

Pacific youth “romantic” relationships and wellbeing.

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Abstract

Healthy youth relationships are central to Pacific youth wellbeing today. Healthy relationship patterns learned in the youth years are precursors for healthy adult relationships in later life. To explore Pacific youth understandings and expectations of healthy relationships, and how and where these were learnt, group and individual talanoa were carried out with Pacific youth in the Auckland region. The final study sample consisted of eleven females and six males who self-identified as Pacific (7 Niue, 9 Samoa, and 1 Tonga). These talanoa were guided by the Fonofale model of health and wellbeing, underpinned by the Pacific Worldview and Appreciative Inquiry. Data were analysed and interpreted both from an individual psychological perspective and a socio-cultural lens.

Study findings indicate that this group of Pacific youth had their own words and concepts for making sense of youth relationships. These youths also understood healthy relationships as involving behaviours of respect, commitment, and sharing. Their understandings were grounded in the values and norms of their Pacific cultural ways which had been learned and nurtured within their families. At the same time, it was clear that the use and the increasing popularity of social media had added new ideas to the ways these youths were looking, thinking about, and experiencing relationships. In fact, a main study finding was that these youths were continually negotiating family and Pacific cultural boundaries, alongside the new roles and expectations introduced by social media, and current times and experiences. Notably, however, these youths appeared to give prominence and respect to the family-based cultural norms.

This study contributes to the local and international literature on Pacific youth wellbeing, adolescent romantic relationships, and dating violence. This study emphasises the need for Pacific youth policies and programs to be grounded in Pacific youth experiences, and for these to be explored through a gender lens. Second, that research designs and methodologies must be open and aware of the multiple perspectives that participants bring to the research and the interplay of these on their experiences and expectations. Families are important to Pacific youth, and policies, programs, and interventions for Pacific youth need to consider these within the contexts of their families. In sum, healthy relationships are important to the wellbeing of Pacific youth in New Zealand today.

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It is my sincerest hope that empirical research and conversations about Pacific youth relationships continue, and that safe spaces are created in our homes and communities for our young people to talanoa about things that matter to them, such as their dreams, their aspirations, and their visions of a good life.

Soifua.

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 acknowledgments), 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.

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Glossary

This glossary contains non-English words that are used in this thesis. A majority are drawn from Pratt's (1977) *Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language*, Churchward's (1959) *Dictionary: Tongan – English, English – Tongan*. Other translations are from other formal sources including literature and personal communications. I list the Samoan words first followed by the Tongan words.

Samoan

aumaga

aoga pese

alofa

umu

fafine fanau tasi

fale

fa'aaloalo

feagaiga

tapu

tautua

tofi

va

va fealoa'i

va tapuia

English

Untitled men in a Samoan village

Song practice

Love, compassion, gift, blessing

Samoan oven or method of food preparation

Woman who gives birth to a child outside of marriage

House

Respect, courtesy

The feagaiga is a sacred covenant of respect observed between a brother and sister.

Certain restrictions, disciplines and commitments have to take place if mana is to be expressed in physical form, such as in a person or object.

Service

Inheritance

Space, distance between

Relationship based on fa'aSamoa values of fa'aaloalo; respectful observed conduct between two people

Sacred space

Tongan

ofa

mana

malie

English

To love, to care.

Rev Dr Ilaitia Tuwere suggests that, in essence, *mana* has to do with life and the power of life that is provided by the gods. Mana also refers to an extraordinary power, essence or presence. This applies to the energies and presences of the natural world.

An energising and uplifting of the spirits, and to a positive state of connectedness and enlightenment.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Growing strong and resilient youth is vital to the wellbeing of Pacific families and communities, and romantic relationships have an integral role in this process. Early developmental theorists, such as Harry Sullivan (1953) and Erik Erikson (1963) proposed that romantic relationships are learnt, tested, and reinforced as part of identity development in the adolescent years, and these experiences have the potential to influence (positively and negatively) future life behaviours.

The extant literature on youth romantic relationships suggests that such relationships contribute to youth well-being (Dush & Amato, 2005), psychological adjustment (Furman, Low, & Ho, 2009), social and personal development (Kuttler & La Greca, 2004), and identity attainment (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Knee, Canevello, Bush, & Cook, 2008). Youth romantic relationships also have the potential to effect youth mental and physical health, sexuality, and financial status (Dush & Amato, 2005; Salerno, Tosto, & Antony, 2015).

Some researchers have described youth romantic relationships as the learning context and training ground for future romantic and marital relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994; Shulman & Connolly, 2013). Furman and Wehner proposed that the models and views of relationships (both conscious and unconscious), that adolescents form through their interactions and experiences with their romantic partners, are carried forward into future romantic relationships. Therefore, what we see now, is what we might expect to characterise relationships in the adult years. Other research points to a relationship between acts of violence (physical, emotional, verbal) in youth romantic relationships and adult intimate partner violence (Lievore & Mayhew, 2007). Drawing on these and other studies, I saw a study of Pacific youth relationships as providing a window of opportunity for identifying and documenting healthy relationship patterns and behaviours which are beneficial for youth wellbeing today and, also as a primary prevention approach to intimate partner violence [IPV].

My story of my wellbeing

I am a New Zealand born Samoan. I was raised in a rural village on the island of Upolu by my grandparents, my mother, and my mother's siblings. It was in this living arrangement and my daily life experiences that I learned that good relations with God, my family, and the people in my life were essential to my wellbeing. I was taught from a young age to start and end my day with God because He is the giver of good health and prosperity. My family was and still is a priority. While I do have individual goals and aspirations, the majority of the time I aim to align my personal goals with those of my family. For example, I chose to pursue higher education not only because I enjoy learning, but also because it enables me to serve and contribute to the good of my family and community.

Growing up in Samoa, I learned that maintaining good relations with others meant showing respect, humility, and love to all people. We carry with us our family name, and the survival of the family is crucial as it is our source of identity, and is also the place where most of our basic needs are met. In communal cultures, families work together to pool resources for the family good; therefore, maintaining good connections with others is crucial to this goal. In the words of the former Head of State of Samoa, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi:

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual because I share a *tofi* (inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family, and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village, and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation, and my nation belongs to me. This is the essence of my sense of belonging.

In my family, my brothers (male cousins and uncles) were and still are responsible for protecting us girls. For instance, if our *aoga pese* (church choir practice) finished late at night, my grandparents would send one of my male cousins to accompany me home. We also had different tasks: my male cousins were responsible for the heavy tasks such as chopping wood, mowing the lawn, and preparing the *umu* (outside oven), while we girls were tasked with ensuring the house was clean, both inside and outside. The only times in my family when all the males and females occupied the same space were during our family prayers. At every other time during the day, we were separated by our tasks and work outside of the home. It was also out of respect that we carried out

our duties separately to prevent breaches of boundaries (*va tapuia*). For instance, in the *fa'asamoa*, the brother and sister *feagaiga*¹ forbids the discussion of sexual matters in the presence of opposite-sex siblings.

The separation of males and females and their corresponding tasks was also observed in church and village settings. In this, I learned that female purity was (and still is) held in high esteem. If a girl fell pregnant outside of wedlock, both her condition and her family became the subject of village gossip. People blamed her family for not protecting her, especially her brothers (i.e., all the males in her family) for not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as her *feagaiga*. If a girl gave birth outside of marriage, she was labelled derogatory terms such as *fafine fanau tasi* (the woman who gave birth to a single child outside of marriage) and her child a *tama a le po* (child of the night). Such labels were not explicitly given, but anyone who has lived in the village knows precisely when they have become the subject of village gossip; it was in people's looks, and in the way, they acted around you. This is one example of how an individual can bring shame to the family and is one of the reasons why Samoan children are taught from a young age to be mindful of how they stand, walk, sit, and talk.

Given the stigma that was associated with pregnancy outside of wedlock, as well as the brother and sister taboo that prohibited opposite-sex siblings from discussing matters of a sexual nature, I concluded that perhaps this was why romantic relationships were not part of my family conversations. In addition, my grandfather constantly reminded me back then to prioritise my education because once that was completed, "*I was free to have as many friends as I wished*". I presumed this was his subtle way of telling me not to have a boyfriend at a young age to avoid pregnancy outside of wedlock and risk bringing shame to our family. Given the role and importance of good relations with my family and the people in my life to my happiness and wellbeing, I chose to prioritise education over romantic interests.

Having grown up in Samoa during those formative years of my life, with these roles and expectations that were associated with being female, my perceptions of romantic relationships then were that they were bounded by family and cultural norms and

¹ The *feagaiga* is a sacred covenant of respect observed between a brother and sister. A brother's duty is to protect their sisters. In turn, sisters honoured and supported their brothers. (See Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2016)

values. As I grew older, I began viewing those cultural norms and expectations as forms of social control to protect the honour of the family and the purity of a Samoan female. In Samoa, it was easy to abide by family rules and restrictions because I was surrounded by a culture and people who held similar views as my grandparents and family. For example, if a woman from my village were to catch me in town talking to a boy, she would have either given him a beating and dragged me home with her, or she would have informed my mother. Even the village *aumaga*² stood guard during church and village festivities where boys from neighbouring villages were sure to attend.

I thought the security and protection of my family and my community were the norms until I moved back to New Zealand in 2007 to continue my education and, I was overwhelmed with the freedom. I was just *me* in big Auckland city. For the first time, I was not my family, my church, or my village. Yet, despite my independence and freedom, my family endured as a priority, and their approval and acceptance of my romantic relationships have always remained paramount to my wellbeing.

New Zealand Youth Wellbeing

With the goal of securing New Zealand's economic future, amidst the country's ageing population and shrinking labour force, the health and wellbeing of youth have increasingly become the subject of government policies and strategies. As manifested in the Ministry of Youth Affairs strategy for child and youth development: "educational or employment failure for any group of young people will cut deeply into our health and wellbeing as a society" (2002, p. 4).

Is economic security a sufficient indicator of wellbeing?

A significant number of youth policies and strategies are framed within the premise that youth are resources to be developed (Redstone & Conn, 2011; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Foster, 1998). Consequently, efforts to safeguard youth wellbeing have tended to be narrowly oriented toward ensuring that these future adults will contribute their economic share. In this scenario, education is vital to neo-liberalism as human

² Aumaga – Untitled men (non-matai holders). In traditional Samoan society, the aumaga were the village strength, responsible for food production, labour and protection and as the future family leaders (Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2016).

capital is a key determinant of nations economic performance and success (Fitzsimons, 2000; Kelsey, 1995). In brief, the flow of social benefits and personal wellbeing from human capital accrue both to the individual receiving the education and to the community in which they live (Gleisner, Llewellyn-Fowler, McAlister, & The Treasury, 2011). Fitzsimons contends that “education is the key to participation in this new global economy for the development of human resources and for the production of research, and scientific knowledge” (2000, p. 5). In Fitzsimons view, neo-liberalism defines individuals as units of capital, with education as the instrument of capitalism.

While economic security is indeed a worthwhile objective in safeguarding the wellbeing of New Zealand society, I began to consider whether wellbeing for Pacific youth could be defined regarding economic outcomes alone. Drawing on my own experiences as a Samoan female, where my family, culture, and faith were fundamental to my wellbeing, I wondered whether other factors were important to Pacific youth wellbeing.

Pacific youth wellbeing

The literature on New Zealand youth wellbeing pays little attention to the Pacific holistic understanding of wellbeing, which reflects a harmony in people’s *spiritual*, *social*, and *physical* relations. Instead, youth wellbeing is measured and determined using generic research methods and models that in most cases are narrowly oriented towards economic security indicators (e.g., Biddulph, Biddulph, & Biddulph, 2003; Farruggia, Bullen, Davidson, Dunphy, Solomon, & Collins, 2011; Gilbert, 2005; NZ Youth Wellbeing 2000 Survey). Generic models have usually been deficit in nature, with the emphasis being on identifying problems and proposing solutions rather than identifying youths’ strengths and building on these. With the application of generic models to Pacific youth wellbeing, Pacific youth are consistently portrayed as worse off than their European counterparts and identified as ‘problems to be solved’. Also, most often proposed measures to address youth status have an economic focus, with outcomes measured using economic indicators.

Take for instance the data from the Youth 2000 studies, New Zealand’s national survey on youth wellbeing (see for example Helu, Robinson, Grant, Herd, & Denny, 2009). Reporting from these studies have consistently classified Pacific youth as having poorer wellbeing, in comparison with New Zealand European counterparts. In the Youth 2000

studies, poor wellbeing is defined as scoring on the low end of the socio-economic scale, living in deprived households and neighbourhoods, having less access to health care, and engaging in risky health behaviours such as cigarette and alcohol consumption. By way of contrast, Pacific youth fared better than their New Zealand European counterparts on the spiritual or faith dimension. Interestingly the faith domain is often dismissed as unimportant to policy decisions, with youth status on the economic indicators highlighted and prioritised instead.

The question then, is, who defines wellbeing? Who determines what matters and what gets dismissed? Should Pacific youth wellbeing be measured by economic outcomes alone? Pacific scholars advocating for the use of culturally appropriate research methods when researching with Pacific peoples, emphasise that there is no such thing as value-free research (Anae et al., 2001; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2008; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Sanga, 2004; Vaioleti, 2006).

Researchers [and participants] bring their own beliefs and understandings to the research process, and these influence how the research is framed, carried out and responded to, and the findings used. (Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014, p. 80)

Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that even if Western theoretically informed questionnaires [which are usually devoid of context] are translated from English into other languages, the emotions and understandings they evoke in those of non-Western backgrounds or collectivist orientations, will not be the same as those of individualist orientations. There are strengths in the use of quantitative methods; they allow findings to be generalised to broader populations. However, as argued by Fairbairn-Dunlop, in order to understand and not merely describe what is happening [in the lives of Pacific youth], it is “necessary to set deductive theory and standardised comparisons against the internal perceptions and cognition of the people and their cultural structures and institutions” (2001, p. 2).

Pacific youth policies should be informed by research that reflects the realities of Pacific youth and their families. Importantly, these strategies should recognise and take account of the fact that Pacific people’s wellbeing may be more than economic security. While financial stability is essential to wellbeing, so too are people’s relationships and connections with their families, communities, their faith and, natural resources. For Pacific youth, wellbeing is achieved through a balancing of these factors.

Gaps in Existing Research

Pacific youth wellbeing has been studied extensively in relation to Pacific identity in New Zealand (e.g., Agee, McIntosh, Culbertson, & Makasiale, 2013; Anae, 2010; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Manuela & Sibley, 2015; Mila-Schaaf, 2010; Mila-Schaaf, 2013; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004). I could not find studies on Pacific youth romantic relationships or the impact of these on their wellbeing.

When I looked at the global literature on youth romantic relationships that inform many of New Zealand's youth relationship policies and programs, I found no study had explored the perspectives of Pacific youth. The majority of these global studies are also quantitative and informed from mainstream theories and a Western worldview of wellbeing (see Chapter 2).

My study, therefore, asks Pacific youth in New Zealand what they think of romantic relationships, and the impact of these on their wellbeing. My study also seeks to document their voices on what they think is vital to their wellbeing.

Research questions

1. What are Pacific youth perceptions, understandings, and expectations of healthy romantic relationships?
2. Where and how did they learn about these relationship expectations and behaviours?
3. What are Pacific youth visions of the future, and how can their knowledge of healthy relationships be fostered and reinforced?

Research approach

This exploratory study seeks a pan-Pacific rather than an ethnic-specific Pacific perspective on youth romantic relationships. While I do acknowledge the differences in languages and cultures of each Pacific group, the goal of this initial study is to set a baseline for further ethnic-specific work in this area. This study also seeks both male and female views, given the differences in Pacific male and female experiences and the

influence of these on youth perceptions and expectations of romantic relationships, as in my own experiences as described.

Given that participants will be Pacific youth, this study is visioned through the lens of a Pacific worldview, as encapsulated in the Fonofale model of health and wellbeing (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). This approach takes account of the spiritual, social and cultural and, physical elements which youth may see as impacting their wellbeing and, against factors of changing times and place. I also wanted to critique these Pacific youth responses against the global models, to explore any commonalities or differences.

At the same time, I recognise the existence of a third space in New Zealand, where, as Tupuola notes, “[New Zealand Pacific] youth identity development is inevitably influenced by the values and beliefs of the host culture, which challenge and compete with their Pacific cultural worldview” (2004, p. 171). Pacific youth are surrounded by and immersed in a dominant Pākehā culture and systems, and these inexorably will have an influencing role in their views and expectations of romantic relationships and their perceptions of their wellbeing.

Research context

Pacific Community in New Zealand

New Zealand’s Pacific population (Total = 295, 941) is a diverse and dynamic group with the fastest growing young population (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2017). About 46.1% of the total Pacific population is less than 20 years old, compared with 27.4% of the total population (4.693 million in 2016). The Pacific community in New Zealand is comprised of many ethnic Pacific groups, and although they are classified together, each group has their language and culture.

Drawing on the Pacific data, the family plays a fundamental role in the wellbeing of Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Fa’alau & Jensen, 2006; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The family is the primary institution, and the source of identity, and social and political participation (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014). The

continuing importance of families is as seen in the maintenance of connections with extended families in the homelands through remittances and back and forth migration (Macpherson, 2011).

Pacific churches also play a significant role in the daily lives of Pacific people in New Zealand, akin to villages in the homelands. Macpherson (2011) noted that churches in New Zealand had become the centre of social life for many Pacific families, and in addition to providing a place of worship, churches also provide health and education services, music, sport, and social activities.

Pacific Youth

The Pacific youth population in New Zealand is diverse. Drawing on data from the New Zealand secondary schools Youth 2007 survey, 97% of the total 1190 students who took part in this study identified as Samoan, Cook Islands, Tongan, Niue, Fijian, Tokelauan (Helu et al., 2009). More than half (52%) of the Pacific students had parents who were both born in the Pacific islands, the parents of 27% were both born in New Zealand, and 21% had one parent born in the Pacific islands and the other in another country. Also, while 37 percent could speak their ethnic Pacific language well, more than half (56%) reported that they could only hold a conversation when this was in both English and their ethnic Pacific language. When asked about their participation in Pākehā culture, 71 percent said they were comfortable in a Pākehā social setting, and almost 87% reported that some or many of their family activities or traditions were based on Pākehā culture. Regarding their home and family circumstances and relationships, the majority of the Pacific students reported that they were living with both their parents, that they were happy with their family relationships, and that their families got on well. Further, the majority of Pacific students identified as belonging to one of the major organised religions and were three times more likely to say that their spiritual beliefs were important to them, in comparison to New Zealand European counterparts (Helu et al., 2009).

Other Pacific youth reports emphasise that Pacific youth aspired to gain knowledge of their Pacific cultures and languages (MOH, 2008; Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2003; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014). Youth saw those cultural ways as key to helping them gain a “stronger sense of pride and a feeling of being special” (MOH, 2008, p. 5), and in

maintaining links with their families back in the islands (Sorensen, Jensen, Rigamoto, & Pritchard, 2015; Wilson, 2010).

Pacific notions of wellbeing

In my search of the Pacific literature, I found the importance of maintaining harmony and balance between Pacific people's *spiritual, social, and physical* relationships as central to Pacific people's wellbeing (Capstick, Norris, Sopoaga, & Tobata, 2009; Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2014; Finau, 1996; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Helu-Thaman, 1998; Ta'isi, 2009; Vaioleti, 2006). The *spiritual* refers to people's relationship to their creator God, the spirits, and the cosmos; the *social* refers to people's relationships with other people, such as their families and communities; and the *physical* refers to people's relationships to their lands, the sea, and the natural resources. Harmony is attained through recognition, observation, and practice of the Pacific concepts of service, reciprocity, respect, genealogy, *tapu* relationships, the language of respect, and belonging. These are delineated in Table 1, as adapted from the *Nga Vaka o Kāinga Tapu: Pacific Conceptual Framework to Address Family Violence in New Zealand*.

Table 1
Pacific concepts underpinning relationships

Concept	Definition
<i>Reciprocity</i>	The concept of supporting families in times of need from a 'generosity of heart', supporting optimal family wellbeing.
<i>Respect</i>	Face-to-face encounters of collective identities, places of belonging, genealogical lineages, roles, responsibilities, and heritage.
<i>Genealogy</i>	The lineage of ancestors and descendants that locates an individual's potential and purpose in the family.
<i>Tapu relationships</i>	The spiritual dimension in relationships where there is an acknowledgement of the sacred nature of family members. Defines boundaries of behaviour, language, and thought.
<i>The language of respect.</i>	Language together with behaviour and ritual honours the relationships.
<i>Belonging</i>	A place to stand based on genealogy. Defines roles and responsibilities in the family.

(Ministry of Social Development, 2012, p.80; hereafter cited as MSD)

Significance of the study

This study is significant in that it adds the Pacific youth voice on healthy youth relationships to the New Zealand and global knowledge base. This has been achieved through the use of a Pacific informed research design and method, which recognises the complexity of experiences and heterogeneous circumstances of Pacific youth, as well as their Pacific cultural worldviews.

Importantly, in light of the risks of relationship violence to people's health, wellbeing, and security, it is crucial that relevant and appropriate policies, programmes, and interventions be put in place that promotes and foster healthy Pacific youth relationships for their wellbeing today and in the future.

Definitions

Adolescence: Typically, youth between the ages 13 and 24 years. This is characterised by the period between the onset of puberty and the time when the individual is accepted as an adult by the society in which he or she lives.

Youth: Because the term 'youth' has different meanings in different contexts, the current study adopts the UN definition of youth as people aged between 15 and 24 years.

*Given the common age range (13 – 24 years) in both definitions, the terms *youth* and *adolescent* will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

Dating/Romantic youth/adolescent relationship: The literature has no consistent operational definitions for these terms. Some studies define dating as a planned social activity with the opposite sex (e.g., Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987), and other studies define dating as a romantic relationship between unmarried couples. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the gap as identified earlier with regards to the language used in research, strategies, and policies, this study does not have an operational definition of youth romantic/dating relationships. Rather, the participants will be probed for their understandings and relationships and the terms they prefer to be used. However, the terms dating relationships and youth/adolescent romantic relationships will be used interchangeably (as they have been used in the literature)

throughout this study until a definition of Pacific youth relationships is established from the findings.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has set the baseline for this study, situating it within the New Zealand Pacific diaspora context.

The next chapter presents a review of the current state of knowledge on youth relationships globally, locating the current study within the Adolescent Romantic Relationships field. Chapter 2 also presents a review of youth relationships in New Zealand, with emphasis on relationship violence in both youth and adult relationships, as these are where the majority of the work on relationships have focused.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological and ethical frameworks adopted to conduct this study. This includes a description of the theoretical stance (i.e., Pacific Worldview & Appreciative Inquiry), the research design (i.e., Qualitative, Fonofale, Talanoa), and the actual research process. This design opened up the platform for participants to present their perspectives, however many they may bring.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the findings, the youths' responses to the three research questions. Chapter 4 focuses on the language and concepts youths used to define and make sense of relationships, as well as the participants perceptions and expectations of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Chapter 5 focuses on where and how youth learnt these relationship behaviours and expectations, as well as their visions for the future.

Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the findings, analysed from both the socio-cultural and psychological perspectives on wellbeing. Looking at the data from both these perspectives has raised a significant number of questions, which have been included in this section for consideration in future studies.

Lastly, Chapter 7 summarises the main findings of this study, together with suggestions that have relevance to Pacific youth and families in New Zealand today.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As the purpose of this study is to explore Pacific youth perceptions and expectations of romantic relationships, this review locates this study within the global knowledge base of youth romantic relationships and wellbeing.

Studies for this review were collated from searches on scholarly databases, specifically PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and ProQuest, on material of psychological, sociological, anthropological, and cultural relevance, using relevant terms and combination of terms (i.e., adolescent/youth/teen/young people; romantic/dating/courting/sexual; relationships/encounters; dating violence; Pacific/Pasifika; diaspora). Analysis of the literature for the review entailed inspection for themes which were (i) prominent and found to occur repeatedly, (ii) detectable across a range of literature, countries and cultures, and (iii) persistent, (i.e. with historical precedence and contemporary aspects). The review intends to reflect contemporarily relevant findings; as such a 27-year period 1990–2017 was applied for literature utilised, with the majority of this published within the past 10 years. Older references are included only where providing historical context.

This review is in two parts. The first part, which is in two sections, looks at youth romantic relationships from a global perspective, locating the current study within the Adolescent Romantic Relationships [ARR] literature. Aims were to explore how youth romantic relationships have been defined in the literature as a basis for exploring how these may be similar or different to the definitions and understandings of the Pacific youth shared in my study. Second, and related, I explore the sources of influence and the places of learning about youth romantic relationships.

The second part of this review looks at youth romantic relationships within the New Zealand context, with a specific focus on relationship violence in both youth and adult relationships. The purpose of this section is to locate my study within the broader New Zealand context.

Part 1: Global literature on youth romantic relationships

Definitions

There has been much debate on definitions of adolescent romantic relationships. Collins, Welsh, and Furman's (2009) conclusions from their review of the adolescent romantic relationships [ARR] field were that while conceptualisations of ARR have been remarkably consistent across existing studies, there was no standard operational definition of this construct. They found that some researchers defined a *romantic relationship* by asking participants whether they had a boyfriend or girlfriend (see Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 2004; Li, Connolly, Depeng Jiang, Pepler, & Craig, 2010). Other studies used brief descriptions for participants to be able to clarify more clearly. For example, Giordano, Longmore, and Manning (2006, p.268) provided their participants with the description: '*when we ask about 'dating' we mean when you like a guy, and he likes you back?*'. Still, other researchers narrowed the criteria by specifying a minimum relationship duration (e.g., at least a month long) (e.g., Furman & Shaffer, 2003). Furman and Hand (2006) contend that the differing conceptualisations of adolescent romantic relationships in the literature are mainly characterised by estimates of duration and frequency, so setting the need for a standard definition of the construct.

Romance

Furman, Feiring, and Brown (1999) argued that it was premature to place such limited constraints on the ARR construct, proposing instead the inclusion of features and characteristics that are prototypic of *romance* in these definitions. These features of romance were: a *relationship*, *voluntariness*, and *attraction*. According to the authors, a *relationship* includes both short-term dating relationships and long-term committed relationships; it is a recognition by two people of a connection between them and an ongoing pattern of association and interaction. In an earlier study, Feiring (1996) found that the quality and level of involvement in a romantic relationship was what differentiated this type of adolescent relationship from a relationship with peers. The second feature, *voluntariness*, refers to romance as a matter of personal choice. While voluntariness in matters of romance is described as typical of Western cultures (Connolly, Craig, Goldberg, & Pepler, 1999; Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000;

Connolly, Nguyen, Pepler, Craig, & Jiang, 2013), Furman et al. (1999) proposed that even in collectivist cultures where relationships were predominantly arranged, the romantic feelings one has for the other may still be defined as voluntary, even if the relationship is not. The third feature, *attraction*, is described as being intense and passionate in nature. This can include feelings of intimacy, caring, and companionship in the early stages, and exclusivity, commitment, and attachment, in more long-term relationships. Feiring (1996) also noted that romantic relationships typically include a sexual component, most often manifested in some form of sexual behaviours such as kissing and coitus. While the three features of romance as suggested by Furman and colleagues provide a reference point for understanding the construct, it is notable that the participants in these studies were predominantly Western youth.

'Age-bound' stages of ARR development: Early, Middle, and Late adolescence

Consistent with developmental theories of human development (e.g., Erikson, 1963; Sullivan, 1953), Connolly and colleagues, in their studies with Western adolescents, concluded that ARR unfold in a series of stages across early (12-14years), middle (15-17years), and late adolescence (18-20years) (Connolly et al., 2000, 2013; Connolly & McIsaac, 2011). According to these researchers, the characteristics of early ARR, labelled the *infatuation stage* by Carver et al., (2003) are characterised by their short duration, low levels of intimacy, and the involvement of the affiliative and sexual systems rather than the attachment and caregiving systems (Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Furman & Wehner, 1994). Middle ARR (*affiliation stage*) on the other hand, is more intense and there is more emphasis on companionship (Collins et al., 2009; Feiring, 1996; Furman et al., 2009; Giordano, Manning, & Longmore, 2010). In the late adolescent stage (*intimacy stage*), relationships tend to be deeper in connection, enduring, and both partners value a long-term relationship (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Brown, 1999). Furman and Wehner (1994) attributed these latter stages to the activation of the attachment and caregiving systems. I have compiled these views together in Figure 1 – ARR Progression Trajectory.

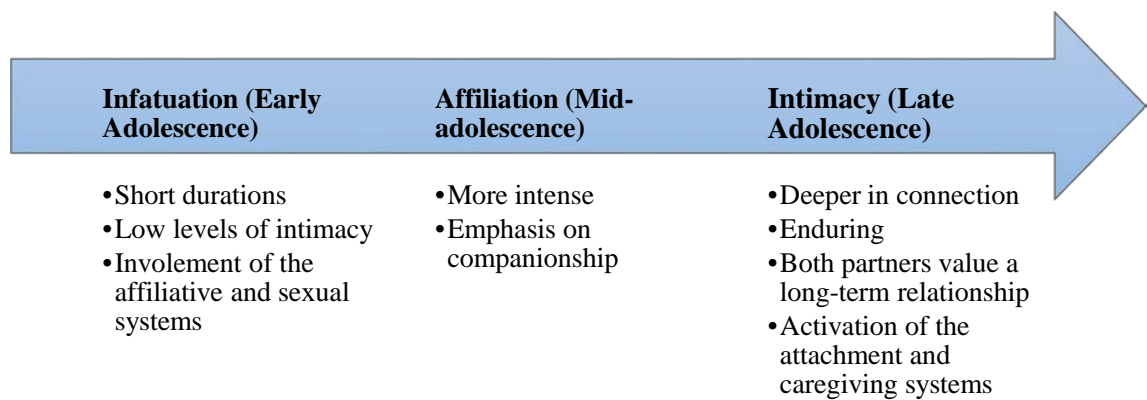


Figure 1. ARR progression trajectory. Compiled from Connolly et al., 2003; Furman & Wehner, 1994; Joyner et al., 2000.

Earlier studies provide support for Connolly and colleagues age-stage developmental theory of ARR. For instance, Laursen and Jensen-Campbell (1999) found that exchanges within the romantic relationships of older adolescents were more likely to reflect greater interdependence and communal orientations than was the case with early adolescent romantic alliances. In addition, Feldman and Gowen (1998) found that conflict resolution between late-adolescent romantic partners more often involved compromise, than conflict resolution in early-adolescent romantic pairs.

Individual attributes

Tuval-Mashiach, Walsh, Harel, and Shulman (2008) suggest that it is imperative to authentically examine the individual differences of the romantic dyad, as these differences can determine whether one is capable of balancing individual needs against those of the partner. Connolly et al. (2013) concur on this point, suggesting that this balancing act is an essential element to solidifying a satisfying relationship. However, Tuval-Mashiach and Shulman (2006) proposed that adolescents are more likely to perceive their individual differences as incentives for deepening and improving their relationships. The negotiation of a disagreement due to individual differences requires each partner to articulate a position apart from the other while at the same time to balance their own needs so as to protect the relationship (Collins, Laursen, Mortensen, Luebker, & Ferreira, 1997; Connolly et al., 1999; Laursen, Finkelstein, & Betts, 2001). Indeed, Mayes, Cohen, Swain, and Leckman (2008) found that over the course of ARR, partners showed an increasing ability to recognise and better negotiate any disagreements. On the other hand, it has been argued that partners avoid potential costs such as conflict and inequality to avoid a relationship break-up (Harper & Welsh, 2007).

Helen Fisher (2006) postulates that unlike adult romantic relationships, youth romantic encounters are centred on the quality of ‘play’. Furman and Shomaker (2008) contend that perhaps this explains why many youth romantic couples tend to uphold a positive façade, actively minimising relationship conflicts or rejecting the differences between them through the use of self-silencing strategies.

Given the increasing incidence of intimate partner violence, as well as its growing youthfulness in Pacific communities in New Zealand, it is essential to establish how Pacific youth manage conflicts in their relationships so that unhealthy conflict resolution strategies can be addressed.

Social influences and adolescent romantic relationships

Much of the Western literature on ARR is informed by early developmental theories of human development, such as Sullivan’s (1953) interpersonal theory of psychoanalysis, Erikson’s (1963) psychosocial stages of development, and Ainsworth and Bowlby’s (1991) attachment theory.

This thesis cannot do justice to these great works, but to summarise, these theories converge on the notion that human relationships develop in stages, and each stage has its predominant influences that shape the individual experiences. For example, from infancy to early adolescence, the predominant influence in an individual’s life is the family and family relationships. As individuals mature, the family is replaced by peers who become the primary influence throughout adolescence until the third stage where a romantic partner is attained (Christopher & Nangle, 1992; Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Leslie, 1982). Implicit in these theories is an individualistic view of the world, where autonomy and independence are valued traits that are seen to be necessary for a good life. In my view, this linear progression which applies to Western cultures may not apply to Pacific family-based communities.

Family

In their analysis of adults’ experiences of romantic love using attachment theory, Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that the representations of parent-child relationships in the early years influenced representations of romantic relationships because both

relationships served a similar attachment function. Secure attachment refers to a sense of security that enables adolescents to engage in the outside world, knowing that they will always be welcomed when they return to their parents (Bowlby, 1988). In this respect, secure attachment is a closely related construct to parental nurturance because it denotes parents' physical and emotional nurturing behaviours, including comfort and reassurance when the adolescent is overwhelmed or frightened. As reported, individuals with *secure attachment* personality styles are therefore more likely to have satisfactory relationships in later life and enjoy feelings of security and connectedness, support, honesty, openness, and equality. At the same time, both individuals in a relationship feel independent yet loving towards each other (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In Pacific societies, extended families are the norm, and the raising of a child is a collective responsibility. Additionally, adults indulge in the child regardless of their age (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1983) as Pacific peoples view children as gifts from God. This practice is in contrast with Western parenting practices where aims are to ensure children are autonomous and independent from an early age. Given this family based structure and parenting style, it is expected that Pacific children form multiple attachments with others. Behaviours that are characterised as healthy through the lens of attachment theory (as in a linear process of relationship development from family to peers) are likely problematic for youth raised in a culture which has differing value systems. For example, in Rothbaum, Kakinuma, Nagaoka and Azuma's (2007) study, Japanese children who were raised to be dependent on their caregivers experienced distress when separated from their mothers. Rothbaum et al. (2007) argued that the experiences of distress displayed by Japanese caregivers were to be expected, given that their mothers indulged in them to foster the values of interdependence and reciprocity, which were valued Japanese behaviours. Drawing on this and other studies, from the lens of attachment theory, it can be said that the Western ideal of secure attachment as the standard for healthy relationships is not applicable and may be problematic for youth from non-Western contexts.

Much of the work looking at ARR through the lens of attachment theory has been in the form of quantitative studies. These studies have provided support for the assertion that romantic experiences for Western youth have some foundation in the caregiver-infant bond (e.g., Doyle, Lawford, & Markiewicz, 2009; Furman & Wehner, 1994; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). For example, Doyle et al.'s (2009)

longitudinal study examined the attachment styles of three cohorts of early, middle, and late adolescents (mean ages: 13.1 years, 15.6 years, and 18.6 years respectively) with their mother, father, best friend, and romantic partner. Findings were that adolescents who were insecurely attached to both mother and best friends were more likely to be insecurely attached to their romantic partner. However, this pattern was only found for insecurely attached adolescents, and not for individuals with other attachment styles. Connolly and Johnson (1996) found considerable continuity in relationship quality between romantic relationships and those with parents and friends. That is adolescents' perceptions of support in their romantic relationships correlated with their perceptions of support both with their parents and with their best friend. In a later study, Engels, Finkenauer, Meeus, and Dekovic (2001) tested the relationship between parental attachment and emotional adjustment in adolescents' relationships and found that in the 15-18-year-old age group, parental attachment was correlated with youth social skills, which in turn affected youth competence in friendships and romantic relationships.

Attachment theory can also provide some basis for understanding the relationship between nurturance and aggression in ARR. Research suggests that adolescents who are securely attached to their parents are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviours and report less mental health and problem behaviours than their peers (Moretti & Peled, 2004). Other researchers have argued that the lack of a secure base can lead to indirect, as well as direct, aggression (Furman & Shomaker, 2008; Wekerle & Wolfe, 1999; Welsh & Shulman, 2008). While the majority of these studies are quantitative and influenced by Western populations, they provide learnings which can be used to increase understanding of Pacific youth views of healthy relationships and, in turn, policies and programs for this group.

Peers

As argued by Dunphy (1963), the peer group replaces the family as the primary socialising agent in the adolescent years. In his view, participation in mixed-sex groups provides the opportunity to meet and potentially date the other sex. Sullivan (1953) proposed that the skills learned through same-sex friendships during childhood served as the basis for forming mutually rewarding relationships in later life. In both these theories, there is an implicit assumption of the role or function of the peer group as the

learning grounds for romantic relationships, and that this stage is necessary for the success of the next stage of life, that of romantic relationships.

Contemporary ARR literature has provided support for these early assertions. For instance, Connolly et al. (2004) found that same-sex peers offered motivation and support for the transition into romantic relationships, as well as feedback on current romantic relationships. Connolly et al. (1999) also suggested that participation in mixed-sex peer groups may facilitate dating relationships through the development of social skills and by reducing anxiety that is associated with interactions with the other sex, for example, the ability to converse, match social behaviours, manage conflict, and establish intimacy. Views are that spending time with cross-sex groups is a precursor step in the trajectory toward romantic relationships, as these actions may spark passion and longing, or friends can become romantic partners themselves (Connolly et al., 2004; La Greca & Mackey, 2007). Further, without access to these peer networks, adolescents may be limited in their formation of romantic relationships (Connolly & Johnson, 1996).

The place of culture in ARR

Harry Triandis (2001) argued that historically and cross-culturally, culture does have a place in adolescents' romantic relationships and, the most important cultural difference appears to be the individualism-collectivism cultural syndrome. In his view, culture is the memory of society which includes what has worked in the experience of society and is seen to be of value in transmitting to future generations. The elements of culture Triandis outlined included shared operating procedures, tools, values, norms, unstated assumptions, and habits about sampling the environment. Furthermore, from a psychological standpoint, perception and cognition depend on the information that is sampled from the environment, and since cultures influence what is being sampled, cultural conventions guide what is paid attention to and how much (Triandis, 2001). Earlier, Triandis (1989) argued that for people in individualistic cultures such as those of North America and North and Western Europe, there is a high probability that elements of the personal self prevail (e.g., "I am kind"). Moreover, people from collectivist cultures, such as those of Africa, South America, and Asia, tend to sample elements of the collective self (e.g., "my family thinks I am kind").

This view is confirmed by Markus and Kitayam (1991), who proposed that people in collectivist cultures are interdependent within their groups (family, nation, tribe), that they give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behaviour by in-group norms, and behave communally. These groups are mainly concerned with relationships. By way of contrast, in individualistic cultures, people are autonomous and independent from their in-groups, they give priority to their personal goals over the goals of their in-groups, and they behave primarily by their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-groups.

Deborah Coates (1999) argued that romance is an acculturating or cultured experience; socio-cultural norms, values, and expectations of romantic interactions form the background within which adolescent romance develops. She proposed that romantic experiences offer a window of opportunity for parents and other socialising agents to use these adolescent interests and experiences to teach young ones about cultural expectations of romantic choices and behaviour. Romantic interests can also afford the young person the opportunity to learn about aspects of the romantic partner's culture through shared activities, which are a more significant and different learning experience for those with partners of a different ethnicity (Coates, 1999). In sum, there is importance in people studying romantic or other adolescent experiences to recognise that nothing exists or evolves outside of culture.

It can be said that in Western societies, romantic relationships are part of the typical teenage experience, emerging early in adolescence and developing progressively throughout the teen decade (Carver et al., 2003; Connolly et al., 2004; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). By way of contrast, in many non-Western societies, such as Chinese and Indian cultures, love is seen to be subordinate to emotional connections within the family, and when such feelings occur, these are constrained by the expectations of the social group (Coates, 1999; Dhariwal et al., 2009; Li et al., 2010; Moore, 1998). In non-Western societies, a young person's pursuit of unsanctioned relationships is considered stigmatising, destabilising a family's social standing (Coates, 1999; Dhariwal et al., 2009). Hence, it is expected that non-Western youth become romantically involved at a much later age in comparison to Western youth.

A myriad of cross-cultural studies comparing adolescents of Indian or Asian descent with their same-age peers of Euro-Western origin (Carver et al., 2003; Coates, 1999;

Connolly et al., 2004; Dhariwal et al., 2009; Feldman & Gowen, 1998; Li et al., 2010; Moore, 1998) support this assertion. At the same time, studies indicate that non-Western youth are just as fascinated as Western youth by romance (Dhariwal et al., 2009), as also suggested in Helen Fisher's work (Feldman, Gowen, & Fisher, 1998; Fisher, 2006). Fisher found that exhilaration characterised romantic attraction, focused attention and that intrusive thinking about potential partners is a primary system for all human partnering. However, unlike Western youth whose romantic experiences were undergirded by peers and the media (Connolly et al., 2004), matters of romance for non-Western youth were within their parents' locus of control (Dhariwal et al., 2009; Li et al., 2010; Moore, 1998).

Gendered roles, norms, and expectations

Studies have highlighted culturally held gendered norms and expectations of ARR. In Western cultures, adolescent boys are encouraged to be independent and often participate in extended peer groups, while girls are more focused on affiliative values and experience greater comfort in dyadic relationships (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Consistent with these gendered values, girls from Western backgrounds report more involvement in romantic relationships and more romantic intimacy than boys (Carver et al., 2003; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). By contrast, Dhariwal's study found that girls in India, for instance, were less likely to endorse romantic activities and autonomy because their parents strictly controlled their socialisation, in comparison to boys (Dhariwal et al., 2009). A second finding was that increasingly as Indian girls entered Western cultural contexts, their romantic desire and autonomy became similar to that of boys. Other studies show that males in traditional Indian societies exhibit greater desire in romantic experiences in comparison to Indian males in the diaspora. Fisher, Brown, Aron, Strong, and Mashek (2010) argued that this is expected, given that girls in traditional societies were the gatekeepers to romantic experiences. Clearly, gendered expectations influence youth perceptions of wellbeing and romantic relationships.

Gendered division of labour in the Pacific

In traditional Pacific societies, the gendered division of labour was based on the ideal of *complementary* male-female roles underpinned by the sacred brother and sister covenant (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001). Everyone had a role in the overall functioning of society

and, the complementary nature of male and female roles ensured that the tasks, benefits, and burdens of society were shared by all. The responsibilities of women in traditional Pacific societies reflected their *honour* and *dignity* as the *feagaiga* in Samoan or *fahu* in Tongan societies, while the tasks of men reflected their *strength*, *protector*, and *provider* nature. These roles were observed and practised not only in the family context but in all community settings. By way of contrast, in traditional Western societies, the separation of male and female roles was underpinned by a patriarchal culture of male dominance and control (Cheyne, O'Brien, & Belgrave, 2008; Duncan, 2007; Gheaus, 2012; Okin, 1987). As documented, Western women were seen to be subservient to men, incapable of rational thought, and valued for childbearing and caring for men. While the Pacific complementary roles fostered values of interdependence, deference, and reciprocity, the Western patriarchal system, on the other hand, fostered the values of male domination and female subjugation. Given the status of Pacific youth in New Zealand as a minority group within a majority, it is essential that this study explores the manifestation of Pacific gendered roles and expectations in these times and contexts and, their influences on Pacific youth romantic relationships.

Contemporary influences on youth relationships: Social Media

The tremendous explosion of information technology [IT] in recent times is well documented, as has its influence on youth. It is well established that the digital realm is one part of a broader universe in which youth now meet, date, maintain their relationships and, break up with romantic partners (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013; Fox, Osborn, & Warber, 2014; Fox & Warber, 2012; Lenhart, Smith, Page, & Manager, 2015; Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009, 2014; Rueda, Lindsay, & Williams, 2015). Western media especially is believed to be at the heart of globalisation (Arnett, 2002). The speed at which IT has penetrated multiple locales around the world has given youth increasing access to Western social forums and paradigms (Dhariwal et al., 2009), simultaneously uncovering avenues for personal and cultural identity exploration and formation (Larson, 1995; Larson et al., 1999). Clearly, young people's perceptions and understandings of romantic relationships, plus the ways in which these are carried out, are hugely informed today by the media and the interests of the popular culture. Indeed, as well documented, young people are using all forms of media to communicate with their romantic partners (Lenhart, 2015; Connolly et al., 1999; Coyne, Stockdale,

Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011; Korchmaros, Ybarra, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Boyd, & Lenhart, 2013; Lenhart et al., 2015).

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are growing in popularity, especially given that more schools, businesses, city councils, public libraries, and public transport are providing access to the Internet (Coyne et al., 2011; Crothers, Gibson, Smith, Bell, & Miller, 2013; Crothers, Smith, Urale, & Bell, 2010). In a recent study of American youth's use of technology in their romantic relationships by Lenhart et al. (2015), findings were that about 8% of American teens had met their partner online. Rueda et al. (2015) contend that online spaces offer youth additional opportunities to practice relationships with friends and romantic partners. Additionally, the accessibility of the internet and technology allows partners to stay connected regardless of how busy their schedules are (Coyne et al., 2011) or where they are located geographically. This availability fosters emotional connection (Lenhart et al., 2015) and aids relationship progression (Rueda et al., 2015).

While social media can assist in building an emotional connection with the romantic partner, there are also risks of inciting feelings of uncertainty and jealousy (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009; Lenhart et al., 2015; Muise et al., 2009, 2014). As Mary Beth Oliver remarked:

Whenever technology is introduced, there are surely benefits, but there are also costs that often go largely unexamined. The technology addresses needs, it solves problems, and it creates opportunities. But it also creates needs that might not have existed otherwise, it introduces problems that no one envisioned, and it can involve drawbacks that weren't fully understood. (Baym et al., 2012, p. 266)

Findings by Muise et al. (2009) were that increased Facebook use positively correlated with feelings of jealousy. They reasoned this was due to a feedback loop, whereby Facebook exposed people to often ambiguous information about their partner that they might not otherwise have access to. In turn, uncertainty and feelings of jealousy as a result of this ambiguous information on the partner motivated increased Facebook use and also partner monitoring (Muise et al., 2009). In a follow-up study by the same authors but through the lens of Attachment theory (Hazan & Shaver, 1987), findings were that anxiously attached individuals were more likely to engage in partner monitoring on Facebook, but more so for anxiously attached women than men (2014).

An online study by Fox et al. (2014) comparing college students found that one's attachment style predicted both uncertainties in a relationship and interpersonal electronic surveillance [IES]. In this study, preoccupied and fearful individuals (insecurely attached individuals with high levels of anxiety) reported the highest levels.

While not knowing the partner's Facebook page may be a desirable position, Fox and colleagues found that some people reported being unable to resist not knowing. They concluded that Facebook is changing the ways in which people develop, maintain, and dissolve their romantic relationships, and users are always faced with a struggle between using Facebook for its reputed benefits (e.g. public declarations of commitment, information-seeking) and dealing with the problems it can create (e.g., partner surveillance, jealousy, network interference).

In addition to raising feelings of jealousy and uncertainty, Lucero, Weisz, Smith-Darden, & Lucero (2013) found that partner monitoring/spying on social media was also becoming recognised forms of abuse in romantic relationships. However, the threshold for labelling such behaviour '*abusive*' differed for adults and young people; young people had lower thresholds for such behaviours, despite experts listing these as warning signs. Indications are that youth tend to minimise and deny the seriousness of abusive behaviours that adults would categorise as dangerous (Foshee, Reyes, Gottfredson, Chang, & Ennett, 2013; Lucero et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2011).

Lenhart et al. (2015) found that youth experienced other forms of controlling and harmful behaviours through media use both during and after a relationship. These included being asked by the current or former partner to remove all former boyfriends and girlfriends from their friends list, sharing passwords, demands for constant and instant communication even when the partner may be with family or friends, and using social media to hurt (or threaten to hurt) the partner by revealing personal information on status updates or by other means.

Pacific youth are not exempt from the influences of social media and technology. Whether and how they navigate this realm in addition to other influence such as family, peers, and cultural factors will be explored in this study.

Part 2: Youth and adult relationships in New Zealand Context

In New Zealand, as in many other Western societies, romantic relationships are a common youth experience. In their seminal work on violence and sexual coercion in New Zealand high school students' dating relationships, Jackson, Cram, and Seymour (2000) found that 84.5 percent of the total 200 female participants, and 78 percent of the total 173 male participants (average age 16.7 years), reported that they had been in a dating relationship. Data from the Ministry of Youth Development's (2010) report on the profile of young New Zealanders in their transition years, showed that 27 percent of the male participants and 36% of the female participants had a boyfriend/girlfriend at age 16.

Violence in youth relationships

While many New Zealand youth enter their romantic relationships with expectations of love, friendship, and happiness, it is well-documented that many will also encounter physical, sexual, or psychological violence (Jackson, 1999; Jackson et al., 2000).

Violence in youth relationships poses a threat to the future of New Zealand, as these relationships are indicative of relationship patterns that may persist in later life, such as intimate partner violence (Lievore & Mayhew, 2007). Jackson and colleagues (2000), found that most of the high school students (mean age 16.7 years) in their Auckland-based study who were involved in a dating relationship had experienced at least one incident of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse (refer to Table 2). Data from a Christchurch university that was included in the International Dating Violence Study (Straus, 2004) showed that 27% of the 134 New Zealand students who participated reported having been physically assaulted while on a date in the previous year. The qualitative data that informed Jackson and colleagues (2000) study revealed that the majority of coercions took place on dates, at the home of the boy or girl, or at social events (Hird & Jackson, 2001). The New Zealand National Crime survey in 2010 concluded that young people in the 15-24 age group are the most at risk of physical, psychological, and sexual victimisation (Statistics New Zealand, 2010).

Table 2
Distribution of each type of violence by gender*

	N	Type of violence (%)		
		Emotional	Sexual	Physical
Male	173	76.3	67.4	13.3
Female	200	81.5	76.9	17.5

*Data from Jackson, Cram, & Seymour (2000).

Male and female data analysed separately for each type of violence.

Violence in romantic relationships, as seen in Table 2, encompasses emotional, sexual, and physical abuse. This is important to note, as there is often a misconception that violence in romantic relationships in both youth and adult relationships is only in the form of hitting the other or physical abuse.

Youth Violence in the New Zealand Media

In 2008, New Zealand society was shaken by media reports of the brutal killing of 22-year-old Sophie Elliott by her 33-year-old boyfriend, in the bedroom of her Dunedin family home (Hartevelt, 2009; The Sophie Elliott Foundation, n.d.). In 2013, another public outrage ensued, this time involving a group of young men based in Auckland who allegedly sought to intoxicate underage girls to gang rape them (Forbes, 2015; Newshub, 2015). The Roast Busters scandal, as it was known, was concerning for both the acts of the young men involved, but also the response, or lack thereof, of the New Zealand Police.

The Sophie Elliot murder and the Roast Busters scandal led to a profound shift in public attitudes towards relationship violence, especially that within youth romantic relationships. Subsequently, efforts to combat intimate partner violence began targeting youth romantic relationships. This was a reactive response. For example, *dating violence* had already been recognised in the 2002 Te Rito: New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy (Ministry of Social Development, 2002), yet, programmes and interventions did not surface until the publicised incidents that led to public reaction and calls for interventions and preventions. It seems that policies to address violence in dating relationships are far from preventative.

The growing youthfulness of intimate partner violence, as seen in Table 2 confirms abusive relationship behaviours are learned during the youth years. Further, a focus on

healthy behaviours instead should lead to decreased incidences of intimate partner violence in the future. Investing in the health of youth relationships, therefore, is a preventative effort that safeguards healthy adult relationships.

Currently, there are two recognised healthy youth relationship programs being implemented as part of New Zealand secondary school curriculum: the Loves-Me-Not-Program and the ACC Mates and Dates Program. While both programmes report success, their evaluations indicate a lack with regards to the needs and understandings of Maori and Pacific youth (Duncan & Kingi, 2015; Pukeko Research Ltd, n.d.). Findings from this study will contribute to filling these gaps in knowledge.

Adult intimate partner violence

Adult intimate partner violence is a significant health risk in New Zealand, especially for women (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Koziol-McLain et al., 2010; Koziol-McLain et al., 2015; Paterson, Feehan, Butler, Williams, & Cowley-Malcolm, 2016). In sum, the numbers of affected women continue to rise each year (see Lievore & Mayhew, 2007 for review). Fanslow and Robinson (2004) found that 1 in 3 ever-partnered women reported experiencing at least one act of sexual and physical violence by an intimate partner. In a national survey of crime prevalence conducted by the Ministry of Justice in 2014, approximately 26.4% women reported having been physically abused by an intimate partner during their lifetime. Administrative data on IPV from the Ministry of Justice in 2006 showed that of the 8,255 applications made under the Domestic Violence Act of 1995, over half were from women applying for a protection order from a current or former intimate partner. The UN Women's report on the progress of the world's women between 2015 and 2016 revealed that a third of New Zealand women had reported experiencing physical violence from a partner during the period 2000 to 2010, putting New Zealand as the worst affected of the 14 countries in the report which responded to the question (United Nations, 2010). As noted, Pacific featured prominently in these data.

Reporting data tells us that the perpetrators of adult IPV are mainly men. However, it is estimated that only about 20% of IPV is reported. Therefore, ideas that men are the main perpetrators are based on this limited amount of reported data. Unlike adult intimate partner violence which is almost exclusively perpetrated by males against

women, Wekerle and Wolfe (1999) noted that violence in youth relationships might be less gender-differentiated. Martin (1990) suggested that if dating violence is less gender-differentiated, it suggests that abusive behaviour in youth romantic relationships have not yet become an adult-like pattern. Wekerle and Wolfe recommended paying attention to youth romantic relationships, as this offers a critical window to ameliorate the perpetration of violent behaviours.

Chapter 2 Summary

Romantic relationships are a normative experience for youth within Western societies as the literature shows. By way of contrast, in non-Western societies, youth romantic relationships are bounded by family and cultural expectations. Furthermore, romantic relationships occur at a much earlier age for youth in Western societies than those from non-Western settings. These differences are essential to consider, given the fact that most youth policies both nationally and globally for wellbeing are informed by Western ideals and expectations of youth development, which may have little meaning if applied in non-Western settings. As outlined, the most important influences on young people's relationships are their family, peers, culture and, the media.

Studies on youth romantic relationships within New Zealand have been mainly through the lens of intimate partner violence. Current literature does not provide Pacific youth voices and understandings of what makes for healthy relationships. These gaps are addressed in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter is presented in three parts: (1) the *theoretical stance*, which describes the theoretical perspectives in which the methodology and methods are grounded (2) the research *design* and *process*, and (3) the research reflections outlining some learnings and insights from the research.

Part 1: Theoretical Stance

To explore and capture the voices of Pacific youth, I approached this research through the lens of a Pacific worldview and, Appreciative Inquiry. Each is discussed in this chapter.

The Pacific Worldview

Pacific peoples see their place in the world as connected to God their creator, their families and community, and their land and environment. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi describes this worldview as:

Imagine if you will, a worldview that understands the environment, humans, the animate and inanimate – all natural life – as having its sources in the same divine origin, imbued with the life force, interrelated and genealogically connected.
(cited in Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014, p. 13)

In the Pacific world view, wellbeing is understood to be a consequence of achieving a harmony and balance between the three interrelated and interdependent elements of Pacific life: *the spiritual, the social, and the physical* (Capstick et al., 2009; Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014) and values beliefs and actions are directed to maintaining this balance (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009) through nurturing relationships (*tausi ma teu lelei le va*) with others, with God, and with the environment. When harmony between the three elements is achieved, one is said to be in good health and wellbeing: any imbalances may give rise to negative consequences such as family violence, disruption of social order, criminal activities, and poor health (MSD, 2012). The *Nga Vaka o Kāinga Tapu: Pacific Conceptual Framework To Address Family Violence in New Zealand* notes:

Wellbeing occurs when all aspects of the individual and collective are in balance, in harmony and integrated, and co-exist with environments, kinship and support systems, language, fulfilment of roles and responsibilities, and the recognition of *mana*³ and *tapu*⁴. (MSD, 2012, p. 4)

Pacific people understand all knowledge to be gifts from God (Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014) and distinguish two kinds of knowledge: *communal knowledge* which is shared and is essential for day-to-day living and, *specialist* and often *tapu* or *sacred knowledge* that is entrusted to those with skills or gifts who then use this knowledge for the benefit of the community as a whole (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Helu-Thaman, 1998). Communal knowledge is “communally made, sanctioned, shared and used with the aim of achieving the good life for all members – however, this is defined” (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009, p. 111). In the Pacific way, all community members engage in the construction and validation of knowledge and the defining of community goals; this mostly takes place in community and village meetings (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001). In these meetings, members can raise concerns and pool their knowledge to identify solutions that would ensure the best outcomes. Time is also not a consideration during these meetings; rather, discussions continue until a consensus is reached. *Talanoa* is the term that is now commonly used to signify these community knowledge construction processes (Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014).

Appreciative Inquiry

Ap-pre’ci-ate, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: VALUING, PRIZING, ESTEEMING, and HONORING.

In-quire’ (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: DISCOVERY, SEARCH, and SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION, STUDY. (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p.2).

³ Mana: Rev Dr Ilaitia Tuwere suggests that, in essence, *mana* has to do “with life and the power of life that is provided by the gods (MSD, 2012). Mana refers to an extraordinary power, essence or presence. This applies to the energies and presences of the natural world.

⁴ Tapu: Certain restrictions, disciplines and commitments have to take place if mana is to be expressed in physical form, such as in a person or object.

Cooperrider and Whitney (2001; 2005) describe Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a systematic discovery of what gives life to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. To achieve this involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and intensify positive potential. Fundamentally, AI seeks to build on people's past and present capacities including their achievements, unexplored potentials, and stories, expressions of wisdom, opportunities, lived values, and visions of valued and possible futures.

AI is underpinned by five fundamental principles: the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, and the positive principle. I see each of which as aligning with the Pacific worldview.

1. The *constructionist principle* of AI rests in the constructionism approach to human science and practice, where knowledge is communally constructed, and the relationship between the knower and the inquirer is fundamental to this process. In Appreciative Inquiry, the locus of knowledge is in the relationship, rather than the individual's mind, and the language and discourses around this relationship create people's sense of reality. This may be good, possible, and true, depending on the language shaping the relationship that creates knowledge.
2. The *principle of simultaneity* refers to the simultaneous occurrence of inquiry and change. In other words, the inquiry itself is the intervention; the questions researchers ask sets the stage for what is found and discovered, which then feeds into knowledge bases that eventually become reproduced in people's stories and their daily conversations.
3. The *poetic principle* is about recognising that people can inquire into anything, which implies that they can also change the things we inquire about. Therefore, AI reminds researchers to ensure they are not reproducing the same worlds over and over, but rather, are engaging in a reconsideration of the aims and focus of their inquiries in the domain of change.
4. The *anticipatory principle* is about 'what could be'. This principle is grounded in the view that current behaviour is guided by the image of the future; that is,

human systems, like movie projectors, are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully in the present as a mobilising agent. Therefore, peoples positive images of the future lead to positive actions.

5. Finally, the *positive principle* is about asking positive questions and creating hope, excitement, caring, inspiration, and a sense of purpose, as these tend to lead to more sustainable positive changes.

In sum, AI is about human relatedness; where relationships thrive, when there is an appreciative eye that enables people to see the best in one another, where they can share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new but better worlds (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001; 2005).

Overall, both the Pacific worldview and AI acknowledge the communal construction of knowledge and the importance of the relationship between the researcher and participants in this process. In the Pacific worldview, the relationship between the researcher and participants is to be maintained and nurtured through respectful relationships, observed in the way the researcher and participants engage and communicate throughout the research. In the AI spirit, the relationship is the locus of knowledge, alluding to the importance of language and how this language shapes reality. Combining the elements of the two theoretical perspectives, data collection took place in the *group* and *individual* talanoa, underpinned by respect and the use of appreciative language. In this way, the knowledge that is constructed is not only valid, from a Pacific perspective (Vaiioleti, 2006; 2013), but also good, possible, and true, from the AI perspective (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001).

Research Design

Qualitative

I chose a qualitative research design because I wanted to capture Pacific youth views on what makes for healthy Pacific youth relationships. Policies and interventions that are effective and relevant to youth can only be gained by listening to youth and involving them in decision-making processes. Qualitative research is about making sense of

phenomena regarding the meanings people bring to them (McIntyre, 2005). Sociologist Max Weber argued that humans are unique and different from other objects in the universe because they assign meaning to their actions, and if we want to understand human behaviour, we must take these meanings into account (McIntyre, 2005). Myers (2010) describes qualitative research as especially valuable in drawing out views and knowledge that is culturally embedded in the lives of people and the relationships they engage in. Pacific researcher Kabini Sanga (2004) emphasises the value of qualitative research with Pacific peoples as this “allows for contextual details, multiple realities to be captured, particularities to be spotlighted, and each voice to be heard” (p.50).

Fonofale model of Pacific health and wellbeing

Taking account of the Pacific worldview, the Fonofale model of Pacific health and wellbeing and the Talanoa method of data collection are used.

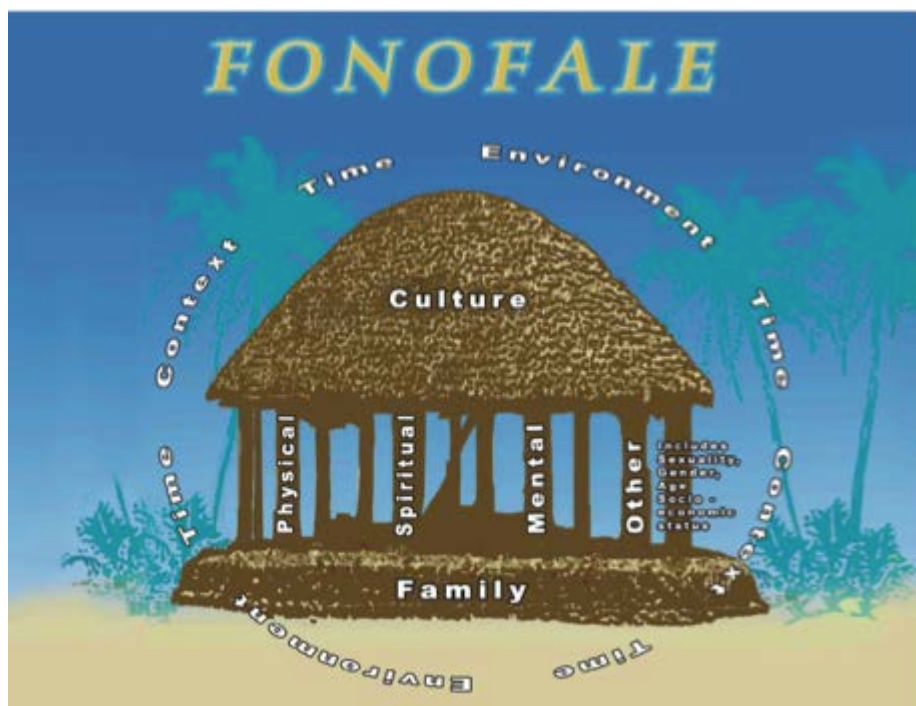


Figure 2. Fonofale Model of Pacific health & wellbeing

The Fonofale model of Pacific health and wellbeing is regarded as both a Samoan and a pan-Pacific model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001). The Fonofale model visualises and captures the elements of Pacific wellbeing as a Samoan fale (house). The architecture of the Samoan fale, characterised by its lack of walls and oval shape consists of a foundation and wooden posts holding up a domed roof. Like the Samoan fale, Pacific

wellbeing is built on a strong foundation and a roof cover that provides shelter and is supported by rigid posts. The floor represents the family, which is the foundation of all Pacific Island cultures. Family can be nuclear or extended. The roof of the Fonofale represents cultural values and beliefs which shelter the family over the life cycle.

Between the foundation and the roof are four posts: these connect the family to culture, and they also interact with or are in a relation to each other. These four posts include a spiritual dimension (the sense of wellbeing that stems from either Christianity or traditional spirituality or both); a physical dimension (relating to biological or physical wellbeing); a mental dimension (psychological wellbeing); and an 'other' dimension which in Pulotu-Endeman's model relates to variables such as gender, sexuality, age, and socio-economic status, each of which directly or indirectly affect health.

Around and encapsulating the fale itself is a cocoon that contains elements that have a direct or indirect influence on each other, as well as the rest of the fale. These dimensions are the environment (the relationship between people and their physical environment, which can either be a rural or an urban setting); time (the actual or specific time in history that impacts on people); and context (this dimension relates to the where/what/how and the meaning it has for the individual or people). The dimensions of the Fonofale model, the external cocoon, and the metaphor of the *fale* not only captures the essence of the Pacific worldview but also allows for the influence of changing times and place - such as the environment (New Zealand diaspora) and context.

I decided to use the Fonofale model as the framework for my data collection method because I saw youth perceptions of relationships would likely be impacted by both the multiple or holistic domains of cultural experience the model signals as well as the influence of changing times and context. Culture is dynamic to changing times and so the Fonofale is appropriate for New Zealand-raised Pacific peoples as well as those Pacific people born and raised in the islands

In line with appreciative inquiry, the domains of the Fonofale signifies strengths, support systems, and assets to be built on and appreciated as positive contributions to Pacific youth relationships now and to the future.

Talanoa

In applying the Fonofale model to this research, the talanoa method of data collection will be used. The talanoa has been described as a personal encounter or conversation where people story their issues, their realities and aspirations (Vaiotele, 2006, 2013). According to Vaiotele, the talanoa can be referred to as a formal or informal conversation, talk, or exchange of ideas, which can be in groups or between two people. In research, talanoa is an exploration of the phenomenon under inquiry from the multiple, relativist, and particularistic realities of those engaging in the talanoa. The researcher, as well as the participants, actively engage in the talanoa. Hence, there is no such thing as an objective researcher in a talanoa. During the talanoa process, participants are encouraged to probe, challenge, clarify, re-align ideas, and/or provide legitimisation for each other's stories, which is made possible through the 'noa' (space) that is created for people to 'tala' (construct knowledge), in a safe and respectful manner (respectful relationships). A talanoa does not consider time, instead, the discussion continues until a consensus is reached, and *malie*⁵ is achieved. Vaiotele (2006, 2013) argues that the outcome of a talanoa is the knowledge that is valid, and robust, as it has been shared, sanctioned, and confirmed by all taking part.

Group Talanoa – Group talanoa were chosen because these are more likely to engender discussions on this personal topic, particularly for shyer participants. Group talanoa also sets a broad sweep pool of information. The group Talanoa involves critical discussions where participants share their views, challenge each other, and clarify ideas (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Vaiotele, 2006). This process allows for up-to-the-minute review and analysis of the data because ideas raised are challenged by participants (Vaiotele, 2006). My role is to bring these shared ideas together.

Individual Talanoa – Individual talanoa were chosen because these allow for in-depth exploration of individual views, and also provide a reflective voice to the group findings. Richer and more in-depth data is expected here.

⁵ Malie: an energising and uplifting of the spirits, and to a positive state of connectedness and enlightenment (Vaiotele, 2006).

Data collection

Drawing on the literature and informal discussions, interview guidelines were drawn up for both the group and the individual talanoa. Notably, the individual talanoa would also explore ‘other’ themes raised in the group talanoa. Draft interview guidelines were piloted with a group of Pacific postgraduate students and adapted as appropriate. No changes to the talanoa schedule were needed (see Appendix B – Talanoa Schedule).

Data Analysis: Inductive thematic analysis

Two points overarched my data interpretation process. First, I was fortunate to attend a data analysis workshop facilitated by Leone Murphy of Think Place⁶. Murphy outlines an analysis strategy which was a combination of design thinking and thematic analysis, grounded in AI. Murphy stated that the first step in unpacking or interpreting data is to make who you are, and your background and assumptions explicit. This step did not necessarily imply objectivity; rather, it was to remind researchers of their values and assumptions. Furthermore, these understandings do influence the ‘eyes’ with which researchers look into the data; these also serve as a constant reminder that representation was the ultimate goal of the data analysis process. In this case, representation is the making of the Pacific youth voice known and minimising the risk of bias and inferences that were not intended by the participants.

The second overarching point is that data analysis takes place during the talanoa. As Vaioleti (2006, 2013) emphasised, people continually respond, argue, and add to others views during the talanoa process – it is a *to* and *fro* rather than a one-way conversation. Therefore, the information that leaves the talanoa process has been critically examined by all present - including the researcher.

The inductive thematic analysis is the process of organising data into themes without trying to fit it into a pre-existing analytical framework. A theme, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. In sum, thematic analysis involves a search across a data set (e.g., a range of talanoa) to find repeated patterns of meaning.

⁶ <http://www.thinkplaceglobal.com/people/leone-murphy>

The inductive approach to thematic analysis bears a similarity to grounded theory, that is, the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 2002). In this sense, the analysis is said to be ‘data-driven’. However, “data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12), nor does qualitative research simply ‘give voice’ to participants (Fine, 1992). Fine argues that even the ‘giving a voice’ approach “involves carrying out unacknowledged pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit, and deploy to border our arguments” (p. 218). Data and meaning are interpreted through the researcher’s eyes which are grounded in a particular culture, values, and theoretical positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kögler, 2013). In this case, Braun and Clarke suggest that researchers acknowledge their positions (as in Chapter 1) and the decisions they make throughout the process, and to recognise these as research decisions.

As Fiona Cram (2006) stated, it is one of our roles as researchers to listen to and document our participants’ voices and experiences. For instance, in Kaupapa Maori research, the aim is:

...to make space for Maori voices and realities to be heard and considered ‘valid’. At the same time, we want to be able to say something, as researchers and analysts, about the society that positions our participants within certain subjectivities. (Cram, 2006)

Similarly, while the data analysis process is inductive, my culture, values, and beliefs play an influential and vital part in the analysis process, as will the theoretical stance in which this research design is grounded.

In this research, the purpose of the thematic analysis will be to provide a detailed and nuanced account of the themes emerging from the data, in relation to the three overarching research questions. The ultimate aim of the analysis and the final themes reported is for representation, rather than objectification (i.e., seeking to present a ‘real’ or objective truth about participants). As Cram (2006), representation is the art of telling our participants’ stories and lives in a way that is true to them: we are not merely holding up a mirror to reflect a reality, rather, from the outset, our research questions, our methods and our way of analysing data set the scene for a representation within which we, as researchers, are an intimate part. In sum, representation is about making

Pacific youth voice visible within this research. I am accountable to my participants as well as the Pacific community. Hence it is my responsibility as a researcher, to analyse and report my findings fully and truthfully.

Ethical considerations

This research was carried out in accordance with the guidelines on conducting Pacific research with Pacific participants prepared by: the Health Research Council (2005), Anae et al. (2001), and Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., (2014).

AUTEC approved this study on the 19th of July 2016 (see Appendix A). Participants were provided with detailed explanations of the study before and during the talanoa. All participants were given an Assent form coupled with a Consent form (see Appendix D) for their parents/guardians, to sign before commencing the talanoa, to confirm their approval to participate. Each form was explained before and after the talanoa, with particular emphasis on the participant's right to withdraw from the talanoa at any time, and from the study itself, at any time before the 30th of September 2016.

Part 2: Research Process

Sample

As mentioned, this thesis is an exploratory study, and so the aim is to present a small number of in depth and information-rich cases which will shed light on the phenomena under inquiry (Patton, 2002). The criteria for participation was that participants self-identify as Pacific and be between the ages 15 to 24 years. English speaking was not a requirement as translation would be available as needed. Aims were to have a representative sample by Pacific ethnicity and by male/ female. The Fonofale model allowed for exploration of non-heterosexual experiences if this should arise.

A two-step research process was planned. The first data collection tool was three group talanoa - one for males, one for females, and a mixed gender group of up to 8 participants per group (total 24 participants). Second, aims were that the group talanoa be followed by a small number of individual talanoa with up to four participants.

Participants in the group talanoa would be invited to participate in the individual talanoa if they wished.

Recruitment

Recruiting participants was quite a lengthy process and followed three steps. First, I discussed the study with a range of youth agencies in Auckland including South Auckland Community Policing, AUT Equity Pacific group, and Pacific churches. This was followed by a number of smaller meetings where I presented the study and its purpose, and following discussions, I left my contact details and information sheets (Appendix C) and asked that youth contact me should they wish to participate. Actual participant profiles by group are in Table 3.

Table 3
Participants' demographics

	Participant*	Age	Ethnicity	Education
Female Group Talanoa	Miriama	25	Niue	Tertiary
	Lisa	22	Niue	Tertiary
	Ruta	19	Niue	Tertiary
	Rita	16	Niue	Secondary
	Lota	15	Niue	Secondary
	Mele	14	Niue	Secondary
	Mei	13	Niue	Intermediate
Male Group Talanoa	Risati	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Mataio	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Pati	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Tavita	20	Samoa	Tertiary
Mixed Group Talanoa	Junior (M)**	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Sione (M)	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Lina (F)***	21	Samoa	Tertiary
	Sina (F)	21	Tonga	Tertiary
	Mary (F)	19	Samoa	Tertiary
Individual Talanoa	Teuila (F)	19	Samoa	Tertiary

*Pseudonyms are provided for anonymity.

**M - Male

***F - Female

As seen, there were 17 participants in the group talanoa and one individual talanoa. Group participants were mainly of Niuean and Samoan ethnicity, with one Tongan participant. While I had hoped for up to four individual talanoa, only one was achieved

largely due to the short study time and availability. While Teuila was the sole individual talanoa, her contribution was comprehensive and enlightening in a number of ways. First, unlike the other participants who were born and raised in New Zealand, Teuila was raised in Samoa. Second, in the course of the talanoa, Teuila shared that she was pansexual. This added value to Teuila's role as a reflective voice, not only from her experiences as an LGBTQi youth, but also as a Pacific LGBTQi youth.

Data Collection

I conducted all four talanoa sessions in English and recorded them using a dictaphone. I started each talanoa with introductions and once rapport was established, I introduced the study, its purpose, and explained the consent process. I also explained the talanoa process and reminded them to be respectful of each other's views. While I had prepared the talanoa guide, the actual flow of these conversation followed participants' interests and concerns. Each of the group talanoa discussions was lively and marked by engagement by all the participants.

In the mixed-sex talanoa, there were no obvious barriers to the discussions. For the majority of the time, there was a consensus among male and female participants. On a few occasions, there was an obvious difference in gender views, and these were noted. The participants in this mixed-sex talanoa were able to challenge each other and in many cases, they agreed to agree or disagree, all with high regard and respect for one another. In this particular talanoa, their conversations were mainly drawn to family and culture, and the influence of these on their relationships.

In the male group talanoa, the discussions predominantly revolved around culture and social media. There was a lot of laughing involved. Interestingly, there were no limitations to the discussions, given my gender, but the males took obvious care around the words they used when the talanoa touched on the topic of sex in a relationship. The discussions around sex usually involved a lot of humour, with one participant commenting that this was not their usual 'boy talk'. One commented afterwards that they had liked the way our talanoa had enabled them to view relationships from a female perspective.

In the female group talanoa, discussions predominantly revolved around social media but also views of the different generations today. According to these participants, there were three groups – the 20s age-group, the under 20s, and the parents' generation. The two participants in their 20s had a lot more to say, and there were fewer responses from the others. Despite attempts to get responses from the younger girls, they preferred to listen. While this presents a limitation with regards to the voice of the younger age group, I saw the process itself as beneficial as these younger girls listened to perspectives on relationships from girls outside of their intermediate and secondary school cliques. When this talanoa ended, I talked to some of the parents waiting outside for their daughters, and they also commented on the importance of having the younger girls participate in this talanoa. Notably, four of the eight participants had to leave the talanoa halfway through.

In the individual talanoa, I was able to probe for a more in-depth discussion on some of the points shared in the during the group talanoa. What was interesting about this talanoa, was that in the beginning, responses about relationships centred on a relationship involving a male and female. However, as our talanoa progressed, Teuila slowly warmed to the topic and in the process talked about relationships from an LGBTQi perspective.

While there was no time limit on the talanoa, I kept an eye out for the participants' levels of interest. Each talanoa lasted for more than an hour. After each talanoa, I thanked the participants for their time and contribution and presented them with a \$20 Westfield voucher as *koha*. At the end of most of these talanoa, participants stayed back to find out more about my postgraduate journey, as the majority of them said they were looking into doing tertiary and postgraduate studies themselves.

Data Analysis

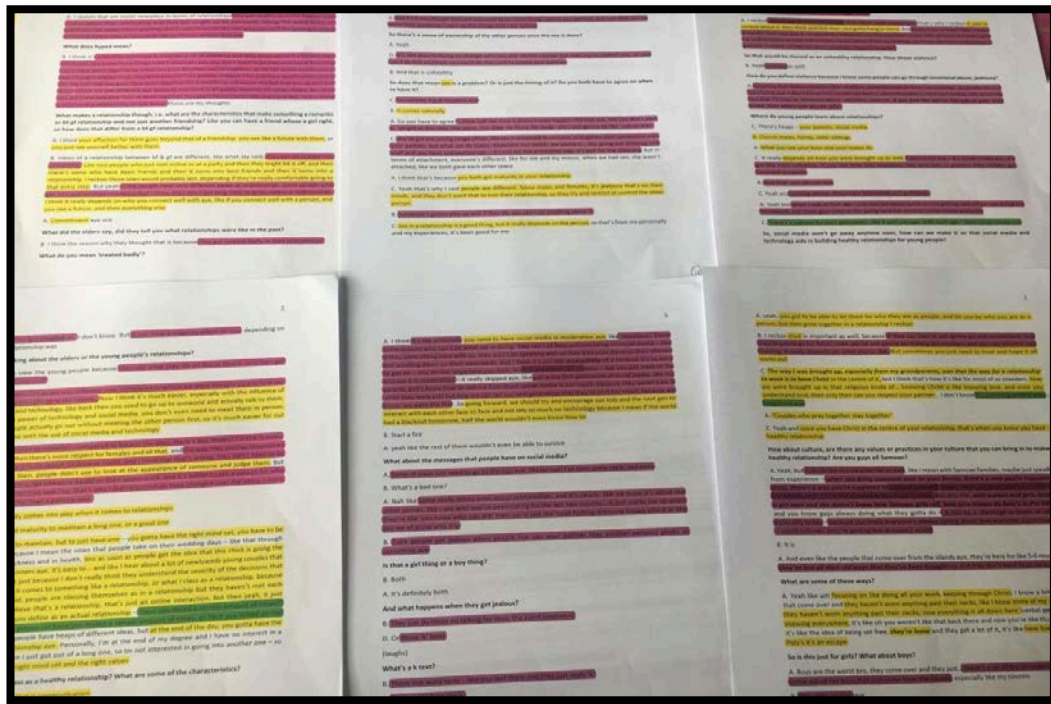
To ensure representation, I engaged in the following stages to reach the themes as presented in the next section. These steps are also presented pictorially overleaf.

1. The first stage of data analysis took place within the talanoa. As Vairoleti (2006) claimed, the talanoa process allows for the information shared to be critiqued and confirmed by those participating in the talanoa. During the talanoa, participants were

able to provide validation for each other's stories. For each topic discussed, they were able to reach a consensus before moving to the next topic. Sometimes, they agreed to disagree on specific issues, especially in the mixed-sex talanoa. I took note of these to inform the subsequent stages of the analysis process.

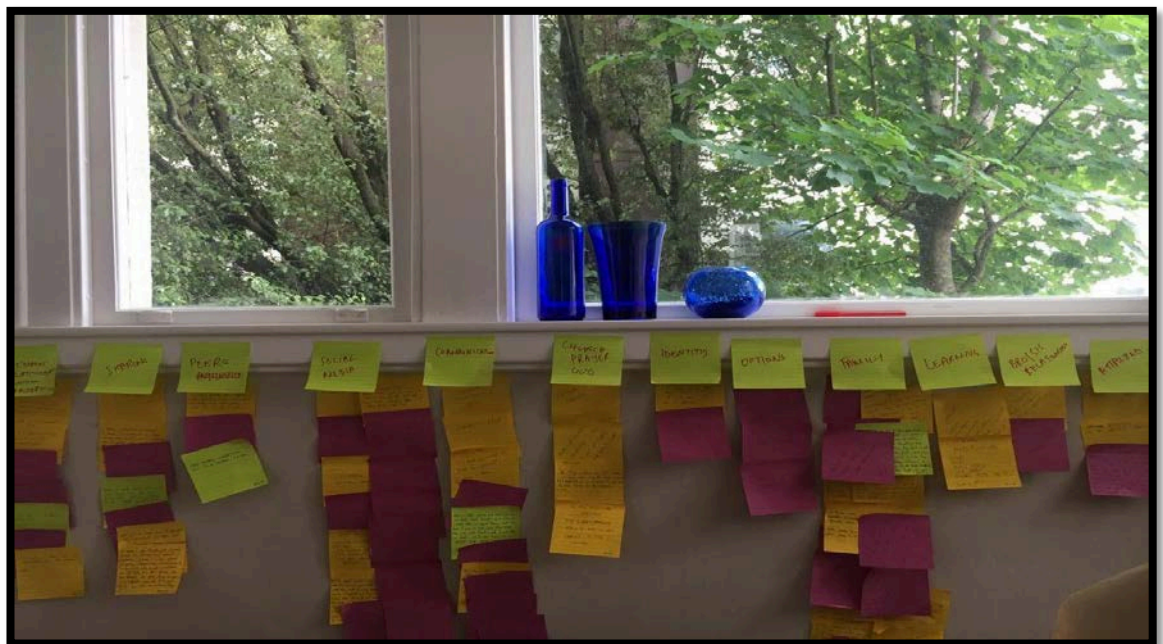
2. The second stage of data analysis happened during the transcription of the audio tapes. This was where I listened and transcribed, making notes of the things that were said that I missed during the Talanoa, or things that were left unsaid. This process served two purposes: one, I was able to raise some of these topics in the following talanoa, and two, I was able to pick up on recurring patterns, while in the context of the interview taking place. I was also able to get my supervisor's feedback on my first talanoa transcript. The actions undertaken at this stage informed the subsequent analysis stages.

3. The third stage of data analysis involved the unpacking of data to identify strengths/gains and challenges/pains. This step was important because it helped me to immerse myself again in the data, and to make sense of what was being said and why. To do so, I went through the transcripts and highlighted strengths/gains in one colour and the challenges/pains in a different colour (see below). This process involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, highlighting as I went, and then writing out all the highlighted data onto same-coloured post-it notes. The post-it notes were then stuck to a wall alongside each talanoa group. From here I was able to visualise how many strengths and challenges were discussed in each group, and then make notes as to why there were this many strengths and this many challenges. Primarily, the purpose of this step was to find the strengths, as is expected in AI research, to build and reproduce appreciative language, with the aim of contributing to better outcomes for Pacific youth relationships (Cram, 2010; Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2014).



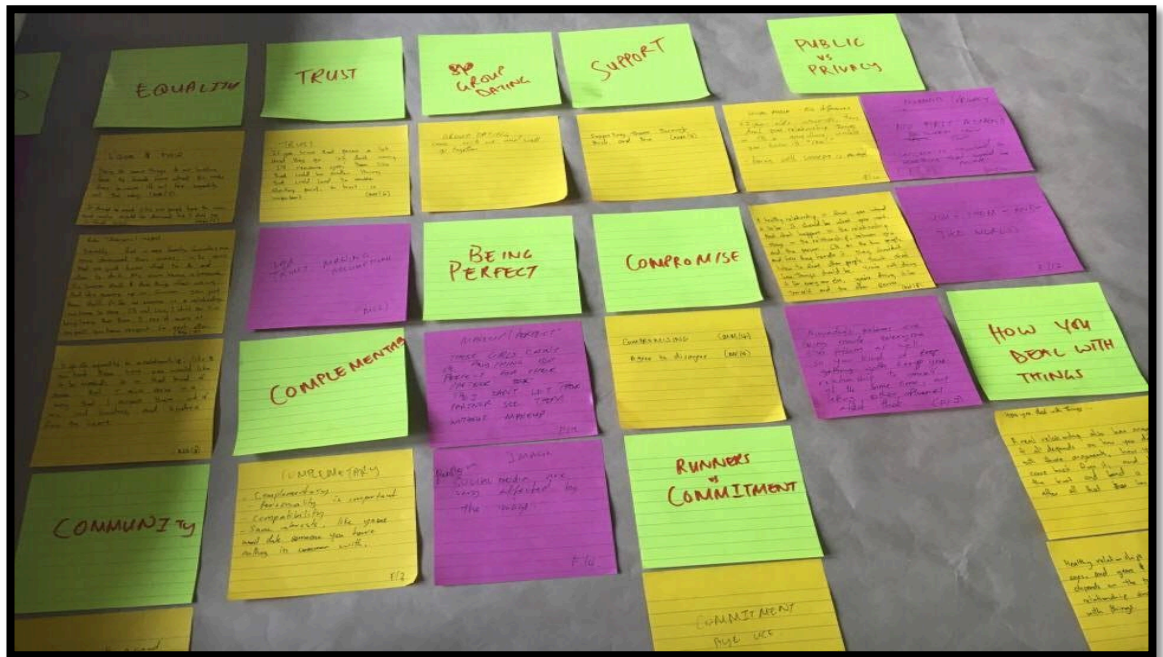
4. The fourth stage involved sorting the challenges and strengths into themes. In Thematic Analysis, it is often said that themes emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By the time I reached this stage, I was already very familiar with the data. This familiarity, coupled with the ability to physically see the data as it was spread across the wall on post-it notes, enabled me to pick up and confirm patterns or things that were most commonly mentioned across all four groups. It was at this stage that I decided to analyse and report the findings for the four talanoa together, as there were more similarities and patterns of participant views between the four talanoa than differences.

5. The fifth stage of my data analysis involved writing rich descriptions for each theme that was identified from the previous stage. By descriptions, I mean using the participants own language and phrases to describe each theme. This stage involved the use of both Microsoft Word and version 11 of NVivo. NVivo is a software package that qualitative researchers use to aid in their analysis of large chunks of interview data. I did not use NVivo for data analysis. I used NVivo to copy and paste manually (coding in NVivo terms) extracts from the transcripts into the themes that were identified in stage 4⁷. The benefit of using NVivo at this stage was that it saved time because when an extract is taken from a transcript and placed under a theme, NVivo allows for the accessing of the origin of the extract with a single click. Therefore, the context from which the terms derived was always there. While some may argue that the use of NVivo results in a passive engagement on the researcher's part, I disagree, as I engaged in constant re-reads of each transcript and manually coded extracts into the themes identified in step 4, and new themes as they emerged within the data. Therefore, this step involved extensive active participation on my part.



6. The sixth stage of the analysis was to read within each theme to ensure that what was included within was relevant to the overall theme, and that each theme accurately represented the Pacific youth voice in relation to the phenomenon under inquiry.

⁷ In NVivo language, this is called coding data extracts into nodes.



7. The seventh stage involved writing up the first draft of the Findings. Each theme included rich descriptions using the participants' voice (verbatim data). However, my role was to interpret and organise data, including themes and sub-themes, and how these related to the other.

8. The eighth stage of the data analysis involved taking the preliminary findings to an audience for discussion and debate, to ensure representation. Preferably this should be done with the participants, but the talanoa participants expressed that they did not want a copy of the transcripts, but would like a copy of the final thesis findings instead. Therefore, I discussed findings with my supervisor, who questioned my reasoning and decisions for each theme and sub-theme, allowing me to see my influences and the extent this had on the final themes. This stage led to a refinement of the themes, leading to the final themes as reported in the next chapter.

Part 3: Research Reflection

Sensitivity

As noted, growing up in Samoa, it was rare to hear youth talking about romantic relationships. Relationships happened, but the majority of the time these were kept away from the public eye. However, if young people did happen to get caught, news of the relationship travelled fast and brought instant disapproval and cries of '*kaukalaikiki*'

(cheeky) or '*fia fai koalua*' (he/she wants to have a spouse). These are derogatory terms and no person would want to be called such things unless of course, they were brave. Having grown up in this environment, I understood that people being in relationships, or even talking about relationships, was a taboo subject amongst Samoans. So when I first presented this topic to a group of Pacific postgraduate students, their reactions were hardly surprising. I felt a sense of resistance, especially when I mentioned that the age group I was interested in carrying out this research with were 13-17 years old. However, I was confident that this research was important, and that I should focus on the benefits of the research.

It took me a long time to realise the error in my first approach to this study which had been predominantly from a Western perspective. Youth relationships are not part of our Pacific community's everyday conversations. This is in contrast to Western circles where youth dating is part of young people's rites of passage, and parents are more receptive to these experiences. Whether it was ignorance, or being immersed in a Western view of the world for so long, I had forgotten simple cultural protocols, which might have prevented the resistance from the Pacific group I had first presented to. Hence, learning from this experience, when it came time for recruitment, I made sure I respected Pacific views of relationships and displayed respect and humility when talking about my research with the Pacific leaders I consulted with. This approach made a huge difference and resulted in a lot more acceptance by Pacific elders whom I never thought I would be able to convince. As mentioned throughout this study, relationships are important in Pacific communities. Respecting boundaries and nurturing relationships, are important when conducting research with Pacific peoples.

Who am I?

During the course of this research, my knowledge and understandings of the Pacific worldview and values expanded, which I incorporated into my design. The initial meetings about this research provided an opportunity to explain the purpose and significance of the research to parents, and why it was important to document Pacific youth voices. This led to lively discussions about relationships, especially the role of the family, which led to one leader suggesting that I include parents in this study. I explained to them that this was not possible due to my budget and time constraints, but I would acknowledge their feedback as a recommendation for further research. My

background and upbringing were also questioned, and being able to provide this information during these preliminary discussions, put parents' minds at ease, and allowed them to trust me with their youth, especially given the nature of the research. This establishing and building of trust might not have been possible if I had recruited participants by simply sending out flyers and advertisements. In the same spirit, I was upfront with community leaders and parents about the benefits of the research. Given the Pacific understanding of knowledge as a gift from God which should be put to good use for the benefit of society as a whole, I assured them that I will use the knowledge and skills gained from this research in my current work as an evaluator, to ensure the best possible outcomes for the Pacific youth. This study will not only benefit the youth I work with, but also the Pacific community both in New Zealand and the homelands. The leaders and parents appreciated my honesty and thanked me for not promising unrealistic benefits.

Participants responses

While the talanoa resulted in rich information about youth understandings, perceptions, and experiences of youth relationships, this information did not come without difficulty. At first, there was reluctance from some of the youth in the group talanoa to talk about relationships. This was a different *feel* from that which I received from the Pacific group I presented to. The reluctance from the participants was more around '*not wanting to be told what to do*'. A lot has been written about indigenous people's experiences with researchers, and perhaps these youths have been over-researched themselves, hence the reluctance. However, this was also about resisting outside influence or intervention on what should be private matters.

That said, the talanoa proved that relationships were an important topic to these youths. The more they engaged in the talanoa, the more they wanted to talk. Many expressed their appreciation for the opportunity and the safe space created to share their views, especially with regards to the fact that their experiences of relationships were largely from a *traditional* Pacific family perspective. They wanted to be heard, and they especially wanted to be able to talk about relationships with their own parents and families.

Chapter 4: Findings – Pacific youth perceptions of healthy relationships.

The aim of this study was to explore what makes for healthy Pacific youth relationships in a Pacific diaspora community, specifically: (1) what are Pacific youth perceptions of healthy romantic relationships, (2) where and how did they learn about relationships, and (3) their views and suggestions for how Pacific youth knowledge and practices of healthy youth relationships be fostered and reinforced.

As discussed, there were no significant differences in participant's responses shared in the three group talanoa and so these are grouped together and thematically presented so as to enable nuances of meaning shared by age, gender and changing times and place to be made explicit. Prominence is given to the participants' voices in this chapter with the aim of ensuring that *they* tell their stories in their own *voices*.

This chapter is in 3 parts. A first and overarching study finding was that these youths had their own language and terms which they used to conceptualise 'healthy relationships' which differed significantly from terms such as 'romantic' and 'intimate partner violence' which are commonly used in the literature. This important point became very clear from the first talanoa. Drawing on this finding, part one of this chapter is devoted to establishing the language and concepts these participants used to make sense of healthy youth relationships. Notable also, these youth-identified terms were subsequently used throughout the talanoa to explore the research questions.

In each of the three parts responses from the group talanoa are presented first followed by reflective comments shared in the individual talanoa, which are presented in italics. In a few instances, the researcher's voice is also included, and this is signalled.

Part 1: Language and concepts used by youth

Responses to this question are presented in two sections. The language and concepts the youth in this study used to define healthy relationships are presented first using their own terms; second, I present their expectations and perceptions of a healthy relationship with a significant other.

It was very clear from the first talanoa that these participants did not use the terms about youth relationships which are dominant in the literature, nor did they conceptualise male-female relationships in the same way. As a result, a large amount of time was spent in the first part of our talanoa trying to establish the concepts and terms which were meaningful to these youths. Responses fell into three main themes: *what youth call their partners*, *what is a romantic relationship*, and *a relationship with a significant other*.

What do youth call their partners?

At the beginning, I was a little puzzled by these participants' excessive use of the term *significant other*, and perhaps this warrants further attention. The other labels used, although not as often, included *partner*, *other half*, *missus*, *boyfriend*, and *girlfriend*. I explored the participants use of these different labels in my individual talanoa with Teuila and she agreed that labels are important to youth relationships. Teuila's responses are in italics.

Researcher: What do people call their partners these days?

Teuila: *It's a lot of different things now. A lot of people call the other person their boyfriend or girlfriend, but for some people that shows that it's not super serious, because it's like a trivialised word, because you can have a boyfriend in eighth grade but you can't really have a partner in eighth grade.*

Researcher: How is the use of boyfriend/ girlfriend trivial?

Teuila: *Because the word boyfriend/girlfriend is thrown around a lot, but for some people when it starts to get more serious, that's when they start calling the other person their partner, or significant other, because the word means you're equal, and you're a duo, like you're partners in crime, and so for some people it feels more serious. But for other people the word boyfriend/girlfriend is already quite serious.*

Researcher: So the labels are important?

Teuila: *Yeah very and it depends on the people. And it's kinda sad when the lines are blurred, like 'are we bf and gf' or are we not, and sometimes one of the people in the relationship would really want the other person to call them their bf or their gf, just so they know that they're together, and they don't, and then it gets all dramatic, which is kinda ridiculous because it's just a word, but it means a lot even if it's just a word.*

What is a romantic relationship? How does it differ from a platonic relationship?

When asked their views of romantic relationships, the majority of male and female participants shared the view that a romantic relationship was *an ideal that is portrayed in the movies and only happens in the movies*. Comments made included:

When I think of romantic relationships I think of those love movies.
(Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

They look at each other like they're smitten, like they've got strong feelings and they don't let go of each other, like they have to be close and hold each other all the time. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

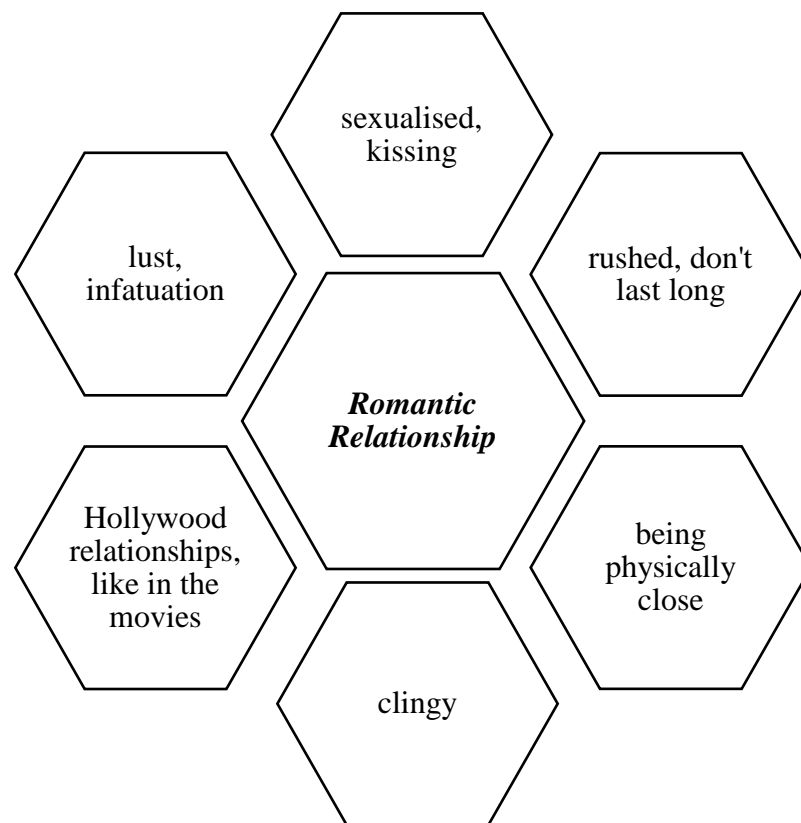


Figure 3. Words and phrases used to describe romantic relationships.

Some, such as Risati, viewed romantic relationships as *not real* or *legit* relationships, making reference to their *rushed* nature and *short* duration. Risati said:

Relationships can be rushed into sometimes, like two people meet in a party and they *hit it off*, and then they *don't last long*, I don't even call it a real relationship. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Others argued that it is *lust* that happens in romantic relationships, not *love*, and people often confuse the two. Miriama explained that when love is non-existent, relationships become more *physical* and *sexualised* rather than *emotional*.

... [People] confuse lust with love, almost to the point where love is non-existent, they see it as a physical sense rather than an emotional, and it's more sexualised. (Miriama, Female-Talanoa)

Pati on the other hand on the other hand viewed sex as an essential element in a relationship, and as an important step towards strengthening the emotional connection between two people:

We've got the wrong image of sex, like sex is supposed to connect, strengthen your connection with your partner, but what we do today, especially our youth, we abuse it... like going out drinking and stuff and you have *unexpected sex* – *it's not for the emotional side, it's just for the pleasure* ... Sex in a relationship is a good thing, but it really depends on the person. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Risati added that guys are always ready to have sex, but there are some who will respect that a female might not be ready and hold off on it, and then there are others who “*get in their fast, quick, done, and gone*”:

I know some of the boys who respect the girl and wait until they're ready [to have sex], and then there are some of the boys who are like ‘*yo I got in there fast*’ *quick, done, gone*, you know ... it's not *a matter of* mutual readiness, where both the guy and the girl is ready, *because sometimes the guy is not ready, but I fucking doubt that*. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Interestingly, older participants gave more attention to what they saw to be the *rushed* and *get physical much faster* nature of romantic relationships today, and which they saw becoming more typical of younger people's relationships. They saw these as a mark of the times. In Miriama's view, Pacific youth were getting into relationships at a much earlier age than in the past.

You see a lot of 12 year olds getting into relationships ... and a lot of them feel like they need to be *physical much faster* than their minds are ready for. (Miriamama, Female-Talanoa)

Risati agreed with this view, he said:

You're 12, you don't know what you want when you're 12, you're not going to be with that person unless you're friends with them for the rest of your life, but a lot of kids they feel like they need to be *physical much faster*, and much earlier than when their minds are ready for it, and when their hearts are, because it's just very unbalanced, and you're seeing a lot of young couples and they're showing the world their love, and everyone is like encouraging them, and that's when drama happens. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

If romantic relationships are seen to be rushed, sexualised, and what are often seen in the movies, what then is a relationship with a significant other, and how is this relationship different from a relationship with a best friend?

Part 2: Relationship with a significant other

The major view shared was that a relationship with a significant other included behaviours such as *communication, trust, fun, laughter, sharing of space of time, reliance on the other, unconditional love, and vulnerability* (Fig 4).

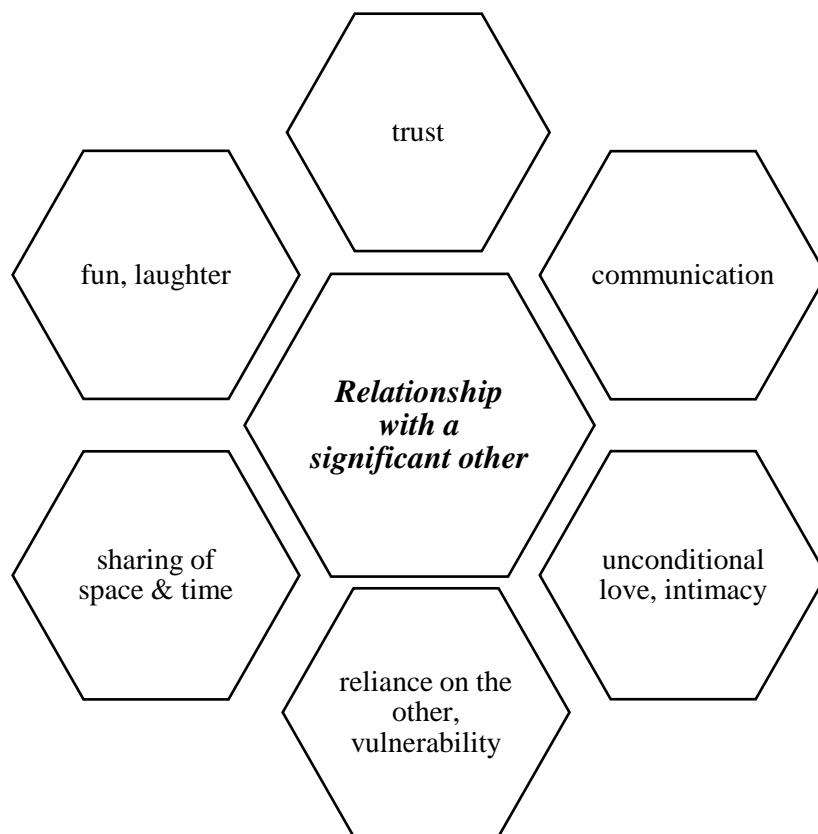


Figure 4. Words and phrases used to describe a relationship with a significant other.

Interestingly, they noted that the same behaviours are also present in a relationship with a best friend, which in their view, made the line between a relationship with a significant other and with a best friend *blurred*.

It's hard nowadays because your significant other can also be your best friend, so it's like a two in one, a package deal. (Lina, Mixed-Talanoa)

On this point Teuila commented:

Your significant other can also be your best friend, except you kiss.

Most responses differentiated the relationship with a significant other from a platonic relationship in terms of the physical and emotional aspects each implied:

Physical Aspects

The *amount of physical space – or personal space - between two people* in a relationship as opposed to two people in a platonic relationship, was frequently mentioned by participants as a main difference between the two types of relationships.

For example:

The difference is in the amount of space between one person and their significant other. Like for friends, you wouldn't sit too close because that would just be awkward, but if you're with your significant other, it would be comfortable, like that's your comfort zone with that person. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Personal space is not a requirement [in a relationship] (Lota, Female-Talanoa)

You go to a certain extent with certain people, so like we can invite our friends into our personal space, but only to a certain extent. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Other physical aspects mentioned in all four talanoa included *sex, kissing*, and more public displays of affection such as *hand holding*.

Emotional Aspects

The emotional aspects of a relationship with a significant other were very similar to the emotional aspects of a platonic friendship; the difference, however, was that for a romantic relationship, these emotions tend to go '*deeper*' or '*beyond that required between a platonic friendship*':

I think your affection for them goes beyond that of a friendship, you see like a future with them, or you just see yourself better with them. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

[In a relationship] everything from communication and affection is on a much deeper, more intimate. (Mary, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

You love them unconditionally. (Mele, Female-Talanoa)

Other differences in emotional engagement between a platonic relationship and a relationship with a significant other included *being more comfortable* with them.

You get comfortable with them, you tolerate their annoying behaviours. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Decision-making was also noted as another point of difference. It was said that, when you are in a relationship with a significant other, your decisions do not impact you alone, rather, your decisions have an influence on both you and the person you are in a relationship with.

What you do impacts the both of you, so you both decide what would be the best choice for the both of you. (Sione, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Expectations of a significant other

For these youths, their expectations of a significant other included that they be: *someone you connect well with through similar shared interests, someone who looks good, someone who loves Jesus, someone who loves my family and whom my family approves of, and someone my friends approve of*. These are explored below and, not prioritised.

Someone you connect with

Female participants expected a significant other to share similar interests with them, or someone whom they were compatible with.

Same interests, like you won't date someone you have nothing in common with. (Ruta, Female-Talanoa)

Someone you're compatible with. (Mei, Female-Talanoa)

Mataio commented that it depends on how well you and your significant other connect:

I think it really depends on who you connect well with aye, like if you connect well with a person, and you see a future, and then everything else just follows. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

A differing point was raised by Lina in the mixed-talanoa. She said:

[When] you get comfortable with them, you tolerate their annoying behaviours. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Sione's response to this was:

Getting annoyed at the little things would be one for a bad relationship. (Sione, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

To which Lina disagreed. She said:

I would find that annoyance normal, like it's a normal thing for a human being to get irritated by someone else. In the beginning of a relationship, you wouldn't really get annoyed at the things that your significant other would do, just because you're in the beginning and everything is fresh and you're learning things about each other. But then when you start to become more comfortable with them, that's when you start realising their flaws and you might start getting annoyed at things. So I don't think that shows an unhealthy relationship. I think it's just a normal thing, and so long as two people work with each other, then it should be okay. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

I decided to take this discussion further and asked the group how they would deal with their significant other's flaws?

Lina: Compromise, agree to disagree. What you do impacts the both of you, so you both decide what would be the best choice for the both of you.

Sione: Let things go.

Lina: Yeah well letting things go, we're not machines, we're not robots, we can't just let things go and like not feel anything about it, again like we have emotions and that's what makes us human, it's what gets us into the relationship. Like if the other person is just going to tell us to let things go, well then they should go, it's as simple as that. Like it's hard to let things go that cannot be forgotten.

Researcher: How do you let things go Sione? And if you let things go, would you forget?

Sione: It would probably be at the back of my mind, but I'll go to sleep at night and wake up and just not think about it.

Researcher: So what if your partner can't let things go, how would you compromise?

Sione: It depends if the partner is being petty, because then it's impossible to let things go when you're being yourself while the other person is being petty, because then it could be little things that could've been avoided in general.

At this point, Sina joined the discussion with these words:

A lot of people say that a healthy relationship is being happy all the time, but a real relationship also has arguments, it all depends on how you deal with those arguments, how you come back from it, and how the trust and the bond is stronger after all that has happened.

Someone who looks good

While *looks* and *someone who dresses nice* were important qualities to many participants, most did not see this as important. Interestingly and perhaps warranting

further attention was that the responses from both males and females on this expectation were directed towards female rather than male appearance:

The person that loves you is supposed to love you no matter what you look, so like *I don't get a lot of these girls nowadays who can't be anything but perfect for their partner*. For their partner to see them without their makeup, and on their ugliest days, that's what's difficult for me. Like my partner's seen me through my Ogre stage and then my Beyoncé stage, and if I was to ask him how do I look, he'll say you're beautiful however you look or in whatever you're wearing. So nowadays it's like *'oh I didn't know what you looked like without that cake face'* and then you're like *'that changes everything'* but it shouldn't. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

I think relationships nowadays compared to back in the days, there's less respect for the females. Because back then there's more respect for females and all that, and the way they portray themselves on social media is more sexual, to draw in males, and I think that that's wrong, they don't need to do that. And back then, people didn't use to look at the appearance of someone and judge them, but nowadays people judge someone based on their appearance, and it's better to see a person for who they are, not what they look like, that's why I feel relationships have changed over the years – more in a negative rather than a positive way. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

In Teuila's view, not worrying about one's significant other seeing you without makeup was a marker of a more serious relationship:

I guess it gets more serious when once you show that person more than just your façade or persona, which I think a lot of kids have these days. Like it's a big deal if someone sees a girl without their makeup these days. Like I have a few friends who are super into make-up every single day, and so it's a big deal when guys see them without their makeup, and that's a sign that it's a little bit more serious than just a date or just a fun person to go out with. (Teuila)

Someone who loves Jesus

While spirituality was frequently mentioned as an important factor in a healthy relationship, in the female talanoa Sela stressed the importance of having a partner who loved Jesus. Sela said, *"they have to love Jesus"*. When asked if the person had to be of the same religion, she responded that: *"it depends on how I and the other person feels"*. The responses by other participants in this group was: *no, they don't have to be of the same religion*.

Not necessarily, because you don't go up to them and ask them exactly what religion they are, you have to get to know that person first before you can find that out, I mean, past relationships I've dated Mormons, but I didn't know that until further down the line ... If the feelings are there, then the other things shouldn't really matter... like compatibility. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Similar comments about faith and religion were raised in the male talanoa:

I guess for us young ones, we don't mind the different cultures and the different religions or denominations, it's our parents that makes it hard for us to choose... like we want to find someone we can be happy with but we also need someone our parents can be happy with. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

You've gotta persevere through that stuff, and it's not only that – when you go to their culture, there'll be things and ways that they run things that are just completely different to what you've known and what you've been brought up with. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Pati shared his experience of dating a girl from a different religion:

For myself, my mum always told me to go for someone within my own denomination because it makes it easier for us... like especially for us Pacific islanders aye it's complicated, it's our egos and pride that makes it hard for us. I remember I told my mum I was going out with a South African girl and my mum straight said no, because I told her she's Muslim. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

When asked how he had dealt with that, discussion took place with Pati as follows:

Pati: Oh I dumped her. It's hard aye, because you wanna make your parents proud... and you've grown up in church and as an islander you always gotta obey your parents.

Risati: Hard to open their [parents] eyes aye... hard to get them to go outside their comfort zone.

Pati: It's hard... especially because she's Muslim and so my mum said '*if you did something wrong to her and her family, they're gonna come for us*' so she got that mind-set of Muslims aye.

Risati: Stereotypes.

Pati: Yeah and that restricts us, especially us, the younger generation. It's a bit of an issue that we face today, especially us islanders, it's our parents pride and ego.

This discussion led and fed into the next expectation, of that a significant other must be someone who loves my family and whom my family also approves of.

Someone who loves my family and whom my family approves of

Someone the family approves of, and someone who loves your family were important expectations of a significant other. On this point, parents 'pride and ego' came up frequently in each of the talanoa. Responses from the female talanoa, were that family name and pride should not be an influence on youth relationships. However, this did not negate the importance of parents input:

I'm like real family oriented, so like for me to not get along with someone else's parents, it would affect me. So for someone for me to date, and I wouldn't click with their parents, it would affect me. I would try my hardest, but for that person's parents to not like the person their child is dating, that's important because if my parents didn't like the person I'm dating I'd have to consider that factor for myself, because I can't be with someone that my family don't like or can't mesh well with. I love my family and we do lots of things together, and it's hard to bring someone that makes it awkward. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

One thing that we shouldn't factor is family name and family pride. That's one thing that should never matter, because when there's a boy you've met and you like them, and then family comes between you, you've gotta choose between your family and the person. Family is a priority but you're also gonna have to equal with that and compromise between you and the family has to be made. It's not a 'me or them'. I would never make my partner choose between me and his family, and he would never expect me to do the same, it's difficult but that's just what you expect in a relationship. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

When I asked if family influence was still important, Miriam said:

Very important, because if they can sense something – they are the ones who raised you, they'll let you know. But if their pride is more important, then you gotta compromise in a way and also communicate how you feel because at the end of the day, you can't help who you fall in love with. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Views shared in the male Talanoa followed a similar train of thought:

I feel like when the parents get involved in the relationship and try to tell people what to do, it pushes them away, and all they want to do is be with that other person. So they push them [family] away, and then the family feels like that they're putting the other person first instead of them. It has happened a lot... my sister has done it, I've done it, my family members have done the same thing. So it can affect your family members and it can affect your partner, because no matter what happens, if you break up with that person or if that person leaves you, the only people you're gonna go back to are your family. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

Some people choose the infatuation with the girl over their long time relationship with their family. But if you fuck it up with your family, you got nowhere else to go man. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

When the participants in the mixed group were asked the same question, the majority of them humorously mentioned that their family's opinion did not matter "*if they do not know about the relationship*". They said the majority of youth, including themselves, are "*going undercover*" or "*having two lives*":

I keep my personal stuff to myself. I just make sure that as long as I don't fall pregnant or I'm not going out doing drugs, smoking weed, all that kind of stuff... and as long as I'm in uni, I'm fulfilling my parents dreams, then that's all that matters. But it all comes down to trust, I want them to trust me to do what I wanna do to make them happy, and I will do stuff like be in a relationship and that's my personal stuff, but as long as I don't fall pregnant, I think that should be fine, because I honestly don't want to bring the name down. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Someone my friends approve of

Only one participant, a male, mentioned the importance of having a significant other whom his friends approve of:

If your friends don't approve of your partner, that can impact the relationship when they don't like the other person (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

However, two older participants spoke strongly about the influence of peers on younger girls relationships, expressing that this influence is not always positive:

If you surround yourself with a group that is very influential, they expect to be a part of your relationship. Especially with teens, they have a group of girls that are like '*now what should we do*' or if you like have a virgin, she'll go into a group full of girls who have let themselves loose and then they're like '*no girl, if he's asking for it, you need to give it, these are the stages bla bla bla*', labelling everything... and you're just sitting there overwhelmed like '*okay I'll do that*' or like there's nobody that's gonna say '*well what do you wanna do?*' like '*do you trust him, do you want to?*' Nowadays everything and everyone is involved in something that should be just private. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Part 3: Perceptions of healthy and unhealthy relationships

Healthy relationships

These youths argued that there is no set definition of a healthy relationship. In their view, people's ideas of relationships, love, and healthy are constantly changing, but so long as the two people in the relationship are *happy, healthy, and free to be themselves*, then that is all that matters. Some, as captured in Sina's comment below believed that a healthy relationship is whatever you and your significant other intend it to be, and not what others say it should be:

A healthy relationship is whatever you intend it to be. A lot of people think that a healthy relationship should be this and that, but for me, if you're in a relationship, it should be what you want, and what happens in a relationship stays in a relationship, between you and the person. And you do things because you want to, not because you have to or because that's your partner and you have to do it because you guys are in a relationship. I don't think there's a definition for a healthy relationship, it's basically on the two people and how they handle their relationship, and what they think a healthy relationship is. They shouldn't listen to other people telling them 'oh this is what it should be like'. Nah. If you're healthy the way you are, then just leave it like that. Don't change because you're not doing it for everyone else, you're doing it for yourself and the other person. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Despite this, several characteristics and behaviours of a typical youth healthy relationship were raised in the talanoa and are categorised in two groups as set out in Table 4.

Table 4
Perceptions of a healthy relationship

Emotions/Feelings	Behaviours/Acts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings a sense of relief, like there's nothing to worry about. • Waking up on the good side of the bed • Trust • A sense of equality in the relationship • Being open and vulnerable with them • Being happy and at least satisfied with what's going on. • Respect • Putting God first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of space and time • Necessary and positive communication • Supporting the other through thick and thin • Praying together • Prioritising • Commitment • Caring for two people • The two people in the relationship consenting to everything and making decisions together

Many commented that the healthiest relationships were where the two people had been best friends first: that two people should be friends first to get to know each other better before a friendship progressed into a relationship. Teuila supported this view with these words:

... some people want the extravagance, the fancy dates, the love confessions, like Romeo and Juliet, from Twilight and all the movies, and I'm like, 'you do realise that most of the people in those movies die, like Romeo and Juliet died', and that shouldn't be what you look up to. Realistically I think you should be best friends first, or at least friends first, unless you fall in love with them at first sight, which I don't think happens, or maybe love at first conversation, or maybe infatuation and then it develops into love. (Teuila)

Others differentiated between behaviours each individual should possess before being involved in a relationship, and things that both people in the relationship should do together. For them, a person should be *secure in themselves and/or be emotionally stable, trusting of the other person, and mature*. On the other hand, peoples behaviours when people in a relationship were: sharing, communicating, compromising, treating

each other as equals, and containing their private relationship moments, especially in this age of social media.

You got to be able to let them be who they are as people, and let you be who you are as a person, but then grow together in a relationship I reckon. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Security & Trust

Most of the participants strongly believed that in a healthy relationship, individuals must have a firm sense of who they are, be *self-secure*, be *emotionally stable*, and *have all areas of their life going well*:

You can't figure out who you are with somebody, because they're trying to figure themselves out as well – so if you're like '*I don't know who I am but we'll grow together*' but no, you have to be very confident in yourself to be able to give yourself whole to someone else. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

To have a proper relationship you gotta have all the areas of your life still going well, like to be classed as a healthy relationship... like a lot of people nowadays just let it slip, trying to hold the relationship up while everything else in their life is crumbling down. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

According to Junior, emotional stability in a relationship was manifested when a person was able to "*support themselves, like remembering to take care of yourself*". Views were that, when a person is secure in who they are, there is less likelihood of them *being jealous and limiting the other person's growth*, or the relationship turning *abusive*:

If you're jealous of someone it's because you are insecure yourself. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

If you're emotionally insecure by yourself, reassurance could be a starting point to like happiness, but it also comes back to you to how you fix yourself, no one can fix you, you have to fix yourself. But if reassurance is not enough, then what is? Say you're emotionally unstable and you have the state of mind that you feel really low about yourself, and like nothing can change what you have in your mind, and no one lifting your confidence will change that, then it all comes back to you... so reassurance, I'm not saying it doesn't help, but it also won't fix or help you fully heal your inner self. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Many described an indicator of a healthy relationship as when:

It's pretty much as long as you're happy and healthy and it doesn't stop you from being you. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

Sione said a healthy relationship is when "*you feel attached to your partner*", to which Lina asked "*what if you're too attached?*" Junior's response to this question was:

Do you reckon that's when it becomes unhealthy? I mean attached is fine, but like when you're overly attached to the point where you don't focus on yourself, you don't put yourself first, like it's one thing to think about the other person, but it's another when you don't realise when everything around you is falling apart... You can focus on the other person, but you're also meant to hold yourself up. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

According to many, trust was important because relationships do not always have guarantees; you just have to trust the person you're in a relationship with:

It also depends on trust and how much you trust that person, like if you trust that person a lot, and they go '*ah don't worry I'll reassure you*', like that could be another thing that could lead to another starting point, so trust is important. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Trust is important, because if they say they're just gonna go out somewhere, and they're gonna go for hours, then you're just gonna be making assumptions and you can become less trusting, it really depends on what you're like. But sometimes you just need to trust and hope it all works out. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Maturity

Older participants were of the view that to be in a relationship and to have a healthy relationship, maturity is essential. Risati described maturity as having a particular '*mind-set*':

You need maturity not only to maintain a relationship, but also to just have one. You gotta have the right mind-set, you have to be in it to win it, because I mean, the vows that people take on their wedding days, like that through thick and thin, in sickness and in health, bro as soon as people get the idea that this chick is going the wrong way, it's runners eye. And like I hear about a lot of newlywed young couples that don't last, and it's because I don't really think they

understand the severity of the decisions that they make. When it comes to something like a relationship, you gotta have the right mind-set and the right values. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

I took this point further and asked, what is the appropriate age that youth should be in a relationship? Many responded that there is not set age, especially because people mature at different ages. In Junior's words:

I don't know the age because people mature at different rates, like I know some people back in high school who were way more mature than people I know here at uni, there's different mind-sets in a sense. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Teuila supported this view and shared an insight from her brother's relationship.

My brother is 21 and he's quite mature for his age, maybe because he's the first child, but he's very independent, he knows how to do a lot of stuff, whereas his fiancé she's been a little bit sheltered, so she struggles with some things. But instead of doing everything for her, my brother just encourages her, and I think that's important because to rely on the other person so much it will tire the other person out, so it has to be a give and take, and you encourage the other person to grow as well. (Teuila)

Sharing of space and time

According to these youths, relationships required a lot of sharing of both space (physical and psychological) and time. A discussion emerged in the mixed talanoa on this point.

Lina: For friends, you wouldn't sit too close because that would just be awkward but if you're with your significant other, it would be comfortable, like that's your comfort zone with that person.

Sione: [You share] your time, but then you don't really have your own time anymore because you're caring about two people.

Researcher: How much time then, do you give to your significant other?

Sione: I'm not too sure, but I think it's important to have your own time.

Junior: What happens if you don't have your own time?

Sione: Then you're not in a healthy relationship.

Communication

Female participants especially commented that a healthy relationship involves *lots* of communication, especially during relationship problems. Miriama for instance, considered herself to be in a healthy relationship because of the communication aspect:

I consider myself in a healthy relationship, I mean it's had its ups and downs, but at the end of the day, the thing that I treasure the most is our communication.
(Miriama, Female-Talanoa)

Lina from the mixed group talanoa supported this view, commenting that talking things through especially during a reconciliation after a breakup may help the relationship go forward:

If the breakup ended in a violent way then there's most likely chance that the two people will be ending things but I guess if you talk it through and communicate, then you're bound to get somewhere. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Teuila also agreed with the importance of communication during relationship trials, providing an example from her observation of how her parents' handle challenging relationship situations:

I think the big thing is communication, especially when the couple are going through trials. Like I know my mum and dad when they argue, I know some people get stubborn and they give the other person the silent treatment so they don't talk about it which makes it worse, but with my parents, even if they were angrily talking about it, they were still getting their emotions out, and so they were still discussing the problem and eventually overcoming the problem, and that's what led to them staying together no matter how difficult it was. (Teuila)

Male participants on the other hand commented that communication should not just be *back and fourth*, rather, communication should be *necessary* and *positive*:

Necessary communication, not like '*alright I'll talk to you later*' and then three minutes later '*hey what are you up to?*' so necessary, not unnecessary communication. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

You have to communicate with each other positively not negatively, not you know, put downs. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

Majority of the participants also talked about the decline in face-to-face communications, which many attributed to the increasing influence of social media the accessibility of technology.

Nobody communicates face-to-face nowadays, it's all via text, via email – *'he did this, I'm not gonna talk to him'* or *'I'm gonna go talk to another guy because he did this'* kinda thing. Face-to-face communication is almost all eliminated because of all the influences of social media and having your phone at your disposal. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Risati agreed with Miriam, but also added that youth need to use social media in moderation. He also added that since they were the first generation of social media, their parents have limited understanding of how much social media is *"too much"*.

I think it's the addiction, you need to have social media in moderation aye, like nowadays I know some cousins who can't do what we're doing, they can't sit here without being on social media. Like if they were sitting here with us, they won't be speaking with us they'd be over there on their phones just scrolling down on their newsfeeds. And I think it's just the accessibility of it because it's so easy to get on any device, anywhere you look, Wi-Fi everywhere, it's so easy. But you just have to try and use it in moderation. It really skipped aye, like we're the first generation of social media. My parents don't know how to tell me how much social media is too much, because they weren't on it when they were kids but now we can tell our next generation that they're on it too much, because we know, we were the first. So going forward, we should try and encourage our kids and the next gen to interact with each other face to face and not rely so much on technology because I mean if the world had a blackout tomorrow, half the world wouldn't even know how to survive. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Compromise

These youths also commented on the importance of compromise in a healthy relationship. Compromise in their view was being able to agree to disagree, and to be mindful of the fact that when two people are in a relationship, what one person does or decided impacts both people. In Miriam's view, being in relationship was a continuous learning process:

We're still learning, but I mean, that's what it's about. You're learning as you go in a relationship, you keep working on it, as opposed to just giving up. There is no middle ground, there never will be. There will always be compromises no matter how far down the line you are, like when you have kids, you have to decide what school they go to, where will you get married, like there's a constant battle that you have to keep fighting. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

To sum up, for these youths, a healthy relationship with a significant other occurred when this progressed over time, from friendship to *intimacy, unconditional love, vulnerability, and sex* (see Figure 5). Additionally, healthy relationships involved individual attributes such as *self-security and/or emotional stability, trust, and maturity*, as well as dyad behaviours such as *sharing, communication, compromise, complementarity/equality of roles* (see Figure 5).

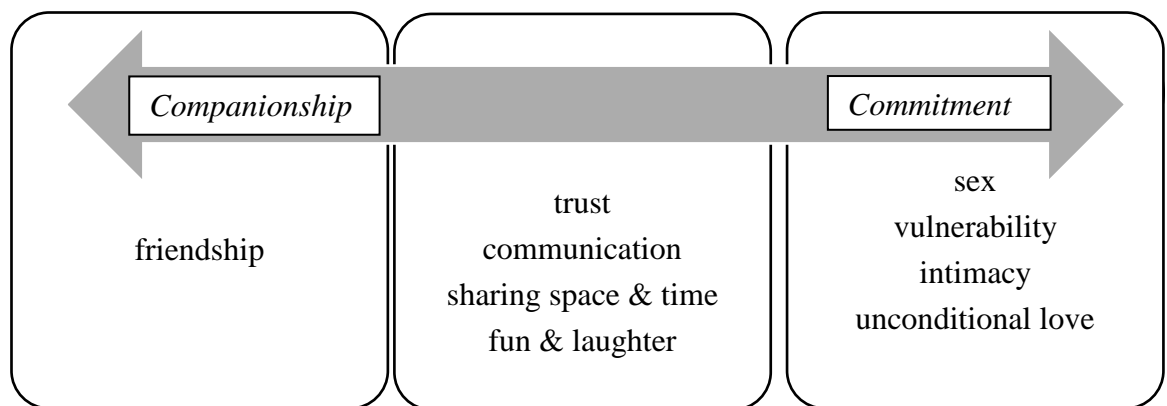


Figure 5. Relationship behaviours and values as a relationship with a significant other progresses over time from companionship to commitment.

Unhealthy relationships

By way of contrast, an unhealthy relationship was characterised by emotions such as *jealousy* and *insecurity*.

If the other person is jealous or insecure, those things impact the relationship as well. But I reckon it would fall under insecurity, like if you're jealous of someone it's because you are insecure yourself.
(Sione, Male-Talanoa)

If you are happy from someone being jealous, you're basically being happy from someone being in pain because being jealous is painful. And I don't think you should be happy from your partner suffering, because that's really selfish. It depends on how much jealousy there is as well, like if it's just a little bit, like they come to you and say 'oh I don't like it when you talk to this person', but when it's something major like they talk to you about how insecure they feel about you being close to another person at a party, then it's insensitive to say that you like them being jealous, because it's painful. So I wouldn't say that's healthy. (Teuila)

In instances where jealousy and insecurity arose, some participants suggested that these could be resolved through *reassurance* and re-establishing or building *trust* with the other.

It also depends on trust and how much you trust that person, like if you trust that person a lot, and they go 'ah don't worry I'll reassure you', that could lead to another starting point in your relationship, so trust is important. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Trust is important as well, because if they say they're just gonna go out somewhere, and they're gonna go for hours, then you're just gonna be making assumptions and you can become less trusting... it really depends on what you're like. But sometimes you just need to trust and hope it all works out. (Risati, Mixed-Talanoa)

However, some participants believed reassurance was not, that a person must be *self-secure, mature, emotionally stable*, and possessing the *right mind-set* first before getting into a relationship:

A lot of people will try and reassure you, but it takes time. Like if you tell him that things will be fine, he might take your word for it, but for a lot of people, it will take time because they also come with their past experiences, like a lot of people have done that to them. (Mary, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

If you're emotionally insecure yourself, reassurance could be a starting point to like happiness, but it also comes back to you and how you fix yourself, no one can fix you, you have to fix yourself, but like what Junior said, if reassurance is not enough, then what is? Say you're emotionally unstable and you have the state of mind that you feel really low about yourself, and like nothing can change what you have in your mind and no one lifting your confidence will change that, then it all comes back to you. So reassurance, I'm not saying it doesn't help, but it also won't fix or help you fully heal your inner self. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

I think maturity comes into play when it comes to relationships. You need maturity to maintain a long one, or a good one. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Yeah not only to maintain, but to just have one, you gotta have the right mind-set, you have to be in it to win it, because I mean the vows that people take on their wedding days, like that through thick and thin, sickness and in health, bro as soon as people get the idea that this chick is going the wrong way, it's runners aye. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Culture

In the male talanoa an important dialogue emerged regarding the impact of *cultural ways* on relationships in New Zealand today. Most often, culture was described as challenging:

Relationships can be challenging in terms of culture, especially today, because you know everyone's always talking about how everyone is practically like, island cultures, they're getting lost in today's world, and even like the people that come over from the islands aye, they're here for like 5-6 months and *they've lost all their old ways that they've been brought up* and they don't want to go by it anymore. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Responses to the question of what are some of these cultural ways focussed more on behaviours such as *dress* and *discipline*. For example:

Risati: Culture is focusing on like doing all your work, keeping through Christ. I know a lot of people that come over and they haven't worn anything past their necks. Like I know some of my girl cousins they haven't worn anything past their necks, now everything is all down here [verbal gestures: pointing to area below the neck] and showing everywhere, it's like 'oh you weren't like that back there and now you're like that over here', it's like the idea of being set free, they're loose and they get a lot of it, it's like here for most of our Poly's it's an escape.

Researcher: So is this just for girls? What about boys?

Risati: Boys are the worst bro, they come over and they just... there's a lot of the disrespectful habits that come out of the boys that just come from the islands, especially like my male cousins.

Mataio: They [boys from the islands] play on girls aye.

Researcher: How do they play on girls, is that something that's common?

Mataio: From what I've heard from extended family, and I know it is actually kind of true, most of these guys all have their little kids too but they've left their missus for other girls.

Researcher: And you guys don't like that?

Risati: Nah man, because my sister is a single mother of 3 kids, dad ran away, so when I see people like that, it's not nice. You know you hear about the victims, but when it happens to someone close to you, it's just a different story aye.)

Tavita: It's like my sister as well, my sister got pregnant at 17 and her partner left and that pissed me off aye, I was angry and I was taking my frustrations out on her, but really it's not her fault. I feel like it's not, it's more her fault, you see males have a bigger effect.

Pati: I reckon males got no balls nowadays, they never stick around bro. That's why I reckon if you're serious about it, then thick and thin man, you gotta hang in there. But those ones who get their missus pregnant and then gap it, no good! It's definitely not the way that I know 98% of them were brought up, and probably at least half of them were subject of the same thing you know, like their dad probably gapped on them, so like bro why would you repeat the cycle?

Notably, no mention was made of physical violence as indicators of unhealthy relationships, although Risati defined family violence in the following way:

Anything that makes someone feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their surroundings, especially in your own home aye. I don't know how people can feel so uncomfortable in their own homes, like anything like that I'll class as domestic abuse, domestic violence, *if you feel like you're not safe in your own home, then where can you be safe?*

Instead, youth discussions of unhealthy relationships revolved primarily around the emotional aspects of violence and abuse, with some references to the sexual aspects. The lack of references to physical violence and abuse is highly important, especially when this is often the most researched and publicized aspect and the most concerning area of intimate partner violence, warranting further attention.

Social comparisons and publicising private relationship moments

In this age of social media and increasing accessibility of technology, these participants had mixed emotions on the role and impact of IT on youth relationships. Most females were of the view that Facebook is *like a reality Photoshop*, and they said this had contributed to a loss of private relationship moments.

Facebook is like Photoshop, a reality Photoshop. Nothing's pure, like with photos back in the days, it's just snap, that's it, but nowadays it's *'oh let's go put on our best clothes'*. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

Photos these days aren't moments anymore, they're practiced, and they're rehearsed a lot. Everything is rehearsed a lot these days as opposed to being in the moment, just be there. And like when you see people that post up presents, like *'my bf got me this for my birthday or Christmas'*, like they have to beat what they did last time. So it's a competition with themselves, as well as each other, as well as the world, in comparison to just being yourself, and being you and them. Now it's being you and them and everything around them that builds the status of your relationship, it just shows how materialistic relationships are these days, which is what's encouraged. It's competition, like I can't stand the fact that you can't be with someone nowadays without having your phone, you can't cherish that because you're too busy looking, scrolling, taking photos, you know like a first kiss is not just a first kiss anymore, you have capture that and you're like *'hold on you have to get my angle right'* and then you post it and say *'hey look I've just had my first kiss'*. What it is now, it's not something that's close to you, it's something that has to be shared, like you see a lot of young couples who have all these perfect photos and then you're thinking *'do you guys even have time to hang out'*, like they're too busy having photoshoots every single moment that they're together. And even screenshots of personal messages are put out *'like aw look what my bf did, he texted me in the morning and he said this, he's so perfect'* and then there's also the *'oh my bf gave me chocolates and this for valentines'*, so you expect that from your boyfriend *'you're like oh where's mine'*? (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

For this group, this kind of behaviour was common mainly amongst younger people (e.g., below 20 years old):

If you look at like 22 years old upwards, they don't post relationship things on facebook or anywhere, unless you know them and you know it's real. Whereas a younger person in high school or something, they post it straight away, and then the next day it's like gone, and then you're like *'ok well obviously that didn't last long'* but like you know we take our time. Facebook for a younger person is like their open diary. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

Mataio referred to these behaviours described above as youth *"getting caught in the hype"*:

I reckon that youth nowadays in terms of relationships they get caught up in the hype of who knows about their relationship and they get caught up on constantly letting the world know on platforms like social media and they don't really focus on the real personal stuff like getting to know someone before they announce to the world how serious they are. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Researcher: What does hyped mean?

I think it's a lot of buzz around it, it causes a lot of attention and they boast about it a lot and like I think that, you know those things aren't necessary aye, you don't need to let everyone know how long you's have been together or what you guys do when you're together, or all the public appreciation, like I thought relationships should be between two people, it doesn't have to have appreciation simply for the fact that you guys have been together for 3 months or whatever the hell kids are up to these days. I think it's real different aye because everyone is all public about in on social media, but then you ask them how long they've been together, two years haven't even met mum and dad, so is it really a relationship-relationship or you know, those are my thoughts. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

According to these youths, relationship problems today are also being made everyone else's problem, because these are exposed on social media or discussed amongst the individual's close groups:

Nowadays problems are being made everyone else's problem as well, like now everyone is using social media to put their feelings up and making it other people's problem as well, so you kind of gotta keep your relationship to yourself at the same time, not letting other influences affect that. (Miriama, Female-Talanoa)

Sina agreed, in her view, whatever happens in a relationship should stay in the relationship:

If you're in a relationship, it should be what you want and what happens in a relationship stays in a relationship, between you and the person. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Miriama summed up youth relationships in this social media age with these words:

You either see a perfect relationship [on social media], and that's relationship goals, or you see a very unhealthy relationship and everyone has an opinion about it, like '*oh yeah he cheated on me again, bla bla bla*' and then everyone's got something to say about it, and then everyone gets mad because they're still

together, and it just fuels everyone around them, and it makes them feel ugly because they're constantly hating on the person that they're with, as opposed to just being the friend of that person and supporting them in whatever they go through. Behind closed doors, everyone's a keyboard warrior. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Chapter 5: Findings – How and where had youth learnt their relationship views?

In this second findings chapter, I address research question two of where and how these youths perceptions, expectations, and understandings of healthy and unhealthy relationships had been learnt. Five themes emerged in these talanoa, namely culture, family, church, social media, and the environment. I conclude this chapter with participants' suggestions of how Pacific youth knowledge understandings and practice of healthy youth relationships can be fostered and reinforced.

The focus was not on the actual relationship learnings (e.g., what is communication in a relationship?), but how they had learnt these behaviours, roles, and expectations, and how these learnings had impacted their relationships or their expectations of healthy youth relationships. Understanding this where and how is essential in the development of appropriate and relevant interventions that target the root of the issue.

Part 1: Where had youth learnt these views?

Responses indicated youth had learnt their expectations and behaviours through four major avenues - culture, family, church, social media, and the environment.

Culture

When participants were asked what culture meant to them, all responded that culture was their families and the church, and the values they learned in these places.

We don't have like a specific 'this is who we are, this is what we need to do' other than like God, family, and being good people. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

Having established this, the values they learnt in the family and the church were explored in-depth, as presented next.

Family

The influence of parents and families on these youths lives as well as their relationships came through strongly in all four talanoa. For these youths, the family was where they learned healthy relationship values such as putting God first, respect, commitment, and prioritising.

Putting God first

As mentioned, some participants' expectations of a significant other included someone who loves Jesus. In-depth exploration shows that this expectation is grounded in the value of putting God first as taught in the family, which they further suggested is what makes for a healthy relationship.

The way I was brought up, especially from my grandparents, was that the way for a relationship to work is to have Christ in the centre of it. Knowing Christ is like knowing love, and once you understand love, then only then can you respect your partner. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Once you have Christ in the centre of your relationship, that's when you know you have a healthy relationship. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

Putting God first, those values of being able to give it all to Him. Pretty much everyone wants to be in control of something but being able to seize yourself to God and trying to encourage that on to who you're with, that's healthy. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

Respect

The family was also where these youths learned the value of respect for the other, through obedience to their parents and through their gendered roles and expectations. Obedience to parents is captured in Pati's comment:

For myself, my mum always told me to go for someone within my own denomination because it makes it easier for us. I remember I told my mum I was going out with a South African girl and my mum straight said no, because I told her she's Muslim. [And how did you deal with that?] Oh I dumped her! It's hard aye, because you wanna make your

parents proud, and also you've grown up in church and as an islander you always gotta obey your parents. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Teuila said she had observed obedience to her parents by prioritising her schooling before entering into a relationship:

I guess for me, relationships were never a top priority because my focus is still school, because you know, parents are always like 'study first, boyfriend later'. (Teuila)

Through obedience, some participants said they respected their parents' wishes and placed these over their individual desires. Other participants found this act difficult, referring to parents' wishes for them as parents *pride and ego*. As mentioned also, some participants said that when parents refuse to let go of their pride and ego, these decisions had an impact on youth's expectations of a significant other. As a result, a significant other for some was described as someone whom their families approve of. When participants were asked what they suggest should be done to balance their own individual desires with their parents' wishes, some said this was like having two lives of hiding, or going undercover:

I keep my personal stuff to myself. I just make sure that as long as I don't fall pregnant or I'm not going out doing drugs, smoking weed, all that kind of stuff... and as long as I'm in uni, I'm fulfilling my parents dreams, then that's all that matters. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

I have to hide it because nana wants me to graduate before going out into the world. (Sione, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Other participants also advised that children should learn to be more open with their parents in talking about relationships, and that they should show maturity when raising such matters.

A lot of people find it hard to reach out at times because they're scared of their parents, like if their parents have expectations of them and they want to fulfil their parents' wishes and stuff like that, obviously for some people it's hard to reach out, and so for me I reckon like it starts with you. So if you want to make the change, you make it yourself. It's breaking the cycle. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

I think that you have to show maturity before you can bring those kind of conversations to your parents because I know some people that want to talk about this kinda stuff, but if all you do is act like a 5 year old when you bring an adult conversation to your parents, they're gonna tell you to get lost with it, because they'll be like 'oh you wanna have a relationship but you're always getting into trouble in school' you know that kinda stuff. If you act more mature and really mean it when you talk to them, there's no way that they won't listen to you. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

The majority, however, suggested that parents must also be more understanding of youth needs, and this could be achieved by parents encouraging family talks and being open with their children.

If parents were more understanding and more informed on how to guide their kids, like based on their past relationships and that, and offer a friendly word of advice, because all it takes is a word of advice from the right person, and that could be the difference between being unhappy for ages and eventually committing suicide. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

[Parents and children should] build a stronger connection with each other, be open and just don't be afraid to let your kids know that they shouldn't be afraid to come and talk to you about anything, that no matter what you've done, no matter what happened, you'll always be the kid. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

Mataio emphasised that just saying “no” to relationships was not good enough. He said:

I know some real close friends of mine their mum and dad were like 'no relationship until you're 21'. Just saying 'no' is not good, because you know, kids feel things while they're growing up, and no one likes to have to hide it from their mum and dad, because mum and dad are supposed to be your go-to, they're supposed to be the people you talk to about that kind of stuff. And you even hear about suicide from kids who don't know how to properly process their relationships, but you never know, mum and dad didn't even know because mum and dad just said 'no relationship', and like what, they're just supposed to go on that when there's a pretty girl in class that wants you over all the other boys in your class? Like it's sad. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Some participants described parents lack of understanding as an ‘island parent’ or ‘Polynesian’ mind-set. However, some also saw parents’ views as shifting with the changing times.

I think we just need to promote more acceptance of this kind of thing [relationships], especially within the Polynesian community. I think nowadays just saying no is not good enough, because these days the world is becoming very influential, and you can’t just keep saying no to something that’s knocking on your door, and you can’t act like it’s not there because when you act like it’s not there, that’s when things like unplanned pregnancies and all of that happens. Not saying that unplanned pregnancy is a bad thing, but it’s avoidable. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

I think some island parents are eventually becoming more understanding, especially here in New Zealand, with the high rates of suicide from Pacific Island youth. Like my mum only changed when she did early childhood care, and she started to see things from a different perspective, from a more understanding perspective. Before she was always the fa’a Samoa way, but that was because she was abandoned from her mom, she was the one who fell pregnant at an early age, so she thought that maybe if she was doing to us what her mum did to her, then we would learn from her mistakes, but it didn't really work because my two older siblings got pregnant early. So when she went to early childhood, that's when she started to see things differently. Pushing your kids, like being strict to your kids is not a bad thing, but when you're being too strict to a point where they feel like they can't turn to you, that's when she realised that that's a problem, because no mother would want to go through that pain of knowing that their kid was going through things that they could never tell their parents, but it's too late now because they're gone, they've committed suicide. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

It can be said that communications on youth relationships within these youths families’ appear to be changing for the better. This is crucial, especially given that the majority cited their parents and families as the most important source of support during relationship hardships:

My relationship is open; well my mum is scary aye, and she'll find out everything. So she said, ‘tell me because if I find out then yeah’. So now I tell her and I like it that way; I don't feel like I have to hide it from her and sneaking behind her back. If I want to see that person I'll be like: ‘aw I'm going to see them’ or ‘this is where I'm gonna be and this is who I'm gonna be with’, so that she knows in case something bad

happens and she knows that I'm with that person at that time. I was crying when I first told her about my relationship, I was scared that she might give me a hiding, but I told her anyways because I knew that she was the only person who was gonna give me the advice that I needed since she's been there, she's done that. So I think that's one of the benefits of being open about your relationship [with your parents/family]. They can support you and make you have a happy or a healthy relationship. (Sina, Female, Male-Talanoa)

I think kids these days when they can't talk to their parents, they turn to alcohol and drugs just to relieve the pain. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

There's a lot of people when they go through breakups, they get depressed and they can't reach out to their parents and this will eventually lead to suicide. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Parents' acceptance, understanding, and openness to conversations regarding relationships, was especially important for Teuila who as noted identified as pansexual⁸:

I have experienced depression and I think it's true, like I think it was a couple of years ago when I was repressing everything and I felt like I couldn't talk to anyone, that's when the depression got worse – when I felt like I was alone, and I couldn't tell anyone about my identity, or that I was confused about who I was, and it was a terrible place to be in. But then coming into the end of last year and the beginning of this year [2016], that's when I came out to my parents, I just told them everything. I don't want to sound cliché but it's really changed my life. And I don't know what it is, but maybe it's because they've been supporting me in everything that I am now, now that they know, and they still love me, and I feel like they truly love me now because before you kinda feel like you're lying. And it's the same with [other] relationships; anything that you're too scared to tell your parents is not going to be good for you and your mental health because you're always going to be, like if you had a secret relationship, you'll always be tip toeing around and you'll always be scared that your parents will hate you for it, and they won't approve, and it will batter down your self-esteem and your self-worth, and it can be dangerous, which can go into suicide in some situations. (Teuila)

When opening up to parents about relationships had not been possible, others said they had sought advice and support from their siblings or other family members:

⁸ Pansexual: romantic or emotional attraction towards people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

My dad said school first and then boyfriends later but he already knows about my relationship. But for me to go to my parents for relationship advice, it's hard because I'm not open with my mum and I see that their relationship is not good. So, anything that has to do with relationships, I go to my sisters, so it's good to have a big family. (Mary, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Some older participants said they were the siblings whom their younger ones turned to for advice.

With younger siblings, they get all their expectations from all their older siblings or cousins. So don't just put rules there or go '*no no no no*' to the point where they're [the younger siblings] like '*yes yes yes yes*'. Give them some rules but also be there with them, not just go 'no' and dump then dump in the middle of the sea. You have to hold them close, and give them exactly what is necessary to have something that they can cherish, not have something that is so disposable that '*yeah you're gonna be the hot thing next week*', especially for those rely on their looks rather than relying on what they have in here [points to head]. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

And leading by example, like you know I consider myself in a healthy relationship, I mean it's had its ups and downs, but at the end of the day, the thing that I treasure the most is communication, which is what I encourage with my younger sister, like if she was to want to talk and communicate, I wouldn't be like "*No you shouldn't do that or you shouldn't go anywhere near him*", like '*I'm not gonna put a wall there* but I'm going to direct her in a way that makes sense to her. Like if she likes a boy and she wants to date him, I'd encourage her to get to know him first as a friend, because there's all those expectations of being in a relationship, you have to be physical in a sense, like you have to hold their hand, you have to have your first kiss, you have to go on dates, you have to spend money – but if you're friends, there's no expectations of that, you can just know the person first before taking that step. There's unhealthy relationships everywhere, but if she sees something pure and something that is built off something, like from both me and my partner as well as my parent's relationship, she can use that as a guide. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

While siblings provide relationship support and advice, this was more restricted to same-sex siblings. As these in the all-male group noted, there are some topics that aren't appropriate to be discussed with a sister, or in their presence.

There are some sensitive topics that you also need to keep in mind, like you're not going to go in front of your sister and start talking about sexual problems, or feelings, but just to know that their door is open is better instead of it being forever shut and you're always on your own. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

On reflecting on these views, Teuila commented:

With my parents, it's a bit difficult because they grew up in families where their parents directed them, but both of them decided that they wanted to be the type of parents that their kids can have open communications with. So sometimes it gets a little bit awkward because they're still learning, like there are times when we're supposed to be discussing but it feels like a lecture, and you're like 'wait I'm supposed to talk oh okay no I'm sorry'. There's still that respect though, and I think that will always be there, especially if you were raised up in a Samoan family, like it's difficult to describe, that va, which will always be there. It depends on the parents, and I'm really lucky with my parents, 'I'm appreciated'. I'll just go home and message them 'I love you so much'.

This discussion highlights quite compellingly the endurance of male-female roles in these families. This respect for the opposite sex sibling stemmed from the way they were raised and are still living in their homes.

I'm the only boy in the whole house and my sisters still have to wear their *ie lavalava*⁹. (Tavita, Male-Talanoa)

With being Samoan and growing up, you get told a lot, like I was the oldest daughter so my dad used to always say 'Teuila you're my oldest daughter, why aren't you cooking dinner every night?' and compared to my brother, you get less freedom I feel, and you get like the talk of you know 'be safe, and always go to the bathroom with another girl and always wear clothes that are modest'. (Teuila)

This difference in freedom between brothers and sisters, was expressed in this exchange between the boys in the male group.

⁹ Samoan sarong – it is a daily wear in the homelands. Shorts or pants are a common wear in New Zealand. In the *fa'asamoa*, it is respectful to wear a sarong around your pants/shorts in the presence of elders, guests visiting a family home, or in this context, in front of opposite-sex siblings (*feagaiga*).

Pati: I reckon guys have the upper-hand. Like for females, the parents are stricter, they have to be at home at a certain time. I grew up with all girls, and when they went out, they always had to constantly tell our parents where they were at.

Risati: Girls come under more scrutiny than guys aye. I reckon guys have it made nowadays.

Researcher: What does ‘guys have the upper-hand’ and ‘guys have it made nowadays’ mean?

Tavita: I get to go out whenever I want and I come home whenever I want.

Mataio: I guess parents are more lenient on us compared to girls. And in terms of relationships, it’s much harder for parents to let go of their daughters. Especially the dads’ aye.

Tavita: Just like with my dad when my sister goes out. Like when my sister used to go to ball nights, when the guy comes to pick her up, my dad would always start crying because he doesn’t want her to grow up or to leave. And then when I go out he’s like ‘okay uce, don’t come home early aye’ and I’m like ‘okay, sweet’.

These gender socialised roles also influenced these participants’ behavioural expectations of relationships, as captured in the exchange below shared in the mixed-sex group. Mary’s experiences of relationships were of one partner being more dominant than the other:

I haven't been in a relationship, but I have seen a lot of people in relationships where one would take the chance of being the dominant one, and then they will also both try to reach decisions equally, but then there's always that person who will try to be the dominant one and take charge and then there's the person trying to organise things. (Mary, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Lina on the other hand was of the view that females take on the dominant role in relationships, as she has observed in her own parents and other family members relationships:

In my family, females are more dominant than males, in the sense that we just know what to do and when to do it and my mum being a housewife, like she just knows stuff and she just does them without asking and also growing up as Samoan, you just know stuff. So like in a relationship for us women, we have to serve. When we serve our significant other, it's not like, I don't see it as a way of being lower than them, I see it more as respect, and so you have a respectful relationship if you also have respect for each other. (Lina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Interestingly, the males in this group stated that there should be equality in a relationship, which in their view is when both the male and female in a relationship are doing the same thing and having equal status/power:

Doing the same things and not holding back the female from what the male does because it's not fair, equality all the way. (Sione, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

I think a relationship should be equal. Like our people have the view that the males should be dominant but I don't like to see it that way. (Junior, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

Teuila referred to these gendered views of equality shared as heterosexual relationship stereotypes, which in her view are generally 'skipped over' in same-sex relationships:

I think with heterosexual relationships there will always be a lot of stereotypes, well more like societal norms of what you as the woman is supposed to do. I don't know how to explain it but I found that with maybe the few girls that I've dated, even if it wasn't serious, it just felt a little more freeing and it wasn't because I liked girls more, it was just because I didn't have to be the super pretty one in the relationship because we can both be pretty, and I didn't have to be gentle, I didn't have to one day iron her clothes for her or cook her dinner. I guess you just understand each other more because you're the same gender. I think a lot of the challenges in heterosexual relationships is that men are trying to understand women, and women are trying to understand men. Whereas if you're both women, you don't have that problem, I think you can just skip over that. (Teuila)

Commitment

Mataio said he preferred a committed relationship, which according to his dad, was measured by the amount of time the two people put in the relationship:

My old man always told us that at the end of the day, time speaks for itself. Like if you and your partner put in the time, like my old man used to tell me no one is gonna take you seriously if, even if you introduce her to the whole family and you've only been together for a few months, like time is what people perceive as the proper measurement of a relationship ... if I look at all the couples in my generation, the new couples, none of our older generation want to know about them, but all of the couples who have really put in the time with their partner, those are the ones recognised by the older generations. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Teuila said she also desired a committed relationship, a preference she learned from her family:

A lot of people in uni, they don't want commitment, they just want to have fun, so like if you want a stable serious relationship it's important that you both know what you want, because you don't want to go into a relationship thinking 'oh I really love this person' and the other person just wants to go on fun dates with you. Maybe it's just my family, but I don't think we never really wanted those companionship relationships. Maybe because we had a good bond, or we are Samoan, or really good friends, but I always felt like I knew that I wanted a commitment relationship, and even though I knew the other person didn't want that, I knew that I was willing to wait. Like I'll wait to get older and it didn't really bother me. (Teuila)

Priorities: Having your life in order

Lastly, the family was where these youths had learnt that healthy relationships require having their priorities in order. Some were of the view that a healthy relationship results when two individuals have everything else in their lives going well, and youth relationships are respected by parents.

To have a proper relationship you gotta have all the areas of your life still going well, like to be classed as a healthy relationship. A lot of people nowadays just let it slip, trying to hold the relationship up while everything else in their life is crumbling down. 'Oh you wanna have a

relationship but you're always getting into trouble in school?' that's what parents say when you tell them you have a relationship. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

It's how you guys carry yourselves, how you affect each other as a couple because that's what they [parents] see. And if they see that you excel in everything you do regardless, because like with my mum, when she found out that I had a partner, anything that goes wrong in my life, like anything stupid that I do, it's her fault, like 'you only did that because you're with her, you weren't like that two months ago when you weren't with that girl'. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

It is one thing to think about the other person, but it's another when you don't realise when everything around you is falling apart. You can focus on the other person, but you need to hold yourself up. (Sione, Male, Mixed-Talanoa)

The world is very dangerous and very overwhelming, there's so many factors around you. You have to consider: how do you make time to see them when you've got work, you've got uni, you've got all these other priorities, that a relationships sometimes is not what you need, but it's expected of you. And when you see people who are focused on uni, it's a shame that people aren't going 'I commend you' or 'I look up to you, you're focusing on yourself and your future' which is something a lot of people don't do nowadays – they don't love themselves before they actually go around and loving other people. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Church

These youths also viewed a healthy relationship as one in which God or Jesus was at the centre. Prayer and church attendance was viewed by many as important, especially during relationship hardships.

I use prayer like therapy, it just gives me someone to talk to, like when you're feeling the pressure, you just pray and it's like this massive weight has been lifted off your shoulders. And like my nana, she always used to tell me how good she felt after going to church, and I never even felt it, I was like 'build ups really'. But you know, once you go through trials and tribulations of your own, when you go to church and you come out, it's not that anything specific touched you, but when you come out of church you just feel better, you feel happy, and that right there aye, regardless of what anyone else says about God and church, it's powerful. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Some participants shared about how they had learnt a lot about relationships when going to church and participating in youth group activities. Teuila's description of her first experience of relationships at Young Single Adults program run by her church.

The positives though of being in church, like the Mormon Church you're encouraged to not just date one person seriously, like dating is encouraged to be a thing that's fun that you can do with a group of friends, and it's not really something that's meant to be serious until you've dated lots of different people and you've figured out who you want to go further with, so it's not just we went out and then suddenly you're together for the next 6 months. It's more like 'oh let's go get ice cream' that was fun or 'let's go to the movies', that was fun, and I think that's important as well, just being able to have fun with friends, group dates, and that was really helpful because it didn't put pressure on you to... like you don't freak out. Like some girls they freak out and say 'omg we're in love now, he likes me' when it's like 'maybe he just wants to have fun when you guys go bowling', and so I understand that now. Here [in NZ] they encourage it in church. Like they have activities, I know last year they had this program with the Young Single Adults where they put all your names in a hat, and then they draw out names for like a girl and a guy, and you had to go on a date that week, and you had to go on a date every week with a different person, and it was really casual and it's supposed to teach you how to go on a cheap date. And that's another big thing to have fun with the least amount of money, especially when you're a student and you have no money. So they encourage that sort of thing, and people get married really fast in my church. I think it has helped them build their confidence in themselves and the confidence to go on dates and not have it be super serious, and to be able to ask people on a date and not be shy about it. (Teuila)

Teuila suggested that sex should be discussed in church and youth group activities so that young people have a safe place to learn about this before getting into marriage.

I think one thing that is a little bit of a negative is that in church they don't really talk about sex, like the only thing they'll talk about is 'don't have sex until you're married', and pornography is bad – don't think about it, just ignore it', which is good, but I've seen with a lot of my friends who once they are married it gets awkward because they don't know how to get intimate with each other, like it just makes them so upset because they think that marriage is this magical thing where suddenly you'll be able to drop all of that and just have sex with the person you're married to but it's not like that, and they don't know

what to do because no one has taught them anything, and that's really sad. (Teuila)

Mataio also noted that attending church and observing other church member's relationships and how church elders reacted to those relationships, was also a source of learning:

Heaps of successful relationships that I've seen come out of the churches aye. But not those get with someone from church and not tell anyone, but those who are open and pray together and everyone can see them and respect their relationship, I mean I've got a cousin whose getting married now, but she's been with her partner and they met when they were in church when they were like 15. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Interestingly, when he was asked what the difference was between being open about your relationships in church and exposing them on social media (discussed next), he responded:

I think because church, well if you have the right people in church who are a positive influence, and you can see all the elders in the church who are happily married, and not even elder elders, but people older than you who have the experiences... and like youth groups and stuff, you see the guys and girls there who aren't much older than you who try their best to make their relationships work, and you kinda see them as an example – like you want to be as happy as those guys are all the time and have your life planned out that way, in terms of relationships, and reaching some of those goals, because I think relationships come from helping each other achieve what your individual goals are, and not changing them, like you know 'I wanna travel all over the world and now I only go back and fourth to Samoa' you know, and still class it as travelling. It's helping them with their goals and them helping with yours as well, and from there you sort of create goals as a couple, and from there you'll be sweet, happy as. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Clearly, the church is an important source of learning and practicing relationships for many of these youths.

Social Media

The influence and impact of social media on these youths relationship experiences and expectations also came through strongly. Social media was a source of learning and

advice for some, aided in the initiation and maintenance of relationships, and also enabled youth to share their relationship moments with family and friends all over the world.

Source of learning and advice

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram where users share pictures and videos of their day to day lives, thoughts, and links to other sites, was described by the majority of the participants as playing an influential role in youth relationships. Some said that when others posted pictures and details of their relationships online, they could look at these relationships and choose whether they wanted something similar or not:

A lot of people can learn from social media as well, like some of your friends on social media they might be going through something similar as yourself and they're writing up statuses about this bla bla bla and what they're gonna do... maybe if that time comes, and you go through the same thing, you might intend to use that in your relationship and just try and see if that works out or not... so basically, just using the media as a source of advice. (Sina, Female, Mixed-Talanoa)

Sometimes when people post up relationships on social media and you're just like I want that relationship, I want to be like them, so then once you're in a relationship and you try and be like what you saw on social media. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

The participants in the all-male and all-female talanoa were of the view that these behaviours shown on social media were typical of the younger age group. They attributed these to young people's early exposure to social media, as well as the accessibility of technology:

The age group is getting younger and younger in what they're exposed to ... they see their friends all over social media, kissing and holding hands, relationship goals, hash tagging and all that. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

If you see little kids nowadays, like little kids in primary they already got Facebook accounts, and their own phones too, posting photos about their boyfriends and girlfriends. When I was at that age I just worried about lunch or not getting told off for not doing my homework, but

these guys they're like going hard out on their social media accounts. There's a pattern for each generation, like it gets younger with each age, their social media use. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

Given that these youths are the first generation of social media, they offered advice and suggestions on how social media and technology can aid in building healthy youth relationships:

You can't change social media, it's always gonna be there, it's like upgrading, you're getting more Apps, there's more things to go on, even smart phones, there's tablets, there's iPads, and there's computers, we can't change that. But if you change the view of the young people that you're close to, like in your network and stuff, I believe that's how you would change it. Like for instance, I wouldn't want my younger brother to date, however if he was dating, I'll make sure that it's like safe and he's happy, all the things that we would want for ourselves. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

You have to try and use it in moderation. So going forward, we should try and encourage our kids and the next gen to interact with each other face to face and not rely so much on technology. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

While the decline today in face to face communication was problematic for some, for others, social media has eased the way relationships were initiated and maintained today: they kept comparing relationship initiation and maintenance today to the '*old school ways*' or '*from back in the days*'.

Relationship initiation and maintenance

[Starting relationships] now I think it's much easier, especially with the influence of social media and technology, like back then you used to go up to someone and actually talk to them. Now with the power of technology and social media, you don't even need to meet them in person, and some people actually go out without meeting the other person first, so it's much easier for our generation now with the use of social media and technology. (Pati, Male-Talanoa)

It's not like you meet someone, you date them, like the old school way of just knowing a person first. Like you see a person, you judge them on social media, I don't know like you can date someone through Facebook, you can date someone that you've known through somebody

else, or texting, you don't even know what they look like, sometimes they don't even look like that. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

'*Sometimes they don't even look like that*', being *catfished*¹⁰, was, fortunately, a phenomena all the participants in this study understood well, indicating their awareness of both the benefits and risks of social media use:

A lot of people have judgments about social media and dating Apps, and so a lot of people won't trust those sites, because you never know, you might be catfished. (Sina, Female, Male-Talanoa)

Teuila expanded on this phenomena with these words:

Well I can say right now that internet relationships are a big no, never have an internet relationship ... like a long distance relationship where people meet on Instagram or Facebook and maybe they live in two different countries, and people date that way now, which is dangerous. It happens quite a lot now because of how popular social media is and people feel like it's hard to talk to the people around them, so they talk online and find someone they can really connect with, but the thing with social media is that you can put your best self on social media or you can put a completely different person on social media, so you never know who is on the other side of that screen or that conversation, and it can get really bad because the person can turn out to be not even the person you expected. (Teuila)

An underlining implication of these youths responses is that social media and reality television shows are redefining relationship concepts such as '*affection*', *intimacy*, '*attention*', and '*rivalry*':

I suppose that's why social media is big because obviously you're not going to put a normal picture of yourself with your track pants, your t-shirt... that's not a look, unless you look like that normally, but 9 out of 10 times you're gonna put your best photo up – the one you selected from your 50 selfies and the filters and you're like 'omg I look real good'. Because if you go onto some teenagers' pages, some of them have 500 likes, but you know, how many of them know you? How many of them show you that affection in real life and say 'you know I love her because she's a real amazing girl' not 'she's so pretty' or 'look

¹⁰ Catfished: to lure (someone) into a relationship by adopting a fictional online persona.

she's got abs', you just put that best image of yourself up. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

With social media as well you don't necessarily have to see the person to date them, you could go for years and be in a relationship with someone you haven't even met, so like taking that intimacy differently, because you're obviously not going to be there holding hands, but you'll always be on your phone contacting them, and you can still love. Intimacy is considered something very different nowadays, it could be like you look at someone and that's considered intimacy. (Miriam, Female-Talanoa)

Girls and guys too just wanna fit in with today's trends, like that TV show *Jordie Shore*, people watch that and they just wanna do what they do, like go to the clubs, get a lot of girls or get a lot of guys. It could be a competition too aye, like all the guys would say 'I wanna get with that girl' and all the girls would wanna get with that guy, and then it can just start from there. (Risati, Male-Talanoa)

It's become a popularity norm aye to see guys getting props for getting with a lot of girls, but with no emotional connections. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

While youth responses also imply a tension and resistance to changes, it is interesting how youth have defined (see Chapter 4) and redefined their own relationship labels and concepts to define or characterise relationships.

Sharing relationship moments with friends and families around the world

Given the role of social media in relationship initiation and maintenance, it is not surprising that youth are using this to share their relationship experiences with friends and families across the globe; which in pre-social media times was not possible due to geographical and immigration restrictions. Teuila noted:

It's important because say you're with someone, you can introduce them to all your friends and family through Facebook. Like all your old friends from school, church, overseas... and it also makes things official. But maybe for the younger people, not so much the older ones. I think the older you get the less it matters. (Teuila)

In Teuila's view then, introducing your significant other to family and friends via social media made 'things' official. This was in contrast to what Mataio viewed as the '*proper channels*' of introducing a significant other to his Samoan family:

When you bring someone over to your family, there's a way you're supposed to dress, there's a way you're supposed to conduct yourself, pretty much you guys have to act like you's are friends and you're not allowed to touch each other. But also like, with women and girls, bringing a girl over and she doesn't know how Samoan girls roll, how girls always do feau's in the kitchen, and you know guys always doing what they gotta do ... like I see all of the couples in my family who have really put in the time with their partner, and have gone through the right channels – respecting the family in the way they bring them in and everything – those couples have been recognised by the older generations, and it's how you guys carry yourselves, how you affect each other as a couple. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Both Teuila and Mataio are Samoan; while their views are their own, they signal that changes may also be happening to cultural traditions, such as *fa'amalamalamaga* (introducing one's significant other to the family).

The responses by these youths reinforce that social media has a place in Pacific youth relationships today, and as a result, the nature and dynamics of relationships are changing. This is evident also in the way some concepts are understood and practiced by the younger generation, as these participants have observed.

Environment

While the theme of environmental approaches did not come through strongly, the few comments that touched on this implied this was a factor in youth relationships. Miriama noted that today, people learn about relationships from the *media* as well as the *mall* and *going into the city*:

Nowadays its televisions, movies, music, music videos, the mall, going into the city. (Miriama, Female-Talanoa)

For Teuila who grew up in Samoa, observing relationships in public was a rarity, which she noted was different to her experience in New Zealand:

I think for the longest time, I grew up in Samoa, I went to school there, it was kind of, like nobody knew about it, so I was the last person to know when two people are dating because you can never tell as they will never hold hands and that kind of stuff ... I don't know, especially in Pesega because now they have this specific rule that there are no dating, no couples, so like a boy and a girl can't be in the same room without anyone else, but then again how can you tell if that's romantic, like what if it's platonic, like can't you just have a guy best friend? It's kind of confusing... like where to draw the line. So when two people dated, most of the times I just thought it was them having a best friend because they didn't really do anything and they didn't go on dates outside of school, so they just saw each other at school, and so yeah that was all what romantic relationships was like... but now that high school is finished, and I'm in New Zealand, it's kind of like an explosion... like now when I am with friends, they're always holding hands, they're always hugging, I guess it's because they don't live with their parents anymore so they're really touchy-feely. (Teuila)

Part 2: How can Pacific youth knowledge be fostered and reproduced?

As discussed, these youths consider themselves the first generation of social media. According to some, this places them in a mid-way position, between younger youth and their parents' generation.

Our 20s age group have both the very traditional before phone ages, and we've had after phone ages, so we've got both insights of what the young ones are thinking as well as what the older ones are thinking. So our age group are very well aware of what's going on. But for like the 30s or beyond, there's a disconnect between the two so there's always gonna be clashes and you know their mind-sets are very different to younger ones, their culture is very different to these guys – they've got one set, two sets, three sets, and the younger generation have got the world. So our 20s age group, we've got the exposure to both worlds. And we've benefited from it, we've learned a lot from what's around us. (Miriamama, Female-Talanoa)

We're the first generation of social media, like my parents don't know how to tell me how much social media is too much, because they weren't on it when they were kids but now we can tell our next generation that they're on it too much, because we know, we were the first. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

As a result, these older youth contend that they are in a solid position to assist and advice their siblings and others on the subject of healthy relationships.

I suppose you can't change or stop people from using social media but you can make sure that if you have younger siblings or cousins and you see what they're doing is not healthy, you can approach them and make them understand that it is not healthy. So, if you start with like the people you care about and hopefully they've learned something, then they can reach out, and that's how it would carry on, because you can't change social media, it's always gonna be there – it's constantly upgrading, you're getting more Apps, there's more things to go on, even smart phones, there's tablets, there's iPads, and there's computers – we can't change that. But if you change the view of the young people that you're close to, like in your network and stuff, I believe that's how you would change it. (Lisa, Female-Talanoa)

I have open discussions with my little sister and she'll be like 'my friend did this' and I'll be like 'oh I have similar stories too, like back in the days my friends did this', so we're good that way and I always tell her if you ever want to do anything, just talk to me about whatever. (Tina, Female-Talanoa)

Additionally, some of the older youth consider that with their understandings, they will become better parents themselves:

I think if our generation gets a better grip on how to conduct themselves, when we grow up we'll be able to teach our kids the proper way to do things, not that there is a proper way, but a way that our kids can get the best out of life. For me, seeing my parents work all day every day, not get any time off, and then there's all these kids at home that need feeding and changing and all that stuff that needs to be done, it makes me think that, nah I don't want to live like that, not saying that that is a bad way to live, but there could be an easier way to live for sure. It's just about education, you gotta educate your kids to know that there is more to life than turning 16, having a kid, and then life over, there's more than that. But they don't promote that on social media nowadays. (Mataio, Male-Talanoa)

Findings Summary

Chapters 4 & 5 have outlined these 17 Pacific youth's responses to the overarching research question of what makes for healthy Pacific youth relationships. Responses have shown the complexity and nuances of youth relationships, many of which have not been considered in the global literature. Most prominent are the labels, languages and concepts used. These youths have their own understandings of romantic relationships, a relationship with a significant other, and platonic relationships, which differ remarkably from global definitions of youth relationships. The role and place of the family in these youths' lives also came through strongly. As discussed, family was where the youth learned the majority of the expectations of healthy relationships. The church, social media, and the environment definitely have a place and an influence on youth relationships, however, these were not as prominent in comparison to the role of the family.

What was notable in these findings was the lack of discussions around physical violence and abuse as characteristics of unhealthy relationships: instead, the majority of references were made to emotional and sexual aspects of violence. Also, while the approval of friends was mentioned by some participants, the role of friends and the peer group as a place of learning about relationships did not come through in the second question. Yet, they defined a healthy relationship as one which begins with a friendship as its foundation before it turns into a relationship, with similar emotional aspects observed in the two types of relationships, except they increase and intensify in the relationship with a significant other. Perhaps then, it is within this *friendship* that they learn about relationships, but it is not given the same attention as the family and other places of learning as identified, warranting further research. The next chapter discusses key findings in the context of previous research.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This pan-Pacific study aimed to explore New Zealand Pacific youth understandings, perceptions, and expectations of healthy relationships. Specifically, it aimed to address three overarching research questions: “What are Pacific youth understandings and expectations of healthy youth relationships?; “How and where did they learn these behaviours and expectations?”; and their views regarding the future. The perspectives of 16 male and female Pacific youth from around the Auckland area were explored in group talanoa, and one individual talanoa as a reflective voice.

In this discussion, I set the talanoa findings against both the individual psychological and the socio-cultural models of youth relationships and wellbeing. In doing so, this approach has raised a significant number of questions which warrant a more in-depth study.

Findings indicate that this group of Pacific youth had their clear views of what was healthy and unhealthy relationships. They saw healthy relationships as involving behaviours of respect, commitment, and sharing, and so I have focussed this discussion on these three pivotal behaviours. They said these understandings were grounded in the values and norms of their Pacific cultural ways which had been learnt and nurtured within their families. At the same time, it was clear that their use and the increasing popularity of social media had added new ways of looking, thinking about, and experiencing relationships. In sum, the majority of these youths, both male and female, were continually negotiating family and cultural boundaries, with new roles and expectations introduced by social media and the current times. Notably, at this time, these youths appeared to give prominence and respect to the family-based cultural norms.

This chapter is in three parts. I begin by discussing the terms and concepts these youths used to define and make sense of healthy Pacific youth relationships. This section ends with a discussion of the healthy relationship behaviours youth raised: *commitment*, *respect*, and *sharing*. Next, I discuss findings from the second research question: where and how these relationship perceptions and expectations were learnt, focusing on main points raised of family, friends, and social media. In the final section, I reflect on the research design and methods and drawing on findings, I outline suggestions as to how

the Fonofale model can be adapted to capture and take account of Pacific youth wellbeing.

Part 1: Conceptualisations of Healthy Pacific youth relationships

Seeking Pacific youth voices on what makes for healthy relationships requires first establishing the terms Pacific youth use when talking about and making sense of their relationships. This is a crucial step to take if the policies and programmes designed to ensure the wellbeing of Pacific youth are to be effective and relevant to them.

Findings established that these Pacific youth held different views of romantic relationships to what is documented in the global literature, such as Connolly & Johnson, 1996; Furman et al., 1999; Furman et al., 2009. For these youths, *romantic relationships* were those portrayed in Hollywood movies, which they described using terms such as *passion*, *lust*, and *public displays of affection*. In their view, these relationships were not *real* because they saw these as often *rushed into* and *short-lived*. By way of contrast, these youths confined their use of the term *relationship* to refer to what they considered to be real or legit relationships, that were enduring and involved *trust*, *fun* and *laughter*, *communication*, *sharing of space and time* and, a *reliance on the other*. Being in a relationship involved emotional and physical intimacy, and opening oneself up to unconditional love and to vulnerability. In sum, these youths did not conceptualise romantic relationships in the same way as proposed in the literature. This difference is critical to take into account when designing programs aimed at building healthy youth relationships if collective and shared understandings are to be ensured.

Relationship labels

The labels used to refer to the relationship and the person whom one is in a relationship with were essential to these youths. In their view, labels were important because these signify the meaning and the degree of seriousness of the relationship, as well as the role and expectations of the person whom one is in a relationship with. The most commonly used label in all four talanoa was *significant other*. These participants did not use the terms *intimate partner* or *girlfriend/boyfriend*, which are the most preferred labels in youth literature and policies. This finding aligns with the extant literature on adolescent identity development, personality, and wellbeing (see Schwartz, Donnellan, Ravert,

Luyckx, & Zamboanga, 2012; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013 for a review of the field), that the adolescent period since the time of Erik Erikson's writings has changed drastically, with new sources of identification introduced through new or transformed social roles. This exploratory study has identified the high importance of establishing youth conceptualisations and definitions of terms used as the baseline for research and also for policy and practice. It cannot be assured that global and universal definitions fit the experiences of all youth, and as in this thesis, Pacific youth.

Healthy Pacific youth relationship behaviours

In the findings chapter, I presented in the participants' voices their perceptions, expectations, and some of their experiences of what healthy Pacific youth relationships *look* like, as well as the risk and protective factors involved. When I re-organised those responses into key indicators of healthy Pacific youth relationships, three major concepts emerged, each of which are pivotal to healthy Pacific youth relationships. These concepts were *commitment*, *respect*, and *sharing*.

In Table 5, I have brought these together using the participants words, and then set these concepts within the Pacific worldview of wellbeing (Chapter 1 & 3), global perspectives on healthy youth relationships (Chapter 2), Triandis' (1989; 2001) individualist-collectivist conceptualisation of culture, and Markus and Kitayama's (1991) psychological theory of culture and the self. My rationale for bringing these perspectives together in this way is to seek to explain and validate ways these three concepts encapsulate the values and behaviours Pacific youth see as contributing to healthy relationships. As noted, each of these concepts is grounded in family norms and values.

Table 5
Healthy relationship behaviours

Commitment	Respect	Sharing
Maturity – having the right mind-set	<i>Feagaiga</i> (brother & sister taboo)	Vulnerability
Growing together	Spirituality (i.e., praying together)	Sharing time & space
Through thick and thin	Obedience to parents	Comfortable with each other
Working on differences rather than ‘gapping it’ or abandoning the relationship	Serve	Trust
Time and effort	Equality	
Providing reassurance and rebuilding trust after arguments	More than physical (i.e., non-sexualised)	
Going far for your significant other	Dependence (i.e., reliance on the other)	

I discuss each concept separately, and then following this section an in-depth discussion of what ‘the family’ meant to these youths.

Commitment

In line with the Pacific worldview, *commitment* is a healthy relationship value and behaviour because it signals a desire to maintain harmony in the relationship. Conflict, on the other hand, implies disharmony and imbalance, which negatively affects wellbeing (MSD, 2012). In the *fa’asamoa* for instance, when two people have a disagreement or are in conflict, we refer to them as having a *va* (Allardice, 2000). *Va* in this situation implies a distance or a separation between two people, and distance is unhealthy, it needs to be closed or reconciled. In line with this view, abandoning the relationship during a disagreement creates a permanent distance/separation (*va*), which is unhealthy for those whose wellbeing is contingent on the maintenance and harmony of relationships. As the youth in this study point out, *gapping* or abandoning the relationship is not the way to resolve differences. Instead, the two people in a relationship should work through their problems together and invest time and effort in the relationship, as it is only those relationships that have endured through the *thick and thin* that their parents acknowledged.

Study findings align with earlier global studies, where commitment in a relationship was identified as typifying healthy adolescent relationships (Bouchey & Furman, 2003; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Larson et al., 1999; McIsaac, Connolly, McKenney, Pepler, & Craig, 2008; Shulman & Connolly, 2013). In these global studies, commitment was only found in the relationships of late adolescent years, implying a belief that a certain level of *maturity*, e.g., having the right mindset was needed to maintain a healthy relationship. This association of age and healthy relationships align with the views of the majority of the youth in this study.

Drawing on a cross-cultural psychological perspective, Markus and Kitayama (1991) proposed that there are links between an individual's self-construal (i.e., an independent/individualistic or interdependent/collectivist self-concept), and their motivations, actions and emotions. For those with an independent self-construal, the motivation for commitment in a relationship may be a re-affirmation of their agency, of the individual as an active agent who influences other people. From this perspective, committing to a relationship and resolving arguments is thus an act of control over one's actions, which if successful, will lead to increases in self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. In failing to nurture and maintain a relationship, Markus and Kitayama posit that these individuals will experience ego-focused emotions such as pride and frustration because their personal attributes (i.e., their goals, abilities, needs, and desires) are a primary referent. By way of contrast, the motivation for seeking commitment in a relationship for those with an interdependent self-construal may be underpinned by a desire to maintain harmony in the relationship. Again, this point also aligns with the Pacific worldview of wellbeing. In relationship breakdowns, individuals with interdependent self-construals will most likely experience other-focused emotions such as sympathy and shame. Other-focused emotions have the other person as the primary referent, rather than one's internal attributes. Markus and Kitayama proposed that these emotions result from "being sensitive to the other, taking the perspective of the other, and attempting to promote interdependence" (1991, p.235). From this perspective, it can be expected that reciprocal exchanges of well-intended actions and cooperative social behaviour will likely occur during the relationship disagreements of individuals with an interdependent self-construal.

Bringing the Pacific and psychological perspectives together, I propose that *commitment* in a relationship can be viewed as a factor in healthy Pacific youth relationships because

commitment links to wellbeing both from a psychological or individual perspective, and also from a Pacific people and family-centred worldview. At the same time, given the reported prevalence of intimate partner violence in Pacific communities both in New Zealand and in the Pacific homelands, it is important that youth understand also that it is ‘OK’ or healthier to leave perceived unhealthy relationship rather than stay. As youth ideas of what *commitment* is indicated, maintaining a healthy relationship requires continuous work. Youth views appeared to be significantly influenced by their parents ‘standards’ of what a *legit, real*, or healthy relationship is. So, while these standards may be informed by the Pacific worldview of maintaining relationships, these family set standards might also be a risk factor for intimate partner violence. The influence of family on youth ideals and practices of relationships is discussed in Part 2.

Respect

In the Pacific worldview, respect is the recognition and acknowledgement of one’s boundaries, place, roles, and responsibilities in relation to others and is shown in people’s manners and conduct. As noted, *va* in the fa’aSamoa also refers to one’s relational boundaries (*va fealoa’i*), each of which are underpinned by respect. Knowing one’s boundaries in relation to others, to God, and to the environment, is the way harmony and balance is achieved. Certain conducts and behaviours are observed for different relationships, such as a child’s relationship with their parent or a brother’s relationship with his sister. In the brother and sister relationship as is well documented (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010; Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2016; MSD, 2012), it is forbidden and highly disrespectful for opposite-sex siblings to discuss matters of a sexual nature in the presence of the other. Failure to observe these norms is equated with overstepping one’s boundary of correct behaviour.

Va fealoa’i (respectful conduct) in communications

The youths spoke at length about the importance of communicating within the family and within a healthy relationship. However, this was not straightforward. For some participants, the lines of communication between them and their parents were open and they felt they were *able* to discuss their relationship concerns with them. Notably, these relationship discussions more often happened with the same-sex parent, and only occurred after their parents were aware and had come to an acceptance of them being in

relationships, even if they had done so against parents' wishes. Others found communicating with their parents challenging and two main reasons were offered for this. First, they viewed their parents' relationships as unhealthy and therefore they did not see their parents as sources to gain valuable advice from, and second, for many of these participants, communication with parents was more often a one-way rather than a two-way process.

The fact that some of these youths were able to recognise and distinguish unhealthy relationship patterns is important to note. This finding reinforces the influence of parents and families on young people's ideas of relationships. Taking this point further justifies the need to focus on family interactions including, as noted, the need for a shift away from *one-way* family communications to *two-way* communications. Findings were that parent-youth communications were highly one-way: parents told youth '*no relationships*' and expected them to listen and obey. Youth were not given an opportunity to present their perspective. As noted, these youths referred to this communication style as the '*Polynesian mind-set*' or '*island-parent*' style of communication. They also understood that their parents belonged to a different generation than them and that their parents preferred ways of communication were influenced by the way they had been raised. Nevertheless, the participants wished for their parents to be *more open and inviting*, and *to let their children know that they should not be afraid to talk to them about anything*.

A small number of participants believed that youth also have a responsibility for initiating conversations within their families and around "*adult*" subjects. Further, it is not enough for communication lines between children and parents to be open, rather, it is respectful communications that are preferred, which these youths believed as observing the *va fealoa'i* (respectful conduct).

Findings were that a number had observed shifts in their parents disciplinary and communication styles, from the *island style* (deductive disciplinary) to a more inductive disciplinary approach. If family communications influence the way youth communicate in their relationships with a significant other, then this shift is a promising move towards building healthy relationship skills in youth relationships. As Maccoby and Martin (1983) importantly note, children who experience inductive discipline learn to appreciate the effects of their behaviours on others. My findings align with Fa'alau

(2011) and Lino's (2015) studies, that respectful communications within the family and the *va fealoa'i* (respectful conduct) are of high importance to Pacific youth learnings about and practices of relationships.

Sharing

These participants viewed sharing as a mutual give and take of material goods, time and space, as well as thoughts and feelings. Sharing is something that is done genuinely, in which *you want to do things for your significant other wholeheartedly*. This view aligns with the Pacific worldview of reciprocity as a '*generosity of heart*', an aspect of *alofa*, *ofa*, or love, and is fundamental to maintaining harmony in relationships and wellbeing.

As reported by Markus and Kitayama (1991), in the reciprocal relationships of those with an interdependent self-construal, the enhancement of the other is more instrumental to self-enhancement than direct attempts at self-enhancement. Drawing on this, Pacific youth with an interdependent self-construal may, therefore, be motivated to share to enhance the status of the other. However, this may be problematic if done to the point where individual desires and needs are subordinated or sacrificed to avoid isolation from the other and, for example from broader network of reciprocal relationships. For youth with an independent self-construal, sharing can be seen to be an act of showing prosocial acts of kindness and generosity (desirable internal attributes) which likely result in others praising and affirming one's good qualities. This affirmation of one's internal attributes is seen to lead to and be associated with increased self-esteem and consequently positive psychological wellbeing.

While the motivation to share for the enhancement of the other is a desirable quality in Pacific cultures, it does raise concerns as to where boundaries are drawn between *enough* and *excessive*. One participant raised this concern with regard to how much time and space one gives to their significant other, and how to determine when this behaviour becomes unhealthy. This is difficult to ascertain when as has been noted, youths' culture and upbringing play a huge role in determining their values and behaviours. Also, youth from the same cultural background may share an implicit understanding of these values; this can prove challenging if youth are in relationships with a person from a different cultural background, especially if these differences are not well understood, made explicit, or are not appreciated.

Future research is warranted to explore this area of sharing further, perhaps ideally a continuum that enables youth to judge when sharing is enough, too little, or too much. However, given the effects of inter-marriage, migration, and young people's exposure to multiple cultures both in their vicinity and on the internet, outlining a continuum that prescribes behaviours and boundaries is likely impossible. Instead, exposing youth to diverse worldviews so that they can be aware of the differences in the beliefs and values of different cultures is suggested.

Part 2: Sources of learning and influences on Pacific youth relationships

Establishing where and how Pacific youth learnt about healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours and their expectations of their partners and themselves, has high importance in exploring Pacific youth voices on what makes for healthy youth relationships. Coming through very strongly in study findings was that the family was the most prominent and enduring source of learning and a significant influence on these youths expectations and experiences of relationships. Churches and social media were other significant sources of learning and influence, although less influential in comparison to family. Surprisingly to me, the influence of peers was mentioned by only one of the 17 participants, and this point warrants further study. These findings of the continuing influence of family challenge the generally accepted idea of a linear progression of socialising agents on individuals. As outlined in Chapter 2, the family is most prominent from infancy to pre-adolescence, with peers replacing the family from pre-adolescence to when they find a significant other (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Dunphy, 1963; Erikson, 1963; Sullivan, 1953). This section discusses youth use of the role of family, friends, and social media in contributing to healthy Pacific youth relationships.

Family

All 17 participants asserted the importance of their families very strongly to their experiences and perceptions of wellbeing and relationships. For this group, family approval and acceptance of their relationships were seen to be essential to their health and wellbeing. However, a pattern of three groups emerged: those who prioritised family expectations above their own (Family First), those balancing both (Family + Me), and those who chose to prioritise or follow their desires above their family's

expectations (Me First; Figure 6). Notably, those in group two (balance) used terms such as *living two lives* or *going undercover* to describe this.

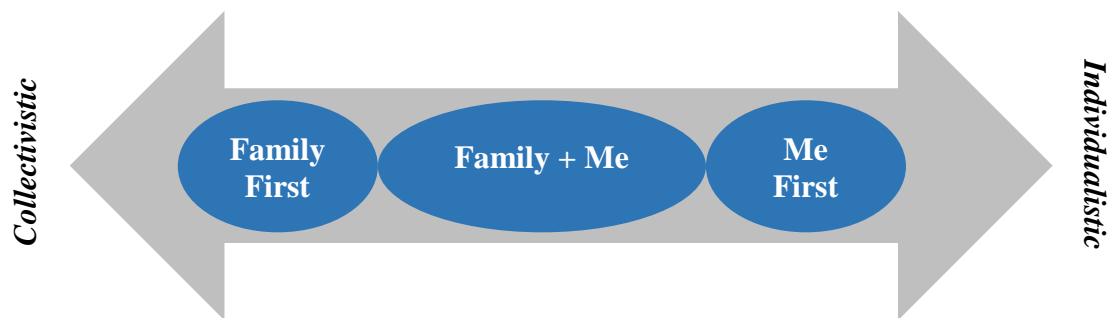


Figure 6. Pacific youth decision-making regarding family approval of relationships.

Setting this pattern within Triandis' (2001) individualism-collectivism conceptualisation of culture, it can be said that these Pacific youths are navigating between two cultural categories: collectivist and individualist. As Mills and Clark (1982), in collectivist cultures, "people are interdependent within their groups (e.g., family) and give priority to the goals of their in-groups, shape their behaviour primarily on the basis of in-group norms, and behave in a communal way" (p.909, as cited in Triandis, 2001). This finding also fits the Pacific worldview of priority to the family as it is the primary identity marker for Pacific peoples (Fairbairn-Dunlop et al., 2014). By way of contrast, in individualist cultures, people's actions are autonomous from their in-groups. They give priority to personal goals over those of their in-groups and behave primarily on the basis of their attitudes rather than the norms of their in-groups (Triandis, 2001). This also fits the Western way of life, where as proposed, youth are raised primarily to be self-actualising, to know their rights as individuals, and where autonomy and independence are valued and fostered from an early age (Rothbaum et al., 2007; Rothbaum, Rosen, Ujiiie, & Uchida, 2002).

To my mind, the actual process of navigating between these two categories (as Fig 6 above) requires the individual to act, which I argue, signifies the exercise of *agency*. As Cockerman (2005) stated, agency is present whenever an actor might have acted otherwise. Agency is thus evidenced in the presence of non-routine actions (Hitlin & Johnson, 2015). Many researchers argue that within collectivist cultures, where the emphasis is on the subjugation of the individual self to the wants, needs, and priorities of the group, agency is exercised at the group or collective level (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Evans, 2002; Hitlin & Johnson, 2015). By way of contrast, in individualistic cultures

that emphasise individual choice, agency operates at the individual level (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz et al., 2012).

Findings are that for this group of Pacific youth, personal agency is exercised within the context of the family. These youths were well aware of both their family's expectations of them and their aspirations. If their family's expectations were at odds with their own, they exercised agency by choosing either to prioritise family, live two lives, or prioritise their personal aspirations (Figure 6). These findings challenge earlier studies on migrant youth relationships within diaspora communities, where it was found that the locus of control of many migrant Indian and Chinese youth relationships rested with the family (Coates, 1999; Dhariwal et al., 2009; Moore, 1998). For Western youth, on the other hand, youth relationships are regarded as part of the typical teenage experience, a step towards complete autonomy from the family (Carver et al., 2003; Connolly et al., 2004; Shulman & Scharf, 2000). Therefore, in Western families, there is an expectation that youth be in relationships, and the decision to engage in a relationship rests mainly with the individual.

My study findings build on extant literature on Pacific youth in New Zealand, that while Pacific youth are navigating between two worlds, they are also becoming increasingly aware of their personal agency and their individuality from their families (Fehoko, 2014; Ioane, Lambie, & Percival, 2013, 2014; Lino, 2015; Manuela & Sibley, 2015; Manuela & Sibley, 2014; Tiatia-Seath, 2014; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 2004; Veukiso-Ulugia, 2016). It is clear that Pacific families in New Zealand are undergoing a cultural transformation, and also, that this generation of youth is playing a part in driving this. This fits Umaña-Taylor, Zeiders, and Updegraff's (2013) longitudinal study, which found that third and fourth generation migrant youth were driving an ethnic identity process, which featured a move away from the family-driven cultural process experienced by first and second-generation migrants. If so, this has implications for Pacific youth policy in New Zealand that recently have tended to emphasise ethnic-specific Pacific approaches. For example, study findings suggest that a cross-cultural "Pacific" youth identity is emerging and that too specific an approach may not align with the reality of these youths daily lives and experiences.

Gendered roles and expectations

The Pacific gendered separation of roles and expectations of brothers and sisters within the family also came through strongly in my study. Male participants acknowledged that they were afforded more freedom than their sisters to spend time outside of the home. Females, on the other hand, stated that their families expected them to be around the home. Subsequently, one male participant expected his significant other to stay in the kitchen with his mother and sisters when she visited, while he and the boys attended to tasks outside the house. Interestingly, a female participant commented that when she has a significant other, she will serve¹¹ him, just as the women in her family have done for generations. Some participants rejected these gendered expectations of a significant other in a relationship and suggested instead that males and females should be equal. Overall, findings support Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2010) argument that gendered ideals play an integral role in Pacific cultural systems, behaviours, and expectations.

These findings align with previous studies on migrant youth relationships in diaspora communities, for example, Dhariwal et al., (2009) and Moore (1998). While this study did not explore Pacific youth relationship prevalence rates, the freedom afforded to sons and the protectiveness of fathers and families over daughters implies that Pacific males may similarly have more relationship experiences in comparison to females.

What is uncertain, however, is whether this separation of tasks commented on by these youths is underpinned by the Pacific ideal of *complementary* male and female roles (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001), or by a Western view of women as subservient to men (Okin, 1987). This is important to establish; determining policies according to these surface manifestations rather than the underlying principles which inform these roles would be erroneous.

Given the reported prevalence of adult intimate partner violence within Pacific communities both in New Zealand and in the Pacific homelands today, further studies are needed to explore the *why* underpinning the gendered socialisation of Pacific youth in these new times and contexts. Philosopher Michael Walzer contends that if the family is founded on customs and laws that emphasise male dominance and female docility and the same hierarchy is enhanced by religion with its notion of a male god,

¹¹ Serve: *tautua*, translated as service to others for the good of the collective, a valued Samoan behaviour.

then the idea of a competing ideology with regards to sex and gender is insufficient (Okin, 1987). He further notes that the more pervasive the ideology across various spheres, the less chance the current structure will be resisted or questioned; and when questioned, the ruling group will argue that the current structure is in accord with shared understandings (Okin, 1987). Understanding the underpinning *why* that Pacific youth express regarding male and female roles and expectations sheds light on the values and beliefs that they are nurtured in. As apparent in these study findings, these same values will be reproduced as youth mature and enter into the world of youth relationships and will influence their views of their behaviours and expectations of themselves and others.

Other influences on Pacific youth relationships

Friends

Most interesting was these youths limited references to the influence of friends in their relationships; this contradicts findings from the global literature where the influence of friends both in the decision regarding the relationship and their expectations of relationships is prominent (Furman & Collins, 2008; Furman et al., 2009). Further research is needed to explore whether this limited influence of friends is the actual experiences of Pacific youth today, or a limitation of the current research methods.

However, a number of points can be made: given the shame which is associated with pregnancy outside of marriage within Pacific societies (Anae et al., 2001; Baker, Helm, Bifulco, & Chung-Do, 2015; Helm & Baker, 2011; Macpherson & Macpherson, 1987; Veukiso-Ulugia, 2016), this perhaps explains why Pacific parents restrict their children, especially females, from overly associating with friends outside the family circle. One female participant noted, her parents did not *mind* her participating in church youth activities or finding a significant other from this group. However, if she fell pregnant, *her name and her family name will be all over the church, and her parents will be blamed*. She reasoned that this was why most parents were strict about their children's involvement in church youth groups or any other mixed-sex crowd. As documented in the global literature, the sexual aspects of youth relationships are learned in their relationships with peers, and mixed-sex cliques are grounds for sexual experimentation (Feiring, 2005; Grover, Nangle, Serwik, & Zeff, 2007) which can lead to unplanned pregnancies.

Findings suggest that sexual health education is crucial for healthy Pacific youth relationships. This is especially so because youth in this study identified sex and kissing as expected behaviours of being in a relationship. Also, given the prominence of the family as the place of learning about relationship behaviours and expectations this group of Pacific youth, it is clear that healthy relationships interventions should target families rather than the present focus on schools, as in the current Loves-Me-Not and Mates & Dates programmes.

Social media

Findings emphasised quite compellingly that social media has an increasing influence and place on these youths relationships. Social media has changed the way youth relationships are visioned, initiated, maintained, and dissolved. In sum, a significant amount of communications in youth relationships today are carried out using social media and by phone rather than in person (face-to-face). For these Pacific youth, it seems that the accessibility of social media and technology has eased the way for introducing a significant other to families and friends both locally and in their respective Pacific homelands. These findings align with the experiences of other youth globally (Christofides et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2014, 2013; Fox & Warber, 2014; Lenhart et al., 2015; Muise et al., 2009; Rueda, Lindsay, & Williams, 2014; Rueda et al., 2015).

With the advancements in technology, it is inevitable that future generations will have access to their means of introducing their significant other to family and friends. The question then becomes, if technology and social media are replacing face-to-face communications, what are the implications of this for the Pacific worldview of maintaining harmony in relationships, which so far has been associated with face-to-face interactions? If social media is used to introduce one's significant other to family and friends both locally and overseas, as these youths indicate, then is the Pacific worldview of maintaining harmony in relationships still paramount, and how would this be achieved? It can be said that social media, therefore, may not be eroding the Pacific cultural worldview of maintaining harmony in relationships. Rather, that social media is incorporated into these youths daily experiences to achieve this goal of harmony in relationships.

Social media as a source of information about relationships

What also came through strongly in my findings was the role of social media as a source of information on relationships. One participant made reference to Facebook statuses that people on her friend's list post about their own relationship experiences; which she said she often read and applied them to her own situations. By way of contrast, the majority of participants viewed these posts as problematic, especially for the younger generation. As noted, in their view, younger people (age 12 was mentioned) have not yet developed the right mindset for relationships. They saw the danger that relationships can be largely informed by what they see online and how they compared with the relationship posts made by their friends. Findings indicate these comparisons have the potential for negative consequences, including the formation of *other* relationship expectations and problems based on whatever is *trending* on social media at a given time.

There are a plethora of psychological studies on the impact of social media (Bessenoff, 2006; Lewallen & Behm-Morawitz, 2016; Russello, 2009; Vartanian & Dey, 2013; Vogel, Rose, Okdie, Eckles, & Franz, 2015). These studies generally conclude that social media comparisons and self-presentations have a negative impact on people's self-esteem and feelings of self-worth, and wellbeing. Given these concerns, it is important that families, schools, and youth services understand and acknowledge the place and of social media in young people's lives, and together with young people seek to address what is healthy and unhealthy social media content and use. However, as these youths have pointed out, they are indeed the first generation of social media, and so presents a window of opportunity for in-depth research to establish and learn from this cohort's experiences of social media use. This will provide relevant information to bridge the social media-use gap between this cohort's parents and the upcoming generation of Pacific youth.

Part 3: Methodological reflections

The use of the Fonofale model in combination with the talanoa method of data collection, with both underpinned by the Pacific Worldview and Appreciative Inquiry, have yielded a rich abundance of multiple perspectives and nuanced data. This

approach has allowed for rich understandings and insights to be drawn from these youths perspectives and experiences. The Fonofale model reaffirmed the importance of a multidisciplinary understanding of each domain, which has enabled me as a researcher to be open and aware of the participants own multiple perspectives. Findings shared to show the complexities of Pacific youth experiences from a cultural perspective and the psychological or individual perspective as well. I found no study in the Adolescent Romantic Relationships field has combined these different levels of influence or domains of perspectives this way.

Suggestions for the adaptation of the Fonofale model for Pacific youth wellbeing

Rather than viewing the *fale* as an individual approach to wellbeing (Manuela & Sibley's, 2014), I saw the *fale* as providing a holistic view of each of the domains of influence on Pacific youth wellbeing. The domains of the *Fonofale* model were regarded as resources and strengths that support healthy Pacific youth relationships. The following three suggestions are put forward as to how the *Fonofale* model can be applied to capture the influences and strengths Pacific youth see as essential to their wellbeing. These are outlined in Figure 7.

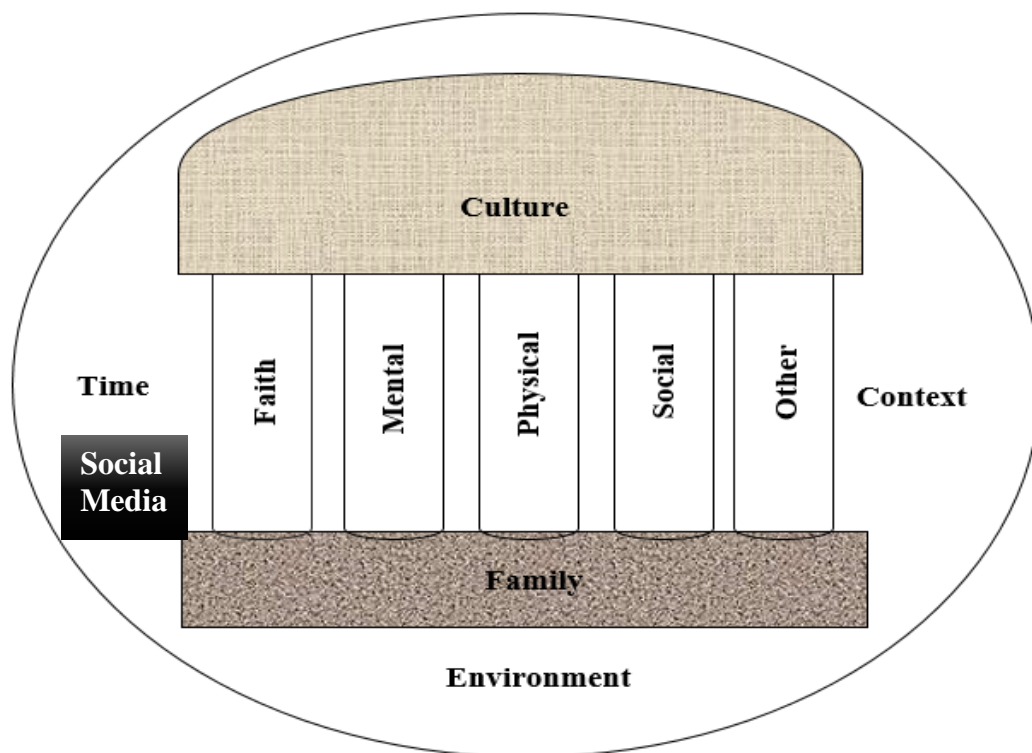


Figure 7. Adapted Fonofale model for Pacific youth development & wellbeing.

In the first place, the family remains constant as the foundation for Pacific youth wellbeing. Contrary to Western models and theories of development (Dunphy, 1963; Erikson, 1963; Sullivan, 1953), study findings indicate that for Pacific youth, the family remains as the foundation over the entire life-span, from childhood to adulthood. Therefore, rather than a linear progression model that sees the individual becoming increasingly independent from the family as they progress through life, a process by which friends also become increasingly important and influential especially during the youth period, the family remains a constant and enduring influence.

Second, given that Pacific youth do not grow in isolation from other people outside of their family circle, I recommend the inclusion of an additional domain labeled ***Social***, to capture the influence of a significant other, friends, teachers, churches, teammates, work colleagues, and community members. Fostering and supporting meaningful connections and engaging with peers and support systems within the community is fundamental to youth wellbeing and sense of belonging. It is not so much the quantity of relationships nor the ease of access to support systems, but rather, it is the quality of

youths' connection to these support systems that matter, and of not feeling out of touch with the social world around them.

Third, that the Spiritual domain is renamed, Faith. This might capture youths' beliefs. Faith also removes the stigma that is associated with those Pacific youth who may not be affiliated with the recognised Pacific churches, or with other religions.

Finally, as in Pulotu-Endemann's (2001) model, the influence of the times, context, and environment on youth wellbeing is tremendous. For example, this study has taken place at a time where New Zealand government policies are increasingly focused on youth wellbeing, a period of an immense explosion in youth access to technology, as well as the public acceptance of ideologies such as the LGBTQi movement. Each of these influences impacts Pacific youth relationships, which should be taken into account in future research. In sum, what makes for healthy Pacific youth relationships, requires looking at Pacific youth within the context of their families, in addition to the influences of their faith, mental and physical health, social relationships, personal preferences with regards to sexuality and political beliefs, and the time period, context, and environment in which they live.

Chapter 7: Conclusions & Recommendations

I have a Facebook account, and throughout this thesis journey, there has not been a day where I have not come across a news article or a friend's post about or relating to relationships be this physical, sexual, and emotional violence. It is easy to forget that some of this content is repetitive, given Facebook and other social media's settings that allow for the shareability of information. However, at the same time, this highlighted the importance of this study on Pacific youth relationships, as well as the place and role of Information and Communication technologies in youth lives today.

This study

In this research, I set out to explore Pacific youth understandings, perceptions, and expectations of healthy youth relationships and in doing so, what they saw to be unhealthy relationships as well. I also wanted to understand how and where youth learned these understandings and expectations. The focus on youth partnerships was necessary given the reported increases in adult partner violence and, also findings showing an association between youth and adult relationship patterns. I saw a study of Pacific youth relationships as presenting a window of opportunity for identifying and documenting healthy relationship behaviours and patterns, which are beneficial for youth wellbeing today and also as a primary prevention approach to intimate partner violence. However violence is defined, violence in relationships is unhealthy and a detriment to the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities and, the nations as a whole.

My research was influenced by the body of local and international literature in the *Dating Violence* field, which documented the increasing prevalence of violence in youth relationships. Most of that research was Western-based and from an individual psychological standpoint and, also featured the application of universally accepted concepts and terms such as *attachment theory*, *romantic relationships*, and *intimate partner violence*. Most often also the extant body of knowledge was gained through quantitative studies and analysed by practitioners.

Drawing on this literature, my questioning progressed from what are youth perceptions of healthy relationships to include: '*Do Pacific youth perceptions of wellbeing fit these global models and language?*' To answer these questions, my approach was threefold. First, my research was about seeking and documenting Pacific youth voices on matters that affect their lives- it was important to start first with youth understandings of relationships, and what they considered to be healthy relationship behaviours and patterns. Second and related, that knowing what Pacific youth understand about healthy relationships would enable the designing of youth policies and interventions that were grounded in these understandings so ensuring these initiatives were relevant and effective. Third, the importance of knowing where and how youth understandings and expectations were learned enabled strategies to target root causes rather than surface manifestations. Therefore, this research which is located in the Adolescent Romantic Relationships field has implications for the Family Violence field.

Given that participants were Pacific youth, this study was visioned through the lens of a Pacific worldview, as encapsulated in the Fonofale model of health and wellbeing. This approach recognised and included any spiritual, social and cultural and, physical elements which youth saw as impacting wellbeing and, against factors of changing times and place. As noted, I also wanted to critique these Pacific youth responses against the global models to explore any commonalities or differences. Also, and importantly, if youth relationships were a learning ground for relationships in later life, then it was crucial to explore for positive and enabling factors impacting relationships rather than deficits which characterise much of research on Pacific youth today. Hence, my use of Appreciative Inquiry ensured that prominence was given to healthy relationship factors so that these could be built on, fostered, and perpetuated.

Youth voices were collected using the Talanoa method of inquiry which created a safe space for knowledge sharing that was open, aware, and responsive to youths' multiple perspectives and experiences as a minority group within the majority New Zealand population. As this study was the first of its kind for Pacific youth in New Zealand or other diaspora communities, I decided on a pan-Pacific rather than an ethnic-specific study. Aims were to set a baseline for future studies on Pacific youth relationships.

This thesis presented findings gained from three group talanoa and one individual talanoa, featuring the voices of seventeen Pacific youth, ranging from 14 years of age to 25. The groups comprising one male, one female, and a mixed-sex talanoa, were designed in this way to explore and capture any gender differences in youth responses, given the expectation that gendered ideals play an integral role in Pacific cultural systems, and influencing Pacific people's behaviours and expectations of themselves and others. Time and budget considerations, as well as the expectations of a Master's thesis, restricted the scope of this research to the Auckland region. Applying this approach was most appropriate, as it provided a holistic view of Pacific youth perspectives of healthy relationships and what they saw as vital to their wellbeing.

Study Conclusions

Main conclusions from this research included the following:

Language and concepts

A major research finding was that healthy relationships were important to this group of Pacific youth and, the terms and understandings these youths used differed from those applied in global theoretical frameworks and models. For example, these youths did not use the terms '*intimate partner*' or '*romantic partner*', the most commonly used terms in the literature. Instead, the terms they used to make meaning of their relationships were '*significant other*', '*boyfriend-girlfriend*', '*partner*', and '*missus*'. Furthermore, youth perceptions of healthy youth relationships involved qualities of commitment, respect, and sharing, which had been learned and nurtured within their families and communities. Unhealthy relationships, on the other hand, were described as rushed, short-lived, and passionate. They associated these qualities with the word romantic and which, they said had been influenced by the relationships they saw portrayed in Hollywood movies. Again, this finding is significant because the terms and understandings that these youths have of youth relationships conflict with those documented in the global literature. This finding also reinforces that people's worldviews influence the values they attach to behaviours and ideas, and which in turn have consequences for their wellbeing. Although this was an exploratory study, the

terms and understandings that have been shared set a necessary baseline for further research aimed at identifying youth service and policy provision.

The enduring importance of family

These youths viewed family as paramount to their wellbeing. The many stories shared demonstrated very compellingly the importance of the family and, the values learned and nurtured within the family and how these significantly influenced youth expectations of themselves and of a *significant other*. These values and beliefs encompassed faith and priority to the family good over individual, taking care of each other and, gendered roles and expectations. Notably for this group, family approval and acceptance of a relationship played a central role in them having or being in a healthy relationship. While the impacts of family influenced their decision-making and individual wellbeing, this warrants further research. At the same time, these Pacific youths were strongly aware and did exercise personal agency, even if this might be considered to be limited or constrained. Findings indicated that these youths were navigating along a continuum of decision-making between two cultural points, collectivism and individualism. Some were at one end of the continuum towards collectivism, *choosing to prioritise their family's needs above their own*, others were at the mid-point, *balancing their own and their family's needs*; and some were leaning more towards the individualism end, *choosing to prioritise their individual needs above those of their family*.

Again, these findings have implications for family and individual security, wellbeing and, also for the *Family Violence* field. If the family is where Pacific youth are learning their relationship behaviours and expectations, then it is fitting that violence prevention efforts are directed towards family-based interventions that are inclusive of cultural norms and values which are observed in families. These include gendered roles and expectations and top-down disciplinary practices. For example, previous Pacific research and anecdotal evidence indicates that Pacific parents often attribute their children's unwanted behaviours to the influence of their friends. This study challenges this thinking, because the influence of friends was much lesser than that of the family.

The finding that the family is foundational in the lives of these youths, and is the primary socialising agent from childhood into adulthood challenges mainstream linear models of development, which propose the influence of the family reducing significantly to be replaced by peers in the adolescent years. This finding has implications for designing and targeting Pacific youth policies and programmes. Whether the focus is on youth relationships, education, or health, these initiatives must not treat youth in isolation but take account of Pacific youth within the context of their families. Notably, economic security was not a sufficient indicator of wellbeing for these Pacific youths. Ensuring healthy relationships with their families and the significant people in their lives was a more important indicator of wellbeing.

Findings showed that social media has an increasing influence and place in Pacific youth relationships, indicating their knowledge and information about youth relationships. In sum, social media is changing the way in which youth vision, initiate, and maintain relationships, and at the same time, it has introduced new relationship expectations and challenges. This group of Pacific youth acknowledged that they were the first generation in their families exposed to extensive social media. Most said their parents had a limited understanding of its influence and what was deemed ‘*appropriate*’ social media use. This finding provides a window of opportunity for more research in this area, especially to understand appropriate social media use for Pacific youth and has implications for the relationships of future generations of Pacific youth and families. This finding has implications also for news agencies, campaigns, and services which utilise social media platforms. Youths’ ease of access to social media content, the shareability of these messages, and the influence of these messages on youth ideas about relationships raises ethical concerns that need to be explored, addressed, and carefully considered. This finding is also an important learning for all, that the messages shared on personal social media accounts are monitored continuously and reviewed for their potential implications for youth.

Adaptation of the Fonofale model

This use of the Fonofale model in this research has allowed for rich understandings and insights to be drawn from these youths perspectives and experiences. The Fonofale model reaffirmed the importance of a multidisciplinary understanding of each domain,

which has enabled me as a researcher to be open and aware of the participants own multiple perspectives. Drawing on the findings from this study, suggestions for an adapted version of the Fonofale model of Pacific health and wellbeing have been raised (see Chapter 6) to evaluate Pacific youth outcomes and to better understand their development and wellbeing.

Recommendations

This study has set a baseline for future research on Pacific youth relationships. Future studies might include, for example, an ethnic-specific approach, a focus on non-heterosexual relationships, as well as perspectives from at-risk or vulnerable Pacific youth. As noted, the age of my study sample was 14-25 years, so perspectives from a younger age group of Pacific youth (11-15 years) will add to the knowledgebase on Pacific youth relationships.

Study Strengths & Contributions

This study contributes empirical and theoretical knowledge to local and global literature on Pacific youth wellbeing and youth relationships.

The strength of this study lies in its holistic and strengths-based approach to Pacific youth relationships. This study created a safe space for knowledge sharing with the use of the talanoa method of inquiry to listen to this group of Pacific youth, appreciate their perspectives, and document these in the global knowledge base. Moreover, the socio-cultural and psychological approach to data analysis and interpretation has yielded a significant number of insights and new perspectives for a better understanding of Pacific youth in these times and contexts.

Closing remarks

This study has highlighted some of the complexities of Pacific youth lives in New Zealand today. More than ever, there is a need for parents, families, and communities

to understand and assist Pacific youth as they navigate the opportunities and boundaries of their relationships in the changing times.

As a Samoan female raised in a rural village in Upolu, my experiences and expectations of relationships then as a youth are remarkably different from those of these youths. However, my time in New Zealand and living away from my family for many years, has added new perspectives, most of which are similar to those shared by the youth in this study. I empathise with their struggles to talk about relationships with their own families. I understand all too intimately their having to navigate between their own and their family's needs.

Relationships are an important topic to Pacific youth. For this group of Pacific youth, the more they engaged in the talanoa, the more they wanted to talk about relationships. Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, Pacific youth are talking about relationships and, the remarkable similarity in the words and understandings this group had of relationships indicates a shared understanding of youth relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand.

Building and fostering healthy youth relationships with families and with significant others is crucial to their wellbeing today and in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval

AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

19 July 2016
Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Peggy,
Re Ethics Application: 16/213 Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand

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 18 July 2019.
The committee notes that as the research relates only to male-female relationships this should be reflected in the title.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 18 July 2019;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 18 July 2019 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,



Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
Cc: Koleta Savaii, ksavaii@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B: Talanoa Guide

Introductions:

- Self-Introductions
- Clarify any issues regarding consent and also inform them of the counselling service available for this project if needed
- Remind them of the confidentiality of views/information provided during group discussions
- Explain the Talanoa process

Participant Demographics:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Education

Talanoa Guide

WHAT: Perceptions, views, and understandings of healthy youth “romantic” relationships.

- **Prompts:** Differences by sex, age, ethnicity, geographic location

HOW & WHERE: How and where did they learn these behaviours and expectations of healthy youth romantic relationships?

- **Prompts:** Domains of the Fonofale Model – Family, Church, Culture, Physical, Mental, Environment, Time, and Other

FUTURE-FOCUS QUESTION: How can Pacific youth knowledge, understandings, and practices of healthy youth romantic relationships be fostered and reinforced?

Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

30 May 2016

Project Title

Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand.

An Invitation

Kia orana, malo e lelei, talofa lava, ni sa bula, kam nau mauri and warm Pacific greetings. My name is Koleta Savaii and I am a student at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). For my Masters study I am carrying out research on Pacific youth and healthy romantic relationships and this is an invitation to you to share your views by participating in either a group discussion or by individual interview.

What is the purpose of this research?

Ensuring Pacific Youth resilience and wellbeing is vital to the quality of life of youth and their families and communities today and, building healthy male-female relationships is part of this process. As reported, the patterns of adolescent romantic relationships established in the teenage years help set the behaviours and expectations for later adult life. Much national research has been carried out on youth male-female relationships in New Zealand and youth programmes have been introduced drawing on this data. My research explores Pacific youth expectations of adolescent romantic relationships and whether these are different from those of non-Pacific youth. Questions will include 'what do you see as healthy and/ or "unhealthy" youth romantic relationships, how did you learn these behaviours? and also are there Pacific ways of dealing with aggressive or violence behaviours (e.g. physical, verbal, emotional)? Aims are that findings are used to inform further policies and practices aimed at enhancing Pacific youth resilience and more especially in connecting and relationship building.

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

You have been invited to participate in this research because you self identify as Pacific and are aged between 13-17 years and you attended the community meeting where this research was discussed.

What will happen in this research?

My research involves group discussions (3) and individual interviews (6). The group discussions will be comprise one male group, one female group and a mixed gender group, each of which will have up to eight participants. If you agree to participate in the group discussions these will be scheduled at a time and venue which is easy for you to get to. As outlined in the Consent Forms, in the discussions you will be free to answer/ not answer any questions as you wish and may leave at any time. With your consent these will be tape recorded. A similar process will be followed for the individual interviews. At the conclusion of discussions and interviews I will send draft notes to enable you to check these for accuracy and add any comments you wish to make.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is unlikely that there will be any discomfort or risk to you in this research. Your participation will be treated with the utmost respect as in the practice of *va fealoai* (respectful relationships), which is important in the Pacific ways.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

Group discussions and interviews will be held at the AUT South campus so that your parent/caregiver(s) so as to ensure confidentiality and also so your parents/ caregivers know that you are safe.

What are the benefits?

Healthy youth relationships are important for promoting youth resilience, wellbeing and the development of healthy adult relationships in later life. Your participation in this study will give you the opportunity to share your views of what makes for healthy youth romantic relationships. Importantly also, the rich information you share will contribute to national policy decision making processes about youth experiences. Too often, youth policies and programmes have been informed by the views of adults and professionals rather than by listening to the youth voice. Findings will also be of benefit to Pacific communities by raising their awareness about youth experiences and the community role in ensuring Pacific youth develop healthy relationships. Finally, findings will add to the global research on the commonalities and different experiences of Pacific youth in the diaspora. The process and findings from this exploratory study will also set the baseline for further ethnic-specific studies.

How will my privacy be protected?

All personal information and opinions will be kept confidential and I will not discuss these with anyone. No other persons will see the transcripts either, besides me and my supervisors. No names will be used in any of the reporting instead pseudonyms will be used. All interview transcripts, tapes and notes will be destroyed six years after the research is submitted.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

If you are interested in participating, I will arrange a time to meet with you and your parent/caregiver(s) to discuss this research. After this meeting, you will have a week to decide whether you would like to participate or not.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

As part of research procedure, your parent/caregiver(s) will be asked to complete a written Consent Form, while you will be asked to complete a written Assent Form, before any data collection takes place. I will discuss this form with you and your parent/caregiver(s) during our meeting. Please ensure that you take the time to read the information sheet and consent forms very carefully and also remember that participation is voluntary. You are welcomed to text, ring, or email me at any time if you have any questions.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

After group meetings and individual interviews, I will send participants a written summary of our discussions so that these can be checked for accuracy. At the conclusion of the research I will also send participants a report.

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

If you or your parent/caregiver(s) have any concerns regarding the nature of this project, please contact the Project Supervisor, *Professor Tagaloatele Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop*, pfairbai@aut.ac.nz, +649 921 9999 x 6203. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTC, Kate O'Connor, 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 are also able to contact the research team as follows.

Researcher Contact Details:

Koleta Savaii

Phone: +649 921 9999 x 7787

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *19th July 2016*, AUTEK Reference number **16/213.**

Appendix D: Consent Forms

Participant Consent Form (Individual Talanoa)

Project title: Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand.

Project Supervisor: Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (Primary); Jane Koziol-McLain (Secondary)

Researcher: Koleta Savaii

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 30 May 2016.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ 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 continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date: _____

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th July 2016
AUTEC Reference number 16/213.

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

Participant Consent Form (Group Talanoa)

Project title: Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand

Project Supervisor: Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (Primary); Jane Koziol-McLain (Secondary)

Researcher: Koleta Savaii

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 30 May 2016.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date: _____

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th July 2016
AUTEC Reference number 16/213.

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

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Project title: Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand

Project Supervisor: Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (Primary); Jane Koziol-McLain (Secondary)

Researcher: Koleta Savaii

☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 30 May 2016.

☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw my child/children and/or myself from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

☐ I understand that if I withdraw my child/children and/or myself from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to my child/children and/or myself removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of our data may not be possible.

☐ I agree to my child/children taking part in this research.

☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Child/children's name/s:

Parent/Guardian's signature:

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

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Date: _____

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th July 2016
AUTEC Reference number 16/213.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Participant Assent Form

Project title: Promoting healthy relationships amongst Pacific youth in New Zealand

Project Supervisor: Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop (Primary); Jane Koziol-McLain (Secondary)

Researcher: Koleta Savaii

☐ I have read and understood the sheet telling me what will happen in this study and why it is important.

☐ I have been able to ask questions and to have them answered.

☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

☐ I understand that I can stop being part of this study whenever I want and that it is perfectly ok for me to do this.

☐ If I stop being part of the study, I understand that then I will be offered the choice between having any information that that other people can know is about me removed or letting the researcher keep using it. I also understand that sometimes, if the results of the research have been written, some information about me may not be able to be removed.

☐ I agree to take part in this research.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date: _____

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 19th July 2016
AUTEC Reference number 16/213.

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