga. Then we all came to New Zealand because they saw the opportunities and thought there could be a better future for us as kids. It is proof that the foundation was set by our parents, I'm doing well and so is my brother. (A2: Tongan, 33 years old)

> It is our culture to help each other with parenting. The extended-family living arrangement is part of our culture. While I am here in New Zealand, because my family is not here I rely on my friends and fellow students. I also use email and the phone for support. But my extended family is clearly the most important source of support despite the distance. (S1: Tuvaluan, 40 years old)

As noted by S1 in the last quote, however, this doesn't mean the family is always present in New Zealand.

This idea is supported by a number of researchers who argue that the Pacific family generally knows no geographical boundaries (Hau'ofa, 1993, Spoonley, 2003, Stewart-Withers, 2007):

> Once when I was really sick I rang my mother in Samoa and my sister came [from Samoa] to be with me. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

> My cousin came from Tonga, my mum sent for her to come and help me with the baby. I would just pay her a koha. She was a young girl. She went back when she got married. (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

Moreover, the support that one could command was not always about immediate family connections; rather, it could just be about cultural links:

> I get support from my wantoks [tribe], who are ready to help me, especially with babysitting my child when I need it. (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

> I might call a friend from the Samoan church to be with me. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

> I'd bring him [my child] with me to uni; I would attend class and leave him with my friends, mainly Pacific people, and then they would go to class and I would do the same [look after their kids]. (A2: Tongan, 33 years old)

With regards to more formal processes of support and making reference to her special-needs daughter, S2 spoke of drawing upon community organisations such as Birthright, and the opportunities offered by them, including financial assistance, legal or parenting advice, social support and Birthright-run camps. She also spoke of utilising respite care, to which she has access 18 days a year through Supportlinks.[5]

It could be observed that most of the participants seemed to have a greater reliance on family-based institutions of support than on Western institutions. They relied upon family or the wider Pacific community over organisations such as Plunket. This was arguably because their families can be relied upon because of cultural values.

Every woman interviewed who had family in New Zealand remained very well connected to them

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5   Supportlinks is an organisation which helps people to clarify the help they may need (through a needs assessment) and then selects the type of services that will provide this help (service co-ordination). Types of help may include home support services (home help and personal care), residential care or carer relief.

and saw family as their main source of support. Those without family were more connected to government or community services, many of which were Pacific Island services. One key informant suggested that first-generation single mothers tend to use their family system as their primary support and that second-generation Pacific Island mothers may be more connected to government or community services for support. This was something that research participants were concerned about:

> Everyone here has experienced using family as their main support to look after children. We [Tongans] need to pass on the culture/family support to the second generation. How to pass on the knowledge and the values to the second generation is something we all worry about. We need a programme to pass skills and values on from the first generation to the second generation. (Key informant: feedback group)

4.2 What constitutes being a successful parent

Those working for parenting organisations argued that just like two-parent families, most single mothers are seeking to provide the best experience they possibly can:

> Most of the single parents whom we have contact with are attempting to provide the very best experience they can for their children, within their means, materially and culturally. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

> For the most part parents are trying very hard to provide their children with full lives. This very much enmeshes with what we do here in our organisation. That even those children of single parents have the birthright to a full life. For the most part parents are trying hard to clothe as best they can, feed as best they can, and provide holiday and after-school experiences as best they can. To say otherwise would be wrong. (Key informant: social worker, parenting agency)

The participants in this study indicated that they thought successful parenting was made up of the following requirements: positioning one's child as the primary focus; applying reasonable boundaries; self-growth and improvement for the parent; seeking assistance and utilising support; maintaining balance and harmony; and cultural connections.

4.2.1 Positioning one's child as the primary focus

All of the participants saw their experiences of parenting to be at times 'hard work', while at the same time being rewarding. All of the women said that being a successful parent meant making their children their primary focus, and while it could be argued that this is something that most parents might say, when the women spoke about their lives this prioritisation of children was also evident.

There was a clear focus on doing what was in the best interest of the child. Participants said that to be a successful parent is to be available, be connected, have energy, maintain harmony, make sacrifices, have good communication and establish relationships (such as making oneself known to the teacher).

Positioning one's child as the primary focus also meant focusing on the wellbeing and welfare of one's child, with wellbeing understood in a holistic sense. This means that children are physically well or illness is managed smoothly, and they participate in extracurricular activities, have formed strong healthy relationships with peers and are doing well academically.

This idea can be seen in the case of S2, where she has one child who has had a serious illness and another child who has special learning needs:

> I know I have done a good job because of the time I have spent with my daughter. My daughter X is special-needs. When she was a pre-schooler I taught her games, basic addition and basic language skills. I just repeated things over and over again, persisting until X would remember them. I made games with food and toys to help her learn. I think the fact that I was placing our daughter first led to the breakdown of the marriage. He couldn't cope. (S2: Fijian, 43 years old)

Being a successful parent also meant children were well-mannered, attended church and understood cultural concepts; and also that they knew their culture (for example, they had opportunity to learn the language), and would one day have the opportunity to travel home, if they had not already.

Successful parenting therefore was also about provision of opportunity:

> I have one uncle and aunt back in Tonga. We still have land. We go back to Tonga when we can afford it. If we could afford it we would go every month, I

am sure we would. This is something I would love to do for my kids. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

We have been home four times [to Fiji]. I took the kids home when they were young. It was really so that they are able to fit in [with our people and the culture] later. (S4: Fijian, 46 years old)

They knew they were doing a sound job because of the feedback they would receive from others:

I would get feedback from the community. They would ask 'Are you X's mum?' They would say 'Oh what a lovely good boy.' I would feel so proud. (S4: Fijian, 46 years old)

4.2.2 Applying reasonable boundaries

All of the participants spoke about the need to have boundaries in place for their children in terms of expected behaviour and manners; doing homework; TV-watching and access to a Playstation or XBox; bedtimes; when children socialised, with whom and for how long; consumption of junk food; and contributing to household chores. They also clearly recognised that the boundaries and expectations placed on children needed to be reasonable. While most of the women interviewed saw their own parents as role models, and indeed looked to them for parenting advice, they also sought to develop what they thought to be good about their own upbringing while modifying what was not so good.

The approach to parenting that many of the women seemed to take was authoritative. As discussed earlier in the report, 'authoritative' parenting, Baumrind (1978) argues, is a parenting style where parents are neither punitive nor aloof; rather they develop rules and boundaries for their children and are affectionate with them. Authoritative parenting is said to be a child-centred approach that holds high expectations of maturity and compliance with parental rules and directions, while allowing for an open dialogue about those rules and behaviours between the parent and child. Authoritative parenting encourages children to be independent while at the same time placing limits and controls on their actions and behaviours. This approach enables children to learn and gain independence through safe decision-making and supported problem-solving:

I think for me personally, it's about letting my children know and understand that there is always a right and wrong way to do things in life ... even if it is a small thing ... like putting that piece of bread

on a plate for health/hygiene reasons. I want them to also know and understand that the power of choice is theirs and that every decision that they will make in life has a consequence and they must be prepared to face the consequences of their decisions. Children, being children, don't know what is right and wrong and it is up to us as parents to ensure that they know the difference from the time they are able to listen and follow instructions. If they can differentiate this ... then I think that is what successful parenting is. (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

Some of the participants who did not initially practise this style of parenting had made connections with organisations such as PAFT, Parent Centre or Birthright and undertaken courses in order to engage in self-growth and improvement (see Section 4.2.3 below).

However, negotiating the boundaries around what is reasonable and what is expected in terms of behaviours and manners and the position of children within the family home is something that can cause conflict in the extended family:

Violence happens between the first and second generations because of these misunderstandings. It is so important to have ways to bridge the gap between them and us. I have to say to my own mother 'Mum wake up! Mum, this is not Tonga.' (Key informant: feedback group)

The difficulty of negotiating differences in parenting style was noted by another key informant:

The parenting of many Tongans of the first generation is based on Tongan culture – to instruct once, not to have to ask many times. For single parents who grew up in Tonga, with parents who had this approach but who are now bringing up children in New Zealand, this must be difficult. What can be done to bridge this gap? (Key informant: feedback group)

The participants in this study are therefore finding themselves in the position where they have to use negotiation skills to pave the way for a different parenting approach from that delivered by their own parents. Specifically, they tend to negotiate for their own children to have more of a voice:

I said to Mum, 'Look Mum, times are changed, we have to be a little more flexible about our parenting, children do have a voice and rights … so we have to take time to listen.' (A1: Tongan, 33 years old)

Many reiterated that regardless of divergent cultural perspectives, some sense of flexibility with the older, more traditional, ways of parenting is required if parenting is to work well:

> Successful parenting is one where there is flexibility. Flexible parenting is, for example, letting children take a toy to church, allowing children some time to play with friends as well as doing chores. (Key informant: feedback group)

Despite the different perspectives, participants still saw their own parents and grandparents as role models:

> My own mother [is a role model] because I think she tried her best to teach me right from wrong in the context of the culture where I come from ...but as I reflect back now ... the Christian values and principles that were also taught to me [guide me], when I was little...One principle that I remember is to do good to all people, even when they hurt you … (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

> I was brought up by my mother. She played a very important role in our lives. With six kids she would grow taro, clean, teach us what was right and good according to our culture. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

Finally, being a successful parent does not mean that in positioning one's children to be the primary focus, one neglects one's own position. Many of the women in this study emphasised the importance of self-focus. This was expressed as self-care and self-direction – for example, undertaking learning to improve one's future prospects.

4.2.3 Self-growth and improvement

One way in which participants saw they were able to take control of personal development was through enrolment in tertiary learning. As seen in Table 1: Primary research participants (single mothers), four participants were engaged in some type of formal learning and were pursuing some kind of qualification. Others had gained a formal qualification such as social work or nursing after becoming a single mother.

This keenness to learn was also observed by those working for parenting agencies:

> In my experience of working with single mothers, single parents tend to embrace learning and will often try anything and everything. Many who I see are looking to improve their lives. (Key informant: support worker, parenting organisation)

The women had also sought to extend themselves in terms of learning about parenting:

> The single parents that I have contact with … most are open to the idea of upskilling, doing the Game Programme, a 10-week communication programme. Also we have a role-playing programme, which is helpful for disrupting those scripts/roles that members of a family might take on which are problematic. Upskilling in terms of parenting is not something that we see middle-class parents seeking to do much. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

> You just have to see the enthusiasm from parents wanting to give their children opportunity. I have seen full-on parenting and a desire to learn. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

> The parents that we see are really keen to participate in their children's learning. They are willing to learn to help their kids learn. This is the great thing about our environment. It is so clearly linked to home and family, and culture. (Key informant: early childhood educator)

Being a successful parent means knowing when and where to seek assistance and utilise support. This is articulated in the following statement made by K2:

> It was a very good parenting choice for me to be away from my children at times to get this study done. You put their needs above yours by getting help [instead of trying to do it all yourself]. Instead I could keep my kids here with me and I would be looking good and if you leave them you look bad but you know it is the best thing for them. Maybe some people might look at you and think you are selfish all this time being away from the kids, but it is not forever and you are not doing it for yourself, you are doing it for your family. I miss my kids but I just have to put the study first; do the study for my kids. You know your kids are looked after and loved. It's not like you are leaving them on the street. You know they are safe and that you are doing this for them but also for you. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

4.2.4 Maintaining balance and harmony

Maintaining balance and harmony within the family unit is also important to successful parenting. The participants tried to ensure that there was some sense of stability in the environment regardless of their

being single parents. This was partly done, as already mentioned, by having clear rules, boundaries and routines. It was also achieved by making choices that would not upset the family milieu. The women spoke about thinking twice about new relationships with men:

> It was hard for me to even think about another relationship because of the pain. I just sought to focus on these kids and bring them up correctly, make sure there was enough food on the table; the chores were done, this sort of thing. (S2: Fijian, 43 years old)

Participants also spoke about relocating away from any chaos to ensure stability and harmony, and seeking to repair relationships with the fathers of their children. Having poor relations with the father of one's children or his family could mean that you were always in conflict in front of the children, or that you might make bad choices because you made your decisions based on emotions rather than what was in the best interest of the children:

> When you feel angry you can make decisions that are based on your needs rather than the kids' just to get at him. I know it is important for them to have a good relationship with their father. Until he had this affair he was a good man. When my son wanted to go and live with his father at 12 I wanted to be spiteful and not allow this, but he was in need of a father figure, so he went to his father. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

Turmoil with an ex-husband or partner was noted to be an obstacle to successful parenting. It was therefore important for the women to have healthy and meaningful connections.

4.2.5 Having cultural connections

The participants argued that being a successful parent meant you had taught your children to engage in meaningful and lasting relationships and connections. Connections could be understood in terms of cultural values, such as fa'asamoa, or knowing where they were from; whether from Niue or Fiji, for example. Language and making plans to visit home in the future were seen to be important.

Being culturally connected was also enmeshed with notions of being spiritually connected. To be spiritually connected was understood as making links to the Pacific community, but it was more explicitly linked to the church, and particularly behaving in a Christian

manner and attending church. To see Christianity and spirituality as separate from culture was argued to be impossible.

Another indicator of successful parenting was that the participants utilised cultural connections and ensured they were maintained or strengthened, and that cultural values were understood. This could be done through Pacific Island pre-schools, faith-based primary or secondary schooling, and belonging to youth groups or mothers' groups that were faith-based, and linked to a Pacific Island ethnicity:

> I have my two-and-a-half-year-old daughter enrolled in a Samoan pre-school/daycare, which also provides transport for pick-up and drop-off for a dollar a day. This really takes the pressure off me since I don't have to worry about getting her to and from school. I don't have a private vehicle. Enrolling her also in this Samoan pre-school has really helped my child settle down and get used to this [New Zealand] environment. I am thankful for the Pacific Island setting here because when we arrived she was fearful of the white-skinned people we met all the time … she would literally hide her face from them. But after a few weeks in school she slowly adapted, and is now used to the white-skinned people around her. (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

> The church environment is very supportive. I have made some good friends within the church community. They follow up on me … ringing or texting, seeing when I need help. (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

Women also cited the importance of being involved in cultural ceremonies, which gave them a sense of self-worth:

> I used to spend time with church groups. The singing and dancing was great. I was able to speak my language. I was part of a cultural group and we did this presentation for the radio, they had a competition to win a trip to Samoa. It was great to be able to represent my culture and feel like I belonged. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

They saw a sense of belonging as important to successful parenting, and practices such as attending family gatherings and cultural gatherings, and having some understanding about the language, were thought to facilitate belonging.

By maintaining cultural connections they reinforced central values:

> PNG culture emphasises that the extended family still plays a very important role in the life of our children. But sadly this is slipping away in these hard economic times and especially for those living in the cities/towns, there is the tendency to become more individualised and focus on the nuclear family. Here in New Zealand, I make an effort to be close to some of the PNG families as well, where my child can still feel the importance of the PNG extended family... (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

> I think one of the cultural norms or practices that I really admire in PNG is the emphasis on teaching life skills to your children so that they can survive in their given environment, ie teaching them to fish, hunt, make gardens, build canoes etc. In a way, I am saddened because I see that my own children may not have this opportunity as they are growing up, mostly living a city life… Here in New Zealand, I try to tell stories to my child about fishing or making gardens and sometimes just try to pretend that we are making a garden ... we use her vegetable toys ...and try to plant this in the soil... (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

Conversely, S2, who identified as Fijian Indian, drew upon her culture in order to teach her daughters another way. S2 came to New Zealand following the breakdown of an arranged marriage in Fiji when she was 25 years old, and she had a desire for her girls, who were both born in New Zealand, to be 'Kiwi' and to be immersed in what she saw as 'Kiwi culture'. While she still drew upon particular Fijian-Indian values, she argued that for her, life and culture in Fiji had been about isolation, hard work and sadness.

4.3 Obstacles to good parenting

A number of possible obstacles to good parenting were considered.

4.3.1 Lack of money and resources

Firstly, a lack of money or resources was seen to be a significant obstacle to parenting. Without money parents felt they could not support their children in reaching their fullest potential in extra-curricular activities and school activities. Some women were also unable to afford a vehicle, so they were reliant on public transport or assistance from friends in times of

need. This was more-so for the women who did not live in an extended family environment, where the cost of running a vehicle could be shared. K1 spoke about having to plan to do her groceries – it could never be an impulsive venture. They would catch a bus to the supermarket and then pay for a taxi home. The cost of the taxi was factored into the grocery bill. This is the only way they were able to manage the weekly shop:

> Financially it is a struggle at times. We can't afford a car, so we take the bus. The UCOL bus is free. We use a taxi once a week for groceries, but still this costs $12 NZD. My main income is the DPB; we take the rent out first but it is hard to stretch a dollar. We use food money sometimes to pay bills and for school activities. Over the years I have done community work and got support from vouchers. I might cook for people at the church once a week and we get a feed for the night. They might give me a gift voucher for some groceries. Sometimes you have to ask for help, for firewood or for clothes. I would go to an organisation that can help when I need it, especially because I don't have this family support. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

While being carless was generally not a major issue, it did mean that activities such as grocery shopping took more time, and it did become a problem when the weather was very bad and when someone got sick. This issue can be seen clearly in S2's case. She spoke about when her daughter was in hospital for an extended period of time and she was based 30 minutes outside of town, and was therefore very reliant on her friends to take her to the hospital.

S3 spoke of her experience of being burgled and of having no insurance to claim anything back. Money became more of a concern when there are unexpected expenses such as new shoes, doctor's bills or a household problem such as the washing machine breaking down:

> Money is not the be all and end all. But [being without] it certainly makes parenting more difficult. It would be stupid to say if you're rich you're a good parent but clearly if your energy is on struggling to make ends meet, put food on the table and you have an unexpected cost it can make parenting more difficult. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

This lack of money was also made more difficult in many instances because gaining financial support from

agencies was complex. This will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.2 Social services: approaches and attitudes

Specifically linked to finances was the pressure felt by some of the participants because of the Working for Families policy, which supports families on low incomes where a parent is working. This made it seem to them as if it was more acceptable to society to be working than to be a full-time parent. This could be seen also in the ways in which some agencies tried to deal with single mothers when they were seeking help:

> WINZ, well, they pressure you sometimes. Well, they are good if they think you want to get off the benefit. But I want to stay at home. I always wanted to be an at-home mother. Is it my fault my boyfriend left? Because he left I now can't stay at home and raise my kid. I now have a Pacific case worker and at least things are a little better. I think I can do this, bring her up well. I love doing this. (S5: Niuean, 20 years old)

> It is a struggle to get anything from WINZ. I think WINZ is only a place that helps you when you are a cripple. Really, really, sick – gone pale then they will dish out some money but other than that then don't bother, don't waste your time. (K3: Samoan, 24 years old)

As mentioned by S5, the perception among the participants was that if single mothers are studying or seeking work then many organisations are more willing to help, but if they are not then the agencies are less supportive:

> There is certainly good support for retraining but if women were wanting to stay at home and 'do nothing' so to speak, then they are looked upon less favourably and organisations are less willing to accommodate requests. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

> The clients that get the best support and response are those who are studying. This is because it is a finite period of support. Like, if I'm a second-year nursing student, therefore WINZ and other organisations can see that person will come off the DPB in time. (Key informant: social worker parenting organisation)

Some key informants working with single parents noted that there is a push by social services to see parents as

contributing: also seen in the case of S5 who wished to stay at home with her children, but felt there was a push to be part of the workforce:

> If you are married you are entitled to stay at home but if you are a single parent then you are not. This feels discriminatory. (S5: Niuean, 20 years old)

Various comments made by some of the participants and key informants indicated that Working for Families has pros (such as subsidised childcare and accommodation supplements) and cons; some felt that government policy has forced women into the workforce when they should be able to stay at home should they wish to.

As noted in earlier discussions, many participants only used outside agencies and state support when they felt they had no other option, (that is, they did not have the extended family to draw upon):

> I don't normally go to WINZ to ask for anything, only when it is a medical issue and I am desperate. If it is about money they say go see a budget advisor; sometimes they even try and push you out the door. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

> When you are worried or scared to go to see these people, the ones who should help, this is an obstacle to living. The doctor's bills were piling up …it is very stressful. (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

This contests the assumption often portrayed in the popular media that single mothers are primarily looking for handouts. Yet in many instances there remains in society and among some social service providers a mentality of only helping the 'deserving poor'. Some of the key informants and participants related that some agencies seem reluctant to give material things 'labelled as handouts', arguing it creates dependency. At times people may just need handouts:

> An obstacle to good parenting for single parents is the way things have shifted in social work, especially in relation to welfare provision. We have had a paradigm shift in that we now talk about empowerment, which translates to mean we can't give people things. It is seen to be rescuing, patronising and creating dependency. Yet there is still space to give material support. Just because you give people things it shouldn't diminish the agency of parents and children. Food bank, petrol vouchers etc have been done away with in the

name of a more modern up-to-date social work response but what people really need at times is a simple response without too many hoops to have to jump through. When families are really struggling just that injection can give them renewed energy. So quite the opposite can happen; rather than reducing people's agency when people are placed in a bracket and the only way they are going to get anything given to them is by doing a whole lot of crawling about, jumping through hoops, it really reduces people's sense of citizenship. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

It was suggested that many agencies give a lot of advice but offer not much in terms of practical support. This is something that needs to be given more consideration:

While we live in an age where resources are scarce so there is always going to be questions about eligibility, but we need to make sure that single mothers are not treated in a punitive manner as an excuse to ensure eligibility. Sometimes it almost goes beyond this and is like punishment for being a solo parent. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

Most of the participants also felt that organisations such as Work and Income New Zealand or Housing New Zealand need to take steps to connect better with single mothers and the Pacific Island community:

WINZ is a hard, difficult agency to deal with; they are certainly more kindly than they used to be, but this depends on your particular case officer. (Key informant: support worker, parenting organisation)

The ways that many agencies work with us [Pacific people] are not so great. (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

A way to address this would be to engage specifically with Pacific Island communities in a forum of their choice, as suggested by some in the feedback group:

If local agencies such as WINZ, Parent Centre or Plunket want to provide better support and information to Pacific Island people, they should come to Pacific Island churches to communicate this information. This is the forum that works for us. (Key informant, feedback group)

Agencies or service providers needing to engage more effectively with women was something a number of the participants spoke about (it could also be seen in the

way that some women felt not having a family GP was an obstacle to good parenting):

When you go to these big medical places like the doctors and you see a different doctor all the time, they don't know us. I have to explain the situation all the time and most of the time they don't bother to ask … they are not even interested in knowing. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

4.3.3 Societal stigma and discrimination

Finally, as noted in the literature review section, single mothers face societal stigma and discrimination, which can be an obstacle to good parenting. The attitudes of professionals such as teachers or health providers can hinder relationships. Being labelled by society as a single mother can position women in a space where their lives become publicly examinable. In acknowledging oneself to be a single mother or being labelled by others as a single mother, one becomes open to assumptions about one's status (Parker & Patterson, 2003, p. 4; also see O'Connor et al, 1999);

When you are on the DPB everyone thinks they know stuff about you. They think they know who you are. People try and make you feel bad about how you get your money, where it comes from. I have felt ashamed. I don't tell people. It is better to say you are a student. (S5: Niuean, 20 years old)

If you are studying people are happy to help but if you are doing nothing – like nothing is caring for kids then…? When did caring for your kid amount to nothing I ask you? (C1: Tongan, 40 years old)

In a broad sense I think we are moving a little away from the stigma attached to single mothers but there is still this belief that the DPB is a lifestyle choice, an easy out, a way of income generation. If solo parents are the theme, this idea that they have made this as a choice to earn money is something that society is still caught up on. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

This idea of Pacific Island single mothers being poor parents and not making good choices for baby is an interesting one. Maybe in some cases, yes, but over the years there has been a lot of targeting towards the more vulnerable sectors of society within which Pacific Island people seem to sit, and I think this has been successful. In my group I see the European girls struggling, with not a lot of support

other than from their mates: sometimes their mates may not be that helpful. (Key informant: support worker, parenting organisation)

In my experience Pacific Islanders and Māori at times fare much better than Pākehā. Targeting in some instances seems to have worked very well. We see that it is the Pacific Island children who are immunised, and Pākehā children are not. Yet this perception remains that these are the ones who are the problem. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

I don't see any evidence to support the common biases or stereotypes argued about single mothers/parents. I see many single mothers/parents in our organisation, they're not drinking, not smoking, they may have come from very damaging and violent marriages and they have very reduced means but still they are willing to pay out for therapy to help their kids overcome the trauma or negativity of the experience. (Key informant: social worker, parenting organisation)

While not overtly discriminatory, non-family-friendly work environments also made it very difficult to parent well and made women more dependent on the extended-family network to survive. According to the participants, looking to balance sick days, after-school care and holiday care means that women cannot follow their dreams in terms of a career pathway just yet:

Since I have been separated I have been on the DPB; I have been doing some study too. Like, I do have a brain. I have done computers, Levels 2, 3 and 4 and business admin Level 2. I am planning to do a few more years of study but I will wait till she [her daughter] is 14 years old till I get a job. Then she can be left by herself. I can't leave her yet, so I will just wait till then. (K1: Samoan, 46 years old)

As noted in the beginning of this report, single mothers can be in a catch-22 situation, where they are expected to fulfil the caring role attributed to women while at the same time fulfilling the earning and providing role attributed to men. Society expects them to be both while at the same time judging them if they are 'only' a good mother or 'only' a good provider. Regardless of this, most of the participants in this study reported that while they did feel they were judged for being a single mother by society, they did not feel judged by their family members or their Pacific community members.

4.3.4 Different styles of parenting

It was argued that the way in which successful parenting was understood in New Zealand could pose problems for Pacific Island parents:

For Pacific Islanders lots of issues, obstacles and ideas about what is successful and good parenting relate to all parents, not just single mothers. (Key informant: feedback group)

I think parenting policy sees good parenting from a Western perspective. Educate your kids, get them jobs. They may not see the value base as being important, like respect, humility etc. Look after the values, and the family, look after the community. Christian faith should really underpin new initiatives for working with and supporting Pacific Island parents and communities. (Key informant: feedback group)

It was also stressed that the Pacific Island community cannot be viewed simply as a whole. Diversity needs to be recognised in terms of ethnicity, household structure, position in the family and whether people are first-, second- or third-generation New Zealanders:

The impact of Samoan culture on Samoan parenting is different from the impact of Tongan culture on Tongan parenting. (Key informant: feedback group)

It is also important to work with individual communities, not just Pacific Islanders. You need to work with the Fijians, the Samoans, the Tongans and people from PNG. (Key informant: feedback group)

It would be important to include grandparents in parenting skills programmes, but also agencies should work with ethnic liaison officers to communicate with different Pacific Island communities. There needs to be different strategies for grandparents, single parents etc. (Key informant: feedback group)

There is confusion and conflict for some Pacific Island people regarding the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act 2007 (formerly the Crimes (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child Discipline) Amendment Bill):

It has been hard trying to understand this 'anti-smacking' legislation in New Zealand. As a

community we have had to come to terms with this law change and look for different ways of putting boundaries in place. I don't really remember anyone giving that much information about preparing for the change and teaching about different ways of disciplining. I know there were protests and things but not a lot about what this meant for how I can parent. Just that you shouldn't do this.
(Key informant: feedback group)

The 'anti-smacking' legislation has made parenting difficult. (S1: Tuvaluan, 40 years old)

I personally feel that the 'anti-smacking' law on children here in New Zealand is making it a bit difficult for me as a parent to discipline my child. In PNG, we don't have such a law and I smack both my children (either on the hands/feet or bottom) if they misbehave or don't listen when they are told. Here in New Zealand, I feel a bit pressured because I am limited in exercising my discipline. But on a positive note, I am also learning to use the tone of my voice (eg, call louder if my child is not listening or responding to me) and trying out the 'time-out' method... I can't say at this stage, how well this is working out ... still work in progress, I guess. (B1: Papua New Guinean, 38 years old)

4.3.5 Personal issues

Personal issues such as health or emotional problems were also seen to hinder parenting:

When my husband left a year ago for three months I didn't want to know my children, or anyone for that matter. It was a very bad time for me. I was pregnant at this time. One day I woke up and I watched my children when they were sleeping, they were right next to me in the bed. They only wanted to sleep with me – me in the middle and them on the side. One day I woke up and thought haven't I done well … all these children, despite how I have been, they still want to be near me. I can be a good mother, and I can do this, otherwise they wouldn't want to be with me, here right next to me. I know they feel loved regardless of how I have been these last few months. (K2: Tongan, 29 years old)

S4 also spoke about the emotional turmoil she felt when her relationship broke down; however, she also saw it as an opportunity for teaching her children about adaptive coping strategies, problem-solving and expressing and managing emotion productively:

I know it is not ideal for your kids to see you unhappy but they also need to see you as a human being with emotions, meaning they see you sad, happy, disappointed, mad or tired. They also see how you role model these emotions, manage these emotions so the outcome is positive. They are not going to learn anything about life if they never see emotion and how to manage emotions. When I was growing up you didn't express emotion to be honest. I remember feeling real anger at times towards my situation or towards my parents but couldn't express this. This is something I have had to learn over the years. (S4: Fijian, 46 years old)

Both key informants and participants thought that a lack of personal time could also hinder good parenting, which reiterates the point that it is important for all parents to have space and time to rejuvenate.

Many of the women did find that the fact that they were connected so well with their extended families meant they had more time available. As noted in the literature section, in many instances having other adults participating and contributing to the running of the household can mean the day-to-day time pressures and financial outlays are less, creating an environment more conducive to parenting.

4.3.6 The extended family

Dependency

While the importance of the extended family and the many positives of family life and parenting have been emphasised throughout this document, it is also vital to not romanticise the extended family. As has been noted in the literature, it is not a given that an extended family is functional. Not everyone involved saw the extended family in such a positive light. Some key informants argued that the extended family created dependency and learned helplessness, and as a result single mothers can lack resilience:

Pākehā girls are often forced to grow up [if they have a baby] whereas Pacific girls don't have to. Regardless of having baby, they remain in the position of daughter, with family members doing everything. It is also important to not romanticise the extended family. If the extended family is doing it all how will this young woman gain parenting skills? They also need to develop resilience. (Key informant: educator, parenting organisation)

It may be, however, that those who are less able or capable tend to migrate towards this more supported living arrangement, rather than that the living arrangement creates less ability. "Mothers with low parenting competency [are] more likely to choose to live with family members rather than those living with family members developing a low level of parenting competency" (Gordon et al, 2004, cited in Poland et al, 2007, p. 3).

A site of conflict

Nonetheless, the extended family can be a place of conflict when adult relatives do not agree about styles of parenting. Members of the feedback group stated that role confusion can make family dynamics less positive.

> Knowing your role within a family can make for better parenting. If people are clear about the roles of people in a family this is better. Maybe it is not a good idea to have the mother-in-law help, but it might be good to have some focus on the ways in which in-laws could be enlightened about their roles. (Key informant: feedback group)

Sometimes the extended family can be an obstacle to good parenting advice:

> Sometimes obstacles can be family members. They mean well but … for example, as a midwife you might come to see a young woman who has a new baby; during the visit you see this new baby, it is breastfeeding well, it is gaining weight, sleeping and having lots of wet nappies but then when you come back a week later that baby is on formula. The young woman has been told by her aunty to put the baby on a bottle. The aunt will say this baby is not getting enough, and this young woman will listen to the advice of her aunt. It is therefore important to work with the extended family; this is the only way to ensure that the parenting advice is best practice. (Key informant: independent midwife)

It is important, however, to manage these conflicts with sensitivity:

> When you undermine the family, the main social support in everyday life, then they stop hearing you as a professional. Professionals need to honour the family. (Key informant: independent midwife)

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Policy implications

5.1.1 Supporting families' parenting

The importance of family to Pacific Island people, and its role in giving strength and maintaining and developing resilience, has been made clear by the participants in this study. This commitment to family can be seen in the way that family members job share and rearrange roles and responsibilities, and are expected to do so in order to maintain the status and wellbeing of all members of the family. Social policy and programmes that seek to work with Pacific Island single mothers, and help them maintain and develop strengths and resilience, must build upon the fact that family is at the very core of Pacific Island systems. It is also important, however, not to assume that just because people are Pacific Islanders, they will be part of an extended family.

The results of this study suggest that parenting programmes targeted at Pacific Island single mothers need to take a holistic approach and consider or include the family, rather than targeting individual mothers in isolation from family members. One also needs to look at how the entire family can be strengthened and supported, especially grandparents, because in many cases they may be the ones involved in day-to-day care. Culturally appropriate parenting programmes should also be developed by Pacific Island people for Pacific Island people, preferably by Tongans for Tongans, by Samoans for Samoans and so forth. Space for parents to rejuvenate is fundamental – they need the means, time and space to take time out from children. This process of gaining space could be informal (for example, children spending time with the extended family) or formal (children attending an organised play group or similar).

Because there is such a reliance on the extended family it is also important to recognise that even when members may need help outside of the family, they can be reluctant to ask. While it is fundamental that we seek to equip families to cope with adversity, it is also important to help them recognise when they may need outside support and assistance. They should be able to take a proactive approach to adversity rather than a reactive one.

5.1.2 Support for culture

While it is true that some cultural values and beliefs are shifting and evolving, the endurance of certain values and beliefs and norms of behaviour held by Pacific Island peoples remains. Social policy and programmes that seek to work with Pacific Island single mothers must build upon the fact that Pacific Islanders are committed to ensuring cultural values, beliefs and norms of behaviour permeate everyday life, regardless of the changes that are occurring. These changes and how they should be managed are a cause for concern for many members of the Pacific Island community.

Because cultural institutions are so important to Pacific Island families, provision of support for these institutions is fundamental if they are to support their community members. Agencies need to think about working in ways to communicate better with the Pacific Island community, making better use of ethnic liaison officers and using venues and forums that are culturally acceptable.

5.1.3 Challenging stigma and discrimination towards single mothers

The stigma and discrimination that single mothers say they experience can hinder trusting relationships with workers in some areas of social service delivery. Some of these mothers on welfare feel as if they have to 'jump through hoops' before they can receive support, and this requires some challenging. While eligibility criteria are fundamental, it is important to ensure that the approach does not slip into the punitive realm and reduce people's sense of citizenship.

There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach to single mothers, because they have diverse situations, experiences, needs and wants. While agencies and policymakers talk of recognising diversity, this has not been the experience of the mothers in this study. There needs to be space for single mothers to sit comfortably in the full-time caring role and not just be punished or rewarded because they are or are not working or studying.

The diversity amongst single mothers is certainly not recognised in the mass media or by many in the general public. Media stories illustrating the diverse stories of single mothers should be published if the general public is to have a greater appreciation of the situation and position of single mothers. Challenges to

the rhetoric and prevailing stereotypes are fundamental if a societal mindset shift is to occur. What single parents are doing and have done well needs promotion.

Finally, it does need to be noted that none of the participants in this study felt they were discriminated against by those who worked in social service delivery because they were Pacific Islanders. Rather, they felt that any discrimination and pressure came because they were single mothers.

5.2 Further research

As mentioned in the section on the limitations of this study, it would be advisable to:

> extend this research geographically to Auckland and Wellington, where there is a larger Pacific population and where more single mothers may be third-generation New Zealanders, and may be less connected with a cultural framework

> consider the same research questions with a much younger target group, such as single mothers aged 16–20 years of age

> examine the differences in attitude and behaviour between first-, second- and third-generation Pacific New Zealanders and how they affect family dynamics and functioning, and how they can be a source of family conflict and have influence on parenting

> gain a more nuanced understanding of the importance of culture in each cultural group (Niuean, Tongan and Fijian and so on).

6. CONCLUSION

While it is important not to romanticise what culture may contribute to the parenting experience of Pacific Island single mothers, it is also fundamental not to underplay or dismiss the role and importance of culture. This study provides valuable insights into the parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and the importance of culture in framing these experiences.

The majority the participants in this study began the journey to parenting in established relationships. This is contrary to a popular view that single mothers have sought to have children outside of a meaningful relationship for the purpose of receiving welfare. While the idea of single motherhood may suggest disconnectedness, this has not been the experience of most of the participants in this study. For the most part these participants were embedded in wider extended family networks where household boundaries were fluid, and there was extensive support from fathers, uncles, brothers or cousins as male role models and caregivers, and mothers, sisters, aunts or cousins as caregivers. The importance attributed to family and ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of all family members is explicitly linked to Pacific Island values, beliefs and norms of behaviour.

Some participants spoke about the culture shock of coming to New Zealand and of coming from a village setting where who they socialised with and where they went was monitored by older or male relatives. Respecting and obeying your parents was an expectation, and if a woman became pregnant outside of marriage she had not obeyed or respected her parents. Also firmly highlighted was the importance of obligations to each other, including single mothers. Regardless of a difficult start or difficult period where shame could be brought to the family, in the long run families wanted daughters and their children to remain explicitly and actively connected with them.

Cultural values attributing importance to being of service and fulfilling family and community obligations meant the participants in this study were not labelled as 'single mums'; rather their multiple roles, such as eldest daughter, sister, auntie, professional, provider or church-group leader, were taken into consideration. They were seen as knowledgeable and skilful by their extended family members and the wider community because of factors such as their evolving position or status as a result of educational achievements. They were not just single mothers; they were single mothers who had acquired a nursing degree, or they were single mothers who organised and ran cultural events. Despite becoming pregnant outside of marriage or having had a relationship breakdown, they were not judged by this continuously. Demonstrating continuous service to family and one's people, through which respect could be gained, took precedence.

Undoubtedly it is this lack of labelling, this connectedness with family and culture and this sense of purpose and worth that has led to the experience being mainly positive for the participants in this study. Cultural values and connections with cultural frameworks and institutions also meant that most of the participants were supported as single mothers daily. This can account for why their parenting experiences were for the most part positive, and also for why they saw themselves as successful parents.

In recent times, the idea that cultural factors can positively shape the lives of individuals or the family unit has gained acceptance (Families Commission, 2005). In Pacific Island families cultural values, norms and expectations can have a significant influence on the way family members work together and support each other not only day-to-day, but also in times of perceived need. Demonstrating respect and service within the family is seen as fundamental to good family functioning and ensuring good outcomes for all family members.

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APPENDIX 1: Ethics approval

Massey University

17 September 2008

Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers and
    Assoc Prof Regina Scheyvens
School of People, Environment and
    Planning
PN331

Dear Rochelle and Regina

**Re: Positive Representations and Expressions of Parenting by Single Mothers: A Pacific Island
        Perspective**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 15 September 2008.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the
Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that
it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-
Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas.
In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

> *"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has
> not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s)
> named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*
>
> *If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone
> other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-
> Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish
requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application
to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be
provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia Rumball

Sylvia V Rumball (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics)

cc   Dr Henry Barnard, HoS
        School of People, Environment and
            Planning
        PN331

Massey University Human Ethics Committee
Accredited by the Health Research Council

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

APPENDIX 2A:

Advert for the paper

Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Taloha ni, Fakalofa lahi atu, Ni sa bula vinaka, Halo olaketa.

Are you a single mother who identifies as a Pacific Islander?

If so, we would like to invite you to be part of a research project funded by the NZ Families Commission (Kōmihana ā Whānau) looking at positive experiences of parenting by Pacific Island single mothers.

We are looking for women from all age groups and from any country in the Pacific.

If you would like to be part of this very important research, or know of someone who may be interested and would like to find out more please email Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers (Massey University) at **r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz** or phone/text on **027 559 4662.**

Otherwise you can call Associate Professor Regina Scheyvens (Massey University) on **(06) 356 9099 xt 2509.**

Petrol vouchers will be provided to compensate participants for their time and any travel.

APPENDIX 2B: Flyer

Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Taloha ni, Fakalofa lahi atu, Ni sa bula vinaka, Aloha, Halo olaketa.

Are you a single mother who identifies as a Pacific Islander?

If so, we would like to invite you to be part of a research project funded by the NZ Family Commission (kōmihana ā whānau) looking at positive examples of parenting by Pacific Island single mothers.

We are looking for women from all age groups and from any country in the Pacific. If you would like to be part of this very important research, or know of someone who may be interested and would like to find out more please email Dr **r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz** or phone/text on **0275594662.** Otherwise you can call Associate Professor Regina Scheyvens (Massey University) on **(06) 3569099 xt 2509.**

Petrol vouchers will be provided to compensate participants for their time and any travel.

Rochelle Stewart-Withers (Massey University) at

APPENDIX 3: Introduction letter

Massey University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Development Studies
School of People Environment and
Planning,
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North, New Zealand

1st December, 2008

**Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Taloha ni, Fakalofa lahi atu,
Ni sa bula vinaka, Halo olaketa.**

Our names are Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Regina Scheyvens and Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop and in our roles as social scientists we have been asked by the Families Commission (Kōmihana ā Whānau) to undertake some research looking at positive examples of parenting by single mothers who identify as Pacific Islanders. Specifically we seek to describe positive experiences of parenting by Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand; gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent'; gain an understanding of obstacles and systems of support (in particular those that facilitate strengths and develop/maintain resilience) for successful parenting as a Pacific Island single mother; and give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining/developing strengths and resilience

We will be looking to undertake interviews in Palmerston North, and the surrounding Manawatu/Tararua areas of Woodville, Pahiatua, Foxton, Shannon and Levin during the weeks of 8th Dec to 17th Dec 2008, and during Jan/Feb as arranged. We are looking for women from all age groups and from any country in the Pacific. We would really appreciate your help in getting this notice out to members of the Pacific Island community by either reading it at community gatherings or adding it to your notice board. If you would like to be part of this very important research, or know of someone who may be interested and would like to find out more please email Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers (Massey University) at r.r.stewart-withers@massey.ac.nz or phone/text on 027 559 4662. Otherwise you can call Associate Professor Regina Scheyvens (Massey University) on (06) 356 9099 xt 2509.

Petrol vouchers will be provided to compensate participants for their time and any travel.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance with this work, Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Associate Professor Regina Scheyvens (Massey University) and Associate Professor Tagaloatele Dr. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, (Va'aomanū Pasifika, Victoria University)

Yours sincerely

Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers

APPENDIX 4: Confidentiality agreement

Massey University
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Development Studies
School of People Environment and Planning,
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North, New Zealand

Positive experiences of parenting by single mothers: Pacific Island perspectives

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I _____ agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project: Positive experiences of parenting by single mothers: A Pacific Island perspective

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers

Signature: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX 5: Participant consent form

Massey University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Development Studies
School of People Environment and Planning,
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North, New Zealand

Positive experiences of parenting by single mothers: Pacific Island perspectives

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

- I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped.

- I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: Date:

Full name - printed

APPENDIX 6: Interview schedule: participants

Massey University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Development Studies
School of People Environment and Planning,
Massey University
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North, New Zealand

Positive experiences of parenting by single mothers: Pacific Island perspectives

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What are some of the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and what is the importance of culture in framing these experiences?

=   Describe the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand;

=   Gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent';

=   Gain an understanding of obstacles and systems of support (in particular those that facilitate strengths and develop/maintain resilience) for successful parenting as a Pacific Island single mother; and

=   Give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining/developing strengths and resilience.

---

1. Details of mother – age, education, working, relationships etc

2. Details of children – ages etc

3. Tell me about your experience of being a parent, as a single mother who identifies as a Pacific Islander.

I.   Living arrangements

II. Support with day-to-day activities – household chores, school run, homework, sick kids, extracurricular activities

III. Finances – incomings/outgoings – support with, cultural commitments

IV. Involvement with/connections with (e.g. friends, family, various institutions – church, childcare, healthcare providers – are these providing a supportive role?). What do you see to be your strongest source of support – rate different sources – and why?

4. Tell me about a parenting time when you thought you had done a great job, and how come you think this?

5. What do you think being a successful parent means?

6. Can you tell me about someone who you think is a successful parent and tell me why you do?

7. Can you tell me about some of the things that make parenting easier for you/harder for you?

I.   In relation to, say, systems, processes, attitudes etc (from family, your community, professionals – e.g. doctors, nurses, social welfare, teachers)

II. Expand on this in relation to stigma, stereotypes of single mothers etc.

* What are some of the things (systems, processes, organisations, institutions, values, beliefs, ideas etc) that help you parent well?

8. What role does culture play in helping you parent well, helping you develop what is going well?

I.   e.g. commitment to family

II. e.g. cultural values, norms, practices, expectations

APPENDIX 7: Interview schedule: key informants

Massey University

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Positive experiences of parenting by single mothers: Pacific Island perspectives

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

What are some of the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers and what is the importance of culture in framing these experiences?

= Describe the positive parenting experiences of Pacific Island single mothers in New Zealand;

= Gain an understanding of what constitutes 'being a successful parent';

= Gain an understanding of obstacles and systems of support (in particular those that facilitate strengths and develop/maintain resilience) for successful parenting as a Pacific Island single mother; and

= Give consideration to the importance of culture in maintaining/developing strengths and resilience.

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1. Tell me a bit about the work of your organisation/your position (in relation to Pacific Island parents, single mothers and Pacific Island single mothers).

2. What sort of things do you think single mothers/Pacific Island parents place importance on in their attempts to be successful parents?

3. Do you see differences between Māori, Pacific Islanders and Pākehā in terms of parenting styles, habits practices? (Focus on strengths)

4. What are the obstacles to successful parenting? For Pacific Islanders, for Pacific Island single mothers?

5. What are the things that provide support, facilitate strengths, and help build resilience, thus enabling successful parenting? For Pacific Islanders?

- *At the individual level, for families, for specific communities.*

- *What part does the individual, family, community (church, preschool etc) play?*

6. In your opinion what role does culture play in relation to successful parenting for Pacific Islanders/single mothers? Can you tell me why?

Blue Skies Research

1/06   *Les Familles et Whānau sans Frontières: New Zealand and transnational family obligation,* Lunt with McPherson & Browning, March 2006.

2/06   *Two Parents, Two Households: New Zealand data collections, language and complex parenting,* Calister & Birks, March 2006.

3/06   *Grandfathers – Their Changing Family Roles and Contributions,* Wilton & Davey, March 2006.

4/06   *Neighbourhood Environments that Support Families,* Witten, Penney, Faalau, & Jensen, May 2006.

5/06   *New Communication Technologies and Family Life,* Weatherall & Ramsay, May 2006.

6/06   *Families and Heavy Drinking: Impacts on children's wellbeing,* Systematic Review, Girling, Huakau, Casswell, & Conway, June 2005.

7/06   *Beyond Demography: History, ritual and families in the twenty-first century,* Pryor, June 2005.

8/06   *Whānau is Whānau,* Walker, Ngāti Porou, July 2006.

9/06   *Supervised Contact: The views of parents and staff at three Barnardos Contact Centres in the southern region of New Zealand,* Gibbs & McKenzie, August 2006.

10/06 *New Zealanders' Satisfaction with Family Relationships and Parenting,* Robertson, August 2006.

11/06 *Korean Migrant Families in Christchurch: Expectations and experiences,* Chang, Morris, & Vokes, October 2006.

12/06 *The Role of Whānau in the Lives of Māori with Physical Disabilities,* Collins & Hickey, September 2006.

13/06 *New Spaces and Possibilities: The adjustment to parenthood for new migrant mothers,* DeSouza, November 2006.

14/06 *New Zealand Cultural Norms of Parenting and Childcare and How These Relate to Labour Force Participation Decisions and Requirements,* McPherson, November 2006.

15/06 *Towards a Statistical Typology of New Zealand Households and Families: The efficacy of the family life cycle model and alternatives,* Crothers & McCormack, December 2006.

16/07 *The Family Court, Families and the Public Gaze,* Cheer, Caldwell, & Tully, April 2007.

17/07 *Fairness, Forgiveness and Families,* Evans, Yamaguchi, Raskauskas, & Harvey, April 2007.

18/07 *Managing Multiple Sclerosis and Motherhood: Women's stories,* Payne, McPherson, & Crerar, May 2007.

19/07 *Diverse Forms of Pacific Families and their Financial Decision-making Approaches,* Koloto & Katoanga, September 2007.

20/07 *Lifelines: Young New Zealanders imagine family, friends and relationships across their life-course,* Patterson, Peace, Campbell, & Parker, September 2007.

21/07 *Older Adults' Experience of Family Life: Linked lives and independent living,* Breheney & Stephens, November 2007.

22/08 *Whānau Socialisation Through Everyday Talk: A pilot study,* Tomlins-Jahnke & Durie, January 2008.

23/08 *Strengthening Rural Families: An exploration of industry transformation, community and social capital,* Goodrich & Sampson, April 2008.

24/08 *Grandparents in Rural Families: Young people's perspectives,* Keeling, Glasgow, & Morris, July 2008.

25/09 *Settling in: Parent-adolescent family dynamics in the acculturation process,* Stuart, Jose, & Ward, February 2009.

26/09 *Sent Home: The impact on the family of a child's exclusion from school,* Smith, March 2009.

27/09 *An Exploration of the Family Partnership Model in New Zealand,* Wilson & Huntington, May 2009.

28/09 *Who Cares for People with Schizophrenia: Family carers' health, circumstances and adjustment,* Collings, August 2009.

29/09 *We're a Family: A study of how lesbians and gay men are creating and maintaining family in New Zealand,* Gunn & Surtees, August 2009.

30/09 *Discipline in Context: Families' disciplinary practices for children aged under five,* Kirk & Hornblow, September 2009.

31/09 *Heart and Head: Explanation of the meaning of fatherhood,* Lawrence & Smith, November 2009.

32/10 *Family Food Environment: Barriers to acquiring affordable and nutritious food in New Zealand households,* Smith, Parnell & Brown, February 2010.

33/10 *'Crime Families' in the News: Exploring media reports of young offenders and their families,* Beals & Van Wijk, May 2010.

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