COOK ISLANDS CULTURAL CONCEPTS TO INFORM FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS AND PRACTICE

LITERATURE SEARCH

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By Jean Mitaera, Langi Paasi and Helena Filipo

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01

ABSTRACT

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FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE SET BY *NGA VAKA O KĀIGA TAPU* (MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 2012) THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT IS TO IDENTIFY COOK ISLANDS CULTURAL CONCEPTS TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOK ISLANDS FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS AND PRACTICES.
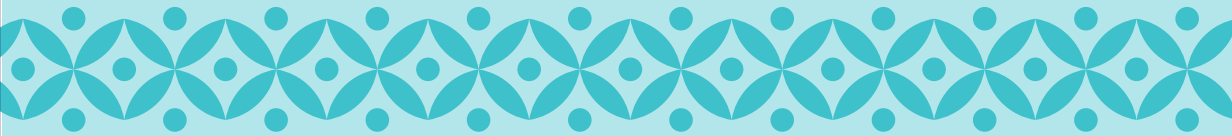
Despite the growing incidence of family violence amongst Cook Islanders in Aotearoa New Zealand, practice interventions to support the safety and healing of Cook Islands victims, perpetrators and their families are promulgated from within western knowledge and theories of family violence. As well, these matters are further aggravated by the small number of Cook Islands family violence practitioners and the dearth of literature available to inform the design of interventions.

Responding to these theoretical, practical and everyday family situations, this project identifies four pieces of Cook Islands literature, reviews and critiques each of them and the cultural concepts they present. The critique draws on Payne's (2014) three key elements of theory building: perspective, theory and model. An approach forward is recommended for designing culturally informed and relevant interventions.

Keywords: Cook Islands – family violence, culture, interventions, atonement, reparation, forgiveness, customs, traditions, history, protocols.

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INTRODUCTION
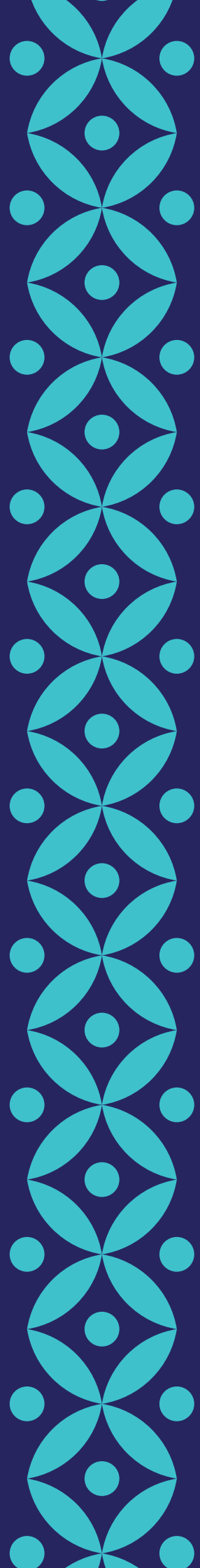
INTRODUCTION

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK'S (2014) GLOBAL DEFINITION, "PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITIES," ARE CENTRAL TO SOCIAL WORK.

For Pacific and non-Pacific social workers, their respect for diversities is best demonstrated in a deep appreciation and understanding of the cultural contexts of the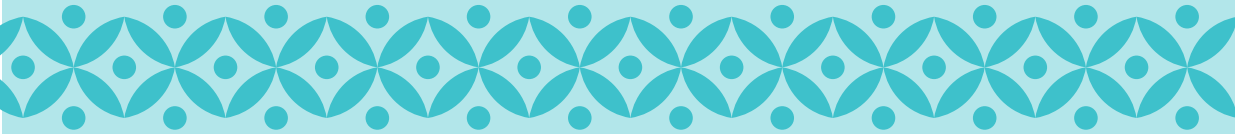 families they serve. This is especially so where the foci are social and kin relationships that are effective and empowering for the people they work with and, as social justice practitioners, social workers actively contribute to the generation of Pacific knowledges. In *Nga vaka o kaiga tapu*, the Taskforce for Action on Violence within families (Taskforce) (2012) asserts the centrality of culture as the basis from which effective family violence practice interventions for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand are developed.

For Cook Islands knowledges and culture, *papa'anga* (genealogy) is the overarching theoretical framework from which family violence should be addressed and *ora'anga meitaki* (wellbeing) restored (Taskforce, 2012, p. 12). The research project reported in this paper identifies key pieces of work that are written by self-identified

Cook Islanders who tender their cultural concepts that, according to Payne (2005), are the basis from which practice theories can be developed. Payne suggests that in the development of practice interventions the elements of theory building (perspective, theory and model) should be considered. These elements are applied to the four key works reviewed which are:

- *Akono'anga Māori Cook Islands culture* (Institute of Pacific Studies, 2003).

- *Pacific pathways to the prevention of sexual violence* (The University of Auckland, 2010).

- *Mou piriia te kōrero 'ā to 'ui tūpuna, aka'ora'ora'ia: Culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Islands secondary schools physical education* (Te Ava, 2011).

- *Tūranga Māori: A Cook Islands Conceptual Framework: Transforming family violence – restoring wellbeing*. (Ministry of Social Development, 2012).

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METHODOLOGY
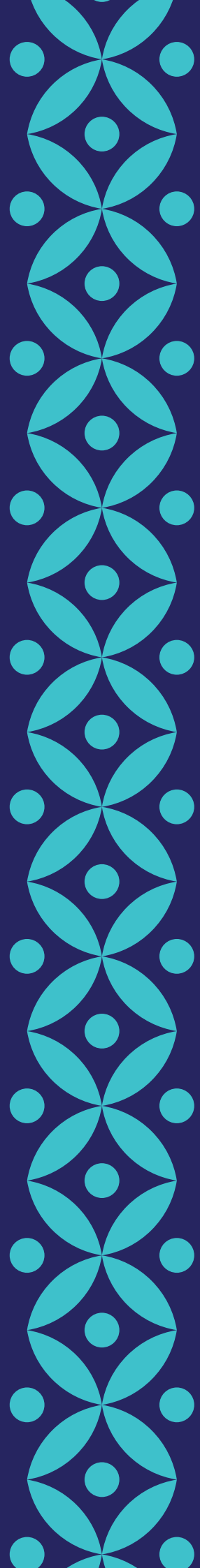
METHODOLOGY

In Aotearoa New Zealand today, Pacific research methodology 'by Pacific, for Pacific' is the premise from which research is planned and undertaken (Falevitu, 2012, p. 3). This means that research is:

- **Underpinned by core concepts and principles that promote and protect the wellbeing of families and individuals, and, is informed by knowledge that is contextually meaningful, and**

- **Reflects the experiences of ethnic-specific communities in insightful ways.**

Critically, Pacific research methodology acknowledges that Pacific knowledges are first and foremost, produced and validated within their own ethnic-specific communities.

METHODS

While the researchers were aware of the dearth of Cook Islands literature, the realities of that scarcity was not fully appreciated until the literature search had commenced. Using the key words with Cook Islands – "family violence", "culture", "interventions", "atonement", "reparation" and "forgiveness", a search commenced on the following search engines and online platforms: EBSCO publishing, ProQuest, Ingenta, Mendeley, CORE, Zetoc, Google scholar, Netscape, Lucos and Yahoo. Of the 1227 papers identified, 1037 were excluded on the basis of their title, author and/or abstract. We retrieved 190 papers and of those only two were deemed relevant.

To reboot the search, the researchers removed the keyword "atonement" (as it rendered mainly Christian religious interpretations) and added the keywords "customs", "traditions", "history" and "protocols". This second search duplicated much of what had already been identified.

In addition, the researchers also spent time with librarians and researchers at Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Library of New Zealand and the Alexander Turnbull Library in an effort to locate relevant literature. At all three facilities, Cook Islands researchers and librarians were on hand to support the search.

While presenting at the Ministry of Social Development National Fono held in June 2016, the researchers were approached by four Cook Islands leaders, who were eager to komakoma (quietly chat) and share their interest in the research. They too acknowledged the lack of Cook Islands literature in the field.

At this point the researchers formalised a komakoma approach with the Cook Islands working group who had developed Turanga Māori (2012). The final selection of the literature to be reviewed was confirmed by the komakoma with the leaders and the working group.

The literature search pathway is summarised in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. FLOW CHART SUMMARISING LITERATURE SEARCH PATHWAY

Keywords identified to inform research on the agreed search engines and online databases (n=1227)

Papers retrieved for more detailed analysis (n=190)

Papers excluded on the basis of title, author and abstract (n=1037)

Papers excluded on the basis of topic, content and author (n=188)

Extension of keywords, reboot literature search

Papers excluded on the basis of duplication between databases, topic, content and or author (n=1223)

Visit and search with librarian and researcher assistance at Te Papa Tongarewa, National Library of New Zealand, Alexander Turnbull Library. Papers retrieved or inspected for more detailed analysis (n=74)

Komakoma with Cook Islands leaders and Cook Islands Working Group

Cook Islands cultural literature included in the research (n=4)

04

LITERATURE REVIEWS

LITERATURE REVIEWS

GROWING INEQUITIES IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL OUTCOMES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND, AND THEIR INCREASING CONCENTRATION AMONGST PACIFIC AND MĀORI FAMILIES AND POOR COMMUNITIES EMPHASISE THE NEED FOR CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS TO BE A FUNDAMENTAL FEATURE OF EFFECTIVE AND ETHICAL SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE. IT IS ALSO THE AUTHORS' BELIEF THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ADDRESS FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS FOR PACIFIC PEOPLES, AND IN THIS INSTANCE COOK ISLANDERS, WITHOUT CONSIDERING AND GIVING VALUE TO THE. CULTURAL CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF THE INTERVENTION

In a similar vein, Payne (2005) argues that it is possible to think about social work in practical terms, for example as a sequence starting with assessment, then intervention followed by termination. The practitioner may draw on guidelines informed by research about effective ways to behave while carrying out each component. Payne argues that such an approach can be mechanical and underestimate the value of both our ideology about the aims of social work and also the practice theories that tell us about the 'what', 'how' and 'when' of social work practice.

Given the pre-eminence of culture and the end goal of informing Cook Islands family violence interventions, the researchers have drawn on Payne's (2005) three elements of theory to inform their reviews of the four works of literature. These elements are:

- Perspectives: express values or views of the world which allow participants to understand their place and role as participants.

- Models: help structure how you approach a full range of situations and circumstances. Models describe what happens during practice in a wide range of situations and in a structured form. In this way we are able to extract particular principles and patterns of activity which provide practice consistency.

- Explanatory theory: explains the outcomes, causes, consequences and the circumstances in which they arise.

Re-iterating the integrated nature of these elements, Payne goes on to state that models and explanatory theory can only gain consistency and offer general usefulness to social work if they provide a view of the world which allows for ideas to be transferred from one situation to another and construct a pattern of practice. He then notes that the models and explanatory theory will, in turn, "also need to have a perspective" (p. 6).
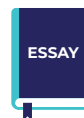
ESSAY
AKONO'ANGA MĀORI: COOK ISLANDS CULTURE

Tongia, M. (2003). Te neke'anga Māori i Porirua: Changing values in Aotearoa. In R. Crocombe, & M. T. Crocombe. (2003). *Akono'anga Māori: Cook Islands culture*. Suva, Fiji, Rarotonga, Cook Islands. Institute of Pacific Studies and Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific in association with the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust and the Ministry of Cultural Development.

This essay is located within a book that brings together 28 writers, 27 who self-identify as Cook Islanders. Each writer presents insider perspectives on many aspects of Cook Islands culture, from the traditional to the most contemporary of topics and views. However, Tongia's essay is the only one assessed by the researchers to clearly name, describe and apply Cook Islands cultural concepts. The context of his piece is focused on the Cook Islands communities that live in New Zealand and how, through identifying and practising aspects of their culture and undertaking a range of 'connected community projects', these communities are able to maintain and develop, in a country outside of their own, a Cook Islands way of doing things.

Tongia refers to toka Māori: indigenous rocks, noting that there are many toka Māori and suggests that for migrant communities it is important to choose a few relevant toka Māori to provide an anchor for a project. The project he describes is the Kura Vaka project. A kura is a formal request, and a vaka a canoe.

The project describes when a formal request was made in 2001, to Te Ariki Dame Te Atairangikaahu, for a Cook Islands vaka to participate in her annual koroneihana (coronation) Turangaewae river regatta celebrations.

To support the community to enact their kura, Tongia identifies three aspects of Cook Islands culture that affirm their values and practices as Cook Islanders to work together:

- *Te kuru pou toru - kuru* refers to the breadfruit tree, *pou* means post or pillar and toru means three. The direct translation of 'three breadfruit pillars' refers to the leadership roles and responsibilities that exist for Cook Islands communities through, i) traditional leaders, ii) the church and iii) government. This concept of leadership, *te kuru pou toru*, provided the community with an understanding of the leadership types they needed to draw on to lead the project forward, call people together and guide aspects of the kura process.

- *Ara tipoto, ara tiroa and 'are vananga* – Tongia identifies these as the key platforms upon which Cook Islanders perform their cultural duties and responsibilities. '*Are vananga* translates to 'house of knowledge', and refers to the maintenance and building of a chief's house or village meeting house. These are houses where traditional knowledge is taught and spoken. '*Are vananga* is a training ground for individuals to learn communal responsibility. It is where one learns the public display and teaching of history, genealogical links, oratory and shared and distinct values. It is a visual arena where one sees the individuals and the titles and responsibilities they carry. It is the most public of platforms for Cook Islanders to perform their cultural duties and responsibilities. Tongia also describes the *ara tipoto* which usually refers to the funeral duties of the immediate family of the deceased. Fulfilment of these cultural duties are of the most personal and private nature. They may include preparing the deceased's body, and do include preparing the house(s) of the deceased and fulfilling hosting responsibilities of visitors and wider family members who will come to pay their respects. *Ara tiro* refers to receiving and hosting duties of relatives and visiting groups. Often the quality of hosting is informed by the status of the visitors and the purpose of their visit. Quality is often reflected in the hosts' food choices, allocation of accommodation and gifts. Again, while the performance of cultural duties and responsibilities are privately negotiated they are open to public display.

- *Kura* is a formal request or application. A *kura* has three stages: the *patia* – making the request, which is led by orators, *kave* – refers to the gifts of food and materials that accompany the patia, and *'aka'oki* – is to return the gesture, that is, an invitation by the current *kura* presenters to their hosts. It is an important

aspect of the *kura* and completes the processes of receiving, entertaining, gifting and sharing of resources. Without the 'akaoki a debt is left unpaid. *Kura* provides individuals within a Cook Islands community collective an understanding of their individual roles and required actions. *Kura* also ensures that expectations and accountabilities within a circular process that re-distributes labour and resources are made evident and public.

Payne's three aspects of theory are present in Tongia's discussions: perspectives that help participants to understand their place and role as Cook Islanders is present, the cultural concepts Tongia presents help model appropriate behaviours in particular contexts, and the cultural concepts also contribute to building practice knowledge of why and how situations arise and how they can or might be responded to.

The concepts identified and explained by Tongia suggest that under certain conditions they might be explored further and applied in other different circumstances to support other Cook Islands communities, specifically Cook Islands family violence interventions and practices.

REPORT

PACIFIC PATHWAYS TO THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Percival, T., Robati-Mani, R., Powell, E., Kingi, P., Peteru, M. C., Hope, L., Finau, E., Selu, E., & Rankine, J. (2010). *Pacific pathways to the prevention of sexual violence: Full report*. The University of Auckland.

This qualitative research project was conducted among seven Pacific ethnic communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. The project aimed to discuss Cook Islanders' views of sexual violence, including protective and risk factors, and the extent to which traditional Cook Islands prevention methods have been upheld within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. It also aimed to understand what approaches could be developed further and identify key messages for prevention, intervention and post-intervention. For the purposes of this review, the research focus is on the Cook Islands report.

The Cook Islands researcher and writer is the Rev. Robert Robati-Mani. He brings to the research the perspectives of an ordained minister of the church, who is New Zealand born and brought up in the islands.

The report identifies two main concepts, mana and tapu. Mana is defined as the concentration of power in gods, spirits, individuals, rites or objects (Makirere, 2003:

In individuals it is exhibited in their power, strength, prestige, reputation, skill, personality, intelligence and accomplishment and viewed as coming from Io the supreme god through the universe and to humanity through the first-born. (p. 25)

Tapu refers to spiritual prohibitions; those things that are forbidden and set apart to be avoided because they are either divine or corrupt (Makirere, 2003). In this sense, tapu prohibitions apply to individuals, families, tribes and society. However, the research reports that a powerful individual, usually a male, who has great mana may breach tapu with little consequence.

Understanding one's own mana and that of others provides a cultural gauge to inform who and how one interacts with another. The report notes that tapu informs conduct and safety.

The report also identifies key terms relevant for sexual violence and family violence. Participants in the research noted differences between pre-contact and Christian attitudes to sexuality and that with the arrival of Christianity came a conservative, prohibitive attitude towards sex and one's sexuality, something understood, at times, to be contrary to cultural pre-Christian practices. Some participants identified this as a key factor to increased incidences of citing and reporting sexual violence.

Interestingly, when the terms, mana, tapu and key terms relevant to sexual and family violence were included as part of komakoma (quiet conversations with the working group members), they all agreed with the accuracy of the definitions and remarked that it is extremely important to name particular acts of violence and the terms themselves are so direct that they would not be used as a first choice. This infers that there is almost a prohibitive distinction around what is socially acceptable language to describe specific acts of violence.

As Cook Islands cultural concepts that inform and explain how and why violence situations arise, socially, culturally and personally, Payne's contributions of explanatory theories, models and perspectives are present. Exploring further how Robati-Mani's cultural concepts can add to practices that better inform and support work with Cook Islands families is recommended.

THESIS

MOU PIRIIA TE KŌRERO 'Ā TO 'UI TŪPUNA, AKA'ORA'ORA'IA: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY FOR COOK ISLANDS SECONDARY SCHOOLS PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Te Ava, A. (2011). *Mou piriia te korero a to ui tupuna, akaoraoraia: Culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Islands secondary schools physical education. Unpublished PhD thesis*. The University of Auckland.

Te Ava's thesis investigates culturally responsive pedagogy in physical education for Cook Islands secondary schools. He argues that culturally responsive pedagogy is important for Pasifika early childhood education as well as at other levels of schooling and draws on the work of Taouma, Tapusoa and Samu (2003), who reported that culturally responsive pedagogy exists when the foundations of knowledge have evolved from children's lives. Sleeter (2005) and Sidorkin (2002) are also referenced as examples of culturally responsive pedagogy to support students to be connected in their learning.

Te Ava also lists other Pacific researchers and educationalists who have developed cultural models and perspectives to support a Pasifika pedagogical approach including Mara, Thaman, Wendt-Samu, Sasau and Sue and Anae.

Te Ava (2011) examines the Cook Islands research framework, the Tivaevae Model developed by Teremoana Hodges (2003).

He presents Hodges' five key concepts: *taokotai* (collaboration), *tu akangateitei* (respect), *uriuri kite* (reciprocity), *tu inangaro* (relationships) and *akairi kite* (shared vision). Building on from Hodges' work, Te Ava identifies six core values integral to culturally responsive pedagogy in physical education for Cook Islands secondary schools. They are:

- *Tāueue* (participation)

- *Angaanga taokotai* (cooperation)

- *Akarongo te tamariki or akatano* (discipline)

- *Angaanga oire kapiti* (community involvement)

- *Te reo Māori Kuki Airani* (Cook Island Māori language)

- *Auora* (developing of the physical and the spiritual)

The Tivaevae Model, Pasifika research approaches, research interviews with Cook Islands teachers and discussions with elders have informed the identification of these core values. Like the Tivaevae Model, the cultural values Te Ava has identified are relevant in an educational context. However, he acknowledges that the concepts are also relevant for a wide range of Cook Islands cultural undertakings.

In discussion with the working group members, we recommend that each of the cultural concepts identified by Hodges and Te Ava be used to describe a range of situations that each cultural concept can apply and help explain as a means to inform their wider applicability, particularly for family violence. These in-depth descriptions would add to the understanding of the origins of the cultural concepts, the values they affirm, the ways in which each is practised, and the consequent roles and responsibilities of their practitioners. Te Ava also believes that Cook Islands values and concepts require *komakoma* with elders, whose knowledge and advice can complement and contribute to leading the academic critique of cultural concepts.

Payne is clear that a theory is an organised statement of ideas about the world, and that perspectives, theories and models are all necessary if theory is to be useful in practice. Te Ava's work contributes to naming cultural concepts and identifying them within an educational context. Further descriptions of the models and frameworks to which these cultural concepts can contribute will expand the explanatory purposes and the theoretical contributions these concepts can make for Cook Islands families and violence interventions.

PAPER

TŪRANGA MĀORI: A COOK ISLANDS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TRANSFORMING FAMILY VIOLENCE – RESTORING WELLBEING

Tūranga Māori (2012) is one of the seven original Pacific conceptual frameworks developed in response to the call from the participants of the Pacific Champions of Change Fono 2010, who collectively identified that culture must be the basis for constructing any solution for family violence. As with the other conceptual frameworks, *Tūranga Māori* was developed for practitioners working with victims, perpetrators, their families and communities. The working group members in preparing this paper advised that they had consciously chosen to approach their role as developers and writers who would:

- Put forward cultural content as opposed to a romanticised view of Cook Islands culture

- Affirm the diversity of cultures, languages and therefore ways of knowing and doing amongst Cook Islanders

- Under no circumstances, culturally validate family violence.

The framework presents the writers' approach to violence and the belief that individuals and the families they belong to have the right to expect to live a good life and enjoy good circumstances. Secondly, they confirm the ability of victims and perpetrators to transform from a life of family violence to wellbeing, from dependence to self-realisation to interdependence.

The framework defines violence and its negative consequences to wellbeing are described and demonstrated.

Critical to the *Tūranga Māori* framework are its elements:

1. *Akono'anga Māori* (Cook Islands Māori culture). *Akono'anga Māori* is informed by *papa'anga* (genealogy/ kinship) and to be expressed it requires the following four elements: *turanga*: (one's position/standing), *piri'anga* (relationships), *akaue'anga* (duties and responsibilities) and *ngakau aro'a* (generosity to self and others).

2. *No teia tuatau* (being relevant and realistic to the environment and context within which people live today). The notions of *komakoma marie* (gradual conversation) and *kia maru to korua komakoma'anga* (calm and peaceful conversation) are cited as ways to have relevance in engagement.

3. *Ta'anga'anga'ia* refers to the use of knowledge and tools, and argues that cultural concepts and tools are only useful when they are put into practice.

The paper discusses each of the cultural elements and their application in different situations. Short explanations and vignettes are used to help clarify the meaning and application of these cultural concepts. In the explanation of *akaue'anga*, the writers refer to Tongia's (2003) essay discussed above of the *ara tipoto*, *ara tiroa* and *are vananga*, to exemplify the expectations and fulfillment of duty.

A major point of difference from the other pieces of literature is that *Tūranga Māori* (2012) was purposely written to address family violence. It provides definitions and cultural insights, and identifies cultural concepts that practitioners can use in their practice. Further, the framework has a 'practice' nous about it, that makes it usable, the explanations and vignettes provide situational applications that allow trainers and practitioners to understand the application of particular concepts.

The researchers are aware that the Cook Islands Family Violence Training has been implemented in Wellington with favourable feedback. Given that *Tūranga Māori* was purposely designed for that purpose, it seems unfortunate that the ability to take the training programme to other Cook Islands communities is either limited by resources or co-ordination.
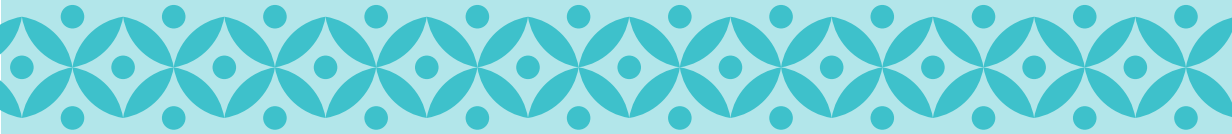
05

CONCLUSIONS

CONCLUSIONS

AS SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHERS WE ARE COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT SOCIAL JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT FOR DIVERSITIES ARE CENTRAL TO OUR PRACTICE.

Support for victims and perpetrators to transform their lives from family violence to *ora'anga meitaki* (wellbeing), family violence inventions must be underpinned and informed by Cook Islands culture. This is especially so when we understand that the quality and depth of our practice can have a widespread impact on the wellbeing of an individual's social and kin relationships.

As researchers, we recognise that research goals shift with each iteration and refinement of methodologies and methods. The filtering processes we adopt allow us to move beyond descriptions and interpretations of
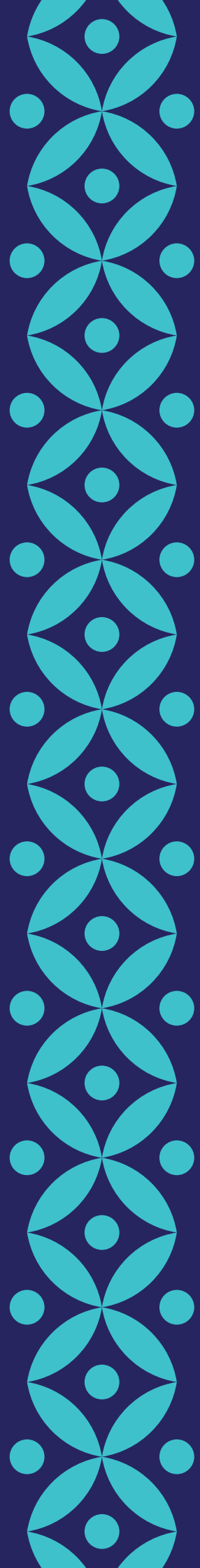
Cook Islanders and Cook Islands culture by religious and academic experts to cultural concepts conceived and/or identified by Cook Islanders for Cook Islanders.

Even with only four literature reviews, it is obvious that an opportunity exists to strengthen the pathway forward.
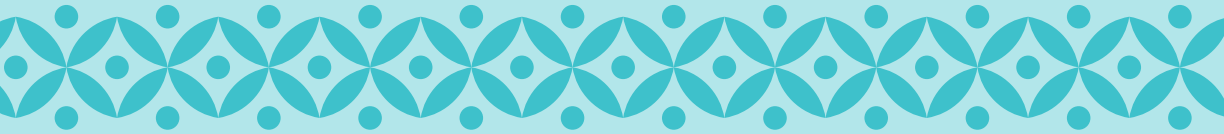
The *komakoma* (conversations) with the Cook Islands community leaders and the working group members have been invaluable for confirming the necessity for research to be informed by those who live and practice the cultural concepts that inform Cook Islands family violence interventions.

06

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THAT THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND A COOK ISLANDS FAMILY VIOLENCE CULTURAL CONCEPTS RESEARCH PROJECT THAT IS INFORMED BY COOK ISLANDS *TUMU KORERO* (ORATORS) AND CULTURAL HISTORIANS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND.

2. THAT THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COOK ISLANDS COMMUNITIES DEVELOP A TRAINING PLAN FOR HOSTING AND DELIVERING THE COOK ISLANDS FAMILY VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAMME.

3. EACH OF THE CULTURAL CONCEPTS IDENTIFIED BY HODGES AND TE AVA (2011) UNDERPIN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT WORK WITH COOK ISLANDS PEOPLE.

07

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Pasefika

PROUD

Our Families, Our People, Our Responsibility

Pasefika Proud embodies a vision of strong and vibrant Pacific children, young people and their families. Wellbeing for Pacific families occurs when all aspects of the individual and collective are in balance, co-existing with environments, kinship and support systems while recognising mana and tapu. Pacific cultures are strengths that can be used positively to promote and enhance resilience within Pacific families.

Pasefika Proud mobilises Pacific individuals, families and communities to take responsibility for the issues they are facing, find the solutions and take leadership in implementing them.

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