

**Educational leadership through a Pasifika  
lens: Navigating their way in a New Zealand  
secondary school context**

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A dissertation submitted to Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Educational Leadership

2019

School of Education  
Auckland University of Technology

## **Abstract**

There is an under-representation of Pasifika teachers in New Zealand secondary schools. Research has shown that educational leadership should be responsive and reflective to the communities they serve, and although indigenous leadership research is growing, it is still limited in comparison to the more westernised notions of leadership. The following research study aims to determine the aspirations of Pasifika leaders leading in New Zealand secondary schools. Building on existing literature on Pasifika leadership, it asks: To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership; and to identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership.

Based on a review of the literature on Educational leadership, Indigenous leadership and aspirations to leadership. Research participants shared their leadership journey through the research methodology of a narrative approach. Analysis of the findings show that each narrator was initially reluctant in their leadership journey, however the common enablers identified were having strong family networks and role models who believed in them. Challenges faced as they navigated through their leadership were bias expectations as Pasifika and reference to the 'glass ceiling'. In this context, the 'glass ceiling' is referred to an unseen barrier that often keeps women and minority groups such as Pasifika from being promoted because of attitudinal and organisational obstacles that stop the progression of non-traditional leaders (Levine, 2000). The results point out that supportive systems in leadership progression responsive to the socio-cultural context can make a difference. The recommendation is that New Zealand secondary schools prioritise an inclusive leadership approach to change the status-quo of traditional leadership which often marginalises the opportunities of non-dominant groups. Further research is needed on Pasifika educational leadership in New Zealand schools to shift and progress in diversifying leadership to mirror the communities they lead in.

## Table of Contents

Abstract	i
List of figures	iv
List of tables	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
<b>Chapter 1 – Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>My Personal Narrative</i>	1
<i>Rationale</i>	4
<i>Dissertation Organisation</i>	5
<b>Chapter 2 – Literature Review</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Educational Leadership</i>	8
<i>Indigenous Leadership</i>	12
<i>Aspirations</i>	16
<b>Chapter 3 – Methodology and Methods</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Positioning</i>	20
<i>Qualitative Research</i>	20
<i>Research Methodology – Narratives</i>	22
<i>Research Method – Semi-structured Interviews</i>	23
<i>Research Participants</i>	24
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	26
<i>Cultural Sensitivity</i>	28
<i>Summary</i>	28
<b>Chapter 4 – Research Findings</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Legolas's Journey</i>	30
<i>Galadriel's Journey</i>	34
<i>Tauriel's Journey</i>	37
<i>Summary</i>	41

<b>Chapter 5 – Research Discussion</b>	<b>42</b>
<i>Introduction</i>	42
<i>Research Question One</i>	42
<i>Research Question Two</i>	45
<i>Research Question Three</i>	47
<i>Summary</i>	50
<b>Chapter 6 – Conclusion</b>	<b>52</b>
<i>Research Overview</i>	52
<i>Conclusion One</i>	53
<i>Conclusion Two</i>	54
<i>Recommendations</i>	54
<i>Research Limitations</i>	56
<i>Research Strengths</i>	57
<i>Final Summary</i>	57
<b>References</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>63</b>
<i>Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet</i>	63
<i>Appendix B: Consent Form</i>	65
<i>Appendix C: Semi-structured interview questions</i>	66

## **List of figures**

Figure 2.1 Educational leadership model (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 12; 2012a, p.12)	9
Figure 2.2 Map showing South Pacific Islands (Lonely Planet, 2017)	14
Figure 2.3 Overview of 2018 teaching demographics (Education Counts, 2019)	15
Figure 2.4 Self-efficacy model. (Stone, 2018)	16
Figure 6.1 Call of the conch shell working model for building Pasifika educational leadership in New Zealand secondary schools (Brown, 2019)	55

## **List of tables**

Table 3.1: Research participants' demographic information	25
Table 5.1: Summary of leadership aspirations described by Pasifika teachers	42
Table 5.2: Summary of factors influencing Pasifika leadership aspirations	45
Table 5.3: Summary of enablers/challenges faced by Pasifika teachers	48

## **Attestation of authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

**Name: Mary Brown**

**Signed:**

## Acknowledgement

This has been a very challenging yet fulfilling journey for me personally and I want to give honour and glory firstly to my heavenly father – God. Amid the trials and tribulations, I encountered in this research – God was a constant spiritual presence who gave me strength when I needed it and a feeling of peace. I held on to two Bible promises found in the book of Isaiah 40:31 *“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint”* and Isaiah 41:10 *“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”*.

To my beautiful parents – Albert & Misileti Webster, they both made the big move to New Zealand from their Pasifika birth places with aspirational dreams for better opportunities. As my first teachers in life, I am forever grateful for your faith, courage, wisdom, teachings, love and dedication to raising your children. Your constant encouragement and belief in me pursuing further education were key motivational factors to completing this master’s programme. I love you both very much and I am grateful that you are both still here in good health to witness our accomplishment.



*Misileti and Albert Webster*

Thank you to my school – especially the Board of Trustees and senior leadership team who supported and endorsed my application for postgraduate studies, time-off work to attend university classes as well as my successful scholarship application.

To TeachNZ – offering the 19-week study awards for teachers to pursue further study is a godsend. Thank you for allowing me enough time off work to focus on refining my research proposal as a full-time student.

To my supervisor Alison Smith – I am greatly appreciative for your ongoing support and guidance throughout this journey from beginning to end. I am blessed that we crossed paths in a Master of educational leadership postgraduate paper which led to a positive working relationship that included many laughs and encouragement throughout the trying times.

To my research participants – thank you for allowing me to use your personal and powerful narratives to assist this research. Continue to light the path and inspire Pasifika people in your leadership.

Thank you to my extended family and close friends who constantly encouraged me to complete this programme, your kind words and encouragement gave me an extra boost to succeed in the completion of this master's programme.

To my rock – my darling husband Karl Brown. You have been very supportive and motivational for me from day one and at the right times when I needed it the most. You are my best friend who knows me so well and I couldn't imagine doing this journey without you. Thank you for carrying the load with our children, thank you for your constant prayers and giving me time-out to finish this dissertation. I love you.

I am dedicating this dissertation to my son Azariah Brown and daughter Zipporah Brown. By the same token, I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my siblings: Charles (Bill), Sabrina, Joseph (Joe), Damian, Theresa (Esa) and brother-in law Damon and Ela; including their children – Silas Webster, Jayla Webster, Francis Webster, Letisha Webster, Sabrina Webster, Tatiana Webster, Niretta Webster, Shantelle Webster, David Webster, Claire Webster, Faith Webster, Daniel Webster, Sapphire Webster, Daniel Inu, and Lolani Brown. I hope they will know that the importance of education is for all ages and that it has no limits.



## Chapter One: Introduction

“Go back?” he thought. “No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!” So up he got and trotted along with his little sword held in front of him and one hand feeling the wall, and his heart all of a patter and a pitter.” (p. 66)

**J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

This quote from the book *Hobbit* succinctly outlines my personal unexpected leadership journey. No matter which pathway I took, it directed me towards leadership, hence the curiosity to conduct this research on educational leadership aspirations.

This chapter begins with a personal narrative of my educational leadership journey which led to my curiosity around this research topic. This is followed by the rationale for the research, including the research aims, research questions and an overview of the dissertation chapters to follow.

### **My Personal Narrative**

This dissertation is positioned in the field of educational leadership. Regarding my own experiences of educational leadership, one of my earliest memories of a leadership role takes me back to my 11-year-old self. I was selected to represent the school with a group of nine other students in a one-day event competing against other schools. This group required a leader and the teacher in charge nominated me to take on that role. At first, I was hesitant because I was unsure why I was chosen out of the group, but I took up the challenge and found the experience enjoyable and attainable. As I reflected, I realised that my journey to educational leadership was an unexpected path. I did not intentionally seek out leadership, nor did I aspire for it initially. However, in saying this, there were several timely opportunities and key people that inspired and encouraged me to pursue my leadership potential. To understand this, I will first share my personal story.

Ni sa Bula vinaka, Talofa lava, and Kia ora. My name is Mary Brown and at the time of writing this dissertation, I hold the educational leadership role of Deputy Principal in an Auckland secondary school. In this research narrative, it is important to situate myself as a New Zealand-born, Pasifika woman. This term ‘Pasifika’ is used to describe a diverse collection of people originating from the Pacific Islands region. I identify myself as Pasifika as I am of Fijian and Samoan heritage. I also acknowledge that I was born in New Zealand from migrant parents who

arrived in New Zealand around the 1970s. I cannot speak my languages fluently but am very comfortable in Pasifika cultural settings due to my upbringing at family gatherings and at significant events such as funerals, birthdays and Pasifika community events. I grew up in the suburb of Mangere, South Auckland, and attended the local schools within this area. I come from a blended family and sit as the second youngest child. My parents migrated to New Zealand with a dream and a pursuit for a better life as this country had educational and employment opportunities that were not as readily available from their Pacific Island origins.

Growing up in this household offered me many rich life-changing experiences. As an illustration, our spiritual faith in God was a foundational principle and value which involved a common practice of weekly visits to church every Saturday. From this experience, I had studied many stories from the Bible of significant people who were fearless, compassionate, relational, faithful, bold and humble. This formed the foundational basis of how I viewed leadership but initially I could not connect these characteristics directly to myself. As I reflect on my immediate family, my parents played an enormous influence in demonstrating leadership as my first teachers. For example, my mother is quiet and shy by nature, but through her actions she showed me the importance of having a positive work ethic, providing for the family and serving with a compassionate and loving heart. She was also educated as a registered nurse and was one of my first examples of where education can lead me. My father was authoritarian in his approach and led our family in a stern but fair way. I admired his confidence and command at family gatherings. He would often share anecdotes of his childhood and compare it to the opportunities available in this country. Looking back now, I can see that he was emphasising the privilege of being educated in this country. My paternal grandmother was a strong Fijian woman in her faith and family. I was fortunate to spend quality time with her in my childhood before she passed away as I have many so positive memories observing how she interacted with others around her. She was friendly, full of life and positively relational with others who crossed her path. I often think about her in my adulthood when I meet other people with similar characteristics. In my church upbringing, I saw first-hand the positive impact of good leaders leading with passion such as church ministers and elders while, on the contrary, I also saw the negative impact of bad leaders who were disorganised and lacked the skills or passion to influence or make a difference.

My leadership journey was initiated from my own extended family and church upbringing. I also acknowledge the contribution from significant teachers in my schooling life like Miss Chappell – my Standard 4 primary teacher of European descent who inspired me to enjoy the world of reading by introducing me to so many reading materials and allowing me to use my attributes to assist my class peers in their reading too. Mr. Guest – my Geography teacher of European descent, who

influenced me to further my education in this chosen discipline at a tertiary level. Mr. Carrasco – my homeroom teacher of South American descent who empowered me to take on student leadership roles in high school through constant guidance, wisdom, and encouragement. And lastly, Mr. Ryan who was the Deputy Principal of Samoan descent at my high school and the first Pasifika person I saw in a senior educational leadership role. His example changed my worldview of leadership in schools as I only ever saw people of European descent in these roles. I was the first and only one out of my siblings that attended university and completed three qualifications before entering the teaching profession. My family were very supportive of me and often when I felt discouraged or lacking the motivation to complete my studies, I was constantly reminded about the privileges that come with good education and the opportunities it would bring to my life.

After completion of my undergraduate degree in 2004 from the University of Auckland, I made a conscious decision to further my studies by completing a post-graduate diploma as I was unsure at the time what career I wanted to pursue. Towards the end of 2005, I stumbled across a prospectus for a teaching qualification through the University of Auckland. I started to think about my own schooling experience and, as mentioned earlier in my journey, I could only name a handful of teachers who made a real positive impact on me. On the contrary I had so many negative experiences with so many more teachers from Primary, through to Secondary schooling. This prompted me to complete the Graduate Diploma in Secondary Teaching in 2006 which is how I began my pathway into teaching.

I was appointed a full-time teaching position at the beginning of 2007 as a Geography teacher in an Auckland secondary school. Towards the end of my first year as a beginning teacher, an internal job vacancy became available for a house leader role (equivalent to a Dean role) to begin in the 2008 academic year. I did not even consider applying initially until the College Director (equivalent to a Principal role) approached me to consider applying, I was very reluctant at first as I felt like I just started my teaching career and didn't feel worthy of taking on middle leadership. After encouragement from my parents about the vacancy I took the leap, submitted my application and was successful. The challenges that came with this role were the lack of support and on-going training available. Many of the skills needed were learned on the job and often I was thrown into the deep end of situations to troubleshoot. Although I was able to overcome many of the challenges in the role, I also knew that robust systems and structures were needed to support and consolidate the role around pastoral care in the school.

Another leadership opportunity was presented in an Acting Head of learning position for the Social Science department. Once again, I did not consider applying for the role, however, I was shoulder-tapped by two senior leadership members at the time to strongly consider applying for the role temporarily while the school advertised externally for a permanent applicant. I continued to be a House Leader as well as the Acting Head of Social Science during the advertising and interviewing of this position. Similarly, to my experience in the House leader role, there was a lack of support in guiding a new person transitioning into the leadership role and yet again I was having to navigate and troubleshoot through situations because the focus now was around the teaching and learning in this department. I overcame many of the challenges I faced because of my mind-set around being solution focused. I also viewed these opportunities as a chance to grow and develop my experience in leadership.

Enablers in my leadership journey were key people who saw something in me that I could not see in myself, from my family to the senior leaders in my school. Reflection from early exposure to leadership in schooling and opportunities presenting itself in my teaching profession, gave me the courage over the years to believe in my potential and skillset I could offer in the roles. In 2015 an opportunity for further study presented itself in the form of a scholarship. I took this opportunity and applied with the endorsement from my Principal. The challenges that came with this were that I was still working full-time in my teaching role, raising two young children under the age of four at the time and the large gap in years since I studied at tertiary last. The loving support from my parents and husband made a significant difference in allowing me to put my energy into my studies. The constant encouragement from my parents about education opening doors has been instilled in my mind and the constant reminder of the struggles that my migrant parents had to overcome moving to a new country gives me inspiration and incentive to succeed. My personal narrative set the foundation for inspiring this research as outlined in the rationale.

## **Rationale**

This research has developed from my own experience as a Pasifika leader in a secondary school context and from conversations with other Pasifika teachers in similar schools in formal and informal settings over the years. With the growing Pasifika population in New Zealand, I wanted to investigate the under-representation of Pasifika people in leadership in secondary schools. Hattori (2016) states that “the great diversity of cultures in our society is not visible in the leadership of our schools” (p. 8), acknowledging the under-representation. Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) support the notion that indigenous

leaders, leading in schools with indigenous students, can effectively contribute to this school community through their distinctive approaches of leading in education.

## **Research Aims**

1. To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership; and
2. To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership.

## **Research Questions**

1. What aspirations to leadership positions do Pasifika teachers' describe?
2. What factors influence Pasifika teacher's leadership aspirations?
3. What enablers/challenges are faced by Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining a leadership position?

## **Dissertation Organisation**

This dissertation is set out in six chapters.

### **Chapter One**

Chapter One has presented an introduction to the research topic using the researcher's personal narrative. It also outlines the rationale, research aims, research questions and organisation of the dissertation chapters.

### **Chapter Two**

Chapter Two presents the literature review drawing on what has already been written about educational leadership and aspirations. Themes of educational leadership, indigenous leadership receiving particular attention.

### **Chapter Three**

Chapter Three describes the purpose of the qualitative research and presents the positioning of the selected methodology and methods of a narrative approach using the semi-structured interview for Pasifika participants.

### **Chapter Four**

Chapter Four presents the research findings using each participant's personal narrative and provides further commentary on identified themes.

### **Chapter Five**

Chapter Five analyses the research findings, identifies emerging themes and discusses the links to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

### **Chapter Six**

Chapter Six presents the conclusion of the research, an evaluation of the strengths and limitations of the research, and lists recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Where did you go to, if I may ask?’ said Thorin to Gandalf as they rode along.  
To look ahead,’ said he.  
And what brought you back in the nick of time?’  
Looking behind,’ said he.” (p. 80)  
**J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

This quote from the book *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien summarises the navigation of this research journey through the relevant literature available on this research topic. It requires ‘looking behind’ what has already been written in order to go forward and identifies relevance of the research presented in this dissertation.

### Introduction

Palestini (2016) writes that “Leadership is offered as a solution for most of the problems of organisations everywhere” (p. 1). This study of leadership has fascinated many researchers in various disciplines, prompting further exploration, and the creation of leadership theories, approaches, models and terminology (Pendleton & Furnham, 2016). Western (2013) describes the dominant exposure of leadership in our society being frequently featured in the news, books, businesses, movies and politics. This was very evident when I initially conducted and filtered the literature revealed in the extensive search results of over four million related sources that appeared after inputting the concept ‘leadership’ in the search bar. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is now a new reality for leadership, the world is continuing to change, due to technology advancing, globalisation, politics, war and power – this shift makes leadership more complex in a new reality. (Daft, 2011; Harter, 2015; Johnstone & Powles, 2012, Ladkin & Spiller, 2013). Leadership can be viewed as an ideology, a system of ideals, beliefs, and values. Alvesson and Spicer (2014) suggest that leadership has a negative side to it too which is often overlooked, masked or ignored because it doesn’t fit the systems as mentioned before. This discourse in leadership is explored further in critical leadership studies to unravel and further challenge the ideology of leadership.

In all aspects of society there is a need for leadership from government spaces; local community groups to our very own family structures within our homes. For the purpose of this research, I will utilise Daft’s definition of leadership as “an influence relationship among leader and followers” (Daft, 2011, p. 5). Although Daft directs this towards becoming effective business leaders, I have selected this definition because of its simplicity in summarising leadership across

all sectors of society, specifically leadership in education. Focusing on the idea of ‘influence’ is linked to leaders being a person worth following and illuminating a path ahead so followers can aspire to leadership. In addition, Alvesson and Spicer (2014) describe leadership as seductive because of this persuasive appeal. Often a desire to lead can come from being inspired and influenced by leaders before us. This chapter will discuss two main emerging themes: leadership and aspirations. The first theme will highlight two sub-themes that fall under this category: Educational Leadership; and Indigenous leadership. The second theme will examine the notion of leadership aspirations.

## **Educational Leadership**

Educational leadership primarily refers to leaders in education communities, leading with the purpose of improving quality educational aims (Burgess & Newton, 2014; Cardno, 2010). During the research phase of the literature, this concept has also been closely associated to educational administration or educational management. While there are competing definitions, it has been placed as instructional, pedagogical and leadership for learning (Sims, Wanigangyake & Hadley, 2018). As this dissertation focuses on the context of New Zealand secondary schools, this sub-theme will review the Ministry of Education key leadership documents to guide middle and senior educational leaders in New Zealand schools. These will include the following two documentations as part of a three-part series: Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) and Leading from the middle.

The Ministry of Education (2008) published the ‘Kiwi Leadership for principals’ document based on best practice experiences of New Zealand principals in leading schools. New Zealand’s unique education system is one of self-management. this permits principals to lead according to the needs of their schools. Fundamentally, principals manage the day-to-day operations of schools from “policy and operational matters, including personnel, finance, property, health and safety, and the interpretation and delivery of the national curriculum” (p. 7). Overtime, New Zealand has shifted from a predominantly bicultural society to a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Kavaliku (2007) denotes this type of society having environments of tension where leaders are faced with challenges in acclimatising leadership in cultural settings. This challenge requires New Zealand principals to develop effective communities of learning in their respective schools (Ministry of Education, 2008). Figure 2.1 portrays an educational leadership model (ELM) exhibiting the qualities, knowledge and skill elements in leading a learning community.



The ELM is centred on this concept of Educational leadership, surrounded with a key factor – relationships. The KEP recommends that principals will benefit greatly with relationship skills based on the foundation of trust as it leads to effective practice when managing various situations in a schooling context (Ministry of Education, 2012). Cardno (2012) supports this by stating that “... productive relationships are built on the foundation stones of productive conversations...” (p. 42), this relationship skill will enable honest and open dialogue and trust. Adapting leadership practices to face the challenges leading in diverse organisations can be a difficult task if there is also no competency around the elements of the ELM – culture, pedagogy, systems, partnerships and networks. Building an effective school culture requires inclusiveness and the availability of success for all students, it looks at the key values which should acknowledge the Treaty of Waitangi and align with the connection of the wider school community (Ministry of Education, 2012). Kavaliku (2007) narrates that it is essential to know and understand the culture of the people you work with, which goes beyond a deeper understanding that includes the traditions and customs. The KEP recommends principals promote educational success for all students by ‘walking the talk’ and being significantly knowledgeable about teaching and learning. In addition, having effective management support systems enriches educational leadership, creating a consistent environment of systems and processes that support the foci of teaching and learning. The final element of partnerships and networks only further contribute to benefiting student success by principals strategically networking with key stakeholders from local community networks to national networks such as the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2012).



Figure 2.1 Educational leadership model (Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 12; 2012a, p. 12)

The two leadership activities in Figure 2.1 that support these elements previously outlined are leading change and problem solving; two vital skills required for effective educational leadership according to the KEP. Underpinning these skills are four qualities surrounding the periphery of

the ELM in Figure 2.1 titled with the following Maori concepts: Manaakitanga: Leading with moral purpose; Pono: Having self-belief; Ako: Being a learner; and Awhinataga: Guiding and supporting. Principals are educational leaders leading school communities in a growing and evolving New Zealand. This can be a very demanding position as educational leaders will often need to navigate and balance carefully between professional and personal spaces whilst effectively demonstrating their leadership skills, knowledge and qualities (Ministry of Education, 2012). Cardno (2010) acknowledges these complexities of educational leadership and states that “... educational leaders must be capable of engaging in personal and interpersonal learning ...” (p. 41). On the contrary, Alvesson and Spicer (2014) expose another side to leadership that breaks away from the assumption that leadership is all positive. As an illustration, the same authors identify how leadership can “marginalize many people who do not fit white, male, heterosexist norms to occupy positions of leadership” (p. 50). The under-representation of Pasifika leadership demonstrates that the experiences that formed the ELM are predominately based on non-Pasifika perspectives and contributes to the growing mismatch of the student population and leadership representation.

The Ministry of Education (2012) published a third document in a three-part series to support leadership in New Zealand schools titled *Leading from the middle: Educational leadership for middle and senior leaders*. This document also applies the ELM as seen in Figure 2.1 that was introduced in the first part of the series: *KEP*. Education leaders such as a principal cannot lead alone in a school community; it would be a mammoth task. However, Spillane (2006) describes popular stories in the education world of charismatic principals turning schools around for the better that often individualise the leader to fit in this genre of heroic leadership, without acknowledging the roles of others who supported this education leader in the journey. *Leading from the middle* moves beyond heroic leadership to a more shared form of leadership, hence the importance of distributing leadership to other senior and middle educational leaders. Harris (2009) identifies that this form of leadership practice is commonly associated with professional learning communities’ literature, which supports the notion that distributed leadership can make a positive impact on educational aims for student success when the leadership is distributed. In support of this, the same author describes that “...distributed leadership, essentially involves both the vertical and lateral dimensions of leadership practice...” (p. 5). With reference to Figure 2.1, the ELM portrays educational leadership knowledge, qualities and skills needed to be an effective leader (Ministry of Education, 2010), senior and middle leaders primarily focus around the leadership activities of leading change and problem solving found in the model. New Zealand’s unique education system of self-managing schools allows educational leaders to set the conditions for meeting educational aims (Ministry of Education, 2012). To define the differences among these leadership roles in New Zealand schools, senior leaders are made up of deputies, associates

and assistant principals. On the other hand, middle leaders comprise of a diverse range of roles from pedagogical leaders, pastoral leaders to teachers with specific or school-wide responsibilities all aligned with the common purpose to improve educational outcomes for all students (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Leading from the middle documents the diversity of senior and middle leaders. Each school differs from one another and these differences often determine the distribution of leadership needs in a schooling environment. As educational leaders in New Zealand "...the purpose of middle and senior leaders is to improve outcomes for all students – outcomes that embrace their education, welfare and development..." (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 8). This can be determined on several success factors such as; expertise, engagement in implementation, collaboration, resourcing, professional development and effective leadership practices. Hence the recommended practice of distributed leadership. Spillane (2006) elaborates that "...it is the collective interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation that are paramount..." (p. 18) in this approach to leadership. Moreover, the Ministry of Education (2012) believe that this position of leadership is fundamental for twenty-first century schools as teacher involvement in educational leadership produces positive results for students. Leadership can shape identity and there is another side to it which conflicts with a faultless version of a leader. The conflict is typically evident among middle leadership positions, where their status is labelled as a leader with some power but the actual realities of the role clash with the ideals of the position (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014). As an illustration, New Zealand educational leaders have a responsibility to meet the precedence outlined by the Ministry of Education whilst also meeting the needs of the school community they serve in. Part of this is the educational success of priority learners identified – Maori and Pasifika students. Harris (2010) argues that distributed leadership can become an obstacle for successful functioning teams, as more contemporary literature shows the practicalities of distributed leadership can encounter clashes due to factors like conflicting leadership styles, conflicting priorities, and conflicting structural and cultural limitations. The common experiences of injustices experienced by Pasifika people are acknowledged as a priority area in New Zealand Education policies (Rio & Stephenson, 2010). However, as this dissertation focusses on the under-representation of Pasifika leadership in secondary schools, it demonstrates that pre-dominantly non-Pasifika educational leaders are having to lead and attempt to meet this ministry precedence of educational success for all priority learners. Santamaria and Santamaria (2015) support the notion that indigenous leaders, leading in schools with indigenous students, can effectively contribute to this school community through their distinctive approaches of leading in education, hence the focus on Pasifika leadership aspirations in New Zealand secondary schools. As immigration patterns continue to increase the diversity within many countries, there is an increasing common desire for new homeland destinations. In a multi-cultural and multi-

ethnic place like New Zealand it would make sense to have leaders that mirror this diversity in society. For example, New Zealand schools are faced with a growing number of Pasifika students and Pasifika leadership would complement this shift in the education sector.

Both Ministry documents – KEP and Leading from the middle - provide direction for educational leadership by identifying four qualities, four areas of practice and effective leadership skills as portrayed in the ELM in Figure 2.1 (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2012). It adopts a distributed leadership stance that may come with complexities due to inconsistent practices and conflict arising (Spillane, 2006). Nonetheless, the guideline has been provided as a resource to build the capability of leadership in New Zealand's unique self-managing schools and educational leaders should be competent with the skills required to lead change.

## **Indigenous Leadership**

Indigenous leadership is a complex phenomenon (Wolfgramm, Spiller & Voyageur, 2016). When researching this sub-theme, it has also been identified as native leadership and traditional leadership. In order to understand the complexities of indigenous leadership we must first understand Indigenous knowledge. Minthorn & Chavez (2015) claim that Indigenous ways of being are built on a system of relational knowledge with multiple influences of lived experiences. It is difficult to pinpoint one type of Indigenous leadership as factors such as traditions, ideas, values, culture, context and history differ among Indigenous communities worldwide (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006; Minthorn & Chavez, 2015). Often popular leadership theories are heavily associated with mainstream communities, dominantly westernised which becomes an obstacle for indigenous leaders due to opposite worldviews for both indigenous and dominant communities (Wolfgramm et al., 2016). When people come together in communities, there are patterns of sameness and distinctiveness that creates classification among individuals and groups, this leads to either include or exclude them (Gunter, 2006). Indigenous leadership can be defined as learning to live in different worlds by becoming bi-cultural and treading carefully around the invisible borders of these different worlds (Evans & Sinclair, 2016; Kavaliku, 2007). Indigenous people have distinct systems, languages, values and beliefs that end up excluding them from mainstream communities. Indigenous leaders need to be aware of these dilemmas because historically, Indigenous worldviews have been ignored; as their lived experiences face societal injustices in both worlds of indigenous and mainstream communities (McLeod, 2015). As an illustration, Alvesson and Spicer (2014) identifies how leadership can “marginalize many people who do not fit white, male, heterosexist norms to occupy positions of leadership” (p. 50), this side of leadership exists in multi-cultural societies, which breaks away from the assumption that leadership is all positive. Indigenous leadership portrays a history of conceding to colonisation

which enforced a foreign westernised leadership structure. This has impacted Indigenous people around the world due to the mismatch in leadership structures and systems (Evans & Sinclair, 2016). On the contrary, these injustices can also “create new and emancipatory forms of leading” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014: p. 51), which allows greater possibility for leadership advancement. Nowadays, Indigenous scholars are commencing with new indigenous literature with an indigenous lens; this provides a voice for addressing the leadership discourses often associated from non-indigenous scholars (Wolfgramm et al., 2016). This positive shift to inclusiveness will bring light to the benefits of applying Indigenous identity and worldviews by Indigenous, for Indigenous in mainstream communities.

The journal article by Stewart and Warn (2017), discusses how Indigenous leaders navigate between the two worlds of indigenous and mainstream communities to better the prospects of their own community through a distinct leadership style of a relational cultural component. This supports the lived experience of McLeod (2015) who refers to a ‘two-sided professional river’, where his cultural position influences and guides his professional practice. This distinct style of leadership does not conform to the status-quo of individual leadership that is widely written about in literature and it is not a contemporary approach to leadership either. Nonetheless, there is an increasing movement of Indigenous leaders voicing their positioning in mainstream communities and challenging the discourses of leadership with an indigenous lens (Evans & Sinclair, 2016). When analysing the discourse of leadership, the four themes that emerge are: issues of ideology, identity, inclusion and intervention (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014). The dilemma often faced by indigenous leadership is challenging the mainstream community norms. The complexities of this is having to look back at traditionalistic cultural worldviews and values; revising and amending it accordingly, to sustainably capitalise on opportunities for Indigenous people today and in the future (Evans & Sinclair, 2016; Minthorn & Chavez, 2015). Peterson (2018) supports this further by stating that Indigenous leaders provoke a new way of thinking that “...organically roots us in community, binds us together in relationship with each other, the Spirit, and the Earth, and drives on our need to contest a global paradigm and world system that is broken for so many people...” (p. 5). Although there will be challenges and barriers faced by indigenous leaders, there is a need for understanding various factors such as historical contexts, social structures and cultures to this unique approach to leadership (Zhang et al., 2012). These same authors promote the importance of indigenous leadership research as it would significantly contribute to the study of global leadership. For the purpose of this dissertation, the emphasis is centred on the context of Pasifika leadership – a form of Indigenous leadership around the world.

Figure 2.2 shows the labelled locations of the Pacific Island nations found in the South Pacific Ocean. Within these Pacific nations are sub-regions: Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (McLeod, 2008). The term ‘Pasifika’ is a collective term and an interpretation of ‘Pacific’ in

several Pasifika languages, it is an umbrella label used and applied often in education institutions when analysing data, documentation or policies (Samu, 2007). Often the label Pasifika homogenises and labels Pacific nations into one large group, however doesn't account for the diversity in each of these nations who have their own identity, languages, traditions, values and cultural systems indigenous and unique to their place of origin homelands (Marshall, Coxon, Jenkins, Jones, 2000; Samu, 2015). Pasifika educators consciously take heed of the 'homogenizing effect' this label can have on Pasifika people if the multiplicity within the term is not acknowledged and recognised (Rio & Stephenson, 2010; Samu, 2007). It should also be noted, that there are other differences within these Pasifika nations such as social class differences, gender differences and intergenerational differences (Marshall, Coxon, Jenkins & Jones, 2000).



*Figures 2.2 Map showing the South Pacific Islands. From "Map of the world," by Lonely Planet, 2017 (<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/pacific/>)*

Literature on Pasifika leadership traditionally has been framed in the context of two models: 'big man leadership' and 'chiefly leadership' which centres on the diverse complexities of economic and political societal structures (McLeod, 2007). This same author further examines three main concepts that interrelate within these frameworks; culture, leadership and good governance. With reference to 'big man leadership', its origins derive from the 'Great Man Theory' and is based on the notion that the ability to lead is inherent. Leaders are 'born to lead' with certain leadership qualities, abilities and traits to influence their followers as their birth right as seen in Pasifika nations like Papua New Guinea (Daft, 2011; McLeod, 2007, 2008). As an illustration, 'big man leadership' status is validated through their specific skill set such as oratory and bravery. Chiefly

leadership is the influence and power derived from the position itself rather than the person individually, their leadership covers a set group that is advantageous over the first model (McLeod, 2007, 2008). The similarities between the two models highlight leaders being practical, powerful, highly influential and male. Both frameworks have been highly critiqued and affected by present-day organisations but still offer a leadership model nonetheless (Douglas, 1979; McLeod, 2007; Sahlins, 1963). Since then, the prospect of Pasifika leadership has moved to more modern-day philosophies due to changing social contexts (Eti-Tofinga, Douglas & Singh, 2017).

Current literature on Pasifika leadership is somewhat limited, however the uniqueness of Pasifika leadership is pertinent in New Zealand’s changing society as reflected in the immigration patterns of Pasifika ethnic groups since the 1970s (Mugisha, 2013; Rio & Stephenson, 2010). For the purpose of this research, the focus of Pasifika leadership will be centred on New Zealand secondary schools. With a large and growing Pasifika student population, the under-representation of Pasifika senior and middle leaders in secondary schools is more marked. Pasifika roll statistics as of July 2018 show there are well over 26,000 Pasifika students in secondary schools, approximately 9.6% of the total student population in secondary schools (Education Counts, 2019). In comparison, teacher workforce statistics as of 2018 show there are over 24,000 full time equivalent secondary teachers employed in New Zealand – only 3.5% of the teacher workforce identified as Pasifika (Education Counts, 2019). As shown in Figure 2.3, the demographics also show an older workforce aged between 45-74 years old, a large female dominated workforce and a significantly leading Pakeha (European) ethnic group.

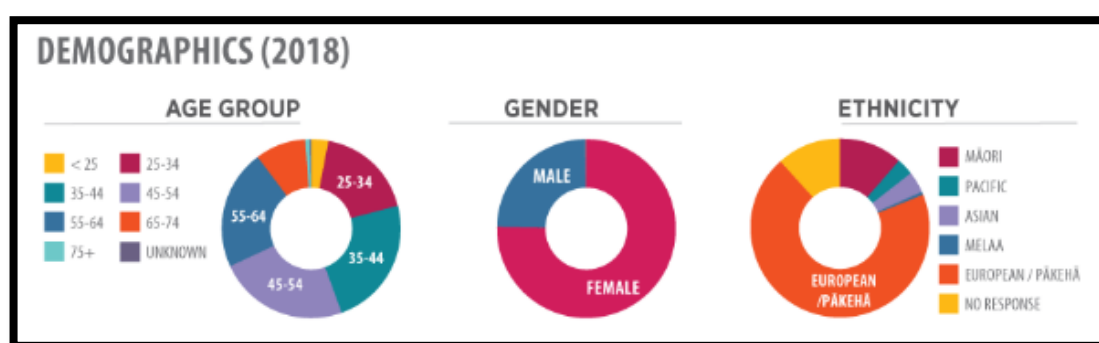


Figure 2.3 Overview of 2018 teaching demographics. From “Teacher Workforce,” by Education Counts, 2019 (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/workforce/teacher-workforce>)

Mugisha (2013) discusses how demographics like what has been portrayed in Figure 2.3 can create ramifications for New Zealand’s education policies. In the face of policy changes addressing the ethnic disparities, the effects of increasing immigration patterns only highlight that it still exists (Mugisha, 2013; Santamaria, Santamaria & Singh, 2017). As Marshall, Coxon, Jenkins and Jones (2000) state “the fact that these differences exist in a supposedly egalitarian system...indicates that the system itself, and its relation to wider society, needs to be critically investigated” (p. 167), this shows the negative correlation between socio-economic status and

ethnicity for Pasifika people. As mentioned earlier, there is hope for positive change as Indigenous leaders can advocate for positive change in their position of power and lived experiences. “Engaging leadership for diversity is a conscious and deliberate choice...which involves a deep commitment to social justice and educational equity” (Santamaria, Santamaria & Singh, 2017: p. 617).

Consequently, the demographics shown in Figure 2.3 highlight an under-representation of Pasifika educators in New Zealand which would conclude that there are fewer Pasifika educational leaders. The earlier reference to indigenous leadership literature shows the complexities involved for minority groups that are not of the mainstream communities, and this links with Pasifika leadership aspirational challenges and obstacles. It would appear that Pasifika teachers are applying for leadership roles and being unsuccessful, or they are not applying for such roles at all.

## **Aspirations**

Aspirations could be defined as the desire or hope to be achieving something. This concept is closely associated to self-efficacy which drives one’s personal motivation, well-being and accountability to “engage in behaviours when they believe that they will lead to successful outcomes” (Cziraki, Read, Spence Laschinger & Wong, 2018: p. 48). Stone (2018) draws on this self-efficacy theory by positioning four sources of beliefs: enactive attainment – an individual mastering something challenging; vicarious experience – an individual being inspired and influenced by role-models; verbal persuasion – when a trusted source verbally persuades influence; and physiological state – relating to an individual’s emotional state that can encourage or hinder behaviour. Figure 2.3 illustrates these four sources contributing to the development of self-efficacy and performance (Stone, 2018). This dissertation focuses on understanding the theme of aspirations to leadership which can be defined as motivation to attaining a leadership position and advancement (Fedi & Rollero, 2016; Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2018). This supports the notion of the self-efficacy theory which begins with an intent to motivate oneself and set in motion the behaviour to achieving the goal, which in this case is leadership (Stone, 2018). Educational leadership allows vertical career advancement by teachers. It has been highlighted through the findings of a research report that minority groups who desire for leadership roles can feel pressured to become the forerunners in school leadership because they will be analysed more closely by their colleagues (McKenley & Gordon, 2002 as cited in Cardno & Auva’a, 2010). This experience alone can either motivate an aspiring leader or discourage from pursuing further career advancement. Aspirations require support and encouragement so that it does not debilitate leadership opportunities and advancements.



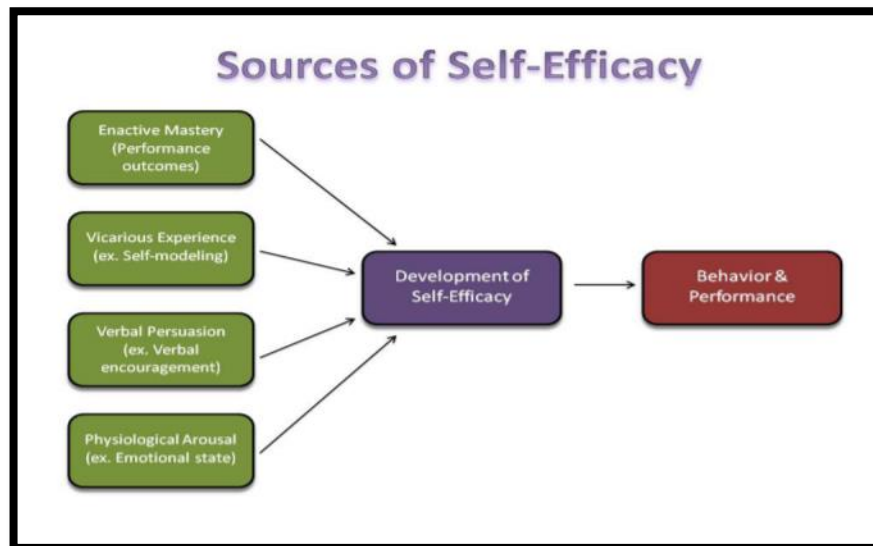


Figure 2.4 Self-efficacy model. Reprinted from “The Neuroscience of self-efficacy: vertically integrated leisure theory and its implications for theory-based programming”, by G. Stone, 2018, *Journal of Outdoor Recreations, Education and leadership*, (10) 2, p. 90.

As portrayed in Figure 2.3, the self-efficacy model highlights four contributing sources that can self-motivate an individual to aspire for leadership (Stone, 2018). This same author discusses the relationship between the two elements of social-psychology and biological accounts through a vertical integration. If we focus on leadership aspirations as the setting for vertically integrated self-efficacy, it could be illustrated as follows:

*Enactive Attainment:* Leadership acquires certain skills, qualities, abilities and attributes. If an individual is aspiring for leadership, an action plan would be actioned in a logical order to advance them forward as they master each goal established in their own belief.

*Vicarious Experience:* Leadership aspirations can come about from being inspired by other leaders who have role-modelled leadership. Other contributing factors include an authentic and trusting connection with the role-model to model yourself after.

*Verbal Persuasion:* The realities of leadership aspirations can be heightened when productive and informative feedback is given to individuals. If done constructively, it is more likely to motivate individuals to aspire for leadership roles through guidance received from a trusting and inspiring leader.

*Physiological State:* In this final sequence of building self-efficacy, an aspiring leader would have a set progression plan that involves mastering set goals with the guidance of an inspiring and influential role-model would give guidance, advice, direction and support to motivate the individual’s ability to pursue leadership.

On the contrary, if the same illustration was conducted in a negative way, where individuals had no leadership succession plan with guidance. There will likely be a decrease in the individual’s

response to aspiring for leadership. Negative factors like ethnic and gender disparities that are associated with social injustices, stereotypes, prejudices and stigma can further hinder career advancement (Fedi & Rollero, 2016). The same authors use an illustration of stereotypes where some individuals who are targeted by the specific stereotype are more likely exposed and affected by that stereotype threat. In support of this illustration, Levine (2000) discusses the concept of the 'glass ceiling' – the unseen barrier that marginalises minority groups from promotions caused by organisational barriers and attitudes towards non-traditional styles of leadership. This unseen barrier for minority groups supports the well-researched concept known as the Imposter syndrome (Pedlar, 2011). The signs and symptoms associated with this syndrome is a fear of failure and self-confidence, anxiety, inadequacy and belief that individuals are out of their depth (Mount & Tardanico, 2014; Pedler, 2011). The literature shows how the effects of popular westernised notions of leadership can have a negative impact on minority groups and the psychological stigma attached with this belief. It leads to missed opportunities for advancement or only further delays the possibility to leadership.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

"There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something." (p. 106)  
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

The reason for selecting this quote from the book *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien is that the story is based on the unexpected journey of a Hobbit who joins a group of dwarves to reclaim their kingdom and, just as with carrying out research, in order to find the way you need to look for it with careful planning and selection of routes on the research journey as we will see in this methodology and methods chapter.

### Introduction

The purpose of this research was to critically examine the lived experiences of Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining leadership positions within a New Zealand secondary school context. This chapter begins with an overview of the methodology applied in my research and the application of a narrative method using semi-structured interviews within an interpretivist qualitative research approach. In addition, the chapter also discusses the Pasifika research participants, ethical considerations in this research and cultural sensitivity. This research was guided by three major questions:

- What aspirations to leadership positions do Pasifika teachers' describe?
- What factors influence Pasifika teacher's leadership aspirations?
- What enablers and challenges are faced by Pasifika teachers, in aspiring to and gaining a leadership position?

The focal reason for doing the research was out of a general curiosity arising from my personal professional experience as a Pasifika educational leader in a New Zealand secondary school. There is limited literature that addresses leadership aspirations in New Zealand secondary schools for Pasifika people, hence my research rationale being explored further. O'Leary (2017) discusses the purpose of research questions as being a way to "define an investigation and provide direction" (p. 37). The research questions evolved since the beginning stages of completing the research proposal as my thinking developed over time due to further investigation of the relevant literature. This process is linked to O'Leary's (2017) guide to generating research questions which includes a checklist process to narrow down the questions brainstormed until it is succinct, well-articulated

and workable in conducting the research. In addition, this had included the process of receiving expert approval from my academic supervisor to ensure the research was relevant.

## **Positioning**

Research methodologies are always aligned with ontological and epistemological positionings (Kara, 2017). Ontology is the philosophy understanding of what things we believe things are in existence or the reality of the nature of being; epistemology centres on how we know and understand this existence (O’Leary, 2017; Tolich & Davidson, 2011). Tolich and Davidson (2011) explain that both “ontological and epistemological beliefs set the limits to what things we think exist in the world and how we can know about those things” (p. 31). The ontological positioning of this research is the philosophy of constructivism because it recognises qualitative research which brings personal values within a context, making it subjective (O’Leary, 2017). Ontologically, I have adopted constructivism, as my research collected the participants’ lived-experiences to construct the research as opposed to just using the participants for research (Kara, 2017). Each narrator shared their personalised leadership story and the research was constructed through their perspectives and experience. The epistemological position I have applied is an interpretivist approach to understanding the narratives shared by the participants as separate accounts as well as understanding their multiple realities (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). The research philosophy of Interpretivism seeks for understanding and meaning through a social construct (O’Leary, 2017). Applying this stance of interpretivism assumes that “truth is relative to individuals and communities” (Cupchik, 2001, p. 30) and explains how knowledge is created. As Vico (1958) states: “The human mind can know only what the human mind has made” (as cited in Simpson, 2001). This personal perspective of the research participants’ worldviews and knowledge permits contextual understanding to provide a rich source of research data on leadership aspirations. The intricacy of research methodology can be complicated due to such variables as diversity, the unknown, or multiple realities (O’Leary, 2017). As a novice researcher I endeavour to be genuine in addressing these complexities in the research process.

## **Qualitative Research**

A paradigm guides how research will be done through an investigation technique. In this case the inquiry is understanding why there is an under-representation of Pasifika leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. It is often found that paradigms such as constructivism and interpretivism are connected to human inquiry because it is value-based and subjective (Kara, 2017; Punch, 2009). Punch (2010) describes this paradigm as focusing on people’s understandings of certain situations and behaviours. This research has applied the interpretivist paradigm This aligns with the overall

purpose of this research. Tolich and Davidson (2011) summarise the interpretivist paradigm as a creation of meaning to infer understanding of their different social interactions in the world. The lived experiences that were shared in the research will contribute to the gaps in literature on Pasifika teacher's aspirations to leadership roles in a New Zealand secondary school context.

Following on from establishing the research paradigm, a research method needs to be applied. Broadly speaking, there are two types: qualitative and quantitative. These terms can be viewed as adjectives represented through the data such as numerical data that can be measured or textual data that can be explored further, it also refers to how data is analysed (Kara, 2017; O'Leary, 2017). Primarily qualitative is exploratory research which provide understanding and discovers trends (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). For the most part, quantitative research is numerical and measures data using statistical methods to quantify the research (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). As quantitative research is commonly large-scale and dependent on statistical data analysis, it was not an appropriate approach to take for the research described in this dissertation. On the contrary, a qualitative approach is better suited for this research as it is more reliant on the collection of experiences and words for data (O'Leary, 2017). This approach permits validity on the lived experiences shared as opposed to the number of participants.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 21). Qualitative research approaches "human beings as agents" (p. 20), who can give explanations of their accounts and validate their reasoning. Applying a qualitative method would illuminate their lived experiences and circumstances (Brinkmann, 2012; Squire et al., 2014). This approach aligned with the purpose of this research, given that a qualitative approach is subjective, inviting inductive and deductive logic and acknowledging multiple realities of research participants (O'Leary, 2017). Qualitative research also comes with its limitations as it deals with people and that, in itself, is complex. The participants share their stories and the researcher accepts this as their truths, in addition, there is no way to determine or question the trustworthiness of the information shared. Moreover, carrying out qualitative research can be a time-consuming process because of the transcribing often required and the analysis of the large amount of information generated by research methods such as semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the possibility of the researcher's bias can be limiting to a study, as it could influence the research process which in turn would impact on the analysis of the findings. I first must acknowledge my own social and cultural background – that is, I am a New Zealand-born Pasifika education leader of Fijian and Samoan descent in a secondary school. I am also researching other Pasifika education leaders' narratives through a qualitative paradigm; I

cannot let my preconceived notions misinterpret my understanding of the narratives. By using a semi-structured style interview allows the freedom to express their narratives under their own terms without the research being misled or misguided. Hence the reasoning for applying the philosophies of constructivism and interpretivism in the research.

## **Research Methodology – The Narrative Approach**

Methodology focuses on the organisation and arrangement of the research activity (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). The narrative approach has become a popular methodology in the discipline of social sciences (Silverman, 2011). Squire et al., (2014) define narratives as a “set of signs, for a set of such signs to constitute a narrative, there needs to be movement between signs that generates meaning” (p. 5). In addition, Carless and Douglas (2017) state that “narrative research allows participants the freedom to raise issues that are meaningful to them. Sharing marginal, taboo, or silenced stories often challenges existing understandings and theories” (p. 308). Thus, the narrative approach is about gathering stories and hearing experiences, a very different form of data gathering when compared to scientific or statistical forms and analysis. According to Squire et al. (2014), “Narrative research assumes no existing expertise” (p. 1) and “context is an important sense part of narrative, since it is what enables narrative to be understood” (p. 12). The narrative approach is a way of sharing or transferring knowledge, thus bringing meaning to the participants’ personal experiences (Thomas, 2012). It allows the participants to share their lived experiences and “offers insights into what life is like as an embodied - living, breathing, feeling – human being” (Carless & Douglas, 2017, p. 307). Often in data analysis, there will be attempts to find commonalities in the data but, in the case of narratives, this could cultivate a culture of fragmentation (Punch, 2009). Punch (2009) elaborates that narratives are a means of preserving the storied data; narratives allows a sense of empowerment as these “stories are part of the representation of social reality” (p. 191) for the narrator. There is a chance of misinterpreting the re-presentation of the narrative out of context, if not analysed correctly. This approach allows the research participants in this study to freely express their own ‘stories’ of Pasifika leadership aspirations in New Zealand secondary schools.

There is no one accepted approach in narrative analysis. However, through careful consideration of the numerous ways to code narratives, I have selected a narrative analysis perspective of re-presenting the narratives – a method to express the participants’ experiences by using the actual spoken words. This approach “makes stories meaningful or coherent in a form appropriate to the needs of a particular occasion” (Silverman, 2013, p. 446). Thomas (2012) supports the notion that “narratives can and should, at times, stand alone” (p. 213), and that researchers only have access to the narratives that are shared, not the actual experiences. Therefore, it is crucial not to

misrepresent the narrative. Atkinson (1990) suggests that using participants' own words asserts authenticity and provides acknowledgment that this is their story. In this dissertation, I have represented the narratives as they were shared with me in the interviews, using their actual words. This is more than just textual data awaiting analysis; it is the lived experiences in their life journey and, as such, should not be misrepresented in any way.

This research critically examined leadership aspirations through a Pasifika lens, so the narration analysis also incorporated the unconscious and emotional narratives such as silence, laughing and body movement along with the oral narrative (Squire et al., 2014). In addition, the use of metaphors in each of the participants' narratives when used to distinguish understanding and meaning, should also be noted in the analysis (Punch, 2009). Larson (1997) states that narratives "can penetrate cultural barriers, give voice to human experience, and understand human intention and action" (p. 455). That is to say that "narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography, and society" (Hunter, 2010, p. 44). Lived experiences are relational in form and therefore the narrative approach requires an ethical relationship between the researcher and participants. Representing narrations is a complex task and therefore I strived to achieve this in an honest and respectful way.

When sorting through the transcriptions of the interviews, I had to draw out the similarities and differences in a vertical analysis between all three narratives. I had categorised the transcript narratives according to the three main research questions as a guide to structuring the findings whilst re-presenting the narrations as stand-alone inserts. This vertical analysis was chosen to show the participants' lived experiences from their perspectives, without altering or misrepresent the narrative. As a side note, there were limitations in analysing the lived experiences in this research as it became very time-consuming to ensure that all elements were considered for the analysis as mentioned above were taken into consideration.

## **Research Method – Semi-structured Interviews**

Interviewing is a common technique used by researchers collecting primary data, as it is flexible, adaptable and can suit various research contexts (O'Leary, 2017; Punch, 2009). There are many forms associated with interviewing such as face-to-face, surveys and questionnaires with individuals or groups of people (Punch, 2009). The method of semi-structured interviews was chosen for this research as the participants were sharing their leadership aspirations in an educational context through a Pasifika lens. In addition, face-to-face permits the researcher to building a rapport and gauge the interview by deducing the narrations and looking for the visual

cues. Methods that did not involve face-to-face interactions were considered inappropriate for this research as it would not obtain non-verbal and body expressions which were considered in the data analysis and the space for the participants to express their personal lived experiences.

The dimensions of a semi-structured format permit in-depth interviews. The interview is only partly planned in terms of the general questions created to structure the interview and allows room for flexibility when further exploring the participants' narratives (Punch, 2009). This form of semi-structured interview sits between the characteristics of structured interviews and unstructured interviews in its classification (Punch, 2009). As Anderson & Kirkpatrick (2015) note narrative interviews ask the how? why? and what? questions that are common in qualitative research and although a narrative approach would generally use a reasonably unstructured interview approach, I adapted the approach to use a semi-structured style interview as a novice researcher to be readily prepared. This semi-structured method gave me the freedom to design an interview guideline of questions to support the three main research questions yet allowed leeway to follow up on the participants' conversations when these took another path in the interview. As with all research tools, there are limitations. Semi-structured interviews require the researcher to be skilled enough to probe for meaning or clarification in the interview. If the researcher lacks these skills, then it could limit the depth of the information gathered and become a missed opportunity for richer data-gathering. This limitation was evident in my practice interview that took place one month prior to conducting the actual interview for this investigation. This practice interview took place in a booked meeting room in the library. The outcome of this practice demonstrated how I was too closely adhering to the interview questions instead of probing my participant for better understanding of their lived experiences which were missed opportunities to dig deeper into the investigation. Fortunately, the practice interview allowed timely reflection for me to improve my interview questioning techniques prior to conducting the actual interviews for this research. These included noting down key words the narrators would mention, having the research aims in front me during the interview to prompt me and allowing the narrator time to unpack their thinking without interrupting their train of thought.

## **Research Participants**

To meet the research aim, this qualitative research used a type of non-probability sampling which meant that some participants were more likely to be included in the research than others (Tolich & Davidson, 2011). Purposive sampling was chosen as the most appropriate sampling approach. Research participants had to meet all the following criteria:

- be of Pasifika descent; and



- be an educational leader in a secondary school; and
- be currently working in a New Zealand secondary school.

To begin the process of finding research participants, a search on twelve school websites was conducted – these schools selected were located in areas of high Pasifika populations. The purpose of searching the school websites was to build a list of possible participants as many school websites include photographs of these educational leaders and their names. The potential problem I anticipated during the search is that not all Pasifika people will ‘look Pasifika’ especially if they are a mixed race. The same applies for their names when I take into account my own name which sounds European. Nevertheless, conducting this exercise enabled me to compile a list of nine potential participants I could invite to participate in the research study. This list was sorted into their leadership roles and the first name from each specific leadership role was selected, providing a list of three people to be initially invited. Participant Information sheets were then mailed to these three people, inviting these potential research participants by using the school address details available on the school website. All contact information for potential participants to register their interest with me to participate in the research was included.

Informal consent was gained from the first three participants to take part in the interview by each participant responding through e-mail accepting the invitation to participate in the research within the seven days of the Information sheet being posted. Formal written consent was accepted at the start of each interview. Three Pasifika education leaders (one principal, one deputy principal and one middle leader) were selected. These three participants provided me with an adequate pool of data to fulfil the demands of a 60-point dissertation project. The remaining six names on the list did not have any correspondence posted to them due to the acceptance of the first three participants. It was then a matter of arranging a suitable time and venue. Two of the participants opted for a location off-site and one participant preferred to be interviewed at their workplace.

All interviews were audio-recorded and varied from 35-90 minutes. Using a semi-structured interview approach allowed a focus on their aspirations to leadership yet was open-ended enough to also allow a space for participants to share their journey as a Pasifika leader.

*Table 3.1: Research participants’ demographic information*

<b>Participant Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Years in this role</b>
Galadriel	Female	Fijian/Indian/European	Principal	50-60	1-5

Tauriel	Female	Samoan/Tokelauan	Deputy Principal	40-50	5-10
Legolas	Male	Samoan	Dean	30-40	1-5

## **Ethical Considerations**

Wellington (2015) notes the importance of ethics in educational research and how this “should be at the forefront of the research of any research project and should continue through to the write up and the dissemination stages” (p. 4). Ethics is vital as researchers in the past have damaged the integrity of research through unethical practices. The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) recognises the need to foster greater integrity and effectively protect the researchers and participants. Hence a lengthy ethics application document is used to safeguard both the researcher and the participant and to promote honesty. Tolich and Davidson (2011) outline key ethical principles to apply when leading research as a social scientist: informed and voluntary consent, do no harm, avoid deceit and confidentiality or anonymity. These principals are also reflected in the ethics documentation required by AUTEC

### **Gain informed and voluntary consent**

Tolich and Davison (2011) state that “before informants can truly volunteer for the research, they need to know what it is they are opting into” (p. 156). A formal letter with a Participant Information sheet attached (see Appendix A) was mailed to three participants in their respective schools using the school addresses readily available on the schools’ websites. This letter introduced myself as the researcher along with my aim and intentions for the research. A more detailed Information Sheet was also attached, outlining the purpose of the research, the process of purposive sampling, the nature of the research process, anticipated benefits, privacy assurances, and contact information to register their intention to participate. The intention of this initial communication for the research study was to be honest about the research and readily inform potential participants so they could decide whether or not to participate. There was also ample opportunity leading up to the interviews for participants to ask any questions or seek further clarification. O’Leary (2017) further supports this process by acknowledging there should be no deception, coercion or inducement that could compromise the ethical obligations a researcher has. Prior to the interview taking place all research participants were asked to sign a Consent Form (see Appendix A) to formalise their agreement to participate in the semi-structured interview and to be audio-recorded. The Consent Forms were not included in the initial communication as it was deemed suitable to present it prior to the interview as each participant had by then accepted to take part in the research.

## **Do no harm**

Tolich and Davidson (2011) state that “deliberately deceiving informants in your research is unethical and constitutes serious misconduct” (p. 157). This principle of ‘do no harm’ ensures that the research is managed appropriately to minimise any risk and not compromise the well-being of the participants and the researcher (Silverman, 2013). In the initial correspondence the information provided gave details on the research study and contact information to ask further questions and accept the invitation. Research participants for this study were given the option to choose their venue for the semi-structured interviews to take place. This choice allowed the participant to select a space that was safe and comfortable for them. In preparation for the interview, I constantly reminded myself of the questions that Punch (2009) states on a general framework when dealing with ethical issues for “Harm and risk – what might this study do to hurt the people involved? How likely is it that such harm will occur?” (p. 50). This awareness ensured that I was paying attention to how I communicated to the participants and how I modified or adapted questions in the interviews.

## **Avoid deceit**

In order to limit deception in this research study, participants were provided information in the form of a formal letter, Information letter, Consent form and contact information for key people should concerns about this research arise. O’Leary (2017) discusses authenticity as an indicator for capturing ‘truth’ in research. It is unethical to intentionally mislead participants and it is the responsibility of the researcher to avoid deceit by constantly reflecting on this process throughout the research (Brinkman, 2012; Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

## **Ensure confidentiality**

O’Leary (2017) defines confidentiality as “protecting the identity of those providing research data” and anonymity takes this a step further by protecting “against identification even from the researcher” (p. 70). As the researcher, I could offer confidentiality but not anonymity as the participants’ identities were known to me. I had to take steps to safeguard the participants’ identities and other indicators that may easily identify them to other people. This included securely storing the recordings on a separate USB, giving each participant a pseudonym on the interview transcripts, removing the name of the school and location and restricting access to the raw data to only my supervisor and myself. As I only interviewed three research participants, from a larger total pool of Pasifika leaders in New Zealand secondary schools, it was likely that my participants would not be identifiable to the readers of this dissertation (O’Leary, 2017; Tolich & Davidson, 2011).

## **Cultural Sensitivity**

When working with any ethnic group, cultural considerations should be applied to respect the interaction between the researcher and the participants. This research focused on Pasifika leaders in a New Zealand secondary school context. All participants, as well as the researcher, were of Pasifika descent and all are educational leaders within New Zealand secondary schools. Using New Zealand secondary schools as the basis for the setting, a strong commitment and acknowledgement to Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) formed an important foundation for the research under the three main principals – partnership, participation and protection.

- **Partnership**

This is based on mutual respect. As a researcher I acknowledged that the participants were key stakeholders in a secondary school context and endeavoured to build productive partnerships with them to allow interchange of narratives shared would be beneficial to all.

- **Participation**

This is based on equality of opportunities and outcomes. Participants were provided a space to share their narrations of lived experiences and reflect as a Pasifika leader in a New Zealand secondary school context along with its challenges, barriers and opportunities.

- **Protection**

This is based on protection of knowledge. The research process with the participants' was conducted in a respectful manner and their shared narrations were acknowledged and valued because it mattered.

## **Summary**

In summary, this chapter explored the selected research methodology and methods to collect the research data beginning with the construction of the three major research questions. The methodology philosophies applied included the following: ontologically – constructivism and epistemologically – interpretivism with a narrative approach. Moreover, the opted methods applied in this research was the interpretivist paradigm of qualitative research using semi-structured interviews. Ethical considerations were discussed in length to protect both the researcher and the participants throughout the research process. The following chapter will present the narrators' findings with further commentary analysis.

## Chapter Four: Research Findings

“A box without hinges, key, or lid,  
Yet golden treasure inside is hid.” (p. 132)  
**J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

This quote from the book *Hobbit* aligns nicely with this particular chapter, as the personal narrations shared by the research participants unlocked ‘golden treasures’ of their own valuable personal stories of leadership.

### Introduction

This chapter contains an overview description of the data presentation supported with the narrative findings from the three interviewees and a discussion of this analysis. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to meet the following aims of this research:

1. To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership; and
2. To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher’s perspectives of the enablers/challengers faced in moving into secondary school leadership.

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the research was guided by three major questions in order to allow me to critically examine the lived experiences of Pasifika teachers aspiring to and gaining leadership positions in a New Zealand secondary context.

The structure of the data presentation is as follows:

1. The three major questions guiding this research stated before each participants narrative;
2. Commentary on identified themes; and
3. The research participants’ narratives re-presented using participant pseudonyms.

This research utilised semi-structured interviews to collect the narrators’ lived experiences, so the interview questions were intended to guide participants, while still allowing opportunities for participants to elaborate on their responses and ideas.

The opening interview questions allowed the research participants to share about themselves to create a respectful space where their narrative was valued. It was an introductory opportunity to begin the semi-structured interview and allowed research participants the freedom to begin their narrative. These opening questions were:

1. Could you tell me about yourself? (background, culture, ethnicity, family)
2. What has been your greatest influence for your educational success?
3. Could you tell me about your current leadership role in your school? How long? What do you do?

The Pasifika ethnicities represented by the research participants were Fijian, Samoan and Tokelauan. These participants all met the selection criteria for this research project. I was honoured to have all three participants navigate and share their realities of leadership. The narratives presented here summarise the following:

- Support that enabled participants to move into leadership;
- Their positive/negative views about Pasifika leadership and its influences;
- A reluctance to aspire to leadership; and
- Challenges and barriers faced in their leadership roles.

## **Legolas's Journey**

Legolas currently holds leadership roles within his professional life, family life and actively in his church community. He is highly family-oriented and comes from a large New Zealand based supportive family that value educational success. The following quotes illustrates this:

*Yes, I am the 15th of 15. All minister kids. Yeah, we are into the whole extended family sort of approach not just the nuclear family and to my brother's kids and sisters' kids to also (pause) close contact with my first generation first cousin and their children, and their children's children. I'm very village related, so not only blood-related but because we are from the same village, we call each other family. (Legolas)*

The ongoing support from his large family network and his mother gave him motivation for educational success in secondary and tertiary schooling. As Legolas narrates: *"Family especially Mum, she actually pushed us to do really well...A lot of family support... A lot of church connections... also that personal drive just to do better..."*. Legolas described growing up around strong leaders within his family and church community who portrayed leadership qualities such as: *"being present ... proactive ... organised ... efficient ... direct ... upfront ... influential"*. He aspired to these qualities role-modelled in his upbringing, and he openly shared his journey about receiving a *Matai* (chiefly) title in 2012 within his family network. Legolas knew that with a *Matai* (chiefly) title comes the responsibility of playing a leadership role within his family and at regular family events that occur.

However, Legolas' narration discourse shifted when asked about his professional aspirations to leadership. He expressed a reluctant journey to actively seek and aspire for leadership roles in his workplace; however, leadership opportunities presented themselves on more than one occasion as mentioned below. There is a relational emphasis in his leadership journey where he was acknowledged, encouraged and supported by those around him, which were deciding factors for him in accepting a leadership role:

*I really was just pushed into that role [Dean]... I was approached at the time, I still felt green at that time and I didn't want to really ... I really wanted to focus on my own classroom teaching. But 2012 and 2013 the opportunity came up again. I confided in a few colleagues and they said yeah it would be nice and it's about time to take that role. Anyway, I took it up (Legolas)*

As Legolas reflected over the transition from being just a teacher to educational leadership, he felt the role was given to him based on what others saw of him: “*I went into that role based on a reputation*”. This showed a sense of awareness in the transition to the role. Legolas acknowledged his upbringing and life experiences had played an integral part, essential to his leadership journey. However, he also noted that having some knowledge was still extremely important:

*I've always been thrown in the deep end. You know, sink or swim approach. It's all good to just be thrown in the deep end, but for me I've learned early on that it's good just to have a bit of knowledge, be more prepared, have a more wider view of what to expect rather than just go in and be narrow-minded about a role. (Legolas)*

Legolas pondered over the idea that if he aspired for leadership, he was aware of the skills he would bring and some potential barriers that may arise at that level of leadership. Additionally, Legolas identified the need to further his leadership development which would require further study, and more years of experience in leading colleagues. He also noted the issues that may arise. He stated “*if I can't handle those issues as a middle leader then I think I'm not well-equipped to handle it in a school wide level*”. He stood firm on the belief that before anyone moved to a more senior position in this profession, a person should be competent in their current role. It seemed that Legolas was content with his current role and acknowledged that aspiring to leadership in education comes down to personal choice and aspirations.

*I think that middle leadership prepares you a lot better but at the end of the day, it's something you want to end up in. You either want to be DP [Deputy Principal] or Principal, knowing that the influence you could have at that level is more powerful and more direct than the influence you have at middle leadership. (Legolas)*

Legolas discussed several factors that were pivotal in his leadership journey starting first and foremost with his belief in God. He described his educational successes down to this important spiritual aspect, *“you know our parents took us to church ... a lot of praying ... that is central to the success”*. He grounded himself in his Christian values such as the importance of family and the role they play in his life. It was through the church that he encountered strong leaders and reflects on this: *“had some really active and proactive ministers who when we were growing up, I really wanted to aspire to be like them”*. These strong leaders demonstrated through their actions how to lead a church community by leading and directing from the front, and also getting among the work that needed doing, such as organising food at church and then helping with the preparation *“ they knew how to work which was to me, more than just talking”*. Legolas placed on a person’s actions reflecting what they are saying, and mentioned that his personal drive pushed him not to follow his school friends who were making negative choices: *“seeing a lot of the friends not following certain pathways sort of pushed me not to follow them but do something a lot more successful I suppose”*. Now that he is part of the teaching profession, he mirrored his experiences from his upbringing by positioning himself around others who would support his professional life such as *“positive colleagues, you know I get good feedback on how to develop professionally...the same sort of advice that your brothers and sisters or people at church or close friends are also saying”*. Legolas demonstrated a close alignment with his church experiences and school experiences.

Legolas felt enabled to be in his professional role through a relational emphasis - working with good colleagues who would constantly support his journey as he navigates his way through his leadership role. Over time, he started to gain more confidence in his role after observing how others before him took up leadership: *“I had good colleagues working together... I have had huge support from my boss as a Dean. Also, my colleagues, we understood each other we communicated well”*. On the contrary, he also faced many challenges as a Pasifika leader in schools. He shared an experience that happened before he began teaching. He was advised that Pasifika teachers were sought after as they knew how to deal with other Pasifika students, but as he transitioned into his teaching career, he couldn’t understand initially what people meant until he started to gain skills that better equipped him as an effective teacher. However, with this reputation came the need for non-Pasifika teachers to use him because he was Pasifika and could deal with Pasifika students. These assumptions only left Legolas feeling isolated:

*A lot of challenges, sometimes you could be left isolated because they think oh yeah, you’ve got it. He’s alright by himself, he doesn’t need this and that and it’s because of me being Pasifika that was the real reason. I felt that they couldn’t come and help me with a lot of things because I could speak fluent Samoan ... A lot of non-Pasifika and*



*Pasifika staff thought of using that Pasifika card or Pasifika rep to dump all the difficulties that they are facing on you and then you are left isolated. (Legolas)*

This lack of support and lack of ownership from others around him may have deterred him from aspiring for senior leadership roles due to his understanding of the bigger picture at a school-wide level which could be a 'losing battle' for just one person. In addition, he discussed how the term Pasifika is a barrier in itself for staff who don't understand "*Pasifika problems, Pasifika issues, Pasifika community, values that come with it ... hence why there is a clash between the two worlds*". He felt that this resistance against changing approaches to Pasifika students and making assumptions about all Pasifika students may have a negative influence in Pasifika leadership within schools.

*A lot of teachers are thinking that our Pasifika students are the monkey see, monkey do or if I tell you what to do, you just shut up and listen approach. That very authoritarian approach that they have with our student which is unfair, because you are talking about 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Pasifika students, so they're not raised as equally like we were once raised, which was a very strict upbringing. (Legolas)*

These data suggest that this is yet another barrier for those considering leadership roles if issues such as isolation and disconnection are embedded within the school culture. Legolas openly shared another experience regarding a negative influence in Pasifika leadership:

*There has always been that approach for teachers to send them here, send them there, send them to Sir. What they don't realise is when they continue to do it, we are dealing with the problem and we try to get them back there, they don't want to deal with it. They want a solution ... they don't want the process ... again I'm dealing with the problem alone ... (Legolas)*

Once again Legolas acknowledged the challenges faced in his current leadership role and his suspicion that, at a senior leadership role, it would be even more challenging as he described:

*I knew there was going to be more work, I didn't realise more that outside the normality of just teaching...but at a bigger level...you have to expect there is going to be conflict...other issues you would have to deal with... (Legolas)*

It would appear in this narration by Legolas that he was continuing to develop his leadership skills further with experience overtime to fully understand what his current role means and how it may fit in the bigger picture of school wide. He also indicated that he needed to build up his confidence as a competent middle leader before pursuing senior leadership.

## Galadriel's Journey

Galadriel was born and raised in a Pacific Island where she attended primary and secondary schooling. She then took up an opportunity to do tertiary studies in Papua New Guinea. All her siblings completed tertiary education to move onto positions of influence such as a school principal, engineer and university lecturer. Growing up, the value of education was very important in her household and was role-modeled strongly by her mother. *"My mother was an accountant...she had a career then she got married and then she had me"*. So, at an early age Galadriel was shown the possibilities of where education could take her. As she shared her narrative about the influence her mother played in her journey it became a sensitive subject:

*I'm getting emotional (crying, stands up to grab some tissues from her desk) cause she's gone now but (pause) she use to say to me you got to get your schooling done, you got to get it done cause you never know (pause) when you get married that if something happens to your family you have to be able to raise your kids. (Galadriel)*

Galadriel's mother would continuously advocate education *"that was drummed into us really early...the value of staying in school"* and demonstrated positivity in less than ideal situations. Galadriel went on to share an experience where she struggled in the subject of Chemistry at school and her mother had arranged and paid for extra tutoring. Then, she sat a Chemistry test where she only scored 2 out of 10. Galadriel was so worried about disappointing her mother so chose to avoid talking about it. However, when confronted by her mother regarding the test, Galadriel reluctantly advised the score: *"And I said 2 out of 10...this is so typical of my mother, she goes well at least you know 2 out of 10 things that is better than knowing nothing"*. This positive influence demonstrated by her mother showed that she recognised potential in Galadriel where she didn't herself see this. Galadriel's narrative shared insight to her early exposure to leaders within her own family. She reflected on her immediate family then mentioned her extended family particularly on her father's side; *"my father's side of the family is strong leaders, there are a long line of leaders in my dad's side of the family...known leaders in the community"*. These reflections showed that leadership was almost normalised within her family network and yet as an adult she had almost tried to avoid it when opportunities presented themselves.

*It's funny cause I don't think I aspired for leadership you know. I think more people recognized somethings in me. I didn't sort of sit down and say that's what I'm going to be...I think it was more people recognizing what I had then me sitting down saying that's what I want...people saw things in me that I didn't quite see in myself. (Galadriel)*

As Galadriel shared her experiences, she often spoke indirectly about the theme of service to others in her story. She mentioned that when there was a need for her help, she would internalise

the complex situation with feelings of uncertainty but would overcome this fear, if there was a genuine need for her service. “*you know a reluctant journey into leadership, only did it cause they needed people to help*”. Galadriel presented another situation in her lived experience where the school she was employed in was facing a leadership crisis. A vacancy for a Deputy Principal role had become available and she initially had no thought of applying for this role. She reflected that her thinking at the time was just to ‘put her head down’ and focus on her classroom teaching, but she was approached by a few colleagues asking if she was applying for the vacancy. Her response was: “*I said No! And I really meant it, I didn’t want it and I felt so many people talking to me...then I kind of bargained with God...give me a sign...somebody is going to talk to me about it directly*”. The closing date arrived for applications and Galadriel was confident that this was not meant to be, until the acting principal at the time approached her and hurried her up to put her application in for the Deputy Principal role. Her response was: “*I just stopped mid-sentence and nearly choked on the glass of water I was drinking*”. The applications were closing that afternoon, so she quickly put a CV together and submitted it, still thinking that she did not have a chance as she compared herself with the other applicants who she believed were better suited to the role.

*Look I have been thrown in the deep end before and I'm always a swimmer, I'm never a sink person. I would have found my way... I worked as a DP [Deputy Principal] for three years. And in my third year I was appointed as a principal. That's another story in itself because again I didn't want to do it...I was like oh no. I was getting my head around this job. Again, just feeling reluctant...That is my kind of funny journey into leadership.*  
(Galadriel)

Now in a Principal’s position, Galadriel has thought about her next steps in her leadership journey which would involve further studies in educational leadership. She believes leaders are grown and can be born with a certain advantage over others but nonetheless there is always room to develop as a leader. So she wants to better her leadership practice and growth to lead others.

Factors that have influenced Galadriel’s journey include inspirational leaders. She spoke very highly about a significant leader in her professional role - the acting principal at the time who inspired her in terms of modelling what it meant to be an inspirational leader:

*She had all this experience...she was so good, she set the standards so high. Her training was so good. She really turned this school around. She built relational trust. She put the resources to where it belong and brought the community back. I watched her do it. She valued the people.* (Galadriel)

This leader before her enabled her to believe that it is possible to lead effectively and the value of building positive relationships with staff and students. She [Acting Principal] had continued to guide and support Galadriel in the senior leadership role;

*That first year, seriously there was a lot of things I didn't know. She said I'm here to train the next set of leaders and when I've done my job I will go. This was the best thing I ever got. She [Acting Principal] is an amazing leader and she still my mentor at the moment. Just the brilliance in thinking. She turned the school around in the fragmented bits and pieces. (Galadriel)*

The transition from Deputy Principal to Principal was a smoother journey for Galadriel to navigate as her Acting Principal at the time was preparing and developing her. As an illustration, she was accompanying the Acting Principal to school board meetings, preparing the Principal report, becoming familiar with what governance looks like in a school prior to being appointed. This hands-on support was another important factor in her leadership journey.

Galadriel's story made numerous references to the Bible and her faith. It was mentioned in her upbringing, in her leadership opportunities when she doubted herself and in her reflections of navigating through this journey; *"I have had the belief that God doesn't settle for second best...why should I give in? You know it's all about service"*. Her spiritual connection of faith in God is another important factor as she reflects: *"when you are obedient in what God wants you to do, you train with the best"*. She found that when appointed into the Principal role, others were telling her that she would need to dress and act a certain way, there were a lot of expectations of her now that she was the face of the school, which became a challenge for her;

*I went away and was thinking about that and I remembered when I first started and remembering what was being said to me and trying to be that for the first 3 weeks and thinking oh hell, it's not working...I was really miserable, and I thought No no, this is not me. I can't be me. (Galadriel)*

At this point in her leadership journey she knew that the only way for her to be an effective leader was just to be herself; she felt much happier as it was more natural for her to be this way as opposed to living up to other people's expectations of what a leader should be. She was fortunate to see how other leaders before her made it work for them and be just as effective.

Another challenge that Galadriel faced was around ambition: *"Pacific people don't put themselves out there. It's hard to talk about you and how good you are...that is probably a big barrier"*. She acknowledged that although there is potential for strong leaders, it is often self-doubt that will hold people back from actively pursuing leadership; *"with Pasifika leaders...we*

*don't always have people speaking to us and recognising our potential, that is not done enough. What we don't have is self-belief".* She was aware first-hand the challenges it brings, so uses it to encourage and enable both her staff and students to break these stereotypes and challenge the statistics: *"one of the things I say to them is the greatest joy is when people don't expect who you are and what you are is priceless"*.

One of the biggest challenges Galadriel shares in her experience is how often people are underestimated, assumptions are made about them and people are not valued, or their circumstances are not taken into consideration. Galadriel considers herself relational as a leader and values face to face interactions with her staff where she would go into their space, sit down and talk with them; *"that's just me, I would stand up and pop in...sitting there with them because I want them to talk about the things they would say in the carpark"*. As she passionately spoke about relationships and the importance of people believing in one another, she stated:

*You know we are not teaching kids, we are building a nation, if we don't do our job well then, another family still live in poverty. We have to make it matter for every child. You know on days where you want to strangle a kid in front of you, you need to stop and think if this was my child what would I want my teacher to do, then be that teacher. (Galadriel)*

Her account suggests that she is visionary, looking at the bigger picture of the domino effect educators can have, for instance, the long-term consequence of effective leadership impact teachers to teachers, as well as teachers to students. She understands that this impact goes beyond the classroom and beyond school and is passionate to be part of these success stories for both her staff and students.

## **Tauriel's Journey**

Tauriel is a first-generation New Zealander after both her parents had migrated over from the Pacific Islands. She is the eldest child in her immediate family and experienced a tight-knit family upbringing which included her grandparents being the primary caregivers when both parents were in full-time employment; *"I'm not married, I don't have children. I have one sister, two brothers and a niece and two nephews who cost me more I would have to pay if I actually had my own kids"*. As a University graduate, she then worked in research before making a career change into the teaching profession:

*I worked at XXX for a while, in the research area...and then I decided I would look at teaching, especially after I decided when I was young that I would never teach. I didn't really have positive experiences with teachers but (pause) you know, I decided that it*

*might be an area that I can develop in. I also had this mindset that (pause) I could take a set of skills and move them from career to career... I figured if I didn't like it, I will go back to research or retrain and become a nurse. (Tauriel)*

Tauriel had the belief that you don't necessarily have to stay in one career for the rest of your life, instead use the skill set gained and apply it in a new environment. She acknowledged an advantage she had with both her parents having aspirational dreams for their children and deeply valuing the importance of education. They encouraged Tauriel to continue further studies and make the most of her opportunities; *"I had the advantage of parents who were not going to force me to go and get a job to bring money into the house"*. They sacrificed an extra income by allowing her to continue studying. She recollects conversations she overheard by extended family members questioning her parents, as to why she was not working. And now, in her leadership role, these questions are no longer asked as it has been replaced with supportive and encouraging comments about her educational success instead.

As she navigates through her journey to leadership, it suggests a sense of humility. She had a high work-ethic and yet didn't actively 'seek the glory', she would always let her actions speak for itself:

*Like I've not proactively sort to (pause) you know you're caught between a rock and a hard place alright, you know you can do the job, but you come from a world where they shoulder tap you. You work and then they shoulder tap you, then you step up, but you still keep your head down, you don't promote yourself. You just keep working and people honour you by showing their respect for you..." (Tauriel)*

Tauriel describes her leadership journey as a space for new challenges and living the dream her parents aspired for in their children. Her lived experience outlines the skillset gained from her researching background and how she uses it in her teaching profession. Her high level of work standard did not go unnoticed and her consciousness of her work environment and the history of the education system itself makes her aware of the spaces she operates in. Although she did not actively pursue leadership, the opportunities became available to her as others would highlight the leadership qualities she possessed; *"But I've enjoyed aspects of teaching and (pause) the leadership aspect of it, I didn't fully recognise for myself, other people recognised it for me"*. Tauriel's story implies that her initial purpose for pursuing teaching was not for the leadership aspect of it but rather a space to further develop her skills in a different setting. She was encouraged to apply for leadership roles as others around her saw leadership potential and ability.

Tauriel spoke about women mentors who surrounded her and challenged her aspirations, so when middle leadership opportunities became available, she had applied. Her lived experience implies that Tauriel is relational and values the encouragement received by other leaders which seemed to consolidate her decision to take up these leadership roles. She further narrates another experience in leadership where an opportunity became available. It was for an Acting deputy principal role that would only last a short period of time due to major transitions occurring within the school. Once again Tauriel was encouraged to apply and was successful in that appointment, even though she initially doubted herself: *“I wasn’t actually wanting to go for the position because I felt I was wasn’t good enough, but other people said I had to challenge myself into that space.”* At the end of that period a full-time deputy principal vacancy appeared and once again she was initially reluctant to apply as she felt at the time that all other applicants had more experience but after careful consideration of the role itself, prayer and seeking her parent’s advice, she applied and was successful in this appointment.

When further questioned around her aspirations in the future, she feels that the space in which she is operating as a deputy principal is not complete for the moment:

*I think that's one of the reasons I don't really want to do a Masters is cause I'm all studied out but I also know that in order to open certain doors you must have this particular qualification. So you would do the qualification to open the door, whereas for me I would do the qualification to open the door if I felt that was a door (pause) if that was the next door I should go through. Have I done everything I can do in the space that I'm in? and is that a space I need to move into to affect the change that needs to happen or be part of the change or be part of the decision-making process? (Tauriel)*

At the start of Tauriel’s narration, she shared the negative experiences she had with teachers growing up in New Zealand schools, this indicated a possible factor that influenced her to make a more positive difference for students as opposed to her own school encounters. The ongoing support from her family continued to encourage her leadership journey; *“my parents...both had aspirational dreams of doing more than what they ended up doing”*. Tauriel’s parents stand firm on the belief that education would provide a better life. This strongly connects with the Christian values evident in her upbringing:

*You know it's lovely that you got a degree but can you make your bed... it's lovely that you are well qualified but do you know how to care and love all the people around you. Can you forgive when there is nothing to be gained out of it. You know that kind of character building aspect of life, you don't necessarily get built using Palagi systems and that kind of space...I've tried to stay true to the way that I was raised and to what my*

*parents have expected of me so I'd have to say the major influences over me have been my parents (Tauriel)*

Her service is evident in her journey when applying for these leadership roles that would place her in a position of influence for the benefit of the students; *"I have to be confident...I went for the job to sit at a table to have influence over decisions made for kids like me"*. She narrates an experience coming through education as a young child about not seeing people advocating for Pasifika people and she goes on to say; *"If they were my colour and did sit at the table, their voice wasn't loud enough, and it wasn't a time for it either"*. Tauriel believes that she has a responsibility to speak up and has developed this skill-set overtime; *"to learn the space to which to speak up and learn the space in which to identify that's prejudice or...needs to be dealt to"*. This is an ongoing learning journey in the aspect of educational leadership for her and she understands the challenges that come with advocating for Pasifika students to non-Pasifika teacher. Negative idiosyncrasies are often experienced in the spaces she navigates through because they don't know what they don't know. An example of this experience is as follows:

*The line I'll never forget...the classic line they said to me was what's wrong with your kids? And I'm like what kids? You know these Samoan kids that's just not behaving and I said well first of all, I didn't give birth to them so they're not really my kids...point number 2 we are all not the same. I could say the same thing to you that if a kid was in prison and they're white, then could I blame you for that. (Tauriel)*

Tauriel's life experience prior to educational leadership enabled her to navigate in complex spaces; *"you learn to read things and understand the way that palagi (European) systems work and how you can make them work for both you and whoever it is that you're representing"*. She reflects on this in her educational journey; *"and that's the cool thing about coming into teaching after you have had life experience cause then nothing really fazes you"*. Tauriel acknowledged colleagues who had generously given their time, guidance and advice which enabled her to 'pass it forward' as an educational leader.

*But seriously you survive in teaching because others are generous and kind and help you. If you have that environment, you will survive. Not just survive, you'll thrive. It is beholding to you to do the same thing, to pass it on. So, it was even more so for me from a Pasifika perspective that I would volunteer for everything... (Tauriel)*

Tauriel had faced many challenges in her education leadership journey, she begun this story by describing when she was employed in her first teaching job and was only one of two Pasifika teachers in the entire teaching staff. This school community was also changing at the time in terms



of ethnic proportions to an increasing Pasifika student community. There were difficult moments she describes;

*I mean there's all sorts of unrealistic, crazy, dumb-arse expectations they have of you when you're brown. I just couldn't get over it and I didn't realise I've been exposed to it through by whole journey in education cause when you're brown and you're a woman...especially if you are in a space that people are not use to seeing you... (Tauriel)*

Another challenge she faced was a reluctance to be ambitious in her educational leadership journey. *"In a Palagi world, blind, pure, naked ambition is fine whereas I struggle with that aspect"*. Tauriel insisted that her actions should speak volume about her abilities, to counter the negative experiences and expectations of being brown. As she elaborated on her experiences she would often find herself having to disprove the prejudice that comes with being Pasifika as she reflected on a conversation she had with another Pasifika colleague; *"I said to him, I reckon the way that these people (non-Pasifika teachers) act and treat our poor kids, you have to be 100 times better"*. She portrayed a sense of responsibility as a Pasifika leader throughout her narrative and showed awareness of the realities in education when she stated: *"the glass ceiling is a lot lower especially if you're a brown teacher"*. Tauriel's upbringing and values she holds dear are reflected in her leadership style in her profession. She shared in her story a self-awareness of her abilities to do the job, yet her life experiences kept her mindful of the bigger picture and she was prepared to face the outcome if she was successful or not. She constantly used her platform to challenge and re-educate the mindsets of others in her educational leadership journey.

## Summary

In summary, this chapter outlined some common themes from the research data collected across all three narrators. Leadership aspirations and factors described were centered on their faith, family upbringing, role-models and cultural background. The enablers identified were based around relationships, opportunities, education and role models. And finally, the challenges faced by Pasifika teachers were their initial resistance, stereotypes, cultural bias and lack of leadership progression pathways in schools. These common themes will be discussed further in the next chapter.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

“This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure,  
and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected.” (p. 20)  
**J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

This quote from the book *Hobbit* illustrates the narrators’ shared experiences were unexpected journeys for these current educational leaders.

### Introduction

This chapter will analyse the findings in the previous chapter in comparison to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two of this dissertation. The organisation of this chapter will be arranged under the three main research questions outlined in Chapter One:

- What aspirations to leadership positions do Pasifika teachers describe?
- What factors influence Pasifika teacher’s leadership aspirations?
- What enablers/challenges are faced by Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining a leadership position?

Each question will be addressed with a table summary of key sub-themes identified, followed by further discussion, with literature to verify and/or dispute these findings.

### What aspirations to leadership positions do Pasifika teachers describe?

As outlined in the abstract section of this dissertation, there is an under-representation of Pasifika teachers in New Zealand secondary schools, this research question was linked to the first research aim: To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership. All three research participants currently hold a senior or middle educational leadership role in a New Zealand secondary school. As they narrated through their leadership journey, four common sub-themes were highlighted across all three ‘lived experiences’. Table 5.1 outlines this summary of these sub-themes identified and the number of responses mentioned in their lived experiences.

*Table 5.1: Summary of leadership aspirations described by Pasifika teachers*

	Galadriel	Tauriel	Legolas
Sub-themes	Number of responses	Number of responses	Number of responses

Responsibility to family, church and/or wider community	5	6	2
Inspiring and influential leadership role-models	5	4	4
Leadership experiences	3	5	3
Value of Education	2	3	2

All three research participants responded a several times across four main sub-themes in the research data collection interviews. The first sub-theme was based on responsibility. This responsibility spanned across their family networks, church and school communities. Daft (2011) describes this in his leadership framework around the personal responsibility and integrity element, where leaders have a duty to lead with strong moral principles. The research study found that the participants imply this personal responsibility role in society needs to be filled in order to benefit the wider group. The realities of leadership can often ostracise minority groups who are not from dominant communities, such as Pakeha (European) males (Alvesson & Spicer, 2014). Additionally, the participants indirectly suggest there is a mismatch in leadership representation and understand they have a responsibility to shift to a more inclusive style of leadership (Evans & Sinclair, 2016). In support of this, Santamaria & Santamaria (2015) compliments this sub-theme based on an applied critical leadership approach to promote diverse educational leadership that mirrors society and promotes the responsibilities as indigenous leaders for social justice.

The second sub-theme revealed in the research was the exposure to inspiring and influential role models in positions of influence. These ‘lived experiences’ gave the participants insight to effective leadership, which also aligns with the four sources of developing self-efficacy (Stone, 2018). Each participant highlighted how these role-models influenced and/or inspired them to pursue leadership in one form or another. Stone (2018) describes this as ‘vicarious experience’ and ‘verbal persuasion,’ where leaders role-model with verbal encouragement and guidance to permit aspirations for leadership advancement. The participants individually named significant role-models in their accounts that came from their own families, their church community and educational leaders within their teaching experience. Having role-models as such, encouraged and fostered further career advancement because these were respected people that the participants trusted and valued due to the foundational basis of relationships. George (2003) advocates the importance of trust in any sustainable organisation; without this foundational element, it is almost

impossible for any business, collaboration or networking to take place because of damaging consequences such as negative reputations. The Ministry of Education (2008; 2012) published the ELM that portrayed educational leadership also being centred on relationships. Productive relationships if done correctly, are a powerful tool for leading change and empowering those in their spheres of influence (Daft, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2008; 2012). This is supported by the notion of authentic leadership. This type of leadership has been modelled in many global sectors such as health, business and education, and is an alternative leadership approach that centres on Authenticity as opposed to literature focused more on leadership styles (George, 2003). It has been described as 'genuine' and 'real' positive forms of leadership as leaders will learn from the experience of others and demonstrate an authentic passion for leading with their hearts and heads (George, 2003; Review, George, Ibarra, Goffee & Jones, 2017; Ladkin & Spiller, 2013). There is a common desire for good, honest leadership to counter insecurities in leadership (Ladkin & Spiller, 2013). Consequently, the origins of authentic leadership stemmed in response to the growing mistrust from leadership scandals, conflict and lack of integrity of leaders in large business corporations (George, 2003, Ladkin & Spiller, 2013, Landes, 2018). If these research participants did not have this factor of effective role-models, it is more than likely their leadership aspirations or self-efficacy would not develop.

Following on from this, the third sub-theme identified was leadership experiences highlighted a few times in their responses during the interview process. Hitt & Player (2019) explored a unified effective leader's framework that discusses this essential domain of building professional capacity. Practising authentic leadership requires a solid foundational base of trust, the three pillars of Self-Awareness, Ethics and Self-Regulation are the elements sandwiched within the support of Relational trust (Landes, 2018). All three participants were given leadership opportunities and experiences that motivated them to develop their own self-efficacy in their leadership roles. Teacher involvement in supporting wider school goals through a distributed leadership approach were influential in their motivation. This approach is applied in the ELM centred on relationships (Ministry of Education 2008; 2012). The narrators shared that although they were initially reluctant to take up the leadership role, the trusting relationships established with certain role-models gave value to the decision in taking up the leadership experiences. It should also be noted that depending on the nature of the school context, leadership experiences could go either way conditional to the school adapting to variables such as ethnic make-up or urbanisation (Hitt & Player, 2019).

And lastly, the final sub-theme identified is the value of education. Although the responses across all three narrators were not as high as the previous sub-themes, it was mentioned more than once

from each participant. The research data showed a similarity in their stories of families migrating to New Zealand with hopes and dreams to advance their circumstances and the value of education was a driving factor for their families moving away from their Pacific place of origins. The three narratives each shared a common upbringing surrounded with a network of close family members that strongly supported them in their leadership journey. Legolas speaks about his Mum and her ongoing support – “...Mum actually pushed us to do really well. Made sure we were doing our homework, a lot of things like that...”. Galadriel narrates a memory about her mum – “...she had a career...so that was drummed to us really early, the value of education, the value of staying in school...”. Tauriel shared a memory of her grandparents being her primary caregivers while her parents were working and the advantage she had with parents allowing her to continue her tertiary studies – “...my parents were not going to force me to go and get a job to bring money into the house. They let me study for so bloody long”. They all pay homage to their parent/s for the sacrifices and push to value education.

### **What factors influence Pasifika teacher’s leadership aspirations?**

There are contributing factors that inspire and influence individuals to leadership. This research question also relates back to the first research aim – To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership. In chapter 2 of this dissertation, Alvesson and Spicer (2014) discuss four themes that come to light when analysing the discourse of leadership: ideology, identity, inclusion and intervention. To summarise these themes; ideology is based on specific values and ideals; identity is in terms of a sense of self; inclusion refers to exclusion as well which is applied to positions where people feel marginalised or included; and finally interventions set in place to create liberating forms of leadership (Alvesson and Spicer, 2014). These three themes will help support, frame and categorise the factors identified in the research participant narrators. Table 5.2 displays the summary of identified factors.

*Table 5.2: Summary of factors influencing Pasifika leadership aspirations*

	<b>Galadriel</b>	<b>Tauriel</b>	<b>Legolas</b>
<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Spiritual: Faith in God, Prayer, Church community	5	2	6
Supportive networks: Family, Friends, Colleagues, Leadership development	8	7	9
Life experiences	11	16	8

As seen on Table 5.2, three common factors were identified in the research data. The first of these sub-themes was based on a spiritual ideology and identity that all three participants narrated on more than one occasion. Their upbringing involved growing up in a Christian church community with Christian values and ideals. For instance, Legolas acknowledged his belief in God as a pivotal factor to his leadership, *“a lot of praying...that is central to the success”*. He also recognised that it was through the church where he found inspiration by effective church community leaders, *“had some really proactive ministers...I really wanted to aspire to be like them”*. Galadriel also speaks about her spiritual faith in God and would actively seek spiritual guidance in her career aspiration choices *“I have had the belief that God doesn’t settle for second best...when you are obedient in what God wants you to do, you train with the best”*. This contributing factor of their spiritual beliefs were evident as they navigated through their lived experiences and demonstrates the physiological state of self-efficacy where each narrative speaks about their spiritual belief and faith in God through their upbringing and narrate their spiritual beliefs in God and Christian values in a supernatural ideology.

Secondly, the sub-theme of supportive networks was identified. Each narrative identified specific people who supported and encouraged their journey to leadership. This supports identity and inclusion. Galadriel’s support network consisted of her parents, siblings and extended family who were leaders in their own respected fields. These inspirational leaders within her own family network indirectly normalised leadership for her as she was surrounded by it. She also spoke at length about an Acting Principal who prepared and developed the transition to her current principal role. Galadriel narrates *“seriously there were a lot of things I didn’t know. She [Acting Principal] said I’m here to train the next set of leaders and when I’ve done my job I will go”*. Legolas narrates about his support networks, which consists of his large close-knit family network, friends and wider church community – *“A lot of family and friends support...A lot of church connections...also that personal drive”*. These two influential communities were a constant support, surrounding Legolas in his personal drive. Tauriel narrated about her grandparents, parents and professional colleagues who have been constant drivers in her journey to leadership. She spoke about her family upbringing where she learnt about character building – *“I’ve tried to stay true to the way that I was raised...you know it’s lovely that you got a degree but can you make your bed...do you know how to care and love...can you forgive when there is nothing to be gained”*. The assurance from these support networks empowered these education leaders into their positions of influence within their professional context. The ELM as presented in chapter 2 concentrates on the key factor of relationships (Ministry of Education, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2012). Each participant highlighted how they valued and trusted their support networks. This also aligned with the self-efficacy theory around vicarious experience and verbal

persuasion (Stone, 2018). Bryk and Schneider, as cited in Robinson (2011) discuss the determinants of relational trust as interpersonally respectful, a personal regard for others, competency in the role and personal integrity. All three research participants identify these characteristics in their support networks which enhanced their attitude and commitment to their leadership roles. Additionally, Stewart and Warn (2017) examine how indigenous leaders are constantly having to traverse between a two-sided community made up of the mainstream and the indigenous. This discourse of identity shows the relational importance of support networks as each participant either directly or indirectly experienced some form of exclusion where there was an initial reluctance to actively be ambitious in their professional journey to leadership however with the reassurance from support networks only further inspired and affirmed their leadership pathways.

The third sub-theme – life experiences emerged on several occasions throughout the research data. This revealed that as the research participants navigated through their ‘lived experiences’ they would often refer to many life experiences that would become apparent in their leadership journey. This aligns with the discourse of identity and interventions. With reference to the self-efficacy theory (Stone, 2018), enactive attainment is about an individual mastering something challenging. The narrators portrayed challenging experiences they were able to overcome with the first two contributing factors of their spiritual faith and supportive networks. Tauriel shared her realities in education “*the glass ceiling is a lot lower...you have to be 100 times better*”, she understood the complexities of navigating between the two worlds of mainstream and indigenous in education. Galadriel narrates “*I have been thrown in the deep end before and I’m always a swimmer, I’m never a sink person*”, she bases this on her experiences of life challenges she had faced in the past. Similarly, Legolas also makes a similar reference as he narrated “*I’ve always been thrown in the deep end...but for me I’ve learned early on that it’s good just to have a bit of knowledge, be more prepared, have a more wider view*”. All three narrators depicted their identity in leadership and resilience, their experiences are conscious and deliberate as outlined by Santamaria, Santamaria and Singh (2017) on engaging leadership for diversity. Stone (2018) depicts another element in the self-efficacy theory on a psychological state, this is the final of the series to developing self-efficacy. The narrators portray a progression of life experiences that have directed, supported and motivated each participant to this identity of educational leadership in their professional roles.

**What enablers/challenges are faced by Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining a leadership position?**

This final research question aligns with the second research aim of this dissertation – To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher’s perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership. Cardno and Auva’a (2010) discussed the challenging realities of under-representation for Pasifika educators in leadership roles. The same authors discuss the notion of token leaders who are not a true representation of their ethnic group due to being assimilated to a mainstream education and a lack of development programmes, networks and progression planning tailored to meet Pasifika ethnicities (Cardno & Auva’a, 2010). Each research participant shared the enablers and challenges faced in their journey to leadership, as outlined in Table 5.3 with an overall summary the common sub-themes.

*Table 5.3: Summary of enablers/challenges faced by Pasifika teachers*

<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Support systems: Family, Church, Friends, Colleagues</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Role models</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Education: Qualifications, Leadership development, Life experience</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Spiritual Faith</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Teacher reluctance</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Cultural assumptions/bias</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Lack of leadership development/pathway programmes</i></li> </ul>

Prior to examining these enablers and challenges outlined in Table 5.3, I will first re-visit the leadership definition applied in chapter two of the literature review. Daft (2011) defines leadership as “an influence relationship among leader and followers” (p. 5). The narrators shared their personal journey to educational leadership, They outlined several enablers that empowered them into their current roles. The first of these are the support systems that included their family, friends, church and work networks, looking at each narrators’ upbringing, the migration to New Zealand came with hopes and aspirations for better opportunities in a new homeland. The narratives valued the importance of the support networks, as these played a crucial part in consolidating their journey to educational leadership. In one form or another each support system reinforced and contributed to their aspirations to leadership. From these support systems included role models who not only inspired but also influenced these research participants to pursue applying for the leadership roles. In addition to this education was a common theme that came through in the research data as the value of education in either formal or informal settings developing skillsets that were transferrable into their current role. Moreover, they referred to their spiritual faith upbringing which not only enabled them but was identified as a significant contributing factor in preparing them for the role. Pasifika leadership is more relevant in New Zealand’s diverse society (Mugisha, 2013) and these research participants navigated through the



sources of self-efficacy theory in enactive attainment, vicarious experience and verbal persuasion in support with these identified support networks (Stone, 2018).

On the contrary, their leadership narratives also faced challenges that could have hindered their leadership aspirations. With reference to Figure 5.3, the summary outlines the following challenges that were common among all three participants, these were: Teacher reluctance, Cultural assumptions/bias, Lack of leadership development and/or pathway programmes. Teacher reluctance was common across all three narrators, each participant did not actively seek out leadership. Mount and Tardanico (2014) discuss a well-researched concept that can describe this, known as the Imposter syndrome. Pedler (2011) describes this syndrome as a disbelief in deserving their achievements and a mindset belief that they are out of their depth. Individuals that demonstrate contributing attributes such as anxiety, reluctance, and fear of failure or self-confidence may miss opportunities to further in their career or even delay further development of their skills and talents (Mount & Tardanico, 2014; Pedler, 2011). The narratives shared in Chapter 5 reveal a sense of the participants almost undermining their leadership skills and abilities in the first instance when confronted with leadership opportunities for career advancement. Tauriel shared in her narrative about the glass ceiling being a lot lower for Pasifika teachers. This unseen barrier labelled as the ‘glass ceiling’ can impede on possible career advancement if it doesn’t fit non-traditional leadership for minority groups (Levine, 2000). Pedlar (2011) states that “leadership fails sometimes because circumstances overwhelm us...because we undermine ourselves” (p. 90).

Another challenge faced by the research participants was the cultural assumptions and cultural bias that come with being a Pasifika leader in New Zealand secondary schools. In this context, cultural assumption is in reference to the attitudes and beliefs on Pasifika people and cultural bias is non-Pasifika people making judgement on Pasifika people based on their own culture and experiences. Stewart and Warn (2017) discuss these challenges of the ‘two worlds’ that indigenous leaders navigate through and find “their work is a process of constant interpretation and negotiation” (p. 4). For instance, Legolas shared experiences where he felt isolated at times in his leadership because his colleagues assumed that as a Pasifika leader, he should be able to manage the more difficult Pasifika students. Tauriel shared experiences where she is often having to educate other non-Pasifika professionals on their cultural assumptions and bias of Pasifika people and Galadriel shared experiences of how Pasifika people are often underestimated because they don’t come across as being actively ambitious. Fan et al. (2019) agree that “racial inequalities persist in even the most progressive of workplaces (p. 1) and suggest that better representation of minority groups may decrease these cultural assumptions or bias. The under-representation of

Pasifika teachers in leadership show the challenges they currently face as educational leaders in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies.

Finally, the sub-theme of a lack of leadership development and/or pathway programme was commonly identified across all three narrators. Developing leadership can equip aspiring leaders with the confidence and skillset needed to enrich and develop productivity in an organisation (Schultz, Shoobridge, Harvey, Carter & Kitson, 2019). All three narratives were initially reluctant when an educational leadership opportunity presented itself, however, it was through the encouragement of others who saw something in them that initiated the consideration of applying for the role. Galadriel narrated “*Pacific people don’t put themselves out there...we don’t always have people speaking to us and recognising our potential, that is not done enough*”. This indicates there is a need for a development programme tailored to cater in growing a better representation of minority groups like Pasifika people in education leadership. As outlined in chapter 2, the Ministry of Education (2008) published a document for New Zealand principals established on best practice leadership experiences, it also introduced an educational leadership model to framework the educational leadership knowledge, qualities and skills. New Zealand principals have the capacity to manage and advance the school according to its needs. A well-thought tailored educational development programme that focuses on inclusive leadership should be a priority in career advancement, however due to the uniqueness of New Zealand self-managing schools it really falls on the key stakeholders prioritising what are the needs of the school community.

## **Summary**

Chapter Five examined the following research aim: to identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership, the sub-themes identified as teacher aspirations were - responsibility to family, church and/or wider community, inspiring and influential leadership role-models, leadership experiences and value of education. The contributing factors associated with the leadership aspirations were the following three elements – spiritual, supportive networks and life experiences. Additionally, the second research aim was to identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher’s perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership. The research findings identified the following enablers – support systems, role models, education and spiritual faith. Furthermore, the following challenges were also identified in the investigation – teacher reluctance, cultural assumptions and cultural bias, lack of leadership development/pathway programmes. Although all three narrators were unique, there were similarities that came through in their ‘lived experiences’ as Pasifika education leaders. Chapter Six will review the research overview with recommendations to address the under-representation

of Pasifika teachers in leadership roles, evaluate the strengths and limitations of the research with an overall final summary to this investigation.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

“May the wind under your wings  
bear you where the sun sails  
and the moon walks” (p. 190)  
**J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit***

This quote from the book ‘The Hobbit’ by J.R.R. Tolkien offer words of encouragement as we draw to the end of this dissertation, I want to impart the same encouragement to aspiring Pasifika teachers in educational leadership. In conclusion, chapter six will encapsulate the overall findings of this research study, evaluate the strengths and limitations of the investigation followed by recommendations and a final summary to support better representation of Pasifika people in educational leadership.

### Research Overview

This dissertation unpacked the lived-experiences of Pasifika educational leaders by providing a platform to document and share these narrators’ perspectives. This investigation is of importance as a person of Pasifika descent myself, for it is vital for Pasifika people to share the voices of other Pasifika people from a Pasifika lens. The narrators’ stories resonated with one another as there were common themes and experiences faced in each of their leadership journeys. According to the Ministry of Education (2008, 2012) documentation, New Zealand’s educational leadership functions under bicultural expectations surrounded by the realities of a multicultural society. These realities can often have a negative impact on Pasifika leadership as it challenges mainstream leadership theories that are dominantly westernised. New Zealand’s shift from a bicultural to multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society only stresses these complex challenges and that is why there is a need for more research similar to this to be conducted in critical leadership studies. As highlighted in the literature review these injustices often experienced by indigenous people can relegate them to feeling marginalised but on the contrary, can also create opportunities for liberation where Pasifika leadership advancement could take place. Notably, that is the hopes of this investigation, to liberate Pasifika people wanting to aspire into educational leadership in a New Zealand context and understanding the complexities that come with navigating between their world and mainstream communities through the voices of the Pasifika narrators who have already taken up the opportunity into educational leadership. More importantly, this study will contribute to the currently sparse and limited literature available and would enable others who wish to pursue further work in this particular area of educational leadership advancement for Pasifika people.

The overall purpose of this research investigation was to critically examine the lived experiences of Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining leadership roles within a New Zealand secondary school context. This was framed by two main research aims. First, to identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership; and secondly, to identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership. This investigation adopted a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three research participants using a narrative approach. Each of these participants met the following criteria – to be of Pasifika descent, an educational leader in a secondary school and currently working in a New Zealand secondary school.

Three major research questions guided the research interviews and the following section will outline the conclusions drawn from the two main research aims.

## **Conclusion One**

*To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership*

The two research questions applied to meet the following aim were:

1. What aspirations to leadership positions do Pasifika teachers' describe?
2. What factors influence Pasifika teacher's leadership aspirations?

The investigation revealed that all three participants were initially reluctant in actively aspiring to leadership in a professional capacity, however in saying so, their lived experiences highlighted the support networks that enabled each participant to move into their leadership roles. The findings concluded that the participants all felt a sense of responsibility not only to their school community but the wider community that included their church and family. Contributing factors included having influential role-models in leadership and strong support networks, their life experiences played a significant role inspiring their own leadership as well as the spiritual component incorporated in their upbringing of the Christian faith, values and ideals. These findings suggest that Pasifika teachers are more likely to aspire for educational leadership if there are inclusive leadership support structures and systems in place to guide them in a professional capacity whilst acknowledging and valuing their culture and beliefs. Pasifika leaders leading in schools with Pasifika students bring a distinctive approach of leading that does not conform to the traditional styles of leadership that is often individualised and westernised in its approach (Wolfgramm et al., 2016).

## Conclusion Two

*To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challenges faced in moving into secondary school leadership*

The research questions applied to meet the following aim were:

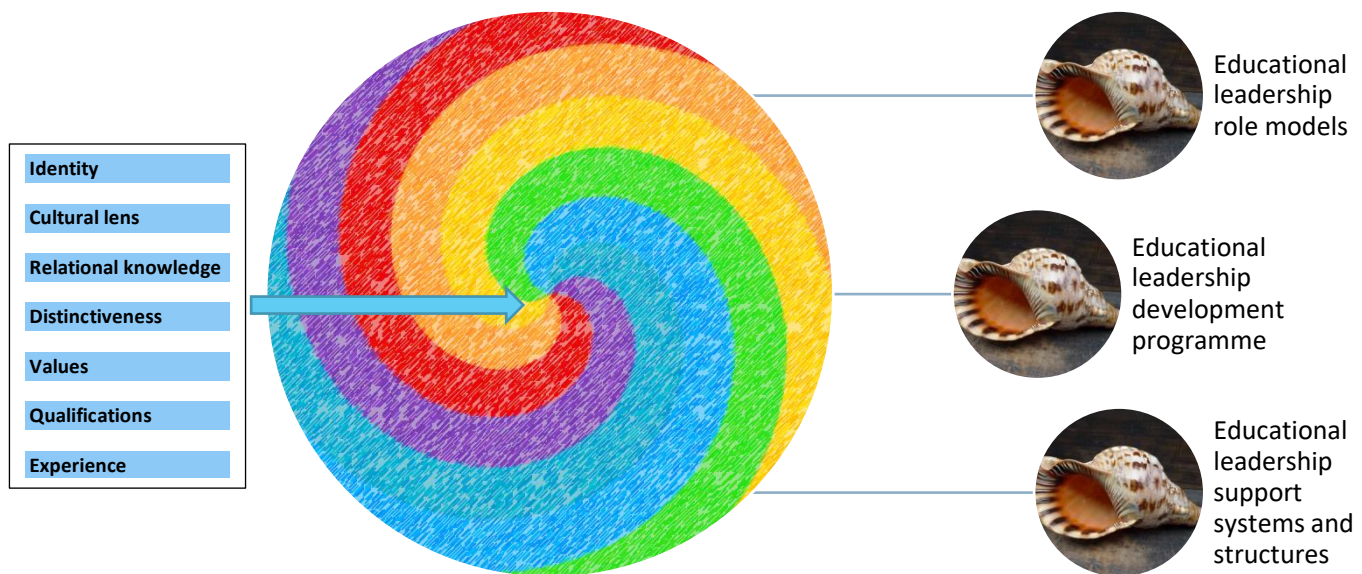
1. What enablers/challenges are faced by Pasifika teachers in aspiring to and gaining a leadership position?

The research investigated what enablers and challenges did participants face moving into educational leadership. Many of the enablers coincided with their lived experiences of aspirations and contributing factors outlined in conclusion one. They narrated about the key support systems such as family, friends, church and work colleagues and identified inspirational role-models who influenced their journey to leadership. Enablers such as the value of education was identified around the importance of qualifications, leadership development and incorporating their life experiences such as their cultural and church up-bringing. In addition to this, the findings discovered the importance of their spiritual faith that is part and parcel of their leadership identity. In terms of challenges, three sub-themes were highlighted in the findings. The first of these were the participants' reluctance to actively pursue leadership. Their narrations implied a sense of hesitancy when leadership opportunities for career advancement were presented. Feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, disbelief and fear of failure are descriptors associated with the concept Imposter syndrome (Mount & Tardanico, 2014; Pedler, 2011). Secondly, another challenge identified was cultural assumptions and cultural bias towards Pasifika people. This finding suggests that racial inequalities continue to exist in education. Although the history of New Zealand's education system has shown a positive shift from colonialism to decolonisation, the tensions continue to exist with minority groups like Pasifika people experiencing marginalisation (Marshall, Coxon, Jenkins & Jones, 2000). Perocco (2018) argues there is a strong correlation between immigration and inequalities to a new homeland. Although there has been deep social transformation globally, new inequalities will only further highlight the disparities and social disadvantages. The final challenge identified in this investigation was the lack of leadership development and/or pathway programmes. The current study implies that their educational leadership journey was initiated through verbal persuasion, an element in the self-efficacy theory (Stone, 2018). It was through the encouragement of other educational leaders did the participants consider the career advancement in the first place. However, there was no set development programme framed as such for educational leadership but rather an amalgamation of different life experiences, support networks as revealed in the research data.

## Recommendation

New Zealand has shifted from a historical bi-cultural society to a progressively more diverse society which includes multi-cultural and multi-ethnic groups. This further highlights the need for New Zealand schools to prioritise a formalised inclusive leadership development programme tailored to the specific leadership needs of a school. Our unique education system permits this to happen due to the school structures set up for self-management. New Zealand principals manage policy and operational matters and the 'Kiwi Leadership for principals' best practice recommendation is to develop effective communities of learning through a distributed leadership approach (Ministry of Education, 2008). Moss (2019) suggests that inclusive leadership can be achieved by creating "diversity and inclusion champions who have a job description which contains three aspects to the role: to be a role model; to be a sign-post directing colleagues to resources and support; and to be challenging" (p. viii). Benefits of this is that it challenges the status quo of traditional educational leadership styles embedded in school practice allowing teachers to be more confident, valued, supported and challenged (Moss, 2019). This is in the hopes that there will be a shift to diversifying educational leadership that reflects the communities they lead in.

The model depicted in Figure 6.1 a potential working model entitled the "Call of the Conch Shell" will be presented to build the Pasifika educational leadership capacity due to the current under-representation of Pasifika teachers, in New Zealand secondary schools. The conch shell has been historically used in the South Pacific as a signalling device that produces a loud sound over long distances. It is often used for Pasifika ceremonial purposes, special events and performances. The conch shell has been selected for this model as it is a representation of the South Pacific and symbolises a leadership signal call for Pasifika teachers. Each conch shell represents a contributing factor. The colours purple, red, orange, yellow and green symbolise the diversity of Pasifika teachers in New Zealand secondary schools and the colour blue symbolises the characteristics, qualities and traits of Pasifika teachers as well as the Pacific Ocean - the large body of water encompassing each Pacific Island nation. The spiral shape of the model signifies the educational leadership journey Pasifika teachers will embark on when they respond to the call of the conch shell which commences from the centre and will begin to expand outwardly.



*Figure 6.1 Call of the conch shell working model for building Pasifika educational leadership in New Zealand secondary schools*

As portrayed in Figure 6.1, The “call of conch shell” recommends that Principals and senior leaders set up the working conditions in New Zealand secondary schools to allow educational leadership opportunities to be more inclusive and diverse. This could lead to better representation of leadership reflecting the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic school communities. Three of the contributing factors include the following: educational leadership role models within schools, educational leadership development programme and educational leadership support systems and structures. Another enabler is the characteristics, qualities and traits each Pasifika teacher will bring with them into the role, these are: identity, cultural lens, relational knowledge, distinctiveness, values, qualifications and experience. Incorporating all these elements into the spiral requires a reciprocal relationship between Pasifika teachers and the educational leaders, school and wider community. The spiral allows a cyclic development to regularly repeat as they continue to develop their educational leadership.

## Research Limitations

One of the limitations of this research investigation was the number of research participants. In total, only three research participants shared their narratives in the research sample size and therefore may not be a true representation of Pasifika educational leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Although I had interviewed educational leaders from across senior and middle leadership roles, it is only one personal narrator as a Principal, Deputy principal and Dean, which again is not an accurate representation of the experiences of Pasifika educational leaders.



There is also limited research literature on educational leadership specific to Pasifika teachers in education. The experiences I shared in Chapter one of this dissertation and the findings in Chapter four of the investigation may not reflect all Pasifika educational leaders in New Zealand but can give insight into the lived experiences of understanding the under-representation of Pasifika teachers in leadership.

## **Research Strengths**

A strength in this research is that all participants met the research criteria: being of Pasifika descent, in an educational leadership role and currently employed in a New Zealand secondary school. They each came with varying lived experiences in their roles and steadfast commitment to New Zealand schools. Another strength is that each participant was willing to share their personal story as the narrators to contribute to educational leadership literature. Further research is required on Pasifika educational leadership in New Zealand schools to identify the leadership aspirations of Pasifika teachers and also explore the effectiveness and impact of inclusive leadership development programmes.

## **Final Summary**

The research has incorporated the voices of Pasifika educational leaders in New Zealand secondary schools. Pasifika teachers aspirations to leadership were connected to their personal stories associated with contributing factors, enablers and challenges discussed at length. The under-representation of Pasifika teachers in New Zealand secondary schools and educational leadership is evidently the realities of many schools. As an illustration, in 2018, there was approximately over 24,000 full-time teacher equivalents across all New Zealand secondary schools, of this total only 867 teachers identified as being Pasifika which is equivalent to a total of 3.5% of the secondary teacher population (Education counts, 2019). In comparison, education counts (2019) statistics shows that there are over 28,000 identified Pasifika students out of a total of over 297,000 secondary students in 2018, this equates to just over 9% of the growing secondary student population in New Zealand. Pasifika teachers represent less than half of the Pasifika students in the classrooms and Pasifika teachers with leadership roles would be far less than the identified 3.5%. This mismatch of Pasifika secondary teachers and Pasifika secondary students imply that Pasifika teachers are applying for leadership roles and being unsuccessful, or they are not applying for such roles at all. This study acknowledges that further research is required to understand that inequalities and disparities continue to exist for minority groups such as Pasifika and there is a need for more diverse leadership.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A



## Participant Information Sheet

**Date Information Sheet Produced:**  
05 May 2017

**Project Title**  
*Educational leadership through a Pasifika lens: Navigating their way in a New Zealand secondary school context*  
An Invitation

Warm Pacific greetings. My name is Mary Brown and I am enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership degree in the Faculty of Culture and Society at AUT. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of my dissertation that is the final part of this degree programme.

**What is the purpose of this research?**  
The aims of this research:

1. To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership.
2. To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challengers faced in moving into secondary school leadership.

My intention is to interview three Pasifika teachers currently in a leadership position from three Auckland secondary schools (2 senior leaders and 1 middle leader). I will be using semi-structured interviews to allow open discussion with a narrative approach. All interviews will be digitally recorded and/or videoed.

**How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**  
Using the school websites available in a public domain your school was identified as a potential participant in this research. You have met the requirement to participate as a current Pasifika leader in a secondary school context.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**  
Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

**What will happen in this research?**  
At the time that we meet, you will be asked to consent in writing to your participation (this will include your consent to be digitally recorded). The semi-structured interview will be approximately take up to 1 hour and a suitable venue and time will be arranged according to your availability. Your agreement to participate will require a consent form to be signed and dated prior to the interview taking place.

**What are the benefits?**  
This research will be beneficial for you as it allows a space and opportunity to reflect and share your lived experiences as a Pasifika leader in an educational context. The research findings will also benefit in a professional development setting for schools interested in Pasifika leadership. Furthermore, this research will complete my Master of Educational leadership degree.

**How will my privacy be protected?**  
Any information that may identify you (including your name) will be kept confidential. There is a small chance that participants' may be known to each other because of the relatively small number of Pasifika people that hold leadership positions in secondary schools. However, as the researcher I will make every effort to keep your identity private. The information obtained from the interview will be stored in a USB stick and only my project supervisor and myself will have access. You will receive an electronic copy of my summary of findings on completion of my dissertation as a token of gratitude for your participation in the research.

14 July 2019

page 1 of 2

This version was edited in July 2016

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There are no monetary costs for your participation but the interview will be approximately 1 hour in length of your time. You will also receive a copy of your interview transcript thereafter that will take approximately 45 minutes to review its accuracy.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You have the opportunity to consider this invitation 7 days after receiving this in the post by emailing your interest to [cdc0504@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:cdc0504@autuni.ac.nz)

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes. You will receive a copy of the interview transcripts and an overall summary of findings via e-mail correspondence.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Alison Smith – [alison.smith@aut.ac.nz](mailto:alison.smith@aut.ac.nz) 921 9999 ext 7363.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor - [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) 921 9999 ext 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Mary Brown

Email: [cdc0504@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:cdc0504@autuni.ac.nz)

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Alison Smith

(09) 921 9999 ext 7363

Room AR413

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90 ~~Okoroaio~~ Drive

Northcote 0627.

Email: [alison.smith@aut.ac.nz](mailto:alison.smith@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017*, AUTC Reference number *17/226*.



## Appendix B

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

05 May 2017

Dear (insert name)

Re: An Invitation to participate in research

Ni sa bula vinaka. Talofa lava and warm pacific greetings. My name is Mary Brown and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership degree in the Faculty of Culture and Society at AUT. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of my dissertation that is the final part of this degree programme.

The aim of my research is to examine the lived experiences of Pasifika teacher's in aspiring to and gaining leadership positions within a New Zealand secondary school context. I am highly interested in the narratives of our Pasifika leaders and would like to share these stories to give insight to leadership from a Pasifika lens.

My intention is to interview three Pasifika teachers currently in a leadership position from three Auckland secondary schools (2 senior leaders and 1 middle leader). I will be using semi-structured interviews to allow open discussion with a narrative approach. All interviews will be digitally recorded.

More detailed information is attached to this letter in the information page. I will hope you consider to participate and have an enjoyable experience sharing your story in this research.

Please note you have the opportunity to consider this invitation 7 days after receiving this in the post by emailing your interest to [cdc0504@autunl.ac.nz](mailto:cdc0504@autunl.ac.nz) and I thank you for taking the time to peruse these documents.

Yours sincerely

Mary Brown

|

## Appendix C

### Semi-structured interview questions

**Researcher:** Mary Brown

**Project title:** Educational Leadership through a Pasifika lens: Navigating their way in a New Zealand secondary school context

The aims of this research:

1. To identify the ways in which Pasifika teachers aspire for secondary school leadership.
2. To identify and critically examine Pasifika teacher's perspectives of the enablers/challengers faced in moving into secondary school leadership.

- 
1. Could you tell me about yourself? (background, culture, ethnicity, family...)
  2. What has been your greatest influence for your educational success?
  3. Could you tell me about your current leadership role in your school? (How long? What do you do?)
  4. What are your views about Pasifika leadership in secondary schools? (experience, positive/negative)
  5. In your experience, do schools have a positive or negative influence of Pasifika leadership in secondary schools? (Why? Describe?...)
  6. Tell me about your aspirations for secondary school leadership as a Pasifika teacher? (Who/What aspires? Next steps?...)
  7. What support enabled you to move into a leadership role as a Pasifika teacher? (Who? How?...)
  8. What have been some challenges/barriers faced in your leadership role as a Pasifika teacher? (Describe?)
  9. Any further comments:

Thank research participant for their time and valuable contribution to the completion of this ~~MedL~~ programme.]