

**“Causes of truancy from mainstream education for a
group of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative
education”**

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**A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Social Sciences**

2009

Department of Social Science

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, the late Gabiriele Dulunaqio and Katarina Baleinakorodawa for their support and encouragement for imparting in me the passion of education.-Vinaka vakalevu Tata kei Nana!

To my daughter, Marian Katarina Baleinakorodawa for the strengths and the efforts shown during this difficult time of your young life. May this be a challenge to you and that it helps you to excel academically.

Acknowledgement

The excitement of completing an enormous task is overwhelming. As I reflect back on my academic journey, I was not alone because many important people have contributed so much and supported me in their own unique ways from the very beginning of my study to its conclusion in the form of the thesis.

I therefore wish to convey my big vinaka vakalevu to the following people.

A very special thanks to all my research participants for their willingness for sharing with me their personal experiences at school and why they are at the Martin Hautus alternative education centre. I know it was hard for some of you to be honest with your sharing-Vinaka vakalevu.

To my supervisor, Dr Camille Nakhid for your push for excellence and editing and writing capabilities which helped me to be a better writer and thinker and as well Dr Evans Poata-Smith for your guidance.

My sincere thanks to my colleague Br David Lavin for your support and the management and members of staff at Martin Hautus-The Pacific Learning Institute for allowing me to conduct my study at your institute-Vinaka Vakalevu.

My heartfelt thanks to my family-my dad -the late Gabiriele Dulunaqio, my loving mother-late Katarina Baleinakorodawa for allowing me to be

who I am today. Thanks for imparting in me the passion of education and self belief. To my brothers and sisters for the support and words of encouragement during the course of my studies-Vinaka vakalevu.

And of course to my wife Selina Gukibau and lovely daughter Marian Katarina Baleinakorodawa for the support, encouragement, and understanding -Vinaka vakalevu

Vinaka, Vinaka vakalevu!!!

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 materials previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualifications of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institutions of higher learning except where due acknowledgements is made in the acknowledgement.

Abstract

Research on the causes of truancy from mainstream education suggest that a range of factors such as poverty, ethnicity, the quality of relationship between students and teachers, and the nature of the classroom environment impact on students' attendance in schools. The majority of the studies on truancy have been carried out with students in alternative education in the U.S.A and Australia. In New Zealand, research has focused on the truancy of Maori students. This study investigates the causes of truancy for Pasifika students in alternative education in New Zealand. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected using questionnaires and three focus group interviews. The findings from this study suggest that a number of factors affected students' motivation to study. The behaviour of teachers and the school environment were found to affect the Pasifika students' approach to learning. Some students had negative views of their own ability and lacked perseverance. Other students believed that a lack of parental or family support impacted negatively on their attendance. Consistent with the findings in other studies on truancy, this study found that a range of influences such as a lack of support from community leaders, students' perceptions of their performance, the nature of the classroom

environment, family structure, lifestyle factors and cultural and church activities contributed to Pasifika students' truanting behaviour.

This study suggests that schools that employ teachers who understand and empathize with the cultural aspects of Pasifika students and who can empathize with their situation will be most effective in preventing truancy among these students. Similarly, schools have dedicated programmes that accommodate the academic requirements of Pasifika students foster a more positive learning environment. Finally, schools should look to put in place initiatives to enable Pasifika parents to become effective partners in their children's education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 General awareness

I am currently an educator and a tutor at the Martin Hautus Institute, Alternative Education Center in Mangere, South Auckland. In this role I am aware of the issue of truant behavior, particularly among Pasifika¹ students, aged between 13-16. I can identify with the dilemma of many learners, particularly Pasifika students, for whom the education system appears irrelevant or of little value and failing them. The students communicate this message to teachers by their frequent and lengthy absence from school. This is a problem as many educators believe that daily school attendance is essential if students want to learn and achieve.

It is my view that schools lack the personnel, the resources or the time to attend to those Pasifika students who demonstrate their unhappiness with the school curriculum and school rules by ‘wagging’ or truanting. This in turn, leads to a breakdown in communication between educators and potentially truant students, which makes it very difficult to implement programmes and

¹ The term ‘Pasifika’ is used because it is inclusive and has been used from grassroots level and up to include all the Pacific Island nations or those from Pacific origin here in Aotearoa as well as its diasporic community¹. It is a collective term used to refer to men, women, and children who identify themselves with the islands and/or cultures of Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, Tokelau, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and other Pasifika or mixed heritages. The term includes a variety of combinations of ethnicities, recent migrants or first, second, third, fourth, and subsequent generations of New Zealand-born Pasifika peoples (Mara, 2006).

strategies to meet the needs of these young people. In fact, such is the pressure on today's educators that some are greatly relieved by the prospect of instructing fewer students if the absentees are those who may be troublesome, have behavior problems or miss school (Reid, 2000). According to Van Breda (2006), most of the teachers feel that their main duty is to achieve results and to focus on learners who wish to do well at school.

In discussions with educators working in other alternative education providers in the South Auckland area, it appears that attempts to deal with truant Pasifika students in mainstream education are failing. These educators believe that a contributing factor is the present school curriculum which is exam oriented rather than being based around the identification of students' learning needs and the modification of teaching programmes that could ensure that all students can access the curriculum to the best of their ability.

Through my involvement with alternative education, it has become clear that the occurrence of truancy is encouraged by a number of negative factors which cause students to absent themselves habitually and unofficially from mainstream education (Pryor et al, 2003). These factors include the influence of drugs, gangs, family pressures, the lack of parental control, and an aversion to the structured school environment (Van Breda, 2006). Despite

these problems, the role of educators is to ensure that the educational programmes offered are effective and meet the standards of the New Zealand education system while addressing the issue of truancy.

1.2 Problem

Non-attendance or truancy is a form of behaviour that is generally overlooked by the public at large (Reid, 2000). Many young people who are truant often engage in meaningless and sometimes criminal activities while away from school (Van Breda, 2006). The results of the three focus group interviews conducted with learners at Martin Hautus Alternative Education Centre show that truant students often engage in fringe activities such as stealing, drug taking, gang related activities, violence and organized crime. There is a strong link between truancy and the rise of a gang culture in our urban areas which police struggle to combat (Patel et al, 2004). While truancy and discipline issues may provide negative examples of contact with Pasifika and Maori parents, some schools have used these issues to open the door for further contact to get feedback from parents. Some schools have involved parents in disciplinary matters and this has resulted in the growing awareness of the difference between the disciplinary policies and procedures of the school and the disciplinary styles used in the home.

My interest in the proposed study not only originates from the concern regarding the link between truancy and juvenile delinquency but about the causes of truancy for Pasifika students in mainstream education.

Truancy has numerous implications for young people. In legal terms, parents of truant students might be accused of failing to fulfill their obligations to ensure that their children receive proper education. In education, truancy is a concern when students are behind with their school work or when they are disruptive in class. This may often affect the other learners in the classroom as well as the teachers. Truancy can be symptomatic of learners that are insecure, have low academic achievement and low self-esteem and these conditions may foreshadow more serious consequences in later adolescent or adult life (Van Breda, 2006). Reid (2002, p. 4) has shown that truancy is “linked with multiple adverse home conditions, low social class and deprivation”.

My experiences in working with young Pasifika students in alternative education, as well as the lack of research in the area of truancy of Pasifika students suggest that alternative education teachers at AIMHI², parents and those in authority such as the Ministry of Education are still trying to work out suitable structures and mechanisms to address the issue of truancy.

² AIMHI- Achievement in Multi Cultural High Schools

These include how to better accommodate these group of people in a constructive educational sense rather than simply ‘babysitting’ them for the duration of the day.

1.3 Preliminary Literature

It is nearly 170 years since Webster painted his well known picture of ‘The Truant’ which describes two young people running away from school, standing outside their classroom anxiously looking at the activities inside (Van Breda, 2006, p. 4). Reid (1985, p. 68) notes that early psychologists identified certain reasons for truancy. Kline linked truancy and running away with man’s roving instinct likening it to the migration of birds and animals (Van Breda, 2006). Hay, influenced by Freudian theory, viewed truancy as an attempt on the part of children to escape from real injuries, to avoid pressures and responsibilities and to retreat from the ‘normal’ intellectual growth brought about by an unstable ego (Van Breda, 2006). Isaacs (1999, p. 47) has argued that truancy is a solution by many young people to many life factors that affect them negatively. Some young people’s experiences are traumatic, stemming from an early age where the victim has very little support in dealing with the trauma and their early upbringing. These unsettled complications and traumas, followed by new ones which build up, simply add to the overall pressure in a young person’s life.

Truancy, in popular English literature, is regarded as a natural, wicked act of escapism which is likely to take place at some stage during the normal development of children (Reid, 2002, p. 3). In the same manner, Reid (1986, p. 112) is of the opinion that rules are often perceived by learners as petty and this can create confrontations in schools which may lead to truancy.

The issue of truancy encloses many of the broader problems that schools are encountering as a result of the reform process. Although truancy is the oldest educational problem in New Zealand, a number of factors may have combined to make it also a new problem; one that has required new responses. These factors are: first, the restructuring of the school system has transfer the responsibility for dealing with truancy to those in power. Second, despite increased overall in retention rate to our high school, there is evidence that a small group of young students continue to be estranged from the schooling system, and are persistent truants(Taylor, 1992), three, the new trend of social conservatism, evident in the discourse of parental responsibility, is tending to blame individual families for school truancy.

In a sense, then the problems faced by teachers is how to make schools or education centers into welcoming, rewarding and friendly institutions. My experience as a teacher leads me to conclude that some teachers find it hard

to implement rules with regard to discipline. The administrative side of their work, which continues to increase, reduces the time available for pastoral care, lesson preparation and paper work, and for other activities such as Education outside the classroom (EOTC), daily and monthly attendance records, incident reports, and marking assignments. Many teachers do not have an understanding of truancy or how to address truancy, nor are they expert in other education support services such as counseling, social services, WINZ and so forth. At the same time the elements of marketisation of education in schools and its effect is a clear evident, the increasing gap between the Pasifika, Palangi and international students.

Most of the students in low decile schools³ in New Zealand are of Maori or Pacific Island descent (Starks, 2003). Most of the schools that these students attend are located in communities that have serious issues of poverty and low standards of housing. Mc Loyd (1998) reports that persistent poverty has more detrimental effects on IQ, school achievement, and socio-emotional functioning than transitory poverty, with children experiencing both types of poverty generally doing less well than never-poor children. Mc Loyd (1998) suggests that higher rates of perinatal complications, reduced

³ A low decile rating indicates a school with a significant number of disadvantaged children. Children at low decile schools face difficulties other than the level of resources at the school itself. Their families may be disadvantaged and the parents may have difficulty supporting the learning process (Fiske, 2003).

access to resources that buffer the negative effects of perinatal complications, increased exposure to lead, and less home-based cognitive stimulation partly account for diminished cognitive functioning in poor children. These factors, along with low teacher expectations and poorer academic-readiness skills also appear to contribute to lower levels of school achievement among poor children. This supports Dabrowska (2007) argument that students in low decile schools have significantly lower reading ages and writing abilities than other children. Students in these schools are more likely to play truant along with students from large families and those that live in poor conditions or whose parents show very little interest in their education (Sparkes, 1999).

An overwhelming proportion of truant youth face major problems in their lives that challenge their ability to attend school. By truanting, the young person's intellectual, social, emotional and moral development is limited as healthy relationships with peers and teachers are not maintained (Puzzanchera, 2000).

In alternative education, most of the students are truant because they make a deliberate decision not to attend school regularly, and in many cases it appears that parents and teachers do not know anything about it. This pattern of truancy affects the young student's potential to further his/her

development and contribute to his/her community. As truancy rates are high among Pasifika students, it is important that research investigates the causes of truancy from the perspective of Pasifika students

Table below shows truancy rate of students 2006 in Aotearoa.

(Pasifika Education Plan: 2008 - 2012-*Truancy rate of students 2006*)

Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika	Number of intermittent and unjustified absences - Non- Pasifika
310	1080	1,389	5,247	47,728	52,975	5.9	1.1
222	898	1,121	5,344	48,495	53,839	4.2	1.9

1.4 Aims of the study

Schools have always failed some young people. The very nature and purpose result in the institutional exclusions of some and the self exclusions of others. This study explores the reasons for school exclusions of Pasifika students and attempts to identify through the perceptions and experiences of the reasons for their non-attendance. It will also explore the effects of the environment on truancy among Pasifika students. It is hoped that the research can provide guidelines that schools or Alternative Education centres can use to address the problem of truancy for Pasifika students who are enrolled in their alternative education centre.

Background knowledge and the development of the topic will be discussed in chapter two, in the review of the literature. The literature review examines truancy as a broad problem for many young people in our society.

Subsequently, chapter three outlines the methodology and methods utilized to address the research question. Research questionnaire and focus group interviews were used to distinguish how and why students play truant. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to bring together the strengths of both forms of research to compare and corroborate results.

Chapter four presents the results of the research design. The research objectives was to investigate the reasons for school exclusions of Pasifika students and attempts to identify through the perceptions and experiences of the reasons for their non-attendance and present the key factors that emerged.

Chapter five presents a discussion of the results in conjunction with the relevant literature reviewed, to gain insight into the non attendance of Pasifika students. The findings raised several interesting issues that related to students and teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Truancy as a part of a comprehensive problem

2.1 Introduction

Non-attendance from school or truancy is becoming a matter of concern for many schools in Japan (Iwamoto, 1997). Educators have to contend with truancy problems as many young people are not willing to attend school for various reasons. This major problem in society has a direct impact on the learners, educators, educational institutes, and parents. The main aim of this chapter is to review the literature on truant behavior as part of a broad problem for many young people in our society.

Despite the counseling programs and services offered in schools, it appears addressing the problem of truancy is not that easy to understand because of the type of student that are enrolled in our schools. It is important to note the extent to which we prioritize students' welfare among the multiple tasks that school counselors and social workers are required to perform, given that truancy is a significant indicator in a series of antisocial behaviors that lead to negative personal and developmental outcomes. Hayden (1994.p.8) suggests that truancy is associated with indiscriminating sexual behavior, alcohol and drug use, delinquency, and dropping out of school. Loeber, (1998.p.143) states that "truancy is generally considered a major risk factor for dropping out of school and for delinquent behavior, including substance

abuse, gang involvement and criminal activity that often lead to more serious problems in adult life”.

This literature review will provide an overview of the problem of truancy in New Zealand and abroad. It will include a description of various types of truancy. The review will also highlight the possible causes of truancy as well as related aspects such as recognizing potential truants, truancy and delinquency, the consequences of truancy, truants’ feelings while away from school and parental attitude towards truancy.

According to Bobillier (1976), the issue of truancy in New Zealand schools has been of concern for a number of years in the community, state and education sector. Despite a common perception that truancy is increasing, the actual size of the problem of truancy is unknown in New Zealand (Andrews 1986, Reid 1986). Whitney (1994, p. 15) notes that ‘truancy, like poverty, has a lengthy past history, and the two have always been closely related’. Smith (1996), in research conducted in the United Kingdom in 1991 and 1992, showed that a significant number of learners of compulsory school age became involved in truancy. Van Breda (2006) notes that factors such as “boring lessons, lack of personal attention, poor relationship with teachers, authoritarianism in schools, feelings of rejection, stood down by the management board, and peer pressure contribute to truancy” (p.17).

2.2 Background

2.2.1 Historical Perspectives

The history of truancy goes back over a hundred years when school attendance was first made compulsory and school officials were expressing concerns over truants as far back as 1870. The issue of truancy has been a major problem in the state ever since the 1877 Education Act made schooling compulsory. As Shukner (1987) notes that...the state's intervention of the sphere was far from the straightforward and uncontested issue (p.81). As Katz(1972) has observed: “ The critical decisions about school attendance policy rested on contentious assumptions about the obligations, limitations and style of the state and its relationship to essentially private groups such as the family” (p.433).

Collins (1998, p. 25) noted that people did not accept compulsory education in 1880 and in many cases children were not attending school simply because schools were not always located in reasonable proximity to their homes. In many cases too, physical access was a cause of poor attendance. Wet weather often made country roads impassable such that numbers of children came long distances to school along muddy roads which were at times blocked (Look, 2005).

Some parents kept their children at home not only because the school was too far, but for reasons such as the children's role in performing farming

duties or providing childcare. Additional factors that led to truancy were the curriculum and teaching methods used by teachers, the old buildings and the economic difficulty faced by some parents. Van Breda (2006) has also noted that compulsory education also removed the responsibility of character development from the family and their community to a depersonalized formal procedure in institutions such as the school.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the issues associated with school non-attendance, including truancy, came to the attention of all who were concerned with declining educational standards in the United Kingdom (Smith, 2007). Wardhaugh, (1992) suggests that at the beginning of the 1980s, much attention was given to the problems of truancy in secondary school in the Netherlands because of the increasing number of migrants who had limited level of education. Furthermore their language and culture were very different from that of the Dutch.

In 1992, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand became involved in the funding of programmes aimed at improving school attendance. In February 1992, the Ministry of Education proposed that Māori Wardens undertake the development of a programme to combat absenteeism among students in school. Later that year, the Ministry offered funding to the Rotorua Maori Wardens' Association to develop and operate on a one-year trial basis for

1993, a programme called Te Kupenga O Te Aroha aimed at reducing absenteeism in schools. In 1995, the New Zealand Education and Science Select Committee inquiry into children at risk through truancy and behavioural problems recognised truancy as being widespread throughout the country. In 2006, researchers found that the occurrence of truancy was more common among Maori and Pasifika people compared to New Zealand Europeans and Asian students (Glynn, 2005).

2.2.3 Defining Truancy

Truancy is the most commonly used term to describe school absenteeism and is usually seen as the deliberate absence from school on the part of the learner without the knowledge or the consent of the parent (Van Breda, 2006). Reid (1986) and Ramburger (1987) argue that truancy could be considered to be a multidimensional experience and each case is unique with the combination of various social, psychological, and institutional factors contributing to the learner's truant behavior.

There are a number of reasons identified as to why truancy occurs. Broadwin (1932) says that truancy can be identified and characterized by neuroticism whereby fear of the teachers leads to the young person leaving school and running back home for safety. Nansel (2001) believes that truancy is a common outcome of bullying where bullied children preferred the risk of getting caught wandering off school than getting caught by

bullies. Okuyama (1999) says that truancy is a type of emotional disturbance in children, associated with anxiety that leads to serious absence from school.

The term truancy, according to Berg (1996) (cited in Van Breda, 2006), is different from refusal to attend school. For example truancy is often used in relation to the school attendance problem characterized by a young person's absence from school without parental knowledge or consent (Corville – Smith, 1995). Truants may start out for school, but fail to arrive there or absent themselves during the day. Berg (2002) defined school refusal as a situation where young people are reluctant or refuse to attend school, often leading to prolonged absence. Bools et al (1990) have suggested that school refusal is when the young person usually remains at home without the parent's knowledge during school hours. The difference between the school refuser and the truant, says Van Breda, is that the refuser is generally a good learner with his or her vocational goals at schools while the truant is indifferent and a poor learner who dislikes school (Van Breda, 2006).

Until the mid-1970s, research published on truancy in British schools appeared only occasionally. Apart from a few academic researchers (Hodge, 1968; Mitchell & Shepherd, 1967 cited in Brown), states that truancy was mainly a concern for teachers, educational welfare officers and some

psychologists who were interested in “social phobia” (Van Breda, 2006). For others, it was fairly harmless misconduct indulged in by a minority of students in the school population (Arum, 2003, p.6-15).

Despite the different views and meanings of truancy, they all focus around the action by students who choose not to participate in the school day. Whitney (1994, p. 51) and (Smith 1996) suggested that not all ‘unauthorized absence’ can be regarded as truancy if the parents purposely kept the learner at home, and not all truancy is likely to be recognized as unlawful absence if the learners quit lessons after roll call/registration in the morning. Although different studies use different criteria to determine truancy, it is useful to distinguish between truancy for the whole day and truancy which involves missing individual lessons or parts of the sessions. Truancy can also happen even if the learner never actually leaves the school compound (Van Breda 2006).

2.2.3 Sociological attitude and Socio-cultural factors

The link between sociological, socio-cultural and socio-economic factors and truancy has been established in the literature. The majority of young people who play truant are from families with particular sociological and social-cultural factors. Reid (2000, p. 78) provides a summary of research findings dealing with the home background factors related to truancy.

According to Reid (2000) many young people are often engaged in meaningless activity while away from school. Some are often bored, finding it difficult to cope with school work thus opting to stay home or 'wag'

Reid (2000, p. 78) also found that truants are most likely to come from broken homes in which divorce, separation, cohabiting and 'mixed' siblings are often the norm; in families where the father or the father figure is away from home for long periods; families with an above average number of children; families living in overcrowded conditions; families where the parent(s) are unable to cope with social circumstances that threaten their lifestyles and lead to abnormal conditions within the home such as alcoholism, physical illness, violence, abuse, familial conflicts and associated stress factors; and families whose parents are not interested in their children's progress at school.

Ascher (1980) argues that when attempting to work with community groups on efforts to intervene positively with education, the focus typically turns to the problem of truancy. Van Breda (2006) suggests that barriers associated with notions of culture, language needs and deficiencies strain economic resources in families, communities, schools and government. In addition parents' uncertainties and schools' preconceptions are also considered to influence truancy.

In a multicultural society such as New Zealand, “internalising the dominant culture's values and identity” can cause “acute difficulties in school contexts” (Gorinski, 2006). Bishop suggests that the dominance of "Pakeha knowledge codes and the monoculturalism and monolingualism [are] attendant upon a long history of assimilation education" (2005, p. 253). This, he says continues to result in patterns of non-participation by many Māori and Pasifika students. Bishop suggests that a possible solution lies in the wider principles and the theory and practice of Kaupapa Maori (Maori philosophy) as an alternative approach to inform mainstream practice whereby cultural appreciation and a cultural way of learning is implemented in the school system (Bishop, 2005, p. 222).

Trumbull (2001) has suggested that family-school interaction patterns must be drawn on, and that schools ought to acknowledge the cultural aspect that each individual student brings to school. This argument is supported Biddulph (2003) who believes that the education system must also contest the differential cultural capital imposed upon Pasifika children in mainstream schooling contexts.

Van Breda (2000) offers three explanations to explain societal variables that influence truancy.

First, it is argued that societal pressures seem to cause schools to be structured in a way that encourages absenteeism among lower socio-economic status learners. Second, based on the citizenship argument, it is suggested that society as a whole and the school specifically, fail to recognise the diverse needs of a range of different learners. Third, it is argued that learners see the school as a less likely place to fulfil their needs than other societal institutions such as foster homes, alternative education centre, gymnasium where learning is not so formal.

2.2.4 Link between truancy and other delinquent behaviour

Typical sociological images of the long term impact of teenage delinquency differ sharply. On the one hand, sub-cultural theorists beginning with Albert Cohen (1955) anticipate that unacceptable behaviour will eventually deliver rebellious youth to the rough-end of the labour market. Willis (1977) and Macleod (1995) present an image of clear and predictable pathways from resistance in school to working-class jobs. Working-class young people get working-class jobs because their celebratory rejection of middle class schooling, their repertoire of minor delinquency, and their masculinist bravado disqualify them for anything other than low-skill manual occupations.

Several studies have established students' lack of commitment to school as a risk factor for substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy and dropping out from school. Problem (2001) also identified a link between truancy and later problems such as violence, marital troubles, job problems and adult criminals. As early as 1915, sociologists were calling truancy the 'kindergarten of crime' (Tennent, 1970, p.535). A 1979 study of 258 adult recidivists in the US showed that 78% had been arrested for truancy, and two-thirds of the remainder admitted they had been chronically truant but were never arrested (Bucqueroux, 2003).

Educators, researchers, and social reformers have also recognized the link between truancy and delinquency. Most describe truancy as a "stepping stone" to more serious delinquent activities (Garry, 1996). Dingwall (1984) says that, like underage drinking and running away, truancy is a status offence, or an activity that would not be criminal if committed by a legal adult. He has suggested that although status offences are considered less serious than delinquent behaviours, truancy may be one of a few status offences that lead to more serious violations in the future. A 1995 report from the Los Angeles County Office of Education suggests that absences from school are the most powerful predictors of delinquency. Thornberry

(1995) state that for too many youngsters age 12-16 not attending classes is the first step towards delinquency.

2.2.5 Educational factors affecting truancy

Reynolds (1980) regards truancy as a "blocked opportunity" within school.

Finn (1999) believes that working class children begin their school careers reasonably confident about their aims and ambitions in life. Duffell (2000)

suggests that the middle class bias of school tends to belittle these aims and

ambitions and to push others in their place that the children dislike but lack

the maturity to understand and to consciously examine and reject. The result,

according to Duffell (2000), is the disaffection with school and its ideals that

can result in delinquency. Stott(1977), writing about working class children

in Glassgow, says that delinquency is not so much a symptom of

maladjustment as of adjustment to a sub-culture that is in conflict with the

culture of the city as a whole. Clark (2005) suggests that the structure of

relationships within school between teachers and students progressively

erode the self-esteem of working class students and produce feelings of

inferiority that lead to delinquent behaviour.

Mara (2006) states that concerns have been raised that Pasifika students are

not reaching the achievement norms and social expectations of their peers

especially in comparison to those of *palagi* origin. This is often the case

when students have been alienated from the mainstream education system (Mc Kirnan, 1986). Gorinski (2006) argues that many Pasifika students in New Zealand miss school for different reasons, depending on the age and circumstances of each student. Some students feel unsafe at school, or on their way to, or from school. Other students may miss school because of family health issues and financial demands, substance abuse, or mental health problems. Manuatu (2000) believes that many more miss school and tend to stay home because they are being marginalized due to poverty or even no access to the main-stream services. Others miss school due to the lack of resources or individual capacity they are pushed out to the margins of the social system.

2.2.6 Family, school and societal factors contributing to truancy

Research clearly demonstrates that there is “no single cause of truancy” (Reid, 2000a, p. 76). Some researchers have found the problem to be associated with “macro–societal factors such as the nature of class system, the environment the young person grew up in and failure of our judicial system” (Van Breda, 2006, p. 31). Others locate it in micro- societal factors such as individual family structure, attitudes and standards of behavior within the family. It is believed that truancy has been attributed to a possible

personality trait, physical and psychological characteristics or poor educational attainment (Van Breda, 2006, p. 31).

In summary the literature suggests that a chaotic family life, an unsupportive school environment and other societal variables are critical elements that are associated with truancy. The significance of these factors will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

2.2.6.1 Family life

Parental choices regarding family structure have long been seen as important environmental influences on child development. Such choices include the number and spacing of children, as well as choices regarding divorce and remarriage and the age at which to have the first child. Furthermore, they include the extent to which “family” refers to more than merely parents and siblings to include grandparents, aunts and uncles, and other extended family members.

Though many educationalists would argue that truancy is more likely to occur among children of working class parents (Van Breda, 2006), this is particularly the case among children from large families who have to confront poor living conditions or parents who show little interest in the young person’s education. Collins’ study (1998) showed that more than half of those charged with school non-attendance were from homes where at

least one parent was absent. Reid (2000) has highlighted that individuals with larger numbers of siblings and only one parent present are more likely to demonstrate truant behaviour.

Other factors that are found to be common among the families of the truant include alcoholism, physical and mental illness, and violence and family disorganization. Van Breda (2006) has suggested that 55% of truants or escapees from school in South Africa have histories of abuse or maltreatment. Families who are “under stress” have difficulty staying together. Students who are likely to be truant come from families with solo parents or broken families (Mc Cown and Johnson 1993). Ryan (1995, p. 275) reported that in one third to one half of the truancy cases in the US, the child lived in a home disrupted by separation, divorce or death.

2.2.6.2 School Factors

Educational and sociological research also suggests that the school system itself may be influencing truancy (Smith, 1996). The research claims that there are identifiable factors within schools that are closely associated with the development of truanting behaviour among young people. O'Keefe (1994) has highlighted a body of theoretical and empirical literature which looks at the school itself as a cause of truancy. Noguera (2003) believes that school factors play a more important role than others in causing truancy and

contributes to large numbers of young people dropping out from schools. Bosworth (1994 cited in Van Breda, 2006) reported that the principal, assistant principal and teachers in a South African school attributed truancy to individual, family and community factors outside their control, leading to a feeling of hopelessness and a lack of effort on the part of the school to change the causes of truancy. In most cases, learners who are truant reveal that attending school is the last thing in their mind or one of the last priorities of their time (Van Breda, 2000). One of the important factors in a young person's upbringing is to have a sense of belonging to a group especially among their peers (Ward, 2004). Truants, however, tend to feel insecure and see themselves as 'outcasts and rejected at schools' (Van Breda, 2006.p.40). This supported my data from my study which shows that learners often felt confused and lost and did not know where to turn for help. Keys (1994) found that the primary cause of truancy was the school system itself. Keys concluded that the contributing factors of truant behavior were school policies, rules, and curriculum and educator characteristics. The author also showed that classrooms that rated high in competitiveness and educator control, and relatively low on educator support had higher truancy rates. Britten (2002) found that 27% of the participants in his research "Who is to blame for kids dropping out of school?" said that educator

unpleasantness and antipathy towards certain learners were significant factors in truant behavior. (Ryan 2001) found that institutional factors such as teachers, boring subjects, gang affiliation, and detention contributed to truancy. Additional reasons for truancy included the negative impact of bullying from other learners, disillusionment with school and the desire to leave school permanently. Capps (2003, p. 34) investigated the structure of junior high schools in South Africa and found that those with the highest rate of truancy were those with the most inflexible attendance policies. Learners in these schools were reportedly more likely to believe that educators and administrators did not care about them and their attendance (Van Breda, 2000). The New Zealand Curriculum Framework focuses on the individual student as the centre of all teaching and learning. However, certain teachers still employ an authoritarian type of teaching which could result in learners absenting themselves from school (Wiles, 2000).

2.3 Chapter summary

Considerable research has been carried out on the subject of truancy. However, research into truancy by the Ministry of Education (2006) did not appear to ask those questions that other countries regard as fundamental to understanding the problem of truancy. For example: What kind of students truant? Why do they truant? (O’Keeffe, 1994). Pasifika students have high

rates of truancy compared with Palagi and Asian students. I believe that school policies, rules, discrimination, and curriculum and educator characteristics are contributing factors in truancy among Pasifika students. Collins (1998) notes that more than half of the students charged with school non-attendance were from homes where at least one parent was absent. Truancy has significant consequences on the student's formal learning. These include educational under-achievement and 'dropping out' of school. This chapter presented arguments raised by educationalists on how to deal with truancy. The following chapter discusses the method used to conduct research into identifying those factors relevant to addressing truancy amongst Pasifika students in New Zealand.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Background

In recent years, studies of students' attendance at schools have been carried out by different researchers in New Zealand. These include "Tracking Truancy in Wanganui" (Kilmister, 2002), "Attendance and Absences in New Zealand Schools in 2002" (Cosgrave, 2003), and "Attendance, Absence and Truancy in New Zealand Schools in 2006" (Ng, 2006). These studies provide a range of information on student absence and truancy at the school level.

This study focuses on the causes of truancy for a group of Pasifika students from mainstream education currently enrolled in alternative education. The research will attempt to identify, through the perceptions and experiences of the students, their reasons for truancy. It is hoped that the results of the study will allow for the development of a set of quality indicators that have the potential to re-integrate these students back into mainstream education.

The study employs the practices and the methodological assumptions of a constructivist inquiry to capture the multiple and the socially constructed realities of each participant (Denzin and Lincoln 2002). This constructivist inquiry explores the context in which truancy for these groups of Pasifika students is developed and inquires into the meanings, assumptions, and

values of those who engage in discourse about information truancy policy. The research question; “What are the causes of truancy for those students enrolled in alternative education?” asks participants what they believe are the causes of their truancy and what their understandings are of non - attendance. The findings of this inquiry and the implications of this study provide a richer understanding of why students are truant. The multiple perspectives offered by the Pasifika research participants provide valuable insights into the complex world of truancy. Lessons that can be learned are included, along with implications for policy makers and suggestions for future research.

The research was conducted at an Alternative Education Centre in Mangere, South Auckland, New Zealand. At this centre, students are enrolled at different times and for different reasons. Each student must meet the AIMHI intake criteria to be accepted into the centre. The criteria for young people being accepted into this programme include: the young student must have had multiple exclusions (2 -3 times) from mainstream school; the student must have a history of dropping out of mainstream schooling after being reintegrated; and the student must have been out of school for two terms. Some students have been enrolled at the centre for a period of six months to a year. Other students were enrolled for a period of three to six months and

some have been returned from a period in police custody and have re-enrolled at the centre.

This chapter discusses and explains the theoretical underpinning of the research. It will discuss the use of focus groups as a method of data collection and describe the research process and the research design.

3.2 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to look at the causes of truancy for a group of Pasifika students who had formerly attended mainstream education institutions and were currently enrolled in alternative education. The researcher will also look at the life experiences of the participating students and how this has impacted on their schooling. It is hoped that an informed understanding of the reasons for truancy will challenge policy makers and schools to develop constructive policies that will assist in delivering programmes that will address the needs of these students and help them remain, and be successful in mainstream education.

3.3 Part 1: Theoretical Underpinning of the Research-Methodology

3.3.1 Focus group in qualitative research

The research method uses focus group interviews to ask questions about the reasons for truancy. This is useful in order to obtain practical suggestions and recommendations from the participants on the most effective way to address truancy. Focus groups are also a means of identifying the participants' experiences, attitudes and beliefs, and allow the opportunity for peer commentary on the opinions expressed by others.

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), focus group interviews allow a researcher to understand the meaning that each participant has of their experiences. Personal interaction and cooperation from both parties is essential. In this study, participants were invited to explore their ideas and opinions about their non-attendance. Three focus group interviews were conducted in an informal manner in which participants were encouraged to engage and contribute freely in a dialogue with each other about their expulsions from school.

For the purposes of this research, a qualitative approach has been undertaken in an attempt to “express real life experiences and...to describe people in their natural settings” (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Merton (1990) suggests

that the focused interview "will yield a more diversified array of responses and afford a more extended basis both for designing systematic research on the situation in hand" (p.135). Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 365) note that the term focus group applies to a situation in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic. Kreuger and Casey (2000, p. 5) define focus group interviews as carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a non judgmental, non threatening environment. During focus group discussions, one can expect that a participant's perception may shift due to the influence of other people's comments. The focus groups in this research were used to discuss, without restriction, the attitudes, opinions, and ideas of the participants about prearranged topics. Other topics also arose during the discussion and were reported.

3.3.2 Origin and aims of focus group

Focus group interviews originated in the 1930s and were employed by social scientists that had doubts about the accuracy of traditional information gathering methods. Concerns were raised about "the defect of the interview for the purposes of fact-finding in scientific research" (Rice 1931 cited in Kreuger, 1988, p. 18). It was suggested that in many situations the interviewer takes the lead and as a result "data obtained from an interview

are likely to embody the preconceived ideas of the interviewer as the attitude of the subject interviewed" (1998, *ibid*) The focused group interview had its origins in the evaluation of audience responses to radio programmes in 1941 by Robert Merton, a prominent social scientist (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). By early 1981, applied demographers began to use focus groups as a way to understand the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that influenced the use of contraceptives.

Around the same time, communication researchers in Britain used focus groups to examine how audience members interpreted messages in the media. Joseph et al. (1994) like Morgan (1997) used focus groups as a first step to overcome their limited knowledge about the gay community. Basch, (1987) and other health educators were attempting to improve the effectiveness of intervention programs by holding group discussions with members of the target group. Nowadays, focus group interviewing is used in many different ways (Morgan, 2000), such as in marketing research, social sciences, communications, education and many other disciplines (p. 30).

3.3.3 Value of Focus group

Using the focus group interview has many advantages. For example, it is relatively inexpensive. Participants can build on each other's ideas and comments, and they are more likely to provide honest responses. The time and involvement of the participants are important factors in the success of the focus group. Participants also provide an opportunity to explore new or unique perspectives, and the types of responses given are up to the participants themselves. In the three focus group interviews that were conducted in this study, it was far more efficient to interview the selected number of people at the same time rather than interviewing the participants individually, and the results were obtained over a reasonably short time span. Another advantage of conducting the focus group interview is that they become a forum for change (Race et al, 1994). Through my informal conversation after the focus group interview, I felt that most of the participants experienced a sense of liberation and self belief and they were happy to share their experiences with the group. This experience was similar to that found by Goss (1996) where the participants in the research experienced a sense of emancipation through speaking in public and by developing mutual relationships with the researchers. I have used the focus groups to "give a voice" to the marginalized groups who are the participants

of this research. Another benefit of the focus group interview is that they draw out information in a way that allows researchers to find out why a particular issue is of relevance to participants (Morgan, 1988). Focus groups also give a clearer understanding of the gap between what participants say and what they actually do (Vyakarnam, 1997). If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behaviors and attitudes will be more readily articulated (Gibbs, 1997).

During the focus group interview, it is important not to expect participants to answer all questions in their first attempt but to allow them time to think and reflect on the question. Considerable care was taken in this study to provide a setting and conditions conducive to discussion. For example, during the three focus group interviews, the researcher allowed participants to talk to each other, ask questions and express doubts and opinions, while exerting minimal control over the interactions.

The outcome of the three focus groups was encouraging because the participants were able to express views that might not have been expressed in other settings, had they been interviewed as individuals at home or at church. At the same time, the researcher was able to probe for clarification or greater detail, and a number of unanticipated but potentially fruitful lines of discussion were pursued.

3.3.4 Limitations of focus group

While there are a number of advantages to employing focus groups to elicit information, there are also a number of limitations. For example, the participants in a focus group may not necessarily be a representative sample of the wider population. There may also be unwillingness on the part of the researchers to follow through and act on information gathered. Some participants may be reluctant to contribute, and there is always the chance that someone's feelings may get hurt.

By its nature, focus group research is open ended and cannot be entirely programmed (Gibbs, 1997). It may generate a lot of qualitative data that may be difficult to analyze. During focus group interviews, outspoken individuals may dominate discussion and this may affect the whole process of interviewing (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In this, I reminded the participants about the importance of respect during the focus group interview.

3.4 Part 2: Research Process

3.4.1 Ethics Approval and Ethical Issues

Ethics approval was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 30th March 2007.

During the study, a number of ethical principles were maintained. The names of, and identifying information about the participants and their families remained confidential.

Each participant was given enough time to read the information concerning the project and its requirements. Participants were also explained their right to ask questions and to withdraw from the study at any time including their right to withdraw any information up to the point at which the data was analysed.

Since the process assured the participants of their rights, it also built a trusting relationship between both parties. Honesty and trustworthiness were important considerations for the participants' involvement in this study.

Moreover, participants were informed and advised that the collected data was to be accessed and analysed by the researcher only for the purpose for which it was collected, and would be kept for up to six years in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office at the School of Social Sciences at the Auckland University of Technology before being destroyed.

Signing the assent forms by participants under the age of 16 indicated their agreement and the signed consent forms by the parents showed their willingness to allow their child to participate in the research as well as their understanding of what was required of them during the course of the study.

3.4.2 Entry and Exit procedures

Since all the participants of this study are current and past students of the institute under study, it was necessary to inform the Chairman of the Management Committee of Martin Hautus Institute and the co-ordinator of the AIMHI Alternative Education about the proposed study. I wrote to them on 4th April 2007 and explained the rationale for the project. I informed them that I wanted to find out why young people were enrolled at this alternative education centre and the reasons for their non-attendance in mainstream secondary education. I also informed them of the objectives of the study as well as the anticipated benefits of the research project for schools and alternative education providers around the country. The management replied positively in support of the project and gave their consent and blessing for the study to be conducted.

At the completion of the thesis, the Martin Hautus Institute and co-ordinator of the AIMHI Alternative Education will be given a report of the study which tutors and students of these respective institutes are welcome to read. I will also make myself available to hear their views of the report and to share my views and my journey toward writing this thesis. Copies of the thesis will be available through the Auckland University of Technology's general library and a copy will be held by the researcher.

3.4.3 Methods of choosing research participants

I chose the participants of the research project on the basis that they were present or past pupils of Martin Hautus Alternative Education Centre. I selected four boys who had been enrolled in the centre for at least two months; four girls and three boys who had been in the centre for six months or more; and four past students of the centre. This gave a total of fifteen research participants. The reason for selecting four girls and three boys was to see whether the motive for truancy is the same for different genders, and how it may overlap. The rationale for the selection of four past pupils was to look at the reasons for their non-attendance at mainstream education and how they viewed education after having experienced alternative education.

Finding research participants was relatively straight-forward because the participants of the project were present and past pupils of the Institute at which I currently teach. Criteria based selection was therefore used for the selection of the research participants. This method identifies and samples students for the focus group interview. I began by inviting former students who were studying elsewhere to be part of the first focus group interview. I acknowledged that the participants at the Martin Hautus Alternative Education centre may have felt pressure to agree to participate. As their

teacher and the researcher, I was aware that the issue of power was a concern. Therefore, I asked a colleague of mine to invite a group of young people currently enrolled in the centre to listen to an explanation of the study. The participants were also asked to take home a letter for his/her parent or guardian explaining the project, and consent forms for the parents to sign agreeing to have their child participate in the study.

It may have been advantageous to the study to have had more female participants than males in the third focus group interview so that there would be a gender balance. However, it was not possible to meet this criterion mainly because participation was voluntary and a number of girls opted not to participate in the interview. There were only two girls and five boys in this focus group. In this particular situation, the issue of gender representation was less important than the need to get participants that could give reliable and rich data about the reasons for truancy among Pasifika students.

3.5 Part 3: Data Collection

The study employed two methods of data collection. The first method of data collection was based around the responses to a questionnaire and the second was the focus group interviews. Three focus group interviews were used to gain insight into the causes of truancy for Pasifika students from

mainstream education now in alternative education. This method was employed because the participants selected shared certain characteristics relevant to the study's questions (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p.114).

The research was conducted at an Alternative Education Centre in Mangere, South Auckland, New Zealand. The interview technique was consistent with earlier investigations into students' learning (Ramsden, 1992) which advocate "fairly open interviews with students discussing their experiences of learning so as to allow the interviewee to influence the direction of the interview and provide rich descriptions" (Entwistle, 1997, p.16). The focus group interviews were conducted between 8:40-9:40am before the students began classes. This was a convenient time for the participants and did not affect their participation in class. Before the three focus group interviews, the participants were informed about the process for the focus group interview. The participants were also informed that each participant's conversation and data would be treated as group data.

The interview questions (Research questionnaire A) were aimed at finding out about the various contexts surrounding the participant's reasons for not attending classes. They were focused around broad thematic areas such as 'school', 'family', 'community', and 'student'. The interview questions in Research questionnaire A were open ended. It discussed the experiences of

the participants at school, their attendance at school, the involvement of parents and other family members and how does the community and its leaders supported them.

The interviews lasted between 40-60minutes and each interview was tape-recorded with the permission of the participants. Notes were also taken with the approval of the interviewees.

Research questionnaire B sought to obtain quantitative data on students' attendance and parental support. Research questionnaire B was given to the participants before the focus group interview and took about 15 to 30 minutes of the participants' time. Upon completion, the participants returned Research questionnaire B to the researcher. The focus group interview was conducted after they had completed the questionnaire.

3.5.2 Discussion of the Data

The data collected from the participants could not be separated from the social context in which it was collected (Diener Suh et al, 1997).

Discussions began around the broad topic areas of transportation to school, regularity of attendance, the nature of the school environment, the relationship with teachers/friends, and the support received from immediate family members and the community.

The discussions of these topics was essential (Krueger, 2000) to help the researcher to ascertain inconsistencies about the topic that may appear during each focus group interview (Morgan 2004). Participants in each focus group interview were not independent of each other and they were given the opportunities to argue their views and perspectives and express their opinions on their own personal experiences.

The researcher took both audio-taped and personal notes during the interviews. The personal notes were used to stimulate further discussions where necessary and to record information on their experiences. The data from the interviews assisted in the corroboration of the information received.

3.5.3 Transcriptions

The tape recorded interviews were transcribed by the researchers with two weeks of the last of the focus group interviews being conducted. The interviews were conducted in English. The transcript of the three focus group interviews were offered back to participants for checking and to verify that they were willing to allow the information in the transcript to be used in the research. Any particularly sensitive data which risked revealing the identity of the participants were removed.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

In this study, the interviewees were encouraged to be critical and reflective by giving them ample time to think about their experiences of mainstream

education and the reasons why they were not attending school. Their meaning, perceptions and views of the issue of truancy were of primary importance to the researcher. The interviews looked at the participants' experiences at school, how he or she traveled to primary, intermediate and high school, school attendance, relationship with teachers/friends/classmates, the support received from families parents/family and community. Some of these questions were also asked on Research questionnaire B which was completed individually prior to the interview.

During the three focus group interviews, asking participants for clarification was important. Therefore the “how” and “why” questions were used consistently to enable participants to give further explanations of their answers. I was very careful not to ask sensitive questions or to probe for answers that might affect the participants personally. However, I emphasized the importance of talking honestly about the real life experiences that caused them to be out of school and why those events happened (Booyesen and Burger, 2007). I stressed the significance of their answers and reassured each participant that confidentiality would be maintained and their names would not be revealed in any circumstances. As a result, I believed that the participants felt more comfortable about speaking openly about their experiences.

3.5.5 Limitations

The following limitations affected this research. Firstly, the study is based on data from a small number of participants and limited to students who were attending or had previously attended the Martin Hautus Alternative Education. While the findings may therefore be generalised across other alternative education centres in the South Auckland area because of their similarities in the type of young people enrolled at these centres, they may not explain other alternative education centres in other regions of New Zealand.

As a teacher, and a researcher, I was aware that the issue of power was a concern and the participants may compel to participate. I reassured them that they had the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw their information from the study at any time without consequences. Similarly, I reassured the participants in the consent form that their participation or non participation would have no influence on my attitude and behavior towards them.

3.6 Summary

The major factors outlined in this chapter in relation to the study included the theoretical position underpinning the methodology. The analysis of data is presented and discussed in full in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

The previous chapter outlined the methods employed in this exploratory study into the causes of truancy of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education. Three focus group interviews and a questionnaire were used to collect data. The questionnaire was used primarily to examine the attendance of students' at primary school, intermediate school and secondary school, and the focus group interviews were used to explore the reasons why Pasifika students enrolled in Alternative education were not attending school. In this chapter I present the quantitative data followed by the common themes gathered from the three focus group interviews for the qualitative data. Extracts from the interview scripts are presented to support these themes.

4.1 Introduction

The analysis of the data serves two very important purposes. First, it highlights the perceptions and opinion of young Pasifika students who are enrolled in alternative education who are of Tongan, Samoan, Niuean, and Cook Island ethnicity, and explores the reasons why they are truant. Most importantly, it allows alternative education students to voice their concerns (Ellis, 2002). Second, this analysis attempted to go beyond the immediate voices and concerns of the participants by placing the perspectives and

experiences of the individual participants at the centre in a wider social, economic, cultural and political context (Strauss, 1998). While individual responses are of great importance, the analysis also developed a collective understanding of truancy from the information generated in the three focus groups. That is, the researcher examined the responses given by the participants in each focus group and then organized the information into common themes. In order to use the data effectively, the researcher had to listen to, and hear the voices of the participants within the context of the alternative education setting, as well as the problems faced by each participant in mainstream education and the impact of those problems at present.

The experiences and the responses were coded into meaningful categories. As suggested by Marshall (1999), coding enables the researcher to discover patterns that would be difficult to detect by just listening to a tape or reading a transcript. First, I conducted initial coding by generating category codes as I processed the responses. I labeled the key themes in the data and was mindful that the category codes I was using were not always mutually exclusive. In some cases, a section of transcript was assigned several codes. Other measures as suggested by Jiao (2005) were also used to ensure ‘trustworthiness, or soundness’ of the study. For example, I discussed the

findings with colleagues to confirm the accuracy of emerging themes. Being a tutor at this centre, I had experienced and seen the problems encountered by the students daily. The common understanding that existed between the participants and me made the site access and rapport building easier than if I had been an external researcher. In terms of methodology, there was no pretence at 'objectivity' in the research. My subjective positioning within the study led to data analysis and discussion based upon the data collected (Bray, 2000). The insider knowledge and experience as suggested by Jiao (2005) provided an advantage of a 'thorough in-depth understanding of the complexity' of Pasifika students' learning experiences.

The three focus groups consist of:

Group 1:

Twickz, Napz, Harlz Starz (aged 13-14)

Group 2:

Tah, Lopez, Roach, Richie, Asy, AJ, Jm (aged 14 1/2-16)

Group 3:

Liz, Fa'alili, Dizzy, Uso (aged 16 +)⁴

⁴ Ex-students

4.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is often a repetitive process whereby “evidence is evaluated, theories and hypotheses are refined” (Rijgersberg, 2008). It typically involves the construction of questionnaires which research participants are asked to complete. Researchers may use the information to obtain and understand the needs of participants and/or to develop a series of strategies and recommendations in response to a particular issue.

There was a rationale for computing cross tabulations. The objective was to clarify and illustrate trends in the data, and it assisted in identifying patterns in the data that could substantiate, complement and clarify the interviews and the written explanations.

This section looks at the quantitative data collected in this thesis. It examines and analyzes the frequency and cross tabulation tables for the purpose of discovering patterns of relationships which relate to the reasons why the participants of the study are truant and to identify the relationship among the variables. There were 15 participants, 5 females and 10 males.

Table 4.2.1

How often did you go to primary school? How did you travel to school?

Gender

Gender		How did you travel to school?			Total	
			bus	walk	car	
female	How often did you go to primary school?	everyday	0	1	1	2
		most of the time	1	1	0	2
		Not much	0	1	0	1
Total			1	3	1	5
male	How often did you go to primary school?	everyday	0	2	4	6
		most of the time	1	3	0	4
		Total	1	5	4	10

Table 4. 2.1 show how often the participants attended primary school and how they travelled there. Only one student did not attend school frequently (not much) indicating that students were good attendees. More students walked to school compared with bus or going to school by car.

Table 4.2.2 How often did they go to intermediate school and how did they travel to school

How did you travel to school?			Gender		Total
			female	male	
bus	How often did you go to intermediate school?	most of the time	1	1	2
	Total		1	1	2
walk	How often did you go to intermediate school?	everyday	0	1	1
		most of the time	3	4	7
	Total		3	5	8
car	How often did you go to intermediate school?	everyday	1	3	4
		most of the time	0	1	1
	Total		1	4	5

Table 4.2.2 shows that nearly the same number of males and females at intermediate level walked to school most of the time but more male than female students went to school by car.

Table 4.2.3

How often did you go to secondary school? * How did you travel to school?

* Gender Cross tabulation

Count						
Gender	How did you travel to school?					Total
			bus	walk	car	
female	How often did you go to secondary school?	everyday	0	1	0	1
		most of the time	1	2	1	4
	Total		1	3	1	5
male	How often did you go to secondary school?	everyday	1	0	1	2
		most of the time	0	3	3	6
		Not much	0	2	0	2
	Total		1	5	4	10

Table 4.2.3 reveals that in secondary school, more female students walked to school most of the time while an equal number of males walked or traveled by car to school.

4.3 Qualitative data

Cresswell (1994) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting.

This qualitative research involved an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As the researcher, I studied participants in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret occurrence in terms of the meanings students bring to them (Koester). This

study involves the collection of personal experience and thoughts that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in the students' lives (Bailey 1997).

4.4 Emerging themes

In exploring the factors that influenced each individual to be truant, a large part involved the study of students' thinking, behaviour and their internal states (de Jesus, 2006). The three focus group interviews were the major source of data collection. The responses from the interviews were categorized into different themes. The key themes are: School, Culture, Family and Community. In order to fully utilize the data, I present as many relevant details as possible from the focus group interviews to support my themes.

4.4.1 School

The relationship between school and student achievement is controversial, in large part because it calls into question a variety of approaches in the policy and teaching methods used by teachers to enable him or her to motivate young people to learn (Hanushek, 1997). Given the fact that school is a learning institution, it is taken for granted that a quality education such as a systematic method to assure stakeholders (educators, policy-makers and the public) is one in which schools are producing desired results and common

elements are being applied to all participants. These elements should include clear goals, progress indicators and measures, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and help for participants not meeting goals, and consequences and sanctions.

According to Statistics New Zealand (2005), young people between 15 and 24 years have a consistently higher rate of unemployment than the general population. For the 15 to 19 age group, the unemployment rate for those not enrolled in educational institution is at least twice the national average. Given these statistics, a question that arises is why so many young people leave school at an early age. Is it because of the education system, peer pressure, teachers, school environment, curriculum or other unknown factors? The following section will look at some of the contributing factors that young Pasifika students say are responsible for their leaving school at an early age.

4.4.1.1 Experiences at school

This section looks at the experiences of participants at primary school, intermediate and secondary level.

Most of the participants had fond memories of primary school. These included being with friends, “playing sports”, “making friends”, and

“learning new things”. School work, the range of food in the tuck shop and field trips were identified as the things participants liked most at this level.

When asked about their experiences at intermediate level, participants responded that their experiences were dominated by school work. A few participants said that they put equal emphasis on school work and sports. Meeting new friends, especially members of the opposite sex, and doing school work were identified as the most important reasons for their coming to school.

The reasons that students gave for their enjoyment of a subject were the students’ ability to cope with the work, the students’ interest in the subject matter and the teachers. Most of the participants said they believed that they had the ability to understand and do work that they found enjoyable. However, subjects that they were not interested in were “too hard”, “too boring”, and “had too much reading and writing”.

The participants gave a number of reasons for not attending school. For example, whenever a student comes late she/he is asked by her /his room teacher to go and see the assistant principal at the office. This was a common experience among students who were late comers. As most of the students wanted to avoid seeing the principal they decided not to attend at all.

Bullying by some of the students was too much for some of the students to deal with. Having something stolen from them, being hit or hurt by another student, left out, made fun of, or made to do something they did not want to do was very much part of their daily school life and was a reason for their truancy. These bullying tactics supports Dunn's (2008) comments that bullying at school is a reflection of a "culture of brutality" that has been tolerated for too long in our schools.

Most of the participants said that their personal relationship with teachers was not good and this prompted them to link in more closely and strongly with their peers outside the school environment and led to their absenteeism. When asked whether there was anything they did not like about school, most of the participants responded that they did not like their teachers and the school rules. The following excerpts were taken from interviews across the three focus groups.

(Tah: group 2) *I don't like most of the teachers. They are mean. They tend to punish you if you do wrong. I hate the school rules.*

(Asy: group 1) *I don't like most of the teachers. They are so powerful. They thought they rule the whole school. I also hate the school rules. You seems to be a like a slave in your backyard.*

(Roach: group 2) *I also don't like the school rules. It is pathetic.*

(Uso: group 3) *I don't like teachers who picked on me all the time assuming that I am going to make trouble.*

(Dissy: group 3) *I don't like trouble makers. Some teachers are boring.*

That's why I started to do bad things and got stood down by the principal.

It was also evident from the students' comments that the teachers' perceptions of them undermined were taken for granted and accepted by the school. Although socio-economic status may be a factor in truancy for these students, the students believed that it influenced the teachers' perception of them in mainstream education. The interviews revealed that teachers' and schools' interpretation of Pasifika students' ethnicities were used to influence their behavior towards these students while the students' own interpretations were not accounted for (Nakhid, 2002). The interviews also revealed that Pasifika students were given few opportunities to construct their own identities (Nakhid, 2002). Most of them believed they were prevented from engaging themselves in schools because of the perceptions held of them by the schools.

(Richie: group 2) *Mean teachers especially palagi teachers- who knows that I am struggling with my schoolwork but does not allow me*

to engage myself to develop my talents in school...not sure ...perception may be?

(Lopez: group 2) I don't like the teachers, some are mean, and others are cool. Yeah (smile) but they tend to look at us islanders as under – achievers/ which me puts me off.

(Harlz) Teachers and students who are a big bully. Other races like Maori and Samoan-not on to it. Not on our level.

(Twickz) I don't like being bullied by teachers and other students at this age.

In a discussion about their academic abilities, most of the students did not see themselves as motivated enough to want to attend school and improve their level of achievement.

(Researcher) How often did you go to school?

(Fa'alili : group 3) I attended school most of the time. I only missed school if I am sick or have family problems. I must admit that I didn't learn much at school.

(Dissy : group 3) I attended school most of the time except when I am in trouble or sick but ... (giggle) of course wagging.

(Roache: group 2) Most of the time but...

(Tah: group 2) Most of the time but wagging and skip classes...

(Harlz: group 1) *Everyday but wagging all periods...*

(Starz: group 1) *Same. That is every day, but wagging all the period.*

(Researcher) Did it change from year 9 to when you left school?

(Dissy: group 3). *Yes, I wagged a lot at school. I also associated myself with the wrong crowd at the wrong time.*

(Uso: group 3) *Definitely, it's a chance to meet new people, make new friends and learn new things but I wag... may be that why I am not achieving as well as I should be...*

(Fa'alili: group 3). *Yeah, pretty much... I am more on to it with my thinking... chance to make friends and meet new people especially dating my girlfriend.*

(Lopez: group 2) *Pretty much, I find it hard to associate with other ethnic groups.*

(Roach: group 2). *Yeah, I tend to wag most of the time though I attend school every day.*

(Researcher) Why are you not attending the centre?

(Liz: group 3) *I am old enough to move to other courses.*

(Fa'alili: group 3) *I am at Marcellin College - back to mainstream education.*

(Dissy: group 3) *I am 16 years old so I am not worthy to be at AE. I need to move on in life.*

(JM: group 2) *I do drugs whole day long.*

(AJ: group 2) *I fight at school.*

(Asy: group 2) *I was involved in gangs. Too many things to think about rather than school work.*

Harlz (group 1) *Because I wagged all periods and as a result, I lose interest in school that's why I am here.*

Twickz (group 1) *I was a big bully at school and wagging every day.*

The responses given by these groups of Pasifika students' show that they they wag most the time.

4.4.1.2 Relationships with Teachers

Students want to have open- minded, modern and enthusiastic teachers because keen teachers help students to be passionate with their work, teachers who are the closest to their parents and who know what they like, and what they do not like (Horng, 2005). When students arrive in a classroom they tend to establish relationships with people around him/her, especially the teachers (Lieberman, 1978). If the teacher makes the effort to understand the student and his/ her background a good relationship is likely to develop. This is important because if students have problems they can

Speak freely with their teachers to find a solution that is good for them (Pajares, 1992). If the student-teacher relationship is maintained in good faith and the communication between them is effective, students will have more respect for the teacher and pay more attention in his/her classes. Social connections enrich students' academic worlds by providing practical and emotional support; offering a means for relaxation, fun and enjoyment; and providing opportunities to voice frustrations, to self-disclose and encounter new experiences (Paine, 2002). At the same time, it makes learning more interesting. If the relationship is bad, and trust, respect and understanding is not maintained, then going to school will not be so encouraging for students and they will lose interest in school and their teachers. This was often the case for the Pasifika students.

(Lopez :group 2)

Students of our age group are not like kids. We are already grown-ups and we like that. We especially want to be treated like that. We expect that from our parents, and we expect that from our teachers also. If the teachers respect the student, the student will know how to repay. The teacher should have friendly relationship with the students.

(Liz :group3)

He/she should talk about his problems to the students, so that he/she gets their confidence. Only then the student will open his/her heart and will talk to the teacher, not being a bum boy that should listen and obey, but as a friend that is willing to help in any situation.

(Starz: group1)

School is the place where we spend most of our day. When we come home, we are tired and want to sleep, or we have home works, or we just go out with friends; so the people that maybe know us better than anyone even our parents, sometimes are the teachers, the people that we see, talk, laugh and even dislike every day.

(Tah :group 2)

I think the teachers are cool; they play an important role in our development in our character, behavior.

A few of the research participants suggested that their teachers were overly harsh because they always gave detention for minor issues.

When asked about how their friends and classmates got on with their teachers some of the participants said that most of their friends related well with their teachers. Others said that their friends disliked their teachers because they were racist and made assumptions too quickly rather than getting their facts right. One of the participants said that the quality of the

student-teacher relationship really depended on the characteristics of individual teachers.

Some of the students said that teachers made assumptions too quickly and were too bossy. For example, Twickz in particular said:

I did not like my teachers because they assumed that I was not doing my work and I was up to something mischievous.

(Napz: group 2):

Some of the teachers were racist and are really bad because they reacted negatively to me and my mate most of the time. This is why I am not attending school.

4.4.1.3 School Rules

For some of the participants in the study, the main motivations for their non attendance at school included a lack of understanding of, or their unhappiness with the school rules.

(Lopez: group 2). *I want to wear colour or any uniform of my own choice but no not allowed. My personal belief influence the way I dressed but I couldn't do that at school ...Can't wear colours or any uniforms of your own choice.*

(Tah: group2) *At times, I asked myself why I need to wear uniforms...they are too obvious Why we don't wear ordinary clothes?*

(Roach: group 2)*I tried my best to be presentable... can't wear make ups, e.g.: jewellery and earrings... it sucks.*

(AJ: group 2) *No, I was not allowed to wear black pants and shoes to school- need to wear the recommended one so they sent me home.*

Asy initially obeyed the school rules:

I followed the rules for the first weeks and I reckoned that the rules were fair though the teachers' made their own rules which are different from the school rules.

He then added:

It was hard to follow them and I was not sure which one was right or wrong ...breaking the rules and half way through the third week, I stayed home...can't be bothered ...Harlz felt that the wrong impression from the teachers of him got him into trouble:

Yeah, teachers give me wrong impressions that I do this, I do that and assuming that I involved in trouble... always put me off. So I started making trouble at school and was sent home.

Like Harlz, Starz said that:

Teachers are assuming that I was a trouble maker at school...wrong impressions put me off and I challenged the teacher...was asked to go to the office to see the assistant principal but I took off home and decided not to come back to that school.

4.4.1.4 Effects of school on young people

At any school, we need to consider the students' needs and what is important for their studies. The questions which I believe need to be considered are: What effect does our present curriculum have on students? How does it affect their feelings and emotions, motivation to learn, behavior, learning and their relationship? Young people need to be provided with a curriculum that imparts the knowledge and the skills that they need to function effectively in the classroom and which will assist them in their social and academic development. Miller (1996) recognized that schools in general and teachers in particular, can contribute to, or in some cases even cause some behavior problems in pupils. He concluded that achieving good standards of classroom behavior and classroom management are the core elements to maintaining students' interest in the classroom.

Being involved in a school that has a reputation for the positive development of young people and how they behave towards their peers, either through formal networking or through the school programmes that are

offered, is important because it can help prevent behavior problems at school.

The extracts below reveal what the participants of the study liked about secondary school:

(Lopez: group 2) *I loved doing my school work, field trips and participating in the school rugby team”, “I liked doing math and education is good. I’d also like smoking and having friends...perhaps girls (laughed)...Yeah, I loved sports. I also like some of the teachers who are a role model to me.*

(Liz: group 3)...*loved going to a neat classroom where clear instructions can be seen and clear classroom /curriculum issues are explained by the teachers*

(Asy: group 1)*I enjoyed the cultural day, sports day and other extracurricular activity.*

(JM group 2)*The curriculum was alright, food was okay but the cool thing was just hanging out with mates.*

While Uso thought that some teachers were unsupportive at secondary school, he felt that his room teacher was the best. He helped him in his studies and his daily problems. At one stage, he initially intended to run away from school but he realized that:

...the loving care and the skills from my room teacher have helped me to think twice.

Tah said that:

I like meeting new boys and making new friends and doing arts. I also like being smart to teachers.

Respond has shown that students tend to learn when they feel that their schools foster a ‘positive school spirit and a climate of respect’, and an environment that provides support and learning (Lehr, 2002). This allows each individual to develop his /her talents.

An atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding should be present if we are to address the needs of students mainly because children come to school daily with different experiences, feelings and emotions and their own view of life.

While at school, students develop a sense of order, place and expectations determined by the environment of the school, curriculum and through their peer interaction. For example, Roach said that:

Clear rules and consistent use of rewards at my first year secondary school helped me to learn and attend school every day.

She then added:

A pleasant work environment provided by my home room teacher in our classroom helped me to focus on learning.

Like Roach, Fa'alili said:

It was cool but the study was different from intermediate level.

Yeah, it is interesting to encounter with secondary school life. It is interesting to see different things- new subjects, new environment, new teachers

Dissy added:

I liked sports. I also like some of the teachers because they were good role models for me.

Leamson (1999) argues that it is the duty of the teacher to accommodate changes and expect changes from students and emphasized the importance of students engaging effectively with the material being learned.

4.4.2 Cultural

Culture, however, is 'dynamic and constantly evolving in response to influential social and physical structures and processes such as the family and school (Schein, 2004). Morrish (1996, in Coxon et al, 2002:6) suggests that culture is not 'merely transmitted', 'it is made'; it is not simply historical and related to the past, it is 'functional and vitally concerned with the present'. Gorinski and Fraser (2005) support the idea by saying that

culture is not the collective catalogue of discrete objects, ideas, mores and pieces of knowledge, but it is a configuration of the total inheritance.

For Pasifika people, culture is manifested in our music, songs, dance, carving, painting, dress, language, food, taboos, rituals, ceremonies and symbols. These integrated patterns of our human knowledge, belief, behavior and traditions are the results of, and integral to, the human capacity for learning and passing of this knowledge down from generation to generation.

Culture contributes to Pasika peoples' way of thinking. It affects how individuals view and see things. In this section I will discuss some of the participants' cultural experience and how it related to their daily lives.

Pasifika culture is full of heritage, sign and symbols that are enriching, artistic, social and educational to Pasifika people. Culture is about the way of life for an entire group or society which includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, and norms of behavior such as law, morality and system of belief. It provides a way for people to be proud of their identity. For instance one of the participants said that getting involved in their cultural dance which participated in the poly-fest competition, and also taking part in their school dance especially the Samoan group made him feel

proud to be a Samoan. Wearing the traditional costumes made him feel special and gave him the opportunity to admire and appreciate his culture.

Various definitions of culture reflect differing theories of understanding, or criteria for evaluating human activity. Anthropologists such as Edward Moore (2004) describes culture as the complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2000), described culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of the society or a social group, and that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyle, ways of living, values system and beliefs.

Abdin (2008) defines culture as "a set of values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society, are shared by and transmitted across members of that society and dictate behavioral transactions within that society. Mathewson (1998, p.120) adds that culture is the way of life of a separate group; this includes a language, a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values. This was important to those participants who participated in their cultural group dance.

It makes me feel happy in front of everybody. Being a Samoan in that big group makes me feel proud of who I am -my culture, tradition and family (Dizzy).

Gorinski and Fraser (2005) explains culture as central to the understanding of human relationships and acknowledges the fact that members of different cultural groups have ‘unique systems of perceiving and organizing the world around them (p.25). I believe that the ways in which we have been socialized largely influence our behaviour and our world view. For instance most of the participants suggested that they associated themselves more in their cultural group.

Liz:

My involvement in the Tongan cultural group influenced the way I behaved and perceived things... and I must say that I feel proud to express my cultural identity in the form of dance and traditions.

Harlz:

...that my involvement in the Tongan church group influenced in the way I see things and how I respected other people especially my Nana.

Lopez:

My involvement in the Tongan lakalaka dance for the poly-fest has helped me to appreciate my culture more and feel proud of whom I am.

This has a great influenced on the way I do things and whom I socialize with.

Cultural expectations of the academic relationship between a teacher and student underpin Pasifika expectations. For example, some of the participants of the study believed that the schooling system demanded respect for teachers. Students did not talk back to teachers; they listened and do what they are told; they were well behaved in class and this was supposed to benefit their learning.

Tah:

Every time, the teacher talked to me, I bowed my head... can't be bothered to say anything.

Dissy added

I just do what I was told

However, most of the participants revealed that their cultural expectations were different from the expectations of the schools. For many Pasifika students, it was expected by their elders and family members that their family will work together, cooperating with each other. This included the beliefs and practices regarding their traditional role as a child, the way they behave in the house, the way they dress, the type of language they use when elders are around and the food they eat. For instance, one of the students said

that at any cultural gathering, they are expected to wear clothes that are appropriate for the function and the language they use is very important when addressing elders in the house as well as the way they behave.

24.4.2.1 Cultural gatherings - *Fiafia* nite

Through my dialogue with students they stressed that teachers needed to view diversity as enriching the classroom community and so allow students to utilise their prior knowledge of their culture as a foundation for scaffolding their learning. Making connections between the meanings children gain from their own worlds and the meanings they gain from their school enhance learning. I believe that it is important of schools to use Pasifika culture and tradition because these help legitimise and validate Pasifika students' knowledge and experiences and must be used in a proper context rather than abusing it. This belief was very much supported by most of the students who said that they believed that culture was important in their lives. Some participants felt that participating in cultural activities such as dances and storytelling in “Fiafia nite” allowed them to learn at and in the classroom, and connect with the performing arts of their homeland or their parents’ home land. It helped them celebrate their own history, express beliefs and assert identity. The dance costumes were a part of the drama and

artistry of the dance itself. The Fiafia nights were a time for celebration and enjoyment.

(Starz: group1). *...participating in a cultural group dance helped me to identify myself within that cultural group.*

(Tah: group2). *Dancing during the 'fiafia nite' celebration has created a sense of belonging.*

When it came to “fiafia nite,” however, some of them opted not to participate in front of their elder saying:

(Dizzy: group 3) *Our traditional dances(when we practiced our Samoan dance) adhered to strict rules in regards to cultural appropriateness and practices.*

(JM: group 2) *Our elders are strict with costumes and the movements must be right...don't want to participate.*

(Uso: group3) *I feel ashamed of myself if I make a mistake.*

Some participants felt that participation in “fiafia nite” or other cultural activities took up too much time.

(Harlz: group 1) *It is time consuming... not much time to go out dragging cars.*

(Liz: group 3) *I spent so much of their time practicing either after school or even at weekends with my cultural groups.*

(Fa'alili: group3) *We practice...practice our item to become immersed in the cultural practices that preparations for dance performances were sometimes a priority for us rather than attending class.*

AJ: *She attended church youth group and Cook island dance group-it was time consuming...boy oh boy... it used up all my time-I only attend cultural practice not even morning classes...too tired.*

The involvement of young people in the cultural gathering is important for their own development. However prioritizing it rather than attending school will only contributing to students becoming truants.

4.4.2.2 Cultural Identity

People categorize themselves and are categorized by others in a variety of dimensions – race, primarily by skin color and other physical characteristics; social class, by the amount of money they earn and where they live and work; ethnicity, by their national origin or ancestry, and their own feelings of group membership.

The aspect of race is in part biologically determined and in part socially defined, and social class is at least partly determined by environmental factors and partly by the constraints and opportunities which our social system permits (Bandura, 1989).

Cultural identity is an important contributor to people's wellbeing. Identifying with a particular culture gives people a feeling of belonging and security (Pfetsch, 2001). It also provides people with access to social networks which provide support and shared values and aspirations. These can help break down barriers and build a sense of trust between people - an experience sometimes referred to as social capital. Too much emphasis on cultural identity is also seen as contributing to barriers between groups (Amin, 2002).

When students were asked how they identified themselves in schools and at home, there were some interesting responses.

(Lopez: group 2) *I identified myself through my own cultural group at school and at home I identified myself through the way I dressed up during cultural functions such as death, church services and cultural gatherings.*

(Twickz: group 2) *At home, I identified myself through my language, cultural traditions that was practiced and kept alive within the family, and at school through my cultural groups.*

(Asy: group 2) *I identified myself with my Tongan group and at home with the food, dress, tapa and language.*

Others believed that if there were close links with other members of the ethnic group, traditional values were maintained. Some of them said that their parents expected them to maintain respect for the elders and to value the family as well as to be competent at school.

However, some of the participants criticized the cultural practices of their communities. For instance, some of the participants felt that there was too much involvement of parents in “fa’alavelave,” that parents were generally too strict on children and that families were too involved in the church and community activities. It was felt that cultural practices put pressure on family finances and resources, often in situations where those families ended up with nothing.

(Uso: group 3) No, my mum was too busy and has no time for me. She goes to cultural activities and other community meetings. I was supported all along by my dad though he is with his new girlfriend.

(Twickz: group1) Yeah my family always supported me financially, though at times, they were involved too much in community meetings and other stuff.

(JM: group2) I don’t know, they were involved too much in community activities.

4.4.2.3 Cultural Mismatch

Mismatch of cultures occurs when our beliefs and values conflict with those of the dominant culture (Cartwright, 1993). For example, the face-to-face communication that took place between the students and those in academic authority conflicts with what is commonly regarded as a “Pasifika way” of doing things (Nakhid, 2003a). These conflicting beliefs often result in students and their parents highlighting behavior and attitudes that are culturally appropriate in their home/community and environment but conflict with the school’s code of conduct (Pransky, 2002). In Pasifika culture, it is considered disrespectful to question the authority of the elders, and children are taught not to ask questions (Latu, 2004). The teacher is seen as a person in a position of authority and to be greatly respected. This view of the teacher can affect the ‘learning of Pasifika students if the students feel that asking questions of the teachers undermines the teachers’ authority’ (Nakhid, 2003b). In fact, Pasifika students are perceived as failing to participate within the classroom setting because they do not ask questions or are reluctant to respond to questions (Nakhid, 2003b). Some of the participants revealed that they had different ways of doing things at home, for example, the way they respected their elders, talked to each other, dressed, and prayed which were not the same as they were at school where the focus was on the academic and not the religious. This cultural mismatch

seemed to have an impact upon Pasifika students' involvement in mainstream schools.

Coll's (1999) research found that Cambodian immigrant families traditionally believed that schools were the realm of teachers who were the experts. To 'interfere' in the day to-day running of the school was regarded as both inappropriate and disrespectful. Accordingly, many Cambodian parents seemed to disengage from the school processes - a perspective and behavior culturally appropriate in a Cambodian context. In Fairburn-Dunlop's (1981) study of Samoan parents' perceptions of New Zealand schooling, parents supported the schools' instructional aims, but believed that schools also had a responsibility to transmit high standards to students being those associated with fa'a Samoa.

Gorinski and Fraser(2005) noted in the Parent Mentoring Evaluation Report that unquestioned Pasifika parent obedience and respect for authority can prevent Pasifika students' engagement in inquiry focused dialogue with teachers and school personnel. This could also be perceived as a lack of interest by schools that tended to operate within the *palagi* concept. The students' comments supported this view:

(Lopez: group 2) *I don't like the teachers, some are mean, and others are cool. Yeah, those palangi teachers ...teaching with their palagi ways*

(Tah: group 2)....*I hate the school rules...very palangi oriented, should be some Pasifika...*

(Starz: group1)*The teachers accused me for breaking the school rules through gang related activities such as gang fights and drugs and hitting one of the teachers with the chairs...typical palagi thinking, us islanders, we don't accused people like that...it will be nice if we have an islander there.*

4.4.3 Family

This section discusses the extent of family involvement and support in meeting the basic needs of the students in the study.

All of the research participants are from Pasifika backgrounds and most live with their parents. Most participants lived in a household with other adults (other than their parents) and other children. Some of them lived with their extended family and a few of them lived only with their mothers.

When participants were asked about the involvement of their parents or other family members in their school work, the response was positive. For those participants who lived with parents and those who lived with other

family members, other demands such as cultural and family issues, for example funerals, birthdays, family meetings, church donations and house chores existed on top of school work. Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.44-50) observed that parent involvement in their child's early upbringing has an impact, not only through child specific learning activities, but through changes in a network of interrelated family factors such as home environment, parental expectations for their children's performance, and increased cognitive stimulation. Data from the study revealed the nature of parental involvement in the students' school life.

(Roach: group 2) *They always give me lunch money, and dropped me to school in the morning but never helped me in my school work because they don't normally at home...that's why I'm here and acting like this.*

(Asy: group 2) *They dropped me off to school, they give me money but not my school work*

(Harlz: group 1) *Yeah, my families helped me in whatever they can. My nana especially, she looked after me and she gives me money but not my real mom...who is busy with her new lifestyle.*

(Uso: group3).*No my mum was too busy and has no time for me. She goes to cultural activities and other community meeting. I was supported all along by my dad though he is with his new girlfriend.*

(Tah: group 2)*They supported me all the times e.g. money, homework, prayer and so on.....strict, no outing during school night, sleep early.*

(Lopez: group2) *They helped me doing my homework and give me money for lunch*

(AJ: group 2) *They took me out to watch games, movies and supported me in my school work.*

(Liz: group 3) *Yes, my mum always supported me in my school days by giving me money and provided transport to school. She always asks me to do my homework.*

(Dissy: group 3) *Yes, my papa always gives me bus money and transport to school and he supported me all the way.*

(Fa'alili: group 3) *Yes, my dad was and always there for me when I am in trouble.*

4.4. 3.1 Parents as a Role Model

The social environment that Pasifika parents and other family members create is of paramount importance to Pasifika children's development. Family interactions in children upbringing predict the 'nature of children's

interactions with adults and peers in wider communities' (Herrera, 1997). Fundamental to young Pasifika children's social development are the opportunities that are created during their interactions with parents at home whether they are good role models or not. During their early upbringing, in the period when Pasifika children have gained relative independence from a primary caregiver and have not yet started formal school Pasifika children shape their relationships with their parents. However, their contributions to these relationships are also dependent on the opportunities and the model provided by their parents. This construction of the family environment is influenced by a range of socio-cultural factors including parents' culturally specific ideas about the skills required for children to be socially competent within their various communities; and the age when a child is ready to develop these skills (Mavoa, 2003).

However, as a Pasifika parent, it is not possible to display all the characteristics of a perfect role model all of the time. Nor do Pasifika children expect that of their parents. Studies show that families and parents contribute to the educational and occupational success of the children.

4.4.3.2 Family Support for Learning

Parental involvement arises from parental values and educational aspirations and these are exhibited continuously through parental enthusiasm and a

positive parenting style (Desforges, 2003). Desforges (2003) suggested that parental involvement has an impact on students' self perception as a learner and on their motivation, self esteem and educational aspirations. For younger children, this motivational and values mechanism is supplemented by parental promotion of skills acquisition (e.g. in respect of early literacy) (Astone & McLanahan, 1991).

It is important for students' individual progress that they are provided with appropriate care, personal necessity, individual education plans, support and good education. I believe that the home-school partnership is a crucial factor influencing students' learning where parents are encouraged to become involved in the learning process and when problems occur for children who are experiencing difficulties.

Parents in a family should be expected to carry out their roles as parents and to nurture their children to be educationally successful. This way they are more likely to see both the family and the school as partners in their child's education and development.

The participants in the study valued their parents and did their best for them. The students commented that their grandparents expected them to maintain their traditions, respect their elders and be fully involved in church activities in addition to school work. It is evident that in many cases the participants'

grandparents had supported them financially through school and had given them advice and help. (Twickz: group1) Yes, my papa always gives me bus money and transport to school and he supported me all the way

(Dissy: group3) *Yeah my family (papa & nana) always supported me financially, though at times*

(Harlz: group 1)....*My nana especially, she looked after me and she gives me money but not my real mom...who is busy with her new lifestyle.*

(Richie: group 2) *My papas' words of encouragement and the family support, and other members of the family helped me doing my homework.*

From the study, a few students who stayed with their mothers acknowledged the support received from them and the efforts of their mothers in paying school fees and stationery, money for bus fare and lunch, giving advice, encouragement and providing inspiration.

(Roach: group2): *My mum always gives me lunch money and dropped me to school in the morning. I love my mum; she is always there when I need her, when I get into trouble at school. She always helps me doing my homework and makes sure that I go to school every day*

(JM group2) *My mum is always there when I am in trouble with the teachers.*

She added that:

She always supported me all the times. She gives me money and helps me with my home work. She always makes sure that I sleep early during weekdays...no outings.

One of the participants said that her mother always told them about life in the islands and that the reason they moved to New Zealand was to get a good education. One student said that the words of encouragement, the support and the help he had received while doing his homework helped him to focus on his school work. Another participant said that his family helped him in whatever way they could.

4.4.3.3 Family and Finance

For many families, one of the biggest sources of contention is the subject of family finances. The money coming in never seems to match the money going out and there was always the stress of what to spend the money on and how. For too many families, getting control of their finances is a lot more than just getting control of their money. It is getting to understand their habits--both thinking and spending--as well as their short term and long term goals so they can offer a more satisfying family life and efficiently prepare

for the future. This section discusses the incomes of families and how it affected the students' educational situation.

4.3.3.4 Family incomes

The major financial concern is no longer the fees that one has to pay but the day to day costs associated with schools. For example, some of the students who lived in Massey Road or Otahuhu and studied at Onehunga High or other schools not in their zone faced travel costs. The results of the study showed that the financial hardship suffered by Pasifika students tended to be caused more by their living circumstances than by costs incurred in the pursuit of their studies. For instance, some of the participants mentioned that the involvement of parents in “fa'alavelave” and being too involved in the church and community activities had put pressure on their family finances and resources.

Dale (2008) stated that Pasifika students tended to come from families who were under financial stress. Equivalent household income rates, accounting for differences in household income due to differences in the number of children and adults, show that 60% of the Pacific population had household incomes of \$40,001 or with less. Seventy-seven percent of all dependent Pacific children live in such households. Furthermore, while 18% of the national population received an equivalent annual income of less than

\$20,001, 25% of the Pacific population received this income. While a quarter (25%) of all dependent children in the total population lived in such households, over a third (38%) of all dependent Pasifika children lived in households with this income (Crothers, 2006).

The income of the family was vital to the survival of students' families. Doing extra jobs or having two jobs alleviated some of the financial burden for their families.

(JM: group2)...*My dad work extra hours to support our family finance.*

(Lopez: group2) *They helped me doing my homework and give me money for lunch...tough though for my brother to keep his two jobs to support our family daily.*

(Twickz: group1) *Yeah my family (papa and nana) always supported me financially, though at times, they involved too much in community meetings and other stuff. My papa works two jobs at the airport and work long hours.*

(Fa'alili: group 3) *Yes, my dad was and always there for me when I am in trouble. He always supported me though at times he work extra hours to earn few more dollars for the family.*

(Liz: group 3)...*In terms of finance, yeah she (my mum) works long hours four days a week to earn few more dollars to pay the extra bills.*

4.4.4. Community

Pasifika community leaders have always emphasized the importance of building and sustaining good community relationships for the well-being and culture of their people. Moreover, there is growing evidence that when local communities are involved in the life of the school or the student there are “positive spin-offs that lead towards improving student learning outcomes” (Alton-Lee, 2003). But building those community relationships is not always a straight forward process. This is because the community itself is diverse. Fullan, (2000, p. 581–584) noted that the concept of “community” implies a degree of homogeneity between groups and schools that rarely exists. Such communities might consist of a diverse range of interest and social organizations such as families, communities, and church groups, other schools close by, and the wider communities, each with their ‘own concern in the community’ (Newton,1999). Whilst building relationships with each of these stakeholders is important, it is not without its challenges. The challenges are about relationships, respect, cultural competency, meaningful engagement, reciprocity, utility, rights, balance and protection.

During the focus group interviews, some of the students mentioned that they left school because of the lack of support from various areas of their community and church groups. Firstly, they believed that financial support from community leaders for individual students and school was poor. The

students felt criticized and put down and some said they were asked to go away rather than being offered financial support.

(Tah: group 2) Every time I went to some of my community leaders for money, they always asked what it is for and why. I remembered one of them said, can't you parent afford to give you money? This is so frustrating.

(Dissy: group 3)...I didn't receive any help from my Samoan community though I asked them for money...extended family...nah...

Another participant highlighted the negative impact of criticism from leaders. One student who was involved in drug dealing approached a pastor for support. Rather than offering support, the pastor questioned him on his absenteeism from school. The student's lack of response resulted in the pastor terminating the conversation.

It is important for community leaders to be open to the kind of issues that affect Pasifika students and be prepared to listen to the challenge facing young people in their neighborhood. Turning young people away or not making time for them will not help them physically, spiritually or emotionally. Pasifika young people need leaders and people to whom they can turn to for support and assistance in times of trouble. As leaders, we need to take seriously young people's sense of community by listening to,

and making time for them. A good church leader is the one that young people will turn to in times of need.

4.5 Summary

The objective of the chapter was to analyze the results obtained from the three focus group interviews carried out with the students at the alternative education centre and from the research questionnaire completed by the students. The quantitative data revealed some important theme findings. First, the students' attendance at primary school suggested that most participants were attending school but more male students were driven to school. At the intermediate level, participants walked to school most of the time but more female students were driven to school. The data revealed that overall, more female students walked to school most of the time while an equal number of male students' travelled by car or walked to school. This data also reveals that amongst those students who walked to school, most of them do not reached their classes on time or tend to skip classes.

From the qualitative data, several significant results were obtained. The life experiences of Pasifika people have an important role in shaping their views and experiences of formal education. The students who participated in the study placed a great deal of importance on their studies. Some of the

participants revealed that through their parents' involvement, they had developed emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically. Others revealed that their parents did not involve themselves in their education while some were supported and looked after by their grandparents. The lack of parental supervision and/or guidance, poverty, substance abuse, or other familial conflicts put pressure on the children's education. Involvement of parents in fa'alavelave, parents being too strict on children or being too involved in the church and community activities also put pressure on the family and other resources.

Wagging or the occasional skipping of classes happened when it suited the students. Students tended to wag or skip classes to attend certain social events which they felt were more exciting and fun than attending school.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

An empirical investigation was carried out that included quantitative as well as qualitative research techniques. The data collection methods used were three focus group interviews and a questionnaire. The fifteen participants in the study had dropped out of school either at the intermediate or secondary level or had been out of school for more than two-to-six months before they were referred to the Martin Hautus alternative education centre.

During each focus group interview, participants shared their stories about traveling to school at primary level, intermediate level and high school. They also talked about their family involvement in their studies and how the community supported them and their involvement in school. A number of concerns expressed by participants have been stated by others in various publications and articles (Hawk, 2001). These concerns include the lack of support from community leaders, the lack of respect shown to them by the school, insufficient money to cater for their personal needs, parents' involvement in cultural activities and inadequate support given by parents.

First the data were coded for four main themes: School, Culture, Family, and Community.

5.1 .1 School

With respect to ‘school,’ a number of factors were identified as significant to the causes of truancy for Pasifika students. One, the students’ relationship with their teachers and school rules and the effect of school on young people. Two, the boredom in the classroom and the dislike of their teachers which resulted in the low value given by the students to school and school work which resulted in ‘wagging’ or the occasional skipping of classes. This also led to the students holding negative views of their own ability and perseverance. Three, teachers failure to praise the students’ work and to accommodate their needs or listen to them. Fourth, students who experienced academic difficulty were likely to wag during class and were unwilling to seek assistance from teachers or academic services. Finally, the curriculum which failed to impart the knowledges and the skills to help Pasifika students to function effectively in the classroom and to assist their social and academic development.

5.1.2 Culture

A number of cultural factors were identified as key to the students’ presence in schools. One, the cultural expectations of their elders and family in their belief, traditional practices, the way they behaved, dressed and the type of

language used. Two, the mismatched of cultures that occurred when the students' beliefs and values as Pasifika conflicted with those of the dominant culture. Three, the 'fiafia nite' or cultural nights which adhered to strict rules that put too much pressure on the students' and the amount of time used during practices which affected their participation in the classroom. Fourth, being able to identify with young people in their cultural group helped the students to understand their traditional values. Finally, cultural practices impacted on family finances and resources, and often in situations where families ended up with little money.

5.1.3 Family

From the study, a number of factors related to family involvement were identified. One, the role of parents as role model was seen as of paramount importance for Pasifika children's development. Second, parental involvement impacted on students' self discernment as a learner, their motivation, self esteem and educational ambitions. Third, the financial situation of the students' families seemed to create a stress that affected the students' involvement in school.

5.1.4 Community

A number of factors were identified regarding the local community's involvement in the life of the school or the student. One, although building

relationships and networking are important some community leaders were not supportive. Two, the negative impact of criticism from leaders was highlighted.

5.2 Recommendations from the research

Based on the earlier findings derived from the literature study and the empirical investigations, the following recommendations are proposed to address the problem of Pasifika truancy.

Schools should:

- ❖ Create an attendance philosophy that is publicized in the learner/ parent manual, on posters in all classrooms and in the school rules. A typical statement might read: “This school is committed to the value that every learner should attend school every day”
- ❖ Develop strategies that will, in fact, be effective in making some difference to the social pattern of achievement of the school. Provide a pathway that is directed towards monitoring students to focus on their study.
- ❖ Provide optimum opportunities for Pasifika students to reach their full academic potential by using a variety of effective teaching strategies such as effective teaching, class management, knowing your student better, delivering your lessons, how to ask question and when to give feedback,

or establishing a class-room environment that is likely to encourage Pasifika students' interest, acknowledging individual efforts and setting standards that other students could imitate.

- ❖ Provide opportunities for Pasifika students to develop their aesthetic abilities, cultural interests and sporting skills.
- ❖ Ensure that positive relationships between teachers and Pasifika students in the classroom are formed. This is vital because it makes a difference to the students' motivation and attitudes towards learning.
- ❖ Ensure teachers develop good relationships with Pasifika students by showing an understanding of their “world”, showing respect for them and their cultures, being fair and patient, giving them attention and affirmation, making them feel valued and important, and sharing their own experiences with other Pasifika students.
- ❖ Encourage positive and constructive behavior management risk strategies in which schools manage Pasifika students' behavior by establishing clear routines, making expectations clear, dealing firmly with appropriate behavior and consequences.
- ❖ Provide a curriculum that meets Pasifika students' needs whereby learning outcomes are ‘relevant and achievable’ (Van Breeda, 2006) for

Pasifika students, likewise, providing a positive climate where success and achievement are acknowledged.

- ❖ With the support of the school counselor, involve truants in group counseling. Allow positive reinforcement and encouragement from their peers.
- ❖ Reward good attendance. Be generous in rewarding and praising good attendance at school assemblies. Attendance certificates or badges that can be sewn on jackets and sweaters may serve as an encouragement to improve attendance by learners.
- ❖ Involve the parents more in the education of their children by, for example, establishing guidelines that hold them responsible for contacting the school in the event of their child being absent.
- ❖ Be understanding. Listen to student's reasons for not attending school and encourage them to express their feelings about it. While listening, underline conflicts which may be causing truant behavior. Provide guidance to support the learner's need to handle his or her own problems.

5.3 Suggestions for future research

Even though this study has achieved its objective which was to explore the causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika

students enrolled in alternative education, it has opened up the following avenues for future research:

- ❖ There is a need for a study that would concentrate on the Pasifika family structure, Pasifika parents' attitudes, and the socio-economic circumstances which may influence truancy.
- ❖ The present study suggests that there is much to be explained with regard to learning content and support for Pasifika students, teacher's attitudes and behavior at school.
- ❖ There is a need to know how the courts and law enforcement impacts on truant Pasifika students.
- ❖ The study suggests that there must be a system in place to support parents and students by advocating for truants and their families.
- ❖ Investigate the impact of Pasifika truancy on delinquency.

5.4 Conclusion

Each school day, hundreds of Pasifika students are missing from their classrooms—many without a genuine excuse. This is a violation of the law as it is a status offense for the youth and educational neglect on the part of the parent. Addressing the underlying issues of truancy is necessary for long-term behaviour change. Implementing a successful, sustainable truancy reduction project is complicated. Gaining consensus among schools to adopt

a consistent definition of truancy and a uniform approach to increase in school absences is a significant challenge. In addition, gaining cooperation from diverse key community players, such as law enforcement, courts, social services, parents, and community-based organizations, can be a challenging and time-consuming task.

Truancy's impact also extends into the adult years where it has been linked to numerous negative outcomes. Consequently, it is critical to identify strategies that intervene effectively with youth who are frequently truant and that interrupt their path to delinquency and other negative behaviours.

It is not uncommon for many Pasifika learners in the age group (13-16years) to have accumulated several days of questionable absence. The extent to which it may contribute to delinquency and educational failure needs to be taken seriously. There is insufficient research into the phenomenon of truancy for Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education centres. The findings presented in this study have identified some factors that cause Pasifika students to be truant from mainstream education. The study showed that Pasifika students who are truant may see the world around them as unstable, unsafe, threatening and confusing. Many of these students come from low socio-economic backgrounds where high rates of

conflict and emotional insecurity exist. In their school settings, Pasifika students who are truant question their academic competency, experience low self-esteem and have difficulty in establishing positive relationships with their peers and teachers. In many cases, it is the teachers and the school rules from which the students seek to escape. At the same time, they do not reject learning as such but are simply disillusioned with the narrowly defined nature of the school curriculum and a curriculum that does not seem to be meaningful to them.

The study also revealed that differing sets of pressures in the students' daily lives affect their learning. For example, financial difficulties appeared to impact on some students, parents' involvement in cultural and church activities affected other students, and teachers' attitudes and approach to students seemed to be an issue for most of them.

Truancy in itself may be harmless, but the attitude and the habits that may result from continual spells of truancy are not always harmless. Workers in alternative education that gives last chance education to truant Pasifika students are aware of the fact that truanting is the first step on the downward path that holds little hope for a brighter future.

Pasifika students who are truant may be calling for help, and seeking to belong and to be connected to an inviting, nurturing school environment. As

a concerned parent and a teacher, I hope that this study can contribute towards assisting with the problem of truancy and to making schools become a place where safety and learning is guaranteed.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will lead to a more comprehensive study of truancy among Pasifika students in New Zealand schools. It is also hoped that the study has presented some useful insights into a rather complicated educational issue, and offered some useful guidelines to address the occurrence of truant behavior among Pasifika students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet for Parent/Guardian	 AUT UNIVERSITY <small>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</small>
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Date Information Sheet Produced:
15th January 2006

Project Title

Causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education

An Invitation

My name is Leronio Baleinakorodawa. I am conducting research for my MA thesis in Social Sciences at the Auckland University of Technology. The focus of my research is on the causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education. This will result in the publication of my thesis.

I am writing to inform you that I will invite your child/children to participate in the study. It would involve taking part in a focus group interview. The result of the study should provide useful information for education providers in Auckland.

Your child/children can withdraw from the study at any time without reasons and withdraw information he/she have provided before the data is analysed.

Before each interview, your child/children will be reminded that his/her confidentiality is assured and that his/her identity will be kept secret.

What is the purpose of this research?

This thesis will explore the causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika Students currently enrolled at an alternative education institute. The research will attempt to identify through the perceptions and experiences of the students, the reasons for their non attendance. It is hoped that the result of the study will show some special area of concerns where I can make recommendations which will help students remain and be successful in mainstream education.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

Your child/children will be part of a group of fifteen students who will be participating in the study. The participants will be divided into 3 groups. The first group is composed of 4 new boys who have been in Martin Hautus alternative education centre for one to three months; the second group consists of 3 girls and 4 boys who have been in the centre for more than three months while the third group is composed of 4 past students . To recruit the participants, Br David Lavin will invite a group to listen to an explanation of this study and then your child will be asked to complete the assent form if he/she wishes to be part of this study. Your child/children will also be asked to take home a letter for his/her parent or guardian explaining the project, and a consent form you need to sign for your child/children to participate.

What will happen in this research?

Your child/children need to go through the information sheet with you. Your child/children will join this research if he/she voluntarily decides to take part in the study. You as a parent will need to sign the consent form and your child/children will need to sign the assent form and return both to Br David Lavin who introduced the project.

After obtaining your child/children consent to be part of the study, I will put him/her in his/her group and arrange with him/her the best possible time for a group interview. It is most likely that the interview will take place from 8:40-9:40 in the morning. The length of the interview will be one hour. The interview will be audio-taped. I will also take personal notes during the interview. At a later date, I will transcribe all recordings. I will give your child/children a hard copy of his/her transcribed group interview for him/her to check the accuracy of information, and for his/her feedback. Your child/children will need to sign this copy to agree that he/she are comfortable with the transcript of his/her interview. After I have all the interviews transcribed, checked, signed, and collected, I will then analyse them before I write up the report.

I will make copies of the report available at AimHi, Martin Hautus –The Pacific Peoples Learning Institute and AUT. I will have a copy with me, so that it is accessible to you.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is possible that your child may reveal information about himself/herself, his/her family and his/her personal experience and that may make him/her feel uncomfortable.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

If your child/children suffer from any psychological, mental or physical stress, as a result of this study, he/she have the opportunity to contact the school counselor on site or the AUT Health and Counseling centre at Wellesley in Auckland. Your child/children can contact the AUT Health and Counseling centre on: 921 9999 extension 9992, and advise them that he/she were involved in this study.

What are the benefits?

This is a good opportunity for your child/children to express his/her opinion and concerns about truancy. The results will have an impact on alternative education providers' decision making process and procedures. This research is important for education providers and students that experience problems of truancy. It can lead to more innovative educational care which can substantially improve the academic and personal life of students.

How will my privacy be protected?

I will interview your child/children group at Martin Hautus alternative education centre. I will also keep information about him/her and from him/her very confidential. Your child/children will be free to withdraw from the study at any time, with the assurance that his/her identity will remain confidential.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will be requested to give up one hour of your time for the interview. There are no costs to you.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Although your participation will be of great value, it is important to understand and accept that you are under no obligation whatsoever to take part in this study. Therefore, take the time to consider this information before you sign the consent form.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will join this research by signing the consent form. You sign this form after you and your parents have gone through the information sheet together, and after you are satisfied with the information about the study, and decide voluntarily to take part in the study.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A copy of the final report of the study will be made available at AImHi, and copies will also be made available to the AUT library. I will also have a copy available.

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

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, *madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz*
Telephone: 921 9999 ext 8044

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?***Researcher Contact Details:***

Leronio Baleinakorodawa

Mob: 021 112 0532

Email: *lerbal06@aut.ac.nz*


Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Camille Nakhid,

School of Social Sciences,
Auckland University of technology
Phone: 9219999 ext 8401
Email: camille.nakhid@aut.ac.nz

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
on 30th March 2007, AUTEK Reference 06/203.**

Appendix B

Parent/Guardian Consent Form	 The logo for AUT University, featuring the letters 'AUT' in a large, bold, outlined font. Below 'AUT' is the word 'UNIVERSITY' in a smaller, bold, outlined font. At the bottom, in a very small font, is the Māori name 'TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU'.
-------------------------------------	--

Project title: Causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education

Project Supervisor: Dr Camille Nakhid

Researcher: Leronio Baleinakorodawa

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mm yyyy.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the focus group interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed by the researcher.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw my child/children or any information that they have provided for this project at any time prior

to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

- ☐ If my child/children withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to my child/children taking part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Child/children's name/s :

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.....
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Parent/Guardian's signature:

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.....

Parent/Guardian's name:

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.....

Parent/Guardian's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 30th March 2007, AUTEC Reference number 06/203.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C

Assent Form	 AUT UNIVERSITY <small>TE WĀNANGA ARONUI O TAMAKI MAKAU RAU</small>
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Project title: Causes of truancy from mainstream education for a group of Pasifika students enrolled in alternative education

Project Supervisor: Dr Camille Nakhid

Researcher: Leronio Baleinakorodawa

- ☐ I have read and understood the sheet telling me what will happen in this study and why it is important.
- ☐ I have been able to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that the focus group discussions that I am part of are going to be recorded.
- ☐ I understand that while the information is being collected, I can stop being part of this study whenever I want without any consequences for me.
- ☐ If I stop being part of the study, I understand that all information about me, including the recordings or any part of them that include me, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature:

.....

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Participant's name:

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Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 30th
March 2007.**

AUTEC Reference number 06/203

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D

Frequencies

Table 1

Statistics

		Gender	How often did you go to primary school?	How often did you go to intermediate school?	How often did you go to secondary school?	How did you travel to school?	Who did you travel with to school?
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1 show the statistics and the five questions for the research and the number of participants participated in the research.

Frequency Table

Table 2

Gender

		Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	female	5	33.3	33.3	33.3
	male	10	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1:1 shows that a higher percentage of male than female participated in the research.

Table 3 How often did you go to primary school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	everyday	8	53.3	53.3	53.3
	most of the time	6	40.0	40.0	93.3
	Not much	1	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

It can be revealed from Table 1:2 that a higher percentage of students attended school every day and most of the time at primary school.

Table 4: How often did you go to intermediate school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	everyday	5	33.3	33.3	33.3
	most of the time	10	66.7	66.7	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 How often did you go to secondary school?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	everyday	3	20.0	20.0	20.0
	most of the time	10	66.7	66.7	86.7
	Not much	2	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Table 1:4 reveals that a higher percentage of students attended school most of the time at secondary school.

Table 6 How did you travel to school?

					Cumulative
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Percent
Valid	bus	2	13.3	13.3	13.3
	walk	8	53.3	53.3	66.7
	car	5	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	15	100.0	100.0	

Crosstabs

Table 7 Case Processing Summary**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How often did you go to primary school? * How did you travel to school? * Gender	15	100.0%	0	.0%	15	100.0%

Table 8**Case Processing Summary****Crosstab**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How often did you go to secondary school? * How did you travel to school? * Gender	15	100.0%	0	.0%	15	100.0%

Table 9**Case Processing Summary**

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
How often did you go to intermediate school? *						
Gender * How did you travel to school?	15	100.0%	0	.0%	15	100.0%

Appendix E

Profiles of participants

Name	Ethnicity	Age
		14
Joeleen Masters	Cook Island/Maori/Niue	15
Latoya Terima Collier	Samoan/Maori	15
Milly Tah	Samoan	15
Stallaney Mokalei	Niue	16
		15
Lisi Papani	Tongan	13
Antonio Napa	Samoan	14
Tuiti Vekene	Cook island	14
Lopiseni vakaloa	Tongan	14
Pauliasi	Tongan	14
Harlem Bishop	Samoan/Maori	14
Ben Silipa	Samoan	16
Richard Silipa	Samoan	15+
Richard Pelikani	Tongan	16
Metale Fa 'alili	Samoan	15+
Duane Sukanaveita	Fijian	

