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# **Collective relationalism and collective individualism: Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity following separation**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, the University of Auckland, 2019.

# Abstract

Parenting apart has become a common occurrence in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere across the West. Much of the sociological literature on experiences of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life draws on normative white Western and nuclearised understandings of family structure, and the organisation of gender relations as well as the nature and scope of parental obligations and responsibilities within that structure. There has been an absence of any analysis of how those from ethnic minority communities, many of whom adhere to a collectivist family structure and hold communally-based understandings about provisions of care, navigate and negotiate parenthood and familial life in the context of separation.

In this doctoral thesis, I address this gap in the literature. Drawing on one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with separated heterosexual Pacific parents, specifically ten mothers and five fathers, living in Aotearoa New Zealand, I explore how gender and ethnicity intersect to shape experiences of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. In particular, I examine the interplay between theories of individualisation and relationality in terms of how Pacific mothers and fathers interpret, negotiate and enact agency and identity following separation. In pursuing this inquiry, I examine how Pacific collectivist understandings of family, in conjunction with Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices associated with doing family in Pacific cultures, shape, in similar and divergent ways, Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity with respect to (re)negotiating care arrangements, (re)organising care practices and (re)enacting familial connections following separation.

In my analysis, I found that Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity were relationally understood, constructed and enacted. However, there were gendered differences underscoring how, when and to whom they were relational. Mothers enacted what I term 'collective relationalism'. This involved exercising agency and identity with a collectivist, child-centred and often self-sacrificing relationalism. Conversely, fathers' agency and identity were characterised by what I call 'collective individualism', and entailed relating to others in a collectivist, child-related but ultimately self-interested way. I conclude this thesis by arguing that Pacific/gendered family norms, values and practices produced differing gendered cultural accountabilities that required mothers to enact collective relationalism and constrained their ability to act in a more individualistic way, while enabling, emboldening and rewarding fathers' enactment of collective individualism.

# Dedications

For my Mom, Britta, “you’re *a* genius.”

For my husband, Edward, and our two children, Sophia and Carmine.

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# Glossary

## Samoa words and phrases

<i>aiga</i>	family
<i>'afakasi</i>	half-caste e.g. half Samoan and (typically) half European
<i>aoga amata</i>	Samoa language nest
<i>fa'agoi</i>	ask permission
<i>fa'asamoa</i>	Samoa way of life or Samoa culture
<i>fa'alavelave</i>	events that interfere with normal life and calls for special activity e.g. wedding or funeral
<i>i 'i</i>	here or over here
<i>i 'o</i>	there or over there
<i>'ote</i>	tell off or scold
<i>Palagi</i>	a person of European descent.
<i>tausi le aiga</i>	to nurture or care for the family
<i>teu le va</i>	fostering or nurturing the relational space
<i>va</i>	relational space

## Tongan words and phrases

<i>anga lelei</i>	generous, kind and calm
<i>faka'apa'apa</i>	respectful and humble
<i>mateuteu</i>	well-prepared, hard-working, culturally-versed, professional
<i>ofa fe'unga</i>	showing appropriate compassion, empathy and love for the context
<i>poto he anga</i>	knowing what to do and doing it well
<i>talanoa</i>	a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas
<i>'ulungaanga faka Tonga</i>	Tongan cultural principles

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Parents living and parenting across spatial and temporal divisions has become a common occurrence in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere across the West. The growing prominence of parenting apart in Aotearoa New Zealand is evidenced by high rates of separation and divorce (Mitchell, 2016), growing numbers of children primarily living away from one of their biological parents (Ministry of Justice, 2010) and rising rates of sole parent families (Families Commission, 2012; Statistics New Zealand, 2014f). Significantly, for the purposes of my research, 2013 census data found that 30.1 percent of Pacific children in Aotearoa New Zealand live away from one of their biological parents (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 88). Also, in 2006, 32 percent of all Pacific mothers were sole mothers (Waldegrave et al., 2011) and Pacific comprised 37.9 percent of sole parent families<sup>1</sup> (Statistic New Zealand, 2008).<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that although sole parent households are often framed in gender neutral terms, an overwhelming majority are headed by mothers (Statistics New Zealand, 2014f).<sup>3</sup>

Pacific parents are, therefore, more likely than parents from other ethnicities, with the exception of Māori, to face navigating parenting apart, making it pertinent to inquire about culturally distinctive ways in which post-separation parenthood and familial<sup>4</sup> life might be experienced and enacted. Such an inquiry becomes even more important in a context of a shift towards shared forms of parental care and responsibility within socio-legal policy on post-

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<sup>1</sup>2006 census data found that Pacific (and Māori) were significantly over-represented in sole parent families when compared against the wider population and other ethnic groups. To illustrate, 28.1 percent of families with dependent children were sole parent families. However, when disaggregated by ethnicity, 43.8 percent of sole parent families were ethnically identified as Māori, 37.9 percent as Pacific and 25.5 percent as European (Statistics New Zealand, 2008). Unfortunately, these are the most current statistics released in Aotearoa New Zealand that disaggregates data on sole parent families by ethnicity. 2013 census data demonstrated that the overall number and proportion of sole parent families had increased from 28.1 percent in 2006 to 30.1 percent. Given that over time there has been a steady increase in sole parent families in the wider population (Families Commission, 2009; Statistics New Zealand, 2014f), the proportion of Pacific sole parent families might have also increased since 2006 to closer to, and possibly over, 40 percent.

<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of key social and demographic characteristics of Pacific people, parents and families in Aotearoa New Zealand refer to Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> 2013 census data found that women constituted 84.2 percent of sole parent households, a figure that has remained relatively stable over time (Statistics New Zealand, 2014f).

<sup>4</sup> I use 'familial', opposed to 'family', to convey an experience that relates to and is suggestive of family, but acknowledges that family life in the context of separation entails doing family with individuals (for example, former partners) one might not necessarily perceive as 'family'.

separated families (Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie, 2012a; Tolmie, Elizabeth and Gavey, 2010b; see pages 8-15 in this chapter). Yet little is known in Aotearoa New Zealand about how parents privately make arrangements for the ongoing care of children or about the experience of parenting and familial life in the context of separation/divorce within Pacific communities<sup>5</sup> (Robertson, Pryor and Moss, 2008, 2009).

To date, the analysis contained within much of the sociological literature on post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life draws on normative white Western and nuclearised understandings of family structure, and the organisation of gender relations as well as the nature and scope of parental obligations and responsibilities within that structure. Mothering and fathering are often framed in highly nuclearised ways and focuses on parents' – or mothers' and fathers' – parenting and care practices for children and experiences of parenthood (see Chapter 3 for a full discussion of this body of work). The literature on the organisational structure of Pacific families, however, provides a consistently clear picture: Pacific families have a collectivist and extended family structure and hold communally-based understandings about moral obligations to children and family (Fleming, 1997; Grattan, 2004; Stewart-Withers, Scheyvens and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010). Yet, there has been an absence of any examination of how culturally distinctive modes of doing family, that emerge along ethnic lines, impact on how mothers and fathers negotiate, organise and enact parental roles and identities, and broader familial life, following separation. By focusing on the experiences of white Western mothers and fathers, and families more generally, the current sociological scholarship overlooks the possibility that separated parents from ethnic minority communities, such as Pacific parents, might bring different ideas, values and norms to bear on how they construct, act and live their parental and familial lives in the context of separation. Through this research, I begin to address this gap in the literature. I provide a sociological analysis of contemporary post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life, but one which explicitly examines gendered and cultural (ethnic) dimensions. I do this by focusing specifically on the experiences of separated heterosexual Pacific mothers and fathers living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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<sup>55</sup> Little is also known about how other ethnicity minority communities experience post-separation parenthood and familial life, however, such a focus extends beyond the scope of this research.

This research project grew out of my interest in how non-conflictual<sup>6</sup> heterosexual Pacific mothers and fathers navigate and negotiate parental roles and identities following separation. Being a Samoan mother, I wondered how Pacific understandings of family, and practices of providing care, inform the way that Pacific mothers and fathers living in Aotearoa New Zealand care for children following separation. My interest in this area was further sparked by wondering how gendered experiences of post-separation mothering and fathering that have been well-documented in the literature (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999; see Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of this literature) might be differently informed and governed in Pacific cultural contexts. I was particularly interested in how gender and ethnicity interact to shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency, in terms of their actions as well as the different ideas that shape how they make, and are able to make, decisions. I was also curious about how their moral identities, as Pacific mothers, fathers and family members, informed their agency and their interpretations of the agency of their children's other parent.

Because of the centrality of agency to my doctoral research, I consider whether Pacific mothers' and fathers' sense of morality and acts of agency are best understood through the lens provided by theories of individualisation or relationality (see Chapter 2 for a detailed account of these theoretical constructs). As a theoretical framework, individualisation contends that individuals in modern Western societies are increasingly living their lives as self-reflexive projects less bound to institutions and structures (such as family, gender and ethnicity) and collective identities (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, 2002; Giddens, 1992). The idea being that individuals exercise agency in conscious, purposeful and reflexive ways, and in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment. In contrast, relationality as a conceptual framework asserts that although individuals might have greater scope to enact agency in more individualised and individualistic ways than have been able to in the past, they do not live their lives free from external influence and/or constraint (Carter and Duncan, 2018; Duncan, 2011). Rather, agency and identity are framed as being relationally constituted, often in non-reflexive, habitual and unconscious ways, by connections with others (Smart, 2007; Mason, 2004) and in relation to institutions and structures (Carter and Duncan, 2018; Duncan, 2011; Martin, 2003).

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<sup>6</sup> I use 'non-conflictual' to denote a relationship between parents free of violence, abuse and coercive control. I also use it to refer to parenting relationships that are for the most part co-operative and amicable. For example, parents who have not turned to the state to resolve parenting disputes over children's care time, but who have instead privately made arrangements for the ongoing care of their children following separation.

Drawing on these theoretical frameworks, I examine the interplay between individualisation and relationality in terms of how Pacific mothers and fathers interpret, negotiate and enact agency and identity following separation. I focus on the extent to which Pacific mothers and fathers operate with an individualistic and/or relational sense of agency and identity or, perhaps more aptly, whether their agency and identity are situated on a continuum from being more individualistic to being more relational. I also consider whether Pacific mothers and fathers exercise agency and identity in similar or divergent ways. In pursuing this inquiry, I investigate how gender and ethnicity intersect to shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity with respect to (re)negotiating care arrangements, (re)organising care practices and (re)enacting familial connections following separation. In an effort to examine how Pacific mothers and fathers enact agency and identity in these different contexts, in each of the substantive chapters of this thesis, I draw on discrete theoretical frameworks, namely of an 'ethic of care' and an 'ethic of justice' (see Chapter 5), 'family practices' (see Chapter 6) and 'family displays' (see Chapter 7). These conceptual frameworks do not only enable me to examine how Pacific mothers and fathers enact agency and identity following separation, they facilitate a broader examination of the way that Pacific mothers and fathers perform agency and identity in relation to broader theoretical debates about individualisation and relationality.

To undertake this research, I drew on feminist and Pacific qualitative methodological frameworks. In line with feminist and Pacific methodological approaches to doing research, I conducted one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with non-conflictual separated heterosexual Pacific mothers and fathers living in Aotearoa New Zealand, specifically ten women and five men, all of whom had the care of their child/ren for at least two nights per week<sup>7</sup>. The questions underpinning my research necessitated a qualitative research methodology that would enable me to gain insight into how Pacific mothers and fathers themselves narrate, convey and make sense of their lived experiences. These methods also provided me an opportunity to inquire about, and discover, how Pacific mothers and fathers navigate and negotiate agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenthood and familial life.

I have divided the remainder of this chapter into three sections. In the first, I establish the context of my analysis by outlining discursive differences between white Western and Pacific

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<sup>7</sup> For the remaining nights of the week, children were in the care of their other parent.

understandings of family and provisions of care for family members. Following this, I outline the socio-legal post-separation family policy context in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this section, I discuss how the principles and logics underpinning post-separation family policies influence, and are influenced by, norms governing post-separation parenting. In the final section, I provide an overview of the chapters contained within this doctoral thesis.

## **Western and Pacific notions of ‘family’**

It has been long argued that in modern Western societies collectivist approaches to family life have been replaced by a more individualistic orientations, and that family life centres around the nuclear household rather than the extended family (Goode, 1963; Morgan, 1975; Parsons, 1956; Ogburn 1955; Thompson, 1963). The idealised version of ‘family’ in white Western contexts is often closely aligned with the symbolic boundary of the nuclear family, both the family one was born into and the family where one currently resides. As such, normative white Western notions of family typically centre on the couple and/or parent-child dyad (Chambers, 2012; Lewis, 2003).<sup>8</sup> There are strong morally-informed obligations, underpinned by legal prescriptions, that parents will work together to care for their children until they reach adulthood. The fulfilment of these family obligations, however, often rely on gendered divisions of labour and responsibility. To elaborate, despite growing numbers of women/mothers engaged in paid work and men/fathers involved in care work, women/mothers often fulfil traditionally defined caregiving and nurturing roles and men/fathers breadwinning roles within the family (Baker, 2010). There are also normative assumptions that any income earned or received will be used or shared among family members to meet individual and household needs (Pahl, 1989, 1995; Singh, 1997; Singh and Morley, 2011). The transfer and use of money generally prioritise the needs of those falling within the nuclear family unit over those falling outside, such as grandparents, aunties, uncles and so forth. The constructed boundary of obligations to family commonly corresponds with symbolic differences associated with being ‘family’ and being a ‘relative’. Being ‘family’ denotes close and affective kin

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<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that this is a normative experience, but rather an idealised version of family (Chambers, 2012; Lewis, 2003; Morgan, 2011). This nuclear family form does not capture the diversity in family experiences and of family relationships. For example, post-divorce families (Smart and Neale, 1999), step-families (Allan, Crow and Hawker, 2011) or those living within ‘families of choice’ involving same-sex couples and close friendships (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001).

connections, while being a 'relative' suggests more distant family relations (Finch and Mason, 1993).

Pacific understandings of family, however, move beyond this nuclearised view. Pacific families have a more collectivist and extended family structure, with fewer clearly marked boundaries between the nuclear and extended family (Fleming, 1997; Grattan, 2004; Stewart-Withers et al., 2010). The family, and the idea of assisting your kin, are central to Pacific cultural norms and values that emphasise family as the single most important feature of social life. There are strong morally-informed cultural expectations that family members – nuclear and extended – will collaboratively work together to provide one another with reciprocal care and support (Barcham, 2005; Duncan, 2008; Grattan, 2004; Stewart-Withers et al., 2010).

Although parents are considered to be primarily responsible for children, it is common in Pacific families to share the physical, practical, financial, emotional and spiritual care work associated with raising children with other, typically female, family members. In the context of parental separation, obligations and responsibilities for care of children are not understood in white Western terms as being private matters for parents to work out (Waldegrave et al., 2011). Rather, it is treated as a concern of the wider extended family, who are actively involved in determining and facilitating post-separation care for children (Robertson and Pryor, 2008; Sua'ali'i-Sauni, McTaggart and Von Randow, 2009; Stewart et al., 2010; Waldegrave et al., 2011).

Similarly, financial obligations in Pacific families reach beyond nuclear households to include extended family. Individual earnings and financial resources are not necessarily used at the earners' discretion, or even within their households.<sup>9</sup> Rather, individuals are expected to prioritise financial obligations to their wider family, especially their parents and grandparents, over their individual and household needs. (Brown, 1994; Connell and Brown, 2005; Flemings, 1997). Unlike white Western families, where the flow of money typically moves between men/fathers and women/mothers and down the generations from parent to child, the flow of money within Pacific families is multi-directional moving up, down and between generations from parents to children, children to parents, parents to uncles, aunties, grandparents and so forth (Cowley, Paterson and Williams, 2004; Duncan, 2008). Likewise, the overall control of

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<sup>9</sup> For example, sending remittances – or money – to family in the Islands remains a common practice for many Pacific people/families living away from their home country (Brown, 1994; Connell and Brown, 2005).



money in Pacific families does not necessarily reflect the gendered patterns found to be present in white Western families, where men/fathers, as generally primary earners, are afforded greater decision-making power over money in the family than women/mothers (Atwood, 2012; Elizabeth, 2001; Pahl, 1995; Vogler, 2005). Instead, access to and control over money in Pacific families is hierarchically arranged along generational lines, with more senior family members typically having a greater say over how financial resources are allocated and used, even when these senior family members are not members of the household. Furthermore, the gendered hierarchy structuring husband-wife relationships comes secondary to the generational hierarchy of parent-child relationships (Pasikale and George, 1995).<sup>10</sup>

The distinction between the framing of family within mainstream Aotearoa New Zealand and within Pacific cultures is succinctly described by Pasikale and George (1995, p. 2) who wrote: “if individualism is the essence of the mainstream culture, then being part of a family ... is the essence of Pacific Island cultures”. However, I do not want to oversimplify my arguments through a binary and prescriptive construction of an individualistic West compared with a collectivist Pacific. The point that I am making is that discursive constructions of family within white Western and Pacific contexts are distinctly different. White Western constructions are informed by discourses of individualism that emphasise individuals – or the ‘I’ – over the collective ‘we’ of the family. In white Western contexts, the ‘we’ typically refers to those in the nuclear family and not a network of extended family members. In Pacific cultures, we see the reverse: Pacific people draw on collectivist discourses that emphasise the importance of broader kin networks – or the ‘we’ – over individuals and nuclear households.

These constructions, however, are not deterministic. Individuals and families, both white Western and Pacific, are able to negotiate their movement between and prioritisation of the I/we distinction. But, within white Western contexts, individuals and households are more able to prioritise the ‘I’ over the ‘we’ without being censured or shamed for acting in ways perceived to be individualistic by their extended families and communities. The pervasive influence of individualism in the West means that individuals have more agency to act in ‘I’ oriented ways.

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<sup>10</sup> But this is not to say that the organisation and negotiation of financial and family obligations in Pacific families does not share some resonance with white Western families. For instance, some of the 32 Pacific families that took part in Fleming’s (1997) study of family income-sharing practices in Aotearoa New Zealand relied on a male-breadwinner as the primary source of financial provisioning for the family. Similarly, Sua’ali’i-Sauni et al.’s (2009) qualitative study of parenting and economic decision-making among Pacific families found that provisions of care and support for children in Pacific families were largely organised along gendered lines, with fathers primarily fulfilling breadwinning roles and mothers caregiving roles.

Within Pacific cultures though, one is less able to do this because one's sense of cultural identity emerges from the 'we' being the focus, a point that I elaborate on in the following chapter.

The pertinence of this to my research is that white Western and Pacific discursive constructions of family are markedly different, thereby signalling the significance of research that considers how Pacific collectivist and communally-based notions of family shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' agencies and identities in the context of post-separation parenting and familial life. In the following section, I discuss the post-separation family policy context in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although my research is not focused on the experiences of parents who turned to the state to resolve parental disputes over care and/or financial arrangements for children, it is important that I outline the policy context to convey some of the norms governing how parents are expected to care and make arrangements for children following separation.

### **Post-separation family policy context**

Over the last three decades, in response to the growing prominence of children living apart from one of their biological parents, policy-makers in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere across the West have developed a series of family-related socio-legal laws and policies (Baker, 2008; Fehlberg and Maclean, 2009; Harris-Short, 2010; Tolmie, Elizabeth and Gavey, 2010a, 2010b). In Aotearoa New Zealand, the two significant pieces of legislation governing post-separation parenthood are the *Care of Child Act* 2004 (which repealed the *Guardianship Act* 1968) and the *Child Support Amendment Act* 2013 (that reformed the *Child Support Act* 1991). These policies, similar to those in other Western nations, were developed to facilitate the continued involvement of both parents in caring for children following separation. The *Care of Children Act* 2004 focuses on the care of and authority over children, while the *Child Support Amendment Act* 2013 is concerned with financial arrangements for children. It is worth noting that the state begins from a presumption that following separation parents will privately work out care and financial arrangements for children as they are assumed to have done prior to separation, with the state only intervening to resolve disputes when requested by one or other of the parties. Below I discuss each policy in turn, starting with the *Care of Children Act* 2004 and then the *Child Support Amendment Act* 2013. Following this, I discuss how the principles

and logics underpinning these policies shape the norms governing post-separation parenting and familial life.

The *Care of Children Act* 2004 introduced significant changes to resolving disputes, usually but not exclusively between biological parents, over the ongoing care of children following separation.<sup>11</sup> Rather than regulating the rights of parents, as the *Guardianship Act* 1968 had done, the focus of the *Care of Children Act* 2004 was on the responsibilities that parents have for their children. But, similar to the *Guardianship Act* 1968, the *Care of Children Act* 2004 is underpinned by the best interest of children principle (Baker, 2008; Henaghan et al., 2015; Tolmie et al., 2010a). Thus, the welfare of children is the first and foremost consideration when determining with whom and where a child/ren will primarily reside (or ‘day-to-day care’), as well as when and how the other parent will have ‘contact’ with them.

In an effort to convey more flexible notions of parenting as well as promoting shared care arrangements, the *Care of Children Act* 2004 replaced key terms, like ‘custody’ and ‘access’, in the *Guardianship Act* 1968, with ‘day-to-day care’ and ‘contact’ (Fisher and Hutton-Baas, 2017). Day-to-day care (formerly custody) includes one or both parents having care of and authority over children. Situations where both parents have the care of and authority over children are referred to as shared care arrangements.<sup>12</sup> Thus, contact (formerly access) is only relevant when day-to-day care has been awarded to one parent, and refers to arrangements made for children to spend time with their other parent.

Another the key objective of the *Care of Children Act* 2004 includes encouraging and assisting parents to make their own private care arrangements without court intervention. This occurs, for example, by requiring parents to complete a Parenting Through Separation<sup>13</sup> course, as well as participating in mediation through Family Disputes Resolution<sup>14</sup>, before being able to apply to the Family Court to resolve a dispute over children’s care (Ministry of Justice, 2019). The intention of the Act, therefore, was to signal a major shift away from the Family Court as an

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<sup>11</sup> Other disputes include those between a parent or parents and other family members, guardians and/or non-family members.

<sup>12</sup> Shared care should not be misread as shared care time, or 50:50 care time arrangements. Rather, it refers to situations where both parents have the care of and authority over children. This is not to say that both parents would necessarily share the day-to-day care of children in equal ways. For example, it might be that parents have a shared care arrangement, but one parent has more day-to-day care than the other. In child support policy, shared care is recognised as having a 28:72 time, or 2:5 night, split (Inland Revenue, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> A free parenting course available nationwide, administered through community organisations, that offers advice to aid parents to make their own private care arrangements for children.

<sup>14</sup> A mediation service administered through the Ministry of Justice.

arbiter of disputes by encouraging private resolutions (Fisher and Hutton-Baas, 2017; Henaghan et al., 2015) in an effort to minimise state intervention in family affairs. I now turn to child support policy.

New Zealand's child support policy was established in 1991 (reformed in 2013), and largely modelled on the scheme implemented in Australia. It created a system of money transfer between separated parents with children under the age of 18 years. Key objectives include affirming the rights of children to be financially maintained by their parents and, in turn, the financial responsibilities of parents to financially support their children. It is articulated as a policy that facilitates parents to fulfil their financial obligations to children to ensure that children do not suffer undue hardship as a result of their parents separation (Inland Revenue, 2011).

From 1991 to 2015, under the *Child Support Act* 1991, child support liabilities, for those who could not privately establish an arrangement, were calculated through a standardised administrative formula based on non-resident parents' (largely comprised of fathers) taxable income. However, reforms implemented in the *Child Support Amendment Act* 2013, similar to those made in Australia, moved away from focusing solely on the income of non-resident parents to assessing the costs of caring for children, and requiring parents to share these costs (Inland Revenue, 2011). The current formula for calculating liability assesses both parents' incomes and living costs, the amount of time child/ren are in each parent's care, and estimated costs of raising children. Other changes included lowering the shared care threshold with the result that starting from two nights per week (as opposed to three nights under the previous scheme) every night a child spends in the care of a parent progressively reduces that parent's child support liabilities. The recent reforms to child support calculations are said to recognise an increase in number of non-resident fathers caring for children following separation and, thus, greater numbers of parents involved in shared care arrangements (Inland Revenue, 2010, 2011).

The best interest of children principle underpins both the *Care of Children Act* 2004 and *Child Support Amendment Act* 2013. Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie (2012a) argue that this principle is accompanied by three logics – the logics of: durability, gender neutrality, and a present and future temporality – that shape how this principle is interpreted and applied to post-separation

parenting.<sup>15</sup> Although Elizabeth et al. discuss the three logics in reference to custody (or care and contact) laws, the same logics can be extended to child support policies. I now discuss each of the logics, starting with the logic of durability, then of gender neutrality and finally the logic of a present and future temporality.

The logic of durability moves away from the clean break principle following divorce, and specifies a continuing relationship between parents for children (Smart, 1997; Smart and Neale, 1999). It emphasises the ongoing involvement of both parents in children's lives as being in the best interests of children. The subtext, however, being less about ensuring continued involvement from mothers, and more about facilitating and retaining fathers' involvement in children's lives (Elizabeth et al., 2012a), because research shows that a significant proportion of non-resident fathers have limited, if any, ongoing contact with their children (Baxter, 2012; Smyth, Weston, Moloney, Richardson and Temple, 2008).

Further, the logic of durability is constructed as a way of protecting children's rights to have an ongoing relationship with both of their parents, however, it also represents the state's interests to ensure that costs associated with raising children remain in the private realm of the family. Put differently, the logic of durability is not only about parents maintaining a meaningful relationship with their children, but also about responsabilising them for costs related to caring for children. To give an example, child support rules stipulate that sole parents, typically mothers, who apply for sole parent welfare support must also apply for child support. Any child support money collected by Inland Revenue<sup>16</sup> is retained by the Crown up to the value of the benefit paid to the parent with care; only after this threshold is reached is child support money passed on to beneficiary mothers (Inland Revenue, 2011).<sup>17</sup>

Although a presumption of shared care is not explicitly written into either of the two pieces of legislation, it is often articulated in policy-related documents, and emphasised by government agencies, as being in the best interests of children (Inland Revenue, 2010, 2014; Ministry of Justice, 2017). For instance, Parenting through Separation courses, similar to the advice given

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<sup>15</sup> These logics have been to a large extent influenced and advanced by a global and vocal fathers' right movement. This movement has advocated for gender neutrality in the area of family law by insisting that contemporary fathers are as involved as mothers in caring for children both prior to and post separation (Collier, 2006; Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Flood, 2010, 2012; Kaye and Tolmie, 1998; Rhoades, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Child support collection agency.

<sup>17</sup> However, in 2011, St John and Fletcher (2011, p. 82) found that this only applied to three percent of all sole parent welfare beneficiaries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The remaining 97 percent of child support received on behalf of beneficiaries was absorbed by the state to offset the cost of their benefit.

to parents contemplating formal child support, encourage parents to work together co-operatively to make shared care arrangements for children (Inland Revenue, 2019; Ministry of Justice, 2017). Similarly, for parents who go through the Family Courts to establish care arrangements, Boshier and Spelman (2011) found that many Family Court Judge's emphasise in their rulings the importance of both parents being actively involved in children's lives. The logic thus idealises shared forms of care and creates an expectation that 'good' post-separation parents will work together to achieve this (van Kriekan, 2005).

However, the presumption that children's best interest involves regular and ongoing contact with both parents has only been found to be true in certain circumstances. These include situations where parents have similar beliefs about what is best for the child, full trust in the other parents' parenting abilities, live within close geographical proximity of each other, and have a relationship free of conflict (Kaspiew et al., 2009; McIntosh and Chisholm, 2008; Robertson et al., 2008). Thus, the general emphasis on continued and active involvement of both parents in children's lives, and the push for shared care, can work against children's best interest. McIntosh and Chisholm (2008), for example, found that regular exposure to tension and conflict between parents during change-overs, as well as the denigration of one parent by another, negatively impacts on children's well-being. Thus, ongoing and frequent contact between separated parents can intensify conflict and tensions, thereby increasing children's exposure to this conflict.

The second logic identified by Elizabeth et al. (2012a) is that of gender neutrality. Post-separation family laws and policies construct parents in gender neutral terms. For example, the *Care of Children Act 2004* begins from a presumption that under normal circumstances both parents are equally able and capable of caring for children (Boshier and Spelman, 2011; Ministry of Justice, 2009; Tolmie et al., 2010b). Mothers and fathers are thus positioned as indistinguishable from one another. The assumption is that there have been significant gendered transformations in family life to the extent that it is now more common for both parents to be actively involved in raising children and engaged in paid work (Inland Revenue, 2010, 2011). This assumption was used as the basis for reviewing how child support liabilities were calculated, and resulted in the shift from calculations based only on non-resident parents' incomes to including both parents' incomes in liability assessments. However, the idea that parenting and care work have become a gender neutral experience jars with the gendered division of labour that continues to permeate most families (Tolmie et al., 2010a). Although

fathers have been found to be more engaged in childcare than they were in the past, mothers continue to undertake more care work for children, even when they are in paid work (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). There is thus a disconnection between the equality rhetoric and the ongoing gendered realities of parenting, both prior to and post separation (Collier and Sheldon, 2006).

Gender neutrality and the push towards shared care are promoted as providing more equitable outcomes for mothers and fathers following separation (Inland Revenue, 2014; Ministry of Justice, 2017). However, the promotion of shared care makes invisible the consequences of applying gender neutral norms to what remains a highly gendered field of practice. In particular, it enables fathers to claim time with children they had hitherto not had, and requires mothers to relinquish time to often inexperienced fathers and to, thus, have less time with children than they had previously had (Elizabeth, 2019). As a result, an increasing number of mothers are spending longer and more regular periods of time away from their children (Elizabeth et al., 2012a), all of which relates to the third and final logic discussed below.

The third and final logic is that of a present and future temporality, and involves looking away from the past, and focusing on the present and into the future (Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Trinder and Kellet, 2007). This logic translates fathers' pursuit of care time into an indicator of their capacity to care for their children, even when fathers have had little to do with caring for children prior to separation (Elizabeth et al., 2012a). Thus, the emphasis on shared care, as well as child support policy provisions that enable liable parents to reduce their child support liabilities by increasing the amount of time (or nights) they spend with children, encourages and facilitates fathers to pursue more care time with children, irrespective of how involved these fathers were in children's lives prior to separation. As such, Elizabeth et al. argue that a logic of a present and future temporality works in concert with the logic of durability and of gendered neutrality to devalue the contributions and sacrifices made by women to the care of children prior to separation. while empowering fathers to claim time with children and over-estimating the ability of fathers to do the work associated with caring for their children during that time (Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Tolmie et al., 2010a).

Moreover, the logic of a present and future temporality works, as Fineman (2000-2001, p. 1040) asserts, as a

perverse affirmative action scheme in which men are excused from nurturing and caretaking norms and are permitted to devote their major energy and attention to their careers and extra-familial activities, without risking adverse consequences when they decide they want to assert claims to control their children post divorce.

In sum, the three shared logics work in ways that “differentially produce, position, and regulate women and men as post separation parents” (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, p. 243). As a result, fathers are able to pursue and claim time with children, while in doing so results in mothers losing time with children. Thus, as Elizabeth (2019, p. 35) argues in a more recent piece of sole authored work, accompanying these logics are morally-informed notions of parenthood being an ongoing and joint project. However, these notions are not gender neutral (Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie, 2010; Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Elizabeth, 2019). Fathers are expected to remain actively involved in their children lives and are also morally obliged to fulfil legally-defined financial obligations to children. Mothers, on the other hand, are expected to facilitate the father-child relationship by giving up time with children and encouraging children to spend time with their fathers (Elizabeth et al., 2010; Elizabeth et al., 2012a).

The laws and policies regulating post-separation parenting, as they have been articulated in policy and related documents, as well as by government agencies tasked with dispensing the information, convey a clear ethos: parents should work together co-operatively and collaboratively to make arrangements that facilitate shared forms of parental care and responsibility. The laws and policies regulating post-separation parenting begin from a non-interventionist approach in the hope that parents will work out care and financial arrangements privately, just as they are assumed to have done prior to separation. However, whether or not parents turn to or rely on state interventions to make care and/or financial arrangements for children, the legal and policy orientation shapes normative expectations about how parents should make care and financial arrangements. In responsibility, the emphasis on the ongoing involvement of both parents, as well as shared forms of parental care, have a normative effect that is accompanied by expectations that when parents separate, they will co-operatively work together in a “civilized way” (van Kriekan, 2005, p. 47) to continue to care for their children. As such, parents who cannot, or do not, make their own arrangements for children are set up to appear as ‘bad’ parents who not only could not make their relationship work, but who now cannot work together in the best interests of their children.



Although, as previously discussed, my research is not focused on the experiences of parents who turned to the state to resolve disputes over children's ongoing care following separation, the significance of the socio-legal policy context to this research is that it conveys some of the norms that might have influenced how the Pacific mothers and fathers thought about and consequently negotiated, organised and enacted their parental roles, responsibilities and identities following separation.

## **Thesis Outline**

I have divided this thesis into eight chapters:

In this first chapter, I introduced the field of research and provided a context for and explanation of the pertinence of this research project.

In Chapter 2, I present the theoretical frameworks that guide and inform this research, specifically individualisation and relationality. I outline how each theoretical framework understands and approaches the question of agency and identity. Within this discussion, I also delineate how agency and identity are framed and understood within Pacific cultures. I conclude this chapter by discussing the value of these theoretical constructs to investigating how Pacific mothers and fathers exercise agency and enact identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life.

Chapter 3 provides a review of the extant literature on post-separation mothering and fathering. I focus on the kinds of post-separation care arrangements that mothers and fathers make for their children, how they manage the care of children across households, as well as how separation alters the way that mothers and fathers experience and enact their moral identities as mothers and fathers. I conclude this chapter by specifying the gap in the literature that my research addresses.

I outline in Chapter 4 the feminist and Pacific qualitative methodological approaches that underpin this research. In accordance with feminist and Pacific methodological frameworks, the qualitative research methods employed were in-depth, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with ten Pacific mothers and five Pacific fathers. In this chapter, I discuss the methods employed, outlining in particular my recruitment strategy, data collection, research

participants and data analysis. In my discussion of my research methods, I outline the challenges that I experienced in the field. I also detail the ethical issues associated with doing research with human participants and how I managed them, as well as the limitations of ethical guidelines based on white Western perspectives for doing research with Pacific people and communities.

In Chapter 5, I explore how the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study negotiated care arrangements for their children following separation. Drawing on the distinction that Gilligan (1982) makes between an ‘ethic of care’ and an ‘ethic of justice’, I examine how gender and ethnicity intersect to shape Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ moral reasoning, and resulting decisions, about children’s post-separation care arrangements. I also investigate how their negotiations and decisions relate to how they construct and make sense of their identities as Pacific mothers and fathers, and family members. What emerges from my analysis is that Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ moral reasoning are highly gendered. Mothers negotiate care arrangements in highly collectivist, relational and self-sacrificing ways, and fathers in collectivist ways that ultimately serve individual needs. I conclude this chapter by arguing that Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices produce differing gendered cultural accountabilities that enable fathers to successfully claim time with children, while requiring mothers to facilitate and foster the relationships between children and their fathers and his extended family by giving up or forfeiting time with children.

Drawing on Morgan’s (1996, 2011) work on ‘family practices’, in Chapter 6, I examine Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ post-separation care practices. I consider the extent to which Pacific communally-based understandings about provisions of care in family shape how Pacific mothers and fathers care for children following separation. I focus on their actions in terms of how and with whom they organise, manage and perform care work, as well as gendered differences in patterns of caring for children. In my analysis, I found that the everyday post-separation care of children was enacted in highly collectivised ways with parents and other, typical female, family members. However, there were gendered differences in the extent, quantity and kind of care work that Pacific mothers and fathers surrendered to other family members. Mothers shared everyday care of children, but did not, and could not, relinquish all the care work to other family members. Conversely, for fathers, collectivist family norms in many ways exempted them from engaging in everyday care work for children. I conclude this chapter by arguing that Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ organised and performed care for children

in both reflexive and non-reflexive ways that were guided by Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices associated with family that rely on and reaffirm gendered understandings and practices of care.

In Chapter 7, I employ Finch's (2007) notion of 'family displays' to explore how Pacific mothers and fathers enact and display familial connections following separation. I investigate how, when and to whom Pacific mothers and fathers enact familial displays, examining how the changed relationship between parents alters how familial relationship and familial life are displayed and the meanings attached to and derived from different family displays. In doing this work, I examine how reflexive Pacific mothers and fathers are of their agency and identity in terms of how they orchestrate and stage displays of familial relationships and familial life. My analysis demonstrates that Pacific mothers and fathers engage in family displays in highly reflexive, albeit gendered, ways. In particular, mothers reflexively enacted agency by displaying familial relationship and familial life with a highly collectivist and child-centred relationalism, while fathers did so in more individualistic and child-related ways.

In the final chapter, I provide a summation of the findings of this research project. Significantly, I outline how my research contributes theoretically and empirically to the field of family sociology. In doing this, I integrate the findings of my three substantive chapters, namely, Chapters 5, 6 and 7, to provide a broader examination of how the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study negotiated, organised and enacted agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. In particular, I provide a broader conceptualisation of the notions I introduce and develop throughout my three substantive chapters of 'collective relationalism' and 'collective individualism'. I conclude this chapter by highlighting the value of research that explores experiences of parenting, parenthood and familial life at the intersections of gender and ethnicity. The incorporation of gender and ethnicity in my analysis showcases the intricate, dynamic and complex nature of enacting agency and identity following separation.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical underpinnings of individualisation and relationality

There have been widespread debates within the sociological literature around the degree to which agency and identity are experienced as individualised or relational constructs (Duncan, 2011; Mason, 2004). In this thesis, I contribute to these debates. To restate the focus of my research, I do this by examining the interplay between individualisation and relationality in terms of how Pacific mothers and fathers enact agency and identity in relation to how they (re)negotiate care arrangements, (re)organise care practices and (re)enact familial connections following separation.

In this chapter, I focus on outlining individualisation and relationality as theoretical constructs that inform and guide my research. I start out with a discussion of individualisation, outlining how theorists such as Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Anthony Giddens (1992) frame agency and identity as being purposeful and conscious self-reflexive life projects. Following this, I discuss the contrasting views of those such as Simon Duncan (2011) and Jennifer Mason (2004), who assert that agency and identity, while being individually navigated and performed, are relationally mediated by institutionalised and structurally-produced norms of practice (Duncan, 2011) as well as connections with others (Mason, 2004). Within this discussion, I also outline how agency and identity are framed and understood within Pacific cultures. I conclude this chapter by outlining the significance of these theoretical constructs to exploring Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity in the context separation.

## **Individualisation**

Individualisation, as a theoretical framework, emerges in a context of growing individualism in the West, and contends that individuals are the central unit of modern social life. Individuals are said to be increasingly living their lives as self-reflexive projects (Giddens, 1992). It is argued that in contemporary modern societies individual agency is less directed by traditions or institutionalised and shared socio-cultural norms, values and expectations, and more by individual preferences and proponents for individual self-fulfilment (Beck and Beck-

Gernsheim, 1995, 2002; Giddens, 1992). Social roles such as parent, wife or husband are argued to have less social value because they can be defined and performed more freely and creatively than in the past. Discussing individualisation, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p. 22-23), for example, state that:

we live in an age in which the social order of the national state, class, ethnicity and the traditional family is in decline. The ethic of individual self-fulfilment and achievement is the most powerful current in modern society. The choosing, deciding, shaping human being who aspires to be the author of his or her own life, the creator of an individual identity, is the central character of our time.

This idea of the “choosing, deciding ... author of his or her own life ... creator of an individual identity” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 22-23) was similarly articulated by Beck (1994) in an earlier piece of sole-authored work, where he argued that contemporary life is driven by processes of reflexive individualisation. In contemporary social life, “the standard biography becomes a chosen biography or “do-it-yourself biography”” (p. 15). Individuals are thus argued to be more autonomous and removed from the influence of community ties or collective identities. Individual identities are framed as a task for the individual. The idea being that individual life trajectories as well as individual identities are less bound to broader social structures/institutions and collective identities. Instead, individuals are argued to have greater freedom to choose and determine how they want to live their lives, and that they do so in individualistic ways in an effort to find and achieve self-fulfilment (Beck, 1994; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Giddens, 1992).

Ideas associated with individualisation have been incorporated into examinations of intimate relationships in contemporary Western societies to highlight the individualistic way that individuals are able to negotiate and navigate modern social life (Bauman, 2003; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995 Giddens, 1992). Giddens (1992), for example, talks about how notions of ‘romantic love’ that became dominant from the nineteenth century have been supplanted with more contingent notions of love, or as he terms it ‘pure relationships’ and ‘confluent love’. In particular, the idea that one person finds the right person and then stays committed to them until death do they part, have been replaced by ideas that if that person turns out not to be a good and compatible fit, they can leave the relationship and find someone else. Falling in love and/or marriage are thus not equated with a permanent relationship. Rather, if one person’s needs within the relationship are not adequately met or do

not lead them to feel fulfilled, they can depart from the relationship to find a more suitable partner. Unlike traditional notions of romantic love being sealed by marriage and thus accompanied by an imposed normative order, do-it-yourself biographies of love (Beck, 1994), or pure relationships and confluent love (Giddens, 1992), are said to be negotiated in highly individualistic ways. Contemporary notions of love and intimate partnerships/relationship are thus viewed as being highly contingent and open to continuous re-evaluation.

The social changes that have taken place in the realm of intimacy and family, demonstrated by, for example, the growing prominence of cohabitation, extra-marital births, separation and divorce, are taken by individualisation theorists as evidence of individualisation. Rather than viewing individual agency and identity as being responses to, or determined by, institutions and structures, individuals are framed as conscious and active agents who, in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment and self-enrichment, drive these social changes (Giddens, 1992). The overarching ideas underlying individualisation is that individuals in contemporary societies have more agency, which has resulted in the disintegration of social institutions and structures, and that they have become more autonomous, living their lives independent of tradition and collective identities.

In the next section, I turn to relationality. I first discuss how individuals relate to institutions and structures to guide how they enact agency and identity, and then how agency and identity are shaped by relationships with others.

## **Relationality**

A number of sociologists have critiqued the notion of individualisation for misrepresenting agency and identity as primarily conscious and reflexive processes and practices. (Duncan, 2011; Gabb, 2011a; Mason, 2004; May, 2011; Smart, 2007, 2011). The central argument being that although individuals might be less bound by social institutions and structures than they were in the past, they do not live their lives free from external influence and/or constraint. Drawing on empirical evidence, studies have shown that institutions and structures continue to influence agency and identity (Carter and Duncan, 2018; Duncan, 2011; Martin, 2003). Duncan (2011), for example, argues that often times the choices that people make are related to circumstance and bound by institutions (e.g. family) and structures (e.g. gender). Institutions

and structures offer habitual, and at times routinised, actions and decision-making processes that condition how experiential threads are woven together across the life course. This is a process that Duncan calls ‘bricolage’ and uses to describe how institutions often “do the thinking” (p. 7) for individuals by providing people with norms of practice that guide actions, decision-making, meaning-making and identity-making processes in at times non-reflexive and even unconscious ways.

In contrast to the views of individualisation theorists, who argue that individuals are conscious and active agents driving social change, Duncan (2011, p. 7) asserts that even in a context of change, or in new and unfamiliar situations, individuals turn to existing institutions to “patch” or “piece together” responses to changing or changed conditions. Although individuals have greater manoeuvre to individually and individualistically navigate their lives, Duncan and others argue that they do not simply abandon traditions or institutionalised norms of practice to live out their lives as do-it-yourself biographies (Carter and Duncan, 2018; Smart and Shipman, 2004). Instead, individuals navigate their circumstances by turning to institutions, consciously and unconsciously, for guidance. Duncan (2011) uses cohabitation as an example to show how despite not adhering to the institution of marriage in a traditional sense, many cohabiting couples observe traditional notions enshrined within marriage as an institution, for example, of love and commitment and, in a more every day sense, of sharing money and household tasks (Vogler, 2005).<sup>18</sup> By drawing on existing institutions as well as normative practices, individuals do not only patch together or bricolage responses to new situations, they also piece together institutions. “These institutions are therefore neither completely new, nor completely traditional, but ... a dynamic mixture” of the old and new (Duncan, 2011, p. 7). Thus, for Duncan, individual agents have the capacity to drive social changes, as evidenced by the growing prominence of cohabitation. But rather than re-inventing the wheel, they navigate and negotiate these changes, and their agency and identity, within already established institutions. By referring to institutions, individuals are able to conserve social energy and, in the process, gain social legitimation.

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<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that the ‘sharing’ of money and household tasks is not to imply that it is shared evenly or equitably between partners. But more to make the point that cohabiting couples have similar aspirations for their relationship as well as experiences as those of married couples. Also, worth mentioning is that despite pooling or sharing money being common among cohabiting couples so too are more individualistic money management practices (Elizabeth, 2001; Vogler, 2005).

Martin (2003) echoes Duncan's (2011) ideas but does so by looking at how gender as a social structure informs individual agency. Martin (2003) discusses in particular how gendering practices shape how we practice gender. She uses gendering practices to refer to how we are gendered, and practicing gender to how we consequently 'do' or perform our gender. Martin argues that when doing gender, individuals often operate with a sense of agency that is informed and situated within a body of gendering practices that are available to be done. The idea being that individuals turn to these gendering/gendered practices, consciously and unconsciously, to inform and guide how they enact agency and construct their identities. For Martin, agency in terms of how one performs or does their gender is seldom a unitary act. Rather, it is informed by a series of historically and culturally located institutionalised and structurally-produced norms that rely on tacit knowledge and performative skills acquired over time. Although individuals have agency in a sense that they can choose to conform or depart from gendering/gendered practices, Martin found that often times individuals do gender in quick and unreflexive ways, on impulse, revealing the deep-seated way that gender, and structures more broadly, shape the kinds of choices that individuals make and the actions they take.

As Duncan (2011) reminds us, agency is about exercising power. It is the power to choose and the power to act. How much power an individual has, or has access to, though is largely determined by their structural social position as well as their relationship with others in institutional structures. For example, how much power or agency someone has in the family is often dependent on their broader structural position as well as their social structural position within the family. Parents typically have greater power and agency than children. However, that is not to say that mothers and fathers have the same or equal access to power. Rather, men/fathers as 'income earners' or 'breadwinners' are often structurally and discursively positioned in the family as having more decision-making power in the family than mothers (Atwood, 2012; Elizabeth, 2001; Vogler, 2005, Wall and Arnold, 2007). To give an example related to family finances, men/fathers are often able to mobilise their generally greater financial contribution to their families to exercise overt power over how 'family' money is allocated and used (Vogler, 1998). The generally greater financial and discursive power of men/fathers also works covertly such that women/mothers, particularly those who are not in paid work or only work part-time, often defer to men in financial matters and frequently self-surveil their use of family money (Burgoyne, 1990; Elizabeth, 2001).



Thus, the power to make decisions and to act are shaped by one's social structural position as well as their social relations with others in institutions. It is these kinds of relations that permit, or limit, one's ability to exercise agency 'freely'. In particular, some individuals are better positioned than others to enact their agency more freely and individualistically. For this reason, Duncan (2011, p. 5) argues that agency is not "simply a matter of choice". Rather, it is an institutionally-shaped and structurally-produced agency that differently positions people, where some have greater ability to exercise agency more freely, while others are more constrained in their agency. To put it another way, individuals have agency, but it is a situated agency as opposed to a free-standing one. That is not to say that individuals are passive agents who simply absorb institutionalised and structurally-produced norms, but rather that they are mediated and negotiated at the micro-level of individuals, providing them with the opportunity to conform or depart, or both, from these norms of practice. However, it is not always easy to abandon or depart from institutionalised and structurally-produced norms because often times one gains social legitimation if one's actions are perceived as being in line with socially accepted and constructed norms.

Agency and identity are not only negotiated relationally at the macro institutional/structural level, but also at the micro-level of interpersonal ties. In particular, agency and identity have been found to be relationally informed through connectivity with others and the continuing significance of (family) relationships (Finch and Mason, 2000; Ribbens-McCarthy, Edwards and Gilles, 2003; Smart and Neale, 1999). As Mason (2004, p. 166) argues, individual agency and the kinds of decisions that people make are "relational, connected and embedded" in overlapping webs of relationships with others.

To illustrate, Mason's (2004) qualitative study on residential histories drawn from interviews with 57 people living in the North of England showed that individual life stories were often told and explained through participants' relationships with others, particularly, but not exclusively, with family. She identified four types of relational practices employed by participants when talking about their residential histories. The first, relational inclusion and co-presence involved individuals making decisions about where to move or live based on staying geographically close to family. The second, relational participation concerned including others in their decision-making. The third, relational constraint and conflict referred to how participants' relationships with others constrained the kinds of decisions they made about where to live. Mason shares participants' stories about how separation or divorce restricted

participants' agency, with participants having to weigh up competing factors when making decisions about where to live, for example, deciding whether to move or stay in the family home, or deciding whether to live in close geographical proximity of children, family or work. And finally, relational individualism, which involved exercising agency about where to live in individualistic ways that also serve the interests of others. However, unlike the aforementioned relational practices, Mason found this mode to be highly gendered, occupying a minority of men's' accounts, and none of the women's. This kind of relationalism often involved men/fathers making decisions on behalf of the family. As Mason notes, this type of relationalism is connected to discourses of masculinity that afford men greater decision-making power in the family and over family finances. Mason concludes by arguing that, contrary to theories of individualisation, individual life projects are often produced and experienced relationally in connectivity with others.

Relationality, as a sociological concept and framework in the study of intimacy, family and personal life, therefore, dismisses the idea emphasised by individualisation theorists of people being bounded, recognising instead the social relatedness of individuals (Gabb, 2011a; Mason, 2004; May, 2011; Roseneil and Ketokivi, 2016; Smart, 2007). In this context, as Smart (2007) discusses, relatedness does not imply, and is not intended to be used synonymously to refer to, consanguineous kin connections. Instead, relatedness is used here to describe how individuals construct and give meaning to their individual lives in reference to others (Smart, 2007, p. 46) and institutions (Duncan, 2011). In other words, the way that individuals exercise agency is enmeshed within interconnected webs of relationships and specific socio-cultural contexts that are accompanied by social and cultural norms, values, expectations and practices. Relationality as a conceptual tool thus enables an investigation of family life that understands that individuals act or live, construct and give meaning to their individual lives in relation to institutions as well as to their relationships with others.

### ***Pacific understandings of relationality***

Ideas associated with relationality are central to Pacific understandings of agency and identity (Henderson, 2016). To expand on this point, the idea of agency and identity being constructed as part of a broader relational project is emphasised within Pacific cultures as an essential part of belonging to and within your community (Henderson, 2016; Mo'a, 2015; Vaai and Nabobo-

Baba, 2017). Writing in the context of Samoa, Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush (2005) argue that the self gains, and is given, meaning in reference to relationships with others. Speaking specifically about the significance of relationality within Pacific families, an individual family member cannot be separated from the relational space between themselves and their parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and other extended family and community members. The relational space, or points of reference, between the self and others, known in Samoan as the *va*, is an essential and integral aspect of encompassing and enacting your culture, a culture that structurally privileges expressions of relationality and collectivity over expressions of individuality (Henderson, 2016; Pasikale and George, 1995).

Drawing on fieldwork undertaken in Samoa, Mageo (1998) emphasises that unlike white Western cultures that are largely ego-centrally organised around the individual, Samoan culture is socio-centrally ordered around the collective. In Pacific cultures, the prevailing moral discourse that guides individual actions and decision-making, or agency, focuses around how to dutifully fulfil and enact individual roles in ways that benefit the broader kin community. As such, Mageo argues that ideas associated with individualism, although prevalent and pervasive within white Western contexts, are fundamentally at odds with Pacific understandings and constructions of agency and identity. In Pacific contexts, relational ways of being and doing encompass something more than simply relating to others, it operates as a means through which individuals and families embody their culture and thereby affirm and reaffirm their individual and collective cultural identities as Pacific (Tamasese, Parsons, Sullivan, and Waldegrave, 2010).

However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, but in the context of Western and Pacific understandings of family, I do not wish to reduce my arguments to a binary construction of an individualistic West compared with a relational Pacific, implying that agency and identity in the West and in the Pacific are homogenously and dichotomously experienced and enacted. Rather, the point is that Western and Pacific understandings of agency and identity have been discursively framed in distinctly different ways. Western constructions of agency and identity draw on a more individualistic and individualised discourse that emphasise the individual or the 'I' (and in the context of family, nuclear households) over the collective, or the 'we' (again in the context of family, extended families). However, discursive constructions of agency and identity in Pacific cultures draw on more collectivist and relational discourses that emphasise the 'we' over the individual (or household) or the 'I'. As in the context of family, individuals

– both white Westerners and Pacific – are able to individually negotiate their agency and identity in ways that align or diverge from these discursive constructions. However, in Pacific cultures departing from these cultural norms and expectations compromises claims to a Pacific identity, because one’s sense of cultural identity emerges through relational and collectivist behaviours.

Further, because Pacific cultures have a more collectivist and relational approach to doing family life, the way that individuals enact agency has a number of implications for how individual and collective moral identities are produced and managed. How one conceives and enacts agency is closely related to individual morality and hence to questions of identity. The way that individual agency is enacted is thus at times a result of individuals and families alike feeling constrained by their desire to be seen as ‘good’ and ‘moral’ family members and families. To give you an example, in Pacific cultures, as discussed in the previous chapter, there are expectations that money and financial resources will be shared and used to fulfil family obligations within and across the nuclear and extended family. These expectations, however, can operate as a source of constraint for individuals and families alike. For instance, many of the Pacific participants in Fleming’s (1997) study of money management practices in Aotearoa New Zealand talked about the tension that they experienced trying to balance cultural expectations of sharing financial resources with the practical realities and hardships associated with maintaining their own individual households. But, as I also discussed in Chapter 1, individuals and families that prioritise their own needs – individual and household – over the extended family run the risk of being perceived as overly individualistic and selfish for engaging in practices that are fundamentally at odds with Pacific cultural values (Cowley, Paterson and Williams, 2004; Fleming, 1997). Thus, despite many of the Pacific couples in Fleming’s (1997) study noting that they did not necessarily want to use their individual and household incomes to fulfil extended family obligations, it was seen as a necessary cost associated with maintaining a Pacific cultural identity.

Although Fleming (1997) did not explicitly discuss agency, the example given above demonstrates how the agency that many of her Pacific participants operated with was informed by Pacific cultural values and closely related to identity. In particular, these family members were relationally constrained to enact agency in culturally-informed ways. To remind, the idea of assisting family is deeply embedded within Pacific cultural norms and values that emphasise the family as the central and most important feature of social life (Pasikale and George, 1995).

To disengage, therefore, from participating in, and meeting, financial obligations to family would not only diminish family ties, it would also limit the capacity for individuals and families to display and secure a culturally-approved Pacific identity. More so, it would open individuals and families up to being shamed and censured within their families and Pacific communities for acting in ways considered to be 'too Western' (Maiava, 2001; Prescott and Hooper, 2009). By enacting agency in collectivist and relational ways, thereby adhering to institutionalised and culturally, or ethnically, produced norms of practice associated with living and being a part of a family, and of being Pacific, individuals and their families are able to maintain or secure their individual and collective identities as good Pacific family members and families more generally.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined individualisation and relationality as theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis contained within my research. Drawing on these frameworks, I examine how Pacific mothers and fathers – as individual agents, parents and family members – navigate and negotiate the individualisation and relationality nexus. The significance of individualisation to my research is that all of the participants in this study had separated from their children's other parent and, prior to separation, all but one had been in a cohabiting relationship and had their children outside of wedlock, all of which points to a tendency towards individualisation. A tendency that manifests itself in the shift away from institutions and structures, as well as pre-established life paths of love, marriage and childbearing being socially sanctioned as permanent, towards a more do-it-yourself biography. Given that my cohort of participants are framed by theorists such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995, 2002) and Giddens (1992) as evidence of individualisation, I examine how they enact agency and identity following separation. For example, did they act as conscious and purposeful agents living their lives as self-reflexive do-it-yourself biographies in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment? Or did they operate with a more relational sense of agency and identity mediated by institutionalised and structurally/culturally-produced norms as well as in connection with others? In terms of the latter question, I investigate the extent to which family, gender and ethnicity – as social institutions/structures – intersect to shape agency and identity. Given that all of the Pacific mothers and fathers had separated from their child/ren's other parent, I consider how they patched or pieced together responses to their changed familial environment. And in particular,

the degree to which their social structural position – as Pacific mothers and/or Pacific fathers – as well as their relationships with others shaped how they enacted, and were able to enact, agency and identity following separation.

As conceptual frameworks, individualisation and relationality enable me to analyse how separated Pacific mothers and fathers living in Aotearoa New Zealand interpret and negotiate institutionalised and structurally/culturally-produced norms associated with the doing of parenting and family life in terms of how they themselves live and construct their familial lives, or enact agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. Given the centrality of relationality to Pacific understandings of agency and identity, and that most of the participants in my study were born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, I examine whether their agency and identity are best understood through the lens of individualisation or relationality, or perhaps an amalgamation of different aspects of the two frameworks.

In the following chapter, I provide a review of the extant literature on post-separation mothering and fathering.

# Chapter 3: A review of the literature on post-separation parenthood

The demise of the intimate relationship between parents is no longer meant to spell the end of their parenting relationship (Simpson, 1998; Smart, 1997; Smart and Neale, 1999). Rather, when couples have children, they become inextricably tied to one another by remaining partnered in an ongoing parenting project<sup>19</sup> (Smart and Neale, 1999), albeit a co-parenting project that is marked by spatial and temporal divisions (Elizabeth, 2015). Parental separation can, thus, be viewed as a transitional period in familial life, with many parents moving from co-residential parenting to living and parenting apart (Amato, 2000; Baum, 2003; Simpson, 1998). This shift involves children living in what Morgan (2011, p. 74) describes as “bi-nuclear families”, and moving between and across the households of their, now separated, parents. In turn, it involves parents experiencing periods of separation from their children in terms of both time and space (Elizabeth, 2015).

Within the sociological literature, post-separation mothering and fathering is an under-studied phenomenon in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the globe. On separation, parents are expected to privately make arrangements for the ongoing care of children, yet little is known in Aotearoa New Zealand about how mothers and fathers negotiate and manage the care of children, or about how parenting across spatial and temporal divisions alters mothers’ and fathers’ experiences of parenting, parenthood and familial life (Robertson, Pryor and Moss, 2008, 2009). In this literature review, I draw on scholarship that emerges out of Australia and the United Kingdom to compensate for the lack of academically published sociological material in Aotearoa New Zealand. I start this literature review by outlining the different kinds of care and contact arrangements that parents make for their children when they live apart, and the different motivations for entering into such arrangements. Following this, I discuss how

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<sup>19</sup> However, it is worth mentioning that although this is a normative expectation, this is not the reality for many separated parents. For example, between 2012-2013, in Australia, 15.9 percent of children (between the ages of 0-17) had contact with their non-resident parent only once every 3-12 months, and a further 28.2 percent had contact with their non-resident parent less than once a year or never (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). However, as Baxter, Edwards and Maguire (2012) demonstrate, fathers are overwhelmingly represented as non-resident parents, and mothers as resident parents. I have drawn on Australian statistics here because there is no available data of this kind in Aotearoa New Zealand.

separation, with parenting occurring across spatial and temporal divisions, alters mothers' and fathers' experiences of parenthood. I then examine how mothers and fathers manage the care of children across households. I conclude this chapter by specifying the gap in the literature that my thesis addresses, discussing in particular how my research contributes to and extends the field of sociological scholarship on post-separation parenting, parenthood and broader familial life.

## **Post-separation care and contact arrangements**

Much of the sociological literature on post-separation parenting focuses to a large extent on the frequency of contact between parents and children, and the types of care and contact arrangements that parents make for their children (Amato, Meyers and Emery, 2009; Kaspiew et al., 2009; Smyth, 2004, 2005; Robertson et al., 2009). For example, drawing on data from a large representative sample of mostly white separated parents in Australia, Smyth (2005) identifies five broad post-separation patterns of care and contact, which have also been found in other small-scale studies in Aotearoa New Zealand (Robertson et al., 2008, 2009), namely, 50:50 shared care, standard care (in the form of overnight and/or weekend time), daytime-only contact, holiday-only contact, and little or no contact with non-resident parents.

Noting that what we know about how and why parents enter into these arrangements are poorly understood, Smyth (2004) offers a discussion of mothers' and fathers' motivations for entering into these different care and contact arrangements. In terms of 50:50 shared care arrangements, Smyth found that fathers often drew on an ethic of 'rights', or what Smart and Neale (1999, p. 129) refer to as an 'ethic of justice', that is underscored by fathers' feeling rightfully entitled to equal care time with children. Conversely, mothers were found to draw on what Smart and Neale (p. 129) describe as an 'ethic of care' by conceding to fathers' preferences to keep inter-parental and familial peace. Mothers have also been found to facilitate these arrangements in an effort to foster the father-child relationship by supporting arrangements that ensured that fathers were involved in children's lives following separation (Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie, 2010; Smart and Neale, 1999; Tolmie, Elizabeth and Gavey, 2010a).

With respect to standard care arrangements (i.e. weekend and overnight visits), Smyth (2004) found that parents typically fell into these arrangements without necessarily having an explicit



conversation about how time would be divided or shared. Instead, arrangements were regularly negotiated and renegotiated to accommodate changes over time in individual and family circumstances. By not having an outlined schedule, Smyth found that care arrangements were able to remain flexible and responsive to the changing needs and circumstances of children and parents, such as changing work schedules and commitments. Although Smyth and others highlight the flexibility within which these arrangements are practiced (Robertson et al., 2008, 2009), implying that this flexibility accommodates the changing schedules of different family members, studies have found this flexibility to be highly gendered. To take one example, Lacroix's (2006) qualitative study of ten white Australian parents, five mothers and five fathers, with a 50:50 care time arrangement found that mothers pursued flexible employment options that were responsive to the needs of their children as well as the changing schedules of their former partners. Fathers, in contrast, did not organise their paid work in ways that made them responsive to the changing schedules of their children or former partners. Considering this, the notion of 'flexibility' in care arrangements discussed in Smyth's (2004, 2005) work in many ways hides, disguises or makes invisible a wide range of childrearing responsibilities and activities that are largely undertaken by mothers (Smart and Neale, 1999; Tolmie et al., 2010a), a point that I elaborate on in greater detail later in the chapter.

In terms of those who had daytime-only, holiday-only contact or limited/no contact, Smyth (2004) found that non-resident fathers often viewed this as the result of their former partner's hostility towards them. Despite Smyth noting that day-time and holiday-only contact fostered focused time between fathers and children, fathers felt that it made it difficult to establish a post-separation fathering identity as well as reaffirm a parental relationship with their children, a finding that was echoed in other studies (Smart and Neale, 1999; Miller, 2017). In these situations, fathers often cited unsupportive resident mothers as a barrier to achieving close and affective father-child connections. However, resident mothers in the aforementioned studies indicated that this pattern arose because fathers were not invested nor did they make genuine efforts to sustain the father-child relationship. Further, low levels of paternal contact were particularly important for mothers who had low levels of confidence and trust in the other parent's parenting capabilities. It was also important for mothers whose former relationship was characterised by domestic violence and/or coercive control, or other forms of oppressive intimacy, because it both minimised the amount of contact and communication they had with their former partners, as well as children's exposure children to inter-parental conflict (Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie, 2012b).

As numerous studies have demonstrated, children's post-separation well-being is not determined by the amount of time that a child spends with a non-resident parent, but the quality of the parent-child and the inter-parental relationship; post-separation child well-being is about contact quality not contact frequency (Amato and Gilbreth, 1999; Burke, McIntosh and Gridley, 2009; Emery, Sbarra and Grover, 2005; Flood, 2010; Kaspiew et al., 2009; McIntosh and Chisholm, 2008; Smyth, 2004). As discussed in Chapter 1, the presumption that a child's best interest involves regular and shared care time with both parents has been found to only be true in situations where parents have similar beliefs about what is best for the child, full trust in the other's parenting capabilities, live within close geographical proximity of each other, and have, for the most part, a co-operative co-parenting relationship that is free from conflict and violence (Ahrons, 2004, 2007; Fehlberg, Smyth, Maclean and Roberts, 2011; McIntosh and Chisholm, 2008; Robertson et al., 2008, 2009; Smart and Neale, 1999; Smyth, 2004).

## **Post-separation fathering and mothering**

Although Smyth's (2004, 2005) work outlines the kinds of care and contact arrangements that parents make for their children when they live apart, it conveys little about how mothers and fathers experience and enact parental roles and identities following separation. For this I turn to Smart and Neale's (1999) qualitative study of in-depth interviews with 60 divorced parents, specifically 31 mothers and 29 fathers of which 58 were ethnically identified as 'white' and two 'black'<sup>20</sup>, in the United Kingdom. Smart and Neale found that there was great diversity in the transition into, and experience of, post-divorce parenthood, distinguishing between three types of post-separation parenting arrangements; namely, co-parenting, custodial parenting and sole parenting. What sets these arrangements apart was whether parents share parental care and parental authority of children. Parental care refers to the direct physical, practical and emotional care work associated with raising children, while parental authority focuses on how parents make decisions about and for children. Co-parenting arrangements involve sharing care and authority; custodial parenting arrangements is marked by both parents sharing the care, but

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<sup>20</sup> Smart and Neale (1999, p. 41-42) did not indicate the gender of the two parents who were ethnically/racially identified as 'black'.

only one parent having authority; and solo parenting is characterised by one parent having both the care and authority.

In terms of approaches to parenthood, Smart and Neale (1999) found that mothers and fathers, in gendered ways, had to adjust or modify their approach to parenting quite significantly in response to the changed familial environment. For fathers, in particular those with a co-parenting and custodial parenting arrangement, it meant developing a more active and engaged approach to childrearing and caring than they had prior to separation. For example, as one of the fathers in Smart and Neale's (p. 78) study said:

Leon Holt: If we were still together I would be doing the usual stereotyped father role, come in from work, play with them, watch telly, weekends have more time to myself. ... I was just there and I probably didn't pay them much attention at all. ...I made a conscious decision ... that I was going to see my children grow up and give them the best that I can. You have to think, 'Well, how do I want it to be in five years' time?' And then, 'Well, what do I need to do to make sure it happens?'

This excerpt demonstrates the way in which this father, similar to many others in Smart and Neale's (1999) study, had to actively revise his parenting approach from that of being a hands-off and "distant" father to becoming an involved and "good" father (p. 79). Fathers in other studies shared similar sentiments of having to alter their approach to fathering by becoming more involved in their children's lives following divorce or separation (Philip, 2013, 2014; Miller, 2011, 2017). For 'involved fathers' it often meant revising how they approached and performed their parental role, to draw on Smart's (1991) earlier work, from *caring about* children to also *caring for* children. The former referring to feelings of interest and concern, and the latter involving the practical, physical and emotional labour involved in meeting children's everyday needs. Fathers spoke about how prior to separation they had taken their paternal role for granted because they could be with and around their children at any given time (Miller, 2011, 2015; Moore, 2016; Philip, 2014; Smart and Neale, 1999). However, following separation, much of what had previously been taken for granted came into focus, with fathers in the above studies talking about the anguish they felt of not being able to be with their children when they wanted and of not knowing the daily happenings in their children's lives, even when they knew little of this prior to separation.

Smart and Neale's (1999) study highlighted the fluidity and variability in meanings attached to fathering identities and fatherhood. To help make sense of this variability I first describe discursive constructions of fatherhood in the West. Historically, normative Western constructions of good fathering were largely associated with being a good provider and simply being present within the intact family. More recent permutations of fatherhood (or 'new fathers'), however, are said to consist of fathers who want to be and are involved in all of the daily activities associated with raising and caring for children (Edin and Nelson, 2013; Miller, 2015, 2017; Moore, 2016). In accordance, Smart and Neale (1999) found that following divorce fathers were able to perform their fathering roles and identities in an array of socially permissible ways. For example, by fulfilling traditionally defined breadwinning roles and being less involved in the day-to-day care of children, or by being an involved and engaged father, often for the first time in their parenting biographies. Among the fathers in Smart and Neale's study, most performed their fathering roles and identities following divorce by continuing to focus on fulfilling provider roles as they had prior to separation. Others reinvented themselves as involved fathers, while some became uninvolved in their children's lives.

Similarly, as Philip's (2014) qualitative study of in-depth interviews with 23 mostly white separated/divorced fathers in the United Kingdom found, a moral claim to a 'good' fathering identity can be achieved by demonstrating a commitment to pursuing and spending time with children and/or fulfilling breadwinning roles and being less involved in children's lives. Attempts made by fathers to pursue care time as well as sustain the relationship with children, or to fulfil provider roles, or both, were considered moral acts in and of themselves. Drawing on one, or both, of these fathering identities enabled fathers to lay claim to a moral identity associated with being a good father, and separated these fathers from those considered 'bad' fathers or 'deadbeats dads', who are marked by their absence in their children's lives and failure to financially support their children.

Mothering on separation, however, is not experienced in the same way as fathering. For mothers, the ideals inscribed within 'intensive mothering' discourses shape how they perform, and are expected to perform, their mothering roles and identities. As numerous studies have demonstrated, the moral construction of good mothering in the West is marked by the ideals associated with intensive mothering as involving child-centred, emotionally-involved, time consuming and self-sacrificing forms of childrearing, and is underscored by ideas that good mothers revolve their lives around their children (Bobel, 2002; Hays, 1996; Miller, 2005;

O'Reilly, 2008; Raith, Jones and Porter, 2015). This moral and social construction has become so embedded in society that mothers cannot easily depart from these ideals without being morally censured as 'bad' mothers. Multifaceted and complex, the ideals associated with what it means to be a good mother are symbolically laden and represent a woman's ultimate dedication to and affection for her children. By subscribing and adhering to ideals inscribed within intensive mothering discourses, mothers provide care for their children, while also morally constructing themselves as good mothers, thereby demarcating themselves from 'bad' mothers.

Most of the mothers in Smart and Neale's (1999, p. 51) study centred their lives around their children's lives. As one mother said, "They are my life. My life revolves around what they do, what they need. They are my boys. ... where they go, I go. It was just never open to discussion". For most of the mothers in Smart and Neale's study, their identity derived from an intense focus on being a mother, which arises in part from "dominant cultural constructions which idealize motherhood" (p. 52) and also because they had revolved their lives around their children. For example, many gave up their jobs once they had children or pursued flexible employment options that worked around their children's needs. It is worth noting that even in situations where mothers were employed in full-time work, they continued to undertake most of the everyday care work associated with caring for children.

The transition into post-divorce parenthood was thus experienced differently for mothers than fathers. Unlike fathers who claimed time with children, mothers were often required to give up time with children (Elizabeth, 2019; Smart and Neale, 1999). In these situations, mothers found it difficult to relinquish care of children to former partners, who prior to separation had little do to with the everyday care of children and who they believed to be inexperienced at caring for children (Smart and Neale, 1999). Mothers in Smart and Neale's study talked about the anguish they experienced of going from knowing every detail of their children's lives and daily activities to having gaps in space and time when they did not know what their children were doing, who they were with, and even much more minute details such as what they were eating, whether they had packed their extra-curricular activities for school. In Miller's (2017, p. 110) qualitative study, mothers articulated it as a struggle of "'letting go' of aspects long and closely held (mothering) responsibilities following separation".

Following separation, mothers were not only expected to give up time with children to fathers, they were also required to service the father-child relationship (Elizabeth et al., 2010; Miller,

2017; Smart and Neale, 1999; Tolmie et al., 2010a). They did this by maintaining a good relationship with their former partners for their children's sake, encouraging children to spend time with their fathers, and caring for children, across spatial and temporal divisions, during fathers' care time (Elizabeth et al., 2010; Smart and Neale, 1999). In the following section, I discuss how mothers and fathers organise the care of children across spatial and temporal divisions.

## **Managing the care of children across households**

As discussed, parental separation does not mean that mothering and fathering ends, but rather that the daily and weekly logistics of mothering and fathering have to be negotiated and organised in different ways across multiple households (Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper and Sparrow, 2015; Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). Despite changes to how and when parenting takes place, research shows that there are gendered patterns and differences in how mothers and fathers manage and perform care work for children following separation (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2011; Neale and Smart, 2002; Philip, 2013; Smart and Neale, 1999; Tolmie et al., 2009). Fathering on separation typically involves providing physical and practical forms of care for children, and often occurs "in pockets of time" (Miller, 2017, p. 118) largely fitted around paid work commitments. In a similar fashion, the fathers in Lacroix's (2006) study, of parents with 50:50 care time arrangements, were found to compartmentalise their parenting obligations and responsibilities to situations when children were in their physical care. These fathers often acted as secondary carers by organising their parental involvement around paid work commitments, thereby limiting their availability to undertake any unexpected 'in case' work for children (p. 187). In the absence of children, fathers often did not continue to do any parental care work, or even anticipate any "in case" care work for their children (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). For many of these fathers, there was no sense of a need to organise their lives around their children's lives, which was likely because they relied on mothers to, make themselves available to, undertake this care work.

Furthermore, the boundaries of fathers' desires for involvement in child care work have been found to be largely limited to activities that involve one-on-one contact and leisure time with children, but did not necessarily extend to child-related domestic chores (Dermott, 2008; Neale and Smart, 2002). Dermott's (2008) qualitative study with 25 white English fathers in intact

families, for example, found that fathers valued time spent reading, playing and talking with children, and to a large extent dismissed the importance of engaging in routine physical and practical activities associated with caring for children (for example, packing lunches and washing clothes). Dermott explains that tasks involved in one-on-one contact with children were often interpreted by fathers as being worthwhile because they developed and strengthened the intimate connection between fathers and children, while indirect and more routine childcare was seen as largely tedious and unrewarding work. However, as a consequence, as other studies have found, the tedious yet necessary work related to caring for children is often undertaken by mothers, meaning that mothers' time with children is often spent on child-related chores and tasks (Neale and Smart, 2002). As such, fathers are able to interpret active, 'involved' and intimate fatherhood in terms of creating quality and intimate time with children, while burdening mothers with child-related chores and activities that mothers in different studies spoke about not necessarily wanting to do but having to do for children (Neale and Smart, 2002; Smart and Neale, 1999, Gatrell, 2007). In this way, caregiving and parenting in the context of separation in many ways obscures the challenges that mothers experience by making the care work that they do largely invisible (Elizabeth, Tolmie and Gavey, 2013; Treloar and Boyd, 2014).

Further, studies have found that much of the child care work that mothers do for their children following separation supersede divisions in time and space, and include physical, practical, emotional and mental care work (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). This care work involves what Miller (2017, p. 118) describes as a "24/7 thinking responsibility, visibly and invisibly occupying most of their time" (Miller, 2017, p. 118) or what Lacroix (2006, p. 187) depicts as a constantly spinning "running wheel". Irrespective of which parent had the official or formal care of children, studies have found that mothers often structured and adjusted their lives around their children's lives (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). Lacroix's (2006) study found that even when mothers and fathers had 50:50 care time arrangements, mothers often acted as primary carer by remaining active and involved in all the different aspects of parenting and included doing care work during fathers' care time. These mothers talked about (re)organising and (re)adjusting their lives to be available for any "in case" care work (p. 187).

Speaking within the context of intact families, Craig and Mullan (2011, 2012) found that parenting as a father does not mean the same as, nor does it equate to, parenting as a mother.

Despite an increase in fathers' activity in unpaid care work and the fact that more mothers have entered into paid work, mothering, compared to fathering, involves more time spent on child care activities and more responsibility for children's physical, social, practical and emotional well-being. These gendered parenting patterns of care persist on separation, with mothers continuing to do a disproportionate amount of care work compared to their male counterparts, even in situations where 50:50 shared care arrangements are in place. Lacroix (2006) found that despite widespread approval of the concept of 'shared care', and fathers increasingly expecting a 50:50 split in care time, genuine shared care arrangements remain rare. Irrespective of the types of post-separation parenting arrangements, and despite findings that have suggested that fathers are more active in their children's lives following separation (Amato et al., 2009; Kaspiew et al., 2009), parental responsibilities and parenting remain highly gendered fields of practice (Elizabeth et al., 2013; Philip, 2013; Tolmie et al., 2009, 2010a). Gender, or more specifically one's gendered parenting position as a mother or father, significantly shapes how parental responsibilities and practices of care for children are managed, negotiated and experienced both prior to and following separation.

## **Conclusion**

In the context of post-separation parenting, what emerges from the literature, as summarised by Philip (2013, p. 228), is that "fathers and mothers are subject to different moral criteria in relation to the level or nature of the commitment to both their children and the co-parental relationship that they are expected to show". Expectations of intensive modes of caring for children done by, expected of, and often pressed upon mothers are not as central to discursive constructions of fatherhood both pre and post separation (Collett, Vercel and Boykin, 2015; Smart and Neale, 1999; Townsend, 2002). In contrast to mothers, fathers face lower expectations of involvement in all the different aspects of children's lives. Notwithstanding constructions of the new and involved father, historical constructions of the good father being a father who might be less involved in the daily activities and routines of children, but a good provider for the family in many ways continue to shape how fathers fulfil and practice their fathering roles and identities. As such, mothers and fathers experience and encounter different sets of expectations and standards for parental involvement in the context of both intact and post-separation parenting.



Townsend (2002, p. 104) writing in the context of intact families said, “men still see being involved in the daily routines of their children as optional. They may be involved, but this is not constitutive of their fatherhood in the way that such involvement is constitutive of motherhood.” A more recent qualitative study echoed Townsend’s findings, arguing that there are fewer prescriptions and more variability in terms of what it means to be a good father than there are on what it means to be a good mother (Collett, Vercel and Boykin, 2015). The mothers in Smart and Neale’s (1999) study talked about how they had centred their lives around their maternal identity, yet for fathers, their identities as good fathers were often derived from their identities as good providers. Even for the ‘involved’ father, caring for children often centred around doing fun and leisure activities with child, rather than child-related chores and tasks. As such, men are afforded multiple approaches to fatherhood, both prior to and post separation, that enable them to perform their fathering roles in a number of ways without diminishing their moral identities as fathers and family men.

What becomes clear is that gendered patterns of parenting, which remain prominent within intact nuclear families, permeate post-separation familial life. Gender continues to be pervasive in the organisation of parenting obligations and responsibilities for children both prior to and post-separation. Mothers and fathers going through separation or divorce are thus confronted with conflicting expectations and realities, where, as discussed in Chapter 1, they are expected on behalf of children to have a ‘good’ divorce/separation and share parental care of children (Neale and Smart, 1997; Smart and Neale, 1999; van Kriekan, 2005), but what emerges from the literature is that there are gendered realities and experiences that differentially shape how fathers and mothers perform their fathering and mothering roles and identities on separation. In terms of negotiating parental responsibilities and obligations to and for children, the literature demonstrates that the ideals inscribed within intensive mothering discourses, and the variability through which fathers can enact good fathering, shape how mothering and fathering are performed and experienced in the context of separation. Normative constructions of motherhood and fatherhood in many ways create contrasting sets of expectations and realities that shape and inform how mothers and fathers do post-separation familial life and make sense of their identities as mothers and fathers.

However, as discerned thus far, much of the sociological scholarship on post-separation parenting and parenthood have been ethnocentrically focused on normative white Western and nuclearised understandings of family structure, and the organisation of gender relations as well

as the nature and scope of mothering and fathering within that structure. Put differently, post-separation parenting and parenthood have been discursively framed in ways that align with the norms of white Western families and the experiences of those from predominantly white European backgrounds. The emphasis in the literature on gendered experiences of mothering and fathering, although significant and needed, centres on nuclearised and individualised understandings and experiences of parenting, parenthood and familial life. There has been an absence of any analysis of how culturally variations in modes of doing family impact on how mothers and fathers in contemporary Western societies negotiate, organise and enact parental roles, responsibilities and identities following separation. Given that Pacific cultures adhere to a extended family structure (Families Commission, 2009; Fleming, 1997; Grattan, 2004; Stewart-Withers, Scheyvens and Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010) and that Pacific parents in Aotearoa New Zealand are more likely than those from other ethnicities (with the exception to Māori) to have to navigate post-separation parenthood, it becomes all the more pertinent to study the culturally distinctive ways that Pacific mothers and fathers experience post-separation parenthood and familial life.

Further, the sociological literature demonstrates that ways of doing family, and mothering and fathering, change when parents are no longer intimately involved (Miller, 2011, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). However, what remains unexplored are the differences that emerge at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. In this research, I address these gaps in the literature. To restate my focus, I do this by providing a sociological analysis of how gender and ethnicity interact to shape how and with whom Pacific mothers and fathers negotiate, organise and enact post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. In doing this work, I examine how Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices associated with Pacific collectivist understandings of family inform how separated Pacific mothers and fathers enact agency and identity following separation. This research project makes an important theoretical and empirical contribution to a field of family sociology that has been under-studied in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the globe. In particular, through this thesis, I extend the sociological scholarship on post-separation mothering and fathering, and familial life more generally, by providing a sociological analysis of contemporary familial life that focuses explicitly on experiences of Pacific mothers and fathers. This research should be viewed as a study that begins to permeate a domain that has to date largely focused on white Western constructions, understandings and experiences of mothering and fathering, and of broader familial life.

# Chapter 4: A feminist and Pacific methodological approach to research

In this chapter, I outline the methodological approaches that have guided this research and the research methods employed during my fieldwork. Considering that my focus is on Pacific mothers' and fathers' gendered/ethnic experiences of post-separation parenthood and familial life, I adopted a feminist and Pacific methodological approach to this research.

There are two reasons that I chose a feminist and Pacific methodological pathway. First, I am a Pacific feminist researcher. In particular, I understand experiences of mothers and fathers, especially within the context of family, to be to a large extent shaped, informed and in many ways governed by gendered norms, expectations, realities and relations of power. I also understand that gendered experiences of Pacific mothers and fathers are simultaneously shaped by Pacific cultural norms, values and practices. Second, this research is explicitly focused on Pacific mothers and fathers. I explore through a gendered/ethnic lens how Pacific mothers and fathers negotiate, organise and enact agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. Adopting and integrating a feminist and Pacific methodological approach to my research is both appropriate and necessary, because together they provide guidelines for research that are responsive and cognisant of the differences in experiences of men and women as well as those from Pacific ethnic backgrounds.

My chosen qualitative research methods of one-on-one, in-depth, semi-structured interviewing is an outcome of these methodological frameworks. One-on-one interviews have a long tradition of being used in both feminist and Pacific methodologies because of their ability to capture lived experiences. In particular, semi-structured one-on-one interviews provide a platform for participants to speak about and convey their lived experiences in their own words. They also provide me with an opportunity to inquire about, and discover, how Pacific mothers and fathers navigate and negotiate agency and identity in the context of separation, while simultaneously giving participants some power and control over the interview process by enabling them to independently raise issues and themes that are important to them. As a mode of gathering data, they provide detailed and in-depth data that is rich for analysis. More than

this, one-on-one and face-to-face interviewing aligns with Pacific cultures oral traditions of knowledge transfer and production (Prescott, 2008; Vaioleti, 2014).

I have broken the remainder of this chapter into four parts. I start out with a reflexive statement that clearly articulates my position within this research. Following this, I introduce the feminist and then Pacific methodological approaches that have guided this research project, outlining how together they influenced my research design and implementation as well as the research methods employed during my fieldwork. In the fourth part, I delineate my recruitment strategy, data collection, research participants and data analysis. In this section, I also outline the ethical issues associated with doing research with human participants and how I managed them, as well as the challenges I encountered in the field.

### **Self-reflexive statement**

Before I introduce the methodological frameworks that underlie this research, it is important that I first articulate my position within this research. I am a 33 year old married Samoan mother. I have been married for five years (and in an intimate relationship for 11 years) to a man who is also Samoan. My husband and I have two children, a five year old son and a ten year old daughter. I was raised in Samoa and moved to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2003 to pursue a tertiary education. My parents were born and raised in Samoa. My family story, similar to many others, is complicated, complex and at times confusing. I have one mother and two fathers and many other family members who played a key role in my upbringing and my life. Before I was born my mother had separated from my biological father (with whom she had three other children/my three older siblings) and had reunited with her ex-husband (who is the biological father of her eldest son/my eldest brother). When I was five years old, my mother left my step-father and reunited with my biological father. Although she reunited with my biological father, my stepfather (who I still call Dad) continued to have an integral role in my life.

My siblings and I lived across a number of households that included our mother's home, father's home, stepfather's home, aunties' home and our (maternal and paternal) grandmothers' homes. At different points in time, we lived in households that one might classify as nuclear family, extended family and a single-mother household. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, it has

been said that extended and collectivist modes of doing family in contemporary modern societies have been replaced by more nuclearised modes (Goode, 1963; Parsons, 1956; Ogburn 1955; Thompson, 1963). Notwithstanding this, Pacific families have been found to have a more collectivist and communally-based orientation (Flemings, 1997; Koloto and Kataonga, 2007; Pasikale and George, 1995; Stewart-Withers et al., 2010; Tisdell, 2000). My upbringing was no exception. I never understood family in nuclearised terms because even though I have lived at times in a nuclear household, I grew up being raised and surrounded by family, both nuclear and extended.

In all of the households in which I was raised, there were rigid gendered divisions of labour. My mother, and other female family members, did most of the cooking, cleaning, childcare and unpaid work. My fathers, both biological and step, and the other men in my family, primarily fulfilled breadwinning roles. This gendered division of labour was pervasive throughout my entire family environment, even the chores that me and my two sisters and two brothers were assigned were gendered. My sisters and I had a much greater responsibility in the home than our brothers. In the evenings, for example, our brother would be given time to do his homework, while my sisters and I were expected to clean the kitchen and tidy the house before being able to do our homework. My biological father's rationale was that my brother would one day have a wife and family to support so he needed to do well academically to get a good job to ensure that he could fulfil this provider role. For his daughters, there was less of a necessity to do well academically, because the assumption was that we would marry a man who would provide for us.

These gendered divisions of labour and responsibility are in many ways evident within my home today. My husband works on average 70 hours per week and we, for the most part, rely on his income as the primary source of financial provisioning for our family, with the income I earn from my doctoral scholarship and part-time work complementing our family income. I largely undertake most of the unpaid domestic and care work in our home. We are fortunate however, that we live within close geographical proximity to my mother and two cousins (and their families), because they provide our family with considerable everyday support. For example, by helping with cooking, cleaning, school drop-offs and pick-ups, after-school care, organising children's birthday parties, and the list goes on. Undoubtedly, the support that we receive from my mother and family enables my husband and I to balance our parenting responsibilities with paid work and, in my case, doctoral studies.

I was therefore captivated by sociology in my undergraduate studies because it interrogated much of what I had taken for granted as just being a normal part of life. During my undergraduate and post-graduate studies, I became increasingly interested in feminist strands of sociology that examined and interrogated patriarchal and gendered workings of power in the domestic realm of family life. In my Honours year of postgraduate study, I was given the opportunity to write a dissertation investigating the gendered workings and implications of child support policies across a number of liberal welfare states, including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom. This piece of research inspired me to further my inquiry by embarking on a Master of Arts. My Master's research expanded on my dissertation and explored the way that gender and ethnicity overlap and interact to shape Pacific mothers' experiences with child support money. To do this research, I conducted nine semi-structured one-on-one interviews with separated Pacific mothers living in Aotearoa New Zealand. Through this research, I found that Pacific mothers' experiences with child support, while overlapping with mothers in other studies (Cook and Natalier, 2013; Natalier and Hewitt, 2014), were differentially shaped, informed and constrained by Pacific cultural norms and values (see Keil, 2015).

Upon completion of my Master's studies, I was further inspired and decided to broaden my area of interest by exploring Pacific mothers' and fathers' experiences of post-separation familial life. Similar to what I found in reference to child support (Cook and Natalier, 2013; Natalier and Hewitt, 2010, 2014), much of the literature on post-separation familial life point to gendered differences in experiences of mothering and fathering (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Philip, 2013, 2014; Smart and Neale, 1999). I, however, wondered how gendered experiences are differentially shaped, informed and governed in different cultural (or ethnic) contexts. Being Samoan, my interest in this area was further sparked by thinking about how culturally distinctive Pacific family norms, values and practices impact on how Pacific mothers and fathers living in a contemporary Western society enact their parenting and familial lives following separation. Locating my research within Aotearoa New Zealand was therefore purposeful because it enabled me to examine how Pacific mothers and fathers living in contemporary Western societies navigate and negotiate Pacific cultural norms, values and practices in terms of how they experience and enact agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, although there is a growing body of sociological scholarship that investigates through a gendered lens mothers' and fathers' experiences of post-separation parenting and parenthood, there is a dearth of literature that examines mothers' and fathers' experiences at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Although my research lacks a comparative cohort of Pacific mothers and fathers living in the Islands, or of mothers and fathers of other ethnicities in Aotearoa New Zealand, it contributes to the existing research by providing a sociological analysis of how gender and ethnicity interact to shape experiences of post-separation mothering and fathering and of broader familial life. In particular, it makes suggestions of how being Pacific shapes, informs and constrains the way that mothers and fathers enact agency and identity, and experience post-separation familial life.

I now turn to feminist methodologies. In this discussion I build on my self-reflexive statement by discussing how my position within this research shapes my analysis of the interview data.

## **Feminist methodologies**

Feminist methodological approaches to research emerged in the 1970s out of a recognition by feminist scholars of the marginalisation of women's voices and experiences in academic research (Hesse-Biber, 2012). They were developed in response to critiques made by feminist researchers about the limits of traditionally privileged positivist methodological approaches that were largely "based on men's lives, male ways of thinking, and directed towards problems articulated by men" (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007, p. 216). Harding (1987, 1998) argued that positivist approaches to research failed to consider how the perspectives of those who formulated the questions and conducted the research to a large extent shaped how the so-called objective data was gathered, interpreted and consequently what was constituted as knowledge. As such, feminist scholars advocated for a more holistic approach to research that included those who had been historically excluded and that paid attention to the role of the researcher in shaping knowledge production processes and practices.

According to Harding (1987, p. 9), the "best feminist analysis...insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter". This requires a level of reflexivity about one's own positionality within the research. As a practice, reflexivity is a continuous process of introspection about the role of one's positionality in research design,

implementation and output. It is about recognising, examining and understanding how one's "social background, location and assumptions affect ... research practices" and outcomes (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 17). Central to reflexivity is making "the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit" (Jootun, McGhee and Marland, 2009, p. 45). By articulating and making clear one's positionality, researchers are able to clearly define the epistemological stance that guides, shapes and informs the formulation of the research questions and design as well as data collection and analysis.

As I discussed in the introduction of this chapter and my self-reflexive statement, I am a Pacific feminist. This enables me to recognise that because of my epistemological position this research is subjective. As previously alluded to, my research epistemology incorporates feminist and Pacific epistemologies to create a Pacific feminist epistemological stance that calls attention to the way in which experiences and realities, and interpretations of these realities, are multiply informed at the intersections between gender and ethnicity. The direction of this research, however, is also a product of my being a Pacific woman and mother. I recognise through my own lived/living experiences that being a Pacific woman/mother shapes my ways of being, feeling, knowing and doing.

Though these kinds of self-reflexive statements might be critiqued as creating a research bias, of being too subjective, Collins (2000) and others argue that all knowledge production processes emerge from particular standpoints and are therefore intrinsically laden with values, predispositions, assumptions and so forth (Haraway, 1988; Smith, 1990). Central to feminist standpoints is a recognition of the role of socio-historical locations in shaping knowledge or, as Haraway (1988, p. 583) calls it, "situated knowledges". Feminist standpoints involve an acknowledgement that all attempts to know are socially located and situated (Ackerly and True, 2010; Haraway, 1988; Harding 2004, Smith, 1990). For many feminist researchers, recognising that knowledge and research is socially located and emerges out of researchers' interests, and acknowledging these interests, increases the objectivity of the researcher and by consequence the research itself (Harding, 1987, 1992; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Smith, 1990). Furthermore, in doing so, researchers move away from positivist and masculinist tendencies of 'objectivism' that ignores, hides or conceals the fact that researchers have values, experiences and emotions that they inevitably bring to their research (Collins, 2000; Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber, 2012).

I thus acknowledge here that I carry a range of lived experiences and assumptions that mothers' and fathers' experiences of family life are largely gendered, and that Pacific people and cultures



adhere to collectivised family norms, values and practices, all of which influences how I interpret and analyse the interview data. However, it is worth emphasising that these are not simply assumptions based on my own lived/living experiences, but grounded in empirical research.

### ***Feminist approaches to doing research***

Feminist methodologies did not only challenge the role of researchers in shaping research design, but also the way that research data was gathered. Feminist scholars, such as Oakley (1981), challenged positivist approaches and in particular the dominance of scientific and quantitative research methods by carving out a space for qualitative methods of inquiry. Such an approach focused on giving a voice to those partaking in research as well as to those that had previously been excluded from knowledge production processes (Oakley, 1981; Sprague, 2005).

Because I was interested in Pacific mothers' and fathers' lived experiences, a qualitative approach to research in the form of in-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews was both appropriate and necessary. This method was chosen because of its ability to gain access to how people narrate and make sense of their own lived experiences. It also enabled the participants in my study to have some control over and within the research process. To elaborate, I chose to run in-depth semi-structured interviews (rather than unstructured or open interviews) to make sure that the conversation covered the main areas of interests. To ensure this, I prepared an Interview Guide<sup>21</sup> that explored a range of issues and topics, and that was designed to encourage responses to the research questions. However, one of the benefits of semi-structured interviews was that, while I might have been guided by an interview schedule, participants were able to raise issues, themes and new lines of inquiry independent of being prompted, thereby giving participants the capacity to guide the flow of the interview as well as the interview questions themselves.

To give an example, often times the issues and themes covered in my Interview Guide were initiated by participants themselves in their own talk. Participants in this way guided the

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<sup>21</sup> See Appendix 2.

interview process by raising issues and themes as well as interpreting and answering all of the questions in ways that they wanted. After getting some general demographics, I typically started the interview by asking the broad question: “Can you tell me about your everyday family life with your children?” Participants responded to this question in an array of ways, some started with their daily routines and rituals, others with their separation from their former partner and others with how they established a care and contact arrangement with their former partners. How the interviews started, and what participants chose to talk about, shaped the direction of our conversation. Approaching and conducting the interviews in this way gave participants the opportunity to talk about and share experiences that interested and mattered to them without feeling bound by my research agenda. As such, the questions in my Interview Guide were not asked in any particular order. Most of the time, many of the questions and topics arose organically through the participants own talk, resulting in a far more fluid and natural conversation.

Moreover, feminist research is informed by what Allan (2012, p. 99) describes as an “ethics of care” that acknowledges the way that power and authority might be unevenly distributed in research processes through assignments of ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’. In terms of how research is conducted, an ethics of care involves ameliorating the hierarchical organisation of power and authority imbued in the role of the researcher and researched. It requires researchers to pay close attention to the way in which “power is handled in the relationship between the researcher and the researched” (p. 99). For Oakley (1981), the demands of positivist research and assumptions about ‘proper’ interview conduct being entailed by an objective, detached and standardised format of interviewing constrained her ability to relate to people in the field. She argued that finding out about participants’ lived experiences was “best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee [was] non-hierarchical and when the interviewer [was] prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship” (p. 41). One of the ways that these power relations can be managed is through what Oakley describes as a participatory model of interviewing that involves the researcher/interviewer sharing their own experiences and biographies with those being interviewed. In doing so, the interviews can be conducted as more of a free-flowing conversation as opposed to ‘question and answer’ mode of talking. By investing one’s personal biography, experience and identity in the relationship as opposed to just expecting interviewees to share their lives, the interviewer and interviewee are able to build rapport with one another, as well as create a relationship of reciprocity that works towards minimising uneven power relations.

In an effort to reduce any power imbalances between myself and the participants in my study, I made sure that before the interviews officially started, I thanked participants for helping me with my research. I conveyed my level of gratitude to them so that they understood that *I* was indebted to *them* and not vice versa. We spent time talking and sharing our experiences and creating a sense of affinity. This was particularly important in my research context because Pacific people are highly relational, and creating a relational space, or *va*, and point of connection are central to social interactions between Pacific people (Ka'ili, 2005; Vaioleti, 2006). For example, on meeting, Pacific people will often explore kin or geographical links to create a connection or sense of affinity as well as a context for the relationship. Because I am Samoan and all the participants were of a Pacific ethnicity, we usually started out by talking about our Island heritage. For example, where we came from in the Pacific, how long we have been in Aotearoa New Zealand and what brought us here. I told them about my children and talked about some of my own parenting experiences. I felt that it was important that I shared with them stories about my children, both prior to and during the interviews, to create a level of trust between us and also to convey that the interviews were a safe space to disclose intimate details and stories about our family lives. Because I expected them to share their family stories and experiences with me, I felt that it was equally important that I did the same with them. By sharing my Island heritage and family story, I was not only building rapport and trust, I was also cultivating the relational space/*va* between myself and participants, a point that I will talk more about in the following section on Pacific methodological approaches to research.

## **Pacific methodologies**

In the same way that feminist methodologies emerged, Pacific methodologies were developed in response to the marginalisation and silencing of Pacific voices and perspectives in research (Huffer and Qalo, 2004; Vaioleti, 2006, 2014). Feminist researchers were the first to recognise the value of understanding those involved in research from within their own contexts. The advances made by feminist scholars in the creation and recognition of qualitative and inclusive research aided the establishment of Pacific research methodologies. As such, feminist (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007; Sprague, 2005) and Pacific (Pacific Research and Policy Centre, 2017; Vaioleti, 2006, 2014) methodologies have overlapping principles and practices that seek to: ameliorate research biases, acknowledge diversity in experiences, reflect on the role and position of the researcher in shaping research objectives and outcomes, and promote social

change. However, what sets the two apart is that Pacific research methodologies place Pacific values and cultural protocols and practices at the forefront of research design, data collection and analysis.

Pacific methodologies emphasise the significance of understanding and researching the experiences of Pacific people from within Pacific worldviews and perspectives. In the same way that feminist methodologies critiqued positivist research as traditionally being a highly masculinised mode of knowledge production, scholars such as Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001, p. 58) argued that much of the historic research with Pacific people and cultures have been done by “outside researchers”, who have their own accompanying theoretical and methodological constructs, that were then used to make sense of Pacific people and cultures. In considering epistemology, Vaioleti (2006, p. 22) argues that “[r]esearchers whose knowing is derived from Western origins are unlikely to have values and lived realities that allow understanding of issues pertaining to knowledge and ways of being that originate from ... Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu or the other Pacific nations.” As such, research methodologies that were designed to identify and explore issues in a Western context are not necessarily useful for identifying issues within Pacific communities and cultures. Pacific scholars have thus begun to cultivate a Pacific methodological space that recognises the value of giving a Pacific voice to ways of doing, thinking, and being, and that emphasises the significance of approaching, understanding and interpreting Pacific people’s lives and experiences from within their own cultural contexts (Huffer and Qalo, 2004; Vaioleti, 2006, 2011, 2014).

### ***Talanoa research methodology***

In this research, I specifically call on the Talanoa research methodology developed by Vaioleti (2003, 2006, 2011, 2014) in the early 2000s. Drawing on Churchward’s (1959, p. 379) Tongan definition, Vaioleti (2014, p. 192) describes talanoa “as a conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas”. Talanoa is derived from two phrases ‘*tala*’ and ‘*noa*’; “‘*tala*’ which means to tell or to talk, and ‘*noa*’ which means anything or nothing in particular” (‘Otunuku, 2011, p. 45), when combined talanoa is to talk about anything and/or nothing in particular. As a research methodology, Talanoa stems from Pacific oral traditions of transferring and producing

knowledge through conversations and talk.<sup>22</sup> Talanoa encourages face-to-face conversations that can be between two people (for example, one-on-one interviews) or within a group of people (for example, focus groups). The nature and focus of the talanoa is determined and shaped by both the researcher and participants, and requires a cultural connectedness between those involved in the research.

Talanoa works best as a personal face-to-face encounter that gives Pacific people the opportunity to relate their experiences and lived realities in their own words and in an environment and space that values and understands Pacific cultural protocols, practices and worldviews (Otsuka, 2005, Vaioleti, 2014). As an approach to research, Talanoa can be viewed as the integration of Pacific cultural protocols and practices with academic knowledge production processes. Talanoa works in culturally appropriate ways that facilitates research with Pacific people and allows for a more authentic portrayal of Pacific peoples' experiences than those derived from other research methods (Vaioleti, 2014). Talanoa, as a research methodology, provides my research with an appropriate research method that enables me to gather rich qualitative data.

Vaioleti (2006, p. 30-31) lists five Tongan cultural principles/*'ulungaanga faka-Tonga* that can be applied in other Pacific contexts and that are necessary for cultivating the relational space/*va* between researchers and participants, and engaging in talanoa. These include being respectful and humble/*faka'apa'apa*; being generous, kind and calm/*anga lelei*; being well-prepared, hard-working, culturally-versed, professional/*mateuteu*; knowing what to do and doing it well/*poto he anga*; and showing appropriate compassion, empathy and love for the context/*'ofa fe'unga*.

Vaioleti (2006, 2014) and other Pacific scholars emphasise the centrality of these cultural practices in research protocols that allow for a respectful and ethical engagement with and between Pacific people. Significantly, these cultural protocols and practices are not simply superficial cultural rituals. Rather they are central to ensuring research quality. The depth and quality of the data derived from the research is highly dependent on the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Similar to the arguments made by Oakley (1981) regarding the way that building rapport and a relationship of reciprocity improves the

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<sup>22</sup> As an oratory tradition, talanoa is recognised and practiced in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Hawai'i and other Pacific nations as a mode of creating and transferring knowledge (Prescott, 2008; Vaioleti, 2006, 2014).

quality and dynamics of the interview, adhering to the Pacific protocols of talanoa strengthens the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, and consequently the quality of the data derived from the interviews. Without these values at the core of the research design and implementation, researchers risk engaging in a talanoa that is characterised by the interviewer asking questions and participants providing short and simple responses, or the talanoa being short in duration (Vaiotei, 2014). However, once the relationship between the researcher and participant has been developed, quality will be added to the research, both in terms of the interviewee wanting to have an in-depth conversation and also in terms of the researcher not wanting to let down participants with whom he/she has developed a relationship. As I have previously mentioned, it was therefore important that before and during the interviews I invested my own personal identity and experiences in the interview process. I did this to build rapport and to create a safe space for participants to talk, more than this though, I did this to create and foster a sense of cultural connectedness and to show respect for the relationship and relational space/*va* that existed between me and my participants.

As I briefly mentioned earlier in this section, equally important to both feminist and Pacific methodologies are research outcomes. It is imperative, as Vaiotei (2006, 2014) emphasises, that Pacific people and communities benefit from the research, which corresponds with the emphasis in feminist methodologies on social change emerging from research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2007; Sprague, 2005). I will acknowledge first that doing this research benefits me on an individual level in obvious ways as it enables me to complete my doctoral studies. However, this research also serves Pacific mothers, fathers, families and communities. In particular, this research contributes theoretically and empirically to a field of knowledge that has previously been under-studied in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the globe. My research builds on and extends the existing sociological scholarship on post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life by examining the differences that exist and emerge when ethnicity is brought to the forefront of the analysis. Outside of academia, this research has the capacity to shape how policy-makers and those working with Pacific parents understand Pacific experiences of post-separation mothering and fathering, and of familial life more generally, offering insights into how Pacific-based culturally distinctive modes of doing family shape experiences of post-separation parenthood and familial life. Further, considering the growing number of Pacific children living away from one of their biological parents (typically fathers), and the emphasis in policy for shared care arrangements for children, it is pertinent that policy-

makers and those working with Pacific families understand the particular issues, dilemmas and challenges experienced by Pacific mothers and fathers following separation.

Both feminist and Pacific scholars stress the importance and significance of research that does not take a tokenistic and/or additive approach, but recognises the value of understanding those involved in research within their own contexts. Talanoa, as a Pacific research methodology, aligns with feminist methodologies because both approaches are concerned with getting at the experiences and voices of those who have been traditionally marginalised in research. Although Pacific and feminist methodologies have overlapping principles and practices, there is no established Pacific feminist methodological framework. I therefore had to continuously recognise, acknowledge and remain cognisant throughout the research process of the differences that underpin each methodological framework.

## **Sample, Recruitment and Methods**

To carry out this research through a qualitative lens, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with 15 Pacific parents, specifically ten mothers and five fathers.

In terms of eligibility for participation, all participants:

- identified with a Pacific ethnicity. This did not mean, however, that their former partner's (or child/ren's other parent) also identified with a Pacific ethnicity.
- were separated from their former partner for at least one year. Targeting parents who had been separated for at least one year allowed for some semblance of routinised post-separation parenting and familial patterns to be established.
- had the care of their children for at least one day or night per week. Although the threshold for participation was based on one day or night per week, each participant had the care of their child/ren for at least two nights per week.
- had a care and contact arrangement with their former partner that was privately established without the intervention of Family Court litigation. I included this criterion in an effort to avoid stories that focused on Family Court processes, and more on how

Pacific mothers and fathers themselves negotiated and organised care for children on separation.

- had never applied for a protection order against their child/ren's other parent. This criterion was added to avoid stories and experiences of abuse, violence, coercive control and/or other forms of oppressive intimacy, which might have been distressing for participants to recall and retell, and which did not pertain to my research focus.

### ***Recruitment strategy***

I recruited participants in two ways. The first was through advertisement posters<sup>23</sup> that were displayed on a number of premises across the Auckland area, including language nests<sup>24</sup>, Plunket offices<sup>25</sup>, and on community notice boards between June 1<sup>st</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017. The second was via an e-mail and/or Facebook invitation that was distributed by community and media organisations with high levels of interaction with Pacific people. Each organisation that agreed to participate in the recruitment of participants was given a Participant Information Sheet<sup>26</sup> and Consent Form<sup>27</sup>. The email and/or Facebook invitation went out in two waves: the first was sent out by 13 community organisations based in Auckland between June 1<sup>st</sup> and July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, and the second call was made through five community organisations based in Auckland and two media organisations operating across the country, and sent out between October 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Both the advertisement poster and email and/or Facebook invitation included a brief introduction of myself, the criteria for participation, preliminary information about the research and interview process, and my contact information.

The call for research participation went out to over 90,000 people. It is important to note here that although the call for participation went out to over 90,000 people that is not to say that they were all eligible to participate in this research. For example, the Pacific News and Current Affairs show produced in Aotearoa New Zealand, Tagata Pasifika, posted the invitation on

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<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>24</sup> Language nests refer to early childhood education centres that take a cultural immersion-based approach to language revitalisation.

<sup>25</sup> Plunket is a nationwide support service for the development, health and well-being of children under the age of five.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix 5.



their Facebook page, which has a following of over 80, 000 people. Similarly, the Waitakere Community Noticeboards is emailed to over 500 subscribers. Yet, many of those who may have seen the call for participation might not have met the eligibility criteria for participation.

In spite of this, I had anticipated a high response rate. I had hoped to be able to interview 20 Pacific mothers and 20 Pacific fathers. However, following the first call for participation, I received only 15 responses, all from Pacific mothers who had personally received an invitation from a manager in one of the community organisations. I did not get any responses through the advertisement posters. Of the 15 responses, only eight met the eligibility criteria. I then went back to the community organisations that had initially sent out the email and/or Facebook invitation and asked if they could resend/repost the call for participation. Of the 13 organisations that had initially agreed to send out the email and/or Facebook invitation, I only received a reply from three organisations agreeing to resend/repost the call for participation.

Following this setback, I approached two other community organisations and two media organisations about posting the call for participants on their online bulletins and/or Facebook webpages. This strategy led to an additional ten responses, of which two mothers and five fathers were eligible to participate. I had originally allocated six months to recruit and conduct interviews (June – November, 2017) but because I did not receive nearly as many responses as I had hoped, I extended this period by an additional two months (June 2017 – January, 2018). By the end of the timeframe that I had allocated for recruiting and interviewing, I had interviewed 15 parents, ten Pacific mothers and five Pacific fathers.

I found that the mode of recruitment that worked best was when managers or members of staff at the various organisations sent out the call for participation and then individually invited those who might be eligible to get in touch with me. As previously discussed, Pacific people are highly relational, and having someone, especially a person in an official position, say to them that they should contact me if they were interested in participating operated as a way of creating a relational space/*va* between me (the researcher) and participants before we had the opportunity to meet. Creating this relational space/*va* gave participants a pathway or avenue for getting in touch with me. For example, all of the participants, as well as those who did not meet the criteria for eligibility, began their emails telling me how they had heard about my research and in particular the name of the person who had told them about my research. In a few instances, participants had expressed their interest to the community organisation's members of staff and asked them to forward on to me their contact details. When these

community organisation members of staff did so, I had to remind them that according to the ethical guidelines outlined by the University of Auckland's Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) to ensure that participants did not feel coerced into participating, participants had to make first contact with me.

Those who did not personally talk to community organisation's member of staff before emailing me, began their email expressing an interest in participating and an apology for getting in touch with me, especially if I had already had enough participants. There was a sense of hesitancy in their emails, where I felt participants worried that they might be bothering me. There was a general feeling of uncomfotability on behalf of participants about initiating the contact and pursuing an interview. For this reason, in my email reply I reassured them that I was still recruiting participants and conveyed my overall gratitude to them for taking the time to help me with my research. The approach of sending out a call for participation and waiting for participants to make the first contact, although it might avoid issues of coercion, it is not culturally attuned to Pacific modes of relating to others. In this way, the ethical requirements for conducting research outlined by UAHPEC to a large extent emerges from Western worldviews and perspectives that are in many ways not cognisant of cultural protocols within different ethnic communities about how to relate to one another and about how they want to be addressed. On reflection, I imagine that this is why I did not have a higher response rate. In particular, my recruitment strategy did not work in culturally appropriate ways to facilitate contact between myself and potential participants. Instead, it acted as an obstacle or barrier to participation, because potential participants might have been unsure about how to approach me and about whether or not I had enough participants. However, although I did not meet the initial number of participants that I had planned, I derived rich data from the ten Pacific mothers and five Pacific fathers that enabled my doctoral research to progress forward.

### ***Data collection***

In response to email contact initiated by potential participants, as I have previously mentioned, I first thanked them for contacting me and then reiterated to them a brief overview of the research, the criteria for participation and what their participation entailed. I attached to this

email the Participant Information Sheet<sup>28</sup> and Consent Form<sup>29</sup>. Once potential participants had had the opportunity to review these, I invited them to ask any questions that they had in relation to the two documents and to my study more generally. For those who still wished to participate, an interview date, time and location that was most convenient for them was arranged.

When I met face-to-face with participants, I again thanked them for participating in my research. I re-explained the purpose of the interview, the background of the research project, the details of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, and the general interview topics. At this point, participants were offered another opportunity to ask questions and/or to withdraw from participating (none chose to do so). Once all questions were answered, I invited them to sign the Consent Form.

On average, the interviews lasted on average 96 minutes, with the shortest interview running for 58 minutes and the longest for 131 minutes. The date, time and location of each interview varied according to the preferences of the participants and included public children's playgrounds, cafés, participants' workplace, participants' residence and University of Auckland premises. All of the interviews took place between 10am – 9pm. Out of the 15 parents interviewed, five were accompanied by their children (all five were mothers). As a small gesture of gratitude for their time and talk, participants were given a \$20 fuel voucher and light food and drink were provided in the interviews.

Given permission from participants, all of the interviews were audio recorded. During the interview, I also took handwritten notes that bullet-pointed key themes, points of interest and follow up questions. The audio recordings were transcribed by me and a third-party transcriber. Prior to any audio recordings being shared, the third-party transcriber signed a Confidentiality Agreement<sup>30</sup>. The Confidentiality Agreement ensured that the third-party transcriber understood that all information contained within the audio recordings must remain confidential and must not be disclosed to, or discussed with, anyone other than myself and my two supervisors, and that the audio file and the ensuing transcript were to be deleted from any record once it was completed and handed over.

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix 7.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix 8.

All of the participants were given the option of receiving a copy of their transcript to make adjustments or provide feedback on these. I asked participants if they wanted to receive a copy of their transcript at the beginning of the interviews (before they signed the Consent Form) and then again at the end of the interview (once the audio recorder was turned off). I also told them that if they changed their mind in the next few days to let me know. I felt that it was important that I follow up with them about their decision at the end of interview and also that I gave them the option of thinking it over for a couple of days. Doing so, gave participants the opportunity to reflect on what we had talked about, and enabled them to make a more informed decision about whether or not they wanted to receive and/or make changes to their transcript. None of the participants opted to receive a copy of their transcript and as such no adjustments were made to any of the transcripts.

### *Considerations of ethical issues*

UAHPEC (2016, p. 4) outlines a range of ethical issues that need to be carefully considered when research involves human participants in order to safeguard the “welfare, privacy, safety, health and personal, social, and cultural sensitivities of participants”. I discuss in this section the ethical considerations that underlie my research project, and in particular how I managed them.

Central to both feminist and Pacific methodologies is a recognition of participants’ autonomy and agency over the research process. My fieldwork was designed in ways that upheld the autonomy and agency of all of my participants. Participation in my research was voluntary and based on informed consent. I did not individually or directly approach, contact or coerce any participant into participating in this research. Once participants made contact, they were given additional information pertaining to the study, the Participant Information Sheet, Consent Form and invited to ask any questions before the scheduling or commencing of any interview.

In the interviews, I outlined the key points within the Consent Form, including their right to withdraw their participation at any stage of the interview without any penalty or criticism. I also talked them through the Interview Guide so that they were aware, before the interview started, of the kinds of topics that would be covered in our talk. I also explained that they did not have to answer any question or disclose any information that they did not want to. I informed them in person, and through the Consent Form, of their right to withdraw some, or

all, of their data within two weeks of the interview or within two weeks of receiving their transcript (should they wish to review their transcript).<sup>31</sup>

Another way that I protected the welfare of participants was by ensuring and respecting their right to privacy and confidentiality. I assured participants that I would never reveal or disclose their identity, nor would they be identifiable in any research outputs. In an effort to do this, all participants were given pseudonyms in transcripts and all research outputs (including this doctoral thesis, subsequent reports, publications and/or conference presentations). The pseudonym that a participant was given was derived from their own name. If a participant had a Pacific sounding name, they were assigned a Pacific pseudonym or if a participant had an English sounding name, an English pseudonym was given. I also modified other identifiable details that were not pertinent to the analysis of the data, for example, the gender of children. In addition, all of the interview transcripts are being securely stored in a password protected computer.

Although it is unlikely that participants experienced or faced any harm or discrimination for participating in this research, talking about post-separation parenting and family life (for example, the breakdown of the intimate couple relationship and caring for children across different households) could have triggered negative emotions such as shame, anger, frustration and anxiety. For this reason, I included in the Participant Information Sheet the contact information of a support service for parents in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition, I advised participants, that if at any point throughout the interview the topics being discussed became upsetting or distressing for them, we could shift the conversation or stop the interview entirely, and that they could edit or omit any data from their transcript that they felt uncomfortable, or regretted, sharing with me.

In terms of safeguarding the social and cultural sensitivities of my participants, as I have discussed, I adopted a Pacific methodological approach premised on ensuring that Pacific protocols and practices were followed throughout the research process. However, more than this, I am a Samoan mother who was raised in Samoa and who has been living in Aotearoa New Zealand for the past 16 years. I have a deep understanding of social and cultural issues

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<sup>31</sup> The reason I had given them two separate two week windows – immediately after the interview and after receiving their transcript – was to ensure in the first instance that I, or the third party transcriber, did not spend time transcribing an interview that would be withdrawn from the data set, and in the second instance so that I would have a timeline to proceed with data analysis.

and sensitivities pertaining to Pacific people and was therefore well-equipped to conduct research with Pacific participants.

### ***Challenges in the field***

#### *Managing ethnic and age differences*

Although I mobilised the five principles outlined by Vaioleti (2006, 2014), I encountered a number of challenges in the field. As Vaioleti (2006) reminds, participants act differently in talanoa depending on their own as well as the researcher's social characteristics, including age, gender, cultural rank or community standing, and in my own research, ethnicity. Although Vaioleti does not discuss how different Pacific Island affiliations shape talanoa, I found that it was much easier for me to build a rapport and to foster the relational space/*va* between myself and Samoan participants than it was for those who identified with other Pacific ethnicities. For participants who identified as Samoan, off the bat we shared a cultural connection and collective identity of being Samoans living in Aotearoa New Zealand. This established an instant familiarity with one another that we then built on by exchanging stories and personal histories about our villages, family and so forth. Being Samoan felt like it created a trust that was instantly felt and that did not come as organically with the participants who identified with another Pacific ethnicity. Rather, with participants from other Pacific ethnicities, I felt that I had to more actively create space and draw similarities in our identities and experiences before there was a sense of ease in our conversation. I am fortunate in that I have visited, spent time, and have family and friends living in all of the Islands that my participants were from, including Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands and Fiji. I shared stories about the time spent in the different Island nations, the family I have living there, the food I love and even some of the language I know. My open sharing and appreciation of their Island heritage and culture cultivated a space for them to similarly share with me their experiences of and with Samoa. Doing this created a sense of affinity and felt knowing of each other, thereby enabling the conversation to flow more easily and freely.

I had to make similar adjustments in terms of how I approached the interviews or talanoa depending on the age of the participant, because interactions in talanoa are guided by the “cultural operationalization of appropriate ethics” (Vaioleti, 2014, p. 208). Part of this cultural operationalisation of appropriate ethics meant constantly acknowledging throughout the

interview the role that age plays in structuring social interactions. My own experiences and cultural competency involved recognising social rank and status that is marked in Pacific cultures by age and generation, where the older you are the higher your status. Of the 15 participants, six were younger than me and nine were older than me (by three to thirteen years). Because there was not a generational gap between myself and my participants in that none of them were, for example, grandparents or considered elders in the community, I could navigate the age discrepancies more easily. However, it meant bringing into particular focus two of the concepts outlined in Vaioleti's (2014, p. 31) work: *mateuteu* or being well-prepared, culturally-versed and professional and *poto he anga* that is knowing what to do and doing it well.

### *Managing gendered dynamics*

In terms of gendered dynamics, Sprague (2005, p. 122) writes, “[g]endered fields provide gendered opportunities, however gendered fields also provide gendered obstacles”. I found this to be true in my own research. I approached and conducted the interviews with men differently from how I did with women. With women, it was much easier for me to establish points of identification and sameness based on ethnicity, age, gender and being a mother myself. As a result, I was not always aware of gendered dynamics at play. Based on our conversations, in particular how the women freely shared intimate and personal details of their lives with me, I felt that they truly trusted me and felt that the interviews were a safe space to share their stories and experiences. Often times, the interviews with the women flowed as a *talanoa* between friends.

Although I shared similar cultural values, understandings and experiences of being Pacific with the men in my study, I had a number of anxieties about interviewing men, and in particular of being alone in the interviews with my male participants. For this reason, when it came time to arrange an interview, I suggested meeting at a café (in an area that was convenient for them). I did this to avoid an invitation of meeting at their home or some other private space. It was not necessarily a fear over my physical safety, though that was a concern, it was more a feeling of anxiety about being in a space that might create too intimate of an environment between me and my male participants. As such, all of the interviews with men took place at a café in West or Central Auckland.

Nevertheless, although all of the interviews with men took place in a public space, I became worried that because we were meeting one-on-one at a café that the meeting might come across as a coffee date. In an effort to set the tone of, and context for, the meeting, I made sure I was first to arrive and that I had necessary props (such as the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form) visible on the table in front of me. My anxiety about interviewing men stemmed from my fear about how to appropriately manage the gendered context and relationship in the interviews. In Pacific cultures, like most cultures, gender in many ways structure social interactions. For example, it is considered highly inappropriate for a married woman to have an intimate and personal interaction, friendship or relationship with someone of the opposite sex (who is not family). I therefore did not and could not approach the interviews with the men in my study in the same way that I did with the women. With women, as previously mentioned, the interviews were approached and conducted as a *talanoa* between friends. However, with men, although I wanted to build a rapport that enabled a good conversation, I did not want to build too much rapport or too strong a sense of familiarity because I worried that it might send the wrong kind of message or be misinterpreted as taking an interest outside of the research context.

In discussing gendered dynamics of female-to-male interviews, Orrico (2015) and others (Sprague, 2005) discuss the challenges experienced by women doing research with and on men, where there are expectations that women should “downplay” their gendered identities and appear genderless (Orrico, 2015, p. 475) in an effort manage gendered vulnerabilities and avert unwanted sexual attention from male participants (Soyer, 2014, p. 461). In an effort to manage this in my own research, I made sure that I presented myself as desexualised and genderless as possible by dressing conservatively, showing minimal skin, not wearing any make-up and having my hair tied up in a bun<sup>32</sup>.

Although I presented myself in this way, it did not mean that I *was* genderless and desexualised or that gender and sexuality were then rid from the interaction, relationship and context. And because of this I was constantly reflecting throughout the interview on how my words, questions, emotions and actions might be interpreted and/or misinterpreted. For example, often times when the women in my study showed emotions such as sadness or hurt, I would draw on Vaioleti’s (2011, p. 31) notions of *mateuteu*, as being, in part, culturally-versed, and ‘*ofa*

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<sup>32</sup> In Samoan culture, long free flowing hair is closely associated with and signifies female sexuality and femininity (Myford, 2005).



*fe'unga* or showing appropriate compassion, empathy and love for the situation, by touching their arm or hand or giving them a hug. However, with the men in my study, in these same sorts of situations, I would instead offer words or expressions of empathy and compassion. Part of practicing *mateuteu* for me in these instances meant continuously being aware of and managing the gendered female-to-male interview dynamic in a culturally appropriate way.

Approaching and conducting the interviews with men differently from how I did with women, I do not believe diminished the overall quality of the data derived from my interviews with men. I imagine that they would have had similar anxieties about partaking in this research when they realised that it was being conducted by a woman, which might have been why none of them objected to meeting in a public space or suggested an alternative location. It is my hope that I demonstrated throughout the interviews the principle of *faka'apa'apa* or respect for the relationship and created, in a culturally-appropriate way, a space for men to share their stories and engage in this research. However, it is worth mentioning that one reason that these men might have been comfortable talking to me, a female researcher, about their personal familial lives is because men have been found to be more inclined to talk to women about intimate topics than they are talking to other men (Rubin, 1976; Williams and Heikes, 1993).

### *Being an insider and an outsider*

In this research, I had to navigate competing tensions of being in some respects an insider and in others an outsider. Being a Pacific mother doing research with Pacific parents in many ways made me an insider in this research. I was an insider because we shared tacit understandings, experiences and knowledge of being Pacific and also of having children. To give you brief example from one of the interviews with one of the mothers:

Moeata: Can you tell me about your evening routines, like from when you get home from work or school to when the kids go to bed?

Salote: ... oh, trying to get the kids into bed is so much fun [both laugh]

This short excerpt illustrates how, without saying much, this mother knows that I understand (because I have children myself) that she is not being literal about bedtime routines being “fun”.

Rather, she conveyed through one word – fun – the daily struggle of trying to coax and keep children in bed. She later said:

Salote: So, I start our bedtime routine at around 7pm, but they're probably not in bed and asleep until just before 9pm. ... [They're] always trying to find ways and reasons to not go to bed ... you know, 'I'm hungry. I need to pee'. Can I have a this or a that. ... Oh, you know their lists go on and on.

Moeata: Oh yes, I do, my kids are exactly the same.

Salote: Parenting is so much fun [both laugh].

This tacit knowing, however, was also derived from having similar Pacific cultural values, understandings and experiences. There was an intrinsic Pacific knowing, sharing and understanding of each other's worldviews, meanings and experiences. To give you another example from an interview with one of the fathers:

Moeata: How important is it to you for your children to spend time with their extended family on both sides?

Tavita: Well, that's a question ... I don't think I've thought about it like that. Yeah, important, but you know Island families, do they have a choice? [both laugh]. ... There's always something going on in the family, you know what it's like, *fa'alavelave i 'i*, *fa'alavelave i 'o* [family gatherings here, family gatherings there].

This father, like most other participants, recognised and acknowledged that I could relate to his own experiences of doing family in Pacific cultures, and he demonstrates this by saying, "you know what it's like".

In both of the excerpts shared above, laughter was not so much about humour, but rather a way of showing and reaffirming shared understandings and experiences. In the same way that insider family jokes can be used to demonstrate close connections (Morgan, 1999), laughing, and laughing at the right moment, demonstrated and conveyed a level of shared knowing and understanding of each other's experiences. To ensure that these nuances were captured, pauses and audible signs of emotions (such as laughter and crying) were transcribed and included in the quotes shared in this doctoral thesis.

Yet, while being an insider I am also an outsider in this research. Although I am a Pacific parent, I am not separated or divorced from the father of my children. Before conducting any of my interviews I had not considered whether or not, nor how, I might broach this with my participants. I knew that I would share with them my story of being Samoan and a parent, but it did not occur to me to have to express to them that I was not a separated or divorced mother. In my first interview (which was with a mother), it came up organically through our talk before the interview officially started (i.e., when the audio recorder was turned on). In this interview, when we talked about mothering or parenting more generally, I was treated as an insider. However, when she talked about areas, issues, experiences and challenges of parenting that she felt were unique to being a post-separation mother/parent, I was treated as an outsider because she recognised I could not know nor fully understand what it means to be a post-separation mother/parent. This mother, like many others, for example, would give me advice or make comments about separating or divorce that highlighted my status as an outsider. As one mother said:

Kate: I thought my life with him was bad, but it's been hell since we got separated. ... Sometimes I wish I could just take it all back and bide my time until my kids are grown and then leave 'cause it's been so hard. I can't believe I thought it would be easier. ... I tell all my friends now that are thinking about separating, don't do it if you can still hang in there ... same to you, seriously.

Naively, I did not consider the significance of telling my participants that I was not a separated or divorced mother, thereby making my status as an outsider known. I knew that I was not a post-separation parent and I assumed somehow that that would be known or conveyed to my participants. Still, I did not have any explicit intention to relay this important piece of information on to participants, in the same way that I did about conveying to them my status as an insider (by being a Pacific parent). In my second interview (with another mother), I shared that I had children, unintentionally I did not share that I was not separated or divorced from their father. Mid-way through the interview, this fact came to light and I felt an instant shift in the mood and conversation. Our talanoa as friends stalled because in blinking lights it signalled to her that we actually did not know one another and that she did not know me. In an effort to rebuild and regain the trust that I felt had been lost, I related my experience of being raised in a post-divorce household. I did this also to convey that I do understand and can relate, in a different way, to some of the experiences of living in post-separation family.

This second interview was one of the biggest learning experiences I had throughout the interview process. It signalled to me the significance of making clear one's position or status as both an insider and outsider. In this research, I was acutely focused on establishing an "ethics of care" (Allan, 2012, p. 99) that safeguarded the interests of my participants (for example, by minimising unequal power relations, outlining my research goals, topics covered in the interview, their rights in this research and by gaining informed consent), and doing so in a culturally appropriate and responsive way. However, I did not pay close enough attention to how clearly stating my position as both an insider and outsider at the outset of the interview upholds an ethics of care for my participants that ensures that they do not feel in any way misled at any point throughout the interview process. Following this second interview, I made sure that I found a way at the beginning of every interview to mention that I was still in a relationship with the father of my two children. I realised in this interview the importance of making known the ways that I am both an insider and outsider to this research in terms of how the mothers and fathers might relate to me and engage in my research. I was so focused on building a rapport, reciprocity and trust through identifying our sameness in order to create a space for a free-flowing talanoa that I did not pay attention to the significance of acknowledging our difference in fostering a safe space for participants that would enable them to discern what they wanted to share, disclose or keep hidden.

### ***Research participants***

The participants varied in ethnicity, age, number of children, relationship status, employment, income source and level, living arrangements, care and contact arrangements and child support arrangements. Below I discuss each of the variances in turn and by gender.

Of the ten mothers who participated in this research, four identified as Samoan/*Palagi*<sup>33</sup>, two as Samoan, one as Tongan, one as Cook Island Māori, one as Tongan/Māori and one as Fijian/Māori/Samoan. All ten of the mothers were born outside of the Island that they ethnically identified with, one was born in Australia and the remaining nine were born and raised in

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<sup>33</sup> *Palagi* is a person of typically European descent. Although originating from Samoa, it has gained widespread use across the Pacific, including Aotearoa New Zealand. A Samoan term is being used in this thesis because the mothers and fathers in this study themselves used this word to describe their European ancestry.

Aotearoa New Zealand. Of the five fathers, four identified as Samoan and one as Samoan/*Palagi*. All five fathers were born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The ethnicity/ies of participants' former partner also varied. Of the mothers, five identified their former partners as Samoan, one as Niuean, one as Māori, one as *Palagi* and two as Samoan/Tongan. Six of the mothers stated that their former partners were raised in Aotearoa New Zealand, and four in Samoa. Of the fathers, two identified their former partners as being Samoan/*Palagi*, two as *Palagi* and one as Samoan. All of the fathers stated that their former partners were born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The ages of the participants ranged from 22 years to 46 years; the age of mothers ranged from 22 years to 46 years and fathers from 29 years to 42 years. Of the ten mothers, five had only one child, three had two children and two had three children. Of the fathers, one had one child and the remaining four had two children. The ages of the children ranged from 1 to 14 years.

An overwhelming majority of participants – 13 out of the 15 –classified their relationship status as 'single'<sup>34</sup>, one mother had remarried, and one father was in a cohabiting relationship. Acknowledging that many children are born to parents not involved in an intimate relationship, all of the participants in my study were involved in a committed relationship with their child/ren's other parent at the time of their child/ren's birth. Of all the participants, only one mother had been married, the remaining 14 were in a cohabiting relationship with their child/ren's other parent prior to separating. Participants had been separated from their children's other parent between 1 to 9 years, with the average length of time being 2.5 years.

Of the 15 participants, 11 were involved in full-time paid employment, and four in part-time paid work. Of the mothers, six were engaged in full-time employment and the remaining four in part-time work. One of the mothers employed in part-time work also received a means-tested government sole parent support in the form of a Domestic Purposes Benefit. All of the five fathers were in full-time employment. The income level of the mothers and fathers varied; three mothers reported annual incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000, four mothers reported annual incomes between \$40, 000 and \$60, 000, one mother and three fathers reported an annual

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<sup>34</sup> However, two of these parents (one mother and one father) were in a relationship but did not classify the relationship as serious enough to be considered to be 'in a relationship'. For example, in both cases, the new partners had minimal contact with their children and families.

income between \$60,000 and \$80,000 and the remaining two mothers and two fathers reported annual incomes higher than \$80,000.

The participants' living arrangements also varied: 12 lived in an extended family household (that included sharing their or their parents' residence), two lived in a sole mother household and one co-resided with his new partner and children. Of the mothers, eight lived in an extended family household and two in a sole mother household. Of the fathers, four lived in an extended family household and one in a household with his new partner and children.

At the time of the interview, a range of care arrangements with their former partners were reported. It is worth mentioning that all of the participants reported that the care arrangements that they made for their children, and had with their former partners, were flexible and often changed from week to week or month to month. It is also worth noting that immediately following separation in all of the cases, children lived primarily with their mothers until a care arrangement was established. Of the mothers, two reported that their children were typically in their care for four nights per week, five for five nights per week, one for six nights per week and the remaining two had a 50:50 shared care arrangement. Of these mothers with a 50:50 care arrangement, one had an alternating 3:4 night split and the other a one-week-on/one-week-off arrangement with her former partner.

Of the fathers, two reported having their children two nights per week and the remaining three had a 50:50 shared care arrangement with their former partners. One of the fathers with a 50:50 shared care an alternating 3:4 night split. The remaining two fathers classified their arrangement as 50:50, but noted that their arrangements regularly changed from week to week from an alternating 3:4 night split to an alternating week split to spending more nights a week with them or with their mothers. What set these two fathers care arrangements apart from the rest of the parents with a 50:50 shared care arrangement was that they had older children who were part of the negotiations and who were thus able to express their own preferences about where they wanted to spend their time.

At the time of the interview, four of the mothers reported having formal child support arrangements that were administered through Inland Revenue. One mother reported receiving \$18 per week and another \$52 per week. For the remaining two mothers with formal child support arrangements, one had not received any formal child support payments (of \$75 per week) for the past two years and another mother's child support contributions (of \$72) were

absorbed by the state to offset the cost of the welfare support that she received (in the form of the Domestic Purposes Benefit). Two mothers reported receiving informal child support in the form of cash contributions: one received \$150 per week and the other received varied amounts that were estimated to be between \$50-\$150 per week. Four mothers reported that they did not have any child support arrangement in place, and that each parent paid their own costs when the children were in their care. Of these four mothers, two had 50:50 shared care arrangements and the remaining two had the care of their children for five nights per week. However, substantial and regular costs (such as, school fees, day-care fees and orthodontist bills) were often split or divided between them and their former partners.

Of the five fathers, one paid \$62.50 per week of formal child support, one had an informal arrangement of \$100 per week, and three did not have any, formal or informal, child support arrangement in place. All of these fathers, without an established child support arrangement, had a 50:50 shared care arrangement. Similar to what the mothers in this study reported, each parent was responsible for the costs of raising children when the children were in their care, and they divided other regular and irregular costs (such as, school fees and day-care fees).

### *Data analysis*

Drawing on the guidelines set out by Braun and Clarke (2006), I conducted a thematic analysis of my interview data. As a method of analysis, it enabled me to find patterned responses that point to similarities as well as differences across the data set. The thematic analysis was done in a three-step coding process. The first phase involved reading each transcript at least twice to gain a general sense of the interview and points of interest, taking notes and writing comments in the margins of each transcript. I then created a separate file that outlined key themes within the interviews. The second phase involved an open coding of the interview data into discrete thematic categories. The ten thematic categories that were established were: understandings of family, care time, paid work, mothering, fathering, family practices, family displays, identity, routines and rituals, relational thinking/doing. All relevant statements and comments in the transcripts were coded and placed into appropriate categories, with some statements being allocated to only one thematic category while others were placed into two, three or more categories. For example, often times discussions of care time overlapped with discussions of

mothering, fathering, family practices and/or family displays, and as such these comments were coded into five or more categories.

Once all of the transcripts were thematically coded, I systematically re-examined each thematic category looking for more focused ideas within broader themes. Using the thematic category 'family practices' as an example, once all statements and comments were coded into 'family practices', I re-coded all the statements into smaller sub-theme categories. What became clear through the process of re-coding the 'family practices' category was that mothers and father engaged in, and assigned different meanings to, different family practices. As a result, I created a 'mothering practices' and 'fathering practices' category to capture and demarcate these differences. At the end of this coding process, I identified nine sub-theme categories within the 'family practices' rubric, namely: mothering practices, fathering practices, grandparenting practices, extended family practices, nuclearised family practices, collectivised mothering practices, collectivised fathering practices, symbolic significance of family practices, and cultural significance of family practices. On completion of the thematic analysis, the data was used to make up the main component of the findings section of this thesis, specifically, Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In the following chapters, I present these analytical findings and discussions.



## Chapter 5: Negotiating care arrangements for children

Drawing on the distinction that Gilligan (1982) makes between an ‘ethic of justice’ and an ‘ethic of care’, in this chapter, I examine how gender and ethnicity intersect to shape Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ moral reasoning, and resulting decisions, about how to divide care time following separation. Given the relationality of Pacific cultures and that they have collectivist understandings of family, I consider the different ideas informing the kinds of decisions that the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study made, and were able to make, regarding children’s post-separation care arrangements. In doing this, I investigate gendered differences in mothers’ and fathers’ moral reasoning and decision-making. I also consider the impact that their reasoning and decision-making had on how they acted, constructed and made sense of their identities as ‘good’ post-separation Pacific mothers and fathers, and family members. Considering that my overall research focuses on questions of agency and identity, an ethic of justice and an ethic of care are useful conceptual frameworks for pursuing this inquiry because an ethic of justice resonates with theories of individualisation and frames individual moral reasoning as being primarily individualistic and self-interested, while an ethic of care to a large extent focuses on the relationality of people’s lives, and thus their moral reasoning. As such, these two ethics facilitate an examination of the extent to which Pacific mothers and fathers enacted agency and identity, in terms of how they negotiated post-separation care arrangements, in individualistic and self-interested ways or whether their agency and identities were exercised in a more relational and collectivist way.

I have divided the rest of this chapter into five sections. In the first, I provide an overview of the moral orientations of an ethic of justice and then of an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982, Held, 1990, Sevenhuijsen, 1998). In this section, I also outline how these competing ethics relate to post-separation care arrangements that mothers and fathers make for children (Smart and Neale, 1999; Smyth, 2004). Following this, I draw on my interview data to explore the moral reasoning informing the kinds of care arrangements that the Pacific mothers and fathers pursued and made for their children, and the differences that emerged in mothers’ and fathers’ talk. In the third, I examine how Pacific cultural norms, values and practices shape how mothers and fathers negotiate care time with children. I then move on to discuss how Pacific mothers’

and fathers' moral reasoning constrained and/or empowered how they were able to exercise their parental agency. Subsequently, I investigate the impact that various enactments of agency – moral reasoning and decision-making – had on how Pacific mothers and fathers performed their moral and cultural identities as Pacific mothers and fathers, and family members, following separation. What emerged from my analysis was that Pacific mothers' and fathers' moral reasoning were highly gendered. Mothers negotiated care arrangements in highly collectivist, relational and self-sacrificing ways, and fathers in collectivist ways that ultimately served individual needs. I conclude this chapter by arguing that Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices produced differing gendered cultural accountabilities that enabled fathers to successfully claim time with children, while requiring mothers to facilitate and foster children's relationships with their fathers and his extended family by giving up or forfeiting time with children following separation.

### **An 'ethic of justice' and an 'ethic of care'**

An ethic of justice, also known as an ethic of rights, is an orientation or process of moral reasoning that positions individuals as rivals in a contest over 'rights' (Gilligan, 1982, Held, 1990, Sevenhuijsen, 1998). That is a contest to obtain and/or maintain one's rights or what one perceives to be their rights. The underpinning logic is that rights can be arranged on a hierarchy, and that procedural rules can be drawn on to resolve moral dilemmas, problems or conflicts. These procedural rules involve weighing up competing claims, and drawing on abstract moral principles (for example, within the context of post-separation parenting, gender neutrality or best interest of children), to determine which, or whose, claim should take precedence (Held, 1990). There are thus perceived winners and losers. As a method of moral reasoning, an ethic of justice assumes that abstract principles can be universally applied to any situation to resolve moral dilemmas and disputes. Engaging in this process of moral reasoning involves a detachment from relationships with others and the social context, and making decisions 'objectively' and 'rationally' (Gilligan, 1982). Within this logic, and in line with theories of individualisation, individuals are constructed as fundamentally ego-centric, disconnected, independent and self-interested actors (Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1989, 1990).

Gilligan (1982) developed the notion of an ethic of care in response to the ethic of justice. She argued that the assumptions and logics underpinning an ethic of justice, of a disconnected, self-

sufficient and self-serving actor, and of 'rational' and 'objective' decision-making, were more closely associated with a masculinised experience of moral reasoning than a femininised one. This was not to imply that men and women definitively draw on different moral orientations, but that men and women have tendencies to view morality, as well as respond to moral dilemmas, problems and conflicts, in varied ways. To capture a more feminine experience, Gilligan argued that approaches to morality should include an element of care and an acknowledgement of the relationality of people's lives. As such, an ethic of care involves moral concepts of responsibility (as opposed to rights) and relationships (as opposed to a detached and self-sufficient individual). The moral necessity within an ethic of care is that individuals have, and feel, a responsibility to care and, in particular, to discern and be aware of their own needs as well as those of others. Responses to moral dilemmas, problems or conflicts are relationally understood as being entangled in webs of relationships and bound to concrete situations. Unlike an ethic of justice, there is no single or set of specific principles that can be equally applied to every situation. Rather, moral reasoning within an ethic of care focus on "concrete needs in concrete situations" (Sevenhuijsen, 2000, p. 37), and as needs change so too might responses or solutions. Communicating and compromising are considered key to resolution. An ethic of care is framed as being a moral and relational activity or an activity of caring about oneself and others. This activity of care or caring is seen as promoting and fostering the welfare of those involved and affected by the outcome of moral dilemmas, problems or conflicts (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000). As such, Sevenhuijsen (2000, p. 9) argues that an ethic of care focuses on the "self-in-relationships", and views moral reasoning and decision-making as a situated agency shaped by connections with others.

In terms of negotiating care arrangements for children following separation, Smart and Neale (1999) and others found that mothers were more likely than fathers to articulate an ethic of care (Smyth, 2004). Smart and Neale's (1999) study demonstrated that mothers did not avail themselves to a rights-based discourse embedded within an ethic of justice when making care arrangements for their children. Rather, they identified a series of needs that had to be considered and met, and arrived at resolutions by weighing up the needs of their children, former partners as well as their own in order to come to what they believed to be the right decision. These 'right' decisions, however, often involved conceding to fathers' preferences in an effort to minimise inter-parental conflict as well as children's exposure to this conflict. It also entailed doing emotional care work to facilitate the father-child relationship (for example, by coaxing and/or encouraging children to spend time with their fathers), as well as supporting

arrangements that ensured that fathers remained involved in their children's lives following separation, even when it meant that they consequently had less time with children.

Conversely, Smart and Neale's (1999) found that an ethic of justice was almost exclusively drawn upon by fathers. Fathers drew on an ethic of justice by invoking principles of rights and equality. These fathers positioned themselves as being rightfully entitled to have time with children, even 50:50 shared care time (Smyth, 2004). Drawing on rights-based discourses, fathers often positioned themselves as victims determined to win what they felt was legitimately due to them based on their social position and status as 'parents'. Smart and Neale (1999, p. 166) argued that fathers focused on their rights as parents to compensate for the lack of a close and affective father-child relationship. To put it another way, because these fathers could not focus on their relationships with children and how time apart might disrupt their children's continuity of care and overall well-being, they instead focused on their rights as fathers. As such, 'legal rights' and fathers pursuing these rights gave them the opportunity or kept open the possibility of forming a close and lasting relationship with their children following separation. However, as a result, it often meant coercing mothers and children into care arrangements and relying on mothers to facilitate the relationship and interaction.

In the following section, I examine how the Pacific mothers and fathers in my study made decisions about children's care arrangements following separation, analysing in particular the different moral reasoning that they employed, and significance they attached to their reasoning. I also consider the difference that Pacific collectivist understandings of family had on how these moral reasoning – associated with an ethic of care and of justice – were deployed.

### **Moral reasoning over children's care arrangements**

The Pacific mothers and fathers in this study told highly complex and layered stories about how they made care arrangements for their children following separation. Below I share excerpts that reflect, in gendered ways, mothers' and fathers' general talk. One mother, talking about the different, often competing, considerations that she had when contemplating her daughter's post-separation care arrangement, said:

Ivona: When we first separated, I wanted to raise [my daughter] on my own, it would've been so much easier 'cause it's been really hard. ... I have a really supportive family and

... so I know that I [could have done] it alone. But I didn't want to do that to [my former partner]. ... And besides [my former partner's] mother is the very involved do-everything type of mother so I knew that [my daughter] would be taken care of and that it would be good for [my daughter] ... because [my former partner's] family is very very very Samoan, like go to church all day Sunday and ... sports or something at church all day Saturday. ... My family, because I'm 'afakasi [half caste Samoan/*Palagi*], we don't do much of that. ... Even though it's hard ... having to give up a lot of my weekends [with her], it's good for her to have that time with him and all his family. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 9, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement<sup>35</sup>)

To give another example, one father talking about how he and his former partner first established a care arrangement said:

Toma: It was hard at first to [make a care arrangement] because our break-up was so bad ... and so I didn't get to see [my son] that much. ... What made it worse was that my son [from a previous relationship] would come over and spend every weekend with [me and my family]. ... Because my son [from my previous relationship] is older, he'd always ask, 'Where's [my brother]? Is he coming?' ... What do I say? ... I just told her that she [couldn't] keep my son away from me ... it's not fair, especially for my [older son] and my family too. ... I had to really fight for it.

Moeata: Can you tell me what you mean by you had to 'really fight for it'?

Toma: ... I just had to tell her straight, that she couldn't keep my son away, that it wasn't fair what she was doing and that if I had to, I would take her to court 'cause it couldn't go on like this. ... I had to really put the pressure on. ... Now [my son is] with [me and my extended family] pretty much every weekend. ... It's good because my sisters [and parents] spoil them ... you know they're the only grandkids. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 7, two nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

And another father, who identified his former partner as *Palagi*, said:

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<sup>35</sup> The participant profile is based on the participant's ethnicity, number and age/s of child/ren, number of nights per week the child/ren is/are in their care and household living arrangement.

Dion: It's hard for [my former partner] to understand. ... She just didn't understand that it's not only about me [having time with our children], it's about my family too. ... And then [she] says that her family needs time too, and why am I not thinking about them. ... It doesn't even make any sense because ... if we're having one-week-on and one-week-off then [our children] can see her family or do whatever she wants when they're with her. ... The whole problem was that she didn't want me to have them for half of the time. ...

Moeata: Was your family one of the main reasons that you wanted to have your children in a 50:50 shared care [time] arrangement?

Dion: Yeah, definitely and because I want to see my kids not just once a week, but she doesn't get it. She talks about her family, [but] when we were together, we never saw them, only Christmas and stuff. ... But with my family, oh you know Samoan families, there's always something going on and I want my kids to be part of that, I don't want every week to *fa'agoi* [ask permission] if they can come over, no. ... I'm their father, I shouldn't be asking for time with my own kids. (Samoan, two children ages 10 and 12, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

As the quotes shared above demonstrate, when Pacific mothers and fathers talked about the care arrangements that they pursued or made, they told highly relational stories. These relational stories wove together multiple layers of moral contemplations that involved and revolved around their relationship with their child/ren as well as their, and their child/ren's, relationship with their own families, and for mothers in particular their former partners and his extended family. Although there was a constant and consistent "relational layer" (Mason, 2004, p. 166) to both mothers' and fathers' moral contemplations regarding children's care arrangements, there were clear gendered differences. Below I discuss first fathers' moral reasoning and then mothers.

As found by Smart and Neale (1999), fathers in this study drew on an ethic of justice when pursuing care time with their children and involved applying abstract principles that emphasised their rights as fathers to have time with children. This ethic of justice was invoked through a voice of power and entitlement, emphasised through sentiments like, "she can't keep my son away from me ... it's not fair" or "I'm their father, I shouldn't be asking for time with my own kids". However, it is worth noting that in both cases, as fathers reported, their former

partners were not trying to sever father-child contact; in Toma's case, his former partner did not want to agree to him having weekend-only time, and in Dion's case, to 50:50 shared care time.

However, there were also elements of an ethic of care woven into fathers' moral reasoning, in particular of responsibility and relationships. In contrast to an ethic of justice that treats individuals as detached from connections with others and social contexts, fathers' moral reasoning were collectively oriented and motivated. The fathers' talk demonstrated that they had a felt responsibility to ensure that they and their family had time with children. As such, fathers told relational stories about the significance of claiming time with children for themselves, their children and other members of their own family. But, this activity of care was confined to their children and their own family, and did not extend to include their former partners or her family. To elaborate, although fathers' moral reasoning over children's care arrangements included an ethic of care for their children and family, when it came to their former partners and her family, they strictly drew on an ethic of justice. Contradictorily, despite none of the fathers considering or talking about their former partner's or her family's needs, they all expected their former partners to understand and recognise their needs, as well as the needs of their families, to have time with children. As demonstrated through sentiments like, "[s]he just didn't understand that it's not only about me [having time with our children], it's about my family too".

As Smart and Neale (1999) discuss, fathers who employ an ethic of justice to resolve disputes over children's post-separation care arrangements draw on a victims discourse. In particular, victims striving to win what they believe is legitimately due to them. By drawing on rights and victim-based discourses, former partners/mothers are discursively constructed as obstacles prohibiting fathers from obtaining, maintaining and/or enacting their rights as fathers to have time with children. For the fathers in my study, their former partners were not considered part of their responsibility of care because they were seen as being in a contest with them over their parental rights. Put differently, their claims for care time were framed as being in direct opposition to their former partner's claims. Former partners were thus exempted from such coverage of responsibility and treated as being beyond their mandate of care. To care for their former partners would mean to acknowledge that their former partners had needs that were not being met. This would turn the issue of care time from being about rights to being about needs, which would thereby diminish fathers' rights claim to time with children.

To give an example, Toma, quoted earlier, struggled to establish a care arrangement with his former partner immediately after separating. When he separated from his partner, he moved into his parents' home, and his son stayed with his former partner.<sup>36</sup> Toma talked about how difficult it was to make a care arrangement with his former partner because "she just wouldn't agree". To pick up on a point mentioned earlier, Toma's former partner was not trying to obstruct or forcibly keep their son from him, rather, as he reported it, she did not want to agree to him having their son every weekend. The care arrangement that he pursued, and established, was weekend-only time. This arrangement enabled him to fit his fathering activities around his paid work commitments. As a consequence, his former partner was left with weekday-only time, which forfeits time with their son that is not encumbered by hectic work/kindergarten schedules and competing priorities. In effect, her caretaking during the week would enable him to enjoy weekend recreational and family time with their son. However, rather than focusing on her needs to have time with their son during the weekend, he focused on his rights, and viewed the 2:5 night split as being in her favour, without acknowledging that it meant that she would not have valuable weekend time with their son.

An ethic of justice, thus, operated as a means through which fathers could exercise agency in ways that prioritised their own needs, wants and preferences (of having, for example, weekend time with children or 50:50 shared care time). Inclusions of aspects of an ethic of care in their moral reasoning, and in particular of their children and other family member's needs, further enabled them to prioritise their own needs without being seen to act in an individualistic way because their claims were located within the needs of others. Hence, fathers situating their needs within those of their children and family bolstered their claims, enhancing their bargaining power, especially as the arrangements were framed as being pursued in the interest of others. Yet, the arrangements pursued, and consequently made, primarily served father's interests, even though they also benefited others. None of the fathers altruistically negotiated or entered into a care arrangement that benefited others and not themselves. Rather, the arrangements that they pursued and made were largely centred around their needs and interests. As such, fathers did not engage in a genuine ethic of care that balanced or weighed up the different needs of all involved parties to resolve disputes over care arrangements. Instead, they adopted an ethic of justice that wove in elements of an ethic of care that facilitated them to

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<sup>36</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, but worth mentioning again here, at the point of separation, for all the participants, children stayed with their mothers until their parents could establish a care arrangement.



enact agency in largely self-interested and goal-orientated ways, a point that I elaborate on later in this chapter. In doing so, fathers were able to wield and exercise power over their former partners. However, they did so covertly, and in culturally-informed ways, because it was situated as stemming from their desire to do the right thing by their children and other family members.

The experiences of the Pacific fathers in this study in some ways resonate with Mason's (2004) notion of 'relational individualism' introduced in Chapter 2. To remind, relational individualism involved exercising agency in individualistic ways that also serve the interests of others and occupied a minority of white men's experiences in Mason's study. The fathers in my study to an extent enacted relational individualism in terms of the care arrangements that they pursued and made for their children. However, there were points of departure in the experiences of the men in my study and those in Mason's study. To elaborate, the men in Mason's study talked about their individualistic exercises of agency as being motivated by selfish tendencies, but how despite having selfish motivations, the decisions they made benefited others. Although the fathers in this study pursued and made care arrangements that suited their individual needs, they did not articulate their claims as being pursued for individualistic and/or selfish reasons. Rather, they emphasised in their talk that they were pursuing care time with children for themselves as well as for other family members. As such, I argue that the fathers in this study enacted agency through what I term 'collective individualism', a notion that I continue to develop in this chapter and throughout this research. Collective individualism nuances Mason's notion of relational individualism, and of relationalism more generally, and entails exercising agency in collectivist ways that serve individual needs.

In contrast to fathers, mothers in this study, again similar to those in Smart and Neale (1999) and Smyth's (2004) study, drew on an ethic of care when making care arrangements for their children following separation. They did this by making decisions based on their felt responsibilities to, and relationships with, others. However, what set the mothers in this study apart from those in the other studies was that their felt responsibilities extended to include in their moral reasoning's the father-child relationship as well as the relationship between children and their former partners' extended family. As such, the mothers shared stories about the importance of giving up and forgoing time with their child/ren for their former partners and his family. More than this, mothers' talk demonstrated that they sacrificed time with their children

to foster, facilitate and service the relationship between children and fathers, as well as between children and their former partners' extended family. This is highlighted when Ivona, quoted earlier, who willingly gave up weekend time with her daughter to her former partner, said, "even though it's hard ... it's good for her to have that time with him and all his family". Ivona's activity of care related to the entire post-separation family, and included her former partner and his family. Across the study, mothers felt a strong sense of responsibility to care for their children's relationships with others, and thus made care arrangements that cultivated those relationships. It was about doing the right thing, not for themselves, but for their children, former partners and extended family on both sides.

The moral reasoning that informed most of the mothers' decision-making focused on balancing the different, and often competing, needs of their children, family, former partners and former partners' family, often at the expense of their own individual needs, wants and desires. For example, while contemplating care arrangements for her daughter Ivona, quoted earlier, did not prioritise her own individual circumstances or preferences. Instead, her motivation to "give up" most weekends with her daughter was relationally informed by what she thought would be best for her daughter in terms of cultivating her daughter's relationship with her father and his extended family as well as her daughter's cultural identity as Samoan, a point I expand on in the following section. It was also informed by considerations of her former partner and his family and the trust and knowledge that her daughter would be well looked after while in their care.

Mothers emphasised in their talk how the care arrangements that they made benefited their children directly. For fathers this was not as clearly articulated, but appeared in the background of their talk. For example, fathers tended to focus on their own needs and the needs of others to have time with children, but rarely phrased it in reverse: the needs of their children to have time with them and their family. However, this was a focal point in mothers' talk. For example, as one mother said:

Sina: ... You really want to say what you feel and just do what you want, and just say [in an exasperated voice], 'just bugger off' [to] the whole bloody lot of them [i.e. former partner and his family], because they can just be so frustrating to deal with. ... But you can't, well it wouldn't be right for my daughter because she needs them in her life and she loves spending time with them. ... And that's why if ever she asks or [if my former partner and his extended family] ask to have her for the whole weekend or any other day,

I'm always fine with it ... because I see how happy it makes her. ... well not 'fine' in a happy way because I'd rather have her home, but it makes her happy and it makes them [i.e. former partner and his family] happy. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 5, six nights per week<sup>37</sup>, extended family living arrangement)

As demonstrated in this quote, Sina, like other mothers, negotiated care arrangements in ways that focused on their children's well-being, and their children's relationships with their fathers and his family. In contrast to fathers, who exercised collective individualism, I found that mothers enacted what I call 'collective relationalism' by exercising individual agency in ways that considered and prioritised the needs of others over their own. To put it another way, collective relationalism involved enacting agency in collectivist and self-sacrificing ways by making decisions based on what mothers perceived to be in the best interest of their children and the broader post-separation family.

### **Culturally-informed significance of relating to others**

The significance of including others in moral contemplations, or relating to others when pursuing or making care arrangements for children, was considered by the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study to be a part of a broader relational familial project underscored by Pacific family norms, values, expectations and practices. As Salote said:

When we first split [up], I really didn't know what plans we would make for [our children]. ... [But] I always expected that our families would be involved, not just involved, but really involved because they cared ... [and] because we're Samoan. It is normal for *Palagi* [white] families that the other side of the family might step back or both families on both sides would step back, but we're Samoan and so I am not surprised at all that they haven't ... and if anything they're more involved now than they were when we were together. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

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<sup>37</sup> As demonstrated in this quote, although Danielle typically had her daughter for six nights per week, this could change from week to week; some weeks her daughter would spend 2-3 nights per week with her father and his family, but most often only one night per week.

Similarly, Ivona said:

Oh [my former partner's family are] extremely close to [my daughter]. Yeah, very much so. ... We're lucky in the sense that like most Samoan families are like that. ... I mean you know, they've just completely raised her and look after her all the time and yeah, that's just what you do if you have a child in Samoa, everyone looks after them. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 9, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Or as one father said:

Ioane: There are lots of hands to help, you know, that's the Samoan way. You can always count on family, especially during hard times ... the cost of the *fa'asamoa* [the Samoan way] comes when you have to give money [to family] [laughs], nah but seriously, you know, it really is our way [i.e. the Samoan way] to be there for family. (Samoan, one child age 6, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

As illustrated by the quotes above, caring for children and doing family in collectivist and communally-based ways was discursively constructed as expressions and enactments of having a Pacific cultural heritage and identity, both individual and collective. For the mothers and fathers across the study, their families provided them and their children with invaluable support, which was particularly important at the time of separation. However, this support was taken for granted as constituting a normal part of living in and being a part of a Pacific family. The Pacific mothers and fathers expected that their families would remain actively involved in caring for their children, which meant that they were not surprised when they did. The collectivist doing of family life was interpreted and understood as what you do when you are Pacific, or as Ivona said, "what you do if you have a child in Samoa" because it is, as Ioane said, "the Samoan way". Expectations that extended family would be less involved or "step back" from the everyday post-separation care of children, were associated with the norms of white, or as Salote says "*Palagi*", Western families and more nuclearised modes of negotiating and organising care for children that centre on parents' responsibilities and obligations to children.

The embeddedness of the mothers and fathers in their family and culture meant that when they were negotiating post-separation care arrangements for their children, they did so in highly relational and collectivist ways by considering extended family in their contemplations and

conversations with former partners. Although the mothers and fathers recognised that they had no legal obligation to include or consider their extended families in their decision-making, as one father said, “at the end of the day it’s up to [me and my former partner], you know it’s up to us to work it out”, they felt a strong culturally-informed moral obligation to do so.

This culturally-informed moral obligation was not only to their extended families, but also to their children in terms of instilling and nurturing their Pacific cultural identity. This obligation to children was felt more acutely because the mothers and fathers were living and raising their children in Aotearoa New Zealand, but would have otherwise been taken for granted if they were in the Islands. In this way, engaging in relational modes of thinking and doing, by ensuring that extended family were considered when making care arrangements and included in their children’s everyday lives, operated as a way that the Pacific mothers and fathers could impart Pacific family values to their children. For example, Salote talking about the significance of her children spending time with extended family said:

It is so important, it is linked to their identity and feeling sure of their identity. ... It secures my children in their family and their place in their family. It also roots them in their culture, which is so important to me because we live in New Zealand and this is why I am so invested in making sure that [my children] spend time with both sides of the family and also their half-brothers<sup>38</sup>. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Or as another mother talking about the importance of fostering her daughter’s cultural identity said:

Sina: I was raised in Auckland, and my Mum was of that generation you know, first generation Samoan ... they didn’t speak to [their children] in Samoan, they spoke to us in English. So, we never learnt how to speak Samoan properly. ... And most of our family stayed in Samoa. ... Thankfully I grew up in an Island community, you know at church and at school. ... That’s why I put [my daughter] in the [language nest] because I want her to be secure in her identity as Samoan. I want her to speak her mother tongue and I want her to feel Samoan through and through ... [so that] when we go to Samoa, she is just an Island girl. ... That’s what’s nice about [my former partner’s] family is that [my

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<sup>38</sup> Her former partner’s children from a previous relationship.

daughter] gets that on both sides [of the family]. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 5, six nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

One father similarly said:

Tavita: Our culture is everything, we're not living in Samoa so we [i.e. me and my family] have a huge responsibility to pass on our culture to the next generation, if we don't, our kids will grow up as pineapple lumps<sup>39</sup>. ... brown on the outside but white on the inside. ... And I want them to be Samoan and proud. ... They need to know their family ... [because] it's through our family that we get our culture. (Samoan, two children ages 6 and 8, two nights per week, lives with new partner)

What is demonstrated by these quotes is that the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study made culturally-informed relational decisions about children's care arrangements because considering extended family and making sure that children spent time with their extended family operated as an important way that they could cultivate their children's cultural identity. Thus, when negotiating care arrangements, the mothers and fathers did not only define the best interests of children as involving continued involvement of both parents, but also ongoing involvement with extended family. Embedding children in their extended family networks worked as a way that the mothers and fathers were able to enculturate children into the importance of family in being Pacific. However, for mothers this extended family network included their former partners' family, while for fathers it was limited to their own family.

In the following section, I discuss how culturally-informed ways of relating to others as well as differences in mothers' and fathers' moral reasoning, in particular of fathers' collective individualism and mothers' collective relationalism, worked in varied ways to constrain mothers' agency, while having an empowering effect for fathers.

### **Constraining relationality**

Mothers' moral reasoning over children's care arrangements were not straight-forward assessments, with mothers easily and willingly giving up or forgoing time with children to

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<sup>39</sup> A chocolate-covered confectionary, with a yellow pineapple flavoured centre.

enable fathers and his family to have time with children. As Ivona, quoted earlier, said, after she had talked about how she and her former partner made a post-separation care arrangement for their daughter, “I’ve made it sound really kind of easy. It wasn’t ... and it still isn’t”. One mother talking about the tension and pressure she experienced from her former partner and family when negotiating a care arrangement for her daughter, said:

Aniva: He asked for [our daughter] to have overnights with [him and his family] and she wasn’t even a year yet, she is used to sleeping with me and waking up with me, and I was still breastfeeding, so I didn’t want that. I even told him that if he wanted to have overnights with her for him to come and at least sleep at our house for a few nights in the beginning and then we go from there. ... But he kept saying that I couldn’t keep [our daughter] away from him ... and that his family wanted to spend time with her too. ... It was so hard because I didn’t want her to go, well not for sleepovers. ... But my parents just told me to keep the peace [and] to just let her go. ... It’s hard because I know that my Mum only said that because she wants us to get along and she doesn’t want his family talking about me ... and thinking things about us. (Tongan/ Māori, one child age 14 months, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

As illustrated by the excerpt above, Aniva, like many other mothers in this study, talked about how the activity of caring for others relationally constrained her to make a decision that she might not have otherwise made. In particular, Aniva felt compelled to agree to overnight care, despite having concerns about how her daughter would adjust to being apart from her and her inability to breastfeed while her daughter was with her former partner and his family. Through her suggestion of her former partner sleeping over at her place to begin the transition to overnight time away, Aniva was demonstrating an activity of care that focused on trying to find a middle ground that suited and responded to all of their needs, including her own. However, her former partner’s refusal meant that she had to (re)adjust her activity of care by shifting her focus away from her needs and preferences and the needs of her daughter to the needs of her former partner and his family. (Re)adjusting her activity of care and considering, or caring about, the needs of others constrained how she was able to negotiate care time and exercise her agency, while empowering her former partner to successfully claim time and enact his individual agency.

Moreover, the emphasis by Aniva’s parents, in particular her mother, on keeping the familial peace, and Aniva consequently agreeing to overnight care, can be understood as a way that she

and her parents attempted to foster the relational space between her and her former partner as well as between the two families. As discussed in Chapter 2, an essential and integral aspect of encompassing and enacting one's Pacific culture is a recognition and acknowledgement of the relational space, or *va*, that exists between individuals and families. In this instance, especially through Aniva's family encouraging conciliatory behaviour, by sacrificing her own needs and those of her daughter, Aniva individually and collectively nurtures the, albeit constrained, relational space/*va* that exists between her and her former partner, her and her own family and between the two families. In doing so, Aniva affirms her identity as a good and moral Pacific mother and daughter, who co-operates with her former partner and who dutifully listens to the advice of her parents.

Although Aniva agreed to overnight care, she exercised a constrained sense of agency that was less about her individual preferences and concerns and more about appeasing her former partner and family. Hence, her collective relationalism worked in ways that fostered relationships, while having a constraining effect on how she was able to claim time and care for her daughter. As previously demonstrated, fathers mobilised relationality, and in particular collective individualism, to successfully claim time with children that suited their individual needs. However, when mothers tried to relate to others in a more limited and restricted way, as fathers did, their pursuit of time was not as successful because they were expected by their former partners and their own family to be self-sacrificing and cognisant of how care arrangements would affect the entire post-separation family.

Relational constraint was experienced more harshly by mothers in situations when fathers invoked an ethics of justice by threatening court intervention. As one mother said:

Danielle: All I knew was that I didn't want to go to court. I didn't want him to have [our daughter] two nights a week, but I really didn't want to go to court. ... Because he does have rights, so I gave in and just agreed. ... We [are] not going through the court at all. ... It's just [because] you can't take back ... court. ... I just wouldn't want to go to court. ... Two nights a week isn't so bad. (Cook Island Māori, one child age 4, five nights per week, extended family living)

Danielle's talk echoed the findings in Elizabeth, Gavey and Tolmie's (2010) study. Elizabeth et al. found that separated mothers often made compromises that enabled fathers to increase their time with children. They did this because they worried about the uncertainty of court



rulings, which they feared might result in losing even more time with children. Danielle, and many mothers in this study, succumbed to the ethic of justice employed by her former partner, and invoked, on her part, an ethics of care by agreeing to two nights per week and seeing it as a compromise. In this particular situation, similar to Aniva's, Danielle was concerned about her former partner having overnight care because her daughter had not spent much overnight time away from her family home. The suggestion of court intervention can thus be viewed as a useful strategy employed by fathers to gain compliance from their former partners, a sentiment that was echoed in fathers' talk. For example, as Tavita said:

At first, we couldn't agree [on a care arrangement] so I told her let's just go to court and they can figure it out ... and that way it's fair. ... She didn't want to go to court. ... So, I told her what I wanted, and she told me what she wanted, and it's been working. (Samoan, two children ages 6 and 8, two nights per week, lives with new partner)

Court intervention was expressed by fathers as a means of establishing and producing fairness in care arrangements. However, the idea of going to court was experienced by mothers as threatening and confronting. Thus, for fathers, the suggestion of court involvement in many ways operated as another means through which they were able to exercise their agency, but in ways that constrained mothers' agency. I turn now to discuss how various enactments of agency shaped the women and men's moral and cultural identities as mothers and fathers, and family members more generally.

### **'Good' Pacific post-separation mothering and fathering**

The way that Pacific mothers and fathers related to others in different, and contrasting, ways can be explained by the different moral constructions and expectations attached to what it means to be a good mother and father, or more precisely a good Pacific *post-separation* Pacific mother and father. For mothers, relating to others in self-sacrificing ways by giving up and forgoing time with children, or collective relationalism, can be understood as a way that they were able to act and construct themselves as good post-separation mothers. The good post-separation mother is described in other studies as a mother who maintains a good relationship with her former partner for her children's sake, even servicing and fostering the father-child relationship (Elizabeth et al., 2010; Smart and Neale, 1999). However, for the Pacific mothers

in this study, being a good post-separation mother was not only about facilitating and nurturing the relationship between former partners and children, but doing so in culturally-informed ways by also cultivating the relationship between children and the extended family on both sides. For example, talking about making arrangements for children during the Christmas holidays, one mother said:

Kate: Last year ... we had a week on and week off [arrangement] and it happened that the week of Christmas, it fell on his week with the girls. ... His family usually go [out of town for Christmas] so I knew that we wouldn't be able to split Christmas. ...

Moeata: Did you talk to [your former partner] about splitting the Christmas break?

Kate: No, I wanted to, especially because my family, we don't have a lot of family in New Zealand and my brother doesn't have kids, so without my girls there are no kids in our family. ... Christmas just doesn't feel like Christmas without them. ... But no, I didn't because we've been getting along so I didn't want it to turn into a big thing with him, and he has a big family with lots of little nephews and nieces, you know so I knew the girls would have fun and if they stayed [in Auckland] I don't think that [my former partner] would've gone. ... And I know his family would blame me. ... It worked out good though because we had the girls for New Years and so [my family] had a big New Year's party ... to make up for Christmas. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 10 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

The need to maintain the peace between herself and her former partner resulted in Kate not asking for time with her children at Christmas. She did this so as not to create any conflict between her and her former partner (because, as she said, "we've been getting along") as well as between her and her former partner's family (who she believed would blame her if her former partner and children did not go). Kate felt a heightened sense of scrutiny from her former partner and his family on her moral identity as a mother if she tried to claim time with her children knowing that they would be going away for the Christmas break. As such, she did not broach the subject with her former partner, even though it meant that she and her own family forfeited time with her children at Christmas. To remind, an ethic of care considers compromises as integral to resolving moral disputes (Sevenhuijsen, 1998). In this instance, Kate made behind the scene compromises. However, these compromising behaviours were only on her part, because it was her (and her family) who had to give up important time with

her children at Christmas. She reported that her former did not raise the issue with her or suggest splitting the Christmas break in some way. But she was willing to make this sacrifice to avoid tension and conflict with her former partner and his family.

In this way, being a good post-separation Pacific mother meant considering and managing the different needs of children, former partners and extended family on both sides. While constraining mothers' sense of agency, these moral considerations and decision-making maintained inter-parental and inter-familial peace, and facilitated the smooth running of post-separation familial life. Thus, good post-separation Pacific mothering involved taking into account the competing needs of different family members and families, and making decisions based on what mothers felt would be best for the entire post-separation family, even though it often meant sacrificing their own needs. By exercising agency altruistically, mothers were able to lay claim and secure their identities as good post-separation Pacific mothers and family members. For the mothers in this study, the project of the self was situated within networks of family relationship or, as Sevenhuijsen (2000, p. 9) describes, a "self-in-relationships". Across the study, mothers' sense of self was not self-interested nor in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment. Although mothers were conscious of their agency, it was guided by Pacific/gendered norms of practice that to a large extent made mothers accountable for the collective well-being of the post-separation family. Mothers' exercises of agency were therefore not enacted in pursuit of individual, or an individualistic sense of, self-fulfilment, but for the collective welfare of the post-separation family.

To illustrate, one mother, talking about how she consciously and purposefully cultivates and nurtures the relationship between her children, former partner and extended family on both sides, said:

Salote: Special occasions like Christmas or birthdays are always spent with both sides [of the family]. ... So, like if both sides, or if their Dad's side can't make it for Christmas, I'll change the day to suit them and just try to make sure it suits us all. ... So we would celebrate Christmas on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve or even on Boxing Day just so that we can all be together, and that my kids can be with their cousins on those special holidays, especially because my kids are similar ages to all the kids on [their father's] side. ... I even do that with their birthdays, I'll change the day to try and suit everyone. ... I want to build that relationship with their other side [of the family]. ... With my family it is easy because they're always around. ... I never want my kids to feel like

they're betraying me by spending time with their other side and for wanting to spend time with them and so it is important that my kids see us all spending time together and that we do spend time together. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Thinking about Western moral constructions of intensive mothering, discussed in Chapter 3, the quote shared above serves as a good example of how the mothers in this study enacted and demonstrated good mothering, in culturally-informed ways, by not only facilitating and nurturing the relationship between children, former partners and extended family on both sides, but doing so in child-centred, time consuming, emotionally-involved and self-sacrificing ways. In the excerpt above, Salote's purposeful efforts to create family time with both sides of the family, while being emotionally taxing and time consuming, fostered the relational space/*va* and familial connections between the mother, children, former partner and extended family on both sides. In doing so, Salote is able to affirm and reaffirm her Pacific cultural identity, as well as her moral identity, as a good Pacific post-separation mother and family member.

Across the study, mothers' talk emphasised the significant amount of effort that goes into servicing the inter-parental and inter-familial relationship (by creating family time, giving up time and/or sacrificing their own wants, needs and preferences). However, none of the fathers in this study talked about making similar efforts to, for example, work their care arrangements around their former partners and her family, or about fostering or facilitating the relationship between their children and their former partners or former partners' family. Rather, their former partner's families rarely featured in their accounts. Even when directly prompted to talk about their former partner's extended family, the discussions were quite limited. For fathers, children spending time with their mother's family was considered a concern of their former partner. As Dion, quoted earlier in this chapter, said, "[our children] can see her family or do whatever she wants when they're with her." Children spending time with their mother's family was largely articulated as being outside of fathers scope of care or interest. As another father said, "yeah, my kids do spend a lot of time with my ex's family, but I don't really get involved or try to get involved in that, you know, it's really her [i.e. former partner's] thing".

Although none of the fathers in this study talked about or emphasised the significance of nurturing the relational space/*va*, or facilitating the relationship, between children and their former partners and their former partners' family, they were not censured for acting individualistically because they were enacting 'we' behaviours with their own families, even

if their 'we' was more delimited than that of the mothers. Because these fathers did not opt out of fatherhood following separation, and instead actively pursued time with children in culturally-informed, 'we' oriented, ways their identities as good Pacific fathers and family men were secured.

Thus, the project of the self for fathers, like mothers, was located within their family relationships. However, the point of departure between the mothers' and fathers' experiences was that fathers were not held to account for the collective welfare of the post-separation family. Rather, fathers were to a large extent exempted by their former partners and their own families from fostering the relational space/*va* between children, parents and extended family on both sides. Fathers actively claiming time with children and morally situating their claims within the needs of their own family enabled them to construct themselves as involved post-separation fathers. As such, fathers were positioned in ways that enabled them to enact agency in individualistic and self-interested ways, because they were not translated as being self-interested or individualistic. Rather, their pursuit of care time and considering the needs of their own family were interpreted as signs of good Pacific post-separation fathering.

As such, the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study drew on highly gendered culturally-informed moral views about how to enact their mothering and fathering identities following separation. Fathers were able to enact their agency in more individualistic 'I' oriented ways to claim time with children by focusing on their and their families' needs. Yet mothers were required to enact individual agency in highly collectivised 'we' ways despite no longer being a 'we' with their former partners and his extended family. However, borrowing from Duncan (2011), this occurred in a both reflexive and non-reflexive ways. To elaborate, although the mothers and fathers talked reflexively about the significance of children spending time with the extended family and nurturing their child/ren's cultural identity, they did not explicitly talk about how they enacted 'I' or 'we' oriented behaviours, or about whether or not they did more or less than their former partners to facilitate and foster their children's relationship with their other parent and extended families.

Moreover, the sense of agency that the mothers and fathers operated with was performed in ways that were guided by Pacific/gendered norms of practice. Put differently, mothers' and fathers' moral reasoning and decision-making were shaped by culturally-produced norms of practice that take shape at the intersections of gender and ethnicity. The mothers' adherence to normative Pacific/gendered norm of practices, although constraining their sense of agency,

secured their identity as good Pacific mothers, and good Pacific family members. Conversely, for fathers, Pacific/gendered norms of practice enabled them to operate with a more individualistic sense of agency because they gained social legitimation as good fathers and family members by simply pursuing time with their children and considering the needs of their own extended family. And, the fact that both mothers' and fathers' could establish post-separation care arrangements in which extended family featured so prominently secured their collective identities as good and proper Pacific post-separation families.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I drew on the distinction between an ethic of justice and an ethic of care to investigate how gender and ethnicity intersected to shape how Pacific mothers and fathers made, and were able to make, decisions about their children's post-separation care arrangements. In my analysis, I found that mothers largely invoked an ethic of care when making care arrangements, and fathers an ethic of justice mixed in with aspects of an ethic of care. For fathers, the activity of care, or relating to others, was much more individualised and individualistic compared with mothers. Fathers primarily related to their children and their own extended family, whereas mothers' activity of care/caring was done in highly collectivist and self-sacrificing ways by considering and prioritising the competing needs and interests of their children, former partners and extended families on both sides, over their own.

As such, mothers' agency was not only relationally informed, but also relationally constrained. In particular, Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices worked in interacting ways to limit how Pacific mothers interpreted, translated and enacted agency. Mothers were multiply constrained by Pacific family values associated with subverting individual wants and needs for the wider collective good, as well as Pacific/gendered discursive constructions of good post-separation mothering. Mothers were additionally constrained by fathers, who often invoked an ethics of justice to successfully claim time with children. Although mothers operated with a more constrained sense of agency, doing so secured their identity as good Pacific mothers and good dutiful daughters and family members.

Conversely, an ethic of care, and relationality, empowered fathers to exercise agency in individualistic ways. They did this, for example, by pursuing time with children that best suited

their individual needs and preferences, but locating them within the interests of their children and family. In situations where former partners did not comply, they moved from invoking an ethic of care (that related to their children and family) to that of justice, which set mothers up to appear selfish and obstructive if they did not agree or give in to the care arrangements pursued. However, the ethic of justice that fathers employed was not detached from connections with others (Gilligan, 1982; Sevenhuijsen, 1998), but collectively organised around their own family.

What therefore emerges from my analysis of fathers' talk is that rather than the two ethics existing as discrete processes of moral reasoning, these ethics interacted to shape how fathers claimed time with children. In particular, the situation, or their former partner's response, determined how and the extent to which they drew on these different ethics, by invoking an ethic of justice interlaced with an ethic of care, or an ethic of care underpinned by an ethic of justice. However, irrespective of how these ethics were deployed, they worked in ways that enabled fathers to exercise agency in individualistic ways to claim time with children that suited their needs, wants and preferences. Although fathers exercised agency in individualised and individualistic ways, it did not diminish their moral identities as Pacific fathers and family members because they pursued and claimed time with children for themselves, their children and their own families.

Pacific/gendered norms of practice operated in ways that provided Pacific mothers and fathers with contrasting modes of exercising agency and identity. Fathers, in particular drew on collective individualism that involved making decision-making in relation to others as well as in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment. Arguably, fathers prioritised their needs over those of others, because not one of the fathers in this study included in their moral negotiations the needs or preferences of those that did not align with their own. However, it was not perceived to be acting individualistically because others, specifically their children and family, benefited from the care arrangements that they pursued and made. In contrast, mothers were required to enact agency centred on collective relationalism, which involved making decisions in collectivist, altruistic and self-sacrificing ways. The interests of others were always prioritised over their own. In situations where mothers tried to exercise agency individualistically to claim time with children in a similar fashion as fathers, they were advised by their family to give in to the needs of their former partners in an effort to foster the relational space/*va* between them and their former partners as well as between families. Yet, these same requests were not being

made, or expected, of fathers by their own families. For mothers, the sense of fulfilment they derived from the care arrangements that they made was a moral one as opposed to an individually felt notion of feeling or being fulfilled. This moral sense of fulfilment came from knowing that they were meeting their felt responsibilities to care for others, and fostering their children's relationship with their fathers and families on both sides.

To conclude this chapter, the way that the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study negotiated care arrangements, and the moral reasoning underpinning their decisions, demonstrates how gender and ethnicity interact to differentially shape mothers' and fathers' agency and identity. In particular, Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices associated with doing family produced differing accountabilities, agencies and identities that shaped how the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study were able to negotiate post-separation care arrangements for their children.

In the following chapter, I continue my examination of how Pacific mothers and fathers – as individual agents – navigate and negotiate Pacific collectivist and relational modes of doing family with how they enact agency and identity following separation by examining Pacific mothers' and fathers' post-separation care practices for children.



## Chapter 6: Caring for children

Gender neutral labels like ‘parent’ and ‘parenting’ hide and in many ways disguise gendered experiences of mothering and fathering. Terms like parent and parenting also render invisible collectivist caring practices that are commonplace in Pacific families, where grandparents, siblings, aunties, cousins and so forth may all play a role. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is a small body of sociological scholarship that explores gendered dimensions of mothering and fathering in the context of separation (e.g. Lacroix, 2006, Miller, 2017; Philip, 2014; Smart and Neale, 1999). However, as I also discussed in Chapter 3, much of this literature draws on normative white Western and nuclearised understandings of family structure, and the nature and scope of parenting practices within that structure. Although demonstrating gendered differences, mothering and fathering are often framed in highly individualised ways that focus on mothers’ and fathers’ responsibilities, obligations and activities of care. The experiences of those within Pacific (and other ethnic minority) communities have yet to be explored in any great depth. As such, little is known about how and with whom Pacific mothers and fathers organise and perform care for children following separation. In this chapter, I address this gap in the literature.

Drawing on Morgan’s (1996, 2011) work on ‘family practices’, I explore how gender and ethnicity interact to shape Pacific mothers and fathers agency and identity in relation to how they care for children in the context of separation. I focus, in particular, on their actions, or care practices. In pursuing this inquiry, I examine gendered differences in how mothers and fathers manage and enact care practices for children. I also explore how care practices for children are enacted in relation to broader family practices undertaken by mothers and fathers with other family members. Morgan’s notion of family practices enables me to continue my analysis of agency and identity, and facilitates a broader examination of theories of individualisation and relationality. In particular, family practices provides my research with a conceptual tool to explore the extent to which Pacific mothers and fathers agency and identity, in terms of how they organise and enact care practices, are reflexively and/or non-reflexively performed in ways that are guided by institutionalised and culturally-produced Pacific/gendered norms associated with caring for children and doing family in Pacific cultures.

I have divided the remainder of this chapter into five sections. I first outline ‘family practices’ as a theoretical concept (Morgan, 1996, 2011), and then how it will be used to examine Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ post-separation care practices for children. Following this, I draw on my interview data to examine Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ care practices, exploring in particular the embeddedness of extended family members in the facilitation of these care practices. In the third, I explore gendered differences in how and with whom mothers and fathers organise, manage and enact post-separation care for children. Continuing this analysis of gendered differences, I then examine how mothers and fathers manage parental responsibilities with paid work commitments. In the final section, I examine gendered variations in Pacific mothers’ and fathers’ collectivist care practices. I conclude this chapter by arguing that everyday care for children is practiced in both reflexive and non-reflexive ways that are shaped by Pacific/gendered norms, values and practices associated with doing family that rely on and reaffirm gendered practices of care.

## **Family Practices**

Broadly defined, Morgan’s (1996, 2011) concept of family practices refers to the ordinary and everyday way that family members perform family life. Morgan frames family life as something that is actively performed, both individually and collectively, through the activities that family members and families engage in. The idea of family practices centres on *doing* family as opposed to *being* family. The emphasis on doing family moves away from a discussion of ‘the family’ as a rigid social structure towards an understanding of family life as being actively constructed through everyday actions, activities and interactions. It is focused on social actors and the actions they take and thus the agency they operate with. To engage in family practices requires agency to act out these practices.

Morgan (2011) argues that family practices emerge through a series of institutionalised activities and interactions that are recognised and understood by family members and wider audience as practices associated with the doing of family life. These practices are also ideologically embedded in our minds, which then manifest in and through our everyday actions and activities. As Morgan (2011, p. 5) discusses, individuals, or family members, do not routinely talk in explicit terms of doing family life or engaging in family practices, rather “they just do them and live them”. However, doing family is not simply a passive or static process of

thought, action or activity. Instead, family members and families actively 'do' family life even if it is not articulated in these terms. Individuals, thus, engage in family practices while intending to and also without intending to (Morgan, 2011) or, to borrow from Duncan's (2011) phrasing, reflexively and non-reflexively.

However, as a result of the regular and everyday doing of family, various actions and activities become non-reflexively practiced, thereby constituting the taken for granted nature of family experience. To expand on this, drawing on the arguments Martin (2003) makes in reference to practicing gender, the doing of family life becomes practiced in such a way that is so well versed, beginning at birth and continuing over the life course, that it appears seemingly 'natural'. As such, the ease through which family life is conducted emerges as a result of actions that are learned over time through practice and repetition. The significance of regular and everyday, as opposed to one-off or episodic, is that frequent performances operate as a reiteration of family norms or sets of family norms, thus creating habits or non-reflexive action.

Although much of Morgan's (1996, 2011) work focuses on actions and practices involved in the doing of family life, he recognises that family practices are not a bounded activity, rather they flow in and between other practices. The doing of family, relating to my research focus, thereby intersects with the doing of gender and ethnicity (or culture). In Morgan's (2011, p. 7) words, "practices merge and overlap with each other like splotches of watercolour paint or those puzzles which can be seen at first one way and next some other way". As such, family practices can be viewed as being situated within a body of Pacific/gendering practices that take shape at the institutional/structural/cultural level or at the intersections between family, gender and ethnicity. In this way, family practices can be understood as an ongoing activity embedded within everyday actions and interactions that are developed within what Allan, Crow and Hawker (2011, p. 33) discuss as "the 'culture' of particular families and within their broader sociocultural milieu".

Situating Morgan's (1996, 2011) work within my own research, when parent's separate much of the taken for grantedness associated with doing family life comes into focus, with parents typically having to navigate familial life in markedly different ways than they had when they were together (Pryor and Rodgers, 2001). I draw on Morgan's work to explore how Pacific mothers and fathers organise care practices for children following separation. I examine how ethnicity and gender interpenetrate to shape how and with whom care practices for children are organised, managed and performed following separation. I use care practices to refer to the

ordinary and everyday care work and activities associated with caring for children. Family practices provides an appropriate framework for this work because as a concept it represents a fluid understanding of family life that embraces the idea that different family members as well as those from different ethnic communities might enact and therefore experience family life in varied ways. In the section that follows, I examine how communally-based modes of doing family shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' post-separation care practices.

## **Collectivised parenting**

Although mothering and fathering are often framed and understood in Western terms in highly individualised and nuclearised ways that emphasise mothers' and fathers' responsibilities to care for children, mothering and fathering in the lives of the Pacific parents in this study was performed in highly collectivist ways with other family members. To highlight this, below are some extracts from some of my interviews that capture mothers and fathers general talk. The quotes shared relate in particular to the role that other family members played in caring for children. For example, one mother talking about her everyday care routine said:

Aniva: I wake up, I shower, then [my daughter] wakes up, I give her breakfast ... I get her changed, I get her bag ready for [day-care]. ... I drop her off before 9am. I come to work. ... I pick her up at 3:30pm, bring her back to my office for like another hour. And then we go home, ... I feed her. ... She'll have a nap for an hour, wake up ... play and then go to sleep at 8:30pm and then it's repeat, that's [a normal day].

Moeata: What part, if any, does your family play in your normal sort of everyday routine?

Aniva: Oh yeah we're all around sort of doing it all together, it just depends really ... like if I'm in the shower and she wakes up, my Mum will make her bottle, my Mum will make her breakfast, my Mum will change her so that she's ready for when I'm out, then I'll put her in the car. ... And some days I can't pick her up or it's too busy to bring her to the office so my Mum or [one of my siblings] will pick her [up]. ... I play netball two times a week so my Mum will be home with her. ... [My Mum will] feed her, change her, give her dinner, put her to sleep. ... Yeah, my family play a massive role. ... And now that I'm saying all this I need to go home and give them all a big huge hug [laughs] ...because I always just assume that all that will be done when I get [home]. (Tongan/

Māori, one child age 14 months, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Pele talking about the everyday support that she receives from her family said:

I know wholeheartedly that I wouldn't be able to raise [my children] without my family, well not that I wouldn't be able to do it because if push came to shove I could do it, but just having the support of my family, and especially my Mum, makes my job so much easier because I don't have a partner to help ... care for my child, but I have them. But actually, even when I had my partner, my Mum and my [extended] family always played a big part in [my children's] lives, even then because my ex always worked. ... Juggling my own job with our children was hard so they've always been a huge support for [me and my children]. ... It feels good just knowing that my [children] are well taken care of, so that I don't have to worry when I'm at work or out, you know 'cause I know that they're OK. ... And it just frees me up to do the small things like go do my groceries alone, it's small but such a big ordeal going grocery shopping with kids [laughs]. (Tongan, three children ages 4, 6 and 7, four nights per week, extended family living)

One father talking about a normal day with his children said:

Toma: By the time the kids wake up, I'm already gone [to work], but my Mum is home with my little sister, so she gets them ready for school and what not. ... Yeah, she does the [school/kindergarten] drop-offs. ... On days the kids are with me, I'll pick them up from school [or my former partner's house]. ... My older son does [an after-school activity] so by the time it's done, it's late so we'll get [takeaways] or something on the way home.

Moeata: Can you tell me about your evenings, like your normal dinner and bedtime routines?

Toma: ... from school we'll go to [the after-school activity] and then on the other night that they're with me, we'll go to the park or something and by the time we get home they're exhausted and I'm exhausted [laughs]. ... I'll pick something up for dinner or we'll have dinner at home. ... The older one showers himself and the younger one will usually jump in with him. ... It's easy to put [my older son] to bed 'cause he's older but the younger one, I'll usually just lay with him until he sleeps or my sister or Mum will

lay with him ... it's just who he wants to sleep with ... he's the spoilt one in our family, if he doesn't want to sleep he'll just hide behind my Mum [laughs]. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 7, two nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

The mothers' and father's talk demonstrate the embeddedness of other family members in everyday care routines for children. Everyday care practices for children were largely undertaken by parents with other family members, as Aniva said, "we're all around sort of doing it all together". Pele shares a similar sentiment by saying, "I don't have a partner to help me .... but I have them", emphasising also the collective approach to parenting that was in play even prior to separating from her former partner. Across the study, mothers and fathers talked of everyday mothering and fathering practices as involving sharing care work and parenting responsibilities with other family members, such as grandmothers and sisters. This collectivised approach to parenting was discussed as growing out of a broader familial project informed by Pacific family norms, values and practices. This is aptly illustrated by what Kate says:

With Island families, it's an all hands-on deck approach, I need my family ... I know in the *Palagi* [white Western] world you have a mother and father and children, but in our culture, you don't have parents and children alone, you have extended families, you're open. ... It's not only parents raising kids, it's a group working together to raise them. ... And it really does take a whole village to raise [them]. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 10 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

In this quote, Kate makes a distinction between normative white Western ideas associated with nuclear households and individualised parenting and parental responsibilities, and the more communally-based norms and practices of doing family prevalent within Pacific families and cultures, where children are considered and cared for as the whole family's children and not just parent's children. In the next section, I discuss how mothers and fathers organise and perform everyday care for children.

## **Organising care work for children**

The mothers and fathers in this study shared much of the physical, practical and emotional care work for children with other family members. However, the mental and "24/7 thinking

responsibility” (Miller, 2017, p. 118) was not shared in quite the same way. Miller (2017) and others (Lacroix, 2006) found that fathers often left a lot of the mental care work and thinking responsibilities to their former partners. This was true of all of the fathers in this study, but they also left this kind of care work to others in their family. For example, when I asked one of the fathers about how before and after school care was arranged, his reply was simple: “my Mum or someone is always home with them”. When prompted further to talk about how this practical care was organised, he said:

Wayne: On the days they’re with me, my Mum or [former partner] will drop them to school. ... And we usually just organise it as we go, if my Mum can’t pick them up, she’ll let [my former partner] or me know, but usually she can. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 9 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

When another father was asked about how he stayed on top of his children’s school/kindergarten and extra-curricular activities, he said:

Toma: ... either my [former partner] or my Mum will let me know, just keep me in the loop. ... And I usually know if something exciting is happening at school ‘cause [my children are] little chatterboxes. ... It always just works out. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 7, two nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Conversely, when I asked mothers similar sorts of questions, they provided detailed accounts of the concerted effort that they made to stay on top of their children’s activities, movements and needs. For instance, Danielle said:

When I can’t pick [my daughter] up or drop [her] off to school, I’ll wake up early and make [her] lunch, you know get [her] ready for school and normally on a Sunday I’ll go and buy what [she] needs for lunch, ‘cause [she] can be quite fussy and I know what she likes. ... And if I can’t pick [her] up [from school], I’ll text my Mum or cousin or whoever just to make sure that they’ve picked [her] up, you know and I’ll call just to have a quick chat with [them]. ... But normally I drop [her] off to school, so it’s mostly picking [her] up. (Cook Island Māori, one child age 4, five nights per week, extended family living)

Or as another mother said:

Leah: My kids' schedules are sometimes crazier than mine. I have to have it all up on a wall, even on the days that they're with their father because there is so much back and forth between [houses]. ... I usually pick them up on the days that they're with their Dad, so I just always mark everything up on the calendar. ... It gets confusing you know, and I never want there to be a day when he thinks I'm picking them up, or my Mum thinks that he's picking them up ... and then they're stranded at school with all of us thinking they're with the other one. ... And I don't want them missing out on things at school when they're with [their father] so I just mark everything in as new things come up and then if they're with their father, I'll just flick him a message or remind his Mum to remind him 'that the children have swimming tomorrow at school, don't forget their togs' or something like that. (Fijian/Māori/Samoan, two children ages 4 and 7, four nights per week, single-parent household)

These mothers talk, like most of the other mothers in this study, emphasise the conscious effort they made, and care work they did, to organise and manage children's lives across multiple households. They text to remind their former partners or former partner's mother of children's upcoming activities so as to ensure that their children do not miss out on important activities or are not left waiting vainly for someone to come and pick them up after school. Care practices such as these, which include mothering across multiple households and when children are in the care of their former partners, is how "it always just works out" for fathers. Echoing mothers' talk, all of the fathers in this study relied on their former partners' and other family members' (including children's) invisible labour of relaying, and remembering to relay, important information to them. Mothers in many ways acted, and were expected by their former partner and his family to act, as filtering systems sifting through information and deciding which channel to relay the information through. For instance, by telling their former partner directly or passing the information on to his family members to relay to him. A point that was reiterated in fathers' talk, for example, as Dion said:

[My former partner] gets all the notices [from school] and if it's important she normally just forwards it on to me. ... When it comes to school fees and uniforms and all that we'd just half it. ... [My former partner] lets me know how much I owe, it's easy though 'cause I can pay all of it online, it's quick. (Samoan, two children ages 10 and 12, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)



This quote shows how fathers expected mothers to filter school notices, only passing on information deemed important and that required an action (such as, the paying of school fees or uniforms). And as Leah's quote shared earlier demonstrates, mothers reaffirmed these sentiments by sharing stories about how they did act as filtering systems. Fathers largely took it for granted that their former partners, family members or children would keep them "in the loop" because this is something that their former partners and family members did for them prior to parental separation.

However, rather than framing this kind of care work as occurring casually, as something that "just works out" or happens, some of the mothers talked about their frustration at having to keep fathers and/or his family members informed. For example, Toevalu said:

When things [between us] were a little bit tricky we had a disagreement about an event that was happening at school ... so I kind of stepped back. ... But he's always asking me, 'What time does school finish?' Like really? What time does school finish?! ... And, 'What days are the holidays?' ... And then, 'Can you give my Mum the school holiday days?' And you know I have too much in my life to organise and remember, and I shouldn't have to remember things like that for you or your family. ... A couple of months ago there was a [school] production and I guess I didn't follow up with him and I did feel guilty not for me, but for [my daughter] because her dad missed out. ... I asked her, 'Did you tell your Dad about the production?' and she said, 'Yeah' and I said, 'Did you tell Grandma?' and she said, 'Yeah'. ... I think because it didn't come from me, they thought it wasn't for ages. ... The week after the production [my former partner's] mother said that she was really disappointed that no one in their family was at the production, that the little cousins wanted to come and that next time to let her know. ... I thought bloody hell, he can get the information from the school himself and I'm sure he does, he just never bothers to read anything. (Samoan/*Palagi*, three children ages 5, 8 and 11, five nights per week, extended family living)

Toevalu's talk demonstrates how mothers were expected to know all the details of their children's lives and expected to be available and willing to relay all and any information about children to fathers and their families to ensure the smooth running of post-separation familial life. Mothers were not only expected to filter through information and keep fathers informed, but also their former partners' family. More than this, these mothers were responsabilised by their former partners and their families to organise the lives of children across households, and

to ensure that everyone in the post-separation family was “in the loop” about what was going on in children’s lives. In situations when former partners and their families were not kept informed, and consequently missed out on important events or activities, mothers were blamed. Toevalu, for example, was responsabilised for her daughter’s paternal side of the family missing out on the school production. It was seen to be her responsibility to ensure that this disruption in lines of communication did not reoccur in the future. Thinking about the ethic of care discussed in the previous chapter, and how mothers felt responsible to ensure that children spent time with fathers and extended family on both sides, this responsibility extended to the kinds of care work that they did for children on behalf of fathers and their families.

Although Toevalu talked about not necessarily wanting to do this kind of work, she discursively framed it as being part of the labour of caring for children and an extension of her mothering role. As she later said:

I suppose as mothers you’re always trying to protect [your children] from being hurt. So that’s why I suppose women continue that role because if I don’t tell him, he’ll miss out, he won’t come, my child will get upset that Dad and everyone in the family didn’t turn up and you don’t want that to happen. (Samoan/*Palagi*, three children, ages 5, 8 and 11, five nights per week, extended family living)

Mothers in other studies shared similar sentiments of doing this kind of everyday, and often highly, invisible care work for children and former partners, that included mothering across spatial and temporal divisions (Lacroix, 2006, Miller, 2017), thereby servicing the father-child relationship (Elizabeth et al., 2010; Smart and Neale, 1999). In situations where mothers withdraw this kind of labour, many of the fathers in Smart and Neale’s (1999) study interpreted it as a sign of hostility from their former partners. What set the mothers in this study apart from those in others was that this invisible care work, and “24/7 thinking responsibility” (Miller, 2017, p. 118) extended to include thinking for and about extended family. In situations where mothers attempted to opt out of this care work, as Toevalu tried to do, it was not necessarily framed as a sign of hostility, but more as a failure on behalf of mothers to meet their mothering obligations to care for their children, by keeping fathers and his family informed on what was going on in children’s lives. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapter, the mothers in this study were not only expected to service father-child relations, but also the relationship between fathers’ extended family and children. Although care practices for children were enacted in highly collectivised ways with other family members, how they were organised and managed

relied on mothers' engaging in intensive mothering (Hays, 1996; Miller, 2005; O'Reilly, 2008) practices, a point that I discuss in more depth in the following section. I now discuss how mothers and fathers balanced care work with paid work.

## **Managing the parenting-work nexus**

Living with and having a supportive family to share parenting responsibilities enabled the mothers and fathers in this study to manage, in gendered ways, parental responsibilities and paid work commitments. I discuss first how fathers managed the parenting-work nexus, and then mothers.

For fathers, the availability of other family members, typically their own mothers, as well as their former partners, to undertake care work during their care time meant that they were free to act in many ways as unencumbered workers as they had prior to separation.<sup>40</sup> In the context of separation, other family members did a lot of the care work that their former partners did when they were together. None of the fathers talked about adjusting or readjusting their work lives to fit around their everyday parenting responsibilities. Given the small sample of fathers in this study, it is important to be cautious about this finding. However, given that three out of the five fathers had vigorously pursued 50:50 shared care time arrangements, one might have anticipated that fathers may have altered their working lives to cope with the additional care demands involved. But, as other studies have found, equal shared care time does not necessarily translate to an equitable division of parental responsibilities between mothers and fathers (Lacroix, 2006; Smart and Neale, 1999).

When the fathers in this study talked about having to adjust their work lives around their parenting responsibilities, it was typically talked about as one-off incidents. For example, when Dion was asked about what happens in situations when children are sick, but he is, or has to be, at work, he said:

Dion: To be honest, I can't think of a time. ... I had to take the day off work to look after my daughter. One time, she was sick or something, I can't remember. I think [my former

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<sup>40</sup> As previously discussed, none of the fathers in this study had ever assumed a primary caregiving role for children.

partner] had an important meeting or something, it's so vague ... but I do remember a time, I just can't remember why I had to take the day off work, or maybe I went in later ...

Moeata: Can you tell me about now, have you had to take any days off when your kids are sick or even to help out at school?

Dion: Nah, they're hardly sick, but sometimes they do pretend to be sick to stay home [laughs] ... but they'll just stay home with [my] Mum. ... And sometimes if they have too late a night, my Mum will purposely keep them home, telling me they're sick or worrying that if they don't have enough sleep they might get sick, even though I'm sure they'll survive one day of little sleep. ... I wish she was that understanding when I was growing up [laughs]. (Samoan, two children ages 10 and 12, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

The presence of a supportive family network available and willing to care for children meant that, even in the context of separation when care time was shared, fathers did not have to assume a more hands-on caregiving role during their care time. Communally-based notions of parental obligations to children thus worked in ways that exempted fathers from engaging in everyday care work. However, prioritising work commitments over parental responsibilities did not diminish their moral identities as fathers because they enacted responsible fatherhood by fulfilling breadwinning roles in the family *and* by pursuing care time with children (see Chapter 5). Thus, fathers enjoy, what Tronto (1993) discusses as, privileged irresponsibility. Because these fathers relied on others to care for their children during their care time, it enabled them to engage in paid work unencumbered by caring responsibilities, without necessarily acknowledging that they were dependent on others. Further, turning our attention back to the distinction outlined in Chapter 3 between *caring for* and *caring about* children (Smart, 1991; Tronto, 1989)<sup>41</sup>, the fathers in this study demonstrated that they cared about their children, however, communally-based practices of care meant that they did not have to do much work to care for their children.

In other studies, fathers talked about how following separation they had to actively and consciously revise how they approached and performed their parental role from being a hands-

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<sup>41</sup> Caring for children refers to the everyday care work involved in meeting children's needs, while caring about children involves feelings of interest and concern (Smart, 1991).

off and ‘distant’ father, who cared about children, to becoming an involved father, who cared for and about children (Miller, 2017, Smart and Neale, 1999). However, none of the fathers in this study shared similar sentiments about revising their parenting approaches. Rather, the presence, availability and willingness of other family members (and former partners) to care for their children during their care time, as their former partners had done prior to separation, enabled fathers to continue to care about and not for children following separation. The fact that they were symbolically present in their children’s lives, by securing time with them and devoting time to playing with them after school/work and in the weekends, demonstrated involved fathering. Thus, they did not feel the need to: adjust their work lives, revise their parenting approach or take on more care work for children.

Although mothers also relied on other family members to care for their children so that they could manage the parenting-work nexus, it was not experienced in quite the same way. In contrast to fathers, mothers talked about working with other family members to find a good balance between mothering and engaging in paid work. Across the study, mothers’ stories involved and revolved around trying to balance their work commitments with their parenting responsibilities. As Salote said:

My mother will drop me at work at 7.30am and then drop my son to school, then she’ll take my daughter to the library or something and if I can get away from the office for lunch, we’ll all go together and have ... lunch in the park. It’s a lot of driving for my poor Mum but it’s nice ... when I have to work long hours. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Similarly, Leah said:

I always try to drop my kids at school if I can’t pick them up, or the other way around. ... It’s hard being a working Mum just trying to be there at work and then be there at home. But that’s why I’m really blessed to have my Mum because she gives them that love when I’m not there. But I try not [to] miss out on too much time with them. ... I feel like I’m always juggling different balls in the air, sometimes I have to prioritise work but then I have to refocus ‘cause it’s my family that always has to come first. (Fijian/Māori/Samoan, two children ages 4 and 7, four nights per week, single-parent household)

Although, like fathers, mothers shared everyday care work for children with other family members, what differentiated their experiences from fathers was that they talked about regularly adjusting and readjusting their work lives to fit around their home lives. The mothers talked about the varied ways that, with the support of other family members, they tried to balance their mothering with paid work, and the importance of not “miss[ing] out on too much time” with children. In contrast to fathers’ talk, mothers did not feel exempted from care work when engaged in paid work or when other family members could do this work. Rather, most mothers felt primarily responsible for their children’s care, even though they did not undertake of all the care work for children. For example, as one mother said:

Pele: Oh, you know, being a Mum ... even though I have lots of help, at the end of the day it’s me that has to be on top of everything that’s going on [with my children]. ... And having three [children] is no joke, so it’s making sure that they are where they need to be and that they have everything that they need for the day or that week or whatever. ... You know, sports gear, homework, playdates. ... As much as I love school activities, every week one of them has something happening so I’m always you know, planning and preparing, planning and preparing. ...

Moeata: Does your family or your Mum help with ... the ‘planning and preparing’? ... or [your former partner]?

Pele: Yeah, yeah, kind of. ... [My family] ... help with dropping them off, or picking them up or just being at home with them when I’m not there, but I can’t very well expect them to be on top of all the million and one small things. ... And wouldn’t that just be the dream if my former partner helped out ... [or] stayed on top of their activities, because then we could have two sets of eyes, hands, ... minds ... following up on what [our children are] doing [or] what they need. ... I probably could ask my Mum to you know take them to birthdays or Saturday sports or whatever, but I’m their Mum. ... As much as it can be stressful, I want to do that for them, you know. (Tongan, three children ages 4, 6 and 7, four nights per week, extended family living)

The mothers in this study derived their moral identities as good mothers from being involved and undertaking everyday care work for children. Thus, despite drawing on Pacific-informed notions of caring for children, the ideals inscribed within white Western intensive mothering discourses (Hays, 1996; Miller, 2005; Raith et al., 2015) in many ways shaped how they acted

and constructed their moral identities as mothers. The mothers could share but not relinquish all of the care work to other family members. Although mothers allowed other family members, particularly their own mothers, to do a lot of care work, they felt responsible for that work and thus ultimately accountable. As such, their mothering/caring practices have contrasting normative origins that arise from collectivist Pacific norms and the norms of white Western intensive mothering, both of which are in tension with each other. To elaborate, collectivist family norms involve sharing care work with other family members, while intensive mothering in Western discourses centre on mothers undertaking this care work. The mothers, however, reconcile this tension, and in particular their inability to live by the impossible standard of intensive motherhood, by juggling and undertaking care tasks that are imbued with particular symbolic value. In this way, mothers and fathers differed in the extent and quantity of care work that they surrendered to other family members, where fathers did not talk about the efforts that they made to ensure they were involved in the everyday care of children, yet this was entrenched in mothers' talk.

### **Collectivised mothering and fathering**

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, the everyday care of children in the lives of the mothers and fathers in this study were embedded in collectivist approaches to parenting, with mothers and fathers sharing care work, albeit in gendered ways, with other family members. However, as the quotes shared throughout this chapter have demonstrated, it was not simply 'other family members', but largely other mothers and women in the family. Mothers and fathers relied for the most part on the women in their families to care for their children, specifically their (and their former partner's) mothers, sisters, aunts and, in one case, a former partner's sister-in-law. The collectivised approach to parenting relied to a large extent on collectivised mothering projects. For instance, Salote said:

Oh yeah, my kids have lots of parents, my Mum, my ex's Mum, their aunts, my sisters. ... They're so used to being with them and you know being Samoan, your parents don't treat the kids like grandkids in a *Palagi* sense. ... They're not babysitting or watching the kids for you in a formal and proper way. ... It's not like that at all with [Samoan] families. ... That's what I love about the [language nest] is that the teachers there act like the kids are their own kids, they're like aunts ... [they are] strict as, but then they also

have a tender and loving side with the kids. ... It feels like when I'm leaving them, I'm not leaving them at a day-care but at my auntie's house or something, you know 'cause they hold the kids and scold the kids like they are their own and that's what I want. ... Because I have so much support from my wider or our wider *aiga* [family] and because my Mum lives with us ... it kind of makes my role as a mother also less important because my kids have the security of many dependable adults, not just one or two people. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Salote starts out by talking about parenting in a very gender neutral way, saying that her children have lots of people in their lives who act as parents to them. But parenting is actually being used synonymously with mothering, as Salote then goes on to list the many women in her children's lives that act as parents (i.e. mothers) to them. The collectivised approach to parenting, or mothering in particular, is understood as encompassing something more than providing practical, physical and emotional care of children, and involves treating the children as their own children as indicated by scolding children if necessary.

Further, Salote situates the sharing of mothering work as a normative practice in Pacific families and as an embodiment of "being Samoan", where parenting is not treated and understood in nuclearised ways that emphasise individualised parental responsibility for children. By saying that her mother is "not babysitting", Salote emphasises the integral role that her mother plays in her children's everyday lives, including disciplining children. Caring for children in a babysitting context implies that: the parents are not present, it is a service for parents of a relatively short duration and that it might involve an exchange to compensate for the service of care. For the participants in this study, care for children was not treated and understood as care work being done for parents, but as a shared family responsibility associated with being Pacific women. As earlier quotes have demonstrated, sharing care and responsibilities for children operated as a way of collectively doing family. There was less of an emphasis on individual parental (or mothering) roles and responsibilities that Salote connects with doing family in normative white Western families, and more on collectivist approaches to caring for children in Pacific families. These same sentiments were expressed by other mothers, for example, as one said, "my parents act as another set of parents for my kids, the name grandparent isn't just a title, they act as older parents [to my children]." Or as Sina said:



Sometimes I feel like the child too, the way my Mum acts with [my daughter]. ... She probably disciplines my daughter more than I do or she'll say to my daughter, 'Enough TV, it's time for bed now'. ... and I look at [my daughter] and I feel for her, but what can I do? ... My Mum is a true-blue Samoan<sup>42</sup> ... if I say anything, she might turn on me [laughs]. No, it is a good thing, it's good ... my Mum just wants to raise her right. (Samoan, one child age 5, six nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

The mothers in these excerpts highlight communally-based approaches to caring for children, where no distinction is made between the status and authority of parents and grandparents. Grandparents are considered simply as other and "older parents" to children. However, that is not to say that all grandparents, and other family members, as a result of being biologically related are afforded this status and authority. Rather, the family members that the mothers talked about as being other parents were family members who were actively engaged in everyday parenting practices of care and authority. These were women that the mothers felt were engaged in a hands-on way, and who were emotionally attuned to their children. As Sina emphasises, her mother is just as invested in her child's overall well-being as she is, stressing that her mother, like her, "just wants to raise her [daughter/granddaughter] right". The sentiments expressed through the quotes demonstrate just how involved other women are in the raising of children, where even when mothers might not necessarily agree, they have to respect and trust that these actions and intentions are in line with what they believe is in the best interest of their children. The sharing of parental care and authority were thus shaped by culturally-informed beliefs about family and the nature of parenthood being collective family projects. In this way, other women in the family in many ways acted as co-parents to mothers, but more specifically, because these women engaged in caring practices associated with good mothering, they acted as co-mothers.

The fathers in this study were not as reflexive as mothers about their parenting practices or about divisions of labour and responsibility for children. Fathers, thus, did not talk articulate as clearly as mothers did about having communally-based, "it takes a village", approaches to raising children. Nor did they explicitly acknowledge the integral role that the women in their family, and former partners, played in the facilitation of caring roles and responsibilities, even

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<sup>42</sup> Sina uses this phrase to convey that her mother is strict and traditional in her Samoan ways. Because she is the grandmother/mother, she speaks with a voice of authority that even trumps Sina's parental authority (in a cultural, not legal, sense). If Sina questioned or challenged her decision, it might have been perceived as breaking cultural protocols of showing respect to your parents in all social interactions.

though it was evident in what they said. The fact that they easily and without reservation enjoyed privileged irresponsibility (Tronto, 1993) by relying on the women in their family, and their former partners, to perform care work typically associated with mothering, shows that they drew on these culturally-informed gendered discourses of collectivised parenting, but it was done in non-reflexive and taken for granted ways that normalised these practices as being part of everyday family life. For example, as Wayne said:

I start work early [in the morning], ... but someone is always home to get them up and ready for school and then my [former partner] picks them up and takes them to school and if she can't then I'll try and start later or [my] Mum or Dad drops them off. ... My Mum usually makes their lunches, my Mum likes to do that sort of stuff for them. ... She wakes up early and makes breakfast and then she'll make their lunch too. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 9 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

This quote demonstrates how parenting for fathers occurred in pockets of time around paid work (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017). But it also shows how care work is undertaken largely as a collective family practice. The practical everyday care work associated with making children's breakfast and lunches was framed by Wayne as a grandmothering practice or work that his mother "liked to do", and a practice that is undertaken by his mother because he leaves for work early in the morning. By framing it this way, Wayne is able to maintain his moral identity as a good father who is not opting out of care work, but who is instead supporting the grandmother-grandchild relationship, while also adhering to the norms associated with breadwinning fathers. Moreover, it reiterates a point previously made about how everyday care work for children is taken for granted by fathers as work that mothers and other women in the family will do and "enjoy" doing. Through fathers defaulting to mothers and other women in the family, fathers show they subscribe in a culturally-informed way to gendered ideas associated with parenting that in many ways allocate care work to mothers and other women in the family. In this way, the fathers called on other women in their family to act as stand-in or surrogate mothers to children during their care time.

Fathering was also treated and undertaken as a collective family project. But how this was understood and enacted was distinctly different from collectivised mothering projects. Collectivised mothering was normally emphasised through stories of sharing physical, practical, emotional and mental care work for children. Fathering, however, was talked about

as being important for its symbolic value. Most of the mothers in this study talked about the symbolic significance of having other men in their families who could act as father figures, emphasising the importance of having, as one mother said, “strong and stable male role-models” in children’s lives. Or as Leah said:

My Dad is wonderful with [my daughter], [she] really looks up to him and I’m so grateful that they have him in their lives because he really is a living symbol of being a family man, you know he reads to them and really chats with them on their level. ... And it’s nice for them to see a man in those terms. ... I’m not sure how much of that quality time they actually spend with their father. ... When we were together, he didn’t do any of that with them, so it makes my Dad so much more important to me because he gives them that fatherly love so that they don’t miss out. (Fijian/Māori/Samoan, two children ages 4 and 7, four nights per week, single-parent household)

Another mother even sought out quality time with male relatives and her son saying:

Salote: I’ll sometimes ask, just when I see that my son is a bit down you know ... sometimes he comes home and says that he didn’t spend that much time with his Dad ... so I’ll get my brother to take him to do something that he likes. I don’t really like to go extreme sporting, well not that they do extreme sporting, but just like kicking a ball around or just simple things. ... When we’re at the beach or something my brother will take fishing rods and they never catch anything, but I like seeing the close relationship that they have. ... It’s good for my son just to have a male in his life that he can count on. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Likewise, Toevalu said:

I had emailed ... [my former partner’s] younger brother ... and said to him ‘Look I want the girls to keep in contact with you guys and I’d like for you to spend time with them so they’ve got the male figure in their life, would you be happy to do that?’ and he was like, ‘Yeah, yeah of course’. ... I felt that it was important because during that time their father [was living overseas] so they didn’t get to see him much. ... Even though we were living with my Dad at the time, I wanted them to have that connection with their other side of the family too. (Samoan/*Palagi*, three children ages 5, 8 and 11, five nights per week, extended family living)

As discussed in the previous chapter, good post-separation mothering involved facilitating and fostering the father-child and extended family-child relationship. However, adding to this, it also meant facilitating and fostering the relationship between children and other men in the family. This involved creating scenarios where children had access to other men in the family who could act as father figures during their care time or when they felt that their former partners were not spending enough quality time with children. In the context of separation, good mothering was thus enacted by ensuring that children had multiple points of contact with other men in the family that mothers felt could demonstrate good and responsible fatherhood. As Pele said:

I'm not sure how good [my former partner] is as a father, but he is just one person so I am thankful that my kids have lots of other men in their lives, and it really is comforting for me that they have that because I feel bad that we're not together, not for me but for them. (Tongan, three children ages 4, 6 and 7, four nights per week, extended family living)

In this particular quote, Pele reiterates what many of the other mothers said, and emphasised the significance of having other men in their children's lives to offset any experience of loss, or of "missing out", while also easing some of the guilt that she experienced as a result of the breakdown of the parental relationship.

The different roles and responsibilities performed by mothers and fathers and by the women and men in the extended family, and the values attached to different practices of care, emphasised gendered dimensions of mothering and fathering. In particular, Western discursive constructions of motherhood and fatherhood as well as Pacific understandings of family to a large extent shaped the caring practices that mothers, fathers and other family members engaged in, and demonstrated how, in the context of collectivised parenting, care practices for children were enacted in highly gendered ways.

## **Conclusion**

The everyday shared nature of caring for children in the lives of the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study challenges normative white Western understandings of individualised and nuclearised parenting, but reaffirms gendered practices of care that parallel those of white

Western norms. The experiences of collectivised parenting demonstrated that even though parenting was treated as a shared family project, parenting was organised in highly gendered ways that resonate with gendered divisions of labour and responsibility documented in other studies (Lacroix, 2006; Miller, 2017; Smart and Neale, 1999). However, what set the mothers and fathers in this study apart from those in others was that mothering and fathering, although highly gendered, was navigated in Pacific-informed ways that speak to the central and integral role of other family members, particularly women, in caring for children.

However, the way that care practices were organised and enacted by other women in the family changed depending on whether they performed these roles alongside mothers or fathers. To elaborate, other women in the family acted as co-mothers to mothers. These co-mothers were other women who were involved in children's daily routines and activities and were seen as being just as invested as mothers in the overall well-being of children. Sharing care work enabled mothers to balance paid work with caring responsibilities, but also gave them a feeling of being supported in their mothering/parenting roles. Conversely, for fathers, the women in their family supported them in their parental role by acting as stand-in or surrogate mothers to children during their care time, even when they were available to do this care work themselves. These women performed the care work that their former partners had done when they were together, and enabled fathers to continue to prioritise work commitments over parenting responsibilities. The way that the women in the family stepped in for fathers and undertook much of the everyday care work associated with raising children, while it shows supportive family relations, produces and reproduces gendered parenting practices that are underscored by gendered divisions of labour in the family. This was further demonstrated by the fact that everyday parenting responsibilities for children were not evenly shared with other men in the family. None of the mothers or fathers talked about sharing to any great extent everyday care work with other men in their family. Although the mothers in this study talked about the significance of the men in their family acting as father figures to their children, these men were not framed as co-parents. Rather, collectivised fathering was less associated with the everyday care of children, or sharing caring responsibilities for children, and more to do with providing children with visible symbols of responsible fatherhood.

The pervasiveness of gendered cultural ideals associated with mothering and fathering meant that collectivised parenting was often translated and enacted as collectivised mothering projects. Thinking about the different moral criteria associated with what it means to be a good

mother or father (Hays, 1996; Philip, 2013), it can be argued that these same moral criteria are imposed on the women and men in the extended family. There are greater expectations on the women than men in the family to engage in everyday care practice. Gendered expectations attached to parenting meant that in many ways the men in the family as well as fathers were to a large extent exempted from engaging in everyday caring practices. Parenting in the context of separation intensified the nature and degree to which other women in the family were involved in the everyday care of children, and increased the symbolic significance of other men in the family acting as father figures to children. Put differently, collectivised approaches to parenting in essence freed, to differing degrees, mothers and fathers from the intensive demands of caring for children without the support of their child/ren's other parent. But, it configured caring practices and responsibilities in such a way that centralised the role of mothers and women in the extended family, thereby reaffirming gendered understandings and practices of care.

As demonstrated, there were also gendered differences in how Pacific mothers and fathers enacted agency and identity in relation to care practices for children. Although both mothers and fathers shared everyday care work with other female family, the extent, quantity and kind of care work they surrendered to other family members differed. Mothers shared everyday care of children, but did not relinquish all the care work to other family members, particularly mental care work. Mothers felt, as well as were made by fathers and his family to feel, responsible for organising children's lives across households. Collectivised care practices did not extend to managing children's lives across households. Mothers actively and reflexively engaged in care practices to organise and manage children's lives during their care time as well as during fathers' care time by, for instance, following up with family members to make sure that children were picked up from school, or ensuring that fathers and their families were kept informed about children's upcoming activities. Care practices such as these were translated as what good mothers do for their children. Mothers thus felt ultimately responsible and accountable for this kind of care work.

Conversely, collectivist family norms enabled fathers to be less reflexive than mothers of their care practices. In particular, communally-based modes of caring for children exempted fathers from engaging in everyday care work for children. As such, fathers left much of the care work during their care time to the women in their family (typically their mothers), as well as their former partners. Fathers relied on these women to be available to care for children as well as

manage the care of their children across spatial and temporal divisions. For example, by relying on their mothers to make children's school lunches, or expecting their former partners to let them know about children's school fees and important activities. In contrast to mothers' talk, fathers did not talk about any concerted efforts they made to make themselves available to do care work, or to balance their paid work commitments with their parenting responsibilities, or to organise the care of children during their former partner's care time. Fathers were unreflexive about their, as well as others', care practices. For fathers, care for children was often framed as casually occurring and treated as a collective family/mothering practice. Yet, as demonstrated through their talk, their former partners and other women in their family did a significant amount of care work for children, thereby enabling them to not have to consciously and actively do, or make time to do, this work themselves. However, this did not diminish their identities as good fathers because they secured time with children (for themselves and their families) and devoted time to playing and spending time with them.

Thus, the way that Pacific mothers and fathers prioritise, organise and perform care work for children affirms and reaffirms Pacific/gendered practices of care. To elaborate, Pacific/gendered norms associated with caring for children in Pacific cultures produced different gendered responsibilities and accountabilities that required mothers to organise and perform care practices in purposeful and reflexive ways, while enabling fathers to enjoy privileged irresponsibility (Tronto, 1993) by being less reflexive about their care practices as well as the care practices of others.

In the previous chapter, I introduced the notions of 'collective individualism' and 'collective relationalism' in relation to how the Pacific fathers and mothers in this study negotiated care time. To remind, I used collective individualism to denote how fathers exercised agency in relation to others in their family, but that operated in individualistic and self-interested ways, and collective relationalism to refer to how mothers made decisions in collectivist and self-sacrificing ways that prioritised the needs of others (i.e. their children, former partners and extended family on both sides) over their own. In this chapter, I extend my conceptualisation of these notions. Collective individualism was characterised by how fathers navigated the care of children in collectivist ways that enabled them to act in self-centred and self-interested ways. To expand on this, fathers were able, and enabled, to rely on other family members, typically their mothers, as well as their former partners to undertake much of the care work for children during their care time. This permitted them to prioritise paid work unencumbered by parenting

or caring responsibilities for children, without losing care time with children. Conversely, mothers' care practices were characterised by collective relationalism and involved caring for children in collectivist, other-centred and child-centred ways. Despite having collectivist care practices, mothers undertook care work that extended beyond their care time and across household boundaries. This included doing care work for their former partner and his extended family, and servicing the father-child relationship as well as relationships between children and extended family on both sides. In the following chapter, I continue my analysis of agency and identity, as well as my conceptualisation of collective individualism and collective relationalism, by examining how Pacific mothers and fathers enact familial connections following separation.



# Chapter 7: Displaying familial connections

Parental separation transforms and redefines familial boundaries and, consequently, the way that mothers and fathers enact and display familial life. As previously discussed, increasingly, the end of an intimate relationship between parents does not lead to the end of a familial connection. Rather, couples with children are inextricably tied to one another through an ongoing parenting and familial project<sup>43</sup> (Smart and Neale, 1999), albeit a co-parenting project that is marked by temporal and spatial divisions (Elizabeth, 2015). The changed relationship between mothers and fathers, as well as periodic spatial separation from their child/ren, means that they often have to enact and display familial life in markedly different ways than they had when they were together.

In this chapter, I use Finch's (2007) notion of 'family displays' to explore how Pacific mothers and fathers enact and display familial life in the context of separation. Building on the previous chapter, I examine family displays as a specific kind of family practice. I investigate how separated Pacific mothers and fathers enact agency and identity through family displays. In particular, I consider how changes in the relationship between mothers and fathers subsequently alters how they display familial connections and familial life, as well as the meanings attached to and derived from different family displays. Considering that the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study, as demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6, draw on collectivist and communally-based Pacific understandings of family, I investigate how this translates in terms of how, when and with whom they display familial relationships following separation. In pursuing this inquiry, I examine how reflexive Pacific mothers and fathers are of how they display post-separation familial connections and familial life. The analysis contained within this chapter continues my investigation of Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity. Family displays offers an appropriate framework for this work because it facilitates a

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<sup>43</sup> However, as I also noted in Chapter 3, despite this being a normative expectation, it is not the reality for many separated parents. For example, Australian data found that between 2012-2013, 15.9 percent of children (between the ages of 0-17) had contact with their non-resident parent only once every 3-12 months, and a further 28.2 percent had contact with their non-resident parent less than once a year or never (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). And as Baxter, Edwards and Maguire (2012) demonstrate, fathers are overwhelmingly represented as non-resident parents and mothers as resident parents.

discussion of how reflexive Pacific mothers and fathers are of how they enact their agency and identity in relation to how they display familial connections and familial life. In particular, it also provides an avenue of inquiry that enables me to examine the kinds of ideas that shape how Pacific mothers and fathers exercise agency and construct their identities as mothers and fathers, and family members.

I have divided this chapter into five sections. In the first, I outline Finch's (2007) notion of 'family display'. The following and more substantive sections draw on my interview data to explore how Pacific mothers and fathers enact family displays following separation. I start out by exploring how family displays are used to convey an enduring familial life beyond separation. I then analyse the kinds of collective family displays that the Pacific mothers and fathers engage in with their children, former partners and extended family. Following this, I examine gendered differences in how Pacific mothers and fathers organise, manage and stage family displays. In the final section, I investigate what the Pacific mothers and fathers perceive as 'appropriate' displays of post-separation familial life, and how this shapes how they enact their individual and collective moral and cultural identities as Pacific parents and families. My analysis demonstrates that Pacific mothers and fathers engage in family displays in highly reflexive, albeit gendered, ways to convey to others, particularly children, that despite being separated they are 'good' Pacific mothers and fathers, and more importantly, are creating good post-separation Pacific families.

## **Family Displays**

Building on Morgan's (1996) notion of 'family practices', Finch (2007) describes 'family displays' as a specific kind of practice that family members engage in to convey to themselves and others, and in the process confirm, that their relationships are family relationships. Finch defines family display as "the process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant others that certain of their actions do constitute 'doing family things' and thereby confirm that these relationships are 'family' relationships" (p. 67). Finch developed the concept of family displays to demonstrate, in a context where increasingly

family connections are not easily defined and identified<sup>44</sup>, how family life does not only need to be “done”, but also “seen to be done” (p. 80). There is an explicit focus on social interactions between individuals (and families) and relevant audiences as key to understanding how family displays work in practice. The focus on audiences or observers means that it is not simply about “doing family things” (p. 67), but others recognising, understanding and interpreting these actions and activities as displays of family life. Put differently, for family practices to be effectively recognised and interpreted as the doing of family things it must be conveyed and understood by relevant others as being a practice related to family life. Family displays are thus seen to be an integral part of doing family, because they operate as a means of conveying and confirming that various actions and activities are part of how one enacts family life.

Drawing on an earlier piece of co-authored work (Finch and Mason, 1993), Finch (2007) argues that a key motivation for displaying family life to others is to lay claim to the positive nature and character of one’s relationships. It is about demonstrating to others that “this is my family and it works” (p. 70). Evaluative statements such as these are claims being made by social agents. Family displays are thus, as others have noted, a site where individuals, or social agents, contribute, often intentionally and reflexively, to how their family circumstances are interpreted by others (Dermott and Seymour, 2011; Heaphy, 2011). This claim is also being made at the level of identity: engaging in ‘appropriate’ family displays enables individuals and families to convey to others that they are good and moral family actors and families. In turn, through various family displays, individuals also show their families, as well as wider audiences, what the idea of ‘family’ means to them.

Family displays are not only about conveying and confirming family relationships to others, they also work as a way of fostering and sustaining family connectedness. As Williams (2004, p. 41) argues, individuals for the most part are “energetic moral actors, embedded in webs of valued personal relationships, working to sustain the commitments that matter to them”. In a context where family relationships and living arrangements are often subject to change over time – through, for example, divorce, separation and repartnering/remarriage – ambiguity about the status and proper character of one’s family relationships are relatively commonplace. For

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<sup>44</sup> For example, in a context of parental separation and divorce where parents and children live for periods of time spatially divided (Smart and Neale, 1999), or within step-families (Allan, Crow and Hawker, 2011) or those living within ‘families of choice’ involving same-sex couples and close friendships (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001).

this reason, Finch (2007) argues that family relationships need to be continuously worked at and displayed in order to be identified, defined and maintained.

To illustrate this point, Finch (2007) draws on Smart and Neale's (1999) work on post-divorce families to argue that in situations where parents and children might live for periods of time across different households, an element of family display is required to demonstrate, affirm and reaffirm family connections. Although Smart and Neale draw on Morgan's (1996) concept of family practices to highlight the varied ways that mothers and fathers perform post-divorce familial life, Finch (2007) argues that in these situations, where family relationships are redefined by divorce/separation, there is a greater need to display family. The significance of displaying family in these situations is to emphasise that despite familial life being reconfigured by separation, with children living for periods of time away from one of their parents, they are still part of a family and they do have a family, even if it might not resemble those of others.

Thinking about how Finch (2007) and others (Almack, 2011) use family displays as a mode through which one conveys family relationships, for the remainder of this chapter I examine how, when and to whom separated Pacific mothers and fathers enact family displays.

### **Displays of an enduring familial life: Mum, Dad and children together**

The Pacific mothers and fathers in this study emphasised the importance of trying to make sure that their children's lives remained, as one mother said, "as normal as possible" following parental separation. This was achieved by engaging in important family displays that offered children visible symbols of continued familial connections between both parents and children. For example, as Leah said:

[One] Sunday, [my former partner] came over to drop off the kids and he said, 'Let's go to the park with the girls?' So we did, then we went out to lunch ... came home and we were basically talking about formalising a separation agreement outside of the court. ... We were getting along really well and ... the girls loved it. ... And then he went off to work and I thought, 'Great! Things are back on track'. ... We can actually function as a family. ... We're separated, but the girls are in both of our care, and we're still their parents, you know we're still a family. (Fijian/Māori/Samoan, two children ages 4 and 7, four nights per week, single-parent household)

Or as one of the fathers said:

Wayne: We always meet up, go together and take [our daughter] to her [sports game] like we used to [do when we were together]. ... It's nice that at the end of the day we can still get along and do things, you know for the kids. ... When we were together, we'd usually just meet at home and then go together to [our daughter's] games, but now it takes a little bit more organising, just depending on what time the game is, where it's at, you know all of that. ... We've always followed [our daughter's] sports and so we didn't want it to be, you know all of a sudden now that we're not together, we sit on [opposite] sides of the court. We just didn't want that to be the focus of her games ... she's the focus. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 9 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

In both of the above quotes, the mother and father emphasise the significance of continuing to do activities together that they did before they had separated. In the context of their separation, doing child-related activities together operated as important displays for their children that demonstrated that they could still “function as a family” and do family things that they “used to” do together.

Across the study, mothers' and fathers' talk revealed that they felt a strong sense of guilt about the breakdown of their relationship and the family, because of its impact in particular on their children. For instance, one mother said, “I feel bad that we're not together, not for me but for [my children]”. Or as Katrina said:

He comes and he drops [our daughter] off ... he just comes in and he hangs out in the lounge for a little while. ... And I see ... how happy she is, when she sees Mum and Dad together. She will do things where ... she'll [say], ‘Daddy, you grab my arms and Mummy, you grab my feet and swing me’. ... How I see it, it's her just wanting to see her Mum and Dad do something together with her at the same time. ... She doesn't get that. ... I sort of look at that, I feel an immense sense of guilt. ... I think that was one of the biggest things when we finally separated, it wasn't about me not being in love with [him] anymore it was more [that] I failed my child. She now comes from a broken family, which was the one thing that I always feared about having a baby. I wanted to make sure her Dad and I stayed together, but we didn't. ... So to try and make up for that, if ever I can, I try to make things as normal as possible ... just finding time or making time to do

things together. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 3, 50:50 shared care, single-parent household)

This mother, as well as most of the other mothers in the study, attempted to manage their children's sense of loss, whilst also managing their own sense of guilt, by participating in activities with their children and their children's father.

However, rather than family activities happening organically through the humdrum of everyday family life, fathers and especially mothers talked about how these activities had to be more purposively organised. As Heaphy (2011) discusses, the demand or need to display, and investments in various displays, vary for different kinds of families. In the context of this study, parental separation created a need or demand on behalf of children that increased mothers' and fathers' investments in how they displayed family with their children and former partners. As such, following separation, many taken for granted family practices, such as sharing meals, going to the movies or sports games together, were arranged and performed in highly conscious, deliberate and reflexive ways.

The mothers and fathers were equally aware of how various actions might be interpreted and understood by children. In particular, they recognised the symbolic significance attached to doing and not doing things together, especially activities that were typically done together as a family prior to separation. In the context of separation, participating in activities that they had previously done together carried new symbolic meanings. For example, Wayne, quoted earlier, anticipated that if he and his former partner did not go to their daughter's sports game together, or if they sat apart, it would provide their children with a visible picture and reminder of the changed familial dynamics and environment, and more specifically, of their parents' separation. However, by doing things together as a family, the mothers and fathers demonstrate to children that despite being separated they can collaboratively and co-operatively work together in a "civilized way" (van Kriekan, 2005, p. 47) to continue to care and be there for them. In the following section, I examine how the Pacific mothers and fathers enact familial displays in relation to extended family.

## **Displays of extended family togetherness**

The importance of displaying familial connections in ways that somewhat resembled pre-separation family life extended also to family displays involving other family members, particularly for mothers but much less so for fathers. For instance, one mother, who had been separated from her former partner for just over a year, said:

Salote: I spend a lot of time at [my former partner's mother's house] and I am comfortable there and my kids are too. ... We'll have shared dinners ... or when I pick them up, I always go in and at least have a coffee. ... [My former partner's mother's] house is like another home for them. ... So I always stay and spend time there like I used to so that my kids can see that things are still the same. ... I wouldn't want them to experience too many changes all at the same time or feel like now that we're separated, they have two disjointed families. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

In this quote, Salote illustrates the significance of continuing pre-separation family routines of spending time with her former partner's family, thereby reassuring her children that although she and their father are no longer in a couple relationship, they are all still one cohesive family unit, and that the children do not belong to "two disjointed families". Put differently, Salote purposefully spends time with her children's paternal grandmother to display to her children that her separation from their father does not mean they will no longer experience 'family togetherness' (Ribbens-McCarthy, 2012), or, worse, have to choose between the two sides of the family.

Salote's talk also demonstrates how ideological constructions of family, and what constitutes doing family and family relationships, exist in our minds, shaping how we act out, and make assessments of, our everyday family lives. The way that ideas about family live in our minds and thoughts Smart (2007) describes as the 'imaginary'. Gillis' (1996) work draws our attention to an important distinction between the 'families we live by' and the 'families we live with' that brings Smart's (2007) concept of the imaginary into focus. The family that we live by is the ideologically constructed family of our imagination, while the family we live with is our family that exists in reality, both of which run parallel to one another, but with the former often being used as an interpretive framework for understanding and shaping the latter. Drawing on Gillis' (1996) distinction, Salote uses family displays to bridge the gap between

the family she lives by: a cohesive, extended family comprised of both her and her former partner's family that continues to exist for the sake of the children, and the family she lives with, and that is a family characterised by spatial and temporal disconnections. More so, Salote's purposeful displays of family for her children also draws on a competing and negative family imaginary of a divided and conflicted post-separation family. However, by displaying post-separation extended family togetherness, Salote attempts to overcome this negative imaginary, and conveys to her children, their father and his family that she is putting her children's needs first. As Salote goes on to say:

Before we separated, sometimes I'd just honk my horn [when I arrived at my former partner's mother's house] to let them know I was there, but now I always make sure I go inside and at least have one coffee and just chit chat. ... Because kids, they see, absorb and know everything and I just don't want them reading into anything, so if anything, I make a bigger effort now with my [former partner's family] than I used to. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

Thus, displays of enduring familial connections and family togetherness did not occur in unconscious and habitual ways, but were instead more deliberately and reflexively orchestrated. Put differently, because the mothers and fathers have stepped outside of the institutional parameters of couple-based family relationality, they now had to work out how to display family relationships and family life, both for themselves and others. Like most other mothers in my study, Salote talks about purposively displaying continued familial connections and a unified familial life with herself, her children, her former partner and his family. Salote recognises that the changed relationship alters the meanings attached to different actions and activities. She feared that if she, for instance, honked her horn when she arrived and did not go in to her children's paternal grandmother's house, it might convey to her children that not only had she separated from their father, but that their broader family environment had also changed where their mother no longer had a familial relationship with their paternal side of their family.

As Finch (2007) asserts, family displays are important when there is ambiguity in family relationships. Prior to separation, there were no questions around familial boundaries, connections and relationships. It was a given that the two families were connected through the parents' couple relationship and children. However, the breakdown of the parental relationship changed the meanings associated with, for example, simple pick-up and drop-off practices that made mothers acutely aware of how familial connections were being displayed and



consequently interpreted by children. By enacting familial life in ways that emulate many pre-separation practices, mothers engage in important family displays that foster their children's sense of security in their family relationships and belonging, where children do not have to feel like they have to choose sides or feel like their families are divided.

Although mothers talked at length about the ways they sought to display family in ways that included their children, former partners and extended family on both sides, this was not discussed by any of the fathers in this study. As the previous two chapters have demonstrated, when it came to the maintenance of familial relationships between children and extended family, fathers did not talk about the efforts, significance or felt obligation to maintain, foster and display any ongoing familial connection between their children and the extended family on their former partner's side. For instance, as Dion said, when asked about whether he spent time together with his former partner's family:

Not really, no. ... I do see them from time to time, but I don't spend you know proper time with them ... just sort of in passing, if I'm picking the kids up or dropping them off but that doesn't really count. ... It would feel really weird to just hang around ... with them. (Samoan, two children ages 10 and 12, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

All of the other fathers in this study shared similar sentiments. To use another example:

Tavita: I hardly see [my former partner's family] anymore, you know at one of the kid's birthdays. ... But ... I don't really talk to them, I just [say], 'Hi and bye'. ... At the last birthday ... I just played with the kids at the bouncy castle, we did the cake and presents and yeah, I didn't hang out with them or anything, but they were all there. (Samoan, two children ages 6 and 8, two nights per week, lives with new partner)

Or as Wayne, who talked about the importance of going to his daughter's sporting events with his former partner, said about spending time with his former partner's family:

We don't all spend time together anymore, like they're really good people ... but we're not family anymore, so it's awkward. ... I went one day to pick [my children] up. ... [My former partner] texted me and said to pick [them] up from her cousin's place. ... When I turned up, it was her cousin's wedding. ... I felt so awkward ... because it felt like I'd just turned up. ... I just said [to my children], 'Hurry up, get your things'. ... And

everyone [was] saying, ‘Don’t go, stay and eat’, kind of thing. ... I just lied and said that I had to go ‘cause I had to pick someone up from the airport. ... There was no way that I was staying, everyone would be thinking, ‘Why is this guy here?’ (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 9 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

Wayne’s quote illustrates the complex and interactive nature of how family displays work in practice, where the context, parent involved and audience changes and shapes the meanings derived from various actions and activities, and consequently how familial life is enacted and displayed. In this instance, the presence of his former partner’s family and the intimate environment or spatial location (i.e. a wedding at his former partner’s cousin’s home) shaped how he felt he could engage and interact, and the meanings attached to spending time, with his former partner’s family. He felt more vulnerable to outside scrutiny and the chance of others perceiving that he had “just turned up” or invited himself to an intimate family event, or wondering, as he said, “Why is this guy here?” He articulates his presence at such an intimate family gathering as being random, where staying might signify a continued familial relationship or connection between him and his former partner’s family, but as he said, “we’re not family anymore”. If he were still intimately involved with his former partner, he would have likely been at the wedding and at the very least known that there was a wedding. It was thus less about being, or staying, at the wedding, and more about not being invited or even knowing about the wedding. This might have underscored his feelings that he was not really family anymore, and that he did not belong in his former partner’s family. Confronted with a marker of his status as an outsider in front of an audience (i.e. his former partner and former partner’s family), he felt “awkward” for being there and possibly shamed if he had stayed. As Finch (2007, p. 70) argues, “a fundamental driving force in presenting families to an external audience is to convey the message ““this is my family and it works””. Wayne might have anticipated that his presence at the wedding would imply that he still belongs and feels a part of his former partner’s family. By leaving, he sends the message that he no longer presumes to have a family-like relationship with them.

Thinking back to the Gillis’ (1997) distinction, Wayne operates with an imaginary of family based on coupledness and children, which has reverted to ‘his’ and ‘her’ family now that they have separated (as marked by not knowing or having been invited to his former partner’s cousin’s wedding). The family he lives with is a separated family that does not do extended family things together, but that does jointly do family things with his former partner and

children. This family he lives by shapes his meaning-making and thus how he displays familial connections in the family he lives with.

Moreover, Wayne, and all of the other fathers in this study, displayed family in much more self-centred and individualistic ways than mothers, operating on the basis of their own comfort or discomfort (i.e. being comfortable engaging in family displays with just children and former partners, but uncomfortable engaging in displays with their former partners' family). Conversely, mothers' orientation to family displays were much more collectivised and child-centred, which meant that, irrespective of how they felt about spending time together with their former partners and his family, they engaged in these displays for children, a point I elaborate on in the following section.

### **Gendered doing of family display work**

Writing about family displays, Heaphy (2011) argues that often times the labour involved in displaying family is gendered, with women investing more time and effort into these displays than men. For reasons such as this, Gabb (2011b) argues that not only should we pay attention to family displays on show, but also "what is happening at the edges and behind the scenes" (p. 39). In this section, I examine gendered variations in how the mothers and fathers in this study organised, managed and staged family displays, starting with mothers and then moving on to fathers.

Most of the mothers talked about the explicit effort they made, and behind the scenes work they did, to create and stage family displays with their former partners and his family, even their former partner's other children. To draw again on a quote shared in the previous chapter, Salote said:

Special occasions like Christmas or birthdays are always spent with both sides [of the family]. ... If both sides, or if their Dad's side can't make it for Christmas, I'll change the day to suit them and just try to make sure it suits us all. ... I even do that with their birthdays, I'll change the day to try and suit everyone. ... I want to build that relationship with their other side [of the family]. ... With my family it is easy because they're always around. ... I never want my kids to feel like they're betraying me by spending time with their other side and for wanting to spend time with them and so it is important that my

kids see us all spending time together and that we do spend time together. (Samoan, two children ages 3 and 6, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

For mothers, organising, staging and managing nuclear and extended displays of family operated as another way that they could care for their children following separation. Caring for children, however, required fostering the relationship between parents and families as well as the overall appearance of the 'family'. More so, by doing this care work, mothers felt they were creating important family displays that helped their children transition into and navigate post-separation familial life. For example, as Katrina said:

Yeah, I do feel uneasy, you know when we're all together [with my former partner's family]. ... For [our daughter's] birthday, I invited [my former partner's other children], my siblings, [my former partner's mother] and [his] two sisters, which I had a strained relationship with, one of them in particular. But I still included them, and they came. ... Of course, I wasn't excited to see them or anything, but I know it meant a lot to [my daughter] that we were all there together. ... I sent some pictures [of her birthday] to her [language nest] and they printed them off to put in her portfolio and she was telling everyone, 'That's my sister, my Nana, my aunties', you know naming everyone that was there, and it just melted me ... and just reminds me what this is all for. (Samoan/*Palagi*, one child age 3, 50:50 shared care, single-parent household)

To pick up on a point mentioned in the previous section, mothers expressed similar discomforts as fathers about spending time with their former partner's extended family. However, for mothers, these feelings of unease were overcome by focusing on how these familial displays would be important to, and interpreted by, their children. As both quotes above highlight, spending time together with family members on both sides of the family, and in particular children seeing them all spend time together, especially on important occasions (such as, children's birthdays and Christmas), operated as an important mode and symbol that conveyed to children, modifying Finch's (2007) phrasing, that 'we are all still a family, and it works'.

In contrast to mothers, who talked about orchestrating displays of family between themselves and their former partners, as well as between both sides of the family, fathers did not talk about making similar efforts to display family in collectivist ways. Rather, their displays of family were more limited to displaying and doing family with their children; their former partners and children; or with children and their own families. None of the fathers talked about attempts that

they made to ensure that their children saw them spending time with both sides of the family, or the significance of displaying a collective and unified family to outside audiences. To give an example, in terms of, for example, birthday celebrations, none of the fathers in this study talked about ever having to arrange or throw a party for their children that included their former partner or her family. Rather birthday parties were often organised by mothers, with fathers talking about being present and making financial contributions. As Ioane said:

For [my son's] birthday ... we had it at a [children's playcentre] ... [my former partner] organised it, she just told me how much it would cost. ... This year was the first year we celebrated together, you know we've only been split up, going on 3 years now. ... The first birthday after we broke up, we weren't getting along, so we didn't do anything together, well [my former partner and her family] had a party at their place but [me and my family] didn't go.

Moeata: Were you and your family invited?

Ioane: Yeah, yeah. I just told my son that I couldn't make it that day but that we'd go to Rainbow's End [theme park], and you know, you say, 'Rainbow's End', oh the excitement. (Samoan, one child age 6, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

Similarly, when Tavita, quoted earlier, was asked about how his children's birthday parties were organised, he said:

[My children's Mum] usually does them, well the big number one's. ... Last year the youngest turned 5, so that was a big one. ... I gave her a couple of hundred dollars and my Mum baked up a storm. ... It was a great day, the kids had fun and that's what it's about. ... I actually get along quite well with [my former partner] but it's sometimes uncomfortable when we're all together with all the family [i.e. both sides of the extended family] because you can just feel all the eyes on you ... so I just kind of keep my distance ... and with her family, yeah, I don't know, it just feels uncomfortable, well for me anyway. (Samoan, two children ages 6 and 8, two nights per week, lives with new partner)

As demonstrated by the quotes shared above, the role that fathers played in the facilitation of extended familial displays were less about ensuring that they occurred and more about simply

being present and participating. What was apparent through the fathers' talk was that the part they played in various family displays was to a large extent shaped by the audience. Fathers were actively involved in family displays when it only involved children and their former partners, however, when it came to more public and collective displays, with wider audiences (such as extended family on both sides and friends), fathers did not initiate, organise or do family display work. Yet, doing or not doing so did not diminish their moral identities as post-separation fathers because they enacted and demonstrated displays of responsible fatherhood by being physically present at activities and celebrations related to children, and through fulfilling breadwinning roles or financial obligations to children (by, for example, contributing to the costs of birthday parties). However, by simply being present, fathers continue to rely on mothers doing this largely invisible though highly symbolic care work, which explains why fathers partake in but do not organise collective displays of familial life, or of extended family togetherness.

### **‘Appropriate’ displays of a good post-separation familial life**

As alluded to throughout this chapter, displays of familial life occurred in specific contexts that centred around children (such as, children's birthdays and sporting activities). In these instances, the mothers and fathers talked about attending events and activities together, and mothers talked about the significance of having both sides of the family present at these events. But, when it came to other important family occasions or events, for instance, a grandparent's birthday or wedding in the family, where children were not the focus of the celebration, clear lines of familial disconnect were established and maintained. In particular, none of the mothers or fathers talked about including or inviting their former partners to important celebrations in their own families. Following separation, mothers and fathers renegotiated how and when to 'appropriately' display familial life and familial relationships to the extent that family displays no longer applied to all and any family-related activity, occasion and setting. Rather, in different circumstances, mothers and fathers enacted different kinds of family display that demonstrated and conveyed changed family boundaries and connections, and/or disconnections, between them and their former partners, as well as between their respective families.

As such, family displays were not always used, in Finch's (2007) sense, to show family relationships and connections, but rather to establish or demarcate family disconnections between mothers and fathers and their former partners and their former partners' family. In an effort to do this, mothers and fathers had to continually negotiate and renegotiate how to 'appropriately' display family at different times and in different settings and circumstances. Doing and displaying family in contexts that centre explicitly on children, or conversely not doing and displaying family when activities were not centred on children, conveyed that mothers and fathers and their respective families were connected to and through children, but otherwise disconnected from each other.

Fathers, and particularly mothers, told stories that highlighted the challenges experienced trying to, on the one hand, maintain familial connectedness and, on the other, establish a level of disconnectedness. For instance, one mother said:

Kate: When I drop my girls, sometimes I'll go in for a coffee ... and just chat about whatever. ... You know [my former partner would say] in front of the girls, ... 'Hey, do you want to come in for a coffee? ... And sometimes I go in, but I don't want to do that too much, you know so I'd be like, 'Nah, I've got to go ... get their stuff' ... and he'd [say, in a sad tone], 'Oh okay'. ... And they would see that, and they'd be angry at me. ... I was such the bad guy in their eyes, and I understand why. I look like it totally. ... But I don't want to give them the wrong idea. ... One time I stayed, and we all watched a movie together and then at the end of the night when I went to leave, I just saw the disappointment in their eyes. ... So now I try not hang around too long or just chat by the car. ... Like we'll still go out for breakfast or whatever as a family, but no more ... intense time together all day [and] all night because I know that they want us to be back together. (Samoan/*Palagi*, two children ages 10 and 13, 50:50 shared care, extended family living arrangement)

Or as Leah said:

I don't think I would want the kids to think we were getting back together. So, it's also important to maintain some sort of distance as well. Because I do remember the time when we did go for lunch and movies and we sat around all day and talked ... the kids became very hopeful, 'Is Daddy coming back?', you know. So it's, I guess drawing that balance in terms of: we can be there for the kids, but we're not in a relationship. But of

course, this is working out what ... for a 4 ... and 7 year old, what ... they can be comfortable with. (Fijian/Māori/Samoan, two children ages 4 and 7, four nights per week, single-parent household)

These excerpts highlight the symbolic significance attached to family displays as well as the complexity of having to navigate and anticipate how varied displays might be interpreted and understood by others, especially children. Mothers, in particular, talked about the importance, and delicate balance, of demonstrating to children that even though they are no longer in a couple relationship with their other parent they can still do family things together, without giving children a false sense of hope that their parents will get back together. As the quotes shared above illustrate, familial displays need to send the right message, especially to children: we are still a family, but we are no longer an intimate couple. The deliberate doing or not doing of familial displays thus involved being reflexive by considering and anticipating the varied meanings that might be attached to different displays and practices, and adjusting one's actions based on those reflections.

Family displays, however, were not only connected to how these displays were interpreted and understood by children and others, but also to enactments of identity, both individual and collective. As previously discussed, it was largely mothers who organised and facilitated family displays, particularly those with extended family. It was also mothers who emphasised the symbolic value of continuing to display family in ways that resembled, albeit in a changed way, pre-separation familial life. In Chapters 5 and 6, I demonstrated how good post-separation Pacific mothering involved facilitating and nurturing the father-child relationship as well as the relationship between children and extended family. Considering this, as well as that mothers did most of the relational care work prior to separation, it comes as no surprise that mothers were often the ones responsible for organising and orchestrating family displays, particularly collective family displays with extended family on both sides. For mothers, 'appropriately' displaying family to children, extended family and other audiences operated as a means of conveying and enacting good post-separation mothering. Put differently, mothers exercising agency in relational and child-centred ways, by prioritising the needs of their children and focusing on the symbolic value of collective displays of family, enabled them to continue to act as good mothers to their children.

Collective and inclusive displays of family life did not only confirm mothers' moral identities, but also affirmed and reaffirmed collective family identities. As Aniva said:



I invited [my former partner and his family] to [my daughter's] first birthday, which my family pushed me to do, they were like, 'Do it, you have to invite them', you know saying, 'You have to do it ... and then ... it's up to them [whether or not they come]'. ... And so, I went over [to their place to invite them] and they were happy to come. ... For my Mum, you know it's all about family, you know '*tausi le aiga*' [nurture the family]. ... And I'm glad that they came because everyone kept asking, 'Is [your former partner] coming?' and I was relieved to say, 'Yes' and of course no one really knows the dramas and the stress of inviting them [laughs]. (Tongan/ Māori, one child age 14 months, five nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

For Aniva, inviting and including her former partner and his family, at her mother's insistence, worked as a way that she and her family (who hosted the event at their home) could demonstrate to children, former partners, former partners' families, friends and their own family that they are a good Pacific family that nurtures the relational space, or *va*, between the now separated families. As I discussed in Chapter 5, ideas associated with fostering familial relationships, and the relational space/*va* that exists between parents and their respective families, are central to Pacific understandings and enactments of identity, both individual and collective. Relating back to the quote shared above, the invitation being extended to her former partner and his family operated as a means through which Aniva and her family could nurture the relational space/*va* and inter-familial relationship as well as construct themselves as good Pacific people and more precisely as a good Pacific family.

Moreover, Aniva's family, and particularly her mother, framed the invitation as a moral obligation Aniva faced as a mother; it was something Aniva had to do because it was the right and proper thing to do. This example highlights how activities, actions and gestures are laden with symbolic significance. Aniva's mother links the birthday invitation to the overall well-being of the entire post-separation family by reminding her daughter to "*tausi le aiga*" (nurture the family). If Aniva had not invited her former partner and his family, it might have opened the possibility of her and her family being shamed because it would speak to the state of the inter-parental and inter-familial relationship. Her former partner's and his family's absence might suggest to others that they can no longer work together as a family for their child (and grandchild). Because the mother and her family could put on a proper display of family, the mother talked about being "relieved to say, 'Yes'" when friends and family asked whether or not her former partner would attend the birthday party. In this way, displays of a good familial

life are a site where both individual and collective cultural and familial identities are produced and managed, while also conferring onto individuals and families alike positive identity attributes.

In addition, collectivised displays of family life did not only work to maintain familial connections within the family or reaffirm individual and collective identities, but also demonstrated to outside audiences the existence of enduring post-separation familial connections. As one mother said:

Sina: [Our daughter] had her [end of year] celebration at the [language nest], and you know everyone comes, and because it's a [Samoan language nest], you see generations of families – grandparents, siblings, cousins, just everyone and we're all packed into the [language nest]. It's beautiful to see. ... I didn't want [my daughter] to be the only one with a mother and father who arrived separate and because it's so packed, we'll sit separated. ... Of course, I invited my whole family, but also [my former partner's family], you know his sisters and Mum and [his] other [children]. ... I don't necessarily want to go to things together with them but for her to see that we were all together and that she had a great big huge family there to cheer her on ... it's you know, worth it. (Samoan, one child aged 5, six nights per week, extended family living arrangement)

In this quote, Sina compares her post-separation family to other families attending the end of year celebration, or the family she lives with to the family that other families seemingly live with. This comparison shapes both how she feels she should display family and also how she imagines others, and particularly her daughter, might assess their family if they cannot display family successfully. A collective show or display of family, and a recognition from others, was seen as important because it made her own family fit in, and not stand out, against other Pacific families with “generations of families” present, demonstrating that they also have “a great big huge family to cheer her on”.

The excerpt shared from Sina, emphasises the interactive nature of family displays. Sina anticipates how others might assess the quality of their family relationships, which consequently shapes how she displays family. Using displays as a claim to recognition, means to draw on imaginary notions, or the families we live by, that “are often closely connected to conceptions of morally and socially ‘good’ families” (Heaphy, 2011, p. 31). Thus, doing and displaying familial life in ways that are perceived to conform to normative expectations of

parents being able to collaboratively work together following separation and of extended family togetherness provides a sense of affirmation that, despite being separated, they are still able to do and display family in the 'right' way.

As Almack (2011) found in her research with lesbian mothers, family displays were often used as an overt strategy to gain social recognition, the same is evident in my study. The mothers in my study intentionally organised, staged and engaged in family displays as a way of gaining social/cultural affirmation of being good post-separation Pacific mothers and a good Pacific post-separation family that comes together for children. The processes, therefore, involved in displaying familial relationships were rooted in interactions between individuals (and families) and wider audiences. Although it was important to show familial connections, "the degree of intensity in the need for display" (Finch, 2007, p. 72) was heightened by the circumstance (of being at the daughter's end of year celebration at the language nest). The need for a collective and unified family display became more intense at this moment and in this instance because of the presence of a much larger audience. However, it was not simply any audience, but a largely Pacific audience. This heightened Sina's need to display family life in a cohesive and collectively based way to show other, largely Pacific, parents, families and language nest teachers that her daughter had both parents as well as generations of her own family there to support her. In particular, it was important to show to those relevant others that her child still had a supportive, loving and involved family, even though she was no longer in an intimate couple relationship with her father. Being able to come together as one unified family, not fragmented by separation, demonstrated to others that they still collectively operated as a family.

## **Conclusion**

The way that the Pacific mothers and fathers negotiated and renegotiated how, with and to whom and when they displayed family life highlights the complexity of doing family in the context of separation. The complexity lies in the fact that fathers and especially mothers engage in family displays to show to children, extended family and others that despite separation they can still enact family-like life with their former partners. However, for the mothers and fathers in this study, family displays were not necessarily about confirming, as Finch (2007) argues, a family relationship, but more about demonstrating to children, extended family (on both sides)

and others that they can continue to act as a 'family' in relation to children, without the mothers and fathers necessarily having a felt familial connection with their former partners.

When Finch (2007, p. 66) introduced the idea of family displays, she encouraged others to not only use the concept but to also refine it. I have clearly engaged with the concept. But I have also refined it to show that family displays work in more complex and nuanced ways than simply conveying and confirming family relationships, as Finch originally suggested. Rather, family displays for the separated Pacific mothers and fathers in this study, to modify Finch's (p. 67) definition, operated as a way that they could communicate to children and relevant others that certain of their actions constitute doing family things without trying to convey that their relationship with their former partners are 'family' or couple relationships. For the mothers and fathers, family displays worked as a way that they could navigate and negotiate complex family and family-like relationships. To elaborate, both mothers and fathers related the symbolic significance of doing family things together, particularly with their children, without wanting to convey that their relationship with their former partners and their former partners' family constituted a family relationship. Instead, it was about showing that they could continue to act *like* a family *for* their children.

Displaying family was not only about demonstrating that mothers and fathers could still work together as a family, but also about showing wider familial connections between children and extended family. However, parental separation altered the familial dynamics in such a way that changed how mothers and fathers felt they could interact with their former partner's family, where the breakdown of the intimate couple relationship reconfigured mothers' and fathers' sense of familial connection to each other and their respective families. As a result, the time, place and audience in many ways shaped how, when and with whom mothers and fathers displayed familial life. Familial connections that the mothers and fathers had with their former partner, and particularly their former partner's family, were thus enacted and displayed in highly situational terms that centred on children.

Further, in the context of separation, displays of family occurred in a more deliberate and conscious way that made fathers, and particularly mothers, reflect on how their actions and various activities might be interpreted by children and others. Prior to separation, much of these practices occurred in non-reflexive ways that had more to do with doing, and less to do with displaying, everyday family life. However, on separation, many of these practices became

opportunities for mothers and fathers to show and display enduring familial connections and family togetherness to children and other observers.

Discussing family displays, Heaphy (2011, p. 36) emphasises the analytical significance of paying attention to how reflexive displays are influenced by what he terms “‘naturalised’ habits”, in an effort to capture non-reflexive and more habituated ways of displaying family. Heaphy uses naturalised habits to refer to normative and discursive constructions of family, however, in the context of this research, I use it to denote how Pacific/gendered norms associated with doing family influence and shape reflexive exercises of family displays, and thus agency. As illustrated in this chapter, mothers and fathers, in gendered ways, operated with a reflexive sense of agency. Building on discussions raised in the previous two chapters, mothers exercised agency in relation to family displays with a collective relationalism that was child-centred, and involved reflexively relating to others in the entire post-separation family, including former partners, extended family on both sides, and especially children. In particular, mothers were attuned to the relational consequences of their displays, or lack thereof, and thus purposefully organised, managed and staged nuclearised and collectivised displays of family. These displays operated as a means through which mothers demonstrated care for their children, and were also tied to their moral identities, and were therefore interpreted as what good post-separation mothers do for their children.

Although fathers too were reflexive of their displays and display work for children, their agency was characterised, as demonstrated in previous chapters, by collective individualism. In the context of family displays, this involved exercising agency in a more self-centred and individualistic way than mothers. As evidenced by fathers only organising and actively participating in family displays with children in situations where they felt comfortable (i.e. family displays with just children, or with children and former partners, or with children and their own family). As such, fathers displayed and enacted their fathering identities in a more limited and individualistic way by fulfilling breadwinning roles, being present at activities and being involved more generally in their children lives.

Yet, irrespective of how the mothers and fathers enacted agency and identity in relation to family displays, what emerged from my analysis was that family displays operated, in gendered ways, as an important mode of doing familial life that conveyed to children and others the existence of enduring familial connections. And in doing these displays of familial life, mothers

and fathers, again in gendered ways, were able to construct themselves as good Pacific mothers and fathers and, more importantly a good Pacific *post-separation* family.

In the following and final chapter, I outline the empirical and theoretical contributions that my research makes to the field of family sociology, and in particular to broader debates of theories of individualisation and relationality.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

## Concluding comments

My doctoral research addresses an important gap in the sociological literature and provides a valuable contribution, theoretically and empirically, to a field of family sociology that has been under-studied in Aotearoa New Zealand and across the globe. The analysis contained within my thesis highlights the significance of research that moves beyond normative white Western understandings of family structure, and the organisation of gender relations within that structure, to consider how culturally distinctive modes of doing family intersect with gender to create gendered experiences of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. In particular, it exposes the limits of research premised on normative white Western understandings of family, and experiences of those from white Western cultures, to reflect the various issues, dilemmas, challenges and experiences of those from Pacific cultures. As demonstrated in the substantive chapters of this thesis, namely, Chapters 5, 6 and 7, Pacific notions of family, as well as Pacific/gendered norms associated with doing family and parenthood, shaped, in gendered ways, how Pacific mothers and fathers enacted agency and identity in the context of post-separation familial life. I turn to these results and analysis now.

The analysis contained within this thesis is situated in relation to how theories of individualisation and relationality conceptualise agency and identity. In each of the substantive chapters, I drew on discrete theoretical frameworks, namely of an ethic of care and an ethic of justice (see Chapter 5), family practices (see Chapter 6) and family displays (see Chapter 7), that enabled me to examine how Pacific mothers and fathers negotiated and enacted agency and identity in relation to (re)negotiating care time (see Chapter 5), (re)organising care practices (see Chapter 6) and (re)enacting familial connections (see Chapter 7) following separation. Drawing on different conceptual frameworks in my substantive chapters facilitated an examination of how Pacific mothers and fathers enacted agency and identity in different aspects of post-separation parenthood and familial life, and, significantly, enabled a broader analysis of Pacific mothers' and fathers' agency and identity in relation to theoretical debates within the field of family sociology about individualisation and relationality.

What emerged from my analysis, as others have found (Carter and Duncan, 2018; Duncan, 2011; Mason, 2004), was that Pacific mothers and fathers – as individual social actors/agents – navigated and negotiated agency and identity in more complex ways than those outlined by theorists of individualisation (such as, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, 2002; Giddens, 1992). In particular, the Pacific mothers and fathers in my study performed agency and identity, both reflexively and non-reflexively, in reference to their family/familial relationships, as well as in ways that were guided by institutionalised and culturally-produced Pacific/gendered norms related to doing family and parenthood. For the mothers and fathers in this study, agency and identity were imbued with Pacific collectivist and relational understandings of family. However, gender and ethnicity interacted in such a way as to produce gendered cultural accountabilities. This meant that following separation the mothers and fathers in this study enacted their agency and identities as Pacific mothers and fathers, and family members more generally, in gender differentiated ways.

Despite Pacific families and cultures being collectively and relationally oriented, I found that irrespective of whether Pacific mothers and fathers were negotiating care time, organising care practices or enacting familial connections, there were gendered differences underscoring how these relational and collectivist Pacific cultural norms were interpreted, understood and enacted. Put differently, although both mothers and fathers drew on Pacific collectivist notions of family and communally-based modes of caring for children, there were gendered variations in the extent to how, when and to whom they were relational. However, rather than necessarily dismissing theories of individualisation entirely, I found tenets of individualisation were incorporated, in a Pacific way, in fathers' relational behaviours. To capture the culturally-informed gendered way that relationality was mobilised by the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study, I now turn to the notions of 'collective relationalism' and 'collective individualism' that I introduced and developed throughout the substantive chapters of this thesis, discussing first mothers' collective relationalism, and then fathers' collective individualism.

The agency and identity that the Pacific mothers in this study operated with were characterised by collective relationalism, and involved exercising a collectivist, child-centred and self-sacrificing relationalism. To put it less abstractly, mothers often enacted agency and identity by considering and prioritising the needs of the others, specifically their children, former partners and extended family on both sides, over their own. This involved doing what they perceived to be best for their children and the entire post-separation family, even when it meant



that their own needs, wants and preferences would not be met. To demonstrate, mothers enacted collective relationalism by, for example, giving up time with children or making care arrangements that suited their former partners and his family's needs (see Chapter 5), or doing care work for their former partners and his family, and organising children's lives across households (see Chapter 6), or creating time for children to see them spending time with fathers and both sides of the extended family (see Chapter 7).

Embedded within mothers' agency was a strongly felt sense of responsibility and care for others, particularly their children. Mothers not only felt responsible for the welfare of their children, but also the entire post-separation family (i.e. children, former partners and extended family on both sides). Contributing to these feelings of responsibility was that mothers were often responsabilised by their former partners and extended family on both sides for fostering children's relationships with their fathers and extended family and managing the relationships between those within the entire post-separation family. As such, mothers were often required to enact agency in collectivist, child-centred and self-sacrificing ways.

Collective relationalism thus also entailed mothers operating with a constrained sense of agency that hindered their ability to act in individualistic ways. Mothers were multiply constrained by Pacific collectivist values associated with subverting individual wants and needs for the wider collective good, as well as by Pacific/gendered discursive constructions of good post-separation mothering. These constructions of good post-separation mothering entailed mothers facilitating the relationship between children and their fathers as well as between children and extended family. Mothers were also constrained by fathers and extended family, who often made them accountable for the welfare of children and the collective post-separation family.

Although relating to others in collectivist and relational ways hampered mothers' agency, it secured their moral and cultural identities as good post-separation Pacific mothers and family members. However, mothers' talk demonstrated that constructing themselves as good post-separation mothers meant trying to simultaneously adhere to the norms of motherhood as constituted by their Pacific cultures as well as those of white Western cultures, by navigating white Western norms of intensive motherhood in culturally-informed ways. As such, good post-separation mothering in the lives of the Pacific mothers in this study involved engaging in collectivist, child-centred, emotionally-involved, time consuming and self-sacrificing forms of caring for children. It also entailed facilitating the relationships, as well as nurturing the

relational spaces or *va*, between children, former partners and extended family on both sides. In doing so, mothers were able to affirm and reaffirm their moral and cultural identities as Pacific mothers and family members.

Thus, for the Pacific mothers in this study, contrary to arguments made by individualisation theorists, the project of the self was not individualised, individualistic or in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment. The mothers in this study did not construct or live their lives removed from their relationships with others or the influence of broader social institutions/structures or collective identities, to live their lives as self-reflexive projects in pursuit of individual self-fulfilment. Rather, their project of the self was highly relational and situated within networks of family/familial relationships. The sense of fulfilment was not individualistic, instead it came from knowing, or feeling, that they were meeting their moral, cultural and parental obligations to their children and families.

Conversely, fathers' agency and identity were marked by collective individualism, and entailed relating to others in a collectivist, child-related but ultimately self-interested way. In particular, fathers' talk demonstrated that they exercised agency in relation to their children and extended family, and how doing so enabled them to prioritise their own needs, preferences and circumstances. For example, by pursuing care time that suited their preferences, but situating their claims within the needs of others in their family (see Chapter 5), or by relinquishing care work to other female family members, thereby enabling them to engage in paid work unencumbered by everyday caring responsibilities for children (see Chapter 6), as well as by participating in family displays with children based on their own level of comfort (see Chapter 7).

Fathers' collectivist and relational behaviours were more limited than those of mothers, and only extended to their children and extended family, and did not include relating to their former partners and/or her extended family. In contrast to mothers' experiences, fathers were not expected or required to facilitate and foster the relational space/*va* or relationships between children, mothers and extended family on both sides, nor were they responsabilised or made to feel accountable for the welfare of children or the collective post-separation family. Rather, Pacific collectivist and communally-based modes of caring for children, as well as norms associated with involved fatherhood in both Pacific and white Western contexts, enabled fathers to operate with a more individualised, individualistic and limited relationality than mothers. To elaborate, fathers' talk demonstrated that they enacted agency in ways that

complied with the norms of fatherhood as constituted by their Pacific cultures, of sharing everyday care work for children, as well as white Western cultures, in particular of involved and breadwinning fathers, by securing time with children and meeting their financial responsibilities to children. As such, the norms of involved fatherhood in both Pacific and white Western contexts in many ways exempted fathers from enacting agency and identity on the basis of collective relationalism. Significantly, gendered cultural norms and practices empowered fathers to enact agency in a self-centred way without being perceived to act individualistically because these fathers were involved in their children's lives and embedded within their own extended family. Thus, Pacific family norms as well as norms of involved fatherhood, in both Pacific and white Western contexts, enabled, emboldened and rewarded fathers' enactments of collective individualism, without diminishing their capacity to claim or secure their moral and cultural identities as good post-separation Pacific fathers and family men.

The individualistic and self-interested nature of fathers' agency perhaps suggests the influence of individualisation; however, this interpretation or reading is undermined by the fact that fathers related to others, specifically their children and extended family, even if it was more delimited than mothers. Their individual life projects were cultivated through, and embedded in, their relationships with others in their own family, as well as in reference to institutionalised and culturally-produced norms. Thus, fathers were able to enact agency in a more individualised and individualistic way than mothers because Pacific family norms, as well as gendered cultural norms of involved fatherhood, worked in gendered ways that permitted and facilitated them to do so.

As demonstrated, my research makes valuable theoretical and empirical contributions to the sociological scholarship on post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life as well as to theorisations of agency and identity. The analysis contained within my thesis highlights the value of research that examines agency and identity, as well as experiences of post-separation familial life, at the intersections of gender and ethnicity. In particular, it demonstrates how gender and ethnicity interact to differentially position how individual social agents – Pacific mothers and fathers – enact, and are able to enact, agency and identity following separation. My analysis demonstrates how attentiveness to the way in which gender and ethnicity intersect to shape agency and identity nuances our understandings of relationalism. It also facilitates a broader examination of the complexities associated with negotiating, organising and enacting

agency and identity in the context of parental separation. As such, this research should be viewed as a study that begins to reshape a domain that has to date largely excluded ethnicity from the centre of analysis, calling for more sustained research on Pacific (and other ethnic minority) experiences of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life, as well as of family life more generally.

## **Study Limitations**

Given the small sample of participants that took part in this research, the results and findings discussed in this thesis are necessarily limited and reflective of the experiences of the Pacific mothers and fathers that participated in this study; the analysis contained within this research does not attempt to establish generalisability between the views of the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study with those of Pacific mothers and fathers more generally. Rather, the data and analysis derived from the Pacific mothers' and fathers' talk offers a nuanced account of some of the ways that Pacific mothers and fathers living in Aotearoa New Zealand experience and enact their parental – or mothering and fathering – roles and identities following separation. More specifically, this research enabled me to identify some of the issues, challenges and dilemmas experienced by Pacific mothers and fathers, as well as raise questions around the different ways that Pacific mothers and fathers negotiate, organise and enact agency and identity in the context of separation. Although Pacific mothers and fathers, as well as mothers and fathers from other ethnicities, might have similar experiences as the Pacific mothers and fathers in this study, further research in the area is required to ascertain any similarities and/or differences.

Furthermore, in this research, Pacific people were discussed as one homogenous group, because in many ways they share similar cultural norms and values associated with doing family life. Although all of the participants in my study ethnically identified as belonging to a Pacific ethnicity, there is diversity and heterogeneity within and across Pacific people and cultures that have not been explored. For example, differences that might exist between the experiences of Samoan mothers or fathers compared with Tongan mothers or fathers. Other similar variabilities were not pursued. For example, all 15 participants were born outside of Pacific Island that they ethnically identified with, we therefore do not know what impact being Island or New Zealand (or overseas) born and raised has on how Pacific mothers and fathers

enact agency and identity in the context of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life. Generally speaking, given the individualistic nature of white Western cultures compared to the collectivist orientation of Pacific cultures, such an avenue of inquiry might have revealed some variabilities between those raised in the Islands and those raised in Aotearoa New Zealand (and other Western nations).

As reflected in my research questions, this study was explicitly focused on how gender and ethnicity overlapped and interacted to shape heterosexual Pacific mothers' and fathers' experiences of post-separation familial life. What has therefore been left unexamined are differences that might have emerged through considerations of the intersecting impacts of class and sexuality. Such a focus, however, would be a valuable research endeavour in future studies since Pacific people (compared with other ethnicities) in Aotearoa New Zealand garner the lowest earning potential and capacity (Statistics New Zealand, 2018), and that discussions of post-separation parenting, parenthood and familial life remain predominantly heteronormative in their orientation.

Also worth noting in terms of my research sample, 13 of the 15 participants classified themselves as 'single'<sup>45</sup>. The fact that most were single at the time of the interviews would have likely shaped and influenced their experiences. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, most of the parents discussed the significance of spending time and doing family things together with their former partners and children. However, the emphasis placed by most parents on spending family time together with their former partners and children (such as movie nights or family breakfasts), in similar ways to what they done together prior to separation, might have been experienced differently if these parents had repartnered. A suggestion that is not implausible given that neither of the two parents who had repartnered talked about spending any extended time alone with their former partners and children.

On a similar note, 12 of the 15 parents lived in an extended family household<sup>46</sup> with their children and other family members. The high rate of extended family co-residence among the participants in this study might have influenced the extent to which extended family featured in participants' talk. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 6, other, typically female, family members played an integral role in providing ordinary and everyday care for children.

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<sup>45</sup> Of the remaining two participants, one had remarried and the other co-resided with his new partner and child.

<sup>46</sup> Of the remaining three, two lived in a sole parent household and one lived with his new partner and child.

However, it might have been the case that the reason that these family members were so involved in children's everyday care was because they co-resided with participants and their children. Future research would benefit from having a more explicit focus on extended family by looking at, for example, whether extended family featured as prominently among Pacific mothers and fathers who lived in a nuclear and/or sole parent household, or the extent to which extended family members provided everyday care for children living in another household. A study such as this would reveal how Pacific people navigate and negotiate cultural understandings of family and care across different households or spatial divisions.

Although the study limitations discussed above are limits of this thesis, they provide me with further research opportunities to build on and develop my doctoral research.

# Appendices

# **Appendix 1: Social context of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand**

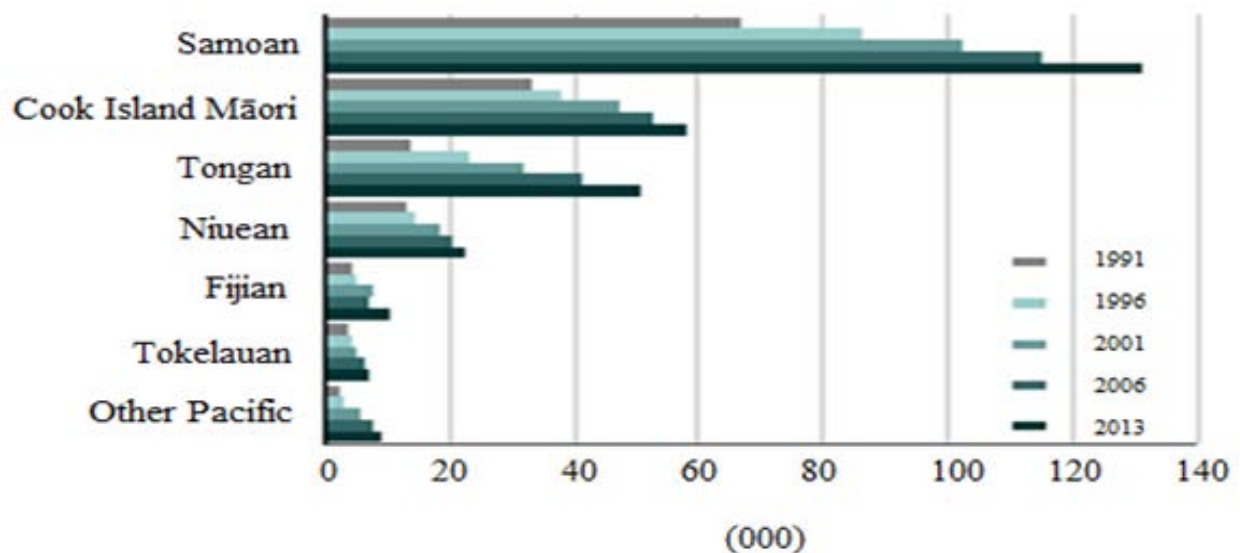


# Social context of Pacific people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Pacific people<sup>47</sup> living in Aotearoa New Zealand are a diverse and eclectic population comprised from the grouping together of different Island cultures and nations. In 2018, Pacific people made up 8.1 percent of the total population, following, in descending order, European (70 percent), Māori (16.5 percent) and Asian (15.1 percent) ethnic groups (Statistics New Zealand, 2019a). Pacific populations are comprised of eight main ethnic groups, in descending order, Samoan (49 percent), Cook Islands Māori (21 percent), Tongan (20 percent), Niuean (8 percent), Fijian (5 percent), Tokelauan (2 percent), Tuvaluan (1 percent) and Kiribati (less than 1 percent) (Statistics New Zealand, 2014e).

As demonstrated in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, the populations of individual Pacific ethnic groups and of Pacific people more generally have steadily increased overtime.

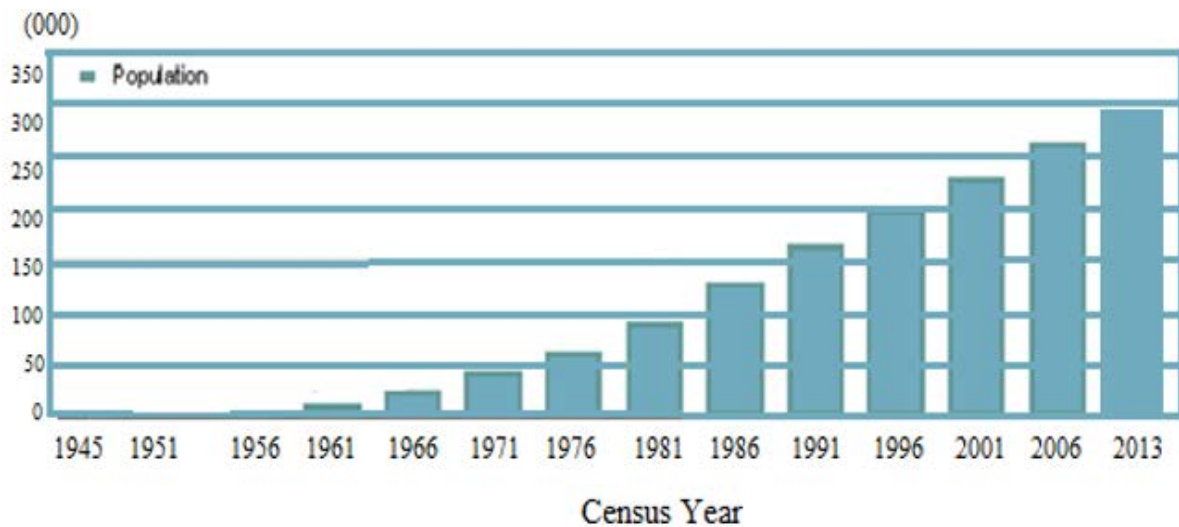
Figure 1.1: Growth of Pacific Island populations, 1991-2013



Source: Statistics New Zealand (2014c).

<sup>47</sup> The labels and terms used to describe people from the Pacific have undergone a series of re-labelling processes. From the 1960s, terms and phrases such as ‘Polynesian’, ‘Islanders’ and ‘Pacific Islanders’ were commonly used. In the 1990s, these extended to include ‘Pacific Nations’, ‘Pacifica’ and ‘Pasefika’. More recently, the phrase ‘Pacific people’ has been widely adopted to convey that previous all-inclusive terms seemingly implied Pacific unity and homogeneity between different Island nations. The more recent adaptation of ‘Pacific people’ acknowledges shared geography and cultural norms and practices, but signifies the diversity and heterogeneity in people, culture and language (Koloto and Kataonga, 2007).

Figure 1.2: Growth of Pacific populations, 1945-2013



Sources: Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (2010) and Statistics New Zealand (2014c).

In 1945, according to census data, Pacific people made up less than one percent (less than 2,200 people) of the total population (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). However, population increases accelerated in the 1960s as a result of heavy flows of migration of Pacific people from the Islands (Bedford and Didham, 2001; Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1998) in pursuit of employment and a higher standard of living (Macpherson, 1991) propelled by a high demand for labour and relaxed immigration laws (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010). However, an economic downturn in 1970s resulted in a pullback of previously unrestricted immigration from the Islands. Despite the implementation of a more restrictive immigration policy, many Pacific people retained their right to remain in Aotearoa New Zealand, and immigration from the Islands has since continued, albeit at lower rates than in the past.

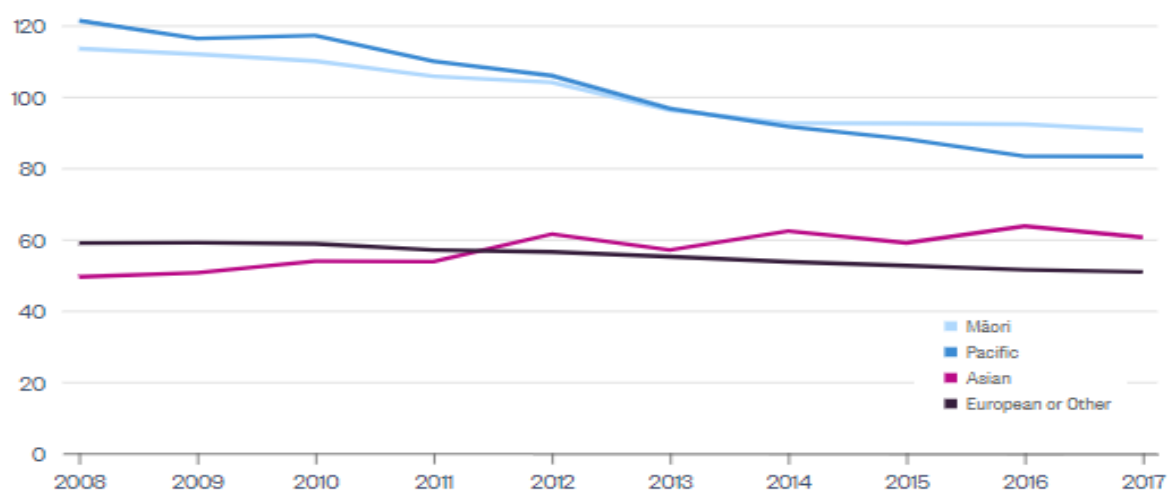
In 2013, 62.3 percent (181,791 people) of Pacific people reported being born in Aotearoa New Zealand (a steady increase from the 2001 and 2006 level of 58.2 percent and 60 percent, respectively), with the remaining 37.7 percent (114,150 people) migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand at some point after birth (Statistics New Zealand, 2014c).

### **Children, childbearing and fertility**

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific people have the highest proportion of children aged between 0-14 years, constituting 35.7 percent of the total Pacific population, and 13.4 percent of the total population. In comparison, children between the ages of 0-14 in European, Asian

and Māori demographics make up 19.6, 20.6 and 33.8 percent, respectively, of their total ethnic populations (Statistics New Zealand, 2014f). The higher percentage of Pacific children is in large part a result of Pacific people being more likely than other groups (with the exception of Māori) to be in age groups when childbearing takes place and because Pacific women on average have more children than women from other ethnicities. For example, in 2013, the average fertility rate for Pacific women was 2.7 births per woman, compared with 2.5 for Māori, 1.9 for European and 1.7 for Asian, and 2 for the total population (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Similarly, to draw on different statistics, Pacific (and Māori) women have higher birth rates than European and Asian women, as demonstrated in Figure 1.3. What we also observe by looking at Figure 1.3 is that birth rates for Pacific, Māori and European/Other are decreasing over time, while birth rates of Asian women are increasing. Notwithstanding these decreases, Pacific (and Māori) women still have higher birth rates than women from other ethnicities.

Figure 1.3: Birth rate by ethnicity, 2008-2017



Note: Birth rate is expressed as births per 1000 females of reproductive age (15–44 years)

Source: Ministry of Health (2019, p. 13).

Not only do Pacific women have higher birth and fertility rates than the total population and other ethnicities, they also tend to have children at a younger age (with the exception to Māori). For example, between 2012-2014, the median age of childbearing for Pacific women was 27 years (and 26 years for Māori), compared with 30 years for the total population and just under 31 years for Asian and European women (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). Moreover, as outlined by data presented in Table 1.1, the rates of births per 1,000 Pacific (and Māori) women are

highest between the ages of 20-24 years, compared with 30-34 years for the total population as well as Asian and European women.

Table 1.1: Average number of births per 1,000 women by age and ethnicity, 2012-2014

Age Bracket	Total	Māori	Pacific	Asian	European
10–14	22	15	4	1	9
15–19	3,315	1,757	671	104	1,742
20–24	10,636	4,069	1,954	862	6,143
25–29	15,361	3,212	1,839	2,951	9,226
30–34	17,144	2,214	1,424	3,491	11,338
35–39	10,010	1,258	820	1,396	7,241
40–44	2,434	366	246	308	1,712
45+	124	19	14	14	86
All ages	59,046	12,909	6,972	9,126	37,496

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2015).

## Families with dependent children, divorce and marriage

Overall trends have seen the steady decline in two-parent families and increase in sole parent families amongst Pacific families<sup>48</sup> as well as in families more generally, as illustrated in Table 1.2 and 1.3. It is noteworthy of highlighting that although sole parent households are often framed in gender neutral terms, 84.2 percent of sole parent households are headed by sole mothers (Statistics New Zealand, 2014f).

A report from the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (2010) suggests that the rate of growth of sole parent families in Aotearoa New Zealand will level off at 30 percent. However, an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2011, p. 13) report projects that the proportion of sole parent families will instead increase to 40 percent between 2025-2030. Unfortunately, these projections were not disaggregated by ethnicity.

<sup>48</sup> A 'Pacific family' is defined as a family where at least one parent identifies with a Pacific ethnicity/ies (Families Commission, 2012).

Table 1.2: Percentage of families with dependent children by family type, 1981-2013

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006	2013
<b>Percent</b>							
Two-parent family	85.9	81.5	75.5	73.2	70.8	71.9	69.9
Sole parent family	14.1	18.5	24.5	26.8	29.2	28.1	30.1
Mother-headed	12.0	16.0	20.5	22.7	24.4	23.5	25.3
Father-headed	2.1	2.5	4.0	4.1	4.8	4.6	4.8

Source: Families Commission (2012) and Statistics New Zealand (2014f).

Table 1.3: Percentage of Pacific families with dependent children, 1981-2006

	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
<b>Percent</b>						
Two-parent family	86.8	83.4	74.6	72.5	72.1	71.8
Sole parent family	13.2	16.6	25.4	27.5	27.9	28.2

Source: Families Commission (2009) and Statistics New Zealand (2014f).

It is worth mentioning that the data presented in Tables 1.2 and 1.3 are misleading in some ways because it refers to situations where one or two parents co-reside with dependent children, but it does not tell us whether other adults or families live in these households (with parents and dependent children). When this information is included and considered, ethnic differences emerge in household composition that are not as straightforward in terms of how the data is presented in Tables 1.2 and 1.3. To elaborate, Pool, Dharmalingam and Sceats (2007) found that there are five times as many European households with only parents and dependent children than there are extended family living situations (with parents, dependent children and other family members), while in Pacific families, there are only 1.2 times as many parent and children households as there are extended family households, a point I will discuss in more depth in the following section of this chapter.

In terms of the age-profile of sole parents with dependent children, 2013 census data found that 2 percent were under the age of 20 years, 9 percent between 20-24 years, 27 percent between 25-34, 35 percent between 35-44 years, 24 percent between 45-54 years and 5 percent over the age of 55 years. (Statistics New Zealand, 2014f). What we observe through these statistics is

that a majority (or 62 percent) of sole parents are between the ages of 25-44 years. Unfortunately, there are no available statistics on the age-profile of Pacific sole parents with dependent children. However, considering that Pacific women have a median age of childbearing three years lower than the total population and four years lower than other ethnic groups (with the exception to Māori), as well as that the highest rates of births per 1,000 Pacific (and Māori) women occurs between the ages of 20-24 years (compared with 30-34 for the total population and Asian and European women), it would be fair to assume that the age-profile for a majority of Pacific sole parents would also be lower than it is for the total population.

Although there are a number of ways that people enter into sole parenthood, such as through the death of a partner or the birth of a child to a single woman, the most common route is cited as being through parental separation or divorce (Families Commission, 2010; Pene, Howden-Chapman, Peita, Viggers and Gray, 2009; Pool et al., 2007). In 2018, there were a total of 3,105 divorces involving children, and a total of 5,598 children involved in these divorces, as illustrated in Table 1.4. Unfortunately, these statistics are not recorded or disaggregated by ethnicity. I am therefore unable to present data on rates of parental divorce and the number of children involved for Pacific families.

Table 1.4: Divorces involving children aged under 17 years

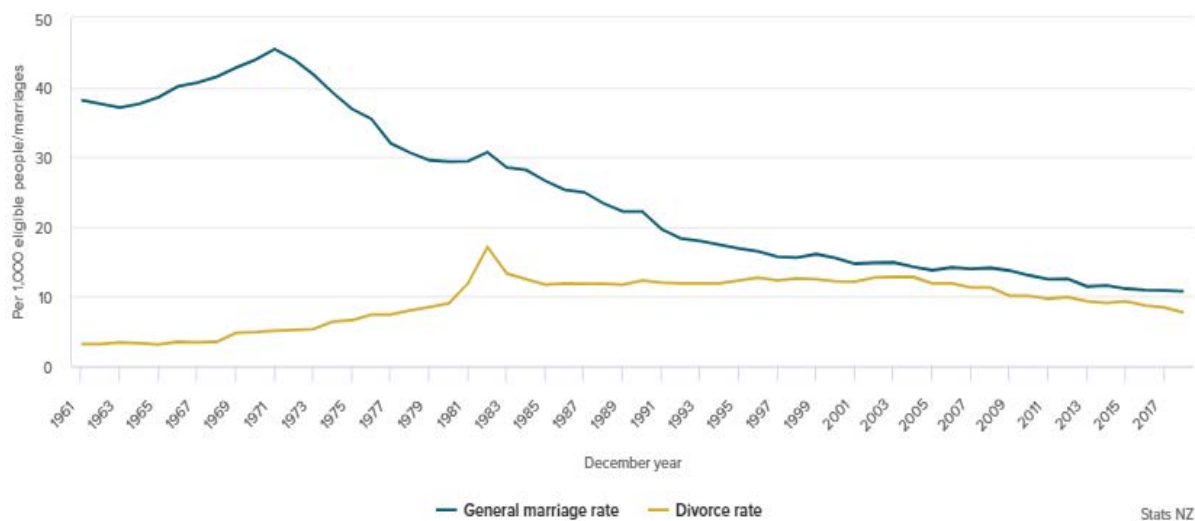
Year	Total number of divorces involving children	Total number of children involved
2010	3,792	6,732
2011	3,774	6,909
2012	3,825	6,861
2013	3,513	6,294
2014	3,360	6,024
2015	3,633	6,510
2016	3,450	6,135
2017	3,321	5,916
2018	3,105	5,598

Source: Statistics New Zealand (2019c).

What we do know is that on average, over the past nine years, there have been 3, 530 divorces involving children, and 6, 331 children involved in these divorces per year. What is also evident by looking at Table 1.4 is that the number of divorces involving children and the proportion of

children experiencing parental divorce is diminishing over time. However, this should not be misread to definitively indicate that each year fewer parents are separating because what we see by looking at Figure 1.4 is that each year there are fewer recorded marriages. While marriages are officially registered, there are no official statistics or records (for the total population or by ethnicity) about relationship formation and dissolution among those in a cohabiting relationship or those who have informally separated from their spouse, or the number of children involved in such separations.

Figure 1.4: General marriage and divorce rates, 1961-2018



Source: Statistic New Zealand (2019c).

However, what we do know, to turn our attention back to Tables 1.2 and 1.3 (on page 153), is that the proportion of two-parent families have steadily decreased while the proportion of sole parent families have steadily increased over time.<sup>49</sup> The increase in sole parent families means that there are also growing numbers of children primarily living away from one of their biological parents. In 2013, 24.1 percent of all children between the age of 0-14 years were living in a sole parent household (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 88). However, when the percentages of children living in sole parent families are disaggregated by ethnicity, Pacific people are shown to be significantly over-represented compared to the wider population and other ethnicities, with the exception of Māori. To illustrate, in 2013, 42 percent of Māori and 30.1

<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that these statistics provide only a snapshot of a particular moment in time. For example, the Christchurch Health and Development Study, which followed the lives of 1,265 children born in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1977, found that 16 percent of those born into a two-parent family had experienced family breakdown by the time they were five years, but over 70 percent of these children re-entered a two-parent family within five years. Similarly, almost 70 percent of children born to a single unpartnered parent entered a two-parent family by the time they reached five years (Fergusson, 2004).

percent of Pacific children lived in a sole parent household, compared to 17 percent of European children and 11.9 percent of Asian children (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 88). Similarly, as represented in Table 1.5, census data collected between 1991 and 2006 shows that over a third of all Pacific infants under the age of one live in a sole parent family. Again, with the exception of Māori, Pacific are over-represented in this category when compared to other ethnic groups and the wider population.

Table 1.5: Percentage of infants under 1 in a sole parent household by ethnicity, 1986-2006

Ethnic group	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
European	13	17	20	23	22
Māori	28	39	41	44	42
Pacific peoples	21	30	32	34	36
Asian	11	13	16	20	18
Other	21	23	24	29	27
Total	16	21	24	27	26

Source: Ministry of Social Development (2008, p. 12).

## Extended family living

According to Statistics New Zealand (2014f), extended family households are comprised of three main types, those that contain one generation (for example, siblings and/or cousins), two generations (for example, siblings and/or cousins and their children) and three or more generations (for example, grandparents, parents and children). In 2013, extended family households comprised 8.9 percent (100, 605 families) of all households. Of these, 58.2 percent consisted of three or more generations, 36.4 percent of two generations and 5.4 percent of only one generation living together in one household.

2013 census data found that Pacific people are more likely than the total population as well as those from other ethnicities to live in an extended family household, 35.8 percent of Pacific people living in an extended family household, compared to 11.7 percent for the wider population (Statistics New Zealand, 2014a), 22.1 percent for Asian (Statistics New Zealand, 2014d), 20.6 percent for Māori and 7 percent for European families (Statistics New Zealand,



2014b). To pick up on a point mentioned earlier and turning our attention to Table 1.6, what we see is that Pacific families are also less likely than other ethnic groups to live in a nuclear family household with only parent(s) and children, and more likely to live “with others” and “other families” in one household. Although this information is not presented in Table 1.6, it is likely that a large part of those classified as “other families” and “others in households” are actually other family members.

Table 1.6: Household living arrangements by ethnicity, 2013

	Live as one family, no other people	Live as one family with others in household	Live with other families
<b>Pacific</b>	57.9%	15.4%	26.7%
<b>Māori</b>	72.2%	13.7%	14.1%
<b>Asian</b>	67%	13.9%	19.1%
<b>New Zealand European</b>	87.2%	7.2%	5.5%

Source: Social Policy Research and Evaluation Unit (2015).

The fact that such a high proportion of Pacific people live within extended family units (a proportion that has not dwindled overtime, but rather increased<sup>50</sup>) shows the extent to which Pacific cultural family norms, values and practices associated with sharing resources remain intact despite the increasing proportion of the Pacific people being born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The extent to which Pacific families share resources are also reflected in rates of government welfare provisions for Pacific sole parents. In 2013, while 30.1 percent of Pacific children lived in a sole parent household, compared with 42 percent for Māori, 17 percent for European and 11.9 percent for Asian (Simpson et al., 2016, p. 88), Pacific parents make up only nine percent of those receiving sole parent welfare provisions, compared with 47 percent for Māori, 33 percent for European and 10 percent for those classified as ‘other/unspecified ethnicity’ (Ministry of Social Development, 2015).<sup>51</sup> The low proportion of Pacific parents receiving a sole parent benefit, particularly when we consider that Pacific people have among the lowest earning capacity (see Figure 1.5 and Table 1.7 on the following page), suggests that Pacific sole parents and children are receiving support from their families, again pointing to Pacific

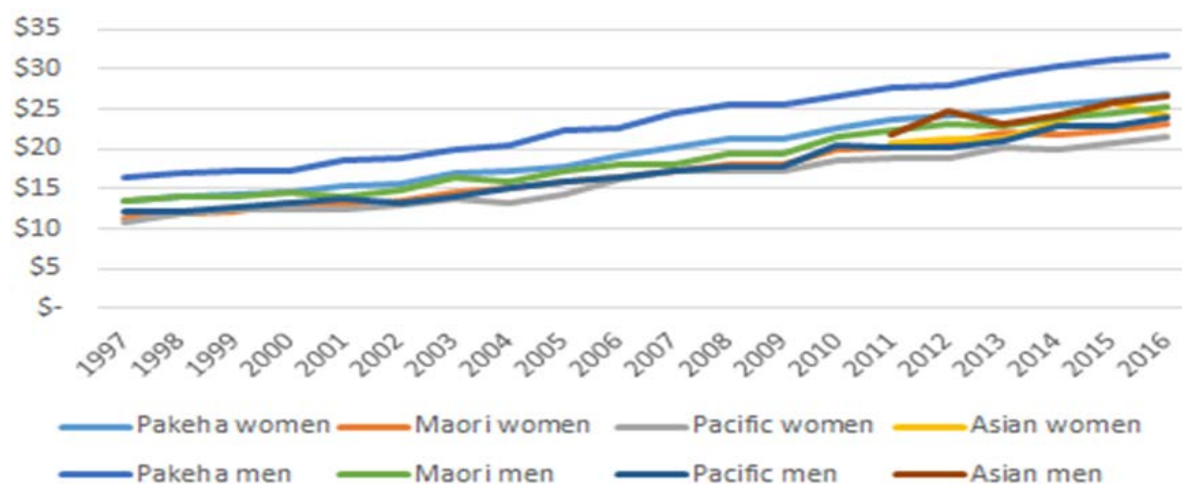
<sup>50</sup> 1996 census data found that 34 percent of Pacific people lived with extended family compared with less than 10 percent for the wider population (Statistics New Zealand, 2014a).

<sup>51</sup> Of the 68, 380 parents receiving sole parent support, 91 percent of recipients were women and 9 percent men, and a majority of these parents were between the ages of 25 and 39 years (Ministry of Social Development, 2015).

communal understandings about family and financial obligations and responsibilities to provide one another with care and support.

However, high rates of co-residence can also be said to arise out of material circumstance and need. For example, in 2018, the median weekly income for Pacific people sat at \$876 (compared to \$900 for Māori, \$924 for Asian and \$1036 for European) (Statistics New Zealand, 2018). Similarly, Pacific men and especially women have the lowest earning potential and capacity, as illustrated in Figure 1.5 and Table 1.7. What we see by looking at Figure 1.5 and Table 1.7 is that not only are there gendered wage gaps between men and women across all ethnicities, but there are also ethnicised wage gaps. In 2018, for example, the average hourly earnings of Pacific men and women was, respectively, \$26.03 and \$23.01, compared with \$33.59 for European men and \$28.38 for European women. What is derived from the data presented in Figure 1.5 and Table 1.7 is that on average, women (of all ethnicities) earn comparatively less than their male counterparts, and these wage gaps between men and women become more pronounced when compared by gender and ethnicity, with Pacific women having the lowest earning capacity.

Figure 1.5: Average hourly earnings by ethnicity and gender, 1997-2016



Source: Coalition for Equal Value, Equal Pay (2018).

Table 1.7: Average hourly rate by ethnicity and gender, 2018

Ethnic Group	Women	Men	Average
European	28.38	33.59	31.01
Asian	25.92	28.67	27.35
Māori	24.26	26.08	25.17
Pacific	23.01	26.03	24.58

Source: Coalition for Equal Value, Equal Pay (2018).

Extended family living can thus be viewed as a way that Pacific people efficiently manage economic resources, but in a culturally consistent and responsive way. Not only does it serve material or economic functions (by reducing housing and living costs), it also serves other practical and social functions (for example, by sharing of household chores, activities and parenting responsibilities as well as facilitating labour market participation). Families with children benefit from living with extended family because it provides parents with more support to help with child-related chores, task and activities, thereby reducing parental stress and allowing parents to spend more time with their children (Poland et al., 2007).

Further, living with extended family is also culturally beneficial, particularly for those born and raised in Aotearoa New Zealand. For example, a study of Tokelauan teenagers' perspectives on living with extended family found that grandparents played a central role in children's upbringing, not only by providing care and support for children and parents, but also by passing down language as well as invaluable traditional cultural values and knowledge, all of which played a central role in cultivating the cultural identities of children and families alike (Pene et al., 2009).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> However, a number of disadvantages have also been associated with living in an extended family household. To elaborate, studies have found that many extended families live in overcrowded housing (Baker, Goodyear and Howden-Chapman, 2003; Howden-Chapman and Wilson, 2000), with the rates of household overcrowding for Pacific being higher than other ethnicities (Baker and Zhang, 2005). It has been estimated that 45 percent of Pacific children between the ages of 0-16 years live in an overcrowded household, compared with 28 percent for Māori and 8 percent for European children (Baker, McDonald, Zhang and Howden-Chapman, 2013). Overcrowded housing has been linked with negative health outcomes. For instance, living in an overcrowded household increases the risk of close-contact infections and has been estimated to account for 25 percent of Pacific people's hospital admission for infectious diseases (such as meningococcal disease, rheumatic fever, tuberculosis and skin disease), compared with 17 percent for Māori and 5 percent for European (Baker et al., 2013).

# **Appendix 2: Interview Guide**

# Interview Guide

## General demographic questions

Age:

Ethnicity:

Island or New Zealand/overseas born:

Where did you grow up?

Number and ages of child/ren:

Income source and level per week/per annum:

Hours per week spent in paid work:

Child support payments:

Educational level:

Current relationship status:

Age of the other parent/s of your child/ren:

Ethnicity of the other parent/s of your child/ren

Are they Island or New Zealand/overseas born?

Where did they grow up?

## Opening Questions

Can you tell me about your everyday family life with your children?

Can you tell me about how your everyday family life changed after you and your partner separated?

When you think about family, who comes to mind? It might be easier, if you like, to draw a mind map of who comes to mind when you think of family? Follow up questions: How has this been changed by separation? What about your child/ren's other parent where does he/she fit? What about your child/ren's extended family on their other parent's side, where do they fit?

How do you think your child/ren see their family?

How much does your current understandings of 'family' match what you expected when you first separated from your ex-partner?

How do you feel about your everyday family life?

## Care and contact arrangements

Can you tell me about the care arrangements you have in place for your child/ren? How many nights per week/fortnight do your child/ren spend with you/other parent and/or extended family (on both sides)? In what pattern?

Can you tell me how you and your former partner made care arrangements for you children following separation? Follow up: what sorts of considerations shaped your decision-making?

Have there been any major changes in your care arrangements over time? Follow up: [for those who have had changes]: what would you say was the main reason for that change? What sorts of things have affected your contact arrangements (for example, money, relationship issues, travel, costs of contact, child support)?

Is there much flexibility in your care arrangements? How responsive are the arrangements to change? Follow up: What happens if there is a birthday/wedding on your side of the family but your child/ren is scheduled to be with your child/ren's other parent?

Thinking about your care arrangements, if you could, would you change anything about it? If so, what would you change and why?

### **Everyday care of children**

Can you tell me about a normal day when you have your child/ren with you, like from when you get up to when you go to bed? Or thinking about the days when your child/ren is with you, what do these days look like?

And what about weekends when you have your child/ren with you, what are they like? Follow up: Who is included/excluded?

Can you tell me about the kinds of activities you do together as a family? Follow up: Who is included/excluded?

Can you tell me about what you do with your family in the school holidays and on special holidays like Christmas or birthdays? Follow up: Who is included/excluded? How did you come to these arrangements? How important is this time together?

How do you feel about the time you have with your child/ren? Did you expect post-separation life with your child/ren to be like this?

Do you do anything together with your child/ren's other parent? If so, what? Follow up: How about parent teacher interviews/conferences, school activities (e.g. gala's, productions, assemblies), children's birthdays?

What thoughts and feelings shape your interactions or lack of interactions with your child/ren's other parent? Follow up: Does this pattern match what you hoped for?

How involved is your extended family in you and your child/ren's lives? How often do you see them? Follow up: What sorts of activities do you do together? What thoughts and feelings inform this pattern?

What contact does your child/ren have with their grandparents and other extended family on their other – paternal/maternal – side of the family? Follow up: What thoughts and feelings inform this pattern?

How do you feel about the relationship that you have with your child/ren's other parent and/or extended family? If you could, what would you change and why?

### **Children living across households**

What are your days like when your child/ren are moving from your care to their other parent's care?

Considering that your child/ren move between your house and your child/ren's other parent's and/or extended families house, how do you organise this movement? Follow up: What are your transportation routines? Who does pick-ups and drop-offs?

Can you tell me about the days when your child/ren is with your child/ren's other parent or extended family? Follow up: How do you feel about the time that your child/ren spend with your child/ren's other parent? What about your child/ren's extended family on their other parent's side?

### **Paid work and childcare**

Thinking about your paid employment, what factors influenced your decisions about paid work? Follow up: Does your child/ren's other parent's circumstances (e.g. work commitments and/or other obligations) shape your considerations?

For working parents, what care arrangements do you have in place for your child/ren while you're at work? For example, who helps you watch your child/ren while you are at work? Or who does school pick-ups and drop-offs when you're working?

Can you tell me what happens in unexpected situations, for example, on days where your child/ren is with or supposed to be with their other parent but the other parent is sick or your child/ren is sick and needs to be picked up from school? Or if you or your child/ren's other parent has to go away for work? What happens in those situations?

### **Emotional and practical labour**

How do you and your child/ren's other parent stay on top of everything, like school notices about dentists or swimming days, and extra-curricular activities? Follow up: Do you and your child/ren's other parent communicate these things to one another and then make arrangements about who will do what (e.g. one parent drops the child/ren to swimming lessons and the other parents picks up)? Or do you organise the extra-curricular activities according to the day that your child/ren is with you?

When you are apart from your child/ren, do you communicate with your child/ren and your child/ren's other parent and extended family? If so, about what kinds of things? And how? Text, emails, calls?

How do you feel when your child/ren are with your former partner?

How do you think your child/ren experience living in two homes? Follow up: How are they when they leave your home and when they return? Are their adjustment periods? How do you manage this? How well do you think your child/ren's other parent manages this? Do you and your child/ren's other parent try to work together through some of these issues?

### **Money**

[If the parent previously had a co-residential intimate relationship with their child/ren's other parent] Thinking about when you and your child/ren's other parent were together, how was money organised? Did you pool it together? Or keep your earnings separate? Is it similar to how your parents shared money?

Can you tell me about how financial responsibilities to your child/ren are organised now? Like who pays for what? How about gifts for birthdays? Clothes etc.?

[If the parent receives/pays child support] How did you and your child/ren's other parent work out child support contributions? Was this arrangement what you hoped for? Follow up: What would you have liked?

Do you receive financial support from extended family or provide financial support to extended family?

### **Wrapping up**

In your ideal world, what would life after separation look like? What do you think needs to happen or change for this to happen?

Is there any information you wish you had at the time of separation that might have made life easier (for you, the other parent, your child/ren and your families)?

Do you have any advice for other parents in a similar situation as yourself?

Is there anything else you would like to add to what we talked about today?



# **Appendix 3: Advertisement Poster**

## **RESEARCH PARTICIPANT WANTED**

**Are you a Pacific parent?**

**Have you been living apart from the mother/father of your child  
(or children) for at least one year?**

**Does your child (or children) spend at least one night a week with  
you?**

**Did you and your former partner make your own care  
arrangements for your child (or children) after you had  
separated?**

If you answered 'Yes' to all of these questions, and if you have never sought a protection order against your child's other parent, I would like to invite you to share your experiences with me in a one-time interview.

I'm Moeata Keil and a Samoan doctoral student researching how separated Pacific parents continue parenting across different households. The interview will last about 90 minutes and can be conducted at a location most convenient for you. Given your permission the interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. There will be measures in place to ensure that your privacy is protected. Any personal identifiable information will not be transcribed or revealed in any dissemination related to this study.

To thank you for participating in this research you will receive a \$20 petrol voucher.

If you are interested in participating in this research or if you would simply like more information please contact me by email on [moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz)

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference number ...



# **Appendix 4: Community Organisation Participant Information Sheet**



**ARTS**

Sociology  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 923 8613  
Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

### Community Organisation

**Project title: Pacific parents' doing family after separation**

**Researcher:** Moeata Keil

**Primary Supervisor:** Vivienne Elizabeth

**Co-Supervisor:** Avril Bell

#### **An Invitation:**

Talofa, my name is Moeata Keil and I am a Samoan doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Auckland. I am seeking your assistance with the recruitment of potential participants for the research I am doing as part of my doctoral studies.

#### **What is the research?**

This is a study about how separated Pacific parents continue parenting across different households. The current research on parents who have separated is primarily based on the lives of European people. The experiences of Pacific mothers and fathers have yet to be explored in any great depth. My doctoral research addresses this important gap in our knowledge by investigating Pacific mothers' and fathers' experiences of parenting in the context of separation. Focusing exclusively on the experiences of Pacific parents facilitates a discussion of the way in which ethnic identity, cultural beliefs and gender shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' understandings, expectations and everyday experiences of post-separation family life.

#### **Who will participate in the study?**

Up to 40 Pacific parents (20 mothers and 20 fathers) will be interviewed for approximately 90 minutes using mostly open-ended questions and a conversational style of interviewing.

#### **What will the participation of my organisation involve?**

You are being approached for permission to recruit participants through your organisation in two ways: 1) allowing the researcher to display and distribute an advertisement poster on the premises (the poster will have preliminary information about the research and will invite interested self-identified Pacific parents to contact me for more information, or to express interest in participating in the study), and 2) distributing an advertisement poster to your

networks via email and/or Facebook (again inviting any self-identified Pacific parents to contact me for further information or to express an interest in participating in the study).

### **What will happen in this research?**

Participants will be asked to take part in a one-time one-on-one interview at a location that is most convenient for them. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes. It is my intention, with the permission of the participants, to audio record the interviews. At the interview, participants will be provided with a consent form to sign giving their permission for such a recording. However, they are welcome to opt out of having the session audio recorded, and may request to have the audio recorders switched off at any time during the interview session. On completion of the interview, with participants consent, the interview will be transcribed by the student researcher and a paid transcriber. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that clearly states that the information contained within the audio recordings are confidential and must not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than the researcher and her supervisors. The participants will be offered the opportunity to receive and make changes to an electronic and/or hard copy of their transcription should they select this option on their consent form.

### **How will the data provided by participants be used?**

As mentioned previously, the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription process all identifiable information will be removed or changed (e.g. through the use of pseudonyms) to minimise the possibility of participant identification. Once all interviews and transcriptions are complete the data will be analysed, looking for main themes and ideas. The findings from my analysis of the interviews will be used as the main component of a doctoral thesis, and may also be used for future publications, reports and conference presentations which may influence government policy. On submission of the doctoral thesis, all audio recordings will be deleted, and only electronic copies of the transcriptions will be stored securely in password protected computers on the University of Auckland grounds for up to six years. Only the researcher and research supervisors will have access to the transcriptions.

### **Right to withdraw from participation**

All participation in this research is voluntary and participants may choose not to answer any question during the interview, to stop the interview at any point, or to withdraw some or all of their data within two weeks of the interview. Participants who choose to receive an electronic and/or hardcopy of their transcript, are able to withdraw some or all of their data within two weeks of receiving their transcript.

### **How will the participant's privacy be protected?**

In order to protect the participant's identity, no real names or other identifiable information will be used in transcriptions or in any future writings associated with this research. Pseudonyms will be used for participants and other people mentioned by participants, and the names of places will be removed. I will also undertake not to reveal participants involvement in the project or any information they provide me, outside of discussions with my research supervisors. However, given the small number of participants in this study (40 Pacific parents)

there is a possibility that participants may be identified, despite these measures being taken. In another step to guard against this, participants will be encouraged not to reveal their involvement to other people in their networks, including on Facebook.

### **Next steps**

I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude for your interest in this research study and warmly welcome your approval to proceed with recruitment in the ways outlined above.

If you have any further questions regarding any aspect of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me, my supervisors or Head of Sociology.

#### **Researcher**

Moeata Keil

Phone: (649) 9239457

Email: [moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz)

#### **Head of Sociology**

Associate Professor Steve Matthewman

Phone: (649) 923 8616

Email [s.matthewman@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:s.matthewman@auckland.ac.nz)

#### **Supervisors**

Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth

Phone: (649) 923 8613

Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

Associate Professor Avril Bell

Email: [a.bell@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:a.bell@auckland.ac.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research can be notified to this project's Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz), +64 9 373 7599 extension 88613, or for any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: [ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...

# **Appendix 5: Community Organisation Consent Form**



**ARTS**

Sociology  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 923 8613  
Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

**CONSENT FORM**  
Community Organisation

**Project title: Pacific parents' doing family after separation**

**Researcher: Moeata Keil**

**Primary Supervisor: Vivienne Elizabeth**

**Co-Supervisor: Avril Bell**

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR SIX YEARS**

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have understood the nature of the research and the voluntary role that I have in the recruitment of potential participants.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that my role in the recruitment of potential participants is:

1. allowing the researcher to display and distribute an advertisement poster on the premises and,
2. distributing an advertisement poster via email and/or Facebook to my networks.

I understand that I may withdraw my consent to participate in the recruitment of potential participants at any time without penalty.

I understand that I will be able to receive an executive summary on completion of the project.

I choose/do not choose (please delete one) to be sent an executive summary to the following email/physical address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Community Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Date



Thank you for your help in the recruitment of potential participants in this project.

An additional copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet will be given to you.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research can be notified to this project's Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz, +64 9 373 7599 extension 88613, or for any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: [ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...

# **Appendix 6: Individual Participation Information Sheet**



**ARTS**

Sociology  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 923 8613  
Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Interview Participant

**Project title: Pacific parents' doing family after separation**

**Researcher: Moeata Keil**

**Primary Supervisor: Vivienne Elizabeth**

**Co-Supervisor: Avril Bell**

### **An Invitation:**

Talofa, my name is Moeata Keil and I am a Samoan doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Auckland. I would like to invite you to participate in this research project.

### **What is the research?**

This is a study about how separated Pacific parents continue parenting across different households. The current research on post-separation family life is primarily based on the lives of *Palagi*/European people. The experiences of Pacific mothers and fathers have yet to be explored in any great depth. My doctoral research fills in this important gap in our knowledge by investigating Pacific mothers' and fathers' experiences of parenting in the context of separation. Focusing exclusively on the experiences of Pacific parents facilitates a discussion of the way in which ethnic identity, cultural beliefs and gender shape Pacific mothers' and fathers' understandings, expectations and everyday experiences of post-separation family life.

### **What are the criteria for participation?**

To be eligible to participate in the research you must:

- identify as Pacific – Island or New Zealand/overseas-born
- be separated from the other parent of your child for at least one year
- have the care of your child for at least one day per week
- have a care arrangement for your child that was not determined by a Judge in court
- not have applied for a protection order against your child's other parent.

### **What will happen in this research?**

If you wish to participate in this research project, you will be asked to take part in a one-time one-on-one interview at a location that is most convenient for you. The interview will last about 90 minutes. It is my intention, given your permission, to audio record the interview. At the interview, you will be provided with a consent form to sign giving your permission for such a recording. However, you are welcome to opt out of having the session audio recorded, and at your request the audio recorder can be switched off at any time during the interview session.

On completion of the interview, given your permission, the interview will be transcribed by the student researcher and a paid transcriber. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure that clearly states that the information contained within the audio recordings are confidential and must not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than the researcher and her supervisors. Once the transcribers have transcribed the interview, they will delete the audio file from their record. You are welcome to receive an electronic and/or hard copy of this transcription should you select this option in the consent form. Also, if you would like to be kept informed about the research findings you are welcome to receive an electronic and/or hard copy of an executive summary of the research findings should you select this option in the consent form.

### **Right to withdraw from participation**

All participation in this research is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question during the interview, to stop the interview at any point, or to withdraw some or all of your data within two weeks of the interview without any penalty or criticism. Participants who choose to receive an electronic and/or hard copy of their transcript, are able to withdraw some or all of their data within two weeks of receiving their transcript.

### **What will you need to talk about?**

You will be asked to speak about your everyday family life, the way it has changed following separation, and your thoughts and feelings about that. You will also be asked in the interview to draw a pictorial representation of your family. The interview will be relatively casual and free flowing – you should feel comfortable asking the researcher questions and expressing your opinions without any judgement or criticism. You will not be required to answer any question or divulge any information that you choose not to share with me.

### **What are the benefits for you when participating in this research?**

To thank you for your participation I will gift you a \$20 petrol voucher. I will also provide light food and beverages for the interview. Your participation will also contribute to the development of a specific Pacific voice on post-separation familial life, something that is lacking at the moment.

### **Are there any risks of participating?**

It is unlikely that you will experience adverse effects from your participation in the research. However, our discussion of some of the issues and themes (around care of children and the breakdown of the intimate couple relationship) might be upsetting for some participants. If this happens you can find support at Parents Help at [www.parenthelp.org.nz](http://www.parenthelp.org.nz) or free phone 0800 568 856.

### **How will your privacy be protected?**

In order to protect your identity, no real names or other identifiable information will be used in transcriptions or in writings based on the transcription. Pseudonyms will be used for you and other people mentioned by you and the names of places will be removed. I will also undertake not to reveal your involvement in the project or any information you provide me, outside of discussions with my research supervisors. However, given the small number of participants in this study (up to 40 Pacific parents) there is a possibility that you may be identified, despite these measures being taken. In another step to guard against this, you will be encouraged not to reveal your involvement to other people in your networks, including on Facebook.

**How will the data be used?**

As mentioned previously, the interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. During the transcription process all identifiable information will either be removed or changed (e.g. through the use of pseudonyms) to minimise the possibility of your identification. Once all interviews and transcriptions are complete the data will be analysed, looking for main themes and ideas. The findings from my analysis of the interviews will be used as the main component of a doctoral thesis, and may also be used for future publications, reports and conference presentations which may influence government policy. On submission of the doctoral thesis, all audio recordings will be deleted, and only electronic copies of the transcriptions will be stored securely in password protected computers on the University of Auckland grounds for up to six years. Only the researcher and research supervisors will have access to the transcriptions.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you is about 90 minutes of your time for the interview, and the time spent travelling to the interview location and perusing the transcript, if you select this option in the consent form.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Please consider this invitation until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018. If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me via e-mail [moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz) at your earliest convenience. If you do not wish to participate but simply have questions, please feel free to contact me too. I have also sent you a copy of the study's consent form for you to review (it will be in another attachment to this email).

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

You may agree (or decline) to participate by informing me - Moeata Keil - through e-mail [moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz).

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be sent to the Primary Supervisor, Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz), 64 9 923 8613, or for any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: [ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

**Next steps**

I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude for your interest in this research study and warmly welcome invite you to participate in this research.

If you have any further questions regarding any aspect of the research, please do not hesitate to contact me, my supervisors or Head of Sociology.

**Researcher**

Moeata Keil

Phone: (649) 9239457

Email: [moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:moeata.keil@auckland.ac.nz)

**Head of Sociology**

Associate Professor Steve Matthewman

Phone: (649) 923 8616

Email [s.matthewman@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:s.matthewman@auckland.ac.nz)

**Supervisors**

Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth

Phone: (649) 923 8613

Email: v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz

Associate Professor Avril Bell

Email: a.bell@auckland.ac.nz

For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...

# **Appendix 7: Individual Consent Form**



**ARTS**

Sociology  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 923 8613  
Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

**CONSENT FORM**  
Interview Participant

**Project title: Pacific parents' doing family after separation**  
**Researcher:** Moeata Keil  
**Primary Supervisor:** Vivienne Elizabeth  
**Co-Supervisor:** Avril Bell

**THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR SIX YEARS**

I have read the Participant Information Sheet and have understood the nature of the research and the role that I have as a research participant.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that participation in this research is voluntary.

I understand that the interview will last approximately 90 minutes.

I understand that given my permission this interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by the student researcher and a paid transcriber, and that after the doctoral thesis has been submitted the audio file will be deleted.

I understand that I am not required to answer any question(s) that I do not want to, and that I may withdraw from the interview altogether at any time, without penalty.

I also understand that I can withdraw some, or all, of my interview up to two weeks after the interview or, if I choose to receive my transcript, within two weeks of its receipt.

I understand that the data will be kept for 6 years in a locked cabinet and a password protected computer on University of Auckland grounds after which all copies and files will be erased and destroyed.

I understand that any information that is reported in any future publications and presentations will be done in a way that does not identify me as its source and that my identity will remain confidential to the researcher.

I understand that given the small number of participants in this study there is a possibility that I may be identified as a participant but that measures have been put in place to reduce the risk of this occurring.

I understand that I can choose to receive an electronic and/or hard copy of the transcript for this interview.

I understand that I can choose to receive an executive summary on completion of the project.

I choose/do not choose (please delete one) to be sent a copy of the transcript of this interview.



I choose/do not choose (please delete one) to be sent an executive summary.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Thank you for your participation in this research project.

An additional copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet will be given to you.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research can be notified to this project's Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz, +64 9 373 7599 extension 88613, or for any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz.

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...

# **Appendix 8: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement**



**ARTS**

Sociology  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland, New Zealand  
Telephone 64 9 923 8613  
Email: [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz)

**Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement**  
Third Party Transcriber

**Project title: Pacific parents' experiences of post-separation familial life**  
**Researcher:** Moeata Keil  
**Primary Supervisor:** Vivienne Elizabeth  
**Co-Supervisor:** Avril Bell

I agree to transcribe the audio recordings for the above research project. I understand that the information contained within them is confidential and must not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than the researcher and her supervisors. I agree to delete the audio file from my record once I have completed the transcription.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Date

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research can be notified to this project's Principal Investigator, Associate Professor Vivienne Elizabeth [v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:v.elizabeth@auckland.ac.nz), +64 9 373 7599 extension 88613, or for any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Research Office, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 ext. 83711. Email: [ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:ro-ethics@auckland.ac.nz).

Approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on ... for three years. Reference Number ...

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