

Pasifika Academics with Adversity in Childhood: Stories of Resilience

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ABSTRACT

This research concerns the stories of resilience from adverse childhood experiences as told by eight Pasifika academics. Studies pertaining to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the phenomenon of resilience have multiplied exponentially in the Northern Hemisphere over the last two decades, yet very few have emerged in the Pacific region. This may be due to the individualistic nature of these studies. The need for enhancing the resilience of Pasifika learners has propagated numerous reports and studies, and though quite helpful as to how the students would be supported by their collective values and culture, they were not specific to ACEs or resilience from adversity. The Pasifika academics in this study have varied heritages, including Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori, Niuean, Fijian and European. They come from diverse traditions and yet have shared collectivist values that embrace family, reciprocity, spirituality, and relationships that support and guide them throughout their lifetimes. The participants shared their stories of resilience and their childhood hardships in un-timed, unstructured interviews, that adhered to the principles of talanoa, notably mutual transparency, authenticity, and empathy. These principles set the tone of the research process and tempered the critical realist (CR) methodology used in this study. Once reviewed by the participants, the interview transcripts were analysed in depth using thematic analysis (TA) with the assistance of NVIVO. Findings indicated that **a)** Pasifika adversity and resilience must be seen through a culture-specific lens, and **b)** the participants' endurance to adversity and the stability of their resilience was directly related to the degree they were supported by their indigenous values; specifically, connection to their own individual culture, their spiritual support, and their family foundation. Clinical

implications point to the necessity that any research or therapeutic assessment tool for measuring or evaluating Pasifika adversity and/or resilience to adversity be informed by the individual Pasifika/Pacific cultural traditions and values of the participants studied or the clients seen. It follows, then, that any clinical or social work that develops from these assessments be facilitated by practitioners that are culturally competent and provide culturally safe environments for the people they serve. Future research is needed to explore these implications and their effectiveness for Pasifika peoples of New Zealand.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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

Signature:

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study explored the resilience stories of eight Pasifika academics who experienced adversity in childhood. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and resilience were two of the most widely investigated topics since the inception of the term "ACEs" 22 years ago (Anda & Felitti, 2014). Nonetheless, scant studies have investigated the topic of ACEs or their associated resilience factors with Pasifika peoples in general and none with Pasifika academics explicitly.

Before continuing, it is appropriate to clarify what determines whom "Pasifika" refers to and why. This cultural designation has other spellings: Pasefika, Pacifica, and Pacifika. I chose Pasifika spelling as it appears to be the most frequently used in the literature¹. Pasifika is an umbrella designation for Pacific Islanders that have immigrated to New Zealand. This designation includes people from Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, The Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Niue, Hawaii, and the smaller Pacific Isles (Gorikski & Fraser, 2006, p. 3). New Zealand government agencies initially coined the term to describe migrants from the Pacific region and their descendants, who now call Aotearoa home (Lemanu, 2014). Some Pacific peoples in New Zealand dispute this designation and claim that it is too convenient a category and tempts non-Pasifika people to lump Pacific peoples from different nations together without acknowledging their diversity (Perrot, 2015).

¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tagata_Pasifika

This research uses the term Pasifika when discussing Pacific peoples in New Zealand and does so consistent with the following statement by Samu (2006):

The use of the term Pasifika recognises the reality of more than half a dozen distinct ethnic and linguistic groups, each with their own unique social structures, histories, values, perspectives and attitudes... A collectivising term such as Pasifika can be understood and used as a discourse that recognises, values and respects the various unique Pacific nations as well as drawing groups together. (pp. 5-6)

For this study, Pasifika is used as an inclusive designation for expediency, with full knowledge of the diversity inherent in the Pacific peoples that live in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The term will include both New Zealand born and Island born Pacific peoples living in this country. Some of the participants identify more closely with their home island country. For this reason, I may also use "Pasifika/Pacific", depending on the context of the discussion. The term may also vary according to the terminology used by the various cited authors. The participants of this study were comfortable identifying as Pasifika while also emphasising the importance of representing their own culture. Finally, there are several terms for people of my Euro-American heritage and the dominant European culture of New Zealand. My chosen designation is the Samoan word "Palagi", which refers to a Caucasian, non-Pasifika/Pacific person.

Apropos to the subject of culture, I began this study confident I knew my cultural history and biases well. I discovered that I did not. This breakthrough came to me while reading the literature regarding the origins of the cultural concepts of "collectivism" and "individualism" (Calahan, 2020; Eisenberg, 1999; Triandis, 1993; Watson & Morris, 2002). Calahan's basic

descriptions are the most generalisable. According to Calahan, individualistic cultures are concerned with the rights and goals of the individual. A person raised in an individualistic culture is usually motivated by personal goals and achievements that, when achieved, results in, for example, awards, position and money. Individualists tend to be competitive and generally work better alone. Calahan comments that collectivistic cultures are more communal and are concerned with what is best for the group and that individuals work together towards group goals, which is more important than those of the individual. Collectivists are relationally oriented and stress the importance of family, community, and reciprocity (Scroope, 2017).

These cultural concepts are central to this study. My professional training and education vis-à-vis trauma, resilience and adversity were referenced from the perspective of individualism. Recognising my cultural roots proved to be a crucial addition to my cache of knowledge as a research scholar in two ways. First, as I learned more about individualism and collectivism, I saw myself in an entirely new light. As my understanding grew, so did my knowledge of my participants and their diverse collectivist cultures.

Secondly, the extensive literature regarding resilience, trauma, and ACEs is either from or influenced by the individualistic country of the United States. Further, the first ACE study was conducted in my home state of California and funded by the very medical institution from which I retired (Felitti et al., 1998). Moreover, the repercussion of that study, not surprisingly, is that nearly all the findings that evolved from those ACEs studies involved participants from the United States (US) and other individualistic Western-European countries. This fact is confirmed by the literature available for this study(ref).

The few exceptions to this were studies focused on "cultural competence in practice", such as Weiss and Berger (2010a) in their book containing 14 studies on Posttraumatic Growth (PTG). These studies investigated groups and participants from divergent cultural heritages in various countries worldwide. A number of those studies were with collectivist or communal cultural populations. Some additional research on trauma and resilience-focused on the sociological and psychological issues and stressed the importance of being culturally competent when serving culturally diverse peoples (Berger & Weiss, 2010; Buse, Burkner, & Bernacchio, 2013; Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Shaw, McLean, Taylor, Swartout, & Querna, 2016).

Other studies on trauma, such as Fernando (2008); Jayawickreme, Jayawickreme, and Foa (2013); Summerfield (2001), stress that individualistic Western determinants of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other trauma-related disorders, cannot be universally applied to non-Western cultures. Others proposed different perspectives on trauma and resilience of small communities, such as collectivist provinces in South Africa (Ebersöhn, 2014) or Asian communities in the United Kingdom (UK) and the cultural barriers to reporting childhood sexual abuse (CSA) (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005).

The initial literature on resilience tended to highlight the innate and learned traits of the individual, and subordinate, or not mention at all, the environmental elements that supported and sustained resilience over time (Dunahoo, Hobfoll, Monnier, Hulsizer, & Johnson, 1998). Even though current studies recognise the external support factors as an essential part of the resilience matrix, individual resilience factors are still individualistic (Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Dunahoo et al., 1998; Lane, 2017; Rutter, 2012). Considering the Euro-American origins of resilience literature, this is not surprising. The "rugged

individualist" mindset, with its emphasis on the "loner hero" portrayed by Clint Eastwood, remains ubiquitous in American culture and known all over the world (Eliot, 2009). These perceptions have influenced the idea of resilience as "grit" and one's ability to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps". This conception of resilience as akin to bravery, heroism, and autonomy has infiltrated individualistic countries with a dominant European population, including New Zealand (Evason, 2016). This romanticised concept of an individual's ability to "tough out" hardships tend to categorise people who do not do this well as "deficient" (Crawford-Garrett, 2018). The resilience concept of "grit" is a valuable trait of resilience rather than its definition and is better defined as perseverance and determination. However, resilience is complex, multifaceted, and variable (Liebenberg, Ungar, & Vijver, 2011; Moore, Flynn, & Morgan, 2019; Rutter, 2012). Moore et al. expand this multifaceted view of resilience as "Social Ecological Resilience" (SER). SER broadens the term resilience by including the environmental influences such as people or institutions and the psychological elements of the person experiencing adversity.

It is important to note that in some collectivist cultures, including Pasifika/Pacific cultures, children tend to stay longer in their abusive households due to collectivistic values such as respecting one's elders and putting family and community wellbeing ahead of one's own (Eisenberg, 1999; Watson & Morris, 2002; Xiao & Smith-Prince, 2015). Ironically, collectivist values, such as the centrality of family, cultural identification, and spirituality, are also protective factors that sustain resilience (Alford, 2016; Panter-Brick, 2015; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011).

SER's ecological view of resilience lends itself particularly well to members of collective Pasifika cultures. However, in general, SER can be applied to anyone from any culture who

has experienced adversity. In other words, the environments that resonate with that person's culture and background support the development of resilience. Environment and other factors influencing resilience are interactive, interdependent and evolving (Liebenberg & Moore, 2016). In other words, resilience is a process (Rutter, 2012) that varies over time and manifests in ways unique to an individual's psychological makeup, cultural foundations and multiple external factors. Therefore, the methods of measurement and assessment of a) adversity, b) of how one endures adversity while growing up and c) its impact on one's adulthood must be constructed for and in consideration of an individual's specific cultural environment and foundations. Liebenberg & Moore appear to be the only researchers who have developed a potentially valuable measuring tool for determining social-ecological resilience factors and resources for adult populations with ACEs.

Literature abounds discussing ways to increase the resilience of Pasifika students in all levels of education, e.g., (Crawford-Garrett, 2018; Hargraves, 2019b; Matapo, 2018; M. Reynolds, 2017). The literature emphasises how New Zealand's current hegemonic educational systems must integrate Pasifika collective values into the curriculums at all levels. Without this necessary upgrade, there is little equity for Pasifika students (Beatson, Seiuli, Patterson, Griffiths, & Wilson, 2018; Benseman, Coxon, Anderson, & Anae, 2007; Brighthouse, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2020; Naepi, 2019; Perrot, 2015; M. Reynolds, 2017; Savage et al., 2011). Unfortunately, there is no such focus on ACEs or resilience related to Pasifika peoples, including academics. The family and community adversities that impact many Pasifika peoples are greatly influenced by poverty, entrenched antiquated colonial and neoliberal attitudes, marginalisation, and racism which impedes equal opportunity (Brighthouse, 2020; Harris, 2018; Hutchinson & New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship,

2011; Naepi, 2019; Paterson, Faribairn-Dunlop, Cowley-Malcolm, & Schluter, 2007; Paterson, Feehan, Butler, Williams, & Cowley-Malcolm, 2007). Culturally sensitive tools that would effectively assess resilience and the impacts of childhood adversity could greatly benefit Pasifika peoples by providing critical preventative information that might lessen the repercussions of childhood adversity. Included in the aim of this study is the hope that it in some way advances this idea.

1.1 Scope of Study

This study had one overarching research theme and three sub-questions to explore the nature of each of the Pasifika academic's adversities and their resilience in the face of those adversities. The sub-questions also served to uncover what resilience-enhancing environmental factors contributed to the resilience of each participant. Comparisons among the participants illustrated the variances between their resilience-enhancing factors and what might be responsible for them. This thesis asks:

Overarching theme: Adversity in Childhood and Pacifica Academics: Stories of Resilience".

The sub-questions were:

- What adversities did the participants identify? Similarities? Differences?
- What were the turning points in the participants' stories that steered their path towards academia? Enabling factors? Barriers?
- What collective support and personal resilience factors aided the participants in their journey? Similarities? Differences?

The Pasifika academics interviewed for this study had experienced adverse childhood experiences. They demonstrated great strength and perseverance due in significant part to the structure, traditions, and values of their diverse collective Pasifika/Pacific cultures. This study aimed to shed light on the culture-specific adversities they experienced and the culture-specific support that aided and assisted them in their journeys towards academic success.

To this end, this study builds on the existent and numerous studies that currently define resilience and adversity. It then redefines these definitions, making them more relevant to the Pasifika participants. This research clarifies what constitutes resilience and adversity for Pacific/Pasifika collectivist cultures in contrast to individualist cultures. It also presents a possible model of what might support and foster Pasifika resilience.

Critical Realism (CR) methodology is employed to examine the deeper causal mechanisms of what augmented the resilience of the Pasifika participants in this study and what hindered it. Talanoa Principles were also utilised alongside CR to further the participants' engagement in the construction of this research, so it accurately documents the essence of their resilience stories, thus contributing to the study's findings. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the findings and reveal the Pasifika attributes that elevated the collective character of the participants' childhood journeys and led to their academic journeys.

1.2 Overview of Chapters

Chapter two will review the literature regarding the differences between collectivist and individualistic cultures and how these differentiations might pertain to Pasifika trauma and resilience. The chapter also reviews the concept of "edgewalking" (Burnett & Bond, 2019;

Perrot, 2015; M. Reynolds, 2017; Tupuola, 2004) and how it relates to Pacific people's challenges and wellbeing while living in an individualistic, European dominated country. In addition, it explores both the relevance and the gaps in the pertinent literature regarding ACEs and resilience as it pertains to Pasifika peoples. Finally, the chapter will review literature regarding the Pasifika/Pacific values and traditions and how they correlate to the existing literature on Social-Ecological Resilience (SER) and its application to this study's participants.

Chapter three will discuss the core concepts that underpin this thesis and how they determined the methodological approach to the research. The chapter explains the theoretical applications of critical realism (CR) and Talanoa principles and how the combination of these concepts informs the different phases of this study. Then, reflexivity, validity, and ethical considerations are outlined, considering how each relates to cultural competence and sensitivity. Finally, the selection of participants, the process of data collection and data analysis are detailed, explaining how each of these phases is compatible with the study's chosen methodological philosophies.

Chapter four provides a detailed account of the research findings extracted from the participants' unstructured interviews. The findings present their stories of resilience, the adversities they experienced and the impact of those experiences. Each participant then discusses their turning points and what motivated them to change, eventually, their life directions toward academic careers. The findings conclude with how the participants endured their adversity and what personal and external factors enabled and inhibited their resilience.

Chapter five sets forth both an informational and critical analysis of the key findings of this study and is organised similarly to Chapter four. The chapter discusses an overarching theme that illustrates how the ability of the participants to negotiate and contend with their adversities is related to the strength of their connection to their collective/collaborative environments. In other words, if the participant had a firm family foundation and maintained strong cultural values, they fared better than a participant who did not have this support.

In the chapter, I use a Pasifika resilience model based on the Fonofale model of health (Pulotu-Endermann, 2001). It is general enough to apply to most Pasifika/Pacific cultures in a variety of aspects (Flanagan, 2016). The Fonofale model is a well-known model that, according to Pulotu-Endermann (2001), illustrates the holistic nature of Pasifika cultures as it applies to their overall health and wellbeing. The author further states that Karl Fuimaono developed the model in 1984 as an illustrated compilation of what his Pasifika students identified were those Pacific values most important to their health and wellbeing. Fuimaono was a nursing and health lecturer at Manawatu Polytechnic² and gave workshops on a variety of health topics, including mental health. (p.2) The Fonofale model is used in chapter

² MANAWATU POLYTECHNIC is located in Palmerston North, Manawatu-Wanganui, New Zealand and is part of the Junior Colleges Industry according to https://www.dnb.com/business-directory/company-profiles.manawatu_polytechnic.97db9b5253a9495c1125bc2e62b882f9.html

five to demonstrate the aspects of Pacific peoples' emotional and psychological wellbeing as it applies to resilience

The proposed model shows how optimal resilience is strengthened by family as a foundation with individual elements, both physical and mental, holding up the protective roof of culture. After discussing the model's relevant application, the study's clinical implications are discussed, followed by the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the potential cultural, environmental, and individual factors that contributed to the resilience of the Pasifika academics who experienced adversity growing up and who are the subject of this study. Adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and resilience from childhood adversity have been topics of considerable research over the last few decades. However, it appears that interest in these topics is somewhat limited in New Zealand (NZ). Few studies are coming out of the ongoing Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Pacific Islands Families Study (PIFS) (Finau, 2011) and the Growing Up in New Zealand study (GUINZ)(Walsh, Joyce, Maloney, & Vaithianathan, 2019). This review brings together those studies and pertinent literature from the growing body of Pasifika research conducted by Pasifika scholars and other scholars dedicated to the advancement of Pasifika research in NZ. Most of those studies centre around educational inequity, Pasifika student resilience, and culturally specific methods and practices within all academic levels. Those, and the few relevant ACEs and ACE resilience studies concerning collectivistic cultures elsewhere in the world, weave together to create a picture of how childhood adversity and resilience from a Pasifika perspective are defined. The amalgamation of the existent literature resulted in the formation of 4 themes for this literature review.

These four themes intend to capture the information gleaned from the described study areas. The first theme is Collectivism vs Individualism. It guides the direction of the two themes that follow and acts as an informational "bookend" with the fourth and final theme.

Its purpose is to define, describe and compare collectivistic cultures, specifically those of Pacific Peoples residing in New Zealand, to the individualistic Euro-Western cultures of New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. I have selected these three countries rather than other individualist countries because they provide more relevant comparable material for discussion. The juxtaposition of these two cultural concepts weaves throughout the themes that follow and throughout this thesis. Each theme will lead into the next. The themes that follow Collectivism versus Individualism are Edgewalking and Wayfinding, Adverse Childhood Experiences and Pasifika, Resilience and its Application to Pasifika, and Social Ecological Resilience.

2.2 Collectivism versus Individualism

These two cultural concepts kept coming up in the literature time and again in discussion and debates about the Pasifika peoples residing in NZ versus the Pakeha /Palagi in NZ (Beatson et al., 2018; Chu, Abella, & Paurini, 2013; Hutchinson & New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship, 2011; M. Reynolds, 2017). It was not until I looked closely into why these terms kept surfacing that I began to fully comprehend the inherent difference between myself and the Pasifika peoples I was studying. The realisation that I come from one of the most individualistic countries in the world brought the collectivist nature of my participants into a more explicit focus. With this increased clarity, I saw how fundamental one's heritage is, how it colours the way one sees the world, and how subtle one's cultural bias can be.

In a collectivist culture such as Pasifika cultures, it is all and ever about relationships. In general, the members of a collectivistic society are group-oriented and interdependent,

feeling a mutual responsibility for each other (Scroope, 2017). Cooperation is, therefore, of paramount importance to the wellbeing of the community. It follows then that there is an expectation that any member's success is shared with their immediate and extended family and often the community. (Scroope, 2018).

Conversely, the focus of individualism is on individual goals and individual rights.

Competitiveness is part of most individualistic societies. Winning is prized, and winners are lauded (Calahan, 2020). I noticed that much of the literature tends to "pit" these two cultural concepts against each other and debate which cultural value is superior to the other. According to Bandura (1995), this is particularly evident when the topic is self-efficacy.

Briefly, self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to succeed. Bandura (1995) points out that many writers assume that a strong sense of self-efficacy in an individualistic culture is more evident in this culture than to the members of a collectivist culture. Bandura expresses this mistaken assumption well:

Contrary to this view, a high sense of personal efficacy contributes just as importantly to group directedness as to self-directedness. In collectively oriented systems, people work together to produce the benefits they seek. Group pursuits are no less demanding of personal efficacy than are individual pursuits. Nor do people who work interdependently in collectivistic societies have less desire to be efficacious in the particular roles they perform than in individualistically. (p. 34)

In reality, Bandura points out that one can be quite personally efficacious and successful in producing the desired result in a group effort as well as an individual one. The operative word is here is belief. Bandura argues that having a negative opinion of one's ability to succeed or cope will unfavourably impact people of either culture. It follows, then, that if a collective community, or an individualistic one, has members doubting themselves, the outcome is unfavourable either way. When one distrusts their ability to change their lives positively, they believe they have little or no power to change what happens to them. Whether looking at this from a collective efficacy point of view or an individualist, perceived loss of control can be traumatic. The actual or perceived loss of power over one's life often precedes adversity.

Nevertheless, what is most important here is how one perceives and defines this adversity. One size does not fit all. Perceptions of adversity vary depending on culture, and so do the solutions (Alford, 2016). Alford provides an example of this when discussing the traumatic and devastating impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami on Sri Lanka. Tourists with PTSD who survived this disaster had prolonged psychological distress (Kar, Krishnaraaj, & Rameshraj, 2014) that interfered with their jobs and home life. According to Alford, Sri Lankans were not, in general, focused on their psychiatric issues. Those traumatised the most saw this disaster in terms of how it damaged or destroyed their social and community networks, livelihoods, and place in their community (p.6). Children just wanted to get back to school, and this, according to Alford, was diagnosed by an "expert" on the radio as "denial", a common observation of most Euro-western trained PTSD therapists such as myself. Their solution would be a series of individual therapy sessions and possibly medication for depression. This type of therapy may be irrelevant for Sri Lankans who

recently lost their entire social and community networks and livelihoods. What is likely to be more effective are practical interventions such as financial support, assisting them in acquiring other sources of income and finding other social networks (Fernando, 2008; Kar et al., 2014).

This tension between collectivist cultures and the dominant, individualistic Euro-Western cultures in New Zealand is at the heart of almost every issue important to Pasifika peoples (Beatson et al., 2018; Naepi, 2019; Seiuli, 2013), as are intracultural issues within Pasifika (Benseman et al., 2007; Burnett & Bond, 2019; Mila, 2018). Potentially, the strong sense of culture and community become more diffuse the further out the generations become (Tupuola, 2004). It follows, then, that the participants of this study with the most robust connections to family and community are those who still have reciprocal links to their home islands.

The clash between the dominant Individualistic Euro-western culture of NZ and the collectivist cultures of Pasifika shows up most prominently in literature discussing NZ education institutions. Overall, Pasifika students perform lower than all the other cultural groups, yet their performance is rapidly improving. Despite the slow progress of the hegemonic educational systems' attempts to incorporate cultural equity in the classrooms, this improvement progresses. (Hargraves, 2019a). This fact is surprising considering the many detailed Pasifika-led Ministry of Health reports that outline the steps needed to achieve equity at all levels of education (Chu et al., 2013). Chu states,

For Pacific people, learning is not confined to effective teaching strategies;
successful learning sits on the pillars of the family, the community, cultural

capital, collaborative relationships and institutional support. When Pacific learners are empowered as confident learners, they are successful. (p. 4)

Resilience from adversity also sits on these pillars, which is discussed in-depth in the coming sections. The educational systems in NZ are where Pasifika families and their children come into direct contact with Palagi, Individualistic values and assumptions. With the support of their families, most Pasifika students strive to adhere to New Zealand's individualistic values in the classroom while being in a competitive atmosphere where individual achievements are overtly rewarded over those achieved by group efforts. (Brighthouse, 2020; Martyn Reynolds, 2018). Pasifika leaders only ask that educational authorities incorporate collective values into the curriculum and the professional training of the educators to meet Pasifika students in the middle (Beatson et al., 2018; Matapo & Baice, 2020). Much of the literature supports this view, and discusses means by which to bolster Pasifika students' academic resilience, so they and their families do not lose hope while working within a system that seems slow in providing equal opportunity in the classroom (Crawford-Garrett, 2018; Matapo & Baice, 2020; Perrot, 2015; M. Reynolds, 2017; The Education Hub, 2019). The academic debates around these educational issues go beyond the scope of this study. However, the resilience elements suggested within them, such as strong connections to community and family proposed by Chu, 2013 above, correspond to the resilience elements of the Pasifika academics of this study.

The findings and suggestions of the studies already cited intend to serve Pasifika students and educators at all academic levels. They also cheer on the continuing efforts towards educational equity for many non-Pasifika students and educators that work alongside them

(Airini et al., 2010; Carter, Laurs, Chant, & Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2017; Chu et al., 2013; Rimoni & Averill, 2019).

2.3 Edgewalking and Wayfinding

The "meeting in the middle" metaphor used to describe the determination of Pasifika students and their families to meet the requirements of the dominant culture's educational system is an apt example of edgewalking. One could describe edgewalking metaphorically as taking the edges of two disparate roads and pulling them together to form a path to walk. One of the first authors to write about edgewalking is Nina Krebs (1999). She described edgewalkers who, "unlike most people, they have chosen to embrace cultural complexity, to see differences [in themselves] as enriching rather than debilitating, to walk the edge" (p.2). With this phrase, Krebs illustrated multi-ethnic individuals in the United States who were on the cusp of a new millennium. They worked through periods of racism, domination, and marginalisation by the country they called home. According to Hofstede (2011), The United States rates as one of the most individualistic countries in the world. This rating is remarkable when considering that nearly all the minority cultures living in the US are considered collectivistic (Eisenberg, 1999). Krebs' subjects describe going through periods of depression, rage, aggression, and acting out before coming to a place of acceptance and understanding of themselves and their environment. They embraced their cultural complexity and applied their talents and energies constructively for causes and endeavours about which they were passionate. As the literature, e.g. (Airini et al., 2010; Beals, Kidman, & Funaki, 2020; Beatson et al., 2018; Benseman et al., 2007; Came, 2013; Carter et al., 2017; Gauthier, 2013; Sam Manuela & Sibley, 2013) shows, this is what so many Pasifika authors, leaders, educators, scientists, and scholars, as well as those who work alongside them, are

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doing. And not only the leaders, but Pasifika of all ages are attempting. They are walking the edges of their Pasifika/Pacific cultures and those of the Papalagi, and visa-versa, working for equity and furtherance of Pasifika throughout New Zealand.

Tupuola (2004) recounts her conversations with second and third generation Pasifika youth in NZ and several multi-ethnic Pacific-American youths in the United States. Tupuola describes how both groups edgewalk between the cultures on opposite sides of the world. She explains how youths are creating "a mix or fusion" of their cultures and hence edgewalk the collectivist and individualistic concepts in a way that makes sense to them. (p.1) In his doctoral case study of male Pasifika secondary students, "Together as Brothers", M. Reynolds (2017) talks about the "survival edgewalk" of his students as they attempt to negotiate the collective world of their everyday community and the individualistic expectations of success in the classroom. Reynolds explains how relationships with peers at school are necessary to maintain connections to intrinsic Pasifika values while striving at school. Reynolds puts it this way, "Connections in the brotherhood extend beyond specific Pacific Island allegiance to embrace a wider Pasifika context." (p.138). Matapo and Baice (2020) present a metaphoric re-visioning of Pasifika educational success using the Pacific Indigenous navigational knowledge of "wayfinding" to offset the impact of the deficit narratives of this success in higher education. While wayfinding or edgewalking, Pasifika students find that they must walk the edges of their collective cultures while navigating the individualistic educational parameters required to succeed.

Other studies emphasise this inner cultural reconciliation. To this end, authors often cited Tupuola's work as the author who brought Krieb's edgewalking metaphor into the realm of Pasifika research (Beals et al., 2020; Burnett & Bond, 2019; Perrot, 2015; M. Reynolds, 2017;

Martyn Reynolds, 2018; Sauvao-Va'auli, 2017). Perrot (2015) uses the term in the context of Pasifika postgraduates and how they must balance family and community obligations with the Euro-Western, individualistic-based education in Aotearoa, New Zealand. In Burnett and Bond (2019), it is I-Kiribati tertiary students who both edgewalk or "dance" inter-culturally as well as intra-culturally, having just recently been included "as Pasifika" (p.330). Matapo and Baice (2020) use wayfinding as a metaphor for Pasifika students to connect with their collective, indigenous cultures, thus strengthening their edgewalking ability. The authors describe this well when they refer to wayfinding as "an art that affirms and generates connection, where the collective (relational self-tied to place, ancestors, people) may thrive" (p. 27).

Judith Neal has written several articles about edgewalkers and describes five edgewalker leader skills (Neal, 2011). The first skill is *the ability to understand and embrace the future*. Neal gives three different ways to do this, but the most applicable to this study is visualising how you want your world and then doing what it takes to get it done. It is not a stretch to see how this applies to those Pacific Peoples who braved leaving their home Island nations to make a new life here in New Zealand. The second skill is *risk-taking*. Neal states that those with this skill are usually seen as outliers because they follow "the road less travelled". Pasifika peoples show this risk-taking skill in everyday life as they face obstacles such as discrimination and marginalisation. The third edgewalker skill is *manifesting*. This skill means taking your dream idea or thought and making it a reality. That is what Pacific Peoples did once they arrived in NZ, and they are still manifesting. The fourth skill is *focusing*, and the fifth is *connecting*. One cannot visualise a future, take the risk to go for it, and manifest it without the ability to focus. As per Neal, connecting is what collectivist Pasifika peoples do

best: they value others, draw out the best in them, and see their uniqueness. However, as stated at the section's beginning, the edgewalking skill needs to be practised by both sides of the cultural road. In my opinion, NZ's dominant culture must hone its edgewalking skills and match those of Pasifika students, community leaders, families so that they are met in the middle.

Many aspects of the studies discussed under this theme mirror the stories of the current study's participants. Five out of the eight chose to immigrate from their respective island countries to pursue and further their education. Along with the other three New Zealand born participants, they described unique wayfinding journeys and exhibited extraordinary abilities to "dance between their worlds with grace and tenacity" (Krebs, 1999, p. 14).

2.4 Adverse Childhood Experiences and Pasifika

Abundant studies have sprung forth since the trailblazing research of Felitti et al. (1998) that linked increased incidences of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to worsening adult physical and mental health. Now that 22 years have passed, debates regarding what constitutes ACEs and how to measure them have arisen. There are now new terms such as "counter-ACEs" (Crandall et al., 2019) and other words for positive childhood experiences and how they may mitigate the effects of ACEs (Miller, Cheung, Novilla, & Crandall, 2020).

There are a scant number of studies regarding ACEs or childhood adversity within New Zealand (NZ) and even less concerning the Pasifika population. It does not mean that forms of childhood adversity do not occur in Pasifika communities and others. To varying degrees, child and family mental health issues and dysfunction exist across all the populations of New Zealand, including the Pacific Island population (Morton et al., 2012; Paterson, Tautolo,

Iusitini, & Sisk, 2018; Schluter, Tautolo, & Paterson, 2011; Walsh et al., 2019; Wilson & Nicolson, 2020). Schluter et al. (2011), one of many studies published from the ongoing Pacific Islanders Families Study (PIFS) out of Auckland, showed an increase in the incidences of child abuse in families where the father experienced abuse as a child. Another ACEs-related paper also came from the PIF study. This research concerned the perceptions of 1200 mothers (of babies born in Auckland, NZ in 2000) and how they were raised (Paterson, Faribairn-Dunlop, et al., 2007). The authors found that Island-born Tongan mothers had lower rates of childhood abuse than did Island-born Samoan women. However, the mothers born in New Zealand had higher rates of childhood abuse in general than both groups of Island-born. It is of interest that the term "abuse" or "trauma" was not used directly in both studies. The authors did not want to imply a predetermined assumption of dysfunction into the data collection process.

Xiao and Smith-Prince (2015) investigated why Pacific Island women residing in the American northwest, with histories of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) and who withheld the incident(s), delayed disclosure of their abuse. Though recruitment was extensive, only eight out of 19 qualifying participants completed the semi-structured interviews, and of these eight, only two were of South Pacific origin; Tongan and Samoan. The United States designated the other qualifying participants as Pacific Peoples (Survey, 2020). They were of Chamorro, Filipino and Hawaiian origin. The authors found that their findings supported those of other authors who studied CSA disclosure from other non-Euro-western cultures and ethnicities (Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005). These two studies, one out of the USA and the other out of the UK, respectively, were explicit about the need for cultural sensitivity by authorities and practitioners concerned with uncovering CSA and assisting victims and

their families. Gilligan & Akhtar stressed the importance of practitioners being very educated and aware of the specific culture and ethnicity of the person(s) sitting in front of them and clear about their own cultural biases and agendas. Most importantly, the authors emphasise that the applied policy and practices concerning the protection [and treatment] of children are predominantly grounded "in an Anglo-American paradigm, underpinned by a rugged individualism" (p.1374). Though not as explicit, Fontes & Plummer allude to these biases and how they are indispensable to "culturally competent" practice.

Xiao & Smith-Prince, (2015) did not appear to acknowledge the possibility of their own cultural bias in their study questions. Another observation is that the authors did not recognise that their findings were not unique to the studies previously mentioned considering their participants and those of the other studies were all from different collectivist cultures. The authors might have been more successful with their recruitment had they sought appropriate cultural consultation before recruitment efforts commenced. It is also unclear whether the authors translated the recruitment documents into the participant's first language if English was not their primary one. Additionally, there was no indication that the findings were fact-checked by allowing the participants to review transcripts. They may have missed an opportunity by not going deeper with their investigation to tease out differences between the cultures of the participants they studied and the more significant number of different ethnicities studied by the other authors just mentioned. Finally, like the PIF study authors above demonstrated, sensitivity to the collective nature of Pacific Island peoples, Pasifika, and other Indigenous populations calls for incorporating cultural values and beliefs into the research design and solicitation of the

participant input into almost every aspect of the research process.(Public Health Dialog, 2011; Tecun, Hafoka, 'Ulu'ave, & 'Ulu'ave-Hafoka, 2018; Tupuola, 2006; Vaiioleti, 2013).

2.5 Resilience and its Application to Pasifika

In New Zealand, as already stated, childhood adversity is present but other than the following study to be examined, measuring adversity in childhood using the ACEs scale (Felitti et al., 1998) though discussed, has rarely been employed for adults. I refer you to the study of Joy and Beddoe (2019), who warn about the possible future use of ACE scales by New Zealand social work practitioners. They assert that the ACE checklist does not address the colonialism, racism, and poverty issues unique to New Zealand's multicultural populations.

Much like the previous section regarding the abundance of ACE studies and adversity (internationally), there are abundant studies regarding resilience. Moreover, like ACEs, there are debates regarding the causes of resilience during childhood adversity and what makes this resilience endure into adulthood. There is also scant to no literature regarding Pasifika resilience to ACEs.

One of those rare references, though not directly specific to Pasifika, was a study by Walsh et al. (2019). They used cohort survey data from the ongoing Growing Up in New Zealand study (GUINZ) (Morton et al., 2012) together with similar studies gleaned from the northern hemisphere to construct an 8-point ACE scale. This scale was extrapolated from the adult ACEs scale from Felitti et al. (1998) and incorporated into the questionnaires given to the parents or partners of the cohort children asking about the dysfunction within the household, specifically regarding depression of the parent or partner, substance abuse,

conviction and jail time, Intimate Partner Violence, Divorce or separation, child physical abuse and child emotional abuse. They administered the ACE scale to a GUINZ cohort of 5,562 54-month-olds that included Pasifika children. They then tested the children with well-respected instruments to measure their preschool skills. The researchers used these results from both assessment tools to predict the children's readiness for primary school. The authors hoped that their findings might help develop preventative educational policies, which may help build resilience in these children, thus mitigating the further impact of their ACEs. Although quite valuable, the limitation of this study, as it applies to this thesis, is that there is no mention of, or measure of, resilience, and the Morton et al. study dealt with children from the GUINZ study, not their adult parents.

Adult stories of resilience relating to ACES in Pasifika peoples were rare, as were comparable studies regarding other New Zealand populations. However, there are abundant studies on the topic of Pasifika educational resilience, e.g. (Airini et al., 2010; Beatson et al., 2018; Benseman et al., 2007; Brighthouse, 2020; Carter et al., 2017; Chu, 2010; Chu et al., 2013; J. Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni, & O'Regan, 2009; Gorikski & Fraser, 2006; Hargraves, 2019b; Matapo, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2020; Perrot, 2015; M. Reynolds, 2017; The Education Hub, 2019). The findings in these studies outline what educational resilience is and how it might be built within the students and are very relatable to the present study's focus regarding resilience to adversity. I draw on relevant educational resilience findings and findings from studies outside of NZ that relate to resilience from abuse to describe those elements of resilience applicable to this study's participants.

It is encouraging to this researcher that studies regarding resilience and Pasifika peoples are in the education field since it is within the classroom that resilience-building potentially has

the most significant impact. Many studies to be cited show educators, and other persons in the educational institutions, are the ones named as major supports to those who might otherwise have failed. What is educational resilience? The Education Hub (2019) provides a good description of this term:

Resilience is the capacity to adapt well when faced with adversity or stress. It helps students stave off the potential negative psychological effects of challenging experiences. It involves more than continuing to persist despite difficulty: resilient students interpret academic or social challenges in a positive way. This may include increasing effort, developing new strategies, or practising conflict resolution. (p.1)

As mentioned in the previous section, primary, secondary, and tertiary Pasifika students in New Zealand historically have underperformed in evaluative test scores. Despite improvements over the last ten years, there is consensus in the literature that necessary institutional components that may serve to promote more significant improvement are slow to materialise (M. Reynolds, 2017; Martyn Reynolds, 2018; Rimoni & Averill, 2019). Current studies repeatedly emphasise that the educational system needs to be more rigorous to incorporate the collective values of relationships into educational practice for Pasifika students to thrive. Martyn Reynolds (2018) emphasises this point when he discusses the Pacific origin concept of *va*, which, as stated in the glossary of this thesis, is a Samoan word that describes the space in which two or more people relate to one another or their environment. Reynolds refers to *va* as an "always-existing relational space between people and things which is founded on a common spiritual origin through a shared creation" (p. 73). As mentioned in the first theme of this chapter, Pacific/Pasifika peoples value relationships in all dealings between people, from the mundane to the formal. This relational space is

underpinned by motivation, a positive sense of self and confidence (O'Shea, Tuagalu, & Henning, 2014). "Teu le va" by Airini et al., 2010, describes both the ethical standard and an approach to research and policy in Pasifika education. According to Airini et al., *teu le vā* "is the cultural reference point to take care of the va, the relationship" (p.11). This collectivist relationality is fundamental to student success and their ability to "stay the course" and be resilient. The findings of M. Reynolds (2017) support this. He shows that when the teacher practices *teu le vā* and takes time to know the student, this effort increases connectedness. This increased relationality increases student motivation by producing more ease and comfort. Practised in this way, *teu le vā* builds resilience in the student and the teacher. It is reciprocal. (p.178)

Perrot (2015), in his Master's thesis, studied eight Pasifika postgraduate students who were deemed failures before entering university. Perrot was able to document the mechanisms of motivation the previously underachieving students used to succeed. Together with sheer determination, these postgraduates pointed to their resilience, supported by culture, family, and community, as fundamental to their ultimate academic success. These students did not receive this kind of support in their primary and secondary education. Even so, support from their Pasifika peers, their families, and their community never wavered. According to Eisenberg (1999), the determination they demonstrated, coming from a more communal perspective, is not self-determination in the way a Palagi like myself might conceive of it; but is "collective-determination", a determination fed by, and stemming from connectedness to family and community. (p.255)

In a similar study, Bessey and Gonzalez (2018) studied seven American doctoral students who persevered through the aftershocks of extreme childhood adversity and became

academics. Like those of Perrot (2015), their findings illuminated the dogged perseverance of the participants to succeed. The participants all scored more than the four or more ACEs, as required for recruitment, with the lowest score being seven and the highest 10.³ All, but one, were considered "minorities"- five Latin Americans one African American. These two ethnic groups were raised in collectivistic family cultures (Chapman, 1991; Eisenberg, 1999; Krebs, 1999) but brought up in a mega-individualistic country. The same is true in a study of 10 African American college students raised in foster homes in the U.S. Lane (2017) describes how these participants were removed from their families by child protective services due to severe abuse. They were placed with foster care families, many of which were abusive as well. In both studies, the participants' determination and perseverance helped them 'buck' the statistics that typically predicted failure (Anda & Felitti, 2014; Jay, 2017). Lane found that having something to prove to themselves and others was another factor, and each of them felt that the abuse motivated them not to repeat the cycle.

In neither study did the participants do this without support. Bessey & Gonzalez (2018) emphasised how relationships were the foundation of their participants' success. A couple of participants received support from their friends' families. One stated that he needed to know what a "normal" family looked like, and all the participants could point to a teacher or other educator that never gave up on them. The participants made school their community, using it and school activities as their primary source of validation. In Lane's African American

³ Please see (Felitti et al., 1998) for more information regarding ACEs study

students, each participant maintained adequate ego strength despite their dysfunctional family and received support from other extended family members outside of the nuclear family. And then, after "aging out" ⁴, they also had the support of the social workers and agencies that helped them with housing and referred them to other support programs. In both studies, participants battled with low self-esteem while receiving negative messages from society in general and family members at home. Bessey and Gonzalez made a critical point, supported by several other authors (Brighthouse, 2020; Matapo & Baice, 2020; Perrot, 2015) that being "at-risk" does not mean they are problems to "be fixed". From a researcher point of view, they are assets to be discovered.

Before moving into Social Ecological Resilience, starting and ending this theme with Pasifika research is apposite. I have chosen a small qualitative study by Beatson et al. (2018). These authors set out to investigate three Pasifika midwifery students and how they experienced studying in a New Zealand university's Bachelor of Midwifery Programme and what helped them stay in the programme. This study was small, but its message was mighty. According to the authors, of the registered midwives in New Zealand, only 2.2% of them were Pasifika. This statistic came as a surprise to this researcher, who assumed that Pasifika women would make up a more significant percentage of those practising in this field, considering the increase in Pacific Islander populations over the last 16 years (Stats NZ, 2018). It is no surprise that Beatson et al. hoped that, by documenting the experiences of these Pasifika

⁴ Meaning they reached the age of 18 or in some cases 20.

midwifery students, their contribution would benefit the acquisition and retention of future students in the field.

The determination to succeed and the ability to fit in are two resilience qualities hitherto identified in previously cited studies' participants and were subthemes in Beatson et al. (2018) findings. Another even more relevant subtheme identified in their research was collectivism. Under the collectivism subtheme, a student answered the question, "What could the school do better to support you?" Her answer sums up the importance of adding the collective Pasifika voice and perspective to this field and New Zealand Aotearoa educational institutions in general:

How Pacific work, function as a whole, is that everything is about us, our family, our community. It's not about individuals. It's not about me being me, sort of thing. It's about "us" always. So, I'm down in Dunedin (at orientation), but I'm there with my whole family. When you're doing stuff, it's like there's a guy that spoke the other day, and he said, "This is the problem with Pacific women: they come over here, they live in their homes as a family; as a unit. Everything is about the benefit of that family; it's not about the betterment of one individual. Then they go to school, and at school, it's all about the individual".(p. 48)

This statement is an apt lead-in to the final theme of this review.

2.6 Social Ecological Resilience

As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, Social Ecological Resilience in the literature is the mirrored bookend to the first theme of Collectivism and Individualism. Briefly, to review, collectivism in a cultural context means that members of the family, extended family, and the community, for example, focus on what is best for the collective group rather than the individual. A Pasifika individual, as a member of a collectivistic culture, is motivated by the group, meaning family and extended family, goals and will quickly put the good of family ahead of their individual goals (Calahan, 2020). How does this correlate to SER?

The literature reviewed so far has listed, defined and categorised the term resilience in many ways, but with an over-emphasis on individuals' temperaments, abilities, innate qualities, and learned coping mechanisms (Liebenberg & Moore, 2016). The operative word here is "individual". As was previously mentioned, most of the literature regarding both ACEs and resilience has come from individualistic countries in the northern hemisphere. It should not be a surprise that from this individualistic viewpoint, resilience focuses on how well the individual can withstand, overcome, or endure adversity and what personal traits make this happen. Indeed, as Bandura (1995) pointed out in the first theme, individualists applaud this self-efficacy and beating the odds and mistakenly claim it as unique to individualism.

SER, then, describes the nature of resilience for a collectivistic culture well. Moreover, it describes resilience well, regardless of cultural value. However, one's cultural environment becomes an integral aspect of an ecological perspective on trauma and resilience.

Social ecological resilience or SER is best described as an ongoing process of interactions between an individual's internal psychology, biology, social and mental capabilities, and skills, for example, with the external support systems available to them and the greater

context in which they and these external resources inhabit (Moore et al., 2019). SER describes resilience in a way that takes into consideration all aspects of the environment. The word "environment" in this context is complex. It includes the political environment, social environment, ethnic and cultural environment, and the psychosocial aspects of the individual (Bookchin, 2007b; Moore et al., 2019; Rutter, 2012). SER has evolved from the fields of Community Psychology (Trickett, 1996) and Social Ecology (Bookchin, 2007a)

In every study already cited, the participants that displayed resilience, regardless of how the authors defined it, were supported by their environment in some way *and* bolstered by whatever coping mechanism they could use to self-soothe (Bessey & Gonzalez, 2018; Bogar & Hulse-Killacky, 2006; Lane, 2017). The environment may have been hostile and motivated them to leave permanently or temporarily to other less intimidating environments. The situation within the context of the abuse may have helped victims by keeping distracted, for example, by taking care of others in the family, or they used the distraction and escaped by going to school, being involved in athletics or other numerous ways to stay away from the abuse. The environmental influence might have been the intervention of a family member or an agency or a teacher or school official. Or the kindness and example of friends and their families. As already stated, resilience appears to be contextual. Culture, family, and the socio-political environment play a significant role in resilience, whether in the face of abuse or adversity stemming from living within a culture other than your own. It was particularly evident for Pasifika students whose roots are planted in their indigenous heritage.

With the Pasifika students, there were repeated descriptions of how the educational environment needed to be more relational, more in tune with their internalised and external collective supports if Pasifika students were to excel scholastically. These descriptions

proved true, as evidence by the documented increased successes of Pasifika students in culturally sensitive PTE's (private training establishments) (Benseman et al., 2007). Further, the resilience of the Pasifika academics of this present study, save one, was intrinsically connected to involvement in the community, their family, and for many, their church. In the frontmost of their minds was what their actions would bring to the collective whole. As the Pasifika midwifery student stated in the quote above, "it's about us always" (Beatson et al., 2018).

SER has gained momentum in psychological and sociological research, shifting from general and global environmental emphasis to a more trauma-centred focus that includes culture and community (DeCandia & Guarino, 2015). However, research that takes a more ecological view of trauma and resilience evolved from community psychology and social ecology as far back as 1996 (Bookchin, 2007b; Trickett, 1996). Community psychology emphasises the reciprocity between environment and community and its impact on the psychological resilience of its members. Bookchin, a lifelong social activist and prolific writer, inserted socio-political problems into the global environmental crisis, stressing that the lives of the individual should be seen holistically and that all facets of its socio-political environment should be treated as equally crucial to a healthy ecosystem (p. 117-18). SER combines psychological impacts on the individual with those of the communal, familial and socio-political atmosphere. Pasifika authors, such as Perrot (2015), appear to agree with this "wrap around" notion of resilience:

[...]it is important to view Pasifika resiliency through a holistic approach.

Pasifika peoples are generally collectivist in nature. Despite distinctions, they

share the importance of relationships, family, and community and are interdependent on these factors(p.18).

Individual strengths such as competence, determination to succeed, and selflessness, are augmented by the external support systems available to them, whether they are far away on their home island or immediately available. The community connection transcends distance. One can see how the dynamics of SER come into play. When landing in a new environment that proves to be challenging or arriving in a new environment after leaving a harsh environment, one is vulnerable and must rely on their self-efficacy. However, if this is to bear fruit in the long run, external support systems need to be there.

Furthermore, as Bandura (1995) so aptly put, as quoted in the beginning theme of this review, one's belief in themselves is crucial to persevere in adverse circumstances, whether one is part of a collectivist culture or an individualistic one. But for the Pasifika peoples discussed in this review, the words of Alofa, a Xiao & Smith-Prince (2015) Samoan survivor of childhood adversity, make the most sense:

In Samoan culture they're very clear and you know there's always people around you. And I mean, I think that helps. Just like a group support system. You can find or make one always in your culture. And even if you know they don't have all the right words or all the statistics, they're still true. That this is not gonna be the way it is forever. So, you can cry, but you don't need to cry for long. (p. 379)

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

The purpose of chapter three is to provide a road map of this study and describe the main concepts that form the basis of the thesis. It will detail additional research questions inspired by the literature review. The overall qualitative research paradigm follows, which is then further delineated by the research philosophy of Critical Realism (CR) merged with Talanoa Principles. Descriptions of Talanoa Principles and CR are next, followed by a discussion of how they work together. Before continuing, it is noteworthy that first, Talanoa is a Pacific way of dialogue or "talk", the word originating in the languages of Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Second, Talanoa, or "story dialogue", is a common form of communication throughout most Pacific Island cultures in and outside of Aotearoa, New Zealand. And third, more importantly, it is an essential part of Pacific research methodology and a necessary part of this thesis which involves working with Pasifika/Pacific participants (Tecun et al., 2018, p. 157). Next are discussions regarding reflexivity, ethical and cultural considerations, trustworthiness, and limitations. Lastly, a description of how the principles of Talanoa are applied in the data collection process is next, followed by a detailed description of the data analysis process.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Theoretical Influences

The overall paradigm chosen for this research project is qualitative, meaning that it is more concerned with listening to and understanding the experiences of the academic participants. Understanding their experiences is more important than "looking for an outcome", which is the goal of quantitative research (Merriam, 2009). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016),

qualitative research seeks to answer questions or explore a topic. More Inductive than deductive in approach, the qualitative researcher is guided by the subject or questions while gathering information from the research participants. The data collected is analysed, and then patterns and consistencies are detected and explored. The original questions may or may not be answered, and broad conclusions are drawn from the findings, then discussed. (Trochim, 2020).

This research explores the internal and external factors that may have formed and supported Pasifika academics' resilience while they endured adversities in their childhoods. Patterns and commonalities in their adverse experiences and resilience factors were explored, as were characteristics unique to the participants. This study does not hypothesise or search for a specific outcome to match a theory. Instead, it presents possible explanations and implications from the findings.

Critical Realism (CR), with the primacy of its multi-layered ontology and emphasis on causality, proved to be an effective methodology, and even more so when informed by the principles of Talanoa. Talanoa Principles, as opposed to Talanoa methodology, set the tone for the overall research process and were particularly useful during the data collection method of unstructured interviews. Before unpacking the Research Design, it is necessary to summarise both CR and Talanoa Principles and what they mean in the context of this research project.

3.2.1 Talanoa Principles:

As stated previously, Talanoa is a Pacific Island mode of discourse steeped in meaning, rich tradition, and extensive history (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). The word "tala" has many

meanings such as: to command, to inform, relay information, have a chat, to talk, relate and discuss and "noa" is translated to common, easy, of no consequence or value (Vaiotele, 2013). It can be as formal as Pacific community leaders discussing important business or as casual as two friends talking and sharing food. Regardless of the context in which talanoa happens, it is known and practised by most Pacific communities throughout Oceania (Tecun et al., 2018).

There is a line from the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue Platform that lays out the principles of talanoa, "The purpose of Talanoa is to share stories, build empathy and to make wise decisions for the collective good" (COP23, 2018). The Talanoa Platform stresses the ideals of equal participation and mutual transparency. In this, study Talanoa Principles were applied during data collection using unstructured interviews. These principles decreased the separation between this researcher and the participants, giving "a human face that the participants can relate to (Vaiotele, 2006b)". Using talanoa with the Pasifika academics made the goals of full disclosure, empathy, and transparency explicit.

3.2.2 Critical Realism

The Talanoa Principles of empathy and connection set the tone of this research and tempered the more abstract methodology of Critical Realism (CR). Summarising CR challenged this researcher due to the enormous number of CR philosophical derivatives and the subsequent debates since Roy Bhaskar initiated the CR movement in the late 1970s. The impetus of the CR movement began soon after the publication of Bhaskar's first two books, *A Realist Theory of Science* (1978) and *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979). In the former,

Bhaskar puts forth a new “non-empiricist” ontology as an alternative to the traditional ontologies of positivism (objectivism, realism) and constructivism (subjectivism, relativism).

Bhaskar (2008) reveals the “epistemic fallacy” of both paradigms, asserting that they reduce reality, or what exists, to what we know of reality or what exists. The epistemic fallacy is at the heart of CR philosophy (Peter & Park, 2018; Scambler, 2016). As Peter & Park explain, a positivist (objectivist) views reality as independent of human beliefs but then reduces this reality to what can be known through scientific methods, as in quantitative research.

Conversely, a constructivist views reality as variable and entirely created “through and within” interpretation and knowledge, thus reducing reality to one’s understanding of reality (p. 66). Whereas both approaches attempt to identify reality, CR postulates that we can endeavour only to approach reality and never completely apprehend it (Bhaskar, 2015).

CR’s ontological approach appealed to this researcher because it presents reality as layered, complex, and impossible to establish ultimately or conclusively. Two other considerations went into choosing CR as a methodology. One was CR’s focus on the nature of causality. The other was CR’s flexibility. According to Leung and Chung (2019, p. 840), “critical realism provides flexibility for researchers to explore deeper latent meanings and mechanisms underlying the phenomenon and to posit explanations of how and why the phenomenon is as it is”. (p. 840)

CR ontology takes into consideration the complex nature of the social and natural worlds. It acknowledges the myriad of structures, cultures, and human interactions and how these ‘entities’ interact (Archer et al., 2016). CR ontology is divided into three tiers, as shown in Figure 1. As A. J. Fletcher (2017) illustrates, the upper tier is the “Empirical” level. The

Empirical level of reality is the experiential (epistemological) level where social events and experiences occur, filtered by and through the interpretations and interactions between human beings. At this stratum, for example, the life stories shared by each participant are interpreted through their perception of what they experienced. The mid or “Actual” level is where events happen whether we experience them or not. It is at the “Real” level of reality

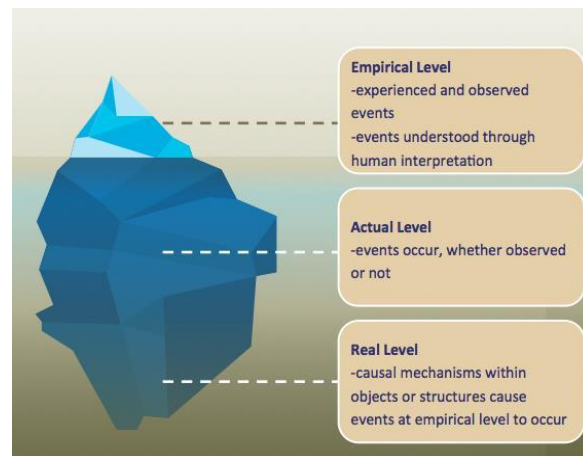


FIGURE 1. AN ICEBERG METAPHOR FOR CR ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY(FLETCHER, 2016, P. 6)

that causative forces within social structures generate the phenomenon experienced at the Empirical level. This level is central to CR ontology.

It is central to CR because the causal forces are “intransitive”, meaning they exist even if they are not detected. And even though they are not seen, they are responsible for the events at the epistemological (transitive) level (Bhaskar, 2008, 2015, 2016). CR was, therefore, useful in this study as it enabled the researcher to investigate with a critical eye those factors that may have either facilitated or inhibited the resilience of the participants studied. This ability broadened the study’s aim of documenting participants’ stories of resilience and what they believed contributed to their stability. It also enables a deeper investigation into the potential causal factors of their resilience. According to Peter and Park

(2018), CR achieves this investigation by “retroduction”, an analytic process of “moving back

and forth from the empirical to the real “to identify these forces of change. In the words of Bhaskar (2010):

...we will only be able to understand-and so change-the social world if we identify the structures at work that generate those events and discourses...These structures are not spontaneously apparent in the observable pattern of events; they can only be identified through the practical and theoretical work of the social sciences. (pp. 2-3).

This in-depth process of analysis is discussed in section 3.9.

3.2.3 Talanoa Principles and Critical Realism and Rationale

How do Critical Realism and Talanoa work together in this study? As mentioned in the introduction to this section, Talanoa Principles centre around building emotional intimacy and transparency between participants and the researcher. I worked with Pasifika academics and found that the participants appreciated the use of Talanoa Principles during the unstructured interviews and created a warm and genuine atmosphere during data collection. This methodological addition to the research design generated in-depth sharing that produced richer data for the intense inquiry that critical realism demands. There is more discussion regarding this in the Data Collection.

This is not to say that methodological philosophies other than CR and Talanoa are wrong or could not be applied to this study. For example, I investigated the use of Ethnographic methodology. This methodological approach has its origin in anthropology, in which researchers studied a group of people within their own environment and culture.

Ethnographic research focuses on the experiences and culture of the participant group and frequently includes the researcher being immersed in the culture and daily life of the participants (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Since studies using ethnography are usually longitudinal with fieldwork and multiple informal interviews, it did not fit the limited timeline of this study.

I also explored narrative research methodology. The narrative research design is like ethnographic research but has a different focus. The focus of narrative research is on the story of an individual's life. It is often used to record and report the stories of a small number of participants regarding a single event they have all gone through, such as cancer screening or an earthquake. It is a form of inquiry that focuses on people's meaning of what happened to them rather than what happened (Papakitsou, 2020). There is commonly a "restorying" of the stories gathered and a re-telling after data analysis (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002). This study is not focused on re-telling the participants' stories or presenting them chronologically, as is frequently done in narrative research. Though this thesis considers how the participants make meaning of what happened to them, it does so in the context of their personal history. Stories were collected, but only to discover "processes or pathways through which an outcome is brought about" (Little, 2011), both known and unknown, and how these causal mechanisms produced resilience. Because of these considerations, using CR together with Talanoa Principles proved to be effective in the philosophical underpinnings of this research.

3.3 Reflexivity, Cultural Competency and Ethics:

3.3.1 Reflexivity

Braun & Clark (2013) were asked about what was needed to become a “good qualitative researcher”. The authors emphasised one overriding element they felt was essential: “developing a qualitative sensibility”. A qualitative sensibility referred to how one must place themselves relative to doing research and listed were several significant factors, including,

...the ability to reflect on, and step outside, your cultural membership, to become a cultural commentator – so that you can see, and question, the shared values and assumptions that make up being a member of a particular society. This involves identifying your own assumptions, and then putting them aside (referred to as bracketing them off) so that your research is not automatically shaped by these. It is hard to do, but vitally important for being able to get ‘deep’ into qualitative data. (p 9)

I had to start “stepping outside” of my cultural identity from the inception of my research with Pasifika academics. It was not just a matter of reading about the multicultural populations of New Zealand with a focus on Pacific Island peoples. The first step was to investigate my cultural leanings and biases. It was not an easy process, but it was illuminating. As mentioned in Chapter One, coming from an Individualistic country such as the United States and being a Caucasian and a retired female brought the differences between my participants and myself into sharp focus. The cultural orientations of the Pasifika participants and myself were juxtaposed to each other. Each one of my cultural facets could have potentially influenced this study for better or ill. Therefore, my

understanding of reflexivity became crucial. According to Haynes (2012), reflexivity is more than just “reflecting” on how one performs, feels or thinks. It is also an ongoing examination process of what the researcher is thinking and how one’s life experiences, philosophical viewpoints, and cultural biases can influence the interpretation of the data and the research process from start to finish.

This constant self-questioning allowed me to set aside the “therapist hat” and my “cultural membership” while respecting my role as a researcher. Setting these labels aside lent a certain amount of objectivity while listening to the intimate life stories of the Pasifika participants without sacrificing empathy. The participants volunteered to tell their stories of how they persevered through their childhood adversity. Some of those stories entailed brutality. As they told their stories, I encountered tensions between my professional training, such as to what extent I self-disclose and self-mandate to adhere to Talanoa Principles of transparency and empathy; and maintain my role as the researcher. I found these tensions to be more positive than negative. Haynes (2012) points out that “a researcher engaging in reflexive research may encounter tensions in the extent of self-disclosure and focus on the processes of research [sic]”. Awareness of these tensions during the interview process did not sacrifice empathy OR transparency, “reflexivity enables research to be insightful, questioning, inter-subjective and transparent on a number of different levels.” (p 7).

Reflexivity involved acknowledging the assumptions and preconceptions I may have brought into the research, what to watch out for, and what to keep in check, a sort of “quality control”(Clark & Braun, 2013, p. 37). Reflexivity in this study forced me to go beyond my demographics and brought on a new awareness of my cultural and personal upbringing.

This awareness allowed for a greater understanding of my participants' journeys and the concepts of "insider' and outsider" perspectives (Beals et al., 2020).

Being conscious of the above tensions assisted me in managing the desire to do therapy with a few of the participants. For example, one participant's trauma issues still lingered, which brought out her need to be accepted and validated in the interview. Ethical boundaries came into play, as did personal boundaries when the participant expressed the desire to see me socially. I maintained rapport and compassion while explaining the ethical limitations.

Finally, reflexivity during data analysis produced an awareness of my culturally individualistic assumptions while constructing themes involving participants' resilience factors. Was I seeing a factor not consciously known to a participant, or did I pick it out because of my therapeutic background and my American version of resilience factors? Was I seeing what I wanted to see due to attachment to a particular theme or participant? The questions were some of the positive aspects of reflexivity that expanded my awareness of the participants, increased my understanding of Pasifika culture in New Zealand, and, more importantly, helped me grow not just as a researcher but as a person.

3.3.2 Cultural Sensitivity

If there is no trust and respect, then participants will not fully trust you with any of the information that they wish to share. This relationship determines the depth and authenticity of information and knowledge shared... it is about the relationship that you develop with your participants (Meo-Sewabu, Hughes, & Stewart-Withers, 2017, p. 14)

The above quote is from the Pacific Research Guidelines & Protocols (PRGP) of Massey University. Consultation and advice were essential during every phase of my thesis, precisely because of my lack of research experience and ethnicity and background. To this end, I endeavoured to follow the PRGP's five essential research principles for conducting studies with Pacific/Pasifika participants. These five principles are: 1) *Respect for Relationships*: Follow all cultural protocols and processes throughout all phases of the research, including confidentiality, and to be humble and respectful; 2) *Respect for Knowledge Holders*: Pacific knowledge and wellbeing are central to the research and participants are the "knowledge holders" and involved while obtaining informed consent; 3) *Reciprocity*: The research must benefit Pacific/Pasifika participants and communities in some way, including access to the research findings; 4) *Holism*: Acknowledge and understand Pasifika/Pacific environmental, cultural and spiritual aspects of the research with communities; and lastly, 5) *Using Research to Do Good*: Ensure these principles are central while developing the rationale for, and the aim of, the research; and that it be rigorous, scholarly and its beneficence includes the study's integrity, process, its potential outcomes and its impact. (p. 12)

To honour the above principles, I consulted with experienced Pacific/Pasifika researchers through all phases of this study. This included my secondary supervisor, the former director of the Pacific Islander Families Study (PIFS) and its founder. I sought guidance from my Pasifika cultural advisors in creating the study's recruitment flyer and the Participant Information Sheet. My cultural supervisor advised me to be very transparent in the Participant Information Sheet, letting the participants know more than just my race and nationality. This transparency entailed disclosing my professional history as a Marriage and Family therapist, including how long I was in practice, my trauma speciality, and the makeup

of my patients/clients. It also included details of my recent immigration to New Zealand and the reasons for studying Pasifika cultures. I also did not specify what constituted childhood adversity or what defined “academic” to avoid any professional or cultural bias during recruitment.

3.3.3 Ethics

This study adhered to the *Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research to ensure that* the participants' wellbeing, safety and privacy, and cultural considerations were protected. I obtained Ethical approval through the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) for each of this study's modifications (see Appendix A) prior to commencement of data collection. I sent or handed the Consent Form (see Appendix B) to each participant. The signed form was obtained prior to their participation, either by email or in-person. One participant forgot their consent form, so the researcher audio-recorded the reading of the consent form and the participant's consent before starting the interview. The consent portion of the recording is separate from the interview itself. Before receiving the Consent Form, the participants were sent the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B).

With the Consent form, participants were informed of how long interviews would be, how they would be recorded, who would transcribe them and how and where the interview venue was chosen. Participants were also given a choice to receive copies of the transcribed interviews prior to data analysis and copies of the findings before the final submission of this thesis.

3.4 Validity and Trustworthiness:

There are variations in describing the criterion for validity, also called trustworthiness, in qualitative writing. Of those criteria, four measures of validity were achieved. The first was described extensively in the section on reflexivity. I actively engaged in self-evaluation at every stage of this research by keeping a running journal on my laptop. With a reflexive approach and open discussion with the participants, my bias in the study was kept in check. (Cypress, 2017). Ethics approval, cultural advisors, extensive research on Pacific and Pasifika cultures, and my overall transparency contributed to decreasing cultural bias in the study. My research participants were also consulted during the transcription of the interviews and while assembling my findings. They will also have access to the approved findings of this study.

Member checking(Haynes, 2012, p. 257) was utilised to increase the validity of the data collected. The transcripts were sent to the participants prior to data analysis to ensure the trustworthiness of the data collected and its accuracy. This precaution also lent credibility to the data collection process. The findings were sent to the participants before submission to ensure that the researcher's interpretations and conclusions accurately represented the participants' history and culture. This action also added to the validity of the study. And finally, every step of this research was reviewed by both the researcher's supervisors.

3.5 Study Participants, Sampling/Recruitment and Study Site:

3.5.1 Study Participants:

The sample was drawn from Pasifika academics in Auckland universities who identified as someone who experienced childhood adversity. "Childhood" meant between birth to 18 years old. The terms "academic" and "adversity" were not defined. This allowed for self-

identification of their academic status and self-identification of what adversity meant to them. As discussed in Chapter One and the Cultural Sensitivity section above, the researcher wanted to avoid cultural bias in either one of those definitions.

3.5.2 Sampling/Recruitment:

There are two basic types of sampling: probability sampling and nonprobability sampling. Random sampling allows the researcher to generalise findings from the population sampled and then statistically measure results. It follows then that most qualitative studies perform nonprobability sampling. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because this research is a qualitative study, nonprobability sampling was used. Merriam & Tisdell (2016) explain that nonprobability sampling is used when the researcher plans to use the data collected to “solve qualitative problems, such as discovering what occurs...and the relationships linking the occurrences” (Honigmann, 1982 as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, p 96).

Merriam & Tisdell (2016) explained that the standard form of nonprobabilistic sampling used in qualitative research is purposive, also known as purposeful. Crossman (2018) further described the sampling of the study as “homogenous” purposive sampling. According to Crossman, it is homogenous because a) the researcher conducted an in-depth inquiry into b) a specific topic (resilience) within c) a select group, Pasifika academics, which were d) directly related to the area being studied. Further, Clark and Braun (2013) stated that when samples are chosen based on accessibility, it is referred to as “Convenience Sampling”. The sampling process worked well because of the accessibility of Pasifika academics within Auckland’s universities.

After receiving ethics approval from AUTECH, recruitment began. The first type of recruitment conducted was by email. I collected Pasifika academics' emails from public university faculty profiles and student and academic referrals. Recruitment flyers were also posted at Auckland universities as per their posting guidelines. I listed my email and text phone number on the flyers. Those recruited by email were sent an introductory invitation to participate in this study via the researcher's university email. The participants who responded to either recruitment method were contacted via an email with attached Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms. Once the respondents confirmed their interest, an interview was scheduled. Those who responded less quickly were sent one follow-up email. This process continued until a total of eight participants confirmed their interest and interviews set up. See Appendix B for the recruitment documents.

3.5.3 Study Site(s)

All but two Interviews took place at mutually agreed-upon locations at either the researcher's campus or the participant's campus. The other two were conducted via Zoom due to the first COVID 19 lockdown. Sites were selected with both the privacy and convenience of the participants in mind.

3.6 Data Collection:

As previously mentioned in this chapter, unstructured interviews were used as the data collection method for each participant. Christenbery (2017) describes three different types of individual interviews in qualitative research (see figure 2) Semi-structured, with predetermined questions asked of each participant and the control of the interview in the researcher's hands. The second type is the Informal interview, done in the field within their

environment with no set group of questions. Field notes are taken rather than audio recordings. The third type is the non-structured interview that is open-ended and without set questions. In this environment, participants are free to express themselves, and the primary control is in the participant's hands.

Talanoa Principles merged well with the unstructured interviewing of Pasifika participants. O'Shea et al. (2014) describes how talanoa can set up the space for this interview process:

Within the talanoa space, if individuals are given time to express themselves and their issues entirely, conversation becomes animated and authentic, thus optimising the cultivation of wellbeing within the circle of entities. Conversation is natural and progressive, rather than confined by a specific agenda. (p. 123)

The issue of control was an important factor in the decision to use unstructured interviews. This mode of interviewing was the most appropriate choice of interview-style when abuse or adversity in childhood is being discussed. (Corbin & Morse, 2003; Indeed.com, 2020). Corbin & Morse (2003) learned from their study that participants felt safer and more relaxed when given more control over the interview process, knowing they had a choice of how much detail to reveal (p. 337).

By using unsolicited interviews in the context of talanoa, it produced a relaxed atmosphere. The participants expressed gratitude for this element of the data collection process.

Type of Interview	Definition	Example
Semi-structured	An interview in which participants are asked to respond to a list of topics to be covered in the interview as compared with a predetermined arrangement of structured questions. Often an interview guide is used with a list of topics to be covered but the interview may follow various trajectories stemming from the designated topics.	“What is your perception of the concept of compassion?”
Unstructured	An interview without the use of an interview guide. Instead the interviewer builds rapport and trust with the participant who then provides free expression of thought about a topic.	“Describe what your pain experience was like prior to using the intervention.”
Informal	Interviewer talks to participants in the field (i.e., observing people in their usual roles) without a formal interview guide.	“How is working with the Habitat for Humanity team different from working with other teams?”

TABLE 1 TYPES OF QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS (CHRISTENBERY, 2017)

Due to the COVID 19 lockdowns, two interviews took place via Zoom. One participant did not have his consent form, so it was read to him. Both the reading and his consent were audio recorded. The interviews began with shared greetings and introductions. The participants were informed about the goal of the study and asked if they had any questions. At the beginning of the interview, some participants needed more guidance than others, but all the interviews went smoothly. As per the intent of talanoa, the Interviews ranged from 1 hour and 10 minutes to just over 2 hours.

As described under section 3.2.1, Talanoa Principles, the principles of inclusion, participation and transparency were evident in each of the interviews. Cultural bias showed up when a participant asked me a question about my life. This was a direct request for transparency. My response was nearly automatic, coming from my experience as a psychotherapist, “Oh, but this is your time to share”. Smiling, the participant reminded me that “talanoa is about sharing experiences...”. This faux pas made us laugh and laid a solid foundation for both rapport and empathy. There was much laughter during the interviews and indicated a

general level of trust and comfort. Transparency was natural, dictated by the context of each interview. The participant in each case determined the end of the interview.

The interviews were audio-recorded using an iPhone 8. In the first two interviews, two devices were used, the iPhone and a Panasonic digital recorder. This was to ensure the accuracy of the recordings and to have a backup recording in case one device stopped working. After the second interview, the new Panasonic recorder stopped working. The rest of the interviews were iPhone-recorded, including the two that were recorded via an encrypted Zoom account. All recordings were immediately uploaded to the researcher's Otter.ai account that was protected by two-step authentication. This online software performs a preliminary transcription of audio conversations. The researcher thoroughly edited these transcriptions online and then uploaded them in encrypted formats to both the OneDrive cloud and the researcher's laptop.

3.7 Thematic Analysis:

The analytic process used in this study is thematic analysis (TA). I chose TA because it is flexible and accessible and added precision to the analysis of the qualitative data. TA is an analysis process used to assist the researcher in coding qualitative data, then identifying and analysing themes within the data (V. Braun & Clark, 2018). NVIVO 2020 data analysis software aided in this process with its superior capability to enable researchers in the TA process. The researcher followed Braun & Clark's 6-phase process of analysing the data.

Before describing this process, it is important to note that TA fits well with this study's overall qualitative paradigm and the methodology of critical realism (with Talanoa Principles). There were two other reasons for this. First, TA systematically and intuitively

immerse oneself into the data, emphasising the researcher's subjectivity as integral to the process (Braun et al., 2017). The second reason is that the “analysis is seen as something created by the researcher, at the intersection of the data, their theoretical and conceptual frameworks, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills and experience “(p 20). This reason, along with TA’s expectation of and encouragement to go into “great depth(s) of engagement” with the data, is in keeping with the study's critical realist perspective and investigative aspect.

Other methods of analysis were explored but were discarded in favour of TA. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis or IPA is a “subject-centred” method that uses small sample sizes. It focuses on participant experiences and meanings through one major life event (Warren, 2020). Since this study explores many happenings within the stories of the participants, TA was better suited. It was also a better fit when compared with Narrative Analysis, which is usually paired with a narrative methodological approach (Papakitsou, 2020), not TA. As was discussed previously in my rationale for using CR (section 3.2.3), a narrative methodology was not a fit for this study. Terry, Hayfield, Clark, and Braun (2017), emphasise how TA’s flexibility is due to TA’s independence from “any particular epistemological and ontological base” (p. 7). According to the authors, it is for this reason that CR is one of many approaches used with TA and why it is best suited for this research.

The first phase of thematic analysis-familiarising oneself with the data-began during data collection. After each interview was completed, the audio file was immediately uploaded to Otter.ai, an online program that did an initial transcription. The researcher then “re-transcribed” each interview, listening to each multiple times. This proved to be a valuable, yet lengthy, process for two reasons. The first was the length of each interview. The

interviews, being unstructured, were of various lengths. The shortest unstructured interview was 1 hour and 11 minutes, and the longest was nearly three hours. The second reason was that Otter.ai did not account for New Zealand accents nor the different Pacific accents of the participants.

Once completed online, each transcript was downloaded in a Word format onto the researcher's laptop. Each Word file was edited while the researcher listened one or two times more to the original audio file stored in the researcher's laptop. This conscientiousness was done for accuracy since the original audio file was clearer than the uploaded audio file on Otter.ai. This thorough familiarisation of the data set is what Terry et al. (2017) asserted when describing TA as both "iterative and repetitive" as opposed to linear. This process was validated through to the final phase.

Each transcript, once approved by the participant, was imported into Nvivo 20. Once all the transcripts were imported, the researcher familiarised herself with the data, reading each uploaded file (transcript) for accuracy. Through repeated readings, the researcher logged initial ideas and impressions by way of annotations and memos. After feeling familiar with my participant's stories, I began phase two, generating codes. This initial coding was a more surface level coding (semantic-level) at first, going over each transcript and coding initial ideas, meanings, and impressions, keeping in mind the research questions. The process continued as I looked for similarities, differences, and regularities and deleted some codes and consolidated others. Viewing the data from the standpoint of CR, factors that influenced or inhibited resilience became apparent, some of which the participants were not aware of. This coding process readied me for the third and fourth phases: Searching, Identifying and then Reviewing (and refining) themes (Clark & Braun, 2013)

I combined the third and fourth phases because, as was previously mentioned, this process is not linear. Initially, I organised the codes according to the research questions, and candidate themes became apparent. I mapped this process out by hand to see the larger picture. I identified similarities to the major themes found in the NVIVO project for my literature review. I merged the two projects. At first, this felt cumbersome. However, after some reorganising, the added information from the Literature review helped to refine the themes. After mapping the themes by hand and finding relevant extracts from the transcripts, five distinct themes were identified that were “distinctive and coherent” (V. Braun & Clark, 2018; Virginia Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The fifth phase was a combined process of mapping and remapping the five themes by hand and cross-checking with the relevant extracts from the transcripts in NVIVO. After much reviewing, which included relating them to the research questions, a ‘final thematic map’ of three related but distinct themes was generated. These themes weave the participants' narratives, the literature and research questions into a rich, cohesive story. This final weaving is presented in the next chapter, completing the sixth phase of thematic analysis (Terry et al., 2017)

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the unstructured interviews of the eight Pasifika academics who experienced various forms of adversity in their childhood. Due to their resilience, innate skills, and external support, they progressed to be where they are presently in their academic careers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these interviews were done in the spirit of talanoa. Talanoa has variations in its description, but since this thesis is about the participants' stories, the definition of talanoa as storytelling "without concealment" is most appropriate (Halapua, 2013). Therefore, this section's findings will show this lack of concealment and the depth of their stories.

Table 1 below shows the relevant demographics of the participants:

	Sex	Place Born	Immigration age	UNI Level	Ethnicity	Age	Birth order
Halona	F	New Zealand	NA	PG student	Tongan/English	50's	Youngest of 6
Alofa	F	New Zealand	NA	UG degree	Cook Island Maori/Irish	50's	2 nd , assumed Role of oldest
Serena	F	Fiji	16	PG Degree	Fijian/European	over 60	Oldest Of 2
Lamani	F	Tonga	young adult	PG student	Tongan	50's	Youngest of 2
Joena	F	Samoa	young adult	PG Degree	Samoaan/ Chinese/German	50's	2 half-bro Only until 10
Kataki	M	New Zealand	NA	UG Student	Tongan	20's	2 nd
Akamu	M	Samoa	13	PG Degree	Samoaan/ Chinese/Niuean	50's	oldest
Hali	F	Samoa	20	PG Degree	Samoaan/Chinese	40's	oldest

FIGURE 2 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS AND UNIVERSITY LEVEL

During the interviews, I invited the participants to tell their stories of the adversities they experienced in childhood and how these adversities impacted their academic journeys. I also

invited them to describe their resilience and other support they had along the way. I prompted them when they asked for guidance, but I found that all the participants could quickly address both topics. With some, their adversities did not stop in childhood, though they did begin there. Each participant experienced turning points in their lives that determined their academic direction. The following themes presented in this chapter developed from the careful thematic analysis of the transcribed data, using TA (V. Braun & Clark, 2018) and NVIVO 20. (See Appendix C)

The findings are presented under four main themes with subthemes: 1. *Beginnings of Adversity*; sub-themes: Death of parent/Divorce, Bullying and Prejudice, Immigration Stress, Emotional and Physical Neglect. 2. *Impact of Adversity*: sub-themes: Negative Impacts, Positive Impacts. 3. *Turning Points*: sub-themes: In Childhood, In Adulthood and 4. *Resilience and Resilience-enhancing Factors*: sub-themes: Innate and Learned Resilience and Resilience-enhancing Influences. The sub-theme terminology aligned with the original ACE questionnaire (see Appendix C) with new categories uncovered by this researcher.

4.1 Adversity's Beginnings

The participants reported various ages when their adversities started. The initial adverse experiences of the participants were varied, some similar, others unique. My interpretations of adversity do not come into play, although I may use terms such as "abuse" or other psychotherapeutic words throughout for simplification.

4.1.1 Death of a Parent/Divorce:

Four of the participants' initial adversity began in this way. For two of them, Halona and Lamani, it was their fathers' death, and for the other two, Joena and Hali, it was divorce.

Though the events are not quite the same, the changes in their lives were no less considerable.

I begin with the participants whose fathers died:

Halona and Lamani:

Halona's father died when she was ten years old. He was a European sailor in his early 50's and passed away due to illnesses caused by the Christmas Island nuclear tests in the late 1950s. Tongan-born Lamani's grandfather died when she was 13 years old. Lamani knew him as her father. He died of natural causes. Both participants attended the funerals yet had entirely different reactions. For Halona, *"I got grounded for crying, so...when my dad died, I became really quite angry"*. Lamani, on the other hand, did not have this restriction. Still, she did have a sort of 'double whammy' when she attended the funeral and found out that she was adopted, *"[I was at] my grandfather's funeral; that's...when I started to hear stories about... me and my brother. We went through...[a] hard time"*. The funeral service stories were that her father was her grandfather, her mother was her aunt, and her older brother was adopted from another aunt. Since she was only three weeks old when her adoption occurred, she did not suspect a thing. More for both participants in the next section.

Hali and Joena

For Samoan born Hali and Joena, divorce initiated their adversity. Like Lamani and Halona, they experienced this event in their lives differently. For Hali, it was part relief and part fear, *“So, my mum's marriage...dissolved when I was five. Our biological father tried to kidnap me”*. She shared that the kidnapping was why her mother received full custody of Hali and her brothers. Not only that, Hali witnessed her father’s violence towards her mother before the divorce occurred. When her mother received full custody, Hali shared a surprising memory, *“the “donor” father was asked how much you would be able to support us financially, and he said to throw us away or kill us...”*. Hali’s term for her biological father was “donor father”. She uses this term because she now accepts her stepfather as her father and does not want to acknowledge the birth father in the same manner.

For Joena, the circumstances and her relationship with her father were very different. She recalled that she was happy before the divorce, feeling safe because of her father’s Mormonism, *“I grew up with a lot of Mormon values and cultures and we had the belief, the spiritual belief that Mormon's don't sin”*. But when the divorce started, she was disillusioned because she discovered her father was having an affair, *“But then my parents divorced when I was around ten... Dad met a daughter of one of his councillors, which he ended up marrying. I never went back to the Mormon church because...I thought I was being betrayed.”*

Halona, Lamani, Hali and Joena:

All four of the women experienced radical changes in their family dynamics and structure directly after their losses. For Halona and Lamani, the difference was abrupt financially. Halona, “...when he passed away, my mum worked during the day as a seamstress, and then worked at night as a kitchen hand. So, we had neighbours who helped to raise us, because I’ve got five siblings”. Her mother working meant that Halona and her siblings were very much on their own without their mother. Both Halona and her older sisters were not handling the loss of either parent well, which impacted Halona,

So, my oldest sister’s three years older than me, and she went a bit off the rails. But of course, you couldn’t get off the rails on your own, so she dragged me off the rails...I started experimenting with smoking, with weed, with drinking. So, by intermediate, which is about 11/12, I was drinking, smoking

For Lamani, the financial impact and seeing less of her mother due to the need to earn more money were just as sudden. The death of her grandfather changed her immediate family’s finances. She lived with her mother and older brother in her grandfather’s *kainga* ⁵, including two unmarried uncles, an aunt, and an older brother who lived with his family in another house within the complex. Any monies earned by the families in the complex were turned over to her grandfather. Her mother’s other siblings, who lived overseas, also sent

⁵ Kainga is the Tongan word for family household and/or extended family.

money back to the kainga. Money was distributed to the families in the household by her grandfather. Before her “father’s” death, Lamani felt *“lucky to be included in the package”*, meaning they were part of the money distribution. But this fortunate situation changed for Lamani’s family once her grandfather died:

Not... that we grew up in a life that we were rich. We were not struggling to earn money for living...we had to work like everyone else. But our grandparents were supporting us. This stopped once grandfather(dad) died.

As demonstrated in the next section, no longer being part of the financial “package” meant working even harder.

For Hali, the divorce did get her away from her abusive father, but her mother moved the family into Hali’s maternal grandfather’s household. Both her mother and grandfather were very loving, but unfortunately, her mother’s older siblings, an aunt and an uncle, were not. They were jealous of Hali’s mum since she was their father’s favourite child. This jealousy also included Hali and her brothers, which meant that, “...my mum’s siblings... my uncle and her oldest sister, my auntie...were abusive, physically abusive...because we were the...only grandkids...whom my granddad raised.”

Like Halona’s mother, Hali’s mother had to work so hard that Hali rarely saw her, *“my mum had so many responsibilities that my granddad gave her to run things for the family... and she was a teacher at the time [too]”*. Things did not go much better when her mother remarried soon after the move. Once again, Hali had to witness her mother’s abuse while she and her brothers continued to endure beatings from the abusive aunt and uncle:

My stepdad... He was very abusive, physical abuse. Not us, but my mum, but we saw it...she was battered everywhere...But at the same time, we had her siblings, my uncle and her oldest sister, my auntie, who were abusive, physically abusive.

This abuse took its toll on Hali, *"It was draining emotionally and mentally; because I'm... the oldest child, [and had] to protect my younger brothers"*. On top of the domestic violence, Hali's stepfather was abusing alcohol and drugs, *"He was into weed, drinking, all sorts of getting high"*.

It was a couple of years before Hali's grandfather ordered her stepfather to leave the family home. Hali's mother followed him. In Samoan culture, she shared that being kicked out of a father-in-law's household *"was an embarrassment to the village and the family"*, so much so that Hali's stepfather did a complete turnaround and quit both the substance abuse and his domestic violence. He started to treat Hali and her siblings with kindness, and she began to call him "father". Hali was around 12 years old when this happened. Unfortunately, the verbal and physical abuse continued from the older uncles and aunts.

Hali made top grades in Primary school and was able to go to the top college in Samoa. Focusing on achievement was her reprieve from abuse. Four to five years later, Hali was getting ready to sit her exams when her grandfather passed away due to the repercussions of abuse suffered from Hali's oldest uncle, the same one who abused Hali. She couldn't sit her exams that year, upset by the news of her grandfather's death and the way he died. But the college did let her sit for her year 13 exams the following year. More in the next section.

For Joena, like Hali, she was moved to her maternal grandfather's household, which was a plantation. But her mother was not kind like Hali's. Her mother and most of the 40 children on the plantation were not kind at all. Her mother was physically abusive to a greater degree after the divorce, without Hali's father's buffering influence. What made the situation worse was the divorce settlement, *"Dad's image of Mum's family is that they're money-seeking people...yeah, mercenary people, always trying to use us to get money from him. Well, Dad won everything. Mum never got anything"*.

Like Hali's older aunt and uncle, her mother's family were jealous of the attention Joena received from her father and were cruel. Though her mother was abusive before the divorce, afterwards, it increased:

"Her upbringing of me was very cruel...for every little thing I did wrong, I was always (slaps her hand and makes an accompanying noise)...she...had all these unresolved issues...(makes a gesture like an explosion)...like a volcano...and every little...Like if I didn't wash the dishes...I would have one of the bowls "Bang!" (makes a hitting gesture) on my head".

Joena explained that her half-sisters and brothers were very fair like her mother and were not treated this way. This treatment was because *"my sisters and my brothers they all look [like], my mum's family. They're all very palagi-like. So, they're more fairer. I'm a bit yellowish- my other siblings they're very fair"*. This prejudice leads directly into the next subsection.

4.1.2 Bullying and Discrimination

Joena, like most of the participants in this study, experienced prejudice as part of her adversities' beginnings. She was taunted by her many "palagi-like" cousins and half-siblings, *"Look at her face. She looks like her father"... I was like a reminder of a bad experience all the time. And it...seems like you're...the blame. You're the scapegoat"*.

For Halona, she's experienced racism and culturalism her whole life, and it was present right after her father's death; her mother had to work day and night, so she and her five siblings had to be looked after:

We had neighbours who helped to raise us...we became very close to this family...but without any brown families [in the neighbourhood]...though we didn't look brown, but we were still brown compared to what was there... we were the brown family...we did...experience a lot of racism.

Alofa experienced prejudice when she accompanied her mother to her many hospital visits. Her mother had a severe disorder that doctors were unable to discover. She was a Cook Island Māori, and though fair like her daughter, she had a thick accent. She did not speak English well, but she did understand it. Alofa, rather than experience the racism/classism herself, witnessed it:

...it made me really sad...they treated her like she was stupid and dumb... if she didn't understand something, they would yell it at her, like she was deaf. I used to think, "Why are you talking to my mother like this? She's not stupid!

Alofa started caretaking her mother when she was very young and felt very protective of her. She was protective because her mother received the same bullying treatment at home from Alofa's Palangi father. Witnessing this kind of bullying both outside the house and inside the home impacted her significantly.

Serena, Fijian, and "half-caste" explained how this designation began her adversity:

[...]you grow up with...feeling inferior...we were a community that's all intermarried and interrelated...most of them sent their children to school...Away... Because that was the snobby thing to do. There was a local school but...They'd say, "Oh, you wouldn't learn to speak properly, you'd speak with a 'half-caste accent..."

Because of this, Serena was sent away "year after year". Her mother was Catholic which meant she couldn't go to the local school,

[...]it was a lot to do with snobbery...we suffered because of that...[S]he put us through hell because she was Catholic...that meant we had to board with separate families. If she had just let us go to the school that was for non-Catholics...to their boarding school; [that] would have been consistency.

As will be seen in the section, this was the beginning of a long journey for Serena.

Kataki, a New Zealand-born Tongan, experienced bullying from four years old through his first year in high school. Being bullied was Kataki's primary experience of adversity,

At church [in] Sunday school... I was a little kid, maybe... before even five...right up to...high school at 16, [or] a little before that; I was bullied at...Sunday school!... We get a roll-out, read the names, "Is so and so here? Is so and so here?" And when they read my name- my last name was____, all the little kids would laugh at me...I was automatically outcast.

Kataki's last name sounded like another word, which was a slur of a minority group, something he did not understand, and it hurt, *"I think about it as a little kid seeing it... is like, "Why is everyone laughing.....my own age group... laughing at me? Or not even wanting to hang out with me...it's almost traumatising"*.

The impact of this prolonged bullying will be presented in the "Impact of Adversity" section.

Akamu and Lamani also experienced bullying and prejudice, but it had much to do with their experience as they immigrated to countries where the dominant culture was of European origin. That will be part of their stories in the next section:

4.1.3 Immigration Stress

Three out of the five participants that immigrated, most for education, reported similar stressors in their first year living in the new country. They were Akamu, born in Samoa, who arrived in New Zealand at 13, Serena 16, born in Fiji (presented in the last section), and then Lamani, 18, born in Tonga, who did her four undergraduate years in Australia.

Akamu, 50's, Samoa

For Akamu, immigration was the initial adversity he'd faced in his life. Before that time, he was a happy child,

I had fun growing up with my friends. We were right next to the water. And right next to our house was the village swimming pool. There were two swimming pools in the village. And one of them was right behind my house. That was a natural spring. So...whenever you finish school, you jump in the water.

Akamu was close to his family and used to his father travelling back and forth between New Zealand and Samoa. Akamu, at 13, was very involved in studying both in a government school and a church school to become a minister. So, when his father drove up in his truck and said, *"Get ready, we're going to New Zealand this afternoon."* Akamu assumed that his father surprised him with a holiday trip. It was not the surprise his father had in mind:

[...]we jumped in the family truck, and we went to the airport...and got on the plane. And, I think we stopped in American Samoa, and then we flew straight to Auckland...we landed in June; it was the middle of winter, and I couldn't believe how cold it was"

His father worked in customs in Samoa and had some businesses on the side and frequently took Akamu to visit them. One business had a walk-in refrigerator that his father took him into, stating, *"This is what New Zealand is like"*. Now that Akamu was in New Zealand, he commented, *"Sure enough, when I got to New Zealand, [it] was just like that. But unfortunately, I could never walk out of that refrigerator for quite a while"*.

Serena was 16 when she and her family immigrated to New Zealand. Though this was not her beginning adversity, it was her first in New Zealand. More about this time in her life is presented later in the chapter. Serena shares similar experiences with Akamu, the first being the cold, *"We [arrived] in New Zealand-it was cold, and we didn't know how to dress for the winter"*. Serena schooled me with the following comment, *"I think you'll find that with most Pacific Islanders who you've interviewed; if they say they came from the islands to here, they would have been unprepared for the cold"*.

The next adversity for Serena and Akamu, after they realised they were not going back to their home islands any time soon, was homesickness. Serena shared,

I'd pretend I was in Fiji and walking along those streets and going to the shops, where it was colourful, and it smelled of spice; and people were friendly and smiley and BROWWNN. And then I just was sick...with homesickness.

For Akamu, he missed his homeland, all his friends and especially his mother, *"It was very lonely...I got really badly homesick...the longer we stayed in New Zealand... and I used to write home to my mother. Yeah, very sad."*

The following two adversities facing Akamu were the same ones that Lamani faced as well. Both participants got to their destination countries only to find out that knowing how to write and speak the English they learned in their respective island countries was not enough.

Lamani was older than Akamu when she immigrated, but rather than New Zealand, she immigrated to Australia on a full scholarship to do her undergraduate work. She knowingly

went to a university that had very few Pacific Peoples, especially Tongans. There was another university that most students from Tonga went to, but she did not want to go there because *“they would...drop out of school and not complete their education”*. Not only that, *“they would group together, and end up getting married, or not complete and go to work”*. Lamani wanted to be sure she would not be tempted to do that. So, even though she planned to go to the other university, she did not anticipate how hard it would be to speak and write English for her classes, *“[I] had to speak English 99% of the time and it was like having, to learn English all over again”*.

Akamu had a similar reaction, though he was just starting his first year of high school,

[...] the big shock was really discovering...that I can only speak English. So previously, I could speak Samoan 90% of the time or maybe 99% of the time. But here in New Zealand, it was almost a reverse. 80% of the time, I would have to speak English [and] my English was not great.

Akamu felt he was *“quite bright”* when he was in Samoa. Still, when he started school in New Zealand, he struggled due to his English proficiency, *“I went through high school in New Zealand. I think I passed my School Certificate at the time. And then I struggled in my Sixth Form, and I had to repeat my Sixth Form to get through”*.

(Since prejudice is often part of other immigrants' stories, I chose to include this with this section rather than in “Bullying and Prejudice”)

Both Akamu and Lamani faced prejudice in their first year. For Lamani, it was in the form of racism from the white students. She commented, *“that first year was really, really terrible”*.

She found that in her labs, people wouldn't pair up with her, *"You know, there was a lot of ignorance there, some racism."*

For Akamu, the prejudice he encountered was in the form of bullying from New Zealand-born Pasifika students. Not speaking English very well made it evident to them that he was *"Fresh Off the Boat...(FOB)"*. Akamu, and others like him, had to face this intra-cultural prejudice, *"[...]not just myself, but other kids...who came over from Samoa...we were picked on by other kids of Pacific Island and Māori descent."* Akamu explained that being a "foreigner" immediately made you an outsider and that *"you only had to be here for a month"* to realise this. Akamu remarked that they were assigned a role, *"...being brought up in a traditional village and...household, you were assigned a role. You were...assigned a role in New Zealand and that is as a "coconut"..."*. The next theme will present the progression of Akamu's, Serena's, and Lamani's stories.

4.1.4 Emotional and Physical Neglect

Both Alofa and Serena experienced emotional neglect, and Serena also experienced physical neglect. Though unintentional, when Serena was sent away to the different families so she could go to the "proper" schools, Serena would experience abuse many times from these families or have her uniform clothing taken, or not be given enough food:

I was very traumatised with some of the places we lived in. We were starved, and we...would take our new uniforms for the year-socks and shoes and everything we needed. But we wouldn't see them after a week, because...they were given to [the family's] children. I can remember going to school with no socks because I couldn't find them or someone else had

worn them...[or] having to cut the hole out of the toe of my shoe so I could wear them.

Serena said some families were good, and at times she would be able to stay a whole year, but more often, they wouldn't have her back:

I had to board with so many different families because I'd be with them for one term, [and] for lots of reasons, they would tell [me] "We can't have you next school term. Tell your mother she has to find somewhere else."

Serena's complaints went unnoticed, and this emotional neglect seemed to hurt the most. Especially when her parents rarely came to visit, *"I felt a sense of inferiority...I didn't have parents that came for me. [it seemed] nobody gave a damn"*. Serena shared that she loved going home for the Christmas holidays because it was the only time she could be with her family. Her mother was oblivious to how severely Serena was treated and how lonely she was, *"my mother was a very, very childish, dependent woman...[she] never gave me any boundaries; she never guided or anything"*. When I asked about her father, she replied, *"My father was an alcoholic"*. This lack of limits and boundaries was, according to Serena, was her most significant, far-reaching adversity. The impact of this will be seen in the next theme.

Alofa also experienced neglect, but it was less intentional and not seen as such. Alofa reported that at the age of three years old, her mother allowed her to walk her club-footed brother of five to kindergarten:

[...] this could be certainly seen as abuse...I would walk my brother to Kindie-across the main road...[and] the Kindie teacher would ring up Mum and say, "Alofa's here." I don't know where my mother was. But I just think, "Mum, why weren't you keeping an eye on me?"

Alofa commented that she didn't have this thought at three years old. She just knew she wanted to protect her brother. This "mothering" was there from the beginning, and Alofa states why, *"...so I mothered him. And then, of course, I mothered my younger siblings as well. The adult responsibilities were kind of usurped on me a little bit because my mother was unwell. And my father wasn't present"*.

As her mother's illness became chronic and life-threatening, Alofa's protectiveness and growing sense of responsibility had both positive and negative impacts, as seen in the next theme.

4.2 Impact of Adversity

Adversity was found to affect different participants in different ways. Sometimes they were challenged so that the hardship prompted the development of skills, constructive actions, and attitudes that assisted them in getting through or overcome the adversity they were experiencing. Other times, especially when adversity was challenging, especially if it was repetitive, the effect was longer-term, and self-destructive behaviours developed in some cases. Then the self-destructive behaviours themselves could cause a shift in attitude and behaviour.

4.2.1 Negative Impacts:

The adverse effects that five of the eight participants endured are loosely categorised as low self-esteem, acting-out behaviours, and depression. What is meant by “loosely” is that these categories do not show up in an orderly way. Instead, they will show up “in the order of appearance” and at times overlap. Five out of eight participants described one or more impacts that fall under these categories.

Serena:

Serena’s beginning adversities have shown how her parents’ emotional and physical neglect and her sense of inferiority of being labelled “half-caste” initiated feelings of shame in Serena. Every year, her attempts to express her unhappiness about the negative treatment by some families she lived with were unacknowledged by her parents. This lack of acknowledgement caused Serena to “act out” these unexpressed feelings with disruptive behaviour in primary school while still in primary school,

“I was made to go sit in the back of the room, [and] I’d kick my shoe off and aim it at somebody. I wanted someone...to play with me. I didn’t want to be sitting in the back by myself...I needed attention”.

When it was time to take exams to advance into secondary school, Serena was told by the nuns that if she continued her disruptive actions, she would not be able to go into secondary school. This threat scared Serena so much that she stopped her rebellious behaviour and tried her best. She passed her exams and felt proud that her new behaviour changed her

circumstances, *"I already knew...I knew that if I did this type of [good] behaviour, I could change my...I could change my...journey"*.

But rather than continuing her secondary school where she was, she learned that she had to go to another school in another town and live with another family. This news angered Serena enough to run away from her host family and quit school halfway through her first year in secondary school. When home for the holidays, she refused to go back to school. She convinced her mother that she would do correspondence classes "sanctioned" by her secondary school but then went back to the main island to party and hang out with her friends. When I asked about her parents being okay with this, she stated that since her mother didn't set any boundaries, *"I knew that I had to be my own guide."*

This decision put Serena at risk both physically,

I just bumped into anyone I met on the road. I followed them home- I would (say)"can I go home with you and I'll sleep on the couch[?]." And a lot of times they were much older girls- 19, 18 and I'd go into nightclubs with them...

and sexually, *"...I was going to those nightclubs and pretending I was older...sometimes they'd abandon me...and I'll just get picked up by any guy. I was lucky [that] I wasn't raped and left for dead...!"*. Then she added, *"Ohhh, I was raped a few times"*. She explained to me that she developed resilience, *"I had no one to depend on...you have to grow resilience because there's nobody else that's going to rescue you. There's no rescuer in this world"*.

Serena's rebellion and need for attention continued after she and her family migrated to New Zealand when Serena was 16. Her parents tried to enrol her in a Catholic College, but she stated she wouldn't go there *"because they're all young. They were my age but...I'd done so much by then."* With no boundaries set by her parents, Serena said she continued to do what she wanted. She abused substances and kept up risky sexual behaviour. At 17, she fell in love and became pregnant by a boy who promptly left and went to Canada. She ended up having a difficult birth and developed post-partum depression that put her baby at risk, *"I wanted to kill her. I just wanted to put a pillow over her head and smother her"*. A nurse rescued mother and child and arranged for Serena's hospitalisation and the baby's admission into a Home of Compassion. Serena stayed in the hospital for five months.

With her daughter safe at the Home, Serena decided to go back to Fiji. She said, *"I conned an expatriate from Fiji [saying to him] I'll marry you"* if he would take her there. Serena shared that her parents didn't ask why *"since I'd been flatting and doing all sorts of things, anyway"*. They contacted relatives in Fiji, and within two days, her cousin showed up, rebuked for being with the expatriate, and took her to her aunt's house. Serena disclosed, *"I sat there with all my shame for what I'd done"*. They told her, *"You're banished!"* and forced her to [] Island to her grandfather's home. This sad occasion was the first time she met him.

At this point, with all that had happened, she became very depressed, and with the added shame, she took a "handful of Valiums" while on the boat to the island and had to be revived, *"they had put me in a mat and were dunking me in the sea. [somebody's] girlfriend was a nurse...she CPR'ed [me]"*. I asked Serena if this was a suicide attempt, and she replied, *"It wasn't ever a thought"*. After five months, she returned to the main island and, *"I went*

completely wild. Absolutely wild”, stating that she was trying to numb herself, “I just did everything just so I wouldn't feel...that got me doing all sorts of horrible things that I look back on now and feel...shame...”

Serena returned to New Zealand when she was about 20 and met up with her daughter's father again. She stopped the substance use, became a Christian, settled down, and became a health professional at 28. But Serena stated, *“He became an alcoholic...I always ended up marrying someone that [I'd] rather not end up with...like her father... we grew apart”*. The marriage ended, and Serena had regrets because their daughter was *“in the middle of it all”*. She brought up her daughter alone for a while, *“I learned to love her when she turned to be about 8. I couldn't love her before that”*. A short time later, Serena remarried to a man *“who was extremely violent”*. Serena was now in her 30's, and she shared that she still had a lot to learn, which is presented in the next section.

Halona

To recap, Halona had been “dragged off the rails” by her oldest sister, and this had exposed Halona to drinking and smoking. Consequently, Halona acted out her grief over her father's death with substance abuse. She also shared that her suffering was diverted to anger since she could not express her sorrow by crying. Like Serena, Halona disrupted her classes, but whereas Serena's was motivated by emotional neglect, Halona's was fuelled by her inability to cry. Halona shared that she was so angry that she often fought and disrupted her intermediate classes to the point that she intimidated even her teachers. When Halona was older, one of her teachers told her that when he found out that she would be in his class,

"He said he cried". Nothing her teachers tried stopped Halona's behaviour, including isolating her from the other students. Halona was so well-liked by her peers that even though her classmates were warned to leave her alone, they disobeyed:

I sat behind a curtain and had to just copy from a book; for a few months, I was in there before and after school. [at] lunchtime, I wasn't allowed to interact with anyone. But I'm popular, so everybody would sneak in to come and see me.

The loyalty of her friends did not keep Halona from fighting or staying in school. The school were obligated to get her a job. It lasted a month, *"I took my first pay...then and ended up being on the streets by choice"*. She chose to join other friends, hang out with violent gangs, and fight whoever opposed her; she usually won fights. Her mother, who has never wavered in her support of Halona, would bail her out any time she was arrested, which was often. I asked her how her mother handled that, and she answered, *"...not very well...She had to keep going because I wasn't her only child...she supported me 110%. Every week, I'd get arrested, and mum would always come and get me out"*. Halona's substance abuse continued. Then, within about six months, she'd had enough and joined the church, *"I was hanging out with gangs in it, some of the guys with it got down for murder...they had killed one of our friends. people died around us"*. At the time, she didn't fit in with the church due to her lifestyle, so she left it, but not the religion.

Halona calmed down a bit, stopped most substances, and got a job in a whare wananga⁶. She met her future husband, 'Fetu' at 14 ½, moved into a flat with him and other work friends.

This “flatting” at an early age was like Serena. However, Serena never felt like she belonged and had no job. She also did not receive support from her parents, specifically her mother. Though acting out, Halona was relatively more stable and had no trouble belonging. After being together for about two years, she and Fetu split up, and Halona went back to the church, stayed a year, and loved it. But when Fetu came back into town, she got back together with him. She was 18 now, and she said that she thought, *"maybe we should give it a go. Maybe this is meant to be"*. They lived together for another two years before they were married, living a *"gang lifestyle"*. Unfortunately, Fetu was a violent man. For Halona and Serena, their turning points came after some hard lessons, presented in the Turning Points section.

Alofa:

Alofa did not act out as a child. Her confidence was undermined by the repeated emotional neglect inadvertently caused by the circumstances of her mother's illness and her father's lack of presence in the household. She was a “parentified” child⁷, helping run the

⁶ Whare wananga is a Maori college specialising in traditional Maori knowledge

⁷ Parentified child is a child that takes on or given adult responsibilities at an early age and whose emotional needs are therefore largely unmet

household as her mother's illness became worse. Rather than rebel, Alofa's protectiveness, demonstrated in the previous section, became more prominent as the situation at home intensified,

The adult responsibilities were...usurped on me...because my mother was unwell. And my father wasn't present. When I got a little bit older...about 15...she was in hospital after a series of events...and we were told she was going to die...I was making sure...my siblings, my younger siblings, especially, were given dinner at night, their homework was getting done, that my sister's...hair [was] brushed and plaited".

Her mother eventually became well enough to come home but could no longer work. Previously, between short bouts of illness, her mother worked up to three jobs. True to her assigned role, Alofa had helped:

I...always helped mum with her jobs...she was a cleaner at the school, she was a dishwasher at a restaurant... She [also] used to sort mail at the post office...that took a lot of study for her. I studied with her...I had to help her to get those qualifications".

Alofa's father berated her mother, and Alofa witnessed this emotional abuse. When her mother was not available, Alofa became the victim of her father's abuse. She realised:

[...] he was not only not present in my childhood, but a master manipulator and very narcissistic. And...how he would talk to her, how he would treat her, how he would manipulate her into doing things she didn't want to

do...That...made me more and more protective of my mother...he manipulated me...as a teenager(pauses to manage her tears)when he sexually abused me...(more tears)

These circumstances were made worse by the lack of money now that Alofa's mother didn't work. Her father, a compulsive gambler, *"We all knew he was a gambler. He loved the horses...That's all he did"*, relied on his wife's and Alofa's grandmother's pension to allow him to continue. Now the financial situation became dire.

Up until this point, Alofa was in her last year of secondary school and getting ready to take her university entrance exams. Alofa stated, *"It was always my deep desire to go to university...it was nothing...anyone in my family... had ever done."* So much of her time had been taken up caring for her mother that she only attended two out of five school days. Because of this, she was offered an aegrotat.⁸ Alofa refused the offer and took her exams anyway, relying on prayer, *"because I had such faith and trust in God"*. She passed them and started her year 12. Still, the bulk of the work in the house remained on her shoulders. She told me, *"I loved school...[and going to university] wasn't particularly supported...there was definitely no motivation from home."* No one in the family acknowledged her achievement,

⁸ Aegrotat: a certificate allowing a candidate to pass an examination he or she missed through illness or exceptional circumstances. (aegrotat., n.d.)

and Alofa expressed pain, *“they didn't understand how that affected me. And what that did.....to me”*. It became overwhelming to combine running a household, taking care of her mother, and keeping up schoolwork. She finally lost motivation and succumbed to her father's constant complaint about money, *“I officially left school on my...17th birthday...and went to work full time...and helped my family out financially”*. More will be presented in the next section.

Kataki and Hali:

Both Kataki and Hali had brief but critical periods of rebellion. Kataki's was fuelled by the insecurity he still felt after nearly 11 years of bullying in Sunday School because of his name. Because of this, it was still necessary for him to *“make a name”* for himself.

He had gained some friendships along the way and shared that his primary schooling, where he had some good friends, helped him get through it. Kataki did not discuss the taunting with his family, even though he was close to them until he was nearly out of high school. According to Kataki, he learned from his father not to talk about what was going on with him, *“he hardly speaks on anything unless he HAS to speak... that's the whole reason why I'm like this...Holding it in”*. He shared that keeping the hurt inside likely affected the decisions he made early in high school. He shared why, *“ I was younger, facing, getting through...Kinda just trying to make my name, so, that people would stop bullying me [and] to start...inviting me to hang out”*.

So, when his family moved to Otara in South Auckland from Mount Wellington, Kataki was about 15 or 16. Making a name for himself was prominent in Kataki's mind due to his Sunday school experience. He said he could have coasted on his older brother's reputation, but *“I*

don't want it handed to me. I want to make a name...I want to earn it myself" This led Katakai into some questionable behaviour with his new friends:

So, sometimes we're on our way to school or on our way home, we would stop at the Mall- "Aww, my shoes are almost ripped. Shall we go steal some new shoes?" I'll be honest. We did quite a lot of shoplifting.

Katakai went on to say that, *"I had to make a name for myself, because...I didn't want to look like that 'soft' dude....'Cos I just moved here"*.

Katakai was reluctant to share what else he did at this time, *"Because it's almost like that saying, "Speaking it into existence."* But then he shared that he went to extremes when he was with his friends, *"going into town clubbing, drinking. Drink a lot, smoke a lot."* Katakai disagreed when I mentioned that it was not unusual for teens to go clubbing and drinking. He took a long time to answer, *"Not like me...I feel like...(sighs)...I've gone further than everybody else has. Nobody went as far as I did."* It was not long before "making a name " for himself wasn't fun anymore, and he hit a turning point. His story continues in the next theme.

Hali:

Hali, now 18, resat her National Exams, finished her University Preparatory year, and was set to come to New Zealand on a partial scholarship. Hali had already decided to go to university back when her stepfather had turned a new leaf. However, since Hali's grandfather died, she had to put university on hold. Her mother had asked her to stay and

help her out with all of Grandfather's businesses, saying, *"That's enough schooling. Come and help with the business[es]."*

Her mother was on the board of so many organisations that Hali reluctantly had to help and became rebellious. *"So, [the] one year I spent there, I got pregnant...(starts laughing)...because I was so rebellious. It was the first time ever to be rebellious (looks significantly at the researcher)".* Hali's pregnancy was not good news for her mother, whose reputation was at stake, and Hali, who was her eldest (only) daughter, was to take her mother's place in the village one day, *"Having her only daughter pregnant, unwed...was a disgrace. So, I came here(NZ) to have my son"*. Hali stayed with relatives and went back to Samoa to raise him three months after his birth.

4.2.2 Positive Impacts

For some of the participants, the adversity itself seemed to be a catalyst for growth. Halona and Serena, though they suffered violence from their husbands, both reached the point when the abuse became the impetus for change. More in the next section.

Akamu:

Akamu, after dealing with intra-cultural prejudice/bullying, not speaking English well, and adjusting to the stark contrast between his Samoan homelife and New Zealand, began to make some friends. Much of what he learned from school and family in Samoa came in handy while developing these friendships. He had this to say about the New Zealand born Pasifika kids and their families

I visited some of my friends who...were lovely people...you go to their homes and realise...they didn't have food...And there were no one at home...And that's when I realised that...I had taken for granted how families are or how you were brought up. They're very different...

Like Kataki, he felt empathy for his Pasifika peers who had less than he did. His English improved somewhat, and he was no longer in the “bottom” classes. He got involved with music and art because, *“I discovered there was some teachers there, who were very good at looking after...your creativity”*. He got himself a guitar and commented, *“that's one of the things that kept my sanity”*. He then told me that, *“my family a band that played popular music. I learned how to play all instruments in that band”*. Akamu used this talent to further the new friendships he began in some of his art classes. He was surprised when one of those friends approached Akamu and asked if he could teach him and his friends how to play the guitar. They wanted to start a band. They had all the instruments but did not know how to play them, *“they were palagi kids... I went and taught them how to play [all] the instruments, and then joined the band”*. Before Akamu migrated to New Zealand, he was studying to be a minister. His Turning Point changes that, as will be presented in the next section.

Lamani:

The shock of Lamani's grandfather's death wore off by necessity. Knowing that she was adopted did not change Lamani's feelings for or what she called her brother and her mother. She was just beginning her Form 2 at that time, but her family now had to make up for the share of the kainga resources they used to receive from her grandfather. This predicament meant that Lamani's mother had to immigrate to New Zealand to work and send money

back to help cover expenses. Now that her mother was unavailable, the duties of a Tongan female now rested with Lamani. She explained that the men took care of income, land, and land-related business. The women “...took care [of] home, the children, and the food...it was a matriarchal system”. Women hold a higher social standing than the men, which meant that her brother was subordinate to Lamani. Lamani was also the “elder” in her immediate family and had duties to fulfil and her school responsibilities.

The most significant part of the additional responsibilities involved the church. Lamani explained further, “[...] Church was the centre of [the] family and community life. There was no time [for] anything else” Though Sundays were a day of “rest”, Lamani stated that it was an all-day affair, with food to be prepared for the entire community for after church, which meant prep time in the early morning. The community revolved around the church, and food prep dominated all occasions, rituals, church holidays and so forth. Lamani stated, “...workdays were of school, schoolwork, taking care of family, food prep and church”.

Lamani, at 14, fulfilled her duties as a traditional female, and her mother had to take on the traditionally male role of earning money. Lamani shared, “I didn't consider this as difficult back then. It is what needed doing”. She wasn't seeing it as a hardship at the time. But while Lamani was looking back on this during the interview, she became very teary-eyed when she said, “I see all of this as sort of “polishing” me”. Lamani talked about how this experience developed an “attitude of trust” in God. Lamani put it this way, “If the rains came, then the next day would be sunny.” More will be presented in the next section.

Joena:

Even after suffering through increased physical abuse from her mother and a great deal of physical labour on the plantation, Joena kept a determined and positive attitude. The biggest reason for this was going to Catholic school:

My uncle placed me in Catholic School. The Catholic school really helped me. ...There's always one Bible reading that I always got out [during] my whole four years of [Catholic school]...Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "there are three things important in one's life, but out of all that, Love".

The bible verse was something that Joena shared that got her through her time in Primary and Secondary school. She also stated that Catholic school and the Bible stories gave her hope, so Joena was determined to leave her situation, *"...out of all those kids, I'm the only one who looked at education to get out of...poverty, to get out of the cycle of abuse"*.

Joena's father added to this by being supportive throughout Joena's education, and it started when she was quite young, *"he would buy me reading books...he would always buy what I wanted- was reading books"*. Joena shared that her father challenged her and was very hard on her. When he died early in his fifties, she felt empty, *"When my father went (died), I found this emptiness. It's like, "What was the purpose of the PhD now?"...Like I only did it just to prove myself to my father.* Though he was strict with her, she excelled because of it.

4.3 Turning Points

4.3.1 Turning Points in Childhood:

Four participants experienced their turning points before turning 19-years-old: Joena, Akamu, Lamani, and Katakai.

Joena: Joena's turning point was initiated by a Marist brother at her Catholic school, *"when I thought I didn't make it to the university preparatory, the Catholic Marist brother came to my mother and says, "No, she's got potential". Her father came into play at this point indirectly, "Because of my father's reputation proceeded him, they thought they could hire me". This meant that she could get jobs to help pay for her schooling. However, Joena already had work, "I had to look for jobs to help mum". Now she took on a third job. So, at 15, Joena had three jobs, "I had a day job at the bank...I had a night job at the local department store...[and] I did part-time at the Ministry of Education, marking newspapers."* She shared, *"I didn't have a salary because that was our weekly food...I took care of electricity bills; the money was only \$80 back then...for two weeks from the bank...the local department store [paid for] our weekly food"*.

The third job's salary, a hundred dollars (tala), paid for her schooling. By the time Joena graduated, she had applied for and got a full scholarship to a university in Auckland, New Zealand. She eventually got her highest postgraduate degree on a full scholarship to a university overseas and is now working for a university in Auckland. She has a husband, a family, and prestige through her husband's chiefly status in Samoa. Because of her faith, she endured the jealousy of her (late) father's third wife because of her father's attention. She continues to deal with her mother's continuing emotional abuse in her way. Joena shared,

"She's...been physically abused, emotionally abused...and so, I see mum has unresolved [issues]...and that's why I never counter it. When she starts doing it to me, I back away." She went on to say that due to the passage from Corinthians 2 about love, *"I am able to forgive and move on."*

At the very beginning of our interview, Joena made a statement that underscores the trait that showed throughout her story and supported her resourcefulness:

I didn't have a very good childhood. I think sometimes we see it as a negative. But I think some of us have created opportunities to break the cycle. I'm the only-first in the family amongst my siblings in university, and I went all the way to the top.

Akamu:

Now that Akamu had joined the band of his younger Palagi friends, his English improved. He found out that he could also use the imagination that he developed in Samoa. He shared,

[...]When the minister was, was teaching...about the notion of a place like "a paradise", I couldn't possibly be there...But he actually taught us how to... develop the role of the imagination. To put yourself in those things, although you never been there.

He became fascinated with different countries in high school and could imagine himself there even though he never visited. He was interested in how people of these European countries did things, *"I was really fascinated by "How did they do it? What do these places look like? How can I imagine them without being there...that's a quantum leap for someone who grew up in the village"*. Akamu passed his final exams in high school and went to

university. It was his first year in university that cemented, so to speak, his turning point.

Akamu commented, *“when I entered university, I think that's when I really found my feet...The world kind of opened up for me. ”*

Lamani:

For Lamani, her turning point began to form when her grandfather died. Her mother had left to work in New Zealand for three years. Then Lamani requested that she come back to Tonga for her final year in secondary school to sit for her exams. When her mother arrived back home, she went to work as a seamstress and prepared food to sell to the community. Lamani had to help when she got home from school to make the food to sell. They would do this well into the night. Lamani shared that it was *“very, very hard work”* and that *“it was difficult to earn the money needed to contribute to the household like...mother was able to do when she was in Auckland”*.

Nonetheless, Lamani maintained her excellence at school. Lamani knew at this point that getting an education was the best way to earn enough money to give back to her family. Lamani had been independently making the decisions for the family while in secondary school and had a clear notion of what she needed to do. Out of respect for her mother's authority, she quietly applied for scholarships at *“all the universities, many, many...Little did...[my] mother know how many scholarships [I applied for]”*. Waiting for the right scholarship, Lamani went to work. Again, out of the cultural norm, she went to the head of her church school and asked if she could work there, *“it was unusual for girls to do this”*. She got a job teaching. Her mother was not very happy about this but went along with it. Her mother planned to send Lamani's older brother to Auckland to earn money for Lamani to

enter university in New Zealand. However, a full scholarship from a university in Australia came through and a stipend with which to live. Once again, even though *"Mum had other plans"*, Lamani insisted, *"No, no, this is good for us"* because of the stipend. Now her brother did not have to work in New Zealand. Lamani was now 18.

As already presented, Lamani struggled her first year. She knew that she would be with many white Australians, but it did not deter her at all. Lamani made friends with both Australians and Pacific Peoples. Her primary connection with them was her Christian religion. Lamani shared that they were a big help, *"it was really, really helpful to have some Australian friends...they helped [me] with some of [my] studies"*. They also helped Lamani bridge the racial and cultural gap.

As was mentioned previously, Lamani was direct with the head of her church school when she asked to teach at her school. Her resourcefulness and direct approach showed up again in her last year at university while spending the holidays with a good Australian friend. The friend's family owned a sugarcane and mango farm. She approached her friend's family, *"[I] asked the parents...if [I] could work for them while visiting for the holidays"*. Lamani told me this was her plan all along to earn extra money. She'd been sending her entire stipend to her mother every month, and now there was "extra". Her mother, concerned, questioned her, *"...this [is a] whole lot of money...what else [are] you doing?"* Lamani responded, *"Nothing ...except for the two weeks working at [my] friend's farm"*. Lamani commented she easily lived off, *"\$20 a week"*. She was able to do this, as the scholarship paid for her room and board.

Lamani graduated, and because of agreements between the monarchy of Tonga and Australia, she went back to Tonga to work for one year. Her mother had returned to Auckland with three more adopted children. She became quite ill, so Lamani went to Auckland and cared for her mother and the children. When I marvelled at Lamani's steadfastness, she told me, *"you give back what you've been given. And...people help each other out. You share food, you share camaraderie, you share money, you share whatever you can"*. While caring for her mother and new siblings, Lamani applied for a full scholarship to Australia for postgraduate work. While her mother recovered, Lamani won the scholarship but decided to stay in Auckland and continue helping her mother. So, she sent the scholarship back to Australia. She quipped, *"This is never done"*.

By this time, Lamani met and married her husband. She applied to and got into an Auckland university for her postgraduate work and, again, was offered a full scholarship, but, again, refused it so she could work more hours than the scholarship allowed. After I expressed some surprise, Lamani said to me, *"it is my responsibility...[to] help out the kainga [back home] and my family in New Zealand"*.

Kataki:

Kataki's turning point came at about year 12/13 in secondary school. He began to compare himself to some of the boys he was, *"clubbing, smoking and drinking"* and stealing shoes with:

I needed something to compare it with...for example, I have a family member...I went to high school with...same age as me...living in (the same town). But he lived there his whole life. I just moved there halfway through

high school. And he's my family as well...we went to school together at (Intermediate school). That's something...I could...measure [and] put into perspective...[of what] my life could have been.

Kataki remembered when he was in primary school and told me about the “(name of the school) Hearts”...*H stood for honesty...E stood for empathy...A stood for affirmation...R stood for respect. And the T stood for trust*”. With this memory, Kataki asked himself, “*How did I get here?*”. He remembered, “*I have morals*”, and that he was close to his family, especially his little brothers:

So, my engine, my heartbeat, would be my little brothers...if I can wake up and make him laugh...he makes me laugh. Then I'll look at my other little brother. He makes me laugh. I'll make him laugh. Then I'll carry that through my whole day.

After this realisation, Kataki commenced to tone down his substance use and focus more on his studies. When I asked Kataki what shifted him from one extreme to another, he answered quickly, “*Family... as I'm getting older...you find the reason why you're here in the first place...you...start getting away from [acting up]...and getting closer to WHY...I'm at the root*”. Kataki joined a Tongan group that his secondary school and his university supported. Here, he made a name for himself differently, “*I made a name for myself...I got to know a lot of people from the association . And, y'know? I was a somebody*”.

Kataki shared how rap music resonated powerfully with him:

I started listening to rap when I was in high school. And that got me through life...there were some rap songs...[that] had messages...how to treat people...how to know who's real, who not to associate myself with...it's like (points to his heart) here.

Kataki related to a U.S. rapper names J. Cole and felt he was a major influence, *"...his dream was almost like mine"*. Kataki proceeded to rap a J. Cole song while it played in the background through his iPhone. One line particularly talked about making a name for himself, *"Your name is all you got...At 14, I knew I was the nicest dude around...I gotta make a move, I gotta do this now...If they don't know your dreams, then they can't shoot 'em down"*. Kataki made a move and now is a full-time student at an Auckland university, making that name for himself. His resilience and support system are highlighted in the next section.

4.3.2 Turning Points in Adulthood

Hali:

Hali left home for Auckland, New Zealand, pregnant, to have her baby and save her mother from further disgrace. She arranged to stay with relatives and, three months after the birth of her son, went back to Samoa to raise him. She spent a year doing that and helping her mother out. Then her mother surprised Hali and said, *"I'm not going to let you waste your life here. I can handle everything...I'm going to let you go to New Zealand to finish your school, and your...brother will go with you"*.

Her mother's words signalled Hali's turning point. She stayed with her cousins, the same place she visited before. The cousin worked at an Auckland university campus and introduced Hali to a lecturer she knew well. She said, *"I see that you have potential, but I don't know what. But I know that this lecturer will be able to tell"*. This lecturer became, and still is, one of Hali's most significant influences, *"To this day, I call her my Palagi mum. But, in my thesis, I call her "my shelter"- lo 'u malu- which is like my mum. Because I'm sheltered there"*. The following section will wrap up Hali's story.

Halona:

At 20 years old, Halona was back with her boyfriend, Fetu, both still leading the "gang lifestyle". They decided to get married and stop that lifestyle. To do that safely, they needed a clean break. They went to Australia and moved in with Halona's sister and husband. Fetu was a talented rugby player and did well in Australia. However, *"...the drug scene got him"*. This unfortunate turn of events prompted Halona to leave Fetu and to go live with her sister.

Halona became very unhappy and homesick, *"it was a horrible, horrible life. I probably reached my lowest point there. To the point where I ended up in hospital for taking too many pills"*. She convinced Fetu to go back to New Zealand with her, and within two weeks became pregnant. However, the physical abuse continued, and she soon found out Fetu had a girlfriend. She told him to leave, which he did.

Halona gave birth to a baby girl, 'Pearl'. When Pearl was just under a year old, Fetu wanted Halona to come back. Because she wanted an intact family and *"family was everything"*, she agreed and went back to Australia with Pearl. Fetu promised her he'd change and stop his substance use, and they would be a happy family. That didn't happen, *"Two nights later, he*

went out, got wasted, came back. I was holding Pearl, and he punched me, and it just missed her face". That was it for Halona. She flew back to New Zealand, went back to church, changed her lifestyle. This event was the beginning of the Turning Point in Halona's life. She moved to an area in Auckland that mainly was Pasifika and, *"they all just looked after me".*

Halona made some crucial decisions, *"being in the church [and] on my own, I grew spiritually...and I was determined to raise my daughter in a good environment".* Halona got involved in her community, was put in leadership positions. She commented, *"They were awesome times of growth...bringing out that determination, emotional strength. And being able to push yourself beyond."* Next to family, the church was and is central in Halona's life. She was determined to give Pearl the best upbringing she could, *"I had [decided] that I wasn't going to study or work; I'd gotten the benefit... I could be home [to] support my daughter and be... involved at school."*

She met and married a missionary, 'Leo', who was from Australia. He was serving in New Zealand, and he seemed like a logical addition to her life since they were members of the same religion. But the marriage did not work out. Instead of physical abuse, Leo was mentally and emotionally abusive. Again, family meant everything to Halona, and she was determined to make the marriage work. Before they split up, she had three more children, and *"we fought in court for seven years".* Halona described it as *"evil times"*, but it was also another period of growth. She won full custody of her children.

Finally, *"I retired from it all [and] made a decision to focus on my studies.* While battling in court, Halona managed to get a Bachelor's degree, an Honours degree, a Master's and is

now a candidate for a higher degree. This accomplishment completed her turning points. All that boosted Halona's resilience is presented in the next section

Serena:

Serena had remarried an *"extremely violent man"* that she stayed with for over seven years. She commented, *"I knew it was wrong... from the beginning...I knew he was wrong"*.

He became a drug runner, and they travelled overseas. Serena succumbed to the excitement of it all, *"I thought it was all glamorous...cos I'd lived...a very staid, Christian life"*. After nearly eight years of this life, Serena had enough. He'd become more dangerous due to his violence, his drug addiction, and his chosen profession. She had this to say, *"He...told [me]he was 'the seed of the devil'. He was worse than that"*. She decided to escape, *"So, in the hotel...terrified...[I took] a thousand dollars [from his] briefcase...and...I [took] my passport...and [his] \$1,000 and [went] to the airport...I bought a ticket and stay[ed] in the airport in case he came looking for me"*.

She arrived in New Zealand, *"and I was completely broken as you would be"*. Her arrival was Serena's turning point. She to her brother's home, and he encouraged her to go back to school and get another diploma. The diploma turned into a Bachelor's degree. *"I did the Bachelor's, and I went to work in the Pacific Islands Mental Health services...and...worked around all over the place"*. And then opportunity knocked, *"someone tapped me on the shoulder to come here"* ("Here" meaning a major Auckland university). Opportunities kept knocking, and she was able to get her higher postgraduate degrees free of charge. The following section will conclude Serena's story.

Alofa:

Alofa had given up on school and gone to work. At 17, she worked full time and, *"I gave a lot of my money to my father, as I was working. Because that's what my mother did. And I felt like that was the way to keep peace"* After nearly two years, Alofa watched the movie Top Gun, made what she said was a "silly" decision to join the New Zealand Air Force. She stated, *"[This] breakaway became the making of me"*. Alofa joined at 19 years old. She did not like it at first and called her mother to say she wanted to come home. Her mother's reply kept her in, *"Look, just stick it out...and [then] she said, 'We're really proud of you'". And I thought, "Okay, well... 'If you're proud of me, I'll stick it out there'".* I asked Alofa if that was the first outright encouragement she heard from her mother. Her response was, *"Yep. Absolutely"*. For most of Alofa's life, she waited for her mother's acknowledgement, which wasn't forthcoming. Not because she was mean, but because Alofa commented, *I don't think she understood"*.

After the Air Force, Alofa came back home and got a high-paying job at the International Airport, and once again, *"My father kind of milked a lot of money out of me...he knew I was earning very good money"*. Alofa's protectiveness of her mother kept her from going out to live on her own:

I didn't want to leave her...in the care of...my father...not without me there...because I was at a point where I'd stand up to my father and say, "Don't call Mum stupid. She's not stupid", while she's cowering in the kitchen.

Alofa felt that it was ironic that her mother inadvertently decided for her. Her mother thought of herself as one who married “up” when she wed Alofa’s father. Her mother commented that this was because he was a “blue-eyed Irishman”. She wanted the same for Alofa, but Alofa disagreed, *“...it did nothing for me. I grew up Polynesian. For me, a white boy was not on my radar”*.

So, when she met her now-husband, ‘Loto’, who is Samoan, her mother was so against it, Alofa moved out. Her loyalty to her husband trumped that of her mother. It was then that Alofa began thinking of her own welfare first instead of her mother's. Her mother, however, did not relent, even when they got married:

She made my wedding day absolute hell...Probably the worst day of my life...I cried from start to finish. She caused...all kinds of ruckus at the wedding. She was hell-bent on me not getting married to him...I didn't talk to her for nine months.

Her mother's attitude changed when Alofa became very ill after miscarrying her first pregnancy. Her illness prompted her to ask Loto to call her mother, *“And within a couple of hours, she was by my bed (tears come up). And she never left our side (tears) from then on”*. At the end of this ordeal, her mother loved Loto. The love that Alofa's mother displayed toward Loto healed the relationship between daughter and mother.

So, after 29 years and four children later, Alofa received a Health Science degree. Fifteen years ago, she and her family went to live in Samoa for about two years due to Loto’s job, and while she was there, she assisted women, teaching them about their health and hygiene and how to keep their families healthy:

I was really touched by the trust that [the women] had in me and... I thought, "[they] trust me, and I can advocate for [them]...This is what I want to be doing is advocating...and being that person...for our Pacifica women.

When they were getting ready to return home to New Zealand, she told Loto about how she felt and was not sure how to use the experience she just had. He told her to pray about it. She did, *"then this moment of peace came over me."* And she knew that she would go back to school in the health sciences. This was Alofa's turning point. With the support of her family, her church, her husband, she found her calling and went for it. More about her support and resilience in the next section

4.4 Innate/Learned Resilience Factors, Coping Behaviours, and Resilience-Enhancing Influences

As stated earlier in this thesis, resilience is a process of adaptation and management of the negative effects of adversity. It takes both innate and learned abilities in conjunction with supportive resilience-enhancing external factors to influence and motivate the process of resilience.

4.4.1 Innate/Learned Resilience Factors

The participants showed extraordinary innate and learned abilities that assisted them during their most challenging times. Common to all eight were Perseverance, Spirituality, and Resourcefulness.

4.4.1.1 Perseverance:

Perseverance is persisting despite adversity to achieve your goals. It was Halona who stated this trait well, *"There were awesome times of growth...bringing out that determination, emotional strength. And being able to push yourself beyond."*

Serena echoed this sentiment after leaving eight years of intimate partner violence (IPV), *"I learned a lot. I learned a lot about myself. I learned even more about resilience and about my inner resources."* Both Serena and Halona experienced IPV and escaped. For them, it took this extreme adversity to discover their determination and strengths. At ten years old, Joena likewise went through extreme adversity, and it honed her resolve to use education to *"get out of the cycle of abuse"*.

From an even earlier age, Hali performed well in school despite physical violence from family. Even though the violence continued, she persisted, keeping a positive attitude while leaving home to have her child *"out of wedlock"*, her grandfather's death, and throughout the care and eventual death of her mother. She said to herself many times that she could control what she did in her life, *"You cannot control your mum's condition...your life revolves around her condition now. But education is something you can control, you can decline, or you can take it as a challenge."* Hali took the challenge through her undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Others displayed perseverance in how they tolerated the bullying and negative messages to pursue their educational goals. Akamu initially bore the bullying and then fought to gain respect from those who put him down.

Kataki showed his perseverance in how he endured the taunting from the Sunday School bullies and overcame their negative messages, eventually finding a belief in himself and

empathy for others. Alofa persevered despite her father's emotional and sexual abuse and her mother's disapproval of her marriage.

Lamani, the only female child in her immediate family, *"I was fortunate ...enough...to, to be by myself as a girl"*. Lamani felt that this made her more assertive as she pursued her educational goals. She commented that had she been in a more traditional family, this independence would have been discouraged.

4.4.1.2 Spirituality

Every one of the participants had some kind of faith in God and considered this faith fundamental to their success. Kataki rediscovered his while in high school:

I was [in my]...second to the last year in high school when I actually started getting [back] into the religion part. But before that, just because of what happened to me when I was younger, I wasn't able to [relate].

Lamani, of the same religion, never lost her faith. When asked what factors aided in her resilience, her first answer was, *"[I] just always knew and felt that God...no matter what, that this is gonna be okay, somehow, some way."*

Hali repeatedly referred to a similar phrase that she attributes to her mother and her grandfather,

Whatever comes your way, God has the answer...We have a just God.

Whatever happens in your family, don't be mean to your relatives, but love them still...[don't] share the love... just with your families, but [with] those who-even if they don't, give, just give.

Joena relied on her spirituality and repeatedly referred to a favourite Bible verse in Corinthians 2, *"There are three things important in one's life, but out of all that, Love"*. This passage helped her get through all the abuse she endured. She used it to forgive her mother, *"She's...been physically abused, emotionally abused...and so, I see mom has unresolved [issues]...and that's why I never counter it. When she starts doing it to me, I back away. I am able to forgive and move on."*

Serena attested that reading ten chapters of the Bible gave her guidance, *"I read those ten chapters a day...even now, I can put it to everyday life. And it does give me guidance"*. It also helped her trust herself, and she forgave her former husband after divorcing him in her 40's, *"I'm not that bitter about what I went through; with what he did to me, because I learned so many lessons!"*

Akamu grew up in the church, and prayer was integrated into his household and his life. He studied to be a minister from a young age and planned for it, *"I thought was going to be either a preacher...or I was going to write stories related to the Bible."* Halona and Alofa shared the same religion and leaned on their faith throughout their ordeals. Halona, who has brought up four children as a single parent, commented on how her faith affected them:

Heavenly Father...was the father figure in our home...I don't think my children ever worried about not having a father because they felt that...my

girls, especially, will say that they've never lacked that...And that's who they could talk to.

4.4.1.3 Resourcefulness

All participants showed resourcefulness amid or because of the challenging times in their lives. Halona and Serena had to be resourceful when they chose to fend for themselves on the streets. Serena learned how to “con” strangers to rescue, feed or house her. Halona’s outgoing and strong personality attracted people who were willing to help her out. Both thought that these hard times contributed to their ability to survive the streets. Serena stated, “*from an early age, you learn how to be resourceful. You have to be resourceful, so you don't starve; you have to be resourceful so...you keep living*”.

Hali was told to go part-time to university to care for her mother. However, she figured out a way to maintain her full class load during her mother’s hospitalisation, “*My mom was admitted for six months at (an Auckland hospital) in 2011. I was sleeping [there], doing my assignments there, and then catch the train to my university[sic]*.”

Joena prided herself in her ability to make money to pay for her university preparatory schooling. The hard work on the plantation and her father’s omnipresent challenge to do better taught Joena to work hard throughout her education and find jobs along the way. Lamani was also very resourceful when finding scholarship opportunities to further her academic career and found side jobs to send more money home while she studied.

Resourcefulness by turning pain into purpose showed up in nearly all the participants.

Akamu used his boxing ability to stop the intra-cultural bullying and his musical ability to

make Palagi friends in secondary school. Alofa focused her early penchant for protection and advocacy into advocating for Pasifika women as an adult. Kataki declared that his pain growing up made him who he is as an adult. He stated, *"I'm not your typical 22-year-old"*. He identified reasons he felt that way and recounted how his bullying experience developed *"a hideous empathy"* for his African best friend while watching him face racism in primary school. He also felt this empathy for his teenage shoplifting mates because he knew *"how they grew up"*. He recognised that these experiences made him into the man he is:

I feel like I needed to go [through] that...so that I could have that [empathy], you know? Like, I have gay friends, and I know that they are going through that right now! I kinda want to look out for them.

4.4.2 Coping Behaviours

Coping behaviours are those behaviours that helped the participants handle their ACEs.

Akamu calmed by playing his guitar, *"I got myself a guitar, and that's one of the things that kept my sanity"*. And for Kataki, it was rap music, *"it helped me get through high school"*.

Hali, Joena, Alofa, Serena and Lamani prayed during their ordeals. Serena commented that prayer helped her focus when there was chaos around her.

Some coping behaviours seem self-destructive at first glance. But not from the perspective of the participants themselves. Both Halona and Serena used their substance abuse to numb their depression and feelings of shame. And Serena's comment, *"I just wanted it to go away"*, applied to both participants when they resorted to suicidal behaviour by taking pills when they were desperate to take away the pain as young adults.

When they were young girls, Joena and Serena discovered reading to distract themselves from what they were going through. Serena commented, *“I loved reading from an early age. Because I grew up lonely, all I had for companionship was a book”*. Joena resorted to reading during the most challenging times, *“By the time you get to do your homework, it's about 10 o'clock [at night], and then you put on the candlelight. I'd always hide and read”*.

4.4.3 Resilience-enhancing Influences

The resilience factors/abilities presented here were augmented by and, at times, motivated by many environmental and relational elements. The findings showed three categories of resilience strengthening elements most familiar to the participants: Family and Friends; Culture and Community; and Educational and Institutional Support.

4.4.3.1 Family and Friends

For Kataki, Akamu, Halona, and Lamani, their families were 100% behind them. All four participants did not suffer abuse or discord within their households and could depend on their families during difficult times. Kataki demonstrated this support with talks with his Nana from Tonga, *“I go to her for relationship advice. Because she has been through...it all”*. He commented that he felt tremendous respect for her life experience. He discusses his life with his mother, whom this researcher met when Kataki answered a video call from his mother and brothers during the interview. The family closeness was palpable during their short conversation. He stated they check in frequently to “say hi”. The attachment extends to his father as well and is demonstrated here:

The whole reason I was so into music was because my dad...that's what he loves doing...that's what he's good at. That's how I bond with my dad. See, I've got his name tattooed here (points to the underside of his arm). That's my dad's name. And that's my mom's name, (pointing at the other arm, same placement) So, whenever I'm...[feeling low]...Then I just look down and be like, okay, yeah.

Halona's support from mother and family did not waver at the worst of times, *"I always had an amazing family. My mom is amazing...we always try and be there for each other"*.

Lamani and Hali had unswerving support from their mothers. Both were caregivers for their mothers during illnesses in-between and while attending university. Lamani's mother survived her life-threatening illness and remained Lamani's primary advocate. Both continue their postgraduate work while working full time and taking time to care for their children, as well as those of other family members. After the death of her mother and grandfather, Hali expressed gratitude for the support and friendship of her "Palagi mom".

Alofa had her best friend and cousin to confide in while growing up and remains very close to her. She also had her husband's and family's love while she was at university, along with her mother's, who helped with the household chores when she was able.

Joena had the backing of her father throughout her educational career until his death. For Serena, her brother was available to guide her after she escaped from her violent husband. That guidance was the beginning of her academic career.

4.4.3.2 Culture and Community

All eight participants are connected to and contribute to their respective cultures and the greater Pasifika community. Serena, who had minimal support from her family or community while growing up, found a Pasifika community within her university. She now gives back to her own culture of Fiji and the greater Pasifika community utilizing her teaching and research.

Hali used her graduate degree to work for a Pasifika research group and did her postgraduate research with Pasifika women. Hali also took over some of her mother's Pasifika community obligations and continues close contact with her home island. Alofa uses her health science degree to give back to the Pasifika community as an advocate for Pasifika women.

Kataki, who has not yet graduated from university, is *"being somebody"* in his Tongan association. He plans to use his degree after graduation to give back to his family and community. He tells his mother this:

This is the type of thing that I talk about with my mom...what I am aiming towards, [not just] the degree, but [also] "I want to give back to where you came from, as well as where we're staying at right now".

4.4.3.3 Educational and Institutional Support

Nearly all the participants had some sort of support from their educational institutions along the way. Joena, Hali, Lamani, and Serena received financial backing from their universities. His university supports Kataki through the opportunities it offers for Pasifika students.

Akamu found support from his fine arts teachers, who recognised his interests in secondary school. Joena stated how a Marist brother alerted her mother to her potential to enter university preparatory classes. Once she completed a professional diploma, Serena was encouraged to change it into a Bachelor's Degree, which paved the way to both her Postgraduate degrees.

4.5 Chapter Summary

The findings of this study illustrate the extraordinary resilience of eight Pasifika academics, some of whom faced serious hardships both as children and as adults. Notwithstanding their adversities, the academics pursued their education despite childhood abuse, childhood neglect, the death and illness of parents, racism, and prejudice, as well as domestic violence. The findings also show that the participants with the least childhood support found it more challenging as they got older, regardless of whether this lack of support was intentional or not. Conversely, the chapter also showed that those with the least difficulty in childhood had smoother transitions into their adult lives than those with more difficulty. Even though the reasons for these differential outcomes are supported in the literature, the question remains about the kind of support needed to promote and sustain resilience during and after adversity. Is this support common to all cultures? Or is there an indigenous paradigm more appropriate for Pasifika peoples and others of a communal/collective culture? Is this appropriateness the same for recently immigrated Pasifika as it would be for those Pasifika peoples born in New Zealand? In the following discussion, I will consider these questions and explore possible answers. Based on the findings, I will also consider potential recommendations for culturally sensitive and specific methods of evaluating both adversity and resilience that can serve Pasifika peoples, including their academics.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into the following sections: Introduction to the chapter, Discussion on the findings, Clinical implications, Limitations, Suggestions for future research, and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction:

It is important to note that because of my individualistic, Euro-American upbringing, I cannot, in any way, set myself up as an “expert” in Pasifika/Pacific research, nor do I aspire to this in the future. Historically, Euro-American researchers presented their indigenous studies from a position of power, whether intending to or not, interpreting their findings through an individualistic, non-indigenous lens, thus positioning themselves as the “expert” (Koya Vaka’uta, 2017) of a culture they were not even part of. My intention is to offer information and to document these resilience stories as honourably and as accurately as possible.

The resilience stories shared by the Pasifika/Pacific academics of this study show a significant degree of cultural heterogeneity that is flexibly bound by a common thread highlighting the shared communal/collective values that are contained within their respective Indigenous Pacific roots. This cultural demarcation within the stories characterises the experiences of resilience and adversity as collectivist in nature.

Nonetheless, there are commonalities in similar stories found in the literature coming from individualistic countries such as the United States. Though there are many similarities with the participants in this study in the adversities they endured, especially in the areas of

childhood physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; many of the *means* by which participants gained their strength and self-efficacy are unique to Pacific/Pasifika.

A restatement of what I mean by “resilience” and “resilience-enhancing” is appropriate here. For the purposes of this thesis, resilience, as stated earlier, is a process of adaptation and management of the negative effects of adversity. This takes both innate and learned abilities in conjunction with resilience-enhancing external factors that serve to support, influence, and/or motivate the process of resilience.

The most significant, overarching theme to come from analysis of the findings is that there is a gradation or range of how well the participants negotiate and contend with their adversities. Their ability appears to be dependent upon and directly proportionate to the strength of and connection to their collective/communal environment, more so than with the innate or learned abilities they possess. This major finding is supported by a few resilience studies such as Liebenberg and Moore (2016) who explain their theory of Social Ecological Resilience (SER) with survivors of institutional childhood abuse from Ireland that left the country to live in the UK. SER is an intriguing concept that is discussed later in this chapter. The study that more directly supports this finding was done by Berger and Weiss (2010). Their research takes a collectivist cultural view of resilience in their study of posttraumatic growth in US Latinos, and describe how this immigrant culture handles severe stressful events through a “family lens”. They found that a measurement of how stressful an event was related to how much the adversity impacted the Latinos’ family (p. 115). Their findings also documented how religion and spirituality is another major means in which Latino peoples coped with adversity. Both these factors play prominently the findings of the present study.

5.2 Purpose and questions reviewed:

The aim of this study was to comprehensively explore the stories of resilience of Pasifika academics:

Overall study focus:

- "Adversity in Childhood and Pasifika Academics: Stories of Resilience".

The sub-questions are:

- What adversities did the participants identify? Similarities? Differences?
- What were the turning points in participant stories that steered their path towards academia? ? Enabling factors? Barriers?
- What collective support and personal resilience factors aided the participants in their journey? Similarities? Differences?

This chapter is divided into thematic sections and subsections that closely mirror those in Findings chapter. Key findings are discussed within the context of each topic.

5.3 The Beginnings of Adversity

A discussion about resilience begins with a discussion about adversity. Anda and Felitti (2014), developed the ACE questionnaire (see Appendix B) in order to measure the number of ACES in over 17,000 adults (p. 203). Though the questionnaire was not utilised as a measurement in this study, many of the questionnaire's categories and subcategories influenced the arrangement and grouping of the findings when relevant. The relevant ACE categories were: Abuse: *Physical, Emotional, Sexual*; Neglect: *Physical and Emotional*; and

under Household Dysfunction the relevant subcategories were *Violence Between Adults*⁹(*Intimate Partner Violence-IPV*) and *Divorce or Loss of a Biological Parent*. Shelby County, USA modified the original ACE questionnaire to include Bullying, Racism, and Witnessed Violence (The Research and Evaluation Group at PHMC, 2014). These also influenced the Findings groupings. I added Immigration Stress.

5.3.1 Death of Parent/Divorce:

The beginning of adversity for four of the participants involved either death of a parent or divorce. Three of the participants were island-born Pasifika/Pacific participants: Hali and Joena from Samoa and Lamani from Tonga. Halona, Tongan/European, was born in New Zealand. This is mentioned because the findings show, at this point, significant cultural differences in the external support the island born women receive during their ordeals as opposed to those by New Zealand born Halona.

5.3.1.1 Death of a parent:

Death of a parent can be catastrophic for a child depending on the age of the child, the closeness of the child to the deceased parent and the emotional support the child receives.

⁹ Original was "Mother treated violently". Updated by" Joining Forces for Children" in the USA. See website: <https://www.joiningforcesforchildren.org/what-are-aces/>

What tends to exacerbate their bereavement is a lack of continuity, either within their environment or in the behaviour of the other parent or parental figures (Ellis, Dowrick, & Lloyd-Williams, 2013). Both Halona and Lamani experienced severe discontinuities after the death of their fathers, but the environment in which these discontinuities occurred were vastly different. Due to her age (10 years), Halona accompanied her mother to the funeral in Tonga and was surrounded by her Tongan kāinga for a month, *“She took me with her...back to Tonga for a month and she grieved with her family [who] took over [and we] had a lot of love and support in that”*. After the month was over, Halona and her mother left the security of the kāinga. Because her mother had to work two jobs to support her six children, Halona was without her mother for the first time in her life.

Halona was affected by her mother’s absence and experienced emotional upheaval entering secondary school. It wasn’t clear whether Halona’s mother was aware of her daughter’s difficulties. Halona might have benefited from some emotional or professional support for her grief during this pivotal period of her life. But studies suggest that Halona’s situation is not unique (Benseman et al., 2007; Hutchinson & New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship, 2011). Collective values such as family wellbeing may mean the parents are absent while they work to meet the standard of living in New Zealand (Hutchinson & New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship, 2011). Hutchison described the stress Pasifika families encounter while trying to maintain traditional values of “large families and community collectiveness” while adjusting to life in New Zealand. (p. 2). This is particularly true when the parents are island born (Hutchinson & New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship, 2011). This assertion closely describes Halona’s family dilemma.

Halona's hardship suggests the difficulty Pacific Island families can experience when attempting to retain and maintain traditional, collective values in a dominant, individualistic culture. This finding is corroborated by psychologist Dr. Karlo Mila (2018), in a Dateline interview when she stated how Tongan parents, used to the ways of their home island, struggled to understand the depression their children were experiencing, brought on by the difficulty their children had negotiating the different expectations of family and those of the Palagi schools they attended. Because of this lack of understanding, the parents did not recognise how much help their children needed. I assume that this may have been true for Halona's mother.

When comparing Halona's circumstances to Lamani's, Lamani's apparent lack of emotional overwhelm was a stark contrast. Due to my own cultural bias and professional experience, this dissimilarity surprised me. I assumed that receiving the news of being adopted while attending her grandfather's funeral at 14 years-old, would make his death more difficult for her; especially when followed by her mother having to leave for Auckland in order to remedy the decrease in the family's income. However, once seen through the lens of Lamani's strong collectivist culture, it was not surprising. Tongan society is interdependent and no one is excluded, whether due to their status, position, or family situation (Scroope, 2018). Lamani was entirely supported by her kāinga, her church, and her community.

Comparatively, the intensity of Halona's grief was likely, in part, a consequence of her younger age. Even though, like Lamani, Halona's mother had to work in order to make up for lost income, Halona was just ten years-old, and her mother's abrupt absence while working day and evening created much anxiety. Even with five older siblings, Halona felt lost, *"I was already angry 'coz of my dad dying...I got into fights all the time and...I felt lost"*.

Born in the Auckland area of individualistic New Zealand, Halona did not have the interdependent communal support characteristic of Lamani's homeland. Halona's lack of environmental support points toward a greater discontinuity in her life following the death of her father. This loss of family cohesion and lack of adult guidance at crucial times in her life, created a progressive fragmentation of Halona's family and social support (Ellis et al., 2013).

Both Halona and Lamani stated that they were brought up communal households and shared Pacific values such as a collective world view; care and concern for others; spirituality; and the importance of family (Pasefika Proud, n.d.) But the dissimilarities in the amount of communal support between the two participants influenced the difficulty of the roads they traversed to achieve their academic pursuits.

The kind of intra-cultural juxtapositions illustrated here show up in the various decisions and behaviours of all the Pasifika participants throughout this chapter.

5.3.1.2 Divorce

Hali and Joena, both born and raised in Samoa, experienced parental divorce at young ages. Divorce, like death of a parent, can be traumatic to a child depending on circumstances. This is observable in "high-conflict" divorces such as those of Joena's and Hali's parents (van der Wal, Finkenauer, & Visser, 2018). At five-years-old, Hali had already experienced a number of adversities. She witnessed the domestic violence toward her mother by her biological father and was kidnapped. The kidnapping prompted the divorce, but Hali was then moved into her maternal grandfather's household only to witness a continuation of domestic violence towards her mother by her step-father. This is while being physically abused by her

mother's older siblings. The aftermath of the divorce was more conflictual than the divorce itself. Witnessing IPV is considered a trauma by itself, and can have repercussions that follow one into adulthood (Anderson & Bernhardt, 2020; Li, Herbell, Bloom, Sharps, & Bullock, 2020; Paterson, Faribairn-Dunlop, et al., 2007).

Joena experienced near daily physical and emotional abuse as well, but at the hands of her mother and her mother's relatives after her parents divorced. She was also separated from her supportive father. What is remarkable in these cases, is how resilient both Hali and Joena were amid this abuse. According to van der Wal et al. (2018), when children go through very high-conflict divorces that are classified as trauma (according to the DSM-5¹⁰, many of these children develop trauma disorders, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Interesting enough, the findings of van Der Wal, et al., further indicated that some of these children showed resilience *if* they acquired proficiency in age-related activities and/or achieved in school soon after the divorce was settled. Ironically, both participants did achieve at school and, in fact, were at the top of their classes. But this seemed more to do with how the participants' chose to cope with their adversity, (Anderson & Bernhardt, 2020; Bessey & Gonzalez, 2018), than it did with helping either one adapt to the divorces of their parents.

Joena's parents' divorce was conflictual for nearly two years. In addition, both participants experienced continuous and constant adversity after the divorces. The combination of

¹⁰ **DSM–5** is a manual for assessment and diagnosis of mental disorders

enduring a conflictual divorce and then experiencing an increase in adversity for the rest of their childhood would most certainly have increased either participants' probability of developing mental health issues (Soffer, Gilboa–Schechtman, & Shahar, 2008). This was not the case. The findings of the current study do not appear to support Soffer et al. (2008) or (van der Wal et al., 2018).

What does support these findings are those collective, communal values that underpinned the households of both Joena and Hali. They, like most Pacific/Pasifika peoples, were brought up to respect their elders despite the mistreatment of some of those elders and both participants continued to contribute to the wellbeing of the household as was expected from all members. Joena, who worked hardest to contribute while working on the plantation comments,

It's hard work. Manual labour you had to do...there's so many of us. After cleaning the taro...My grandfather...he likes coffee. We grew coffee and cocoa on the plantation [and] so we had to collect all the coffee beans...and the cocoa, roast them, all manually! That's how we make our breakfast tea for the mornings.

5.3.2 Bullying and Discrimination:

The reality of discrimination and racism threads its way throughout the stories of seven out of eight participants. (The experiences of three participants who immigrated, Akamu, Lamani, and Serena are discussed under Immigration Stress). Pasifika/Pacific peoples, New Zealand-born or Island-born, face inter-cultural and/or intra-cultural discrimination on a regular basis (James, 2019; Naepi, 2019). It is still imbedded in the many of New Zealand's institutions, including their educational institutions, despite sincere efforts of the New

Zealand's Ministry of Education to address the issue (Brighouse, 2020; Chu et al., 2013; M. Reynolds, 2017). Overall progress in this area appears to be inhibited by the persistent remnants of colonialism and neoliberalist attitudes that still plague New Zealand culture (Brighouse, 2020; Gauthier, 2013). Because of this, marginalisation of non-white populations remains ever-present challenges to the country's multi-cultural goals and this influences the intra-cultural conflicts that exist among Pasifika peoples (Berry, 1997; Gauthier, 2013).

It appears to be too easy to discount this structural/institutional discrimination as “not that bad” by some members of New Zealand's dominant culture. This is reflected in Harris (2018), who gives a frank account of his experiences and observations as a young Pākehā, of New Zealand's ongoing and complicated relationship with Māori peoples. Though the focus is on Māori, Harris's four types of “white defensiveness” are easily extended to Pasifika peoples. One of which is “detriment-centring” (p. 4). This type of defensiveness is when people-e.g., administrators, teachers, policy makers, researchers- give their attention to the disadvantages and problems that beset Māori and Pacific peoples, portraying them as peoples who need to be fixed rather than supported by their accomplishments and social capital. This focus on Pasifika/Pacific peoples disadvantages has overtones of patronisation and is a remnant of colonialism (Brighouse, 2020; Koya Vaka'uta, 2017; M. Reynolds, 2017). Unfortunately, these narratives still exist in the educational resilience literature that speaks to the preponderance of labelling of Pasifika students as “underachieving” (Crawford-Garrett, 2018; M. Reynolds, 2017) This illustrates one of many hurdles the Pasifika/Pacific participants might have faced prior to commencing their academic paths.

A significant and disturbing finding has to do with those participants that experienced insecurities because of their mixed ethnicity. For Alofa, *"I've been saying more in my later years, 'I'm tired of trying to prove our how brown I am. I worked hard to prove my brownness...I'm immensely proud of my Polynesian heritage'".* Alofa also had to witness her children go through their own issues with their mixed ethnicity after living in Samoa for two years,

Because they were considered 'Afakasi', half-caste, that in itself brings all kinds of prejudices and misunderstandings. They weren't Samoan enough while they were living in Samoa; and they're not Palagi enough while they're living in New Zealand.

Halona also went through this inner dilemma, *"I always felt like there was this thing of you had to prove yourself. Prove that I'm Tongan; I'm too white to be brown [and] too brown to be white".* Halona was well into her adulthood when she came to terms with her dual heritage. Often, her fighting in her adolescent years was over perceived racism, *"I...fought older kids and it became more racist driven. There was a lot of racism at the school".*

Mental health issues also impact the successive Pasifika generations (S. Manuela & Anae, 2017; Mila, 2018), particularly when strong communal support of family is missing or disrupted. Both Halona (1st generation Tongan New Zealander) and Serena experienced this disruption in their collective support and recalled experiencing depression and turning to self-harm to escape their despair as will be discussed later in this chapter.

5.3.3 Immigrations Stress

It is appropriate to open this section by continuing the topic of discrimination, as it applies to three out of the five participants who immigrated to continue their educations. The literature confirms bigotry as an issue specifically for immigrant populations of colour entering individualistic Western-European and Euro-American countries, including New Zealand (Anae, 2014; Aranda & Vaquera, 2015; Berry, 1997; Gauthier, 2013). Racism impacted Serena who already felt singled out and set apart from her primary school peers because of her half-caste heritage. When she immigrated to New Zealand at 16, Serena felt more of the same angst while listening to discriminatory remarks from some New Zealanders of European origin,

People wouldn't know that I had any coloured blood in me. So, they would talk down about Maori's and Pacific people, and I'd be sitting there, not wanting to say that "you're talking about me"...because that wouldn't do me any good. So, I would just think, "I don't belong anywhere". Again (emphasis hers), I didn't belong!

Already feeling like she “didn’t matter”, this experience only enhanced her feelings of exclusion. James (2019), a fair complected Fijian with an Australian father, also felt very connected to her island heritage and yet felt a similar lack of belonging to either culture. This is illustrated in her reaction to hearing the word “coconut”, “I feel like I have inverted coconut syndrome; white on the outside, black on the inside, but ultimately hollow” (p. 1). James goes on to explain that the term coconut is derogatory because in Pacific Islander culture, it means that they are perceived to embrace the institutions of the dominant white culture, thus brown on the outside, but white inside.

These racial epithets are also often used by others of the same or other Pacific/Pasifika cultures. When coupled with other immigration stressors, ethnic Identity conflicts can make immigrants more susceptible to mental health issues, here in New Zealand and in many other neoliberal countries (Berry, 1997; Chtereva, 2016). Serena, who hated the “whiteness” of New Zealand, *“I’d pretend I was in Suva and walking along those streets and going to the shops, where it was colourful and it smelled of spice; and people were friendly and smiley and BROWWNN”* could not reconcile her immigration stress, which only increased her depression.

Akamu and Lamani also faced the stress of discrimination their first year in their new countries, as well as had to contend with poor English proficiency. However, both appeared to progressively acclimate well without any expressed inner conflicts. The question is, why not? For Lamani, being 19 and more mature was a factor to her positive adjustment. However, for 13-year-old Akamu, one would expect that experiencing intra-cultural racism, combined with his lack of English skills and homesickness would cause difficulty in his ability to adjust (Berry, 1997). This assumption is informed by other research in this area. According to Gauthier (2013), FOB (Fresh off the Boat) term is frequently cast at not only recent immigrants, but also first and second generation Pacific/Pasifika youths if they speak with a Pacific accent and/or choose to practice their cultural traditions, rather than conform to Palagi customs. The derogatory term “coconut” previously mentioned, is considered more offensive than FOB to most of Pacific origin (James, 2019). For these reasons, Akamu’s measured reactions to being referred to as an “FOB” and “coconut” were somewhat surprising; especially at an age when acceptance by one’s peer group is of

paramount importance. What is more, Akamu surmounted his difficult first years in secondary school extraordinarily well.

It could be argued that the relatively swift adjustment process of Lamani and Akamu, had more to do with their strong Pasifika/Pacific collectivist principles of relationality, inclusion, family, reciprocity, and love (Airini et al., 2010; Brighthouse, 2020; Massey University, 2013; Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2018). These findings further suggest the essentiality of external communal support together with internalised traditional values. This statement is supported by Montayre, Neville, and Holroyd (2017) in their study of the acculturation process of 15 older Filipino immigrants to New Zealand whose adjustment to living in New Zealand was contingent on retaining their heritage while settling into New Zealand culture. Similarly, the findings of Nayar, Hocking, and Giddings (2012) describe how Indian immigrant women acculturated well by integrating aspects of their Indian culture into their occupations in New Zealand.

Further explanations for Akamu's acculturational progress include supportive family members already living in New Zealand, one of which went to university before him, maintenance of cultural ties to Samoa, and confidence born from a warm and loving *agia* and *aiga potopoto*¹¹. Having been brought up in a traditional family and village in Samoa, Akamu could not help but adhere to *fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way) and operate from these

¹¹ *aiga potopoto*: Samoan extended family

guiding principles that revolve around honouring one's family (Scroope, 2017). Akamu's internalisation of fa'a Samoa no doubt nurtured his self-efficacy and assisted him in navigating his first year(s) in secondary school.

5.3.4 Emotional and Physical Neglect

Whether physical or emotional, neglect has potentially devastating consequences in adulthood, including damage to the brain (Glaser, 2000) and impaired psycho-social functioning (Kim & Miller, 2020). The likelihood of these consequences is proportional to the number of other risk factors. The research by Price-Robertson, Rush, Wall, and Higgins (2013), suggest that barriers to resilience can arise when neglect is compounded by other concurrent adverse experiences. Considering the importance of interdependence and self-association for collectivist Pasifika/Pacific peoples, there is a possibility that neglect may be more damaging if a child is initially raised communally, but then separated from family and/or community without the ability to connect with a "surrogate" group/family. I say this because if, according to Eisenberg (1999), self-efficacy and esteem for a member of a collective culture is determinant on being a "good group member" (p. 255), then prolonged separation from the security of one's "collective" could impede the development of self-confidence.

Alofa, Serena, and Halona all experienced significant neglect. None of the neglect was intentional. However, as the findings indicated, this did not lessen the impact it had on the participants. Halona's initial adversity and subsequent emotional neglect has already been discussed.

Though Serena describes her father as an alcoholic and her mother as a “dependent and childish woman”, she portrays her family as happy, at least during the Christmas holidays. Her mother’s apparent fixation with sending Serena off-island to board with different families in order to attend Catholic primary schools undermined Serena’s confidence and emotional security. Her mother seemed unaware of Serena’s increasing discontent as this went on. The findings of Soffer et al. (2008) indicate that emotional neglect, as opposed to emotional abuse, e.g. being belittled or put down, adversely affects one’s self-efficacy and one’s psychological resilience. But Serena recalls both physical neglect (being “starved”) where she boarded and emotional neglect (clothing stolen, being treated differently than the rest of the family). This leads to “cumulative harm” which likely contributed to Serena’s difficulty in forming peer relationships and lack of adaptation to her school environment (Manly, Lynch, Oshri, Herzog, & Wortel, 2013; Price-Robertson et al., 2013; Soffer et al., 2008).

Feasibly, Alofa’s endangerment due to her mother sanctioning walking her brother to Kindergarten, had more to do with her mother’s collectivist/communal upbringing in the Cook Islands where *oputangata*¹² was omnipresent and children were able to run around without worry of being unsupervised (Walrond, 2015). As for as Alofa’s emotional neglect in terms of not having her emotional needs met by her mother, who was either working or ill,

¹² oputangata: Cook Island Māori for extended family

this likely had more to do with her collectivist upbringing. Therefore, contributing to the duties of the household, even at a young age, was not at all unusual being raised by her mother, her auntie (mum's twin) and her Nana. And as evidenced by Alofa's concern for her older brother, protectiveness and caregiving came quite naturally to her. All this being said, even though there was emotional wounding in Alofa's beginnings, she also had the support and love from extended family. These findings support, to some degree, previous findings that positive childhood experiences can offset negative childhood experiences (Center for Disease Control and Prevention; Crandall et al., 2019).

5.4 Impact of Adversity

5.4.1 Negative Impacts

For both Halona and Serena, their initial adversity morphed quickly into rebelliousness and both participants chose to live on and off the streets, putting them at extreme risk, as evidenced by both being sexually assaulted. As further consequence of their rebellion, they had other adversities in common such as substance abuse and defiant behaviour. But whereas Halona, when compared to Lamani in the “Beginnings of Adversity” section, had fewer collective supports in place to assist and protect her, the support she did have as her adversity continued, was more substantial than that of Serena. Halona rediscovered her church during this violent and chaotic period in her life which helped her curb the worst of her substance abuse and motivated her to get a job. Serena, on the other hand, continued to have her needs neglected after immigrating to New Zealand and because of this and her inadequate preparation for secondary school, continued to rebel and refused to attend any school in New Zealand. She instead acted out, *“I just went and did the most worst things you could do-at that age...like if there were any kind of drugs around, I took them because who cared?”*. Serena’s lack of self-esteem and solid friendships continued and implies how the continuation of her parents emotional neglect compounded by the continuation of her destructive at-risk behaviour, had a substantial psychological and possible neurological impact (Perry, 2002). Serena, in lieu of no other support, had to lean heavily on inner resources of defiance and determination to survive. Though she considered these traits to be the foundation of her resilience, they unfortunately did not prevent her substance use, her pregnancy, inability to care for herself or her new daughter, and subsequent depression and suicidality.

The lack of family, community and social support while going through adversity would be difficult for anyone, but even more so for a young person, such as Halona, born into a collective culture, who experienced 10 years of feeling happy and secure in her family and then suddenly lost this security. Halona had difficulty negotiating her emotions as well as her education and homelife. An article by Hutchinson and New Zealand Social Entrepreneur Fellowship (2011), showcased a Pasifika youth mentoring program for Pasifika teens struggling to navigate between their collective culture at home and their lives within the Palagi culture of New Zealand. The mentoring program educated these young people on the importance of maintaining the connection to their Pasifika families and culture, which in turn would provide lasting and greater protection and increase their resilience. This article suggests how Halona's close family ties, identification with her Tongan culture, sense of community with her peers, whether on streets or in church, was crucial to her resilience and augmented her determination to endure.

Hali continued to persevere through continuous physical abuse and witnessed IPV at the hands of her step-father. Once again, this would likely predispose Hali to anxiety disorders and because of this, she would perform poorly in school (Jimenez, Wade, Lin, Morrow, & Reichman, 2016; Strompolis, Payne, Ulker, Porter, & Weist, 2017). And, as the findings clearly showed, her educational performance from primary to university was exemplary. This implies that her strong collective upbringing, which included the solid support of Hali's mother and grandfather and her non-abusive extended family, mitigated negative possibilities. Hali noted that she had a short stint of rebellion at 18 that had no relation to her earlier abuse.

The key factor from the findings discussed in this section indicates that the more consistent a Pacific/Pasifika person's communal support is, the higher the probability that they weather the impact of their adversities. The study of the collectivist culture in Sri Lanka by Alford (2016) and to some degree the study by Kar et al. (2014), corroborate this. Alford asserts that trauma is "culture specific" and describes how the rate of trauma recovery for many Sri Lankan survivors of the 2004 tsunami depended more on how much of their social network and community survived, rather than how the trauma affected them psychologically. This is even more apparent in the following section.

5.4.2 Positive Impacts

Positive impacts were experienced by Akamu, Lamani, Joena, and Hali, even though she was mentioned previous under Negative impacts. Akamu and Lamani's strong, traditional collective upbringings and support were discussed thoroughly in previous sections. They both learned from their immigration stressors, became accomplished "edgewalkers" (Burnett & Bond, 2019; Krebs, 1999; Tupuola, 2004) by retaining their cultural identities while successfully navigating the Palagi secondary and tertiary educational systems.

Both Joena and Hali epitomised positivity amid harsh times. In their estimation, the adversities they endured produced positive results and were ultimately beneficial.

According to Hali *"that pushed me to be stronger...It took that being responsible to my two younger brothers, to make me stronger in terms of not taking negative experiences in my life to affect me"*.

Joena had a similar response, *“I would always try to create something positive out of a negative situation...I guess those are problem solving skills...that I’ve developed. It’s like survival but it’s also, problem-solving skills”*

Joena and Hali’s outcomes are known as “Posttraumatic Growth” (PTG) (Tedeschi, 2020). PTG is when growth occurs directly as a result of the adversity experienced. Both participants used their adversities as motivation to leave their situation. Joena viewed education as “a way out” while still in primary school. Hali did as well while in secondary school. Regardless of their harsh environments, they both had the solid, consistent support of a parent all the way through their adverse childhood experiences. They both internalised and lived with strong communal values from their Samoan upbringings, as evidence by how they described the raising of their children. Hali talks about this,

I moved here in 2001...and what I learned from my granddad and my mom..., I gave it to my two kids; my two older boys. And then they topped-[...] High School-English, Health and Mechanical Engineering [and] got top prizes.

5.5 Turning Points

Each participant in this study experienced at least one pivotal event during or because of, their adversity, ordeals that changed their perspectives and moved them from despair to that of possibility. With my trauma clients over the years, what brought most of them into treatment was the hope that their emotional pain from their past trauma might be relieved. The ones that stayed in treatment were the ones that realised that I was not going to give them solutions, but I was going to assist them in the discovery of their self-efficacy. When one is a child going through severe abuse, self-efficacy is illusive. This lack of belief that one

has the power to change their circumstances for the better too often follows the individual into adulthood (Weindl, Knefel, Gluck, Tran, & Lueger-Schuster, 2018).

This was true for three out of the eight participants. The turning points for these Pasifika participants were periods of time that they glimpsed the possibility of self-efficacy. And from the comparison of these three, Alofa, Halona and Serena, that realisation came sooner for those who had the greatest access to consistent collective support. So, the degree of self-efficacy was also in direct proportion to the amount of communal support. Research by Panter-Brick (2015) and Rutter (2012) corroborate these findings and the existence of these crucial turning points and rightfully place them in the *process* of resilience.

So, what is it that prompts a turning point? According to Rutter (2012), reasons are heterogeneous and unique. This also supports the findings. Each of the participants, though autonomous in their actions, resourced the strength of agency from the relationships surrounding them, their own abilities, as well as the internalised relationship bonds of their upbringing. The participants that could draw on all three of these elements experienced turning points swiftly. Relationships of all kinds are central to the collectivist cultures of Pasifika, as is described by Pasefika Proud¹³ in their list of “Shared Pacific Values” (Pasefika Proud, n.d.) as well as in a similar list from Massey University (2013). Kataki is an example of this. Kataki’s internalised values gained from his primary school, coupled with close

¹³ See <https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/about/shared-pacific-values/>

relationships with his family, his culture and church, provided a sturdy platform with which he changed his trajectory and truly, in his words, “made a name for” himself. Akamu and Lamani immigrated with this platform already in place and seemed to naturally draw strength from this foundation as they faced the stress of immigration.

It is important to note the risk factors associated with IPV. In Halona’s case, there is evidence that witnessing IPV between her parents (which she mentioned only in passing), together with her subsequent adversities, could increase her likelihood of becoming a victim of IPV as an adult (Li et al., 2020). And for Serena, the long-term impact of her childhood neglect, compounded by the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse up through adolescence, could further increase her likelihood of becoming a victim. Particularly since there exists evidence that Serena’s complex trauma may have affected Serena’s ability to form healthy relationships and potentially cause damage to her self-worth and efficacy (Dye, 2018; Newton & Gavin, 2018; Price-Robertson et al., 2013). Indeed, Serena talked extensively about feelings of shame while growing up and her perceived abandonment by her family. Collinson (2021), in her study on the impact of childhood shame and IPV, points to an even greater probability that Serena would accede to the attentions of her glamorous, yet violent, second husband.

Thus, these two women leaving their violent partners without returning is quite significant, especially when considering the statistics. In a multi-country study done in 2005 by the World Health Organisation, 8-21 % of women leave their partners two to five times. However, in a more recent study by STAND! (2013), shows that on average, women attempt to leave seven times before leaving for good, which would further decrease this percentage.

It is intriguing that Halona and Serena situations go against these statistics, though as to why cannot be determined due to the scope of this study.

For these two participants, the escalation of violence appeared to cause a “knifing off” of their traumatic pasts, which in turn, had a clarifying effect on how they perceived themselves and their relationships. The new perception and the availability of an opportunity to escape had a “multiplying effect” on their psyche, causing a renewed sense of self-efficacy and agency to abruptly change the course of their lives (Rutter, 2012, p. 39). In the light of the differences between the availability of resilience-enhancing, collective supports between these participants have been discussed previously. So, Serena’s lack of supports may have lengthened the time it took to reach her turning point. Nonetheless, her and Halona’s cases are remarkable.

5.6 Innate/Learned Resilience Factors, Coping Behaviours, and Resilience-Enhancing Influences

5.6.1 Tying it all together:

I want to reiterate how resilience is not simply “toughing it out” or solely a product of one’s personality. It pertains more to the whole psycho-social eco-system surrounding the person enduring the hardships. Identifying that psycho-social ecosystem is essential for discerning the multi-faceted construction of an individual’s resilience. This model is supported by the literature regarding Social Ecological Resilience (SER). SER, as described by Liebenberg and Moore (2016) and Moore et al. (2019), comes closest to describing the holistic approach I’ve used to define Pasifika/Pacific resilience. I prefer the term “Psycho-Social Ecological Resilience” (PSER), as it ties in the mental, emotional, and contextual/environmental aspects of resilience which are a) coping mechanisms, b) the innate and learned abilities and c) the resilience-enhancing environmental factors.

I wanted to find a model that takes into consideration the diversity of Pasifika peoples, but could be used in a broader sense to illustrate PSER. There are a few models that approach this intent. For example, there are significant Pasifika-oriented researchers already cited, that use the term “ecological” (Airini et al., 2010; M. Reynolds, 2017) when they describe cultural approach to Pasifika education and research (Airini et al., 2010; Reynolds, 2017). Airini et al., in their 2010 report, “Teu le vā”, have one model in their appendix that describes the complexities of Pasifika peoples that includes their diversity as well as in an “ecological/holistic context” that applies to the “individual and collective levels”. (p.23)

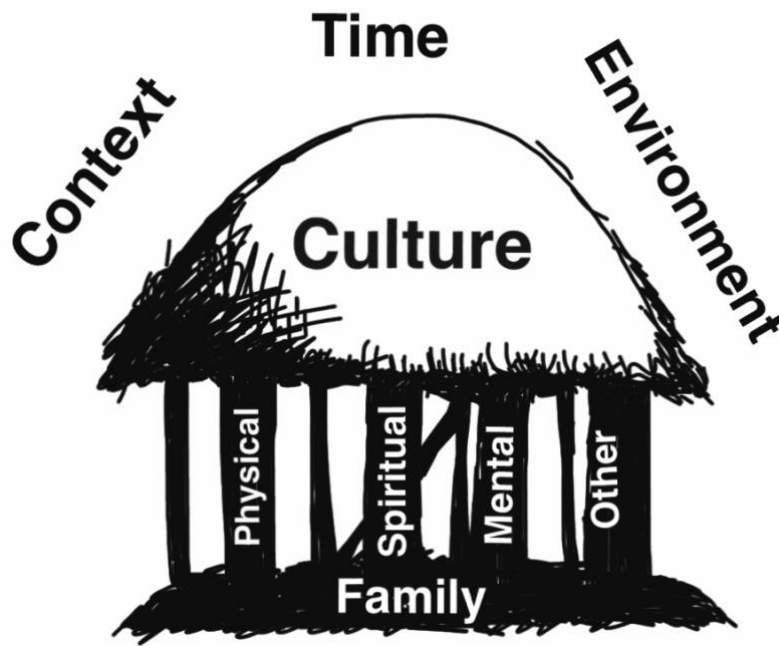


FIGURE 3 THE FONOFALE MODEL BY PULOTU-ENDERMANN, 2001

The most appropriate model that best applies to Pasifika resilience and that encompasses all three elements of PSER is the “Fonofale Model” (Pulotu-Endermann, 2001) in figure 3. For example, the participants’ internal and individual resilience factors and their coping behaviours, are contained within the pillars. Ideally, they are sheltered and enhanced by their culture (the roof) and are connected to a firm foundation of family (the floor). The three individual resilience factors common to all eight of the participants, Spirituality, Resourcefulness, and Perseverance can be incorporated into the pillars, as can all the unique abilities, mental and physical wellbeing, and coping mechanisms. Time, context, and environment surround the *fale* and symbolise how resilience is a dynamic process that changes over time according to context and environment. The way Pulotu-Endermann (2001) describes *fale*, Samoan for house, as representative of the overall wellbeing for Pasifika peoples, it can also represent the overall resilience of each Pasifika participant.

With this model, is easier to envision how the more intact a participant's fale is, the better they can withstand adversity in their life.

The family is “the foundation of all Pacific Island cultures” (Pulotu-Endermann, 2001, p. 4) and can be, as we have seen, the foundation for each participant. The *pou* or pillars connect culture to the family, but they also influence and interact with each other. The surrounding elements relate to the epistemology and ontology of Pasifika culture, showing relative reality and way of knowing as dynamic within the flexibility of time, environment, and context.

This ecological concept used in other research of collectivist cultures and show the importance of how the breadth and strength of an individual's resilience factors is contingent on the solidity of the collective environment. A relevant example of this is Ebersöhn's resilience study (2014), of school communities in three impoverished provinces in South Africa. In his study, Ebersöhn discusses how resilience occurs within these communities in an atmosphere of adversity due to the lack of resources in the general community. This adversity supplies the pressure to adapt to the adverse conditions in each individual member, and instead of a “flight or fight” response, he observed what he calls a “flock” response, where the individuals join together to strategise on how to manage and share resources. (p. 29) This is not far from what happens in a strong, interdependent Pasifika/Pacific community that focus on the needs of the whole. For by seeing to the needs of the whole, the needs of the individual are met. This is demonstrated by the previously mentioned shared Pasifika values of Love, Family, Collective, Respect, Spirituality and Repricosity applicable to most if not all Pasifika cultures without sacrificing the diversity within them (Pasefika Proud, n.d.).

5.6.2 Discussion Summary

So far in this chapter, I have highlighted how there was a continuum or range of inter-related collective support elements among the participants, and that their ability to withstand their adversities depended upon the cumulative strength of these elements. The Fonofale model, using the Samoan house (fale) as a metaphor, helped to visualise how for some participants, when the foundation of family and/or culture values became weak, the internal structure, or more to the point, the participant's resilience was threatened. But it also illustrates how when time, environment, and context changed, those participants eventually adapted and either re-discovered their family and culture, or found a way to fortify their weak foundations or values by forming their own strong families and/or connecting with their cultural community.

Also, this discussion attempted to illustrate the difference between collective Pasifika cultures, and individualistic cultures of the Western world in order to stress how research regarding resilience and adversity must take into consideration the cultural context of the participants they are studying. And, finally, this thesis has advocated the necessity of thorough and meticulous cultural competence for any researcher desiring to conduct research with Pasifika/Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

5.7 Clinical Implications

These findings may help to understand why any trauma-focused therapy or social work must be well-versed regarding the culture and customs of anyone they intend to help (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). The literature regarding Pasifika education on all levels emphasized repeatedly that the powers that are involved in educational curriculum and policy need to take a more advocational role in overseeing that educators and educational institutions incorporate Pasifika values and collective needs into all aspects of education (Airini et al., 2010; Benseman et al., 2007; Brighthouse, 2020; Chu et al., 2013; J. Fletcher et al., 2009; Gorikski & Fraser, 2006; Matapo & Baice, 2020; Ministry of Education, 2020; Naepi, 2019; Perrot, 2015; Martyn Reynolds, 2018; Samu, 2006). The findings suggest that this same attention be given to meliorating the adversities that Pasifika peoples, whether born in New Zealand or not, experience on a day-to-day basis while striving to pursue higher education. This would allow them to better participate fully within their culture and the country they inhabit.

This issue of cultural competence cannot be underestimated. Cultural competency stresses the importance of those working in the helping professions to be knowledgeable about and sensitive to people from cultures different from their own (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005; Panter-Brick, 2015; Tiatia, 2008), is important. However, what is equally, if not more important to the helping professions, is cultural safety. In my own clinical practice, I worked with peoples from several other cultures, both ethnic and religious. I had to be very conscious of the specific challenges these clients experienced while living in contrast to the dominant Euro-American culture of the United States. I was not cognisant of the terms then, but many of their cultures were collectivist in nature. Regardless, the success of our therapeutic

relationship was dependent on my cultural competence and being aware of my own biases. But there is also the matter of cultural safety.

Cultural Safety is a concept that surfaced, according to the QUT Faculty of Health (2013), in the 1980's referring how New Zealand's healthcare institutions could more suitably serve Māori peoples. It has evolved into a basic tenet for most healthcare agencies and institutions. It charges its healthcare professionals to create a "culturally safe place" where peoples of any culture will not be discounted or emotionally harmed; where one's personal and cultural identity is protected and respected. Further, it instructs these professionals to recognise that indigenous peoples are not homogenous, but are individuals with unique and varied backgrounds. It further instructs them to acknowledge the people's right to engage as equals; to create an environment of empowerment and mutual respect; and to ensure participation in their own care and treatment. It is about meeting them where they are and on their own terms. (George, Te Ata o Tu Macdonald, & Tauri, 2020; Williams, 1999, p. 2)

It is important to note that both cultural competence and cultural safety emerged in response to the assimilationist clinical practices of many practitioners who were primarily from individualistic, non-indigenous and/or European backgrounds. This study illuminates how mental health care practitioners, trained in more Western therapy models, must adapt their practice so the collectivist cultural needs of their Pasifika clients and patients are met, and their unique cultural heritages are respected. This principle of cultural safety and competence might be confronting for some non-Pasifika/Pacific clinicians. But speaking from my own experience, if one takes the challenge on, the potential for growth, both personal and academic, is immeasurable.

Finally, the findings indicate how first and subsequent generations of Pasifika need to have their cultural values and traditions respected and incorporated into the services and institutions they are expected to be a part of. Research indicates that these peoples' and recent immigrants thrive when they can acculturate to the dominant culture with their own cultural connections and traditions intact (Berry, 1997, 2010; Ward & Liu, 2012). This would benefit them as well as the country they are choosing to reside in, particularly with the social and economic capital they provide that country.

5.8 Suggestions for Future Research and Study Limitations:

5.8.1 Suggestions for Future work

Because of the dearth of individualistic, Western-European studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and on resilience and its aspects, some important areas for future research could be:

- 1) How to assess the ACEs of the Māori peoples, the collectivist indigenous peoples, and other immigrant populations of New Zealand?
- 2) And how can these assessment tools be respective and representative of the distinct historical and cultural variations for each?
- 3) What are the elements of their psycho-social ecological resilience factors and how would these be found?
- 4) Given this information, how would this information impact clinical interventions for each of these multi-cultural groups-the individuals, their families, and their community?

5.8.2 Limitations of the Research

Knowing the limitations in one's research is especially important in qualitative research because results are not pre-determined or predictable as they may be in quantitative studies. The results are more emergent and the result of time-consuming meticulous examination and interpretation carried out in a recursive manner. Even with very careful reflexivity and methods of validation, one can only get close to describing what might be true or valuable, which is especially true given my critical realist methodology, which asserts that we can only approach what is true, but never capture it because events are constantly evolving, time and context contingent.

The limits of this research include sample size. Due to constraints such as COVID 19 lockdowns and other time restrictions, a larger sample size may have produced a richer mix of data. With a larger size, the research could then include a questionnaire with additional statistical data that could enhance the validity of the research.

Another limitation is that resilience stories were collected from a very specific sample of the Pasifika population. This meant that all the factors of resilience and adversity variations cannot be completely generalized out to Pasifika peoples. However, this study did shed light on the resilience factors that, according to the literature, appear common to Pasifika peoples in general and are applicable to their collectivist cultures. This may impact how useful the findings are for the communities these participants are part of, as they can inform future research, which then can inform policy and practice.

Finally, though every effort was made to minimise researcher bias, the researcher is a Palagi, Caucasian in who only recently relocated to New Zealand from the United States. Similar research may have produced more relevant findings if done by a Pasifika researcher.

5.9 Conclusion

There are so few studies that address trauma in Pasifika/Pacific families and communities, and I believe that they are best taken on by Pasifika researchers *and* those non-Pasifika researchers that have a sincere desire and passion to do so. Vaioleti (2006a) presents a necessarily rigorous protocol for those non-Pasifika researchers who want to take this on:

If researchers are not knowledgeable in Pacific ways or skilled in *tui kakala*, they cannot accompany the participants to the cultural, contextual and spiritual depths of their sharing and theorising. The research will be poorer for that, and misleading...These concerns and limitations highlight the need for a highly interactive, informal, flexible and ecological approach where researchers (perhaps non-Pacific researchers too) will engage more meaningfully. (p. 32)

I have done my best to this end and intend that my future research will demonstrate an even greater effort to achieve this. I hope that this study proves beneficial for the Pasifika/Pacific peoples of New Zealand and was a benefit for the participants who shared their hearts. This study has not only showed me an entirely new way of looking at the world of research, it has taught me the meaning of culture, my own and my participants. The following quote from Gorikski and Fraser (2006) , describes culture in a way that resonates with what I've learned how I've approached this thesis:

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; it is not the collective catalogue of discrete objects, ideas, mores and pieces of knowledge, it is configuration of the total inheritance and way of life. (p.4)

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPROVAL

The logo for Auckland University of Technology (AUT) features the letters 'AUT' in a bold, white, sans-serif font against a black rectangular background.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

5 October 2020

Jackie Feather

Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Jackie,

Re: Ethics Application: **20/3 Pasifika academics, who overcame adverse childhood experiences (ACEs):
Stories of resilience**

Thank you for your request for approval of amendments to your ethics application. The amendment to the recruitment protocols - to include other Pasifika academics has been approved.

The change to the title is noted.

I remind you of the **Standard Conditions of Approval**.

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

5 May 2020

Jackie Feather
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences

Dear Jackie

Re Ethics Application: **20/3 How do Pasifika parents perceive the impact of adverse childhood experiences on their parenting**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 5 May 2023.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1. Remove the word 'anonymous' from the advertisement and replace it with 'confidential'

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research](#) and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7. It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard and that all the dates on the documents are updated.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>

(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

A-1. Consent form

Unstructured Interview Consent Form

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Project Title: Pasifika academics, who overcame adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Stories of resilience.”

Project supervisor: Jackie Feather, PhD, and Professor Janis Paterson,

Primary researcher: Bonny Mathe Helms

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 29 September 2020. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
- The interview will last approximately 2 hours, however I am aware that the interview is open-ended and may be longer or shorter if I chose.
- I allow the audio recording of my personal story when I chose to share it during the interview. I am aware that I may chose not to share my personal story of resilience and that I am fully entitled to withdraw from participation at any point of time.
- I am aware that due to the COVID-19 restrictions and/or proximity limitations that my interview may take place using a secure online platform such as Zoom. I am aware that only the audio portion of this virtual interview will be collected.
- I am aware that I can choose a verbal consent after the contents of this form is read to me by the researcher. I am aware that this verbal consent is recorded and will be separated from the interview content and stored securely with the other consent forms as outlined in the Information Sheet.

- I am aware that no notes will be taken during this interview, and that the recording will be transcribed by the primary researcher.
- If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study, then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings prior to their publication. (please tick one) Yes ___
No ___

Participant's Signature

_____ Date: _____

Participant's Name (please print)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 05 May 2020 Ethics Application 20/3
Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Participant Information Sheet

3 September 2021

Project Title:

"Pasifika academics, who overcame adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Stories of resilience."

Primary Researcher: Bonny Mathe Helms

Supervisors: Dr. Jackie Feather, Primary and Dr. Janis Paterson, Secondary

Pacific Cultural Advisor: Hilda Port

An invitation to you:

Kia ora, Ni sa bula vinaka, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Bula Vinaka, Ia orana, Taloha ni, Halo, Kona mauri and warm Pacific greetings.

My name is Bonny Mathe Helms. I am American retired from 29 years as a psychotherapist. I moved to Auckland in March 2019 to be with my family and pursue research at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am currently working towards my Master's thesis with this study.

In my practice, I counselled a great many adults who survived adversity as children, many of whom experienced trauma as a result. I worked with many cultures other than my own and became fascinated with how we as humans can overcome adversity to become viable members of our communities. As I worked with diverse clients and patients, I found that I needed to immerse myself in the culture of those who came to me, and work collaboratively creating their treatment. Essentially, we shared as one human being to another with mutual respect for our origins. This was essential to produce deep healing and resolution. I am particularly interested in understanding more about how people of cultures different from my own, who have had adverse childhood experiences, have overcome these adversities. Pasifika peoples I worked with seemed to be particularly resilient.

Are you a Pasifika academic who has experienced childhood adversity? If so, as part of my Master's Thesis, I invite you to share with me, a non-Pacific researcher who also went through adversity as a child, how you came through adversity in your childhood and attained your current academic standing.

What is the purpose of this research?

This study endeavors to explore how different Pasifika cultures identify childhood adversity and their ways to persevere. Stories that show how to overcome difficulty growing up are incredibly valuable and needed. Since most studies look at childhood trauma from a northern European/Western viewpoint, I want this study of resilience in the face of ACEs to come from viewpoint of the culture being studied, in this case a Pasifika viewpoint. As an American psychotherapist working with different cultures, I saw that non-European Americans were under-represented in ACE studies. Also, also most ACE research tended to pathologise more "diverse" cultures and this gave an inaccurate view of those cultures as a whole. Very few documented how to overcome ACEs.

I chose to do this study with Pasifika academics because (1) you are living examples of resilience and 2) you are a member of a multicultural Pasifika population in Auckland, New Zealand. I learned from my Tongan cultural Advisor, Hilda Port of AUT that each Pasifika culture has its own customs and traditions and handles ACEs in their own way. For this reason, academics of different Pasifika cultures are invited to participate. Your story of resilience and those of the other Pasifika researchers/academics will make up the main part of my Master's thesis. Your perspectives will also pave the way towards my eventual PhD work with Pasifika participants. There also may be presentations and publications other than my Master's thesis as a result of this study.

I hope one day to combine my experience as a psychotherapist and my research findings to provide the space, time and any relevant expertise that enables Pasifika participants to create culture-specific programs; programs that provide mentorship and instill resilience and hope to others in their community.

NOTE: Even though I've been a psychotherapist, it is important to state that my role in this study is as a researcher, not a therapist. I am unable to provide any counseling during or as a result of your participation in this study. This would be a clear conflict of interest.

What will happen if you participate in this study?

I am inviting you to share your story in a confidential, unstructured interview that will take place either face-to-face or virtually via a private Zoom account due to proximity limitations or COVID 19 restrictions. The interview will last approximately 2 hours. I say approximately, because this interview respects the basics of Talanoa, in that it will be open-ended; an inclusive, mutually participatory and transparent dialogue. How long this dialogue takes will depend on what your needs and wants are at the time. The interview is audio recorded. If via Zoom, only the audio portion will be used and video portion discarded. During the interview, you can choose whether or not to share your story, and you can stop the interview at any time.

Before the interview transcript is used in data analysis, you will have the opportunity to review your interview transcript and correct any discrepancies.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

If your email and identity as a Pasifika academic is public knowledge, you may have received an email from this researcher with an Invitation Flyer attached or a colleague provided access to an Invitation Flyer and/or this Information Sheet. As noted above, I am choosing to focus on Pasifika academics because 1) you are living examples of resilience and 2) you are a member of a multicultural Pasifika population in Auckland, New Zealand. I first learned about Pasifika people in New Zealand through my secondary supervisor, Professor Janis Paterson who founded the Pacific Islander Family Study (PIF). She provided an introduction to Dr. Dan Tautolo, who is the PIF Director of this study. This led to an introduction to Dr. Julia Ioane, Hilda Port (a graduate of AUT and current PhD student) and Dr. Juliet Nanai. Hilda and Juliet expressed interest in my study and solicited copies of this Participant sheet with the intent of passing them on. I am grateful for their trust.

As a Pasifika academic in New Zealand who went through adversity in childhood, your story will eventually contribute encouragement and inspiration to the people in your communities.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Once you agree to participate: After you have read through this information Sheet and decide to be a part of this study, you'll be sent a Consent Form as an attachment via email. Please take the time to read the Consent Form thoroughly. You may give your consent the following ways: a) scan or photograph the signed Consent and send it back to this researcher, b) copy the Consent Form into an email and send it back with a sentence indicating your agreement, or c) you can give your recorded verbal agreement once the researcher has verbally stated the contents of the Consent Form.

Any contact information given to me prior to receiving and/or signing your Consent will be entirely confidential. If you do not end up participating, your information will be deleted completely. Only after signing the Consent Form will your information be retained.

How will my privacy be protected?

The interview Talanoa will be recorded and transcribed by this researcher. No one else will have access to these recordings other than my primary and secondary supervisors. A pseudonym will be used to address and identify you during the interview. This pseudonym will continue to be used during the processing of this raw data. I will not be taking written notes during our dialogue. All data will be encrypted and stored in a password protected cloud drive called OneDrive provided by AUT as well as backed up on a password protected external drive. The files in which this data is contained will also be a password protected. Once processed, any physical data will be kept in my supervisor's locked office in a locked cabinet.

All Consent Forms will be kept in locked in a cabinet in my secondary supervisor's office. If you have given verbal consent, that portion of the recorded consent, with the location and date stated, is separated from the interview recording as well as the transcribed portion and stored along with the written Consent Forms. Your identity will never be revealed in any dissemination related to this study such as written papers, publications or presentations.

Your information will only accessible by myself and my supervisors and will be used for this study only. It will not be distributed in any way and held in the strictest of confidence.

Further, please know that your participation in this research is voluntary and whether you choose to participate or not, this will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You can withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible

What are the discomforts and risks and how will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

During our dialogue in the interview and specifically as you tell your childhood story and how you overcame it, you may feel emotional and uncomfortable. You also may feel a sense of relief. As stated above, you can stop the interview at any time. You can choose not to relate your story. It is entirely up to you.

If you feel emotional discomfort that is difficult to deal with after our interview, as a participant in this study, you are entitled to three (3) free confidential counselling sessions via the **AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing Centre** as a participant in this AUT

study. Please note that these sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in this research, and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- Drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment. Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992
- Please let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and then provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling
<http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling>.

What are the benefits?

Benefit to you as a participant is the opportunity to talk about these topics that are not usually disclosed to others. You will also be given the gift a \$50.00 Countdown food voucher as a thank you for your time and effort given to this study.

The benefits to the community are to have a study that accurately communicates your experiences and perceptions from the perspective of your specific Pacific culture. Documentation of this has the potential of inspiring courage to those in your community who've gone through what you did.

Completing this study will benefit me in that I gain a Masters of Philosophy. The findings of this study may also be used a reference in my future PhD, in journal articles, other research papers and/or any other academic publications or presentation

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The costs to you is your time. As stated above, how long our interview will be is up to you.

Typically these interviews are not longer than 2 hours.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You may have three weeks to consider this invitation and contact me after this information sheet has been made available.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Once this research is completed and prior to publication, all participants will receive a one-two page summary of my findings. This can be sent via NZ Post or emailed depending on your preference. Your feedback will be welcome once you receive the findings.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the

Project Supervisor, Dr. Jackie Feather,
Email: Jackie.feather@aut.ac.nz
Contact number: +64 921 9999, ext.7693

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the

Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Carina Meares
ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You may contact the research team as follows:

Primary Researcher Contact Details:

Bonny Mathe Helms
Email: nrp8038@autuni.ac.nz
Phone or text: +64 022 169 9092

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Project Supervisor, Dr. Jackie Feather,
Email: Jackie.feather@aut.ac.nz
Contact number: +64 921 9999, ext.7693

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *05 October 2020*



29 September 2020 research invitation

**PASIFIKA ACADEMICS! YOUR
HELP IS NEEDED!**
Your stories of resilience and hope
are the focus of this research study
You are invited to
PLEASE join me in this research!

IF:

-YOU ARE A PASIFIKA ACADEMIC?

-YOU ARE SOMEONE WHO OVERCAME ADVERSITY IN CHILDHOOD

Project Title: Pasifika academics, who overcame adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): Stories of resilience."

The Researcher: Bonny Mathe Helms

Supervisors: Dr. Jackie Feather, Professor Janis Paterson; Cultural Mentor: Hilda Port, PhD(c)

Kia ora, Ni sa bula vinaka, Talofa lava, Malo e lelei, Kia orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Bula Vinaka, Ia orana, Taloha ni, Halo, Kona mauri and warm Pacific greetings. My name is Bonny Mathe Helms. I am American and retired last year after 29 years as a therapist and counselor to move to Auckland, join my family and attend Auckland University of Technology (AUT). In my work, I counselled a great many adults who survived adversity as children, most of whom suffered symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as adults. I worked with many cultures other than my own and became passionate about how we humans, regardless of culture, can overcome adversity to become viable members of our communities. As I worked with diverse clients and patients, I found it was crucial to immerse myself in the culture of whomever I worked with in order to produce deep healing and resolution. I moved to Auckland in March 2019 to begin research at AUT to do research on this very important cross-cultural topic.

The aim of this master's thesis is to document stories of resilience from Pasifika academics of different Pacific traditions and who are students and/or faculty at either AUT or Auckland University. Specifically, this study will authenticate the factors that influenced your resilience and see how these factors are similar among the diverse Pasifika cultures and how they are unique. Basically, this study will document your determination and message of hope.

What will happen if you join in the study: We will meet in a private space at a time we both agree on. Or via Zoom at a mutual agreed on time. The interview will be informal so we can get to know each other. During this time, you may choose to tell your story. If you chose to, I will only audio record your story in a secure format. These recordings will be labelled anonymously and stored in an encrypted file. Before I use the interview for my study, I will send you a copy of the transcript for

your review. Then and only then will your story be part of my research. If I am privileged enough to interview you, we will share non-alcoholic beverages, if possible. while we talk.

Interested? **CONTACT**: text or call Bonny at 022 1699 092, or email: Bonny at nrp8038@autuni.ac.nz to receive the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form or if you have any questions

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 05 May 2020, AUTEC ref #: 20/3

A-4 Recruitment Email (researcher's note: this email was sent to the Pasifika faculties of the universities solicited)

16/July/2020

Kia Ora,

Thank you for opening my email and I hope it finds you well.

I am an MPHIL postgraduate at AUT and am doing a study on resilience factors, specifically with Pasifika academics who have gone through some sort of adversity in their childhood and overcame the impact of this adversity to the degree they have become university postgraduates and scholars.

With the guidance of my Pasifika advisor, I am incorporating the principles of Talanoa in my research methodology, particularly with my interviews. For this reason, the interviews are unstructured, and so far, have lasted for a little over an hour. I leave the length up to my volunteers.

The study is a straightforward one. I am gathering the stories of resilience from AUT Pasifika postgraduates of any level, PhD candidates, as well as PhD's at any professional level. Since Pasifika encompasses many different cultures, my hope is that these stories of resilience will represent that multi-cultural aspect.

With these stories, I will

- Explore the factors that contributed to the participants resilience *as defined by the participant*
- Investigate what the differences and similarities in those factors that exist in the stories
- Document parts of the stories that demonstrate these factors
- Make sure that findings are culture specific
- Make sure that as little bias as possible exists in this study
- Make sure transcripts and findings are approved by the participants both for accuracy and cultural representation before analyzation or publication

Please find both my Invitation flyer and Participant Information Sheet attached to this email.

If you are interested and willing to give of your time for an unstructured interview, please respond with using this email and we can set up a "meet and greet" time that can be done in person, Skype or Zoom.

Again, thank you for your time!

Bonny Mathe Helms

MPHIL, School of Environmental Health and Sciences

Supervisors Jackie Feather, PhD and Professor Janis Paterson

A-5. ACE Questionnaire Categories

Categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences
ABUSE, BY CATEGORY
Psychological (by parents)
Physical (by parents) Sexual (anyone)
NEGLECT, BY CATEGORY
Emotional
Physical
HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION, BY CATEGORY
Alcoholism or drug use in home
Divorce or loss of biological parent
Depression or mental illness in home
Mother treated violently
Imprisoned household member

FIGURE 4 ORIGINAL ACE QUESTIONNAIRE CATEGORIES (ANDA & FELITTI, 1998)

APPENDIX C. NVIVO CODES

Codes

Name	Description	Files	References
ADVERSITY		10	97
Abuse		5	56
IPV, emotional, parents fighting		4	12
mental & emotional		5	17
neglect		3	11
physical abuse		2	13
sexual abuse		2	3
BULLYING OR PREJUDICE		9	29
SUD		4	9
CULTURAL TENSIONS		5	25
Inter cultural tensions		4	15
intra-cultural tensions		4	9
IMPACT OF ADVERSITY		4	39
SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE		9	264
COPING SKILLS		5	17
Education		8	41
friends & others		5	17
importance of family		8	89
Innate and learned skills		8	29

Name	Description	Files	References
Being Resourceful		7	17
Empathy		1	3
need for approval		1	5
out of cultural norm		8	50
Perseverance		6	37
staying positive		2	2
working hard		5	16
INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT		5	15
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL		7	16
SOCIAL STRUCTURE		5	26
female roles		6	14
male roles and expectations		4	6
Spirituality or religion		8	39
TURNING POINT		8	26