

**Representations of Pasifika New Zealanders in reality television:  
*A Police Ten 7 case study***

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**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.

Signed by .....

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## **Abstract**

This research was conducted to better understand the implications of negative portrayals in the media of Brown – in this case, Pasifika or Māori – communities. Its premise is to analyse how fraught relationships between police and Brown New Zealanders are portrayed in the reality crime-based tv show Police Ten 7 and what the implications are of those depictions.

It looks at how Pasifika and Māori were treated in the production of a reality-television police show, though as a Pasifika researcher I concentrate on those implications for Pasifika communities.

Six episodes from Police Ten 7 were qualitatively reviewed and a thematic analysis was conducted to contextualise the data. These episodes were chosen purposively to create context and to examine changes, if any, in the show with the introduction of a Brown host. My findings are informed, framed and supported by the critical race theory.

As existing research indicated, Māori and Pasifika people were featured frequently on the show. My findings reiterate this notion; not only were they featured more, they were also portrayed as incompetent, lazy and easily exploited. South Auckland, home to large Brown communities, was depicted in these episodes as a hostile and damaging community for its prevalence of street crime. The episodes disproportionately targeted South Auckland as a hotbed of crime. The research found deploying a Pasifika police officer as host did make a difference, but it was much too late and elements of the show continued to carry negative connotations of Brown communities understood through visual and verbal cues.

# **Chapter 1: Fa'alapotopotoga o tagata Pasifika i totonu o Aotearoa / Pasifika Communities in Aotearoa**

## **Overview of research**

This research provides insight into the multidimensional issue of stereotyping in mainstream media, particularly against Pacific Islanders in New Zealand. Six episodes of the reality crime television show Police Ten 7 will be explored as a case study, through thematic analysis. This will help to deepen my understanding of the situational qualities of the show and the influences it has on race depiction. In the context of this research, it will help provide insights into the negative stereotyping in Police Ten 7 against Pasifika communities and what those implications mean for Pasifika peoples.

Furthermore, through the analysis of these episodes, influences on crime statistics, like poverty and the policing of brown communities, will be discussed.

My approach is influenced by a deeply embedded cultural orientation, using critical race theory to inform my observations and contextualise my findings. The overall aim of this thesis is to help unravel the complexities of race depictions in reality crime-based television, particularly against Brown communities in New Zealand.

My observations together with the evidence collated from these episodes will contribute to the ongoing discourse around the portrayals of Pacific people in the media.

## **A personal perspective**

As a young Samoan woman pursuing higher education, in communication studies, I confront my inability in the past to contextualise the racial stereotyping I consumed in mainstream media. Growing up in an intergenerational, non-English speaking home, much of our interaction with the outside world seemed to be through images and stories in the media, often stories of people that looked just like me – but incarcerated or dead.

From the initial stages of my research proposal and then transitioning into the thesis writing process, it has been eye opening to unravel examples of the New Zealand Pacific diaspora coerced by institutions like the police and replicated through ethnic tagging in the media. My thought process starts from whether unconscious bias is the same as systemic racism. I have used Police Ten 7 as a case study because previous research positions me in a good place to draw my own conclusions.

## **Naming Pasifika people**

Some scholars have criticised the ambiguities of the term *Pasifika*, given the number and variety of Oceanic cultures it represents. According to Foliaki (1994), it undermines the uniqueness of each Pacific island culture. While I acknowledge that each Pacific Island nation is different in its own

ways, this does not negatively impact the premise of my research. *Pasifika* and *Pacific Islander* are complex terms that spans several meanings, all of which encompass a strong sense of identity and belonging (Matika et al., 2021). I will be using the terms *Pasifika*, *Pacific Islander* and *Pacific people* interchangeably with reference to the Pacific Island community in Aotearoa New Zealand. I feel safe in using these terms interchangeably for my research because I proudly identify and resonate with these terms.

Similarly, I will also be using both *Aotearoa* and *New Zealand* throughout my thesis.

### **Research origins**

New Zealand has a long history of strong cultural, political and economic ties with its neighbouring Pacific Islands (Lee, 2009). The term “Pacific Islander” refers to someone from the vast ocean that is Oceania. Polynesia is a subregion of Oceania, which consists of more than 1000 islands across the Central and Southern Pacific Ocean (Burrows, 1937). These islands include Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Niue and the Cook Islands. The indigenous people who inhabit the islands of Polynesia are often referred to as Polynesians. These people share many things alike, including cultural practices, traditional beliefs, origin stories and language relatedness (Franklin, 2003).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands were territories under New Zealand administration. However, on 4 August 1965, after a constitutional referendum, the Cook Islands became a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand (“*The dawn*,” n.d.). This meant that people in the Cook Islands were eligible for dual citizenship in both New Zealand and the Cook Islands. Similarly, on 19 October 1974, Niue joined the Cook Islands on a free association agreement, granting their government budgetary assistance and an opportunity for its people to gain New Zealand citizenship. However, Western Samoa took its own distinctive route to become an independent nation. On 1 January 1962, after several efforts by the Samoan independence movement, the New Zealand Western Samoa Act 1961 terminated the Trusteeship Agreement allowing Western Samoa to gain its independence as the Independent State of Western Samoa, now known as Samoa.

### **Migration for labour**

Rights of residence and New Zealand citizenship have encouraged the migration of Niueans, Tokelauans and Cook Islanders under the free association agreement (Marsters, 2016). There has also been considerable migration to New Zealand from Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. However, not all migrants from Tonga, Samoa and Fiji are citizens, so migration from these Pacific Islands has been more strongly impacted by periodic changes in New Zealand immigration policies (Lee, 2009).

Based on the Pacific Migrant Trends and Settlement Outcomes report 2018, Pacific migrants tend to settle in Auckland for employment opportunities and the value of its growing Pacific communities (*Pacific Migrant Trends*, 2018).

Prior to the Second World War, New Zealand had a sparse Pacific community, with only a few hundred (Bedford, 1994). Confronted with labour shortages in the post-war period, the New Zealand government called for Pacific migrants to come to New Zealand for work. Programmes were implemented to bring young men over for forestry and factory work, while young women were being brought in for domestic work (*"The dawn"*, n.d.). A labour shortage in manufacturing in the early 1970s reeled in many more.

Aid from New Zealand to the Pacific Islands increased in the 1950s and 1960s. Moreover, the Labour government of 1972-1975 has been referred to as the pivoting point in New Zealand's relations with Pacific states (*"The dawn"*, n.d.). The Prime Minister at the time, Norman Kirk increased New Zealand's development assistance overseas.

The mass migrations after the Second World War led to an overrepresentation of Pacific labourers in lower skilled occupations, such as machinery operators and forestry workers (Vunidilo, 2006). However, over the past 80 years of a number of generations, Pasifika people have become an integral part of the New Zealand social fabric. From being encouraged, largely, to come to work in New Zealand's factories, Pasifika New Zealanders now have influential leadership roles in all parts of society, from Cabinet to industry to the university sector. In 2022 Toeolesulusulu Damon Ieremia Salesa was appointed as Vice Chancellor for Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Salesa became the first Pasifika person to be appointed Vice Chancellor at a New Zealand University (Tokalau, 2021). Salesa shares a similar migration story to many Pasifika people whose parents migrated to New Zealand in hopes of a better life for them (Tokalau, 2021).

Based on the 2018 Census, 8.1% of New Zealand's population identified with one or more Pacific ethnic groups, one of the fastest growing population groups (Stats NZ, 2019). The 2018 census results showed that New Zealand's cultural make-up is increasingly diverse following high population growth in the past five years (Stats NZ, 2019).

### **A shameful period of history for New Zealand – the Dawn Raids**

In 1973 and 1974 Kirk's government came down suddenly and forcefully on Pacific people who had overstayed their New Zealand visas. Tongans and Samoans were among those most targeted and surprise dawn raids by police on the homes of suspected overstayers were carried out all over Auckland, justified by a spurious connection between migration and a failing economy. The Dawn Raids were particularly harmful and unjust because Pacific Islanders made up only one third of overstayers at the time, but accounted for 86% of those arrested, prosecuted and deported (Anae, 2020). Immigration policies continued to constrain Pacific migrants under the leadership of the

National government elected in 1975 (*"The dawn"*, n.d.). The raids are contextualised further in Chapter 2.

The Polynesian Panther Party was a revolutionary social justice movement of the 1970s that resulted in part from the Dawn Raids. It formed to combat racial injustice carried out against Pacific Islanders and indigenous Māori in New Zealand, more specifically, those living in Auckland (Anae, 2020).

The Polynesian Panther movement, as it was formerly known, was formed in 1971 and consisted of Pacific Islanders in their later teens and early twenties – mainly Tongans, Samoans, Cook Islanders and a few Māori individuals (Anae, 2020). The Polynesian Panthers headquarters was in Ponsonby, the heart of the Auckland Pacific Island community at the time (*"The Dawn"*, n.d.). The group expanded with people from local communities joining in on the advocacy for Pasifika rights. The groups influence grew and chapters were opened in South Auckland, now known as home to much of Aucklands Pasifika communities, and in Dunedin, Christchurch and Sydney.

The formation of the Polynesian Panthers was heavily influenced by the Black Panther Party and made direct comparisons with the oppression of African Americans in the United States of America (USA) and the discrimination faced by Pacific Islanders in New Zealand. The group was started by Will 'Illolahia, Fred Shmidt, Eddie Williams, Paul Dapp, Nooroa Teavae and Vaughan Sanft. The Polynesian Panthers sought freedom through self-determination, which included combating police brutality, ending exploitation of Pacific communities, pushing for better housing conditions and including Pacific history in the New Zealand schooling curriculum (Anae, 2020).

Several factors influenced the end of the Dawn Raids, including widespread opposition to them. This opposition ranged from the public outcry led by the Polynesian Panthers to Island leaders and church spokesmen, Ngā Tamatoa and anti-racist organisations such as the Auckland Committee on Racism and Discrimination (Anae, 2020).

The Dawn Raids were discontinued by Prime Minister Norman Kirk's Labour government in April 1974. However, with the election of Rob Muldoon's Third National government, the raids were later reintroduced and this time, more menacing than before. Eventually, by 1979, the Dawn Raids came to a halt with Muldoon's government concluding that they had failed to help ailing New Zealand economy.

The story of the Dawn Raids and the establishment of the Polynesian Panthers connect with themes such as nationhood, identity and state sanctioned violence. Though these incidents are of the past, the history of New Zealand police and Pasifika human affairs fuels the ongoing mistrust that Brown communities have had in the New Zealand police.

## **Crime-based reality TV**

Over the past 20 years a rapid increase in broadcast television has been the advent and subsequent explosion of reality-based TV (Strenger, 2011). Reality TV purports to offer viewers a glimpse of a reconstructed social reality and can be hard to pinpoint in entertainment programming because they blur the lines between news and entertainment (Fishman, 2018).

Of the many professions and interests featured in reality TV, one of the most prolific sub-genres follows the work of law enforcement officers (Strenger, 2011). In Fishman (2018) book *Entertaining crime*, he expands on the complexities of reality crime-based programmes. Reality crime TV shows resemble aspects of the news but, like other entertainment programmes, stems from forms of crime fiction (Fishman, 2018). There are typically two formats that reality crime shows use, each of which portray reality claims in their own ways (Fishman, 2018).

The first format presents a series of vignettes featuring interviews with victims and other relevant informants, as well as photographs and footage that support the case (Fishman, 2018). This can be seen in the reality crime show *America's Most Wanted*. Moreover, the second format is the ride along approach to filming where TV crews ride with police and film the case as it unfolds. The police are filmed in action and viewers are provided a front row experience and while this format is typically perceived as the truth, these incidents are heavily edited and only the most action-packed sequences are aired to attract more viewership (Fishman, 2018). This can be seen on the American reality crime show, *Cops*. *Cops* was cancelled in 2020 amid protests against racial injustice and police brutality following the murder of Black American man George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin who was accompanied by police officers J. Alexander Keung, Thomas Lane, and Tou Thao at the scene. *Cops* was cancelled over claims of racial profiling and injustice against Black Americans.

While some long-running international police shows, like *Cops*, have been cancelled over sensitivities around how they depict minorities (Larson, 2006), New Zealand police and TV producers say their shows are different (Cardwell, 2021).

### **Police Ten 7 – where it all began**

New Zealand's earliest frontline crime shows included Police 5 hosted by Keith Arthur Bracey. Bracey played a significant role in the crime fighting series, presenting, producing and researching for the show. The show began in 1976 and lasted ten years. Thereafter, Crimewatch which followed similar crime cases to those that would be highlighted later on Police Ten 7, was launched in 1987 and aired until to 1996 until it was replaced in 1997 by Crime Scene, which aired for only one year.

Police Ten 7 was launched in 2002 and has been one of New Zealand's most prominent reality television shows. Since the shows launch, it has since produced a total of 750 episodes, spanning 29

seasons. The show was created by producer Ross Jennings with help from a production company, Screentime New Zealand as part of the entertaining programming portfolio by Television New Zealand (TVNZ) (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). The show was established as an updated version of the local series Crimewatch, which was broadcasted on channel one before moving to TV2 in the mid-nineties (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

Over its 20+ year tenure, Police Ten 7 has received many accolades for its viewership success. In 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015, the show won TV guide's best on the box award for the best reality series (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). It also received nominations for the best reality format at the 2007 Qantas Television Awards, and the best original reality series at the 2019 Huawei mate30 pro New Zealand television awards (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

Police Ten 7 has portrayed the frontline operations of New Zealand's police force over more than two decades. Each episode usually followed two to three call-outs by police anywhere in New Zealand, for offences including, violence, theft, vandalism, alcoholism, drugs and general crime.

The crimes and wanted offenders segment of the show features up to five people wanted in relation to offences that vary from drug offences to burglary and assault. Each episode follows one main case and involves the show's host visiting the crime scene, accompanied by a local detective who takes the host and audience through the events preceding, during, and following the offence. The alleged offender is described by the host using a colourful array of strongly negative depictions and viewers are advised to come forward with any leads by contacting the Police Ten 7 hotline on 0800-10-7-4636.

The title Police Ten 7 derives from the New Zealand Police code 10-7, which means "Unit has arrived at job". The series was initially hosted by renowned and retired Detective Inspector Graham Bell from 2002 to 2014. Sergeant Rob Lemoto, of Tongan heritage, succeeded Bell as Police Ten 7's host in 2014 until the show was cancelled in 2023. Lemoto had previously appeared on the show as a case officer investigating an aggravated robbery in Mount Maunganui. The shift to have Lemoto appointed as the show's new host was said to be part of a proposed format update and a cultural shift highlighting the programme's values and representations (Greive, 2023).

The interactions between police and individuals was the reason the show became so widely recognised, suggesting an approach of good-humoured pragmatism over the rather excessive force palpable in overseas programmes like the American reality TV show, *Cops*.

Police Ten 7 courted several allegations of racial discrimination over its long tenure. However, 2021 would be the beginning of the end for the infamous crime series. Police Ten 7 faced allegations of racism, particularly against Pasifika and Māori peoples and criticisms for its alleged biased portrayal of policing in New Zealand (Collins, 2021). Then-Auckland City Councillor, the late Fa'anānā Efeso Collins weighed in on the issue calling on broadcaster TVNZ to scrap Police Ten 7, reiterating that it

feeds on racial stereotypes and harms Pasifika and Māori communities for “low-level chewing gum tv” (Collins, 2021). The tweet read:

Hey @TVNZ it's time u dropped Police Ten 7. A couple of days ago I was watching tv and your ad cut promo'ing the program showed young brown ppl. This stuff is low level chewing gum tv that feeds on racial stereotypes & it's time u act as a responsible broadcaster & cut it (Collins, 2021, March 21).

The tweet has since been retracted from X, formerly twitter.

Both the Chief Executive of Screentime, Philly de Lacey, and Police Ten 7's former host Graham Bell defended the show by claiming that it portrayed the reality of crime in Aotearoa New Zealand. De Lacey countered Collins' claim by arguing that their work aimed to provide an accurate depiction of what New Zealand police are doing out on duty (Cardwell, 2021). Bell also supported Lacey's claims by stating that the police do not choose who they are looking for, the people committing the crimes were the ones selecting themselves to be sought (McIvor, 2021; Bielecki & Quince, 2021).

Unfortunately, following Councillor Collins' public comments on his tweet, he and his aiga received online death threats (Mandate, 2022, October 6).

Disagreements over Police Ten 7's portrayal of crime in New Zealand were not new (Lawrence, 2020; Podvoiskis, 2012) and Collins was not the only politician to wade in on the show's longstanding controversies. In 2023, former deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters also posted a tweet in defence of the show:

Most level-headed Kiwis, including frontline police and people like Graham Bell, know that it's only those sociological loonies who think that way – and would rather believe their feel-good lies than accept the harsher truth like the rest of us do (Peters, 2023, May 12).

Such interpretations rely on the correlations of media representations and police crime reporting.

However, critics have argued it is not that the show is not consistent with statistics but rather, how the intense and over policing of minority groups portrayed, reinforces colonial culture (Deckert et al., 2023).

In 2021, TVNZ commissioned a review after it received public backlash criticising an advert for Police Ten 7. The advertisement clip featured a Brown male gulping his last bit of alcohol before speaking to police. A series of clips promoting the upcoming episode followed this scene. The review was commissioned by TVNZ in response to criticism that the programme perpetuated negative stereotypes, particularly against Pasifika and Māori peoples.

On the contrary, the review concluded that the portrayal of Pacific and Māori individuals in the show was generally fair, but the show did very little to discourage negative stereotypes (p. 18). The review set out eight recommendations, one of which recommended staff at both TVNZ and Screentime NZ

partake in training that would reform their understanding of racism, bias and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These recommendations are discussed in the literature-review chapter.

Following the 2021 independent review, the show was renamed Ten 7 Aotearoa. The new format of the show would provide a deeper insight into policing in New Zealand with a focus on education and crime mitigation (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). Presenter and radio broadcaster Sam Wallace was also introduced in 2022 as co-host of the series.

Despite efforts to keep the show running, it was discontinued by TVNZ in 2023. TVNZ claimed that this was because it struggled to gain viewers (“TVNZ,” 2023) but as this thesis will explore, it became much more complicated.

In the current study, I have coded six episodes of Police Ten 7 from six different seasons. I’ve intentionally set out to review these particular episodes for two reasons.

The first reason is simply to get a spread of possible data, but the second reason is specific to my research questions. I have chosen 3 episodes from 3 different seasons before the introduction of Rob Lemoto as the new host in 2014, and the other 3 episodes from 3 different seasons after Lemoto fronted the show (2014 onwards)

This strategic approach will also help me draw my own conclusions on what difference (if any) it made having a Pacific Island police officer host the show and what impact the proposed cultural shift had on crime reporting on Police Ten 7 thereafter.

The six episodes I will be reviewing are:

- 1) Season 2, Episode 2.
- 2) Season 8, Episode 3.
- 3) Season 13, Episode 7.
- 4) Season 22, Episode 14. (First episode with new host, Rob Lemoto).
- 5) Season 24, Episode 24.
- 6) Season 24, Episode 27.

## **Research questions**

My primary research question is:

**To what extent are Pacific people unfavourably and unfairly represented in television through Police Ten 7?**

From this research question, two sub questions emerged and support different parts of my inquiry. These are:

- **Does Police Ten 7 exploit the prevalence of crime in Aotearoa's Pacific communities?**
- **To what extent, if any, did deploying a Pasifika policeman to front the show make a difference?**

Overall, this thesis will serve as a contribution to the ongoing discourse of media representations in Aotearoa.

### **Organisation of Thesis**

The introductory chapter was broken in to two parts. The first part of the introduction was a personal perspective and an overview of the history of Pasifika people and their experiences, both past and present, living in Aotearoa. The second part of the introduction expands on Police Ten 7 and the controversies in which this research emerges.

Chapter 2 will review existing and relevant literature to create a coherence between the available literature and themes explored throughout this thesis. It will start to frame the focus of this qualitative research.

Chapter 3 will explain the research methodology; a qualitative approach to data collection and the uses of thematic analysis in the context of this research. This chapter will also provide references from the show and build my themes. These themes include *low level chewing gum TV*, *manner of policing* and *controlling the narrative*.

Chapter 4 will discuss my findings and discussions, with reference to the data analysis, contextualisation of my findings and what that means in the context of this research.

Chapter 5 will be a conclusion chapter which will contain the conclusions I have made from the consideration of my findings. This chapter will also answer my research questions.

Chapter 6 will outline the limitations of my research and opportunities for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Le Toe Atiinaa'eina o Tagata Pasifika i Niu Sila / Reconciliation of Aotearoa's Pasifika diaspora**

This chapter reviews the literature through which my research emerges, with a focus on the extent to which Pacific people are unfavourably and unfairly represented on television in Aotearoa and how shows like Police Ten7 amplify dominant culture and values.

Relevant literature supports the most important themes of this study. These include literature on New Zealand's growing Pasifika communities, causes for migration and their establishment and expansion through the years. More importantly for the context of this research, literature will be used to reference previous research about Police Ten 7 and explore the controversies around the shows premise.

This chapter will review literature on power relations and the reporting of crime in the media, media representations of Pacific communities and provide some insights into the portrayals of South Auckland – the world largest Pasifika community.

Moreover, literature on racism and reality television will provide some insights on the negative portrayals of marginalised communities.

Literature will also be included on the interrelationship of poverty and crime; why crime is more prevalent in certain communities and what role social factors like poverty play on the overrepresentation of Pasifika and Māori peoples in crime statistics.

The conclusion will summarise key points from the literature as well as findings in the literature that are relevant to my research.

### **New Zealand's growing Pasifika community**

Auckland is widely recognised as the world's largest Pacific city and has the highest concentration of Pacific people (Allen & Bruce, 2017).

Table 1: Components of Pacific Island population at 2018 (New Zealand Census).

Pacific Island	Population
Samoan	182,721
Tongan	82,389
Niuean	30,867
Tokelauan	8,676

Fijian	19,722
Cook Island Māori	80, 532

Source: Statistics New Zealand, 2023.

Moreover, the establishment of a large Pasifika presence in New Zealand has cultivated a history of its own. The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a huge wave of migration from the Pacific to New Zealand – especially by Samoans and later followed by Tongans (Anae, 2020). Though Tonga and Samoa dominated the migrations for labour, neighbouring Pacific Islands like Tokelau, Niue and Cook Islands also established their own communities in New Zealand thereafter. Tokelauans, Niueans and Cook Islanders are New Zealand citizens through their right of citizenship; provision of colonial rule (Bedford et al., 2010). In 1965 the Cook Islands became a self-governing State in free association with New Zealand as well as Niue in 1974 (Quentin-Baxter, 2008). This meant that, Tokelauans, Niueans and Cook Islanders were (and still are) territories under the Realm of New Zealand (“*The dawn,*” n.d.). This meant that Tokelauans, Niueans and Cook Islanders were granted entry into New Zealand, unlike Samoans and Tongans who needed to retain a permit to enter and temporarily remain in New Zealand for employment (Anae, 2012).

In 1964 a quota of visitors from Samoa i Sisifo (Western Samoa) were welcomed on work permits, typically spanning three months and in 1967, a quota of Fijians were granted work permits for up to six months (Anae, 2012). The Immigrations Act of 1964 was the relevant piece of legislation used by authorities in their pursuit to find overstayers. An amendment of the act in 1968 enabled the deportation of those who overstayed their work permits (“*The dawn,*” n.d.).

With the economic decline in the 1960s, the New Zealand Government turned its back on once-valued migrant workers, directing and empowering police to find and deport overstayers (Fepulea’i & Jean, 2009). Growing tensions between the Pacific communities and the New Zealand Government came to its tipping point in the mid 1970s when the Dawn Raids were established to capture, prosecute and deport overstayers back to their home country (Pollock, 2004). These Dawn Raids, as they came to be known, were initiated under former Prime Minister, Norman Kirk’s Labour government in 1974 and later intensified by Robert Muldoon’s national government in 1976 (Etherington, 2022). The New Zealand police were appointed by the Government to force their way into people’s homes at any hour of the day or night and to stop people at random on the street to ask for anything that could prove their right to stay in the country (Spoonley, 2012; Fepuleai’I & Jean, 2009). With minimal restrictions on their aggressive tactics, police and police dogs would forcibly enter people’s homes without a search warrant, shining torches in people’s faces and demanding they provide their visa documents (Triponel, 2021; Tuiburelevu et al., 2022). The raids were also carried out in the early hours of the morning often

traumatising sleeping children and families with their forcible handling of suspected overstayers and the use of police dogs (*Colonisation*, 2022). This approach was applied almost exclusively to Pacific Islanders (Anae, 2020), including Tongans, Samoans and Fijians who were (and are) a part of the dominant Pacific immigrant groups in Aotearoa (Etherington, 2022), though the raids also targeted other people from different parts of Oceania.

The Dawn Raids were intensified in 1976 (Etherington, 2022) and in her book *All Power to the People: Overstayers, the Dawn Raids, and the Polynesian Panthers*, Anae (2012, p. 221) stated that during this time:

...record levels of immigration from the islands (largely to fuel postwar demand for unskilled labor) coincided with the collapse of the global commodity boom and the onset of recession in the New Zealand economy. The circumstances provided fertile ground for the public expression of racism and general resentment towards groups perceived to be taking jobs from locals, threatening cultural homogeneity, boosting crime rates and adding strain to public resources such as housing, welfare, and education.

The term overstayer became largely associated with Pacific people which had negative connotations (Anae, 2012). An increase in crime rates, unemployment and economic upheaval in New Zealand were connected to the presence of Pacific communities in major cities (Spoonley & Hirsh, 1990). The economic downfall in the 1970s reflected a narrative in the media that Pasifika people were responsible for prevailing job shortages and “social ills” (*Colonisation*, 2022, p. 7).

Concerns about stereotyping in the media and marginalisation of non-dominant ethnic communities have a long history (Allen & Bruce, 2017). During the Dawn Raids, mainstream media outlets were used by the State to generate negative stereotypes and reinforce reports of criminal behaviour by Pacific Islanders (Anae, 2020). Spoonley and Hirsh (1990) reiterated these sentiments by Anae (2020), showing that a stereotype of Pacific Islanders had developed as troublesome, as bearers of health problems and as school dropouts. While the constant discrimination towards Pacific people was shameful, Anae (2020) also stresses that this period ignited collective and radical efforts to combat oppression. This period was vital in cementing Pacific advocacy and solidarity for Pacific people in New Zealand, both then and now (Anae, 2020).

Anae (2020) describes the political and social unrest of the 1970s as one of racial tension. Despite the majority of overstayers being from Europe and North America, police had an exclusive focus on the proportion of overstayers from the Pacific (Fepuleai & Jean, 2009). Although Pacific Islanders only made up one-third of the overstayers accounted for, 86 per cent of overstayers prosecuted were from the Pacific (Spoonley, 2012; Misa, 2010). Ultimately, the raids were ineffectual because despite the deportations of illegal Pacific immigrants, the New Zealand economy continued to decline (Anae, 2020). The Dawn Raids came to an end in 1976 (“*Ardern*,” 2021).

In August of 2021, an event was held at the Auckland Town Hall marking the Dawn Raids. The event was hosted by the Minister for Pacific Peoples for the New Zealand Government to apologise to Aotearoa's Pacific diaspora for their mistreatment under earlier New Zealand administrations. The apology was different to any other apology offered by the New Zealand Government before for its integration of cultural practices (Iloilo, 2023). The Minister for Pacific Peoples, Aupito Tofae Su'a William Sio was among some of the Pacific Caucus who helped to guide the ceremony. After Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's speech, she was cloaked in a ie toga (fine mat) which is symbolic in the Samoan culture as an act of shame and regret, mainly used in the context of asking for forgiveness. Many Pacific leaders commended Ardern for being receptive to the historic apology and community leader Toesulu Brown stated that the apology would "represent a new dawn, one that is full of promise for reconciliation" ("*Ardern*," 2021).

The Government's targeting of migrant workers through the Dawn Raids was a prime and establishing example of Pasifika communities being disproportionately targeted through government policies (Allen & Bruce, 2017). While in the context of this research, racism in New Zealand is not considered as overt as it once was, the ongoing impacts of overt discriminations continue to be felt by Pasifika people today (*Colonisation*, 2022). This can be seen in the anger and mistrust that Pasifika (and Māori) communities share in contemporary experiences, from which my analysis of Police Ten 7 partially emerges. Negative media narratives and overt racism as seen in the Dawn Raids still persist today ("*Racism*", 2020; Etherington, 2022; Tuiburelevu et al., 2022; "*The dawn*," n.d.). Although, as Allen and Bruce (2017) have highlighted, Auckland boasts a large Pasifika community, Etherington (2022) states that "Auckland may be the world's largest Polynesian city, but discourses of crime, violence, laziness, and neglect marginalise Pasifika peoples today" (p. 297).

Discussing the establishment of Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa is important to this research because it pertains to the long and controversial relationship between the New Zealand police, the New Zealand government and Pacific minorities. As a daughter of Samoa and the Pacific region, it is my duty to point out that today's issues of racism are deeply rooted in a past overshadowed by racial disparities, political unrest and ethnic tagging (Spooner & Hirsh, 1990; Etherington, 2022).

### **Criticisms of Police Ten 7**

Events in the United States (US), where so-called reality cop shows first flourished, foreshadowed the controversies about Police Ten 7. A long-running US reality crime series, *Cops* came to a halt amid nationwide protests against police brutality, following the tragic death of George Floyd in 2020, at the hands of police officer, Derek Chauvin. The weekly programme ran for more than 1000 episodes following US police through drug house raids, prostitution busts and on-foot chases. Premiering on FOX Broadcasting company (FOX) in 1989 with beaming lights and Inner Circle's Bad Boys, the

reality crime-based programme reeled in criticism for glorifying questionable police tactics (Ouellette, 2020).

Debuting in 2002, the reality crime-based TV programme Police Ten 7 went on to be one of the longest running crime shows on New Zealand television (Deckert et al., 2023). The show screened every Thursday at 7:30pm on TVNZs Channel 2. The half-hour show used two event formats, an incidents segment (the reality-TV action component of the show) and an unsolved cases segment (showing wanted suspects).

An incident on a Police Ten 7 episode would pan the camera to real-life footage of the New Zealand Police (NZP) out on daily call outs, with the scene typically finishing with an incident's resolution i.e., an arrest, charge, fine or warning. Meanwhile, the case segment of the show would present the public with information on a wanted offender, with a mugshot of the alleged offender and a brief description of their age, build, ethnicity and where they have close contacts.

Police Ten 7 has been the subject of much controversy and criticism over its tenure (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). In 2007, then chief executive officer of TVNZ, Rick Ellis was strongly criticised before Parliaments Māori Affairs select committee. When questioned about how TVNZ was upholding its charter responsibilities in relation to Māori inclusion, he listed some programmes including Police Ten 7. He came under fire for the mention of Police Ten 7. Former Māori Party co-leader Pita Sharples and then National MP Dame Georgina Manunui Te Heuheu both said the programme perpetuated negative stereotypes against Māori as criminals and underachievers, to which Ellis later apologised admitting Police Ten 7 was not the best example of Māori programming (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

According to a content analysis of the entire 2010 season of Police Ten 7 by Podvoiskis (2012), in terms of offending, Māori youth and men were overrepresented and Pākehā were underrepresented. This was discussed in Bieleski and Quince's (2021) review claiming that while Pacific and Māori individuals featured more frequently on the show, this was "to some degree" the truth about patterns of crime in New Zealand (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p. 17).

The latter criticism of the show was sparked in May 2021. Then Auckland Councillor, Fa'anana Efeso Collins, himself of Tokelauan and Samoan heritage, tweeted:

Hey @TVNZ it's time u dropped Police Ten 7. A couple of days ago I was watching tv & your ad cut promoting the program showed young brown ppl. This stuff is low level chewing gum tv that feeds on racial stereotypes & it's time u acted as a responsible broadcaster & cut it (Collins, 2021).

The tweet created a stir in the media, receiving mixed reviews from the public as well as politicians and academics. While some claimed that Police Ten 7 simply depicted an uncomfortable truth, others

argued that the show needed to proportionalise the filming of Brown individuals. (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

Amid allegations in 2021 of Police Ten 7 perpetuating racial stereotypes, former host Graham Bell claimed that the people committing the crimes were the ones putting themselves in a position to be sought (Bieleski & Quince, 2021; Currie, 2023). However, the production agreement between the New Zealand Police and Screentime NZ reveals a deep involvement by police in the provision of aired content (Bieleski & Quince, 2021), which is where the negative portrayals of Pacific and Māori people are being overlooked.

In an interview with Newstalk ZB's Heather Du Plessis-Allan, Bell claimed there were many issues in society that were falling by the wayside because people were so "precious and fragile about what everybody says these days it's getting ... bloody ridiculous" ("*Graham,*" 2023). Bell had "forged a hard-line tough-on-crime on-screen persona for which he had become well known (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p. 7). He hosted the show from 2002 to 2014 and became widely known for his use of provocative language, calling suspects names like "vicious morons", "gutless goons" and "a lunatic scumbag" (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p.7).

A study by Yan et al. (2021) countered Bell's defence of the show's premise by drawing on data provided by the New Zealand Police and focusing on the representation of aggressive suspects. Yan et al. (2021) looked into the depictions of Māori and Pasifika as committing more aggressive offences, analysing 25 episodes from Season 14 to Season 28. The coding process was based on the type of offence committed and the ethnicity of the suspect involved. Eighty-one offences were coded across the 25 episodes.

Consistent with their hypothesis, their findings showed that Māori/Pasifika were over-represented on Police Ten 7 (69% vs 53% of aggressive crimes) and non-Māori/Pasifika were underrepresented (31% vs 47%). Though the data is limited by the relatively small number of incidents in the 25 episodes that were coded, findings by Yan et al. (2021) were consistent with Collins' claim that the show feeds on racial stereotypes.

TVNZ's content director, Cate Slater says the broadcaster has the duty to ensure it is constantly evolving to keep up with viewer expectations and changing societal demands ("*TVNZ,*" 2021). As a result, a review was commissioned by TVNZ in response to Collins' tweet about the show perpetuating racial stereotypes, particularly towards Pacific and Māori peoples. The review was conducted by Auckland University of Technology's Dean of Law, Khylee Quince, and senior media content consultant Karen Bieleski. Their review found the depiction of Pacific and Māori individuals in the show was reasonably fair, but that the show did very little to discourage negative stereotypes (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

The review made eight recommendations and one of them highlighted the need to formalise the programme's policy for cultural integrity (Palmer, 2021).

In no particular order, Bielecki and Quince (2021) suggested in their review TVNZ should:

- formalise Police Ten 7's policy for cultural integrity by requiring ScreenTime NZ and TVNZ staff to partake in relevant training in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, racism and bias
- uphold contemporary media values as enlisted in Broadcasting Standards Authority and New Zealand Media Council decisions
- provide more regional and demographic coverage by diversifying filming locations
- commission relevant research to contribute to Police Ten 7's reflection of societal values
- include coverage of planned events with a police presence for better geographical representation
- ensure promotional material for Police Ten 7 is overseen and signed off by the show's editorial commissioner before it airs
- have promo directors take part in proper training for producing promos for "high risk" shows (Bielecki & Quince, 2021, p. 21)
- make promos more generic so that incidents from specific episodes are not used in isolation for promotion of the show

Following the review by Bielecki and Quince (2021), Slater said TVNZ's ambition with a newly proposed format of the show was to continue to emphasise the important work of New Zealand Police, while better acknowledging the communities they serve (Palmer, 2021). The show was rebranded in 2022 as Ten 7 Aotearoa with radio broadcaster, Sam Wallace introduced as new co-host.

Race Relations Commissioner Meng Foon stated that while the show was a helpful tool in solving crime in New Zealand, it targeted more Brown people than White people which made the show racist ("*Race*," 2021).

Former police detective Tim McKinnel, who now works as a justice advocate, voiced similar concerns about the defences launched of the show's premise. McKinnel (2021) referred to the show as a retouched piece of carefully managed propaganda that amplifies the racism and classism that often harms our vulnerable communities.

In 2023, the show ultimately aired an 'End of an era' 3 hour special. Despite recent efforts at reform, it was evident that the show could no longer keep up with newer societal demands; a much different society from the one it debuted into in 2002. More importantly, a complex matrix of influences on crime such as poverty and housing insecurity have become more acknowledged and better understood (Polglase & Lambie, 2023).

## **Power relations and crime in the media**

The world as we know it today is a precisely mediated era (Krotz, 2014). Something important to understand in relation to power and the media is that, collectively, we do not use, interpret and respond to representations in the media the same way (Greer, 2007).

Concerns over the damaging impacts of the media on some communities persist and academic research exploring representations of crime in the media, dates back to the early 1900s (Pearson, 1983 as cited in Hendrick, 2006; Bailey & Hale, 1998). The media *are* a complex matrix of institutions, organisations, processes and practices that are multifaceted in composition, scope and purpose (Briggs, 2020). Analysing media representations therefore helps us understand hidden power relations helping to shape media coverage of crime (Hodgetts, Masters & Robertson, 2004).

Understanding the interrelationships between crime and the media is paramount in scoping the positioning of crime and media in our social world (Hendrick, 2006). Furthermore, the media itself does not change autonomously. Rather, it reflects developments in social perceptions and practices that have other origins (Reiner, 2012).

The under-representation of Indigenous perspectives in mainstream media contributes to the marginalisation of these communities (Allen & Bruce, 2017). Media scholars have found that news reporting overwhelmingly poses Indigenous peoples in New Zealand and Australia as a societal risk and as problematic for the mainstream; Indigenous policies only gain interest when they target a narrow range of news values – most significantly, conflict and proximity to elites in society (Mickler & McHoul, 1998; Meadows).

An unfortunate example of this occurred in March of 2018. Australia's Channel 7 came under fire for its controversial discussion about the adoption of Indigenous Children (Wolfe, 2020). The segment referenced the stolen generation which was the removal of Indigenous Australian and Torres Strait Islander children by Authorities to be put into westernised schooling and housing institutions from the years 1910 to 1970 (O'Loughlin, 2020). Commentator Prue Macsween, radio presenter Ben Davis and show host Samantha Armytage – an all-White panel discussed the adoption of what they claimed to be abused children – comments that were both factually incorrect and harmful to these communities (Wolfe, 2020). MacSween actually stated that during the time of the stolen generations, some children were removed from their families for good reasons and that perhaps the Government should do it again (Mitchell, 2020). This sparked an uproar from the Aboriginal community which led to a defamation lawsuit against Channel Seven, Armytage and MacSween. The network breached broadcasting standards and was rightfully sanctioned by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (Mitchell, 2020). In a statement, Ms Dixon-Grovenor, the daughter of renowned Aboriginal civil rights activist Charles Dixon, emphasised that “wealthy White women calling for Stolen Generations 2.0 was a shameful, profoundly hurtful and devastating display of racism” (Mitchell,

2020). These concerns were echoed by Indigenous elder Rhonda , citing that the incident was “another symbol of national shame and another appalling example of the deeply entrenched virus of racism that still plagues White platforms of privilege in [Australia]” (Wolfe, 2020). Despite in-court settlements and a public apology by Channel Seven, Sunseri (2007) highlights the importance of reserving a space for Indigenous perspectives in the media, especially when they are regarding issues that involve Indigenous peoples.

News, entertainment programmes and other parts of the mass media carry significant power over how the public understand and perceive the criminal legal system and its key components (Allen & Bruce, 2017; McGregor, 2017; Van Dijk 2016). Media consumption can not only influence people’s perceived realities but also shift their attitudes and cause fear among many (Allen & Bruce, 2017; Van Dijk, 2016, McCreanor et al., 2014).

Crime is of constant, pervasive and systematic value to reality television, film and print media (Bradley & Walters, 2011), and as a result, has piqued the interest of academics for decades. New Zealand mainstream media has tended to depict minorities, particularly Māori, as dangerous radicals, criminals and activists, and a peril to New Zealand’s social fabric (Gregory et al., 2011; Barnes et al., 2012).

Conventional news reporting is heavily influenced and often entirely dependent on information provided by third-party agencies like the police, companies and governments (Hunter & Hanson, 2009). While the media depends on police agencies to provide the key details that are central to crime news coverage (Gest, 2019), Van Dijk (2000) emphasises a concern that those who control the media control a society’s discourses about itself. According to Van Dijk (2000) discourses on media narratives are the main source of people’s attitudes, knowledge and ideologies, both of powerful elites and ordinary citizens alike.

Crime reality TV shows have given us a glimpse of what police officers do on duty (Lawson & Lawson, 2016), but they do not reflect the spectrum of police activity in its entirety (Bielski & Quince 2021).

There is always an element of power on the New Zealand police in *Police Ten 7*, given the relationship between the production company Screentime and the New Zealand Police. Auckland University of Technology’s Richard Pamatatau, who teaches Creative Writing and Intercultural Competence, also weighed in on the issue stating that he was gobsmacked and upset to know the level of control the New Zealand Police had over the show. (McConnell, 2021).

Some of the details of the contract between Screentime and the New Zealand Police, provided under the Official Information Act 1982 to investigator Tim McKinnel (2021) include the following clause:

The Police will preview programme content before screening and the Produce shall amend or edit the programme to accord with any concerns expressed by the Police regarding issues of security, sensitivity, privacy and any other matters set out in this agreement (McKinnel, 2021 as cited in Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p. 11).

“Any other matters” is later defined in the agreement as “matters that may affect the integrity or legal liability of the Police or bring the police into disrepute” (McKinnel, 2021 as cited Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p. 11).

This emphasises how highly selective Police Ten 7’s content is and though the cases are very real, the portrayals of certain events are often distorted. A number of studies have supported this notion. This was shown in a research by Podvoiskis (2012) which concluded that while some aspects of policing and offending in Police Ten 7 were portrayed fairly accurate, for example gender and ethnicity of police, other aspects were notably skewed. One of the findings from this study stated that the White individuals portrayed in Police Ten 7 were more likely to be police officers than suspects or offenders, while non-White individuals were depicted as being more involved in violent offending (Podvoiskis, 2012; Deckert et al., 2023). Furthermore, of the offenders arrested for violent crimes, the broad majority (82%) were of Māori or Pasifika heritage (Podvoiskis, 2012). These findings were also supported in a study conducted by Yan et al. (2021) that concluded Māori and Pasifika peoples were overrepresented on the show, engaging in crimes that were more aggressive. More recently, similar findings emerged from a study by Deckert et al., (2023), comparing their data with official police statistics. Deckert et al., (2023) found that not only were Pacific and Māori people overrepresented in association with violent offences, most of the TV airtime was dedicated to suspects of Pasifika and Māori identity.

Media discourses are neither transparent nor completely innocent (Allen & Bruce, 2017). Moreover, in New Zealand, researchers contend that despite implicitly claiming to be inclusive of all New Zealanders, most mainstream media coverage is generated by Pākehā people, for a Pākehā audience and about Pākehā issues (Cosgrove & Bruce, 2005). This is ironic because Pasifika people are constantly having to navigate challenging narratives about their lived experiences, presented in stories constantly misconstrued by the media.

Meanwhile, Police Ten 7 underwent a significant overhaul in 2014 and my research will include some insights from the significant changes from 2014 onwards. This is particularly important because after TVNZ commissioned a review of the controversial crime show, it struggled to rebuild its image after a history of promoting what has been referred to as “old school policing” (McConnell, 2021).

According to Mason (2003, p. 1), “factual, fictional and factional media representations of policing are a crucial, and for a great many citizens, probably the sole influence in shaping their perceptions about criminality and community safety and criminal justice”. Furthermore, as research has also demonstrated, ethnic minorities tend to appear disproportionately as suspects in such programmes,

leading to an exaggerated association of these communities with crime (Monk-Turner et al., 2007; Prosis & Johnson, 2009).

Though previous studies have confirmed that Māori and Pāsifika individuals front majority of the violent crimes in Police Ten 7 (Podvoiskis, 2012; Yan et al., 2021), the aim of this research is to further understand the racist undertones in the show. I want to identify whether the influences of colonial culture are driving certain narratives about minority groups in New Zealand. Though much of the literature refers to Māori and Pasifika communities and their overrepresentation in crime statistics, I am particularly interested in crime among Pāsifika individuals and what those implications are.

### **Media representation and Aotearoa's Pacific communities**

Portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities as victims of police brutality have also been heavily criticised for their potentially damaging influence on public opinion (Dukes & Gaither, 2017). In New Zealand, there are similarities between how Pasifika and Māori people are represented in the media. Both have been ethnically tagged in news headlines and stereotyped in mainstream media (Spooner & Hirsh, 1990). For example, how during the Dawn Raids, mainstream media and Pālagi (European) New Zealanders referenced Pacific people as criminals. Dr Melanie Anae recalled the tension between Pasifika New Zealanders and the media during the raids:

Our worst enemy was media coverage back then, the 'man in the street' had an English accent and negative coverage of Pacific people was everywhere ... We were portrayed as rapists and criminals, so we needed to tell our version of events (*"Melanie Anae,"* 2020).

Negative narratives about ethnic minority perpetrators are often prompted by misconceptions in the media that continue to racialise crime and criminalise race (Jacobs, 2017). Researchers have also documented how marginalised ethnic communities are continually disadvantaged in mainstream media coverage, which serves to silence minority voices and to privilege majority voices (Loto et al., 2006). Such misrepresentations have very real implications on those minority groups and their associated rights in society (Loto et al., 2006).

Furthermore, Pacific people remain underrepresented in media accounts and when they do show face, tend to occupy all the wrong places including hospitals, welfare offices, courts and prisons (Moala, 2005). This is supported by Pearson (1999) who states that when representations of Pacific people in mainstream media do exist, they have often been negative and marginalising.

Pacific people have, since the mass migrations in the 1960s, faced racialised discrimination and continue to be depicted in the domestic media as unhealthy, unmotivated and criminal others (Loto et al., 2006). Moala (2005) states that Pālagi exercise significant power associated with social and economic privilege, which enables Pālagi assumptions to frame the lives of Pacific people. On the contrary, socially and economically disadvantaged Pacific people's voices are rarely prioritised on

issues that affect their lives, and thus face both material and symbolic inequalities (Hodgetts et al., 2005).

### **South Auckland and the media**

The cultural positioning of Pacific people has changed over time (Allen & Bruce, 2017). More than 50 years have passed since the Dawn Raids, and yet South Auckland is still overshadowed by the ensuing discourse of Pasifika people as dangerous and unemployed (Borell, 2006). For decades the negative portrayals of Māori and Pasifika people that dominated media-centred discourses have ingrained hard-to-shift attitudes that get reinforced by such approaches to journalism. Media portrayal of South Auckland has painted it as a brutish scene of crime and poverty (Nairn et al., 2011; McCreanor et al., 2014; Allen & Bruce, 2017).

The community of South Auckland, a suburb mostly populated by Pacific people, has faced ongoing criticism and scrutiny from the media and law enforcement agencies in New Zealand for its reportedly increasing levels of gang-associated activities, high rates of recidivism and criminal offences involving Pacific youth (Nakhid, 2012). Moreover, the profile of young Pacific people and events involving youth gangs, have been subjected to widespread media publicity and government scrutiny (Nakhid, 2012).

As a result, South Auckland has been normalised in mainstream media as a Brown place – an area where gangs, violence, poverty and crime are prevalent (Borell 2006; Nakhid et al., 2009). This isolation by news media perpetuates this normalisation and stigmatises the people of South Auckland, directly resulting in the community being separated from wider society (Allen & Bruce, 2017). Nevertheless, South Aucklanders have boasted a strong sense of belonging (Nakhid, 2012; Nakhid et al., 2009). These varying perspectives reinforce an argument by Jhally and Hall (1997) that what is missing from media coverage is equally important as noting what is present, due to the news media's power to mediate certain realities (Couldry, 2000)

Spoonley and Hirsh (1990, as cited by Raela, 2017) explores two case studies on the topic of negative representations of Pacific individuals. The first case study was by Pacific Island academic Finau 'Ofa Kolo whose work highlighted the mainstream media's misreporting of the tragic death of a Tongan man by a group of young Samoan men who murdered him in 1989. Ethnically tagged gang ties and inter-cultural fighting were headlining news stories, often portraying Pacific Islanders in a way they felt was unbalanced and insensitive to their lived experiences (Raela, 2017). The second case study was by Samisoni (1990), and entitled Pacific Island Responses to Our Monocultural Media. In this case study, Samisoni (1990) states that the New Zealand media have been unfair and unkind to Pacific Island communities and suggests a resolution would be to develop their own media. Moreover, ethnic minority media – media produced by and for ethnic minority groups – has offered more positive representations and a counter narrative to mainstream stereotypes (Ross, 2014).

Studies of media bias have been replicated all over the world and reflect the socio-political structures that underpin media representations, so it becomes increasingly important to be conscious of messages in the media especially those regarding minority groups (Tukachinsky et.al., 2015). In Police Ten 7s “wanted” segment of the show, profiles of alleged offenders are narrated, asking the public to help police in their search for, for example, “a group of murderous thugs; two young creeps; a halfwit with a gun, a false beard and a turban; a mindless lowlife; two vicious morons; two armed and violent mongrels; three stooges; three desperate and wild-eyed gutless goons; three vicious apes; two fat women and a man with a gun; this little thug; this little germ; lunatic scumbag with a steak knife”, as extracted from a collation of former host Graham Bell’s most grim descriptors.

The review commissioned by TVNZ provided a more nuanced recount of the Police Ten 7, However it also highlighted how minimal efforts were made to negate negative stereotyping against Pacific and Māori communities. The review also stated that the show’s traditional approach to policing and crime, which has been described as a “goodies versus baddies” approach, prompted public misconceptions about crime and society (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

Bell’s provocative descriptions of suspects became a concern for the public and Bieleski and Quince (2021) reinforced that while the constant depiction of Pasifika and Māori people’s on the show may well have reflected a reality of over-representation in crime statistics, there was no need to keep reinforcing the message that certain groups in our society are getting into more trouble than others.

## **Racism**

Much of the literature on racism and micro-aggression has focused on ethnic minorities in the United States, African Americans included (Swim et al., 2003). Van Dijk (1995) creates an important conversation around racism not just being the result of White supremacist ideologies but also the effect of everyday, mundane, negative attitudes and opinions through subtle acts of discrimination against minorities.

Racism is a complex and multi-faceted issue – from the individual to the situational and social, to institutional and systemic (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). At the individual level, the filters that work to monitor what is portrayed on Police Ten 7 are usually unproblematic. However, the repeated depictions and framing of individuals who identify with or presumably belong to certain groups as suspects or offenders is in and of itself concerning – for its relationship to perpetuating harmful stereotypes (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). Some racism can be so indistinct that neither the victim nor perpetrator fully understand the extent of what is happening, which may be especially toxic for non-White individuals in multicultural societies (DeAngelis, 2009). Racism and race are avoided and underexplored not just in public discourse but also in research in the New Zealand context (Callister, 2008, 2011; Lowe, 2008), including in the realm of communication studies (Robie, 2009).

While New Zealand also has a history of ethnic minorities in opposition to White supremacist ideologies, Van Dijk (1995) states that a strategy the media and other White elites used in their public façade as ethical leaders of society was the denial of racism. The mainstream media has often been criticised for reinforcing a dominant narrative about national identity that assumes Pākehā superiority (Barreto, 2019). In the 1980s, a call to address institutional racism became particularly important in New Zealand (Spoonley 1990). With the economic upheaval in the 1970s, conflict over ethnic identity intensified (Raela, 2017).

As much research on media representation in New Zealand suggests, there is a complex matrix of influences that everyday people adopt while consuming media content. Media presents no blatantly racist propaganda but repeatedly perpetuates negative representations of minority groups, for example, prolonged focus of Māori involvement in criminal activity (McCreanor et al., 2014). This is also evident in *Police Ten 7* with Bielecki and Quince (2021) reiterating that although Pacific and Māori peoples in the show were, to an extent, consistent with the patterns of crime and offending in Aotearoa, it does not diminish the anger, frustration and hurt felt by these communities because of the harmful aftermath of the show's history. Despite the review stating that the show had shifted from its old approach, it also noted that the previous format of the show "casts a long shadow" (Bielecki & Quince 2021, p.20) and that much of the public still did not trust the show.

The tweet mentioned earlier by Fa'anānā Efeso Collins in 2021 was prompted by a trailer for the show featuring a brown-skinned male consuming his last bit of alcohol after speaking to police. The advert ended with the man dropping his can into a recycling bin and the police issuing him with an informal warning. Quince & Bielecki (2021) stated that a 10-second snippet, taken out of context, with humorous music, featuring the only Brown offenders of the episode's four stories, in their view, misrepresented the efforts of not only the police but the show, in this instance (Bielecki & Quince, 2021). They discussed how the show was arguably mana-enhancing for the police – the police generally look good, claiming that the show's critics would inevitably fixate on this, given the police involvement in the show's editorial content.

Elmqvist and McLaughlin (2018) emphasise that the more a stereotype is reprised in media content, the more it becomes normalised and can influence the way individuals think about and interact with different groups. That's the jarring thing about the media – it has the power to shape not only how we see others, but most importantly, how we see ourselves (Cohen et al., 2019).

### **Over-policing of minorities**

Police play an important role in keeping communities safe and protecting society (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022). However, what happens when these same communities that police are out to protect, fail to perceive police as an adequate institution? Jackson & Gau (2016) states that failing to view authority as legitimate has a correlation with a distrust in the police. This can often result in increased

exposure to violence and crime (Panditharatne et., 2018), which is concerning because this is considered the norm for many ethnic minority groups (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022).

A lower sense of trust in the police by marginalised communities often stem from a long history of antagonism between the police and minorities (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022).

Researchers and media alike have centred much of their observations on the tense relationships between the police and minorities in the USA, however, a similar recurring pattern can also be seen here in New Zealand (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022). In 2020, the Black Lives Matter protests emerged across not only the USA but globally. This period highlighted a long history of prejudicial treatment of minorities, particularly African Americans, at the hands of police (Weine et al., 2020). The nationwide sentiment, including the protests from New Zealand, emphasises that the strained relationship between the police and minority groups is not an isolated phenomenon (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022).

Much of the literature on how ethnicity and race are portrayed in reality crime shows has focused largely on US reality TV shows, including the long-standing show COPS. Content analysis of these programmes have constantly revealed that proportionally, more Black suspects are depicted committing violent crimes than White suspects (Dixon, 2006). This sentiment has been replicated in New Zealand through research by Podvoiskis (2012), Yan et al., (2021) and Deckert et al., (2023) who have all concluded that Māori and Pasifika people are overrepresented in crime shows like Police Ten 7, particularly in violent offending. Moreover, research has shown that exposure to these programmes influences ideas of danger and negative perceptions of marginalised communities (Ramasubramanian, 2011).

In New Zealand, Māori individuals are also less likely than Pākehā communities to report that they trust the police (Panditharatne et al., 2018). New Zealand Police pose as gatekeepers of the criminal legal system as they choose who they communicate with, who they investigate and who they charge with an offence (Linkhorn & Dawson, 2019; Deckert et al., 2023). In comparison to non-Māori suspects, Māori are more likely to be convicted, incarcerated or to receive longer prison sentences for the same offences (Cunneen & Tauri, 2016; Webb, 2017). Fleming et al., (2021) asserts that over-policing and racial prejudice by police have adverse effects on people's mental health and wellbeing.

Similarly, while Pacific people are not widely overrepresented in crime statistics in Aotearoa, they are overrepresented in violent offending, often linked to family violence (Ioane & Lambie, 2016).

There is no doubt that Pasifika and Māori people feature disproportionately in crime and prison statistics, but some of that disproportion may be due to police unfairly targeting certain groups and offences.

Walters (2020, as cited in Deckert et al., 2023, p.3) reports that:

Where Pākehā are more likely to have handcuffs, restraints, or empty hand force used on them, Māori and Pasifika are likely to experience more extreme tactics in the form of OC spray or tasers. Most worryingly, two-thirds of all people shot by police in the last 10 years have been Māori or Pasifika.

Moreover, there are other influencing social factors that contribute to patterns of crime in New Zealand and, most importantly, why crime is more prevalent in certain communities than others. In the context of offending, Latu and Lucas (2008) contend that low socio-economic status and the connected exposure to aspects like unemployment or alcohol and substance abuse resulting in criminal behaviour, is the driving force behind the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacific people in crime statistics. For the context of this research, this insight is important because according to Bieleski and Quince (2021) the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacific people in Police Ten 7 are to some extent, reflected in crime statistics in Aotearoa. However, just as important to the conversation around the prevalence of crime, are the inequities that disproportionately affect Pasifika and Māori communities. For many Māori, the colonial displacement has resulted in intergenerational poverty and a loss of community and culture (Farmer, 2001 as cited in Webb, 2018).

In New Zealand there are reports that closely link Pasifika and Māori to crime as a result of social disadvantages like poverty. Pacific children experience some of the highest rates of impoverishment in Aotearoa and despite former governments' efforts to address child poverty, there has been no improvement (Foon, 2024). Conversely, a study by the Ministry of Justice found that compared to 30% of the general population that experience crime, Māori experience 38% of crime in New Zealand (Johnsen, 2021). Webb (2018) asserts that something needs to be done about governmental policies and institutions that continue to legitimise the racialisation of crime and poverty. Smith (2018) echoes a similar concern stating that poverty is an issue in other parts of Aotearoa where it coincides with high crime and victimisation levels, increased rates of drug dependency and poor health outcomes.

The relationship between crime and poverty in Pasifika and Maori communities will be discussed further in this thesis.

## **Reality television**

Reality television is a genre of TV programming that has become a prominent phenomenon in the past few decades (Podvoiskis, 2012). Media content has the power to influence public attitudes towards certain people, experiences and institutions (Fishman, 2018). Reality based television has been described as “blurring the boundaries” (Mason, 2003, p.1) between fictional and factual television because while it presents real life instances that have occurred in reality, it is presented in a way that mimics fictional television, as opposed to documentaries which also portray real people and real experiences (Friedman, 2002). A distinct difference that sets reality based television apart from other

genres in television is the decisive claim to reality combined with the goal of providing target audiences with entertainment (Friedman, 2002; Leishman & Mason, 2003). These claims are echoed in Fishman (2018) book, *Entertaining Crime* which provides insight into the complexities of reality TV programmes. On one hand, they claim to present the truths about crime and on the other, they resemble features of crime fiction (Fishman, 2018).

The purpose of television is to maximise advertising and to maximise advertising you have to maximise the audience (Berger, 1987). While police reality television programmes, like Police Ten 7, have helped to combat crime and provide insights into the work police officers do as a part of their job (Lawson & Lawson, 2016), they do not reflect the spectrum of police activity in its entirety (Bieleski & Quince, 2021; Monk-Turner et al., 2007; Smolej, 2011). Furthermore, ethnic minorities tend to be misrepresented in these programmes, leading to an amplified association of these communities with crime (Prosise & Johnson, 2009).

Despite the show aiding crime in New Zealand, we must also acknowledge the unspoken subtext and dominance of the present majority culture (Nairn & McCreanor 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Content aired in reality crime shows like Police Ten 7 needs to be carefully consumed because although the cases are real, these programmes are often heavily edited and reconstructed for the purpose of entertainment (Fishman, 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The available literature on crime reporting in New Zealand, with reference to the research themes of identity, racism and the influence of dominant culture on media representations, highlights a much bigger issue in New Zealand mainstream media. Key findings from the literature are that although minorities in New Zealand are portrayed in the media, they're displaced and misrepresented in certain contexts. Also identified within this literature review is an important external review by TVNZ on the show's premise. The study by Bieleski and Quince (2021) is a significant piece of research in the Police Ten 7 controversies and the ongoing discourse around the issue of negative stereotyping in mainstream media. Despite the review stating that the portrayal of Pacific and Māori people in the show was relatively fair, it also provided an insight into how institutions have the power to feed harmful stereotypes, whether they are aware of it or not.

Moreover, a notion that much of the literature also supports is that marginalised communities do exist within various media channels (including those of the New Zealand television landscape). However, their depictions are often based on and sometimes limited to persistent racial stereotypes. Much of the literature on crime and the media in New Zealand states that there is a large misconception of minority groups, like Māori and Pacific, due to the media's misrepresentations of these communities.

The interrelationship of crime and social factors like poverty need to be explored so we can understand the overrepresentation of Pasifika and Māori in patterns of crime.

The purpose of this thesis is not just to identify the impacts of over policing of Brown communities but to also grasp the influences of colonial cultural narratives on the portrayals of Pacific people in the media.

### **Chapter 3: Agai atu i la'u metotia o saililiga – The research approach**

The previous chapter reviewed the literature published on this study's focus which is to establish the extent Pacific people are unfavourably and unfairly represented in television through Police Ten7. In this chapter, I will explain my research design and methods.

I have opted to utilise a qualitative framework for this study because I am looking at the human experiences, interactions and social constructions within the shows content. I am also looking at the qualities of my own experience of viewing these episodes as a Pasifika person. The method of analysis I have chosen is a thematic analysis, looking in depth at overarching themes that emerged from the analysis:

1. Low level chewing gum TV (Collins, 21 March 2021)
2. The manner of policing depicted
3. Control of narratives about Pasifika people

The first theme is an in vivo code and pre-existed, while the last two themes emerged from the coding process. The themes each provide a different lens on the episodic content. The first theme allows me a framework to discuss the quality of the show in terms of public interest. The second and third themes each allow me to study representations of two key groups – suspects and police.

The data analysis included coding transcripts of the six episodes. These thematic references from the transcripts were categorised under the three overarching themes. Once these references were categorised under each theme, my findings were contextualised informing my discussions and ultimately, answering my research questions.

The criteria by which I am judging my references have been informed by ideas from the Critical Race Theory. This is a theoretical framework that looks at systemic and institutional structures that emulate racial disparities. This framework further explains the interrelationship of race, racism and power.

#### **Ontology**

The starting point of my research design is that it is culturally informed. As a daughter of the Pacific, a byproduct of the mass migrations in the 1960's, I have seen and experienced stereotyping of Pacific people that has been shaped by colonial narratives in the media. As a Samoan and Christian woman, my life is centred in a strongly communal culture shaped in communitarian principles more strongly than the individualistic cultures dominating Western societies. I bring with me all these values and have taken careful measures to acknowledge that different incidents in the show will impact audience members differently depending on who they are and where they come from. Indeed, central to my research is the idea that a Pasifika lens should more often be applied to media studies in Aotearoa to better understand the full impacts and cultural implications of mainstream media texts.

Ontologically speaking, this research comes with a view of the world that is aligned with bounded relativism.

It is important to highlight the coexistence of relativism and bounded relativism. Moon and Blackman (2014) have identified relativism and bounded relativism as two distinct ontologies that are both relativist in nature. Relativism draws on the idea that realities exist as intangible mental constructions with no reality beyond the subjectivity of the experience (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Meanwhile, bounded relativism is the idea that mental constructions of reality are equal in space and time within cultural, moral and cognitive boundaries (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

A bounded relativist argues that one shared reality exists within a bounded group, for example moral and cultural, but across groups different realities exist (Moon & Blackman, 2014). An example of this, in the context of this research is, while we can accept that Police Ten 7 is a tool that has helped Police solve many cases, when you look through a Pasifika cultural lens, you see the truth of racist stereotypes that dominant-cultural audiences conceive as the truth of the world and reconstitute as racist social tropes. A bounded relativist position allows for important deepening of our understanding of social realities while not allowing for extreme use of the idea of relativism to justify customs that are universally unacceptable in human rights terms, for example, child labour. An extreme relativist might say there are no such things as human rights, only cultural contexts.

The reason bounded relativism is important to this study is because media representations of social realities in New Zealand are deeply tied up in colonial narratives (Ono, 2009) and to thoroughly understand the impacts of this stereotyping, we must understand the construction of meaning and what influences the truth of social phenomena.

Research by the Broadcasting Standards Authority (2011) suggests that television viewers do not believe that reality TV programmes aim to portray participants in a negative light and that any footage depicting negative behaviour or attitude is a result of what individuals “actually... are, rather than what the programme is attempting to depict them” (BSA, 2011, p. 9).

Different individuals will have different interpretations of the show and with this research, I am trying to better understand the implications of subtle microaggressions through the shows use of language, portrayal of power and distribution of resources. These implications may not mean the same thing to non-Pacific people. Each person is also representative of their community. A bounded-relativistic position does not see this as a competition for the same reality, but instead, in constructivist terms, a culturally centred and communitarian reality.

## **Epistemology**

This study is underpinned by a constructionist epistemology. Constructionism is the view that there is no objective reality to be discovered (Crotty, 1998). It is also the understanding that truth stems from

our engagement with the realities in our world and meaning is therefore constructed (Crotty, 1998), making it an anti-realist stance (Hammersley, 1992 as cited in Banfield, 2004).

It is important to highlight the co-existence of socially constructionist and constructivist views of the world. Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes, while constructionism has more of a social rather than individual focus (Young & Colin, 2004).

Reality is socially constructed and because people differ in their understandings of it, there is no single, fixed reality apart from peoples interpretations (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). Most of what is known and most of the knowing that is done is concerned with trying to make sense of what it is to be human, as opposed to scientific knowledge (Steedman, 2000). Therefore, while everything in the world has definable properties, for social constructionists, what is more interesting is why certain properties assume importance and, critically, are then used as the basis for social or scientific evaluation (Burr & Dick, 2017).

Constructionism in this study reflects largely on how people viewing the show, no matter what background they come from, are engaging and being influenced by the police-centred (Leishman & Mason, 2003) reality created on Police Ten 7.

Seen through this research paradigm, policing in Aotearoa was constructed for the audience on Police Ten7 as anchoring the relationship between everyday citizens and law enforcement. A constructionist view of the show proposes that certain features of Police Ten 7 might perpetuate negative pre-existing stereotypes of Pasifika and Māori peoples as criminals and recidivists.

Non-Pasifika people will respond differently to the events that are stereotyping to a Pasifika individual because they do not come from a Pasifika community and therefore do not face the same challenges and experiences.

Though many academics have embraced constructionism, there has also been criticism because of the ambiguity of its subjective nature (Andrews, 2012). However, Neuendorf (2002) states that “all human inquiry is inherently subjective” (pg. 11), and while the themes identified in my research may well be socially constructed, they are supported by the analysis of content in the episodes selected, with resultant data further categorised into sub-themes that in relationship create dynamic meaning of their own.

## **Methodology**

According to Moen (2006, p. 61) a “qualitative approach to the field of investigation means that researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them”. Qualitative researchers investigate the nature of social

processes and create cross-sectional themes in the data that form part of the analysis (Mason, 2002). Systematically categorising data is fundamental in qualitative research and often forces us to challenge any preconceptions we have (Mason, 2002). Qualitative analysis requires qualitative data, and these include direct observations, interviews or written documents. Qualitative methods are also utilised and these include participants, direct observations or case studies (Devi, 2009). Qualitative modes of inquiry are interpretative; it assumes that reality is socially constructed, and variables are interwoven and complex. The purpose of a qualitative mode of inquiry is to interpret, contextualise and further understand an issue while using the researcher as an “instrument” for research (Devi, 2009, p. 6).

On the contrary, quantitative analysis usually relies on numeric elements and statistical measures to predict findings (Wetcher-Hendricks, 2011). Quantitative content analysis will look different for each research project but usually starts with keyword frequencies, time counts or space measurements (Devi, 2009). A quantitative mode of inquiry is the idea that social facts have an objective truth, and variables can be identified and relationships in the data can be measured (Devi, 2009). A quantitative approach to research is also experimental in nature and reduces the data to numerical indices (Devi, 2009).

Quantitative and qualitative analysis are interrelated, and each carries its own significance in making inferences about research data. Essentially, all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively, and all quantitative data is informed by qualitative inquiry (Devi, 2009).

This research design primarily uses a qualitative approach, which in terms of data analysis, means watching and coding the ride-along sections of six Police Ten 7 episodes. Three of these were during Graham Bell’s run as presenter on the show and three after, with Tongan police officer Rob Lemoto fronting the show. With transcripts from the six episodes, together with verbal and visual cues from watching these episodes, three main themes were identified as pillars of this research design. These include low level chewing gum TV referencing Fa’anānā Efeso Collins tweet, manner of policing and controlling the narrative. Sub themes emerged under these themes during analysis to further explore what certain references from the show mean in the show’s broader context. The process is explained further in the explanation of the data analysis.

The objective of this study is to better understand the implications of race depiction in Police Ten 7, particularly of Pacific communities in New Zealand. In their review, Bieleski & Quince (2021) concluded that the portrayal of Pasifika and Māori individuals in the show, was corelative with the realities of patterns of offending in New Zealand. Through this research I want to further pursue the discourse around Police Ten 7 and, in qualitative terms, analyse the show’s portrayals of Brown individuals. This looks deeper into the quality of television having an influence on race depiction,

police and suspect interaction, the impact of editing and most importantly, the depiction of race in *Police Ten* 7.

### **Case study**

A case study has been defined by Yin (2003 as cited in VanWynsberghe & Khan, 2007) as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 81).

Case studies have been adopted in varied investigations, especially those of sociological studies (Tellis, 1997). According to Fidel (1984), case studies are used to investigate phenomena when 1) a wide range of relationships and factors are involved, 2) no laws exist to identify which of these relationships and factors are most significant, and 3) when relationships and factors can be observed directly. Case studies seek to encapsulate people as they experience their natural, everyday circumstances (Feagin et al., 2016).

There are many common features of case studies and Feagin et al., (2016) expands on their holistic approach, stating that it has the ability to offer researchers “empirical and theoretical gains in understanding larger social complexes of actors, actions and motives” (p. 8). Tellis (1997) refers to case studies as “multi-perspectival analyses” (p. 2). This means that researchers consider not just the perspective of the actors but also their relationship and interactions with other relevant groups involved.

This systematic development is important and beneficial to this research because not only am I looking at the portrayals of Brown suspects in these six episodes, I am also considering what those implications are for their communities alike. While navigating the controversies of racist undertones in the show, six episodes have been selected for the purpose of this study, to provide further insight on the portrayal of Brown suspects.

The findings are not generalisable to other cases, but it provides rich data that deepens our understanding of the production and editorial structures in *Police Ten 7*. These structures and processes have contributed to previous research on negative stereotyping in the show (Podvoiskis, 2012; Yan et al., 2021; Deckert et al., 2023). This highlights the overarching issues including the cultural significance of certain incidents in the show and the influences of other social factors on Brown suspects featured. This case-based approach helps to contextualise isolated incidents in these six episodes and triggers a thought process about wider considerations in social terms.

### **Method: Thematic analysis**

A thematic analysis involves a process that focuses on identifying recurring themes or ideas in a textual data set (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016). It provides systematic and accessible procedures for

generating codes and themes from qualitative data (Clark & Braun, 2017). Thematic analysis can be in many forms, including, but not limited to analysis of political documents, videos and transcripts of an interview (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

Langridge (2004, as cited in Terry et al., 2017), states that:

In a thematic analysis three levels of codes are usually recognised ... These are 1st, 2nd and 3rd level (or order) codes ... Most people begin with a very basic descriptive level of coding and work upwards in a systematic manner towards a more interpretative level (p. 3).

It is important to differentiate what themes and codes are (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). Codes are used to capture features of the data relevant to the research question and themes are patterns of meaning underpinned by a central concept; a shared core idea (Clark & Braun, 2017). Themes provide a framework for reporting and regrouping a researcher's analytic observations (Clark & Braun, 2017).

Many researchers have claimed that thematic analysis and content analysis are often used interchangeably (Baxter, 1991 as cited in Terry et al., 2017; Javada & Zarea, 2016). This may be due to the common grounds of data collection through coding and identifying themes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

A thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clark (2006) entails a six-step process. This includes 1) the researcher immersing themselves in the data, involving note taking and transcription, 2) generating codes from the data that identify a feature of the data, 3) collating codes to build themes, 4) reviewing themes in relation to the coded extracts, 5) refining the specifics of each theme and 6) fine tuning the overall story.

While a benefit of a thematic analysis has been its flexibility, this too has been the reason for criticism of the analytical method (White et al., 2012; Tomkins & Nicholds, 2017). Gibson (2006) points out three theoretical issues with thematic analysis; The first is interpretivism which refers to the interpretation of other people's actions based on our own understanding, the second issue is language which is one of the many ways in which we make sense of our experiences and the third issue is quantification in that researchers should not only focus on the repetition of specific terms (Gibson, 2006). These issues point out the limitations of language and close attention should be paid to context for entering it (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). However, it is important to acknowledge that the disadvantages emerge as a result of inadequate research questions or poor analysis and not thematic analysis itself (Hollardson, 2009; Hayes, 2000 as cited in Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

In this research, themes have emerged from data collected through the coding of transcripts and viewing the visual content of the six episodes. Language is not the main focus of the thematic analysis, though language is used to understand what certain incidents may mean or imply.

## **Theoretical framework: Critical Race Theory**

There are plenty of studies on critical race theory (CRT), though mainly from the US (Ladson-Billings, 2020; Crenshaw et al., 1995). Critical race theory is the study of transforming the correlation of race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). It is based on the idea that race and racism are produced by social thoughts and power relations (Rollock & Gillborn, 2011 as cited in Delgado & Stefancic, 2023) and sets race at the centre of critical analysis. Critical race theory is not just a product of civil rights thinking but also critical thinking as well (Roithmayr, 2019).

Critical race theorists believe that race is a social construct, and that racism is not merely the result of individual prejudice and bias, but a concept that is also deeply embedded in legal systems and policies (Sawchuk, 2021). Scholars have shared two broad commitments of critical race theory. Firstly, as a critical intervention into civil rights scholarship, critical race theory outlines the interrelationship of ostensibly race-neutral ideologies like “merit” and “the rule of law”, and structures of white supremacy (Roithmayr, 2019, p. 1). Secondly, critical race theory persists to transform social hierarchies and to advance the political commitment of racial emancipation (Roithmayr, 2019). It is a unique approach to research in that the theory confronts the omnipresence of racism.

White supremacy is a dominant and oppressive force in many societies and critical race theory emphasises that it must be challenged (Taylor, 1998). Critical race theory emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s in part as a response to the enforcement of civil rights legislation (Willis, 2008). The concepts of race and racism were still largely tied to a conventional liberal structure of law and society (Roithmayr, 2019). This era imposed liberal political commitments that fixated on the objectivism, universalism and race-neutrality of concepts like merit and equal opportunity. (Roithmayr, 2019). Moreover, according to Roithmayr (2019, p. 1):

Racism was understood to be a deviation from these race-neutral norms: To be racist was to irrationally assume on the basis of an irrelevant characteristic like skin colour that people of colour did not possess the universal characteristics of reason or merit.

Despite the scientific refutation of race as a valid biological concept and attempts to confine race in much of the public (political) discourse, race continues to be an important social construct and signifier (Morrison, 1992).

Furthermore, in 1989, the first official critical race theory conference was held and specifically reserved for the issue of race. Critical race theorists dispute the concept of race-neutrality and values the often marginalised minority voice (Hylton, 2008). Many of the early thinkers of critical race theory had generated much of its critical content from critical legal studies, its ideology diverged in significant ways (Roithmayr, 2019). First, while many critical race theorists acknowledged the efforts

of critical legal scholars to expose the relationship between law and *social* power, there was no development of the same relationship between law and *racial* power (Roithmayr, 2019).

The late Derrick A. Bell was a prolific writer on critical race theory and one of his propositions was the concept of interest convergence (Ladson-Billings, 2021). According to Bell (1980 as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2021), racial justice is only sought by white people to the extent that they get something out of it.

Interest convergence is about alignment, not altruism. We cannot expect those who control the society to make altruistic or benevolent moves toward racial justice. Instead, civil rights activists must look for ways to align the interests of the dominant group with those of racially oppressed and marginalized groups (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 38).

Criticism on critical race theory can come from the idea that the theory fuels the oppressed versus oppressor narrative, discriminating against powerful people in order to achieve equity (Sawchuk, 2021).

Concerns regarding Police Ten 7s depiction of crime are not new, and concerns of how race is depicted in reality-crime shows are not limited to Aotearoa (Cavender & Fishman, 2018; Nickerson, 2019). The premise of this research is to better understand the implications of stereotyping against Pasifika people while acknowledging the wider social context of Police Ten 7.

I have adopted the critical race theory as a theoretical framework to be able to think systematically about racism rather than looking at the issue of racism simply as individuals mistreating each other. Critical race theory allows me to understand that there are structures in our society that create racial inconsistencies. In the context of crime, particularly in Police Ten 7, previous research by Podvoiskis (2012) concluded that the programme presented a distorted image of offending in over-representing Māori, young people, and men, and under-representing Pākehā. My research contributes to the discourse around perpetuating negative stereotypes of brown people and communities.

While laws and policies are supposed to be neutral, sometimes they promulgate misconceptions about racial and economic disparities including education, housing and in this instance, crime (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023).

The review commissioned by TVNZ agreed that Pasifika and Māori individuals are featured more frequently in the show and Bieleski and Quince (2021) reiterated that to some degree this reflects the reality of crime and offending in New Zealand, where both Pasifika and Māori individuals are notably over-represented as offenders and victims of crime. This correlation of race, crime and media representation is the dilemma that critical race theory allows me to ponder. It also reveals the unfortunate reality that what is ethical is not always legally binding and what is legal is not always right.

## Data Analysis

The thematic analysis of the six Police Ten 7 episodes was a step by step process. The initial process involved repeatedly watching the episodes for context. While watching, I noted down things that piqued my interest as a researcher. These included direct quotes, editing cues and notes of interactions between police and suspects. Using transcribing software, transcripts were created from the six episodes and coding commenced. The coding process consisted of inductively grouping references from the show under common themes. I started with one pre-existing theme, while the other two emerged from the data. Prior research by Podvoiskis (2012), Deckert et al., (2023), the review by Bielecki & Quince (2021) as well as Efeso Collins' tweet have strongly influenced this research.

Fa'anānā Efeso Collins' tweet, urging TVNZ to act as a responsible broadcaster and cut the show altogether, revamped claims that the show was racist. This claim has sparked mixed reviews from both the public and community leaders. Collins called Police Ten 7 "low level chewing gum TV that feeds on racial stereotypes" (Collins, 2021, March 21). I have used "low level chewing gum TV" as an in vivo code and one of three main themes for this analysis.

Due to censorship, I have prescribed "Brown people" to both Pasifika and Māori individuals portrayed in the show. Clearly they will not share exactly the same experiences, given the cultural centrality of social construction, but since Māori are also a part of the conversation around crime and offending in this context, I have enlisted them as part of my analysis. Clear information on the cultural identity of suspects was not available. Also, the pre-existing research from which my research emerged was about the show's treatment and portrayal of both Pasifika and Māori people. However, as previously mentioned, my conclusions to this research are culturally framed so I want to discuss what those implications are for Pasifika communities in which I come from.

## Themes

The first theme titled "low level chewing gum TV" is an in vivo code, directly extracted from Fa'anānā Efeso Collins' tweet. Aimed at exploring his claim, this theme provides deeper insight into comments or incidents in the show, whether by police or other people, that arguably perpetuates negative stereotypes in the interests of audience gratification. This theme also confronts the idea that viewers already have inherent tropes in their heads about Māori and Pasifika communities and even if they are being "fairly portrayed" (Bielecki & Quince, p. 17) with a focus on crime prevention, justice then comes at the expense of vulnerable members of our communities being filmed for entertainment purposes. A sub theme titled *racism* was also developed and will include any racial slurs or comments made about race.

The second theme looks at *the manner of policing* and will explore how police are situated in these episodes and their interactions with certain suspects in the show. Two sub themes emerged from this

theme: *intimidatory policing* and *communicative policing*. Intimidatory policing looks at so-called old-school policing style where police are more hands on with suspects. Meanwhile, communicative-policing looks at a more mellow, conciliatory police presence in the show.

The last top-level theme that emerged from the coding process is titled *controlling the narrative*. This theme will look into editorial content of the episodes that presents as unfair and discriminating.

I have called certain incidents and quotes from the show “references” for the purpose of this thematic analysis. I have collated relevant references from these six episodes and have included them in a table below. Listing references under each theme enables me to understand how they relate to each other and draw my conclusions from them as a Pasifika individual who understands what a Pasifika experience looks like.

While some of the references are direct quotes, some are quotes that, from my interpretation, are evident of what the theme it has been categories under, entails. Time stamps have been provided for some of the quotes and more context is provided in the coding sheet. See Appendix A.

**Table 2: Thematic references and themes.**

Themes and sub-themes.	References.
<p><b>Low level chewing gum television.</b></p>	<p><b>S8, E3. Case 1.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “The ringleader is carrying a hammer. John suspects it’s not for woodwork classes.. Most of the young people causing the disturbance seem to be (Otāhuhu) school students, but their aggression outweighs their vocabulary”.</li> <li>- “Crip! F**k you bro, TNS (Thugs not soldiers) motherf**ker” *holding up gang signs*...</li> <li>- “TNS *inaudible* that’s my uso!”</li> <li>- (05:37) – “O le a le mea e fai a fua kagaka?” (Samoan translation: why are you bothering people?). Son says “f**k you” to the camera and mother says “kapugi lou guku!” (Samoan translation: shut your mouth!) while slapping her sons head.</li> <li>- (06:57-8:34) – One of the offenders goes on a tangent about what TNS means.</li> </ul> <p><b>S13, E7. Case 1.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (4:03-04:17) – “Go and look for shoplifters or do some work... for \$18 an hour, instead of sitting on their fat a**ess and eating corned beef”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S24,E24. Case 1.</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (1:40-1:50) – “You fellas have lied to me so many times in my life its f***ing pathetic. I don’t believe any of youse” ... (4:40-4:50) “I didn’t want them to get into trouble.. any mother would do that”.</li> </ul>
<b>Racism.</b>	<p><b>S13, E7. Case 4.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (13:00-13:05) – “Slap me again you fu**ing ni**er”.</li> <li>- (05:17 - 05:27) – “I can tell the way you talk to me officer. Is it mainly because I’m a Islander? You’re being racist man”.</li> </ul>
<b>Manner of policing.</b>	<p><b>S2, E2 –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This episode covered five cases and three of those were located in South Auckland.</li> </ul> <p><b>S8, E3. Case 1.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “for some reason, they seem to think they’re living in.. South Central Los Angeles and enjoying the thug life”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S22, E14. Case 2.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “I can tell you 110% I’ve stopped *** before. Are they there with their little blood bandanas?” while the camera pans to one of the individuals holding up gang signs and wearing a red shirt that says “Mighty Dog Soldier” which is often associated with the Mongrel Mob.</li> </ul> <p><b>S24,E27. Case 1.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “It’s the same for everyone”.</li> </ul>
<b>Intimidatory policing.</b>	<p><b>S13, E7. Case 4.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (19:36-19:43) “I’m her father!”.. “she’s my daughter!”.</li> <li>- (19:45-20:15) gruesome audio from police mic.</li> </ul>
<b>Communicative policing.</b>	<p><b>S22, E14. Case 2.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “That <i>is</i> dirty underwear”</li> <li>- “Oh you found what you’re looking for” *all parties laugh*.</li> <li>- (09:58 – 10:25) – “They’re actually quite well behaved... we’ve decided to give them a 28 days compliance, basically allows them to get everything sorted on the car. Gives them a bit of an incentive instead of paying a fine, they can go sort their car out. Generally people are more accepting of that.. works out better for us”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S22, E14. Case 5.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A lot of positive conversation between police and other parties.</li> <li>- “He’s a legend actually”.</li> <li>- “That’s some impressive pilot skill”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S24, E24. Case 1.</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (5:20-6:35) – “You have to go through an iwi panel. You have to admit that you're in the wrong, but, like, they might be able to help you. Just talking to the kids, they're saying you're having a bit of difficulty with finances at the moment, so that's probably a good way for you to go, cos then you can talk to them, and they might be able to help you, you know, with those sorts of things”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S24, E24. Case 4.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (21:46-22:22) – “Is that still good to eat?” *All parties laugh*</li> </ul>
<p><b>Controlling the narrative.</b></p>	<p><b>S2, E2. Case 2.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Honestly, I did not do that. That is the honest truth”.</li> <li>- “I’m being straight up I did not do that” (Face is not censored).</li> </ul> <p><b>S2, E2. Case 3.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Yes, I was down here last week. Yes I did not pay a motel and yes, I did take a TV... just once”. (Face is censored).</li> </ul> <p><b>S13, E7. Case 3.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “You’re not filming that now ay because I see the lights off. You only film what you want to film”.</li> </ul> <p><b>S13, E7. Case 3.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (11:47-11:50) – “O tara sucks”.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

To conclude, this research design is culturally infused, providing a bounded relativist perspective on the quality of television having an influence on race depiction. This is supported by a constructivist epistemology that considers so-called reality as a social construction and provides insight into how the programmes portrayals are heavily influenced by the social perceptions of police work in Aotearoa. I have used the critical race theory to further explore the interrelationship of race, racism and power. This theory allows me to broaden my understanding of how media depictions can polarise perceptions of certain communities and influence how audiences feel about them. The qualitative approach provided a thorough analysis through observation and note taking. Through the data analysis process, I was able to pinpoint particular practices and instances in the show that are relevant to my research inquiry. Thematic references were categorised under their respective themes and sub-themes and from this, I was able to explore and develop my findings. A coding sheet has been attached as Appendix A, organising the main themes of low level chewing gum TV, manner of policing and controlling the narrative with references from the six episodes. The coding sheet provides context as some of the

thematic references in the table are better understood with further explanation provided in the coding sheet, if not further explained in the findings and discussions chapter.

## **Chapter 4: Faaupuga le lelei sa faigofie ona iloaina i taimi o fa'atalanoaga / Underlying, negative and tonally driven stereotyping was discernible in the six episodes**

In this chapter, I will outline and discuss my findings which have emerged from the data analysis which reveal some uncomfortable and confronting truths. Each analytical theme will be discussed. References in each theme have been listed in the table provided in the methodology chapter. A coding sheet has also been attached as an appendix for more context. As previously mentioned, where otherwise explicitly stated, due to censorship and limitations of personal observation, I have referred to Pasifika and Māori suspects as “Brown” peoples. Though my research inquiry is about Pasifika peoples, understanding the depth of the mistrust in the New Zealand Police that both Māori and Pasifika communities share, is important context for this research.

In the thematic analysis of these six episodes, there is a finding for each theme and these are used to conceptualise the conclusions to my research inquiry.

My first finding is that Brown people featured in the episodes under study are more likely to be recidivists. The second finding is, not only are Brown people featured more often than non-Brown people in these six episodes, they are portrayed as incompetent members of society. The third finding is that in the episodes where cases are filmed in South Auckland, Police Ten 7 strategically feed the narrative that Brown people are criminals by portraying them unfavourably. The fourth finding is that with the introduction of renowned Brown police officer Rob Lemoto as host, the negative stereotyping was not as overt but there were still elements of the show that carried negative connotations about certain communities. Related to this, the interactions between police and suspects/offenders were notably a lot more positive in the last three episodes following the introduction of the show's new format in 2014.

### **Theme one: “Low-level chewing-gum TV”**

**Finding:** Brown suspects in these episodes were portrayed as incompetent and more likely to re-offend.

References under this theme were from incidents in the show that reinforced a negative stereotype against Pasifika people and communities.

Across six episodes, 26 cases were featured in the reality/ride-along segments. These focused on a total of 14 Brown – Pasifika or Māori offenders across the six episodes (53.8%). So, across six episodes totalling 142 minutes in the ride along segment, 76 hours were devoted to Brown suspects compared to 66 hours for non-Brown suspects. Not only are Pasifika and Māori peoples featured more frequently in these six episodes, they are also portrayed as incompetent.

For example, in season 8, episode 2, case number 1, there are many references from this case that build on my finding that Brown people are portrayed as incompetent in the show. The thematic references will be provided with context to better understand the portrayal of these suspects. The police had been called out to Otāhuhu to an incident where some Otāhuhu High School students were fighting and engaging in disorderly behaviour. While police are arresting those involved, the camera pans to the suspects and members of the crowd alike, some of whom are still in their school uniform, throwing up gang signs and cursing while shouting “TNS!”, which stands for Thugs Not Soldiers – a local gang. During the arrests, Graham Bell states: “Most of the young people causing the disturbance seem to be school students, but their aggression outweighs their vocabulary”.

Six juveniles were apprehended and taken back to the station. This particular scene raises some privacy concerns. The police contacted the juveniles’ parents to accompany them at the police station. One of the young offenders was seen visibly upset and was being consoled by his parents. At 05:37 the mother of the upset suspect says to him “O le a le mea e fai ai fua kagaka?” (why are you bothering people?). He lashes out and says “F\*\*k you” to the camera and the mother shouts “Kapugi lou guku!” (Shut your mouth!) while slapping her son’s head. The deliberate inclusion of this scene represents “low-level chewing gum TV” for many reasons. For non-Samoan speaking, non-Pasifika individuals, this scene provides no context and looks like a mother abusing her child. This is particularly confronting because we recognise certain patterns in our society to be the ones we are a byproduct of. Not only does this scene perpetuate negative stereotypes against Pasifika youth, it also reinforces ideas that this young offender is violent because his mother is the same. There is no further evidence for the assumption the audience is encouraged to make.

This scene perpetuates negative stereotypes about Pasifika people and the dynamics within their aiga (families). Negative stereotypes carry reverberations – while a Pasifika person understands the cultural context of this form of physical discipline, this scene has the potential to make Pākehā people think they are right to believe that Pasifika people are violent within their homes, which then poses a potential threat to the general public. There is no background information provided on the mothers relationship with her son and what that looks like outside of the show. Negative stereotypes pre-exist in the heads of the audience and these filmed and constructed moments trigger the revival of racial reverberations. Moreover, the mother is not a suspect, but she is exposed brutally to the New Zealand public. It is unfair to portray certain individuals as more violent than others just because it entices viewers to maintain an engagement with the show. Similarly, during the Dawn Raids the media associated largely Brown communities with negative stereotypes, reinforcing negative connotations of these communities (Anae, 2012). With the disproportionate policing of Brown communities (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022), negative views of Pasifika people emerged into the general consciousness from the Dawn Raids and we start to see recurring themes of negative media depictions.

In addition, one of the offenders is seen preaching about what “TNS” means to a police officer who is filling out his paper work. It contributes nothing useful to the programme other than making for so-called good TV while showcasing a desperate juvenile. This observation also highlights how framing Pasifika suspects in this way, encourages viewers to see them as brutish, incompetent members of society.

Furthermore, an example of using the narrative of Brown people as criminal can be seen in season 8, episode 3, case 3, where a Brown suspect has been apprehended following a high-speed chase. The police officer – a Pākehā male, reads the suspect's charges being laid at the time while providing a recount of the night's events. The police officer reads “unlawful taking of a vehicle, theft of petrol, failing to stop, reckless driving and six warrants”. This was included in the show and shows that editors were happy to reinforce the message that Brown people are criminal and menacing. As discussed earlier, when a constructionist lens is applied, meaning is understood as being co-constructed; as an audience, we bring our own understanding and meaning to these types of portrayals. Reading the suspect's charges out loud as a part of the show's dialogue creates a ripple effect for people who already carry negative feelings towards Brown people who have bought into stereotyping in the media – especially if the same is not being done for other non-Brown suspects.

From my coding references I found that the show did indeed belong in the category of low-level chewing gum TV. More importantly, there is an element of policing in the show that separates Pacific suspects and non-Pacific viewers and their understanding of the reality of crime as it plays out in the show. Brown people are not only featured more frequently in the show, they are also portrayed as incompetent individuals who are more likely to re-offend. Other references of low-level chewing gum TV are also described under the “controlling the narrative” and racism theme. There is a strong interrelationship between these themes and they each share an insight into the construction and representation of Brown people in the show.

See Appendix A for coding references and more context.

**Racism.** This sub-theme represents the thematic references that underpin cultural aspects of Brown suspects. Either overt or subtle, they were included in the show's editorial content and contribute to the negative media portrayals that ultimately ended the show.

**Finding:** Racist undertones in the show were deemed permissible in these six episodes.

Examples of references to this sub-theme include season 13, episode 7, case 3 where a Pākehā man casually says, “Otago sucks”. The show's stereotyping of South Auckland, together with the lack of cultural competency in this instance, highlights the negative portrayals of not just people but also marginalised communities in New Zealand.

Another example of racist undertones in the show is in season 13, episode 7 case 1 where a Pākehā male is suspected of theft at a grocery store and says to two Brown workers at the store “Go and look for shoplifters or do some work... for \$18 an hour, instead of sitting on your fat a\*\*es and eating corned beef”.

The qualitative approach to my research enables me to look at the qualities, feelings and sentiments of these incidents. Though some people may see or hear nothing wrong with this reference, I will further explore the show’s tonally driven stereotyping which may go right over some people’s heads and for others, reinforce their pre-conceptions of Brown people as lazy and troublesome.

The issue of racism in the show, as discussed by people like libertarian politician Winston Peters, was never about the antagonism between Brown people and the New Zealand Police but rather the typically negative and harmful stereotyping of Brown people in the show. The show simply did not portray the full spectrum of policing in New Zealand (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). However, there are issues around the way in which Brown people were framed as part of a reality show presumably set up to solve crime.

These instances of stereotyping are particularly important to my research because they point out that the shows depictions of Brown people were a part of a toxic structure to frame and mediate crime as a Brown concept. These were similar to the media portrayals that occurred during the Dawn Raids. These and other references that navigate Police Ten 7s subtle racist undertones will be further explored in the Discussion section.

### **Theme two: Manner of policing**

References under this theme point to the ways in which police are socially situated by the producers of the episodes and how the editorial content chosen for inclusion, proposes a framing of crime that is centred on police.

**Finding:** Brown suspects in these episodes were apprehended differently compared to Pākehā suspects/offenders.

All six of the recidivists featured across these six episodes were also Pasifika or Māori. This meant that there was a warrant out for their arrest, or they were taken back to the police station for an unrelated charge than the one filmed as part of the episode.

For example, in season 24, episode 27, case number 1, a police officer claimed that being handcuffed was the same for everyone. My observations indicate otherwise. Though this is not conclusive, it is indicative of the institutional disadvantages that Brown people are often subjected to.

In the first episode I reviewed – season 2, episode 2, case number 2 – a young Brown suspect was arrested for a reported car break-in at a bar in Māngere, South Auckland. The suspect, a young Brown

male, repeatedly stated, “I did not do anything Officer”. A witness had claimed the suspect had been lingering in the car park but there was no physical evidence to prove his connection to the incident, beside the statement from a witness. He explained to Police that he was just on his way home but was subsequently taken back to the local police station in handcuffs. His face was uncensored by the shows editors. In the same episode, in case number 3, an elderly Pākehā man was investigated for fraud matters regarding some motel thefts in Hamilton. After initially claiming he did not commit any of the alleged offences, he later admitted to taking the goods from the motels using fraudulent payment methods. After his admission and despite members of the public recognising him from a circulated picture, he was not handcuffed but did accompany the police to the local police station. His face was censored.

Perhaps, these are arguably different types of cases; one is for an alleged car break in and the other is for theft of motel appliances. So I compared two apprehensions for a similar offence, and came to the same conclusion.

In season 24, episode 27, case number 1, a Brown male suspect was involved in a domestic dispute with his partner and was arrested for threatening behaviour and assault. He was under the influence of alcohol but he complied with police and asked to be detained without handcuffs. The police officer refused, claiming that it was the same process for everyone.

However, in season 24, episode 24, case number 4, a Pākehā man was involved in a physical altercation with his brother in law and pulled out a knife. Despite admitting he was in possession of the weapon and threatening to kill his brother in law in front of the police and camera crew, he was taken to the police station without handcuffs, and actually enjoyed a sausage on the way there. He was also under the influence of alcohol.

These differences are easily overlooked in the context of a show running for 21 years, but the comparison helps to deepen our understanding of how the overpolicing of Brown communities can be more harmful for people who already come from these marginalised communities. These editorial inconsistencies help fuel the discourse around negative media portrayals of Brown peoples.

**Intimidatory policing.** This sub-theme emerged under the theme concerning the manner of policing.

**Finding:** Intimidatory policing in the show is at times carefully edited to portray a balanced interaction between police and those involved.

I found one instance of intimidatory policing, in which police used extreme measures to diffuse a situation. Other instances in the show where Police dealt with suspects were very carefully edited – Police would regularly provide explanations of what they were doing in each case to make the public

feel like they were a part of the scene. The control of police over the shows content is further explained in the discussions section.

In season 13, episode 7, case number 4, a young Brown female had been driving erratically around South Auckland. A high speed police chase ended in front of her family home in South Auckland. Much to her fathers confusion, his daughter was arrested in front of their family home. The suspects father constantly asks police what is going on and is clearly distressed at the sight of his pregnant daughter's arrest. Police then proceed to pull and tug the father and tell him he is under arrest for obstruction. According to the Summary Offences Act (1981) under clause 23, resisting a police, prison or traffic officer entails intentionally obstructing or encouraging any other person to resist or obstruct an authorised officer. The father appeared confused and the scene does not show him obstructing or encouraging any one else to obstruct police in any way. He simply wants to know why his daughter is being arrested. Later on one of the two arresting officers takes his handcuffs off and explains what happened to his daughter but this comes at the expense of a traumatic experience for the father. Most fathers would have reacted the same way if police officers arrested their pregnant daughter outside of their family home. These incidents are, of course, situational in nature but there was a lack of communication by the police in this instance. The father is not a suspect in this case. The confusion and chaos of this incident, needed to be diffused by police through better communication. There was a striking lack of cultural competency; communication from the police would have been more mana-enhancing for the father instead of the public humiliation that took place. Pasifika communities hold the concept of aiga (family) very close. Given the deeply damaged relationship between New Zealand police and Pasifika communities during the Dawn Raids, the mistreatment by police of the father in this scene can trigger intergenerational trauma. Police Ten 7 exploiting this fragile, damaged relationship to keep their audience compelled is thoughtless. It challenges the implicit premise of the show that the police are on the side of all law-abiding New Zealanders.

This scene and the scene mentioned earlier with the Samoan mother hitting her son provide an important insight – Pasifika families, not just suspects, appear to suffer more from exposure in these six episodes. No non-Brown families are featured in the show in the same limelight. Against a background of pre-existing negative stereotyping of Brown New Zealanders, Police Ten 7 included these incidents as part of a constructed reality that is harmful to these families and communities. Parenting skills vary dramatically in all cultural contexts. The relationship between the New Zealand Police and Pasifika and Māori people has long been controversial for experiences like the Dawn Raids and Crown breaches of te Tiriti o Waitangi. Critical race theory allows us to look deeper into these relationships and while laws and policies are meant to be neutral, they are found through this lens to promulgate misconceptions about racial and economic disparities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). This will be discussed further in the discussion section.

While the show is only a glimpse of frontline policing and events are filmed in isolation, such an incident helps us understand why Police Ten 7 has faced much criticism for its portrayals of certain communities.

**Representation of softer policing.** A second sub-theme that emerged from the manner of policing theme was a softer approach to policing.

**Finding:** After Rob Lemoto's introduction as host, there is a notable difference in police and suspect interaction. Police are more purpose-driven in helping find more positive outcomes for suspects.

In the three episodes analysed after the introduction of Lemoto as host, the police and suspect/offender interactions were a lot more friendly and seemed more inclusive. An example of this can be seen in season 22, episode 14, case 2 where a Police officer issues some individuals a compliance notice to bring a vehicle up to standard, instead of fining them. A policeman confides in the audience: "We've decided to give them a 28-days compliance ... gives them a bit of an incentive instead of paying a fine ... generally people are more accepting of that."

Another example can be seen in season 22, episode 24, case 1, where a Brown woman and her two children were questioned about theft from a stationery shop. The police officers advise the mother of an iwi-based alternative. "You have to go through an iwi panel. You have to admit that you're in the wrong, but they might be able to help you. Just talking to the kids, they're saying you're having a bit of difficulty with finances at the moment, so that's probably a good way for you to go ... they might be able to help you with those sorts of things".

These interactions were not typical of the police-suspect relationship represented in the episodes analysed during Graham Bell's tenure. Their inclusion in later episodes highlights a cultural shift towards less intrusive framing of suspects and offenders, as was intended in the 2014 changes (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). In this altered show, police are more involved with suspects, advising them of other avenues that may provide better outcomes for all parties involved.

These changes and other aspects of policing as shown in Police Ten 7 are discussed further in the discussion section.

### **Theme three: Controlling the narrative**

**Finding:** The negative stereotyping in the show is premeditated yet subtle.

This theme explores the idea that Police Ten 7 presents a distorted image of offending through the overrepresentation of Brown people as recidivists. This further reinforces the stereotype that Brown people are reoffending criminals and the relentless cycle becomes a racial trope that the audience is positioned to perceive as the truth (Fishman, 2018).

While in the episodes I analysed, Bell's contentious descriptors of people as low-lives and scumbags had been removed from the show, there were still examples of Police Ten 7 controlling a police-centred narrative.

From my observations, the issue is not only that Pasifika, and Māori individuals are featured more frequently in the show, it is more importantly *how* they are depicted.

TVNZ, Screen time and the New Zealand police include in these episodes what they want. They are not compelled to film and/or include any content. In season 13, episode 7, case number 3, an intoxicated individual had been detained to sober up in the cells overnight. While being searched, he says to the camera "... You only film what you want to film". In his drunkenness, he recognises that he is being filmed in a vulnerable state and knows that at some point, this material will be used by producers to present a constructed and only partial reality of policing and crime in New Zealand.

The format of the show means the audience expects the police will provide explanations of their policing on the show. The premise of the show is to provide an insight into Aotearoa's frontline police work. Particularly in the ride along segment of the show, Police Ten 7 purports to give us an insight into "public facing frontline policing" (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, pg. 17) often concerning minor nuisance offending and street patrols at night. The programme's reality segments were drawn from material filmed across Aotearoa, but mostly in the Auckland region, where the base of operations for the production is located (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

The constructed reality of crime and offending in New Zealand, as portrayed in Police Ten 7 has performance measures in place to ensure the programme carries out its functions fairly and accurately. These include the broadcasting standards authority free-to-air code of broadcasting practice, as well as the New Zealand Media Council principles (for online streaming). However, police have a significant involvement in the construction of the shows content. This raises questions over how police control the narrative in Police Ten 7. Former journalist and academic Richard Pamatatau claimed the show typically fixated on low-level crime instead of white-collar offending and helped confirm the worst prejudices of Pākehā (Cardwell, 2021).

Though there was only one verbal cue listed as a thematic reference under this theme, there are several aspects of the show that highlight how editors ensure that police maintain control of the narrative. These will be explored further in the discussions section of the chapter.

## **Conclusion**

While watching the show, I had preconceived ideas of what I was going to observe, having read previous research. However, I hoped I would gain a more nuanced understanding of these negative portrayals of Brown peoples in the show. Because there was, in fact, very little effort to minimise

stereotyping (Quince & Bieleski, 2021), there were multiple opportunities for negative racial undertones to persist.

This can be seen in the portrayals of Brown people as incompetent and recidivists in the six episodes that were reviewed for this research. Certain incidents in the show, like the framing of Brown youth in South Auckland in Police Ten 7, signify why we must take media portrayals very seriously for their influence on how people perceive Brown communities. The part of my research question that looks at the extent to which Pasifika people are unfavourably and unfairly portrayed, encompasses the entirety of the issue at hand; how Brown offenders in the six episodes were detained differently to Pākehā, the fact that Brown offenders are depicted as lazy and aggressive, and how the show presents a distorted reality of crime through its overrepresentation of Brown offenders as recidivists, all of which are detrimental to a community that is already marginalised.

The New Zealand police have had a tense relationship with Pasifika and Māori communities for a long time. Pasifika and Māori people also share a deep mistrust of the police and this goes far back into our history and includes; the Dawn Raids and breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This mistrust is evident in Police Ten 7 and while the show is an incident-based programme focussed on frontline policing in Aotearoa, understanding the implications of perpetuating negative stereotypes in the show, helps deepen our understanding of the influence television has on race depiction, the construction of crime and the framing of certain communities.

Each of the themes that emerged from the coding process share some connection to each other; the difference in policing of Brown people in Police Ten 7 reinforces Pākehā prejudices and gives the police, who seek approval from the majority public, the power to control the narrative. This narrative stems from negative preconceptions of Brown people and then shown as low level chewing gum TV.

## **Taliina o fesili o sailiiliga / Answering the research questions**

This section will present and discuss my findings in the context of my research question: To what extent are Pacific people unfavourably and unfairly represented in Police Ten 7?

I will also revisit my subordinate questions:

- Does Police Ten 7 exploit the prevalence of crime in Aotearoa's Pacific communities?
- To what extent, if any, did deploying a Pasifika policeman to front the show make a difference?

While the programme has been discontinued, it is important to know what policing looked like in the past to understand where it stands today. Graham Bell claimed that uncomfortable truths about crime in Aotearoa were not going to go away with the cancellation of Police Ten 7. This has undertones of an argument that Brown people are more criminal but we do not want to admit that. This is what I am trying to get past with this study.

With inconsistencies in the shows editorial content and the overrepresentation of Brown suspects, it seems far fetched to a show damaging to our neighbourhoods and communities because it helped to solve some cases. Police Ten 7 presented members of our most vulnerable communities, who were clearly already suffering, in situations that did not need to be filmed, edited and constructed for the entertainment of an audience responsive to its othering.

### **Policing of Brown communities**

While I acknowledge that there are Pasifika populations in other areas of Auckland, for this research, I have highlighted South Auckland where Pasifika people represent a large demographic. In the six episodes analysed, 26 cases were included. Nine of these were filmed in South Auckland – 34.6% which is just over a third of the content being analysed. In the first episode analysed, Season 2, episode 2, three of five cases in the episode were filmed in South Auckland. According to Bieleski & Quince (2021), the production team was open about the fact that the show was restricted by its budget and the geographical limitations of filming. One of the recommendations made in the review by Bieleski and Quince (2021) suggested gaining more regional and demographic coverage in more diverse filming locations. Although I support this notion, I think more importantly it is the way people are depicted in a certain setting. Some of the incidents in the show are not just inconsistencies in editing but also in policing as depicted in certain incidents.

In the cases that were filmed in South Auckland, it is not just the location and prevalence of Brown people that is the issue, it is the framing and reconstruction of negative stereotypes against these people and communities.

In my findings section, I discussed season 8, episode 3, case number 1, where some Otāhuhu youth, who are a part of the TNS (Thugs Not Soldiers) gang, were fighting and arrested for disorderly conduct. While providing a recount of the incident, one of the police officers says, “for some reason, they seem to think they’re living in South Central Los Angeles and enjoying the thug life”. Some police officers look at South Auckland as a hotbed of crime. Including this in the editing of the show means that producers and police are both happy to spread this negative framing. South Auckland is about much more than the incidents of crime that occur there.

The over-policing of certain communities (Deckert et al., 2023) is an indication of toxic societal structures existing in New Zealand. The prevalence of crime in some communities can be a result of a number of influencing factors but there is no denying that Brown people are treated differently by police than Pākehā people. While some Pākehā were not handcuffed on camera, all of the Brown suspects who were formally arrested were handcuffed. This is most likely due to the fact that the Brown suspects featured are also tied to more aggressive crimes like assault and possession of an offensive weapon. That is the relentless cycle – Brown people are policed differently (Kappmeier & Fahey, 2022), which fuels the mistrust they have in police, police continue to perceive Brown offenders as more menacing and this racial trope is then reinforced through the depictions of Brown offenders in *Police Ten 7*.

The diversity of police representation in more recent years has also shifted to be more inclusive of all ethnicities, ages and genders (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). This is reflected in the later years of *Police Ten 7* but also presented its own issues. Where the show was once characterised by Bell’s strongly perjorative descriptors and callous dismissals of human beings, the later image of police engaging in friendly conversation with suspects seemed all too good to be true. These implications are further discussed in the following section.

### **A cultural shift**

The introduction of Rob Lemoto echoed hopes of a new direction for the show. Its new format suggested a new focus on victims of crime, a move away from provocative language, and less intrusive framing (Bieleski & Quince, 2021). The cultural shift also meant more recognition of and respect for te reo Māori, with Lemoto taking courses to work on his pronunciation (Bieleski & Quince, 2021).

While the introduction of Rob Lemoto was something of a breath of fresh air from the old-school policing portrayed in the earlier episodes, there were still elements of the show that carried negative connotations of certain communities. Negative stereotyping became less blatant but persisted more quietly.

For example, one of my findings was that Brown people featured on the show were more likely to be recidivists. All six of the recidivists that were featured across these episodes were Brown offenders – either a Pasifika or Māori male. When police found them again regarding an unrelated incident, even if there was insufficient evidence to arrest them for that day or nights events, they were still taken back to the local police station for processing and to organise a court date to front other charges. While the portrayals of these incidents were indeed a lot more mellow, the need to list the charges do more harm than good. In season eight, episode three, case three, after following the pursuit of a wanted offender, the police officer reads the offenders other charges which include unlawful taking of a vehicle, theft of petrol, failing to stop, reckless driving and six warrants.

If the recidivists are Brown and their re-offending is being highlighted in the show, viewers are absorbing the reinforcement that Brown criminals are probably going to re-offend. There appears to be little hope for them. This condemnation is carried subtly.

Conversely, the police-suspect/offender interactions that were filmed in the last three episodes that were fronted by Lemoto were a lot more positive than those from the first three episodes.

For example, in season 22, episode 14, case number 2, while police are searching a car that did not look road-worthy, they come across some things like old coffee and undergarments that make both the group of Brown males, as well as the police, laugh out loud. This seemed to be a very positive exchange between what was being portrayed as a group of gangsters and the police – see appendix for the reference. Was it included for its public-relations value? In fact, in the later episodes under study, the police were more involved with suspects/offenders in finding better ways to alleviate the chances of them re-offending, rather than the just-another-day-in-the-office attitude shown by police in the earlier episodes. As another example, in the same episode, the police decided to give the group a 28-days compliance notice which would give them incentive to sort their car out rather than having to pay a fine. A more human side to policing became evident.

Moreover, in the case mentioned earlier about the female offender who was apprehended for taking goods from a stationery store, when one of her daughters mentioned that they were having financial difficulties, police were shown advising her and her family to seek support through AREM; a successful community alternative for iwi resolution processes which allows offenders to go before an iwi panel and discuss what the underlying factors were that led to the offending. This kind of communication was not evident in any of the earlier episodes where the police are seen simply either arresting suspects or handing out fines. The importance of police actively being involved with providing offenders with a resolution provides more room for rehabilitation and less re-offending.

These interactions in the show reflected a more involved and inclusive policing culture. Following the review by Bieleski and Quince (2021) TVNZ staff were required to undergo training for more awareness around cultural integrity. Rob Lemoto's pronunciation of te reo Māori words was clearly

very good. However, Lemoto's introduction seemed to have been more for inclusivity and most of the changes that came with his introduction were embedded in the shows editing. It almost seemed too good to be true. To go from a past that cast a long shadow of negative depictions of Brown suspects and their communities to suddenly having police officers engaging in friendly banter with suspects/offenders seemed like a band-aid approach.

### **Racist undertones in the show**

Bieleski and Quince (2021) are adamant that much of the criticism of the show is generally aimed at the police rather than the show itself, citing that the distrust that some communities have in the police, influences their perceptions of the show, "without pinpointing any particular practices or instances of discrimination in the programme itself" (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p. 17).

There are three instances in the show that I can pinpoint instances of discrimination against Pasifika people, even with the limitations of a sample of six episodes. The first instance is in season 13, episode 7, case number 3. A Pākehā male who is very intoxicated gets a ride home from Henderson police. In his drunken state, though he is in Henderson, West Auckland, he believes he is in Otāhuhu, South Auckland. As he is getting into the police car, one of the police officers confirms they are not in "Otāra", confusing the two suburbs, and the Pākehā man casually says, "O tara sucks".

O tara is a key locality in the (re)production of Pasifika identity in Aotearoa and tends to be avoided by Pākehā New Zealanders (Murphy et al, 1999, as cited in Cheer, et al., 2002). Though today's Otāra is more diverse, negative connotations around the largely Brown community are still strong. This was also disappointing from an editorial point of view. Content may have occurred naturally between the Pākehā man and the police officers, but it has been included in the episode by editors. This is a subtle reinforcement of Otara, home to generations of Pasifika peoples, as an unfavourable community. There was no other editorial call for its inclusion, given it was a mistake made by the police officer.

The second instance in which I can pinpoint practices of discrimination against Pasifika people is in season 13, episode 7, case number 1. A Pākehā male was caught shoplifting goods from a grocery store. The two security guards featured on the episode are Pacific Islanders and they know the man from previous shifts at the store. At one point the Pākehā male says, "Go and look for shoplifters or do some work... for \$18 an hour, instead of sitting on your fat a\*\*es and eating corned beef". Corned beef is a widely recognised Pacific delicacy. It holds cultural significance and is often gifted during special occasions. However in this context, a Pākehā suspect saying this to two Brown males doing their job insinuates that they are lazy, easily exploited and greedy. This was chosen for inclusion in the editorial content of the show and amplifies negative perceptions of Pasifika people, reinforcing a racist framing that even their food is to be mocked.

The third instance in which I can pinpoint discrimination in the show provides a different perspective and admittedly one I did not expect to find. In season 13, episode 7, case number 4, a racial slur was aimed towards a Brown police officer. I made the inference that he was Polynesian from the traditional tattoo sleeve on his arm which is difficult to see clearly in the dark. An intoxicated Pākehā male is arrested for disorderly conduct and he says, “Slap me again you f\*\*\*king n\*\*\*er” to the arresting police officer. This deeply offensive racial slur has roots in the language of African American slavery. While the reason this offender used this specific slur is unknown, it was proactively included in the episode by editors. The included incidents of racism on display might shock some viewers, to others they are likely to be a reinforcement of their own racist views and help sustain a shared racist identity.

### **The influences of poverty on crime**

For the purpose of this research, I have looked at class-caused crime as the causes of crime that derive from social hierarchies that exist in society. The concept of class acquires social implications and whether this is good or bad is an inherently problematic discussion – because of the complexities of defining what is and is not a certain class (Pressman, 2015). However, looking at class-caused crime provides a different perspective into why some people resort to committing certain crimes and how we view those people.

During my data analysis, I explored four cases in these episodes that were attributed to theft. In season 24, episode 24, case number 1, a Brown-female suspect was detained and taken back to the station with her two teenage daughters over the theft of goods from a Gisborne stationery retailer. She explained that they were looking at some books, pencil cases and other stationery items. The goods were later recovered by police in their family car. While being interrogated, one of the suspect’s daughters mentioned that they were having some financial difficulties. This is the lived reality for a lot of Pasifika and Māori families. There is a complex matrix of influences on why people commit certain crimes, like theft. Brown people in New Zealand are in prison more proportionally (*“prison facts,”* 2024) but take away the fact that they are Brown and look at other factors like wealth, class and security. People who are less secure socially, financially, and often living in deeply deprived housing conditions, are more likely to resort to crime just to get by.

Crime is contextual and there is a complex matrix of influences that drive people to commit a crime like theft. While some people shoplift to feed a drug or other habit, some, due to poverty, shoplift out of desperation. There is a saying in the Samoan culture that says “Ana se amio ua tu’u, ae leaga o le masani” which means when something is behavioural, you can usually deter yourself from doing it but this is difficult once it becomes a habit. And while Police Ten 7 is an incidents-based reality crime show, there is still a gap to be bridged between what causes crime, how we view people who commit certain crime and why some crime is more prevalent in some communities than others.

In his insightful book *The rich get richer, and the poor get prison*, Jeffrey Reiman (2001) explains how the criminal justice system favours upper-class criminals over poor criminals, whether they commit white-collar crime or street crime. Firstly, lower class people are presumably more likely than rich people to be arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to prison for street crimes (Reiman, 2001). The wealthy are also more involved in white collar crimes which Reiman (2001) says is serious but is treated more leniently. White collar crimes are sometimes referred to as occupational crimes because they are usually committed in a legal setting (Cole, 1995), including fraud and money laundering. Reinman (2001) also alludes to the myth around white collar crime that they are not serious because they do not result in injury or death. This classism and white supremacy is an oppressive force in many societies and critical race theorists argue that it must be challenged (Taylor, 1998). This idea that white collar crime is not treated in the same way as street crime or any other form of crime that is prevalent in marginalised communities – that are largely Brown, presents an unlevelled playing field for the discourse around the treatment, development and depictions of Brown suspects.

From my observations in the show, Brown people are often portrayed as committing low-level crime like disorderly behaviour or assault and Pākehā are more likely to be shown committing white-collar crime. These differences are often overlooked but create meaning of their own.

### **Speaking up against harmful stereotypes at a cost**

Race-related political issues are often sensitive topics and people's conceptions can be polarized (Jeffres et al., 1999).

Though the claims that Police Ten 7 perpetuated negative stereotypes against Māori and Pasifika peoples is nothing new, it was not until Fa'anānā Efeso Collins contested the shows existence in 2021 that a review was commissioned by TVNZ. This was met with some mixed reviews including that of former host Graham Bell. Bell defended the show by explaining that it is very hard not to feel a certain way towards a group of people who are constantly offending (McKinnel, 2021). Bell also reiterated that the police do not choose who they are looking for and the people who are committing the crimes are the ones selecting themselves to be sought.. "it's as simple as that" (Bielecki & Quince, 2021, p. 3).

However, the uproar from passionate viewers and politicians alike was anything but simple for Collins who, after his twitter proclamation, received death threats (Latif, 2021). At a church conference in 2021, while speaking on social justice, Collins explained how the police informed him of a death threat made six weeks prior via the police's anonymous tip line in response to his tweet stating that Police Ten 7 reinforced negative stereotypes for Pacific and Māori peoples.

The situation escalated and the bomb squad was sent out to Collins home and offices (Latif, 2021). No bomb was found but Collins admitted the incident made him reconsider his future in politics.

In a podcast episode by Mandate NZ, a teary Fa'anāna discussed the unfortunate reality that came with his duty as a Pasifika politician – being a voice not just for his whānau but all Aucklanders being impacted by a plethora of issues including negative stereotyping in mainstream media (Mandate, 2022). In the podcast, while discussing how he has dealt with racism given the nature of his role, he choked back tears saying:

... Death threats are next level. I remember when they said to me. 'Usually if they send a death threat to a politician, they just name the politician'... when they named my family.. my girl just turned one and a half, I thought, 'Who thinks like that about a baby, a child'.. that is the unfortunate reality of what we face. But you stand up (Mandate, 2022).

Collins was not just an advocate for this pressing issue, he was also the reason TVNZ commissioned a review about the show. This incident is a testament to the burden of combatting social injustice, a burden that is disproportionately carried by victims deeply impacted by that injustice.

### **Sensitivities to the show**

The mediated, mutually beneficial and carefully negotiated realities created by the media and the police are marketed as realistic in appearance and are typically understood as such by audiences (BSA, 2011). In a tweet following the news of Police Ten 7's cancellation, New Zealand politician Winston Peters said: "It's only those sociological loonies who think that way – and would rather believe their feel-good lies than accept the harsher truth like the rest of us do" (Peters, 2023, May 12). Though Peters is right that the truth is harsh, no one is claiming that it is not accepted. It is because we accept the harsh truth about the overrepresentation of Brown people in crime statistics that we take media portrayals of Brown communities seriously.

Reality crime-based television creates blurred lines between news and entertainment (Fishman, 2018). People perceive these constructed realities as the truth, but they are heavily edited to present the most action-packed sequences to encourage viewership. The show may well reflect the reality of crime and offending in New Zealand (Bieleski & Quince, 2021), but presenting members of our communities in a vulnerable state is unhelpful and damaging.

Reality crime television shows like Police Ten 7 are a dangerous playing field. Reality TV is a socially constructed reality where we see what producers, directors and participants want us to see. "The situations are contrived, and the protagonists handpicked" (Greer, 2001, p. 1) and with the depictions of Brown communities as incompetent, lazy and irredeemable, those negative stereotypes are reinforced by racial undertones in Police Ten 7.

Police Ten 7 is hardly an accurate depiction of police work anyway, and we don't need to keep ramming home the message that particular groups in society get into more trouble than others (Van Beynen, 2021).

In TVNZ's most recent Statement of Intent, it made the following statement:

Different moments matter to different New Zealanders and we need an appropriate breadth of content to meet the varied needs of specific viewer groups. Some of those moments will be relevant local stories and others international. Some moments will stimulate conversations, some elicit laughter, some tears, and others will provoke personal contemplation (Bieleski & Quince, 2021, p.5).

It is important that as a broadcaster TVNZ ensures that content accurately reflects *all* of society. This was one of the recommendations made in the review by Bieleski and Quince (2021). Moreover, while there are programmes specifically devised for Pasifika and Māori community perspectives like Tagata Pasifika and Marae (Bieleski & Quince, 2021), given the fraught relationship that pre-exists among New Zealand police and Brown communities, media portrayals must be considered seriously for their ability to influence people's perceptions of these marginalised communities.

## Chapter 5: Faaiuga / Conclusion

Brown people are not only featured more frequently in the Police Ten 7 episodes under study, they are also portrayed unfavourably; they are shown as more aggressive, as recidivists, lazy and as people who struggle with financial issues. Audience members with pre-conceptions of Brown people as more criminal, are content to perceive them in a relentless cycle of re-offending.

To explicitly answer my research inquiry about what extent Pacific people are unfavourably and unfairly represented in Police Ten 7 – I want to emphasise that the misrepresentation of Brown people in the show is a culmination of several inconsistencies, not just in policing but the editing in the show – the structure of its storytelling. What was missing was an understanding of what ramming home these negative stereotypes can do to these communities.

Though I looked at how both Pasifika *and* Māori were treated in the show, as a Pasifika researcher I navigate what these implications are for Pasifika people.

Pasifika people in the show are portrayed as incompetent, lazy and greedy. While that motivates me to change the narrative for my people, for others, the reinforcement of negative stereotypes keeps them in a cycle of shame and displacement. It is shameful and burdening. For some, this is the sad reality – a culmination of very traumatic events that have caused people to run in to some hard times.

South Auckland, home to a large Pasifika population in Aotearoa, is portrayed in these episodes as a hostile and damaging community for its prevalence of street crime. Police Ten 7 framed and disproportionately targeted South Auckland as a hot bed of crime. This reinforces negative stereotypes against Brown people who make up much of the community but live in many other places as well. Furthermore, Brown suspects and offenders are dealt with by police in a different manner compared to Pākehā suspects and offenders. This is not exclusive to Police Ten 7 but was amplified through the show.

Deploying a Pasifika police officer to front the show did make a difference, but I believe it was much too late and the issue at hand could not be fixed with this band-aid approach. The introduction of Rob Lemoto shifted the filming and editing structures of the show. The negative stereotyping that was mentioned by the late Fa'anānā Efeso Collins in his tweet, was much less overt but the show still carried negative connotations of certain communities. These are better understood with the visual and verbal cues in the episodes. The police and suspect/offender interactions in the later episodes were a lot more positive than they were in the earlier episodes, with police taking a hands-on approach to working with offenders to ensure the best resolution for them. While this is good progress, there is still a long road ahead in rebuilding the trust between the New Zealand Police and Brown communities and most importantly, how that dynamic is portrayed in shows like Police Ten 7. I

believe with the show gaining more traction and people becoming more aware of its stereotyping rather than aimlessly consuming its content, the shows cancellation became inevitable.

The social construction of frontline policing in Police Ten 7 is inconsistent and damaging for Brown communities. Reality crime television shows like Police Ten 7 are the last place we need to be reinforcing negative stereotypes against already marginalised communities. Just because there was no overt racism in the show, does not mean that we should let subtle microaggressions in the media fester away in the name of justice. No one knows a Brown experience better than a Brown person so if our language and our people are being used for entertainment in a way that is degrading for our communities, let us always hold those responsible, accountable.

The complexities of what influences crime is an issue that we need to address. People are quick to judge what they see on the screen but never want to contribute to the discourse of what lead, in economic and social terms, to this criminal behaviour. Police Ten 7, though helping to solve cases, overlooked many of its editorial inconsistencies and perpetuated negative stereotypes against Pasifika and Māori communities. The quality of television has strong influences on race depictions and if we are going to confront the uncomfortable truths about crime and offending, we need to ponder those uncomfortable truths about what real rehabilitation looks like too.

Adopting critical race theory allowed me to think critically about the correlation of race, racism and power – to value the often marginalised voice. The way in which Brown communities are policed and portrayed becomes increasingly important in reality crime-based programmes like Police Ten 7. It is a historical cycle that often shapes contemporary experiences – Brown people are policed differently, which fuels the mistrust they have in police, police continue to perceive Brown offenders as more menacing, and this racial trope is then reinforced through the depictions of Brown offenders in Police Ten 7.

Fa'anānā Efeso Collins was condemned both in public and private for speaking up against the negative stereotyping in Police Ten 7. The backlash he received is exactly why people are afraid to speak out. I commend him on his contributions to the Police Ten 7 controversy because much of my thought processes emerged from his sentiments. While my research is only a contribution to the discourse around negative portrayals of Brown people in the media, the change that we are after can only be sought through a collective commitment to rehabilitate and rebuild our communities.

### **Tapulaa o sailiiga / Limitations of this research**

There are several limitations to my research that hinder a thorough analysis of Police Ten 7 in its entirety. For example, the sample of six episodes being studied in isolation cannot conclude that all of television or even Police Ten 7 is racist.

Another limitation to this research is the fact that the show has been removed from many of its original streaming sites and even the websites that they are available on, do not provide access to all 29 seasons. On the tubi streaming website, of the shows 29 seasons, only seasons one through 16 and 22 through to 24 are available for viewing. This meant that my analysis of the programme was limited to the seasons that were accessible.

There were some limitations of my thematic analysis that meant that I had to create my own observational measures regarding suspect and offender identification. This included censorship. With some of the participants faces blurred, I had to make my own inferences based off of my own cultural knowledge and experiences.

However, I think any type of qualitative research requires a source of observation to make sense of the data and contextualise findings.

### **Avanoa mo nisi saililiga / Opportunities for further research**

This research is only a part of the argument and there are plenty of opportunities that I feel this research topic can be taken elsewhere.

Any research that is conducted about Police Ten 7 from hereon could potentially use its long standing controversies to better understand the quality of television and its influence on issues like depiction of race, on a national scale. I pursued this research in 2021 and the show aired its final episode in May 2023. This provided me with some context, and I think if someone was to carry this conversation on, it would be great for a comparative study. There are other reality crime TV programmes and I think there is a real opportunity to get an insight into how other countries are portraying their frontline policing. Police work is undoubtedly very important but how can we portray police work in New Zealand without feeding into negative stereotypes?

Another opportunity for further research could emerge from one of my findings – in the cases that are filmed in South Auckland, Police Ten 7 strategically feed into the narrative that brown people are criminals by portraying them in an unfavourable manner. Research could be done around understanding South Auckland street crime better, especially with local gangs – these are usually the less established and less well known gangs compared to the likes of Mongral Mob or Black power. Local gangs are more regulated in the local streets but reap the same repercussions.

Future research could also talk about the relationship between the New Zealand Police and Pasifika (and Māori) communities. Brown people have a deep mistrust in police and only time will tell if this ever changes. This would be interesting to study and document.

Opportunities for research are limitless depending on how you look at it. My research was informed by findings from previous research on Police Ten 7, including research by Podvoiskis (2012), Deckert et al., (2023) and content from the review that was commissioned by TVNZ in 2021, and conducted by Karen Bieleski and Khylee Quince. I took a different approach, opting to provide a cultural lens. I am a Pasifika woman so I spoke about Pasifika experiences, perhaps the portrayal of other ethnicities in the show could be studied on a broader scope.

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## Appendix A

### Themes and references.

#### Chewing gum Television.

- 1) S2, E2. Case 3 – “We knew what he was up to, little mongrel”.
- 2) S8, E3. Case 1 –
  - Graham Bell – “The ringleader is carrying a hammer. John suspects it’s not for woodwork classes.. Most of the young people causing the disturbance seem to be (Otāhuhu) school students, but their aggression outweighs their vocabulary”.
  - Offender 1 – “Crip! F\*\*k you bro, TNS (Thugs not soldiers) motherf\*\*ker” \*holding up gang signs\*...
  - Offender 2 – “TNS \*inaudible\* that’s my uso!”
  - Offender 3 mother – (05:37) “O le a le mea e fai a fua kagaka?” (Samoan – English translation: why are you bothering people?) → Son says “f\*\*k you to the camera and mother says “kapugi lou guku!” (Samoan – English translation: shut your mouth) while slapping her sons head.
  - One of the offenders (06:57-8:34) goes on a tangent about what TNS means. It contributes nothing useful to programme other than making for good TV while showcasing the sad reality of street crime, largely populated with Pāsifika (and Māori) youth.
- 3) S13, E7. Case 1 – John who’s stolen goods from a grocery store has a go at 2 brown, male security guards. (4:03-04:17) “Go and look for shoplifters or do some work... for \$18 an hour, instead of sitting on their fat a\*\*ess and eating corned beef”.
- 4) S13, E7. Case 3 – Peter, who is very intoxicated has no idea where he is. He gets a ride home from Police. “O tara sucks” (11:47-11:50).
- 5) S24,E24. Case 1. Penny has been suspected of theft inside Paperplus (1:40-1:50) “You fellas have lied to me so many times in my life its f\*\*\*ing pathetic. I don’t believe any of youse”. – when questioned about her children that accompanied her.. (4:40-4:50) “I didn’t want them to get into trouble.. any mother would do that”.

#### Racism.

- 1) S13, E7. Case 4 – Barry who has been arrested for disorderly conduct while drunk. “Slap me again you fu\*\*ing ni\*\*er” (13:00-13:05) to one of the arresting officers (based off of sleeve tattoo the officer of is Polynesian or Māori descent.
- 2) S24,E24. Case 1. Tony feels unheard (05:17 - 05:27) “I can tell the way you talk to me officer. Is it mainly because I’m a Islander? You’re being racist man”.

#### Manner of policing.

- 1) S2, E2 – over policing in South Auckland. This episode covered 5 cases and 3 of those were located in South Auckland.
- 2) S8, E3. Case 1 – “for some reason, they seem to think they’re living in.. South Central Los Angeles and enjoying the thug life” – to me this is a bit tone deaf and ignorant to the fact that crime is also prevalent in South Auckland, particularly street crime – and should be dealt with all the same..
- 3) S22, E14. Case 2. While pulling over a car that doesn’t seem road worthy, one of the female police officer says “I can tell you 110% I’ve stopped \*\*\*\* before. Are they there with their little blood bandanas?” while the camera pans to one of the individuals holding up gang signs

wearing a red shirt that says “Mighty Dog Soldier” which is often associated with the Mongrel Mob.

- 4) S24,E27. Case 1 – When offender Tony who has been put under arrest for threatening behaviour and assault asks if he can go with the Police Officers, without the handcuffs, the police officer that he is speaking to says “it’s the same for everyone” .. my observations from other episodes prove otherwise – discuss social implications and significance in discussions section.

### **Intimidatory policing.**

- 1) S13, E7. Case 4. Isabel who’s been driving erratically ends up in handcuffs in front of their family home in South Auckland. She is 6 months pregnant, and her father, Harry, asks what is going on. With the stress of arresting Isabel and looking for her accomplice, 2 Police officers put him in handcuffs. Harry is clearly distressed and just wants to know what is going on with his pregnant daughter who is now sitting at the back of the police car. Not knowing why his daughter is in handcuffs and now him being handcuffed by Police, he understandably becomes unsettled. He’s being pulled and tugged by the two police officers and then is told he’s under arrest for obstruction. (19:36-19:43). Later one of the two arresting officers takes his handcuffs off and explains what happened to his daughter but at the expense of a traumatic experience for the father.
- 2) S13, E7. Case 4 – upon finding Isabels accomplice, audio from the Police officers mics are used with footage of the front of the house where the pursuit is happening. (19:45-20:15) provides some gruesome audio.

### **Representation of softer policing.**

- 1) S22, E14. Case 2. – while police are searching a car that looks unsafe to be on the road, they come across a few things; Female police officer: “that is dirty underwear” – one of the individuals: “oh you found what you’re looking for” \*while both the group of males and police officers have a laugh\*.
- 2) S22, E14. Case 2 continued – Police officer (09:58 – 10:25). “They’re actually quite well behaved... we’ve decided to give them a 28 days compliance, basically allows them to get everything sorted on the car. Gives them a bit of an incentive instead of paying a fine, they can go sort their car out. Generally people are more accepting of that.. works out better for us”.
- 3) S22, E14. Case 3. (10:55-11:35) Police follow alongside Nathan who has been doing wheelies on his bike without a helmet.
- 4) S22, E14. Case 5 – four wheel drive flipped over. Throughout the whole case there are a lot of positive interactions filmed.
- 5) S24, E24. Case 1. (5:20-6:35) – “You have to go through an iwi panel. You have to admit that you're in the wrong, but, like, they might be able to help you. Just talking to the kids, they're saying you're having a bit of difficulty with finances at the moment, so that's probably a good way for you to go, cos then you can talk to them, and they might be able to help you, you know, with those sorts of things”.
- 6) S24,E24. Case 4. No handcuffs; Tony is seen eating a sausage at the back of the police car, on the way to the police station. He has a friendly interaction with police officers. (21:46-22:22).

### **Power – controlling the narrative.**

- 1) S2, E2. Case 2. Constables on Sonia Webb and Alex Grant called out to Mangere bar where a suspected thief is held – allegedly broke into cars. The suspect is young brown male named Francis. His face is **not** censored and there is very close framing of him being handcuffed and outside while investigating the cars damages and during interrogation.
  - “Honestly, I did not do that. That is the honest truth”.
  - “I’m being straight up I did not do that”.
- 2) S2, E2. Case 3. Constables Rob Downer and Craig Chaplow are investigating an elderly Pākehā man regarding fraud matters – motel theft of goods and leaving without paying. His face **has** been censored during questioning. He was not handcuffed and admitted to the thefts. “Yes, I was down here last week. Yes I did not pay a motel and yes, I did take a TV... just once”.
- 3) S13, E7. Case 3. While an intoxicated Barry is being searched before being left to sleep in the cells. (15:32-15:42) “... You only film what you want to film”.

### **Episode features:**

“Brown” suspect/offender = Pāsifika or Māori.

#### **Pasifika (or Māori) suspect/offender:**

- 1) S2, E2. Case 1. (Chee – assaulted an individual and stole radio).
- 2) S2, E2. Case 2. (Francis- other related charges).
- 3) S8,E3. Case 1. (6 juveniles- fighting).
- 4) S8, E3. Case 3. (Donald- car theft and other charges).
- 5) S13, E7. Case 2. (Bethany - fighting with bouncers on K Road).
- 6) S13, E7. Case 4 x 2 (Isabel – driving erratically. Passenger accompanying her).
- 7) S22, E14. Case 1. (Darren, threatened someone with a gun).
- 8) S22, E14. Case 2. (Group of males getting car inspected).
- 9) S22, E14. Case 4. (Marcus – out on active charges).
- 10) S24, E24. Case 1. (Penny – theft).
- 11) S24, E24. Case 2. (Dan – domestic incident with partner Jackie).
- 12) S24, E27. Case 1. (Tony – domestic incident with partner).
- 13) S24, E27. Case 3. (Jason – warrant out for his arrest; cleared in court the day after his arrest).
- 14) S24, E27. Case 4. (Sam- possession of an offensive weapon).

#### **Theft:**

- 1) S2, E2. Case 1 (theft of car stereo).
- 2) S2, E2. Case 3. (theft of motel appliances – tvs, microwaves, kettles).
- 3) S8, E3. Case 3. (stolen car and mobile).
- 4) S24; E24. Case 1. (Stolen stationary from Paperplus).

#### **Portrayed as aggressive:**

- 1) S8, E3. Case 1 – Otāhuhu TNS incident.
- 2) S22, E14. Case 1 – Darren- possession of a weapon and threatening behaviour.
- 3) S22, E14. Case 4 – Marcus- outstanding warrants including injury with intent to injure and threatening to kill.
- 4) S24, E24. Case 2 – Dan- Male assaults female (MAF) charges.
- 5) S24, E24. Case 3 – Nixon involved in MAF assault complaint.

**Recidivist – warrant out for their arrest or being detained for an unrelated charge to the incident of the episode.**

- 1) S2, E2. Case 2. (Francis – Went to court the following day of incident of his brother, to face up for other charges).
- 2) S8, E3. Case 3. – Police officer reads out the offender Donalds charges after the interviews. (Unlawful taking of vehicle, theft of the petrol, failing to stop, wreckless driving, and six warrants).
- 3) S22, E14. Case 1. – Darren caught up in a stint again, while out on bail with conditions.
- 4) S22, E14. Case 4. – Wanted person, Marcus ( out on active charges) spotted by a member of the public.
- 5) S24,E27. Case 1.- Tony has an argument with his partner and she calls police.. Tony doesn't realise he has breached a protection order previously made by his partner.
- 6) S24,E27. Case 3. Jason has a warrant out for failing to appear in court; tries to escape when he sees police.

**South Auckland location:**

- 1) S2, E2. Case 1.
- 2) S2, E2. Case 2. Mangere.
- 3) S2, E2. Case 4. Otāhuhu.
- 4) S8, E3. Case 1. Otāhuhu.
- 5) S8, E3. Case 3.
- 6) S13, E7. Case 4. Manurewa.
- 7) S22, E14. Case 2. Manukau.
- 8) S24, E24. Case 2. Manukau.
- 9) S24;E27. Case 4. Manukau.

**Refused to make a statement/press charges:**

- 1) S8, E3. Case 1. (09:00-09:07) - TNS incident; the guys that were beaten do not want to make a statement or cooperate further with police on this matter.
- 2) S24,E24. Case 4. (19:00-19:35) – Tony and Mike (bro in laws) have gotten into a fight and Tony has hit Mike; Mike is sceptical to press charges because of the long term repercussions as well as the involvement of children in the family.

**Financial issues:**

- 1) S24, E24. Case 1: Penny- theft from paper plus.
- 2) S24, E24. Case 2: Dan and Jackie constantly arguing about financial problems.
- 3) S24, E27. Case 5: Michelle is driving a car while her registration is on exemption. While asked why she doesn't have a license she says it's a financial issue. (19:12-19:25).
  - "I just got out of jail and things just aint as easy as they told me they were going to be".
  - "I just got a new warrant for it.. I do know my registration is on exemption and I'm working towards that, but.. financial difficulties are a little bit tight at the moment".

**Findings:**

- Many brown offenders are often recidivists. When Police find them again regarding an unrelated incident, even if there is insufficient evidence to arrest them for that day/nights

events, they are still subsequently taken back to the station for processing (organise a court date to front other charges).

- Not only are Pacific people (and Māori) featured more in the show, they are also portrayed as incompetent, lazy, greedy and easily exploited.
- On the cases in South Auckland, Police Ten 7 strategically feed into the narrative that brown people are criminals by portraying them in an unfavourable manner; filming suspects and non-involved people throwing up gang signs, swearing and aggression.
- Three incidents involved family members (Penny and her daughters, Mother hitting son and Father who's pregnant daughter got arrested) – all Brown families who suffered more from exposure to the public – suspect and families filmed.
- With the introduction of Rob Lemoto, the negative stereotyping was not as overt but there were still elements of the show that carried negative connotations of certain communities.
- The police-suspect/offender interactions that were filmed, were also very different to those from the first three episodes. Friendly banter with suspects, a lot of positive communication.. too good to true? – Obvious shift in editing processes.
- Police seem more involved with providing better outcomes to mitigate the impacts of crime rather than the sort of “just another day in the office” attitude shown by Police in the earlier episodes (Providing an incentive where possible, proposal of iwi alternative for relevant suspects).