

# Pacific perspectives on family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

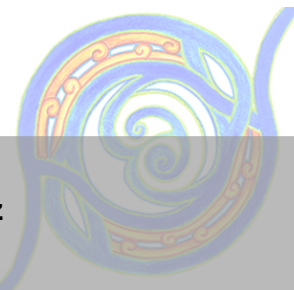
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## Key Messages

- Pacific peoples experience significant rates of family violence in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 'Mainstream' family violence initiatives and programmes are not usually effective for Pacific peoples. Using Western tools and ideologies for interventions is not ideal for addressing issues of family violence for Pacific families and communities, given the differences between common Pacific perceptions and meanings around issues of violence.
- There is a need to accommodate Pacific worldviews in order to deliver meaning and information around violence into policies, funding allocation, and strategies developed by the government. Funding criteria should allow each provider to develop a service that reflect their organisation's philosophical base, incorporating the Pacific cultural norms and culture within which it works.
- Bridging the gaps between micro and macro practices will have a higher possibility of achieving effective outcomes for family violence among Pacific families.
- Accountability and monitoring outcomes of current policies and funding allocation needs to be more transparent.
- Interventions and therapies for Pacific communities that acknowledge cultural diversity should be used where appropriate. 'One size fits all' provides limited ability to consider the diversity of Pacific families' cultural backgrounds, paths to violence, and required interventions. Family violence is complex, which requires practitioners to match interventions to a wide range of people and different types of family structures.
- Holistic approaches to intervention and prevention for Pacific communities need to be utilised in addressing the complexities of cultural, communal, and church issues when working with survivors of violent abuse and perpetrators of violence.
- Currently, access to culturally safe therapy is limited. Selected therapists, many who are not trained to work with Pacific communities, are appointed as part of many funded initiatives and programmes targeting violence.
- 'Family' in Pacific culture is central to people's being. Therefore, individuals usually identify themselves within the context and relational connection to their families or communities. Working from a holistic approach means working with the whole Pacific family to address and prevent family violence and monitor the progress after the intervention.



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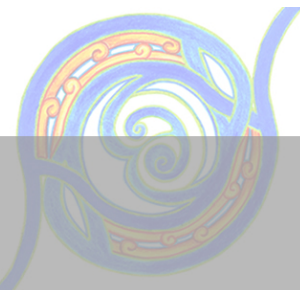
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## 1. Introduction

Pacific populations in New Zealand have significant rates of family violence as both victims and perpetrators.<sup>1-3</sup> The main Pacific groups in New Zealand are the Samoan, Cook Island, Tongan, Fijian, Tokelauan, Niuean, and Tuvaluan peoples. Although descendants of the Polynesians, the seven groups are diverse populations and are not homogenous.<sup>4-6</sup> They are linguistically, culturally, and geographically distinct from one another.<sup>5, 7</sup> This paper is not a complete representation of the views and experiences of each of the seven ethnic groups but rather a general and overall perspective on family violence service provision to Pacific communities.

We argue that holistic, collaborative, and collective approaches to addressing family violence for Pacific families are essential for their healing process.<sup>5, 6, 8-10</sup> However, there is currently a mismatch between macro policies and micro practices in family violence service delivery. This mismatch contributes to disparities and inequities affecting the lives and wellbeing of Pacific families in New Zealand. We propose that transparent integration of macro-level policies and micro service provision has significant potential to enhance effective outcomes for Pacific families.

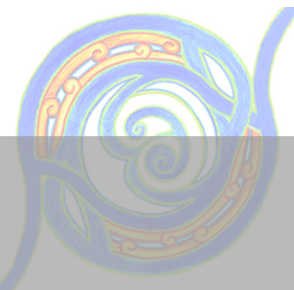
### Structure of the paper

This paper presents a critical analysis and interpretation of the information available about family violence using a Pacific lens. It is based on peer-reviewed and grey literature, government reports, and other available resources; the authors' experiences managing and working in Pacific health and social services; and conversations with other Pacific people with experience working in community-based family violence services. The paper identifies systematic forces and processes that have a significant impact on family violence services for Pacific families and critically examines the effect of macro-level decision making and policies on family violence services for Pacific families at the community level.

The first part of the paper provides a demographic overview of Pacific peoples living in New Zealand, the prevalence of family violence, and the importance of culture in understanding and addressing family violence issues for Pacific communities. The section on the macro-level discusses structural and systematic processes that have a direct impact on the services and interventions for family violence for Pacific communities. The third section provides examples of the effect of these processes on service delivery and practices related to family violence at the micro-level. The final part of this paper connects the macro and micro-level practices and identifies their impacts on family violence services.

## 1. Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand

Considered as an historical term, 'Pacific Islands' was a political definition used by the New Zealand government to address issues relating to Pacific peoples from the 1960s.<sup>6, 7, 11</sup> Other terms commonly used are Pasifika, Pasefika, Pacific Islanders, Oceania peoples, Pacificans, and Pacific peoples. This paper will use Pacific or Pacific peoples for consistency. Pacific peoples and academics have critiqued



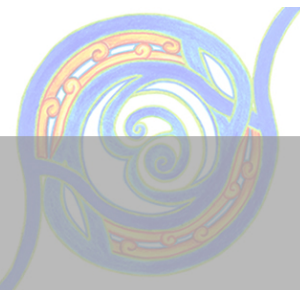
the use of the term 'Pacific' to describe groups scattered over Oceania, inclusive of the Polynesian, Melanesian, and Micronesian islands.<sup>12-14</sup> These distinctive groups may share one ocean but have unique differences in their languages, cultural values, and practices.<sup>6, 15-17</sup> These differences are not recognised nor acknowledged in the vast majority of policies, laws, and regulations of family violence interventions in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Each of the Pacific nations has a long history with New Zealand society. The constitutional arrangements that led to Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans obtaining New Zealand citizenship are evidence of New Zealand's colonial role.<sup>12</sup> These historical relationships have brought significant changes to the cultures, citizenships, and lifestyles of the Pacific nations. The migration of Pacific peoples to New Zealand to fulfil labour shortages in the post-war period was considered as the best opportunity for the island nations. The high demands for labour provided opportunities to migrate to the "land of milk and honey" and for better lives. However, for most Pacific migrants (mainly from Samoa, Tonga, and Fiji), this demand for labour was only short-lived. Economic troubles and recession hit the New Zealand economy in the 1970s, and the labourers became viewed as a "burden" to New Zealand society. The solution to this problem was the "downgrading" of Pacific workers in the eyes of policymakers from physically fit labourers to overstayers, which eventually led to the dawn raid<sup>a</sup> fiasco.<sup>17</sup> The dawn raids created painful psychological and mental health problems for Pacific migrants, their families, and communities. The effects of these historical events created disparities that continue to influence the lifestyles and wellbeing of Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand today.<sup>14, 17</sup>

The number of Pacific peoples in New Zealand is growing. According to the New Zealand census in 2018, 381,642 people identified with at least one Pacific ethnic group, and this made up 8.1% of the population, up from 7.4% in 2013.<sup>18</sup> The largest groups were Samoan (182,721), Tongan (82,389), and Cook Islands Māori (80,532). Almost two-thirds of those who identified with at least one Pacific ethnic group were born in New Zealand. Predictions indicate that the Pacific population will make up a significant proportion of the New Zealand labour force by the year 2026.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> The dawn raids were carried out by New Zealand Police in the 1970s on migrants thought to have overstayed their visas. Homes and workplaces were forcibly entered in the early hours of the morning and people stopped in the street and asked for proof of residency. People found to have overstayed were often prosecuted and deported, sometimes as soon as the next day. The raids targeted Pacific peoples despite the majority of people overstaying their visas being from countries such as Britain, Australia and South Africa. The dawn raids were condemned by various sections of New Zealand society including Pacific and Māori communities, church groups, employers and workers' unions, and human rights and anti-racist groups. The raids damaged New Zealand's relations with Pacific nations and communities.



## Family violence and Pacific peoples

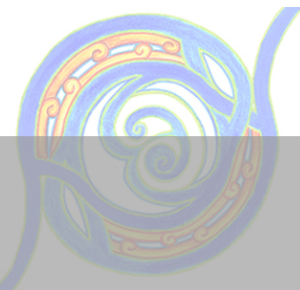
Family violence is a broad term that includes intimate partner violence (IPV), child abuse, child neglect, and elder abuse.<sup>1, 20</sup> Family violence covers a broad range of controlling behaviours, such as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that are likely to cause fear, intimidation, and emotional problems in a variety of close interpersonal relationships. These relationships are inclusive of those between partners, parents and children, siblings and with significant others who are not part of the physical household but are part of the family and/or are fulfilling the function of family.<sup>7, 8, 21</sup>

Pacific peoples, on the other hand, conceptualise violence as a disruption to relational space between people that can fracture relationships with others.<sup>20, 22, 23</sup> This relational space<sup>7, 22, 23</sup> is known as the *va* in many Pacific languages. This refers to a space that relates and holds families, people, siblings, villages and communities together in unity, the space that is context and gives meaning to all things. The relationships between all things in this space comes with commitments and responsibilities. These relationships are guided and strengthened by the reciprocation of values such as respect, love and humility.<sup>22, 23</sup> However, multiple factors have disrupted these relationships in Pacific families. Factors such as colonisation, migration, acculturation and globalisation have all contributed to the changes in relationships for Pacific families.<sup>13, 16</sup> *Te Rito: New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy* (2002)<sup>1, 24</sup> also acknowledged the roles of systemic and environmental factors such as inequality, patriarchy and the impact of colonisation and discrimination as contributing to the occurrence of violence in the homes. For example, colonisation and acculturation brought significant changes to how family units are structured and organised and to gender roles for Pacific communities.<sup>23, 25</sup> These changes continue to have a major impact on Pacific families and their relationships today.

Traditionally, women in the Pacific nations have high status that is significant in maintaining the hierarchical social structures within their families and nations. Status for women is depicted, for example<sup>b</sup> in the sister-brother relationship in Samoa<sup>23</sup> and the *mehekitanga* system in Tonga.<sup>20</sup> However, these relationships have undergone changes since early contact with Western ideology. For example, the *feagaiga* covenant has changed, as Fepulea'i has captured in this statement:<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> *Feagaiga* in the Samoan culture is an indigenous practice that ensured the sacred status of the sister and the role of the brother as a protector and provider for the sister within the family and the village.



*“The sacred brother-sister indigenous covenant had undergone a significant change since the arrival of the palagi missionaries in Samoa, 1830, when this sacred covenant was taken from the brother-sister and transferred to the church minister-village, effectively devaluing the worth of the sister in the indigenous feagaiga. The rippling effects of the breakdown of feagaiga over generations, for many, has manifested itself in the rising incidents of family and sexual violence in our Samoan communities.”(p.ii)*

~ Fepulea'i M. Feagaiga, The sacred brother-sister covenant – past, present and future [Masters thesis]. Te Wānanga o Aotearoa; 2016.

We argue that the philosophy behind the *feagaiga* and traditional status of Pacific women does not fit in with the Western ideologies of the gendered division of labour and the cult of domesticity that has come with Christianity to the Pacific nations due to colonisation.<sup>7, 23</sup> These Western gender ideologies have controlled the ways people behave, and in turn, disrupted the social structures that guided pre-colonial understandings of gender and gender relationships in Pacific cultures.<sup>23</sup>

Peteru's<sup>8</sup> literature review (2012) defines family violence as a symptom of complex socio-cultural and environmental factors. The Pacific Advisory Group<sup>c</sup> and Pacific academics have noted that most contributing factors for family violence are economically and socio-culturally determined.<sup>8, 26</sup> These numerous risk factors confirm that there is no one solution to address or prevent violence in the home for our Pacific families.<sup>8</sup>

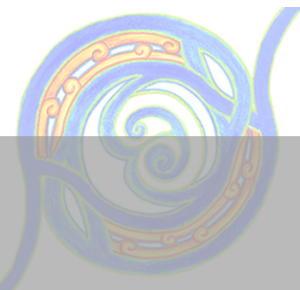
## Prevalence of family violence

Family violence is a harsh reality, and a widespread issue facing New Zealand society, as shown in prevalence data, literature reviews, and peer-reviewed documents.<sup>27-31</sup> Statistics on the prevalence of family violence indicate that this is a worldwide epidemic.<sup>32-34</sup> It has both short and long term impacts on individuals, families, systems, societies, and communities. Much of the international and national

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<sup>c</sup> The Pacific Advisory Group was established in 2005 to “provide strategic advice to the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families, Family and Community Services and the broader Ministry of Social Development, on their development and implementation of policies, services and initiatives that impact on Pacific peoples in New Zealand.” (p.1)

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/initiatives/action-family-violence/pacific-programme-of-action.pdf>



data show that Pacific peoples experience higher rates of violence than many other ethnic groups.<sup>35</sup> There is evidence that women and children are victims of family violence in a significantly greater proportion than men.

25, 32, 35, 36

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supports prevention for gender-based violence in more than 150 countries and territories and reported findings on a prevalence survey on violence in 31 countries in Asia and Pacific. The results show that 15 to 68 percent of women have disclosed experiencing physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime by an intimate partner.<sup>35</sup> The prevalence data for six of the Pacific nations that participated in this survey is a huge concern as shown in table 1 below. The data collection for the six Pacific nations was conducted from 2000-2012.

**Table 1: Percentages of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime**

Country	Sample	%
<b>Cook Islands</b>	1013	33.0 %
<b>Fiji</b>	3193	64.1 %
<b>Kiribati</b>	1769	67.6 %
<b>Samoa</b>	1646	46.1 %
<b>Tonga</b>	634	39.6 %
<b>Tuvalu</b>	501	36.8 %

Data from World Health Organisation (WHO) Multi-country Study on Women and Health and Domestic Violence Against Women, compiled in:

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *Harmful Connections: Examining the relationships between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific*. Suva, Fiji: UNICEF; 2015.

### **Factors that protect family wellbeing**

*Reciprocity, respect, genealogy, observance of tapu relationships, language and belonging are concepts that are shared across the seven ethnic specific communities as elements that protect and strengthen family and individual wellbeing. It is important to note that the English translations of these concepts do not reflect the depth or contexts of their meanings, or the unique and diverse ways in which they are lived out in the day-to-day practices of each ethnic community. Reference must be made to each ethnic specific publication.*

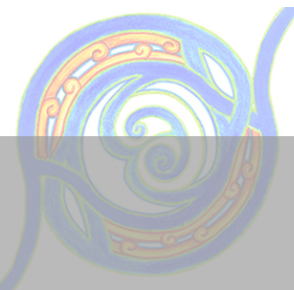
### **Factors that contribute to family violence**

*Situational factors: including socio-economic disadvantage; migration; culture and identity.*

*Cultural factors: including beliefs that women are subordinate to men; perceptions and beliefs about what constitutes violence; (mis) interpretation of concepts, values and beliefs about tapu relationships between family members including children and the elderly; unresolved historical and intergenerational issues; fusion of cultural and religious beliefs and their (mis) interpretations.*

*Religious factors: including (mis) interpretations of Biblical texts; fusion of cultural and religious beliefs and their (mis) interpretations.”(pp.12-13)*

*Nga vaka o kāiga tapu: a Pacific Conceptual Framework to address family violence in New Zealand*. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development; 2012.

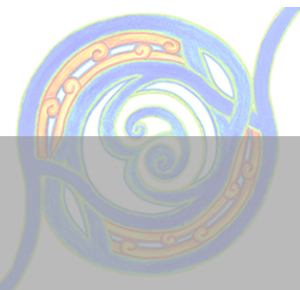


A report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) examined the connections between violence against women and violence against children in the South Pacific.<sup>35</sup> It was the result of an extensive systematic review of existing data sources on violence against women and children in the Pacific. The review reported that women who experienced IPV in their homes were more likely to report their children having behavioural problems, having nightmares and repeating a year in school, or dropping out of school completely. Children whose mothers were subjected to IPV in Fiji and Kiribati were twice as likely to have to repeat years of schooling or to drop out of school. Fulu and colleagues<sup>37</sup> have also noted that violence against women in their homes can harm and affect the children.

In New Zealand over the last ten years, there has been some research and literature reviews that has described Pacific people's experiences of violence.<sup>8, 20, 26</sup> However almost all the prevalence data available are reported as Pan-Pacific, thus making it more challenging to disaggregate if some Pacific groups are at higher risk than others. A recent report by the Ministry of Social Development<sup>38</sup> stated that some data indicates Pacific young peoples have greater exposure to violence than other ethnic groups. Currently there is insufficient data collected on a regular basis to determine whether family violence is increasing or decreasing for Pacific (or any other) communities in New Zealand.

Although there are limitations, New Zealand family violence data indicates that violence is a significant issue that requires comprehensive strategies to address it. Data on the prevalence of family violence for Pacific communities is summarised in the following studies. A representative sample of New Zealand women surveyed in 2003 found that one in three Pacific women (32%) had experienced physical and/or sexual IPV in their lifetime, with 9% experiencing violence in the twelve months prior to the survey.<sup>33</sup> The Youth '12 research team reported that 27% of Pacific students witnessed adults hitting children in their homes and 15% witnessed adults hitting other adults. Pacific students were three times more likely than New Zealand European students to report witnessing violence against children by adults in their homes.<sup>39</sup> Sexual abuse is also a significant issue, but quite often it is considered a taboo topic for discussions among Pacific communities so creates challenges for prevention and intervention initiatives. The Youth '12 survey stated that 22% of Pacific students reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact, and close to 40% of Pacific students who had experienced unwanted sexual contact had not told anyone. Female students were about twice as likely to report experiencing unwanted sexual contact and to have not told anyone compared to their male counterparts.<sup>40</sup>

The longitudinal Pacific Islands Families (PIF) study also provided data on Pacific peoples and family violence. This study followed a cohort of 1,085 mothers and their infants born during 2000 in Auckland.<sup>41</sup> They examined the association between maternal intimate partner violence (IPV) and postnatal depression (PND) six weeks after giving birth. Women completed measures for IPV and PND.<sup>41, 42</sup> The results showed that women who were victims of physical violence were more likely to report postnatal depressive symptoms than those who were not (29.6% vs. 10.9%). Other studies in





New Zealand have examined issues such as violent youth offenders,<sup>43</sup> incarcerated peoples,<sup>44</sup> family violence deaths<sup>45</sup> and protection orders<sup>46</sup> and all provide further data relating to the prevalence of family violence among Pacific peoples.

The data on family violence from these different studies confirms that it is a primary concern. So, why does this issue continue to persist for Pacific communities, and what can be done differently to respond to, and to help prevent this problem? In the last ten years, some efforts and resources allocated to Pacific activities have led to the development of different frameworks in anticipation of developing appropriate solutions for addressing family violence affecting Pacific communities.<sup>9, 47, 48</sup> However considering the prevalence data shown here, it is evident that current prevention and intervention strategies available for family violence are not working well for Pacific communities.

## Pacific culture and family violence

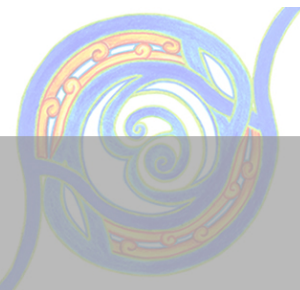
Findings from the literature reviews by Peteru<sup>8</sup> and Malungahu and Nosa<sup>26</sup> both indicate that culture is strongly considered to hold a vital role in addressing family violence for Pacific communities. Culture is defined as encompassing material and non-material elements that include various aspects such as language, beliefs, ideas, rules, myths, generational issues, and religion, to name a few.<sup>49, 50</sup> Further, where there is language comes a culture that defines one's social identity,<sup>51</sup> worldviews, norms and values that guide relational connections with others.<sup>52-54</sup> Nelson Mandela made a meaningful statement about the importance of language:<sup>55</sup>

*"If you talk to a [person] in a language [they] understand, that goes to [their] head. If you talk to [them] in [their] language, that goes to [their] heart."* (p.15)

~ Nelson Mandela, quote in Thomsen S, Tevita J, Levi-Teu Z. *A Pacific perspective on the living standards framework and wellbeing*. New Zealand Treasury Discussion paper 18/09; 2018.

Language is an expression of culture.<sup>51, 56</sup> It transmits cultural norms, knowledge, and values that guide one's life and behaviour concerning others and their environment.<sup>57</sup> When people think about the language associated with who they are, they will likely behave in accordance with the cultural norms and values connected with that language.<sup>56, 58</sup> Through language, people become aware of unwritten rules about what is appropriate to say and acceptable to do.

The documentation of family violence by Pacific researchers, authors, commentators and academics emphasises many aspects of culture that are important to incorporate in services and interventions for Pacific communities. Culture is acknowledged as a strength, a cultural capital, and a treasure that



can be used positively to prevent violence in the families.<sup>59</sup> Pasefika Proud,<sup>d</sup> established under the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families is very active in engaging with Pacific communities in executing different projects<sup>9, 60</sup> but, despite these initiatives, there are continued calls challenging government policymakers to look to Pacific cultures to inform family violence programmes when working with Pacific families.<sup>5, 61</sup> One of the champions<sup>60</sup> for addressing family violence in Pacific communities<sup>e</sup> argued:<sup>62</sup>

*“what was being delivered in the mainstream was having minimal impact on change behaviours; it was not connecting with Pacific perpetrators or victims, nor their families and communities”*

~ Pacific Champion for Change, quoted in Pasefika Proud,  
*Preventing family violence through culture*; 2018.

The Nga Vaka o Kāinga Tapu framework<sup>48</sup> released in 2012 extensively describes the role of culture in family violence education. Recommendations from this framework concluded: incorporating cultural knowledge, skills, and tools from each Pacific ethnic group is paramount and useful for addressing family violence in the homes.

*“One of our significant strengths is utilizing our significant cultural capital. We have an understanding of our families and recognize the importance of communication through our languages.”*

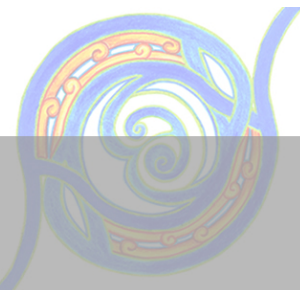
~ Tevita Funaki, CEO, The Fono  
<https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/stories/helping-hands-to-end-the-harm/>

We would also note that fostering a greater understanding of one’s cultural norms and the values communicated through one’s language can be an effective intervention method for Pacific families. Incorporating these norms and values in the government’s legislation, policies, and funding distributions for family violence prevention and interventions are considered essential for Pacific communities.

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<sup>d</sup> Pasefika Proud is a family violence prevention campaign that mobilises Pacific families and communities to take responsibilities for the family violence issues affecting their lives.

<sup>e</sup> Champions for Pacific family violence in this paper refers to those Pacific individuals who have dedicated their lives to working with their communities by promoting family violence services and supporting Pacific families affected by family violence.



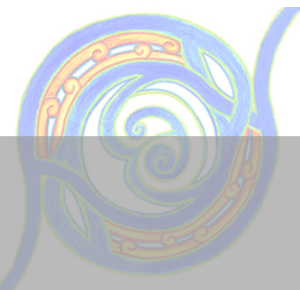
At present, the English language is used to define and contextualise the drivers of family violence in New Zealand. Values incorporated into legislation reflect principles which are underpinned by Western ideologies. As a consequence, policies and strategies, resource allocation, educational curriculum, therapies, and service delivery continue to be framed around Western ideologies and language. However, Western paradigms and ideals do not align with Pacific ideologies and the ways they restore harmony and healings within the homes.

Indigenous paradigms are distinct from many Western paradigms and should not be subsumed under Western paradigms when creating programmes for Pacific people. For example, it should not be assumed that family conferences which bring family members together is an inclusive and positive way to approach Pacific families. In many cases, it is culturally inappropriate to sit parents and other family members together to bring about a desired outcome. It may not achieve the goal of giving every member a “voice” to contribute to a positive plan going forward. A group of men may find it difficult to voice their individual thoughts and emotions collectively facilitated by a professional but may engage and attend meetings more readily if there is a spiritual head, such as a priest or pastor to accompany the practitioner when facilitating discussions. Holistic approaches that acknowledge and respect cultural spaces and relationships work better than trying to fit culture into Western paradigms that do not accommodate cultural significance.

## Pacific responses to family violence

In the last 20 years, Pacific communities have experienced many changes in the family violence community sector through systematic restructuring.<sup>63, 64</sup> These changes determine the levels of service and the intensity of programmes Pacific services are engaged to deliver to address violence with Pacific families. Furthermore, it introduced changes to the number and sizes of services and the types and levels of resources available for Pacific communities.<sup>63, 65</sup> While restructuring and funding pressures have impacted ‘mainstream’ and other community services too, they tend to have the greatest impacts for already marginalised communities and services operating differently to the ‘mainstream.’<sup>66</sup> Despite the changes, Pacific services continue to work with the limited opportunities and resources to address family violence issues for Pacific communities. Some of these services in Auckland are described below.

The Pasefika Proud Campaign, Le Va service, the Fono Network and the Fonua Ola Network all hold contracts with different ministries. They have also extended their capacity to researching Pacific communities.<sup>60</sup> The Pasefika Proud Campaign addresses violence in Pacific families by using messaging designed, delivered, and led by Pacific peoples around building strong and healthy families. Pasefika Proud has also engaged in projects examining issues of family violence for Pacific communities.



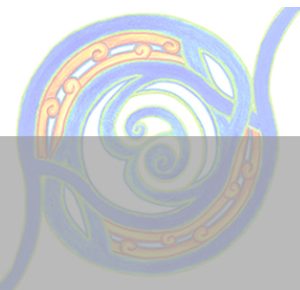
In 2012, seven (now eight) ethnic-specific Pacific conceptual frameworks informed the building of *Nga vaka o kāiga tapu: A Pacific Conceptual Framework to address family violence in New Zealand* and ethnic-specific Pacific capabilities among practitioners, providers, and community leaders. The Nga Vaka frameworks<sup>52</sup> aimed at assisting policymakers and writers to understand core Pacific values and principles that underpin the Pasefika Proud programme<sup>10,52</sup>. This framework sets out the key cultural concepts and principles of wellbeing for each of the eight main Pacific communities in NZ: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga and, Tuvalu. The second part of this framework is a Pacific competency-training program that provides participants with in-depth insight into cultural approaches to achieving wellbeing for Pacific peoples.

The Le Va service<sup>67</sup> has been in operation for many years and continues to provide mental health online services for Pacific communities. Le Va carried out a two year research project identifying the underlying conditions, risk factors, and protective factors for violence unique to Pacific young people. In 2018, working in collaboration with ACC and Synergia, Le Va received funding to develop a Pacific violence prevention program called *Atu-Mai*. The programme aims to strengthen Pacific communities by developing confident and resilient Pacific young people. *Atu-Mai* seeks to equip Pacific young people and their families with the right knowledge and tools to live violence-free. The rationale for this programme is that Pacific young people experience high rates of family violence, sexual violence, and suicide attempts. *Atu-Mai* takes a strengths-based approach to achieve positive change. Online resources are being produced and made available for Pacific families. While the online resources and tools can be very useful for the young generations and those who are digital savvy, one challenge can be that other family members may have difficulties accessing them.

The Fonua Ola Network,<sup>f</sup> formally known as the Auckland Pasefika Providers Family Violence Prevention Network evolved initially from a small group of concerned providers working since the 1970s. The network was launched in 2007 with 11 providers as members. Due to restructuring changes with the

Ministry, the network was officially established in 2014 and took over the administration of five of these Pacific providers. Fonua Ola is a social service provided by Pacific peoples and they cover all the areas in Auckland. Fonua Ola is contracted to provide family support, Whānau Ora support, family violence counselling and cultural social work support. Similarly, the Fono<sup>68</sup> runs a holistic

<sup>f</sup> For a detailed history of Fonua Ola, visit <https://www.fonuaola.org.nz/our-history>



service and offers a range of social services to cater for Pacific needs including a mental health service, family support, Family Start programmes and a youth mentoring service. The Fono provide Family Violence Programmes and Safety Programmes for Pacific people across all of Auckland. These programmes provide advocacy and support for families and crisis intervention services for those who have experienced family violence. While these Pacific services and others throughout New Zealand are committed to providing better services for Pacific communities, there are limitations and systematic issues that challenge their ability to deliver these services. Some of these challenges are discussed below.

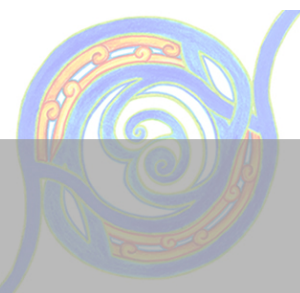
## 2. Macro level impact on services and interventions

This section focuses on practices and decision-making at the macro level and how these impact on the family violence interventions Pacific services can provide for their communities. There is currently limited information on the impact of public sector restructuring or changes of government on family violence services for Pacific communities. As a consequence, it is important to examine these issues to identify the connection between macro and micro-level practices<sup>69-71</sup> and their influence on family violence services for Pacific peoples.

### Restructuring of public sector

Family violence affects people with different positionalities. The factors that contribute to, and the effects of family violence are diverse and can vary for different ethnic groups. In this globalised world, changes to structures and systems of a country are inevitable due to one key priority: to improve its economy. However, political and economic changes often bring about changes that benefit only a small group of people.<sup>64, 72</sup> These changes are likely to affect the lifestyles and life chances of other minority ethnic groups. The changes can have a significant influence on how people live their lives, how they contribute to society, and how they behave as citizens. These changes can also lead to loss of employment for families. An example is the relocation of manufacturing factories and the loss of employment for the workers most likely to be Māori and Pacific peoples. Moreover, the relocation of families out of Auckland to places with cheaper accommodation as a solution to address homelessness and housing issues has impacted Pacific families. These families sacrificed the benefit of having a support network nearby due to being isolated from relatives, which can contribute to and make it more difficult to end violence in the homes.<sup>21</sup>

In 2009, academics associated with the School of Government at Victoria University of Wellington<sup>63</sup> were commissioned to undertake a project looking at the future State by reviewing empirical data and literature on restructuring in the public and private sectors. Focus groups were conducted in 2011 with chief executives and other officials to identify key perspectives. It found that chief executives who initiated the restructuring were more optimistic about its role and impact than those who were



directly affected by it. The research team concluded that restructuring is a device of control that has been overused by government. They argued:

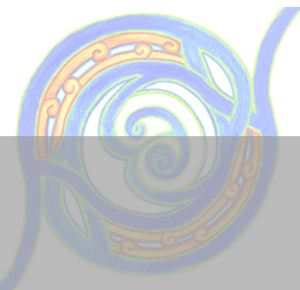
*“We conclude that restructuring has indeed become the ‘hammer’ of organisational change in New Zealand, a result of the ‘freedom to manage’ formula adopted in the late 1980s to break up a unified and ‘career for life’ bureaucracy that was seen to respond too slowly to the economic crises of the 1980s. The restructuring has become almost an addiction, reinforced by short, fixed-term contracts ... Restructuring is a symbol and sometimes a substitute for action. It treats organisations as though they are mechanical objects with interchangeable parts rather than as living systems of people who have choices about the extent to which they will commit to their work.”*

~ Norman R, Gill D. Restructuring: An over-used lever for change in New Zealand's state sector?  
In: Gill D, Ryan B, eds. *Future state: Directions for public management in New Zealand*.  
Wellington: Victoria University Press; 2011.

Restructuring of systems and changes of government do result in changes to policies and intervention plans for family violence.<sup>64</sup> The changes can determine the number of contracts that are funded, the ways services are delivered, and what monitoring and reporting processes exist. However, there is no evidence that the restructuring and reshaping of the New Zealand welfare and social service system in the last ten years has resulted in any significant reductions in the number of family violence incidents for Pacific peoples as shown in police reports and statistical data.<sup>73</sup> In 2019, Newshub reported the government acknowledged the lack of evidence of improvement in family violence.<sup>74</sup>

Restructuring often affects staff members working for the New Zealand government Ministries, and leads to changes in funding and planning contracts, and the establishment of new advisory and reference groups. Restructuring is about disestablishing old ways and establishing new and alternative systems.<sup>63, 64, 75</sup> The most recent and significant restructuring of the Ministry of Social Development and its contracting of family violence services was through the establishment of Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children.<sup>76</sup> A final report from an independent panel<sup>77</sup> stated that the performance of the system was well below what New Zealanders required for children and young people considered in need of care and protection. The system was overhauled, and Oranga Tamariki was established. This restructuring took place in 2017, and it may be too early to determine its impact on family violence services for Pacific communities.

A previous restructuring of MSD in 2014 saw the establishment of Community Investment business units as a result of the Ministry's work towards investing in services and outcomes.<sup>78</sup> The goal of the new structure was aimed at supporting a more flexible, joined-up approach, prioritising relationships



and providing support to the community providers. However, criticism from the public and providers has questioned the lack of transparency and the economic effect of these changes on staff and community services.<sup>79</sup> The restructuring also affected Pacific providers when two out of eleven funded providers merged under the new network provider. During this process, two of the original 11 successfully merged, four remained independent and others closed down, which led to unemployment for staff who had served in these community groups for many years. A previous manager for one provider shared her experience:<sup>80</sup>

*“We did not have a choice but to close and let our people go. It was regrettable because some of our people have worked for many years as community workers and as advocates, and we paid them so little money to help us with our families. We had such a demand for support, and these people pick up all the bits and pieces that we could not do because it is out of our budget. Then the Ministry wanted us to merge, and it came with more changes and expectations. They said if we do not merge, then there would be no more contracts for us.”*

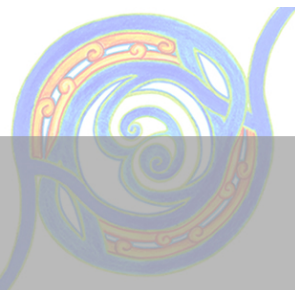
~ Retired NGO manager, personal communication, August 2019

Family violence prevention programmes and services run by Pacific providers target Pacific communities.<sup>81, 82</sup> These services are often small in scale and cater to specific groups of people. These small services are more at risk for closure or merger when the restructuring of the public sector takes place. In 2018, the Kia Piki Ake Welfare Expert Group<sup>83</sup> reviewed the welfare system and strongly suggested that the government needed better solutions to improve services for Pacific communities:

*The expert group strongly recommended “for the MSD to accelerate its commitment to cultural responsiveness to Pacific Peoples and take account of their diverse Pacific communities in New Zealand.” (p.45)*

~ Welfare Expert Advisory Group, *Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring dignity to social security in New Zealand*. Wellington; 2019.

In 2018, a Joint Venture for eliminating Family Violence and Sexual Violence was introduced with the intention of bringing government agencies together. It seeks to create one single point of accountability and has the potential to join up people and resources from across the public service.<sup>84</sup> <sup>85</sup> There has been an acknowledgment that the family violence system's decision-making and management has been government-led. Therefore, a key challenge for this Joint Venture is to involve providers and communities in partnerships across the family violence system. This idea of a joint venture is relatively new and a detailed picture of how this is going to work has not yet emerged.



However, it seems that changes can come with new dollars and tend to come with new expectations in terms of numbers and volumes. It will be essential to follow up on development and implementation of the Joint Venture, to determine whether it will make a difference to family violence for Pacific communities.

## Policies, strategies, and laws on family violence

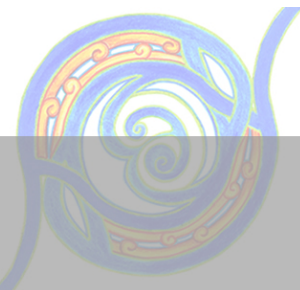
Earle<sup>86</sup> cautioned that when it comes to policymaking, the government and other institutional power are positioned at the centre, and Māori and minority groups such as Pacific are at the margins. In 2015, Fulu and colleagues<sup>37</sup> stated that Western ideals seem to underlie the hegemonic power that is present and continue to control the political and social environment today. It is evident from Fulu and colleagues' work that government ideologies, values, and interests influence their political action and inaction on policies and resources for family violence. Local government laws, regulations, and the policies in place prioritise individual rights and protection for family violence, and none of these clearly describe what adequate interventions are needed and for what ethnic groups. A discussion paper by the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor on preventing youth offending in New Zealand noted that:<sup>87</sup>

*“Interventions continue to be sourced from Western worldview models of theory and practice, despite there being as many as 19 different ethnic groups under the ‘Pacific Islands’ label defined by Statistics NZ, all with their own worldviews.” (p.25)*

~ Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor. *It's never too early, never too late: A discussion paper on preventing youth offending in New Zealand.* Wellington; 2018.

Policies and strategies are used as tools by the government and the public sector to set direction and activities concerning planned interventions and resources. These strategies outline the key goals, objectives, and quite often, the principles that are to guide the implementation process of these plans.<sup>20</sup> The language used to frame these policies and strategies is often based on Eurocentric values and norms. Cook<sup>88</sup> noted that Pacific peoples' lives are affected by policy that they have no voice in the development of, at a national and local level.<sup>89</sup> More than twenty years later, although there has been some progress, policies and strategies for family violence continue to be dominated by Eurocentric norms and values.

The 2017 redevelopment of the Kapasa, a policy tool<sup>61</sup> with analysts across government sectors, was a genuine gesture of collaboration. This is the Ministry for Pacific People's policy analysis tool for policy managers and analysts working for government agencies to incorporate the needs, values, aspirations and experiences of Pacific people in their policy development process.<sup>66</sup> The Kapasa provides Pacific information that is valuable and useful:





*“Kapasa is a policy tool, a tool that provides a platform for government agencies to build their understanding of Pacific peoples – with the hope to lead to more effective policy development.”*

~ Ministry of Pacific Peoples. *Kapasa: The Pacific Policy Analysis Tool. The Policy Project.* Wellington, 2017.

The biggest challenge is the lack of explanation as to how and when this information is incorporated into policies. Despite the development of policy frameworks that should guide action, there is evidence of a disconnect between policy and practice. While Pacific worldviews and approaches for family violence interventions articulated through their Pacific models of care are widely published,<sup>10, 90-92</sup> it is not evident that they are taken up in government policy, planning, contracting or funding of services. Similarly, it is not clear the extent to which practitioners are aware of and utilising them, indicating implementation and resourcing gaps. Further, policies are often decided by those who have limited or no experiences or interaction with those affected by abuse and violence. The Glenn Inquiry People’s Report expressed a similar view by emphasising the importance of including the voices of those affected by family violence in policies:<sup>93</sup>

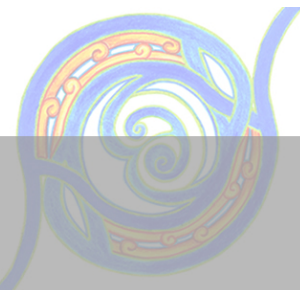
*“Importantly, the development of a strategy must be informed by the voices of those affected by child abuse and domestic violence, and by frontline workers. The current reliance on policymakers with little or no insight into, or understanding of, child abuse and domestic violence and its impacts does not work.”* (p.75)

~ *The People’s Report: The People’s Inquiry into addressing child abuse and domestic violence.* The Glenn Inquiry; 2014.

Likewise, contracts for funding and the amount of funds are determined by the funder themselves based on their expectations. One manager spoke of his experience:<sup>94</sup>

*“I was shocked when my funding and planning manager turned up with a contract for me to sign; this was my first contract since I took over this team. I did not sign it, I asked him to explain how he decided on our service description, the number of families we need to work with and how did he arrive at the number of dollars that require to work with this number of families. I think he was shocked when I asked; I do not think he was expecting that I was going to push back”*

~ Network team leader, personal communication, July 2019



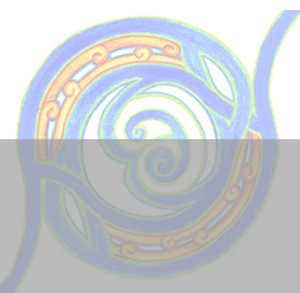
The government has released multiple strategies, action plans and guidelines for family violence in New Zealand within the last 20 years. One of the first significant strategies in relation to Pacific communities and family violence was *Te Rito: New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy*, released in 2002.<sup>1</sup> This strategy set out clear goals and objectives by the government towards their vision of living free from violence and also presented a set of principles to guide the implementation process and future initiatives for violence prevention. However although this strategy emphasised the need for approaches to family violence to be culturally appropriate and culturally relevant to various ethnic groups, the strategy did not reflect the holistic and collective practices and approaches that are significant to Pacific groups. A 2016 literature review by Malungahu and Nosa on family violence<sup>26</sup> emphasised that Te Rito's strategy provided a multifaceted approach and was consistent with the goals and objectives of international strategies on family violence.

The establishment of the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families in 2005<sup>24</sup> aimed at developing a partnership between the government and non-government agencies and to prioritise Māori and Pacific approaches to preventing family violence. One of its responsibilities was to advise the family violence Ministerial team about improvement strategies for addressing and eliminating family violence in New Zealand. They focused on the quality and diversity of approaches to eliminating violence in Māori and Pacific families.<sup>1, 24</sup> The Pasefika Proud Campaign group<sup>60</sup> worked alongside the Pacific Advisory Group under the governance of the Taskforce to implement various initiatives for Pacific communities. They have also led the development of Pacific strategies, family violence Pacific frameworks, and Pacific models.

Although the Taskforce was disestablished in 2015, these previous strategies, frameworks, and models have contributed to the development of a new Pacific strategy and action plan, *Pacific Prosperity: Our people, our solutions, our future*,<sup>95</sup> released in October 2019. This strategy places Pacific peoples, families, and communities at the heart of the development, thinking, and decision making on social issues. It focuses on the voices of Pacific families and strong aspirations from the Pacific communities to actively design and lead their own innovative solutions. This collective and inclusive approach may produce better solutions towards addressing social and family violence issues for Pacific peoples. As Debbie Power (Chief Executive, Ministry of Social Development) commented, the changes the Ministry needs to make are to recognise and acknowledge who they are and what they are about in order to support them:

*“No longer is focusing on just one factor and one person enough. We need to recognise that every Pacific person who walks through our doors is a member of a family and that their family is part of a wider Pacific community. Understanding Pacific peoples in the context of family and tailoring our services to support the wider needs of Pacific peoples is vital if we are to genuinely build relationships and partner alongside Pacific.” (p.7)*

~ Ministry of Social Development. *Pacific prosperity: Our people, our solutions, our future*; 2019.



## Funding and planning of family violence services

Informal discussions with current and former staff members in various Pacific social service agencies identify the reality of issues related to funding by government.<sup>94, 96</sup> It is evident that there is not enough funding to meet the high demand for services required for Pacific families. Most family violence funding is targeted towards the immediate aftermath and focused on crisis rather than preventing violence or healing processes. This funding model does not reflect the Pacific ideology of addressing family violence issues from a cultural lens and a holistic perspective. In her keynote address at the inaugural *Nga Vaka o Kainga Tapu: Pathways to Wellbeing Fono* in Auckland, Professor Konai Helu Thaman stated (n.d.):

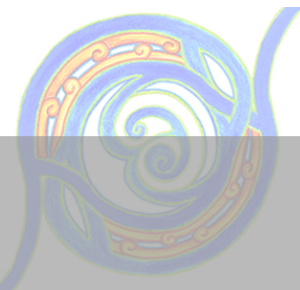
*“We have to delve a lot more into where people come from, what their values are, and see what we can find from their context in order to create solutions for their problems.”*

<https://www.pasefikaproud.co.nz/stories/culture-and-values-informing-strong-pacific-families/>

Likewise, the contracted programme may not be able to cater to Pacific families with more complex and multifaceted needs. Interventions for Pacific families with complex needs require time and space to hold *talanoa*<sup>9</sup> towards healing the relational space between family members with an experienced practitioner who can facilitate these sessions. Healing an individual with an issue can be a temporary fix for Pacific communities. Healing for a broken relational space holistically is a permanent outcome for all family members. However, the time and space required for these *talanoa* sessions is not always recognised or acknowledged in the Pacific services funding contracts. A retired manager shared her experience:<sup>80</sup>

*“They need to change the way they allocated funding to contracts in order for us to have the time and space to support our families holistically. The funding is determined by them; they give us a number of families that we need to work with and the amount of funds allocated to these families. Then we have to do our own maths and work out how much time is needed to spend with each family. Say if I have two counsellors then I have to divide the number of families between the two of them, and they have to work out how many counselling hours for each family they have to work with before the end of the quarter. Our counsellors provide a report to me at the end of the quarter then I write our quarterly monitoring report to the Ministry for our payment to be released, and for me as the manager, it’s about survival. I did not waste time*

<sup>9</sup> Talanoa is a universal concept throughout the Pacific, and it refers to a process of inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue between family members or groups of people.



*questioning the quality of the counselling sessions my staff provided because I know deep down we are not providing the quality work to our families. It was more like ticking boxes for the Ministry's contractual requirements, and for us, it was a matter of surviving. And you know what, it was a cycle, after 2 to 3 months I see these family names again, got referred back to us."*

~ Retired NGO Manager, personal communication, August 2019

A counsellor who had worked in the community for many years and had transitioned to a new role in the private sector shared her experience:<sup>96</sup>

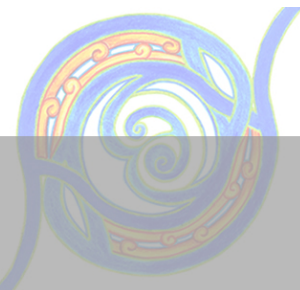
*"Counselling with Pacific families is not well covered in our community services due to lack of resources to support this. It is frustrating, it's band-aid therapy. Contracts do not always cover counselling with families. We need to have family therapy where we have family talanoa, and the counsellor can facilitate that and decide how she/he can work with the family to address the problem. Working with a family takes time, but I would rather make a difference to one or two families than trying to see ten families in one week and no change."*

~ Counsellor, personal communication, October 2019

The Ministry of Social Development plays an essential role as one of the primary funders of family violence services.<sup>38</sup> However, its role has frequently changed during restructuring processes, which in turn has led to restructuring within the service delivery sector. When management staff within the Ministry change, this tends to have a significant impact on community services. Quite often, there is a lack of clear information about the Ministry's role. At times, service providers have contracts that are already determined by the Ministry in terms of outputs, eligibility criteria, resources, and monitoring processes. This control was also a significant concern for a Māori provider in relation to the role of the Ministry as the funder and the lack of clarity on the services selected for funding.<sup>97</sup>

The changes in the Ministry's role creates frustrations for community services, but significant concerns have also been raised about the priority focus of the funding provided. One Māori service provider<sup>97</sup> raised concern in relation to the short term funding options that does not always account for culturally appropriate interventions. Ninety percent of family violence funding focused on the immediate aftermath rather than preventing and monitoring behavioural changes.<sup>38</sup>

It is evident that the distribution of funding for family violence interventions creates or furthers inequities and this highlights the mismatch between the Ministry's policies for service delivery, funding allocation, and Pacific providers' perspectives on what services are culturally relevant for effective outcomes. Unfortunately, as one retired manager shared:<sup>80</sup>



*“For the 50 years that I have served my community within the area of family violence, I have to do much more than what we got for our service. What I want to say is that these documents are beautiful writings that do not go any further up at where they decided what goes into those policies and funding criteria by the government.”*

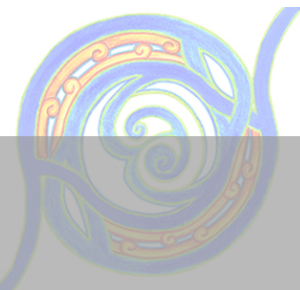
~ Retired Pacific NGO manager, personal communication, August 2019

The Pacific Advisory Group<sup>2</sup> recognised that limited funding has been provided and argued that services are often short term and inadequate for the services that Pacific groups needed.<sup>10, 90, 92</sup> MSD utilises a contributory funding model that partially funds services, assuming that communities may have equitable access to additional resources to invest in services they need. However, most Pacific providers do not have the time nor the capability to apply for additional funding to meet the demand for their services. With twenty years of experience working with Pacific family violence services, it is evident that Pacific staff are often overworked and underpaid, trying to support their communities. Qualified staff members with (for example) counselling skills often choose highly paid jobs in more prominent institutions over community services due to being overworked and underpaid in the community sector. Furthermore, the length of community service contracts is problematic and does not provide the income stability or security required to retain highly qualified staff members. A concern by a family violence service provider cited in the Family Violence Funding Approach report below reiterated these contracting issues for community providers:<sup>38</sup>

*“Short term contracting, contributory funding (which has [effectively] decreased due to lack of CPI increases over eight years) plus competitive tendering and unrealistic expectations of providers to demonstrate significant change improvement to long-standing community issues result in stretched and stressed leaders and agency workers. It takes time, trust, and relationship to work productively with other agencies, and with the above being the reality, this is often not achievable because it is quicker and more cost-effective to get on and do things independently as an agency. If the systemic and long-standing issues as above could be resolved, it would help to support a way forward towards greater collaboration and working partnerships.”*

~ Service provider quoted in Ministry of Social Development. *Family violence funding approach: Building a sustainable future for family violence services*. Wellington; 2019.

Working with a Pacific family from a holistic perspective requires a collective and collaborative approach where families are comfortable to engage with the services throughout the course of the intervention.<sup>8, 26</sup> This approach needs to include follow up services to ensure families continue to make positive progress towards their healing process. However, most contracts do not have funding for follow up. In most cases, once a 15 or 12 week intervention is over, the case is closed and



services will not be able to have any more contact with the families. Working holistically with a Pacific family is fundamental in achieving effective outcomes, and this often requires working with the whole family as a unit. The MSD report on current issues in funding notes:

*“To enable providers to achieve positive outcomes for whanau we need to allow more time and flexibility for providers in how they deliver services, and we need to recognize that working holistically means that one service cannot alone provide all the support an individual or whanau need to heal and live a violence-free life.”*

~ Ministry of Social Development. *Family violence funding approach: Building a sustainable future for family violence services*. Wellington; 2019.

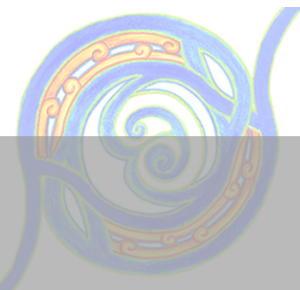
The eligibility criteria to access services and therapies can also mean referrals to other services can be a problem. The eligibility criteria in service contracts often state that other services are not able to access them for their clients.<sup>96</sup> These criteria tend to limit collaboration and working relationships between providers.

## Service provision expectations

The first experiences of service users can determine their future willingness to engage with any other service.<sup>9, 97</sup> Therefore it is particularly important that service provision has the capacity to consistently respond safely and respectfully to those experiencing family violence. Staff members need to be well equipped and professional to deliver services that meet the needs of Pacific families. The *Family violence, sexual violence and violence within whānau: Workforce capability framework*,<sup>98</sup> and the *Family violence risk assessment and management framework*<sup>73</sup> released in 2017 aimed at building workforce capability for community services to achieve better outcomes for families. However, services are not equipped to implement these frameworks without the appropriate resources from the government.

Short-term and long-term interventions are needed to deliver effective results based on the complexity of family violence.<sup>80, 94, 96</sup> Adjustment to funding models and future contracts to deliver services that work towards more meaningful outcomes are fundamental in achieving these outcomes. The services need to focus on people and problems rather than numbers as articulated in the Ministry of Social Development family violence funding approach report:<sup>38</sup>

*“Removing service volumes will reduce the emphasis on providing a service to meet contract requirements; this will enable more innovative approaches that are truly client-centric and provides as much as, or as little as needed to support positive outcomes within complex situations.”*



~ Ministry of Social Development. *Family violence funding approach: Building a sustainable future for family violence services*. Wellington; 2019.

## Contracting community services

The 2012 literature review by Peteru<sup>8</sup> identified the need for new insights into and approaches to understanding family violence for Pacific families. Specifically, she called for an understanding of the socio-cultural contexts and the diversity of circumstances for victims, perpetrators, and families who are affected by family violence. She noted that contracting Pacific community services is essential; however, it was noted that underfunding will lead to poor service outcomes such as unpaid and unqualified staff, poor retention of qualified workers, and the absence of skill development. The lack of resources and lack of knowledge does not make it possible to implement culturally appropriate models for service delivery.<sup>48, 50</sup> As a result, no services are fully incorporating the models that are important to restore harmony and wellbeing for Pacific families. The New Zealand government developed the service descriptions for contracts and assigned the resources for service delivery. However, these service descriptions and resources allocated towards these contracts do not match the service interventions required to support Pacific families.

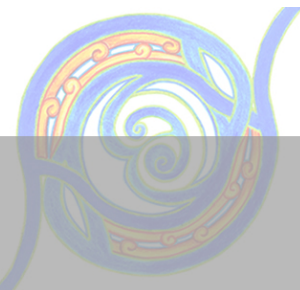
With limited funding, there is often competition for tenders. The reality is that each service is already struggling to maintain its services due to limited funding; therefore, any opportunity to compete for a tender inhibits collaborative relationships between providers. Moreover, each tender comes with criteria, new expectations set by the funders, and creates a competitive environment for Pacific providers. Furthermore, providers with managers who can write stronger applications are more likely to be successful than other providers:<sup>94</sup>

*“I worked as a manager for one of the providers for eight years, and I must say you have to be at the top of your game to go for those new contracts. You have to know how to write well because it is a tender and every provider needs extra funding; it can be very competitive.”*

~ Network team leader, personal communication, July 2019

## Training curriculum and workforce

Many training curricula for students and professionals in counselling, psychology, and social work degrees are largely influenced by mainstream ideologies, expectations, and models. Trained staff are more likely to be employed by public hospitals and institutions where training practices often reflect work requirements and ethics in these places. Students are often attracted to well-paid jobs rather than working in not for profit organisations and community services where upskilling and promotions are rarely available. Trained staff are expected to follow a specific code of ethics for practice by registering with recognised bodies. As Pacific practitioners with experience in dealing with family



violence community contracts, it is evident that professional supervision is likely to be provided for trained staff in mainstream institutions as part of their employment contracts. However, the community services struggle to secure funds and support for their counsellors and social workers. Additionally, funding for community services does not provide for supervision and upskilling of staff members in many contracts. Therefore, community services staff are not adequately supported or upskilled to ensure a high quality of service in responding to families with complex needs.

Most Pacific community services do not have the resources to employ highly qualified counsellors, and in many cases, staff with no such qualifications are utilised to mentor and advocate for families in need. Pacific clients who need therapeutic counselling will not receive the support they need from these services because they need to engage with professional and capable practitioners.<sup>94, 96</sup> Some Pacific professionals and capable practitioners in family violence have preferred to work in mainstream and private clinics due to remuneration and opportunities. Many Pacific families cannot afford to pay the fees of a therapist, limiting their choice of quality therapy, which is often crucial in bringing about change. It is critically important that policymakers attend to this disparity by improving access to appropriate cultural and effective services for those affected by violence (and funding at a level that allows for additional skill development and safe practice).

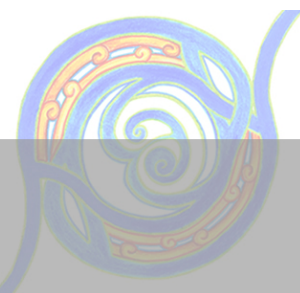
### 3. Micro-level practices and interventions

Following on from discussing policies, strategies, funding, and contracting at the macro level, this part of the paper turns towards practices and interventions around family violence for Pacific peoples and what these look like in practice.

#### Practices and interventions

Therapeutic intervention for Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand continues to challenge practitioners and providers using Western paradigms that contrast with a Pacific worldview.<sup>10, 82</sup> For example, language contains invisible codes that are not spoken but are expressed through body language.<sup>51</sup> We argue that communication sometimes is “caught” and not “taught.” Understanding non-verbal and body language can be challenging for non-Pacific practitioners when working with Pacific people.<sup>82</sup> Lack of eye contact, for instance, maybe labelled as avoidance by a therapist, however in Pacific culture, it is a mark of respect to lower one's gaze. Nodding one's head may be interpreted as indicating that the client is in agreement and is engaging, when there is a possibility the client is being polite and respectful.

Cross-cultural work can be even more challenging when working with issues of family violence.<sup>7, 99</sup> “Violence” covers all forms of violence such as psychological, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial, including non-physical controlling or abusive behaviour, which may cause imminent harm to





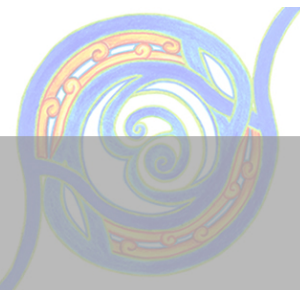
one's health, safety, and wellbeing. These "forms" of violence are not always easily understood or identified as forms of violence by many Pacific people and groups.

Similarly, interventions for perpetrators of family violence are primarily attended by court-mandated clients. Some mainstream initiatives like the 'Living without Violence' programme are delivered in some Pacific languages. Group discussions that tend to confront issues around violence and its impact are crucial. However, there is often still a need for professional intervention in the form of culturally sensitive therapy. Some Pacific providers are contracted to run group sessions for men, but there is no evidence of how successful these group sessions are as resourcing has not been provided for evaluations. With issues such as family violence, Pacific peoples may be less likely to emotionally engage in group sessions with strangers; therefore, they may need a separate space to address underlying issues leading to violent behaviour. Although many programmes offer access to counsellors, appointed therapists are usually not trained to work with Pacific clients, disadvantaging Pacific clients in receiving appropriate help. The effectiveness of therapists working with Pacific clientele needs to be monitored. Non-engagement of many Pacific clients with "appointed" therapists already creates disparity. Resourcing spiritual support to add to the therapeutic process may also help clients. As practitioners with twenty years' experience working with Pacific families around issues of family violence, it is evident from clients' evaluations that these disparities exist and must be attended to.

## Practice-based considerations for interventions

Māori have developed whānau centered approaches to service delivery for their communities.<sup>27, 28</sup> Pacific models depict similar approaches to working with Pacific families where healing of broken parts of the collective is significant for restoring peace and harmony for families. There are many ethnic-specific models, and concepts used to conceptualise culturally appropriate ways of working with Pacific families.<sup>10, 22, 92, 100</sup> However, the challenge is the translation of these models into policies and therapeutic interventions. As for Māori, the 'family' is central to Pacific peoples; hence, interventions that are family-oriented and grounded are vitally important. When family relationships are broken, it affects all family members unless these are mended and fixed. Pacific models emphasise the importance of working with families from a holistic approach and the importance of incorporating cultural norms and values into these therapies. For example, the State removing Pacific children and placing them with non-Pacific families does not align with Pacific conceptualisations and ideologies of family relationships.

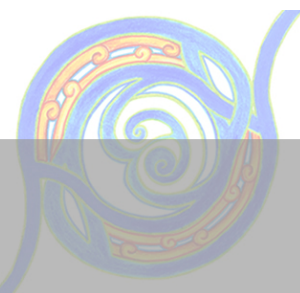
Current family strength-based interventions are effective with many families focusing on the diagnosis of problems and deficits within a family, then identifying inherent strengths, aspirations, and desires to empower and move the family forward.<sup>101</sup> However, if using this approach with a Pacific family, in an attempt to diagnose and discuss problems, a provider/practitioner may encounter resistance. Within Pacific culture, value is placed in upholding family honour, sacred relational ties



between family members, village honour, chieftain respect, religion, and loyalty. Open family discussions or disclosing family problems could cross cultural boundaries, which could jeopardise relational and cultural ties. For example, relational spaces for example between a father and his children often means that obedience and compliance towards the father and his requests are expected to be upheld for the remainder of his life, affecting what may be communicated. Open communication about how one feels emotionally is not always culturally appropriate, therefore content is limited or not shared depending on relational space.<sup>102</sup> A brother and sister relationship is often one of protection and responsibility, therefore a sister may be unlikely to share about personal relationships outside *aiga* (family) or family settings.<sup>103, 104</sup> These cultural bonds and spaces between family members contribute to the complexity of family conferences and mean that they do not always facilitate a safe space to disclose and discuss issues of family violence. Instead, feelings of dishonour, shame, humiliation and anger could escalate. Preliminary risk assessments need to involve collecting client information necessary to determine the level of risk. However, this may prove difficult when using Western concepts such as structured interviews or screening tools with Pacific families.<sup>103</sup>

Respectful discussions around the importance of sharing information can help with the assessment process, for example explaining to Pacific families that coming forward with information can help professionals and agencies make better decisions to support families going forward. More time may need to be spent on discussing the purpose and intent of intervention. For example, if care and protection are needed outside the family, it is crucial to explain how safety for the child works within a system outside their family. Careful consideration is needed when referring Pacific families and individuals for professional help. Monitoring initial contact and whether the referred service was appropriate, for example, by following up with the client and asking them, are important ways to support a successful engagement with service providers.

Understanding from a cultural perspective considers indigenous patterns, ways of living and their understandings of health, with the intention of supporting recovery and wellbeing. In a bid to address violence within a Pacific context, health platforms including cultural and spiritual elements that have been created by various Pacific people are important. These are portrayed in Pacific models such as the fonofale<sup>14, 100</sup> and Uputāua approach.<sup>90, 92</sup> These are models which seek to incorporate customs and traditions, spirituality, and language into a health paradigm that aligns to the totality of a Pacific person. These are excellent models, providing sound platforms of learning and of understanding through a holistic Pacific worldview.<sup>8, 10, 26, 36</sup> However, for non-Pacific practitioners and providers, some cultural models are unfamiliar and may seem complicated and challenging to deliver. One of the challenges is the pronunciation of Pacific words and grappling with the essence of a word, which may lose authentic meaning when interpreted into the English language.<sup>51, 56, 99</sup> Many have not witnessed Pacific models practiced in therapy. Others may not feel culturally competent to use them and lack confidence. Cultural models are likely to be more effective when delivered by a provider or practitioner who holds cultural knowledge, which is steeped in knowledge of traditional customs,



proverbs and narrative language to connect appropriately to those facing issues of family violence.<sup>51, 56, 99</sup> Therefore, the development of training curricula for practitioners should reflect these critical aspects of Pacific cultural perspectives, as well as knowledge about family violence.

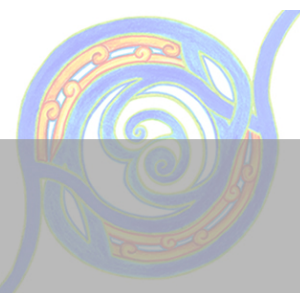
Contrary to using only theoretical and clinical methods to assess and understand Pacific people, the application of cultural knowledge and observation are alternative and beneficial ways to connect with Pacific families. Using cultural proverbs or metaphors can also assist the understanding and healing of brokenness. For example: *“O le upega e fili i le po, ‘ae tatala i le ao”* which translates to “The fishing net is knotted at night but untangled in the morning.” This is a Samoan proverb referring to the resolving of conflict.<sup>51, 59</sup>

#### 4. Connecting macro-level impact and micro-level effect on family violence services

Examining the link between macro and micro-level processes highlights disparities that have a significant impact on family violence services for Pacific communities. The policies and resources controlled by the government and the practical interventions implemented by the community level are operating in silos. Mainstream policies that guide contractual requirements and resources for family violence interventions and preventions do not reflect the therapeutic approaches needed to address family violence issues with Pacific communities. There are numerous family violence initiatives for Pacific communities supported and funded by the Ministries.<sup>8, 20, 26, 48, 61, 95</sup> These are evident in the development of several Pacific frameworks, research projects, literature reviews, policy tools, and action plans by Pacific advisory and reference groups for the Ministry of Social Development<sup>1, 24</sup> and Pacific scholars. However, these documents consistently conclude with a vital recommendation to the government to incorporate Pacific cultural norms and values in their family violence policies.

Connecting the two levels of intervention in theory and practice is a persistent challenge.<sup>9</sup> The persistent challenge is mainly due to the application of excellent therapeutic models and service delivery that does not connect with many Pacific people. Individualistic therapies may challenge Pacific people because their lives are largely shaped by the relationships they hold with their families. Disclosure of violence is further complicated by strong cultural imperatives to uphold family honour and respect, which exists in the culture. Therefore, acknowledging emotions towards oneself and family members can be hindered or avoided altogether.

An integrated practice across government and communities is necessary to improve responses to family violence; however, if the providers of the various services are still using mainstream, individualistic type services, the struggle to connect with Pacific may continue as it is not relational to them.



## 5. Discussion

The issues highlighted in this paper indicate gaps in service provision and integration with current multi-agency, integrated or co-ordinated responses to family violence with Pacific communities.<sup>8, 26</sup> Implementation of more cultural support, both practically and emotionally, for survivors or perpetrators of violence is essential for successful outcomes. Cultural models are important, and if used skilfully in therapy by a practitioner who is culturally trained, can facilitate and reconnect values back to the Pacific person. The essence of Pacific worldviews and ideologies of cultural norms and values is captured in this statement by the Samoan former head of state:<sup>51</sup>

*“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 my tofi (an 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 belonging.” (p.51)*

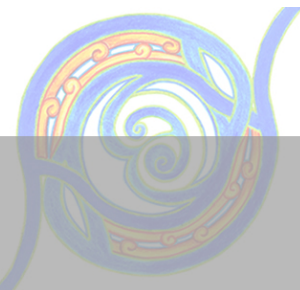
~ Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese, E. In search of meaning, nuance and metaphor in social policy.  
*Social Policy Journal of New Zealand.* 2003;20:49-63

The voices of those who have experienced abuse and family violence need to be reflected in policies. Policies need to be monitored for effectiveness, and cultural appropriateness, and evaluations need to be more transparent. The numbers shown in the prevalence data indicates that the numbers of those affected by violence are substantial. The question that we should be asking is, why does this number for Pacific families remain so high?

Family violence issues involve multiple risk factors which affect many aspects of life; therefore, appropriate, beneficial co-ordination and integration across services and systems is essential. Ongoing development and implementation of policies, systems, and practices must continue to integrate holistic and cultural approaches. It is imperative to respect diversity and support access to and equity of service provision to all. Supporting collaboration with clients and other services to promote client choice and responsibility is important. Client engagement, feedback, and involvement need to be monitored to inform the government and policymakers for future planning.

## 6. The way forward

Family violence is indeed a complex issue in Pacific communities that requires multifaceted action. In particular, the disconnection between the macro-level where decisions and strategies are made and the micro-level where community services interact with those families living with violence needs to be addressed.



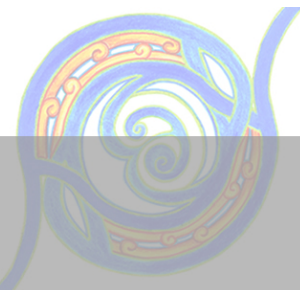
## Macro-level policies

The changes initiated by the government at the macro level will continue to have a major impact on family violence services for Pacific communities. The government holds power to determine what these changes are. Most importantly, the government is in the position to introduce changes by incorporating recommendations by the Pacific communities to improve services for family violence. The way forward for Pacific communities is the incorporation of Pacific worldviews, models, and theories into policies and having a clear and transparent partnership between Pacific communities and the government. Simply acknowledging the existence of these worldviews has failed to improve services for the Pacific, but instead, an *integration* of these approaches may produce outcomes that are significant towards improving responses to family violence affecting Pacific families.

The conditions and terms for contracting Pacific services continue to be sourced from Western worldviews. A family-centred initiative is significant to Pacific communities; therefore, contracts for working with Pacific communities should reflect this approach. The Pacific documents reviewed for this paper emphasise the importance of incorporating collective and cultural values and norms into policies for family violence. Initiatives targeting just one generational group may contradict these recommendations. For example, a programme focused only on youth or women, and that does not also engage other family members, is not going to end violence in Pacific homes. However, the timing and approach of this engagement occurs requires careful consideration, in order to ensure victim safety. The contracts need to incorporate Pacific collective and holistic approaches to service delivery. Likewise, time and space are equally important for healing. Therefore, the funding for service contracts need to align with the level of need and time required to work with families affected by violence. More importantly, the Pacific workforce that is required to deliver services should be well equipped professionally and culturally to implement these contracts. Monitoring of the contracts needs to include an assessment of the effectiveness of using therapeutic models and practices by different professionals. Likewise, the monitoring process should include assessments of how families are responding to these therapies.

## Micro-level practices

It is important to note that there is no one specific therapeutic model that works best with Pacific people because 'Pacific' are not a homogenous group.<sup>7, 8, 21</sup> Rather it is about the therapist being informed about the cultural totality of a Pacific person and the therapist's ability to create a space for clients to tell their stories around violence in a culturally safe environment.<sup>105</sup> Acceptance of indigenous and cultural ways of knowing (cultural psychologies) need to be included in mainstream training curriculums. Where possible providers need to be Pacific or, if not Pacific, trained to work with Pacific, thereby incorporating a culturally sensitive approach when delivering a service.



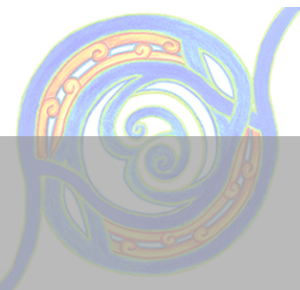
Often Pacific clients have limited or no choice around therapists. This can lead to non-engagement if there is no cultural consideration in the therapeutic process and may result in the client feeling unheard, misunderstood, or unable to emotionally connect. This further disadvantages Pacific people accessing services of their choice.

Having access to cultural advisors is also vitally important, acknowledging that advice on cultural issues further informs ethical practices for those working with Pacific families. Empowering Pacific families to engage in cultural practices that work and bring restoration can also be important. Most importantly, this can include encouraging Pacific peoples to call upon the cultural capital that exists within them, in order to support them to initiate the way forward to acknowledge and attend to issues of family violence with the view of restoring *mana* back to their belonging.

Some Pacific services provide excellent services of information and productive tools targeting the younger generations. These can provide a safe platform for those wanting to access help and knowledge around family violence. Resources in multiple Pacific languages can assist those seeking help. However, these need to sit alongside and be supported by the availability of Pacific therapists, counselors and other practitioners who can engage face to face with families affected by family violence where needed. As Pacific are a collective and communal people group, connection can play an integral part in the therapeutic process for those affected by family violence. Non-verbal cues and body language, for example, cannot be picked up with online therapeutic apps and websites.

Prevention and intervention programmes that focus on youth also need to engage all family members to be effective. Pacific youth often find it challenging to go back into a home environment where parents or caregivers have not received professional help or guidance around issues of family violence. The younger generation standing up to the older generation can sometimes be viewed as crossing a cultural boundary of respect. Therefore it is crucial that external intervention and therapy is made available for all members of the family or *aiga*.

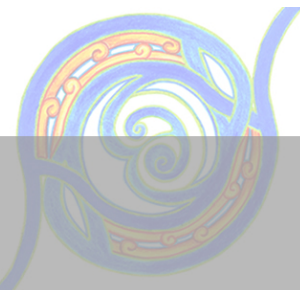
There is a lack of cultural training for professional therapists working with Pacific individuals and families around issues of violence and abuse. Cultural discourses, expectations, and customs add further complexities for Pacific clients already experiencing issues of family violence. These cultural complexities need to be understood and addressed in therapy. Professional development that addresses ways of working culturally, would enable therapists to provide a more holistic service to Pacific clients. Trainers need to be experienced in working with Pacific clientele and with common cultural dilemmas. One could determine whether most agencies are offering a professional service to Pacific clients, or whether Pacific clients are referred to services which are void of cultural considerations, therefore increasing risk. A professional service for Pacific communities delivers a holistic cultural approach: it is not just an academic, Western and theoretical approach which is void of Pacific cultural capital.



## 7. Conclusion

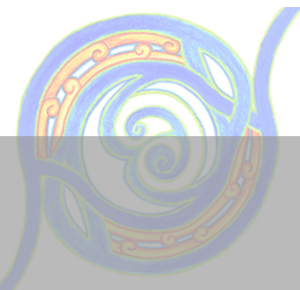
This Issues Paper has sought to explore and highlight the particularities of family violence for Pacific communities in New Zealand, through a Pacific lens. Drawing from both local and international research literature and personal communication with Pacific champions for addressing family violence, there are gaps in family violence services for Pacific communities that warrant further consideration by the government. For family violence prevention and intervention initiatives to be successful for Pacific communities, a clear and transparent integration of policy and practice is required.

This paper focuses on Pacific communities from a holistic and collective approach that acknowledges the diversity of families, identities, generations, and the whole of the Pacific communities. We hope that the readers of this paper consider the positionalities of Pacific peoples while reading and conceptualising the issues we have raised.



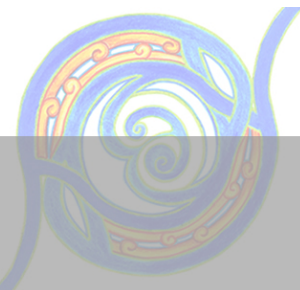
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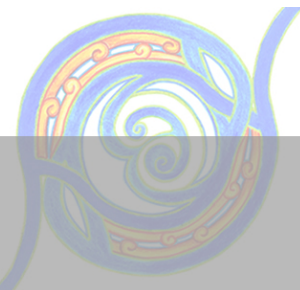




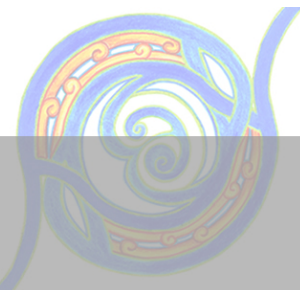
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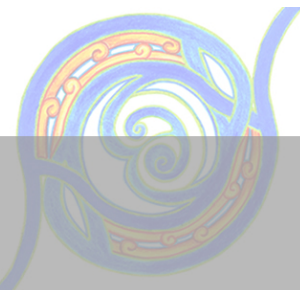
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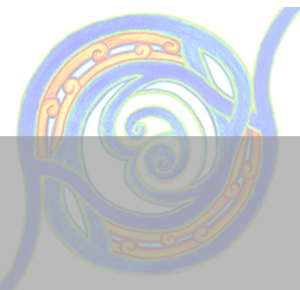
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