

COMPASS: **Whānau Pasifika** **navigating schooling in** **Aotearoa New Zealand**

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He mihi | Acknowledgements

The COMPASS project is a partnership between Rangahau Mātauranga o Aotearoa | New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and Professor Melinda Webber from Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland. It is part of NZCER's Te Pae Tawhiti Government Grant Programme of Research, funded through the Ministry of Education. NZCER is also grateful to have had the opportunity to further our connection with Waipapa Taumata Rau through working with Rāhera Meinders and Dr Jean M. Uasike Allen on this report.

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1. He kupu whakataki | Introduction

The COMPASS project is part of NZCER’s Te Pae Tawhiti Government Grant Programme of Research. It is also aligned to the broad goals and aspirations of NZCER, in that its overarching purpose is to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the notion of Whakatere Tōmua—Wayfinding.

The COMPASS project has examined the ways kaiako, ākonga, and whānau navigate educational experiences and contexts. Using quantitative and qualitative data from the Kia tū rangatira ai project, COMPASS has focused on examining the social-psychological conditions for school success from the perspectives of Māori and Pasifika students (n = 5,843), Pasifika whānau members (n = 362), and kaiako Māori (n = 311) from 102 schools across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Collectively we are the wayfinders, duty bound to see beyond the horizon, imagine the impossible, and do everything we can to make it possible.
(Iosefo et al., 2020, p. 50)

In direct opposition to deficit research focused on Pasifika¹ education and achievement, this study takes a strengths-based approach to exploring whānau Pasifika experiences of learning, thriving, and succeeding at school. Pasifika learner engagement and educational achievement has long been a central focus of research in Aotearoa New Zealand (Samu, 2010; Samu et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2015). Some of this research has focused on exploring Māori and Pasifika student success through collaboration (Wolfgramm-Foliaki & Smith, 2020), the impact of stereotype threat on Māori and Pasifika students (Allen & Webber, 2019), and exploring educational practices that can benefit Pasifika learners (Chu et al., 2013; Rimoni et al., 2022). While these studies and others have contributed to discussion focused on ākonga Pasifika and teachers of ākonga Pasifika, few focus on success measures from the perspectives of whānau or more explicitly from perspectives of whānau Pasifika. Therefore, this study contributes knowledge to the field by centring whānau Pasifika perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs about success for their tamariki and why this success is important.

The current study employs the Indigenous practice of wayfinding to frame discussions about how whānau Pasifika envision success for their tamariki through a range of values and characteristics. These values—which are central to whānau Pasifika—can be understood as stars that guide ākonga in

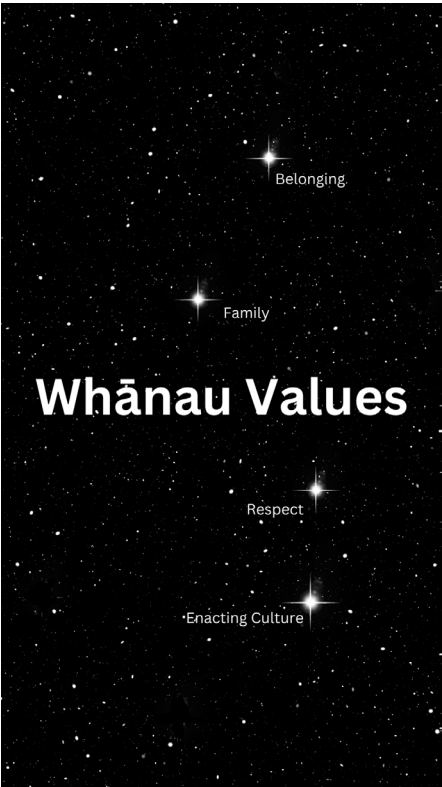


FIGURE 1: Whānau values from the study conceptualised as a star path by which navigators find their way

¹ In this study, we have chosen to use the term “Pasifika” to describe all people of Pacific ancestry, whether they may be migrants or who have been born and raised in Aotearoa.

their educational pursuits. The characteristics are the enactment of values that steer ākongā towards achieving their educational aspirations.

Pasifika values can be seen as guidelines for how to behave appropriately according to Pasifika worldviews. Whilst we acknowledge that Pasifika cultures are diverse and have nuanced value systems, we have shared understandings about how to treat and relate to other people. Pasifika values are deeply woven into the fibre of our respective cultures, despite many whānau having lived in Aotearoa New Zealand for decades. Educational policy documents and a growing body of research indicate that to effectively support ākongā Pasifika, educators must make Pasifika values visible in the education of tamariki (Hunter, 2021; Ministry of Education, 2018, 2020a; Surtees et al., 2021; Tuifagalele, 2022). Our findings complement the extant research, indicating that whānau of tamariki Pasifika are guided by Pasifika values and teachers must develop a better understanding of the ākongā and whānau Pasifika they serve and reorient their teaching practices to support them accordingly.

Wayfinding from Indigenous perspectives relies on knowledge that is an Indigenous birth right, knowledge that is part of who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading. As articulated by Iosefo et al. (2020), wayfinding is “a view from the heavens, using the sky as a guide for navigating a journey on earth” (p. 19). Thus, in the context of this report, whānau are wayfinding by centring Pasifika values as a way of navigating the educational journey with their tamariki in Aotearoa. Spiller et al. (2015) argue that wayfinding and wayfinders draw on their depth of knowledge of the world and their intuition to traverse distances and often dangerous seas. Trusting our intuition as Pasifika peoples and wayfinders is central because, as Witt (1991) argues, the “point of concentration is his navel ... this is considered the centre of one’s body and being ... is the point from which to live” (p. 3).

The findings of this report highlight how whānau of tamariki Pasifika not only aspire for their tamariki to be successful at school but also purposefully facilitate the success of their tamariki through a range of Pasifika values and characteristics that are central to their personhood. While these values and their enactment continue to reinforce ancestral knowledges and ways of doing, seeing, and being, it is also apparent that whānau of tamariki Pasifika, especially in the diaspora, are also enacting these values in a range of ways that are “new”—reflecting a possible shift in how Pasifika values are enacted here in Aotearoa New Zealand. This potential shift may have a range of implications for teachers’ work, but it is important to note that any shift in Pasifika values and how they are enacted is complex. It could be a sign of shift towards cultural enrichment, but it could also raise concerns about the erosion of “traditional” customs. Hence, questions need to be raised around the contexts and motivations for such shifts and how these are impacting whānau, school, and Pasifika student engagement and success.

We begin this report by articulating our choice to privilege te reo Māori rather than Pasifika languages. This is important and part of the next section in which we position ourselves, as Pasifika and tangata Tiriti living here on this whenua of Aotearoa. The design, research questions, approach, and data collection and analysis are outlined, highlighting who the participants are that inform this study. The remaining sections report the findings and discussion of this study. Employing the Indigenous practice of wayfinding, the report draws into sharp focus how Pasifika values guide, and characteristics shape, Pasifika success for whānau. At times this can appear to be in direct opposition to mainstream educational settings, but in some contexts whānau articulated how they aim to work in partnership with educational systems privileging their values and characteristics for the educational success of tamariki in Aotearoa. We end this study by drawing conclusions and providing provocations for the reader.

Tukuna te reo kia rere

As researchers with Pasifika ancestry and as tangata Tiriti living in Aotearoa New Zealand, we acknowledge our responsibilities to both tangata whenua and the whenua. We are guided by both Māori and Pasifika researchers who have paved the way before us. We navigate complex social and educational spaces as we are Indigenous, but not to this whenua. We also acknowledge that we are shaped both by our whakapapa to Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa and our lives here in Aotearoa New Zealand. One way we have demonstrated our acknowledgement of our unique positions is by employing te reo Māori in the writing of this report to demonstrate our commitment to living on this whenua.

Indigenous languages are archives of ancestral wisdom. Yet in Aotearoa New Zealand, te reo Māori and various reo Moana² can seem in competition with each other. As authors, we grappled with the choice of how to showcase our reo Moana as well as acknowledge the reo that echoes throughout this whenua from the maunga to the moana: te reo Māori. Therefore, we have opted to showcase our reo Moana in our individual positionalities as well as throughout the report in the form of proverbs from the authors' cultures. However, throughout the remainder of the report, we have chosen to prioritise te reo Māori. The rationale behind our decision is manifold. Firstly, many of our reo Moana are fighting to stay afloat and by showcasing our own heritage languages (Lea Faka-Tonga, Vosa Vakaviti, and te reo Māori Kūki 'Āirani) we centre ourselves and our ancestral knowledges into the writing. We join the collective struggle to demonstrate the value of our languages. Secondly, we intend to demonstrate that our languages need not be rivals. We acknowledge the whenua on which we stand, the tangata whenua that we share this land with, and the close connection between our heritage languages and te reo Māori.

2 Reo Moana refers to the languages of Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa (the Pacific Ocean).

2. Ko wai | Positionality and worldview

Positionality is an important aspect to Indigenous and Pacific processes of relationality. Hau'ofa (2008) recognises that “[a]n identity that is grounded in something as vast as the sea should exercise our minds and rekindle in us the spirit that sent our ancestors to explore the oceanic unknown and make it their home, our home” (p. 43). As wāhine of the Moana, we acknowledge the collective nature of our worlds, but at the same time we understand the nuances of knowledge, languages, identities, histories, and place-based experiences that we bring into the space and project together. Therefore, we hold the ideas of sameness, and uniqueness in tension here, and acknowledge this duality through our use of wayfinding as a framing for the work in this report. It is through this process of wayfinding that we position ourselves as distinct wāhine of the Moana and explore success of tamariki through the perspectives of their whānau.

Renee

I am a first-generation Aotearoa-born Indigenous Fijian woman. My parents and grandparents migrated to Rotorua, Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 1980s, with the intention of gaining more career and educational opportunities. Despite being in a different country, my vuvale (family) did their best to ensure that my generation and I were instilled with i valavala vakavanua (Fijian protocols and acceptable values and behaviours) when we were growing up. While they were helping us grow as Indigenous Fijian people in Aotearoa, we were all learning how to be Indigenous Fijian learners in Aotearoa as well.

I was fortunate enough to grow with and learn from both my maternal and paternal families here in Aotearoa. When I refer to “my family”, I am including my extended family members in this because the responsibility of teaching was, and still is, shared amongst the elders, relatives, and my parents. It was through regular interactions and talanoa that I developed the Aotearoa–Indigenous Fijian worldview that I have today. I call it an “Aotearoa–Indigenous Fijian worldview” because I was learning all things Indigenous Fijian in an adapted and contextual form due to living in Aotearoa.

From a young age, my family did their best to be involved in my educational journey. This could be seen in their interest in my up-to-date school results or sharing stories of their own educational pathways. It was through this that I was able to recognise and achieve the expectations that they had set for me and incorporate the knowledge I learnt from home into the classroom. It is from these experiences that my interest in collaborative work and support between Pasifika learners, families, and schools has grown.

Based on my experiences, I hope this research highlights the collective support and effort that both Pasifika learners and families give. The relationships between Pasifika learners, families, and their teachers are powerful, and give us an insight into why educational success is perceived as a collective, rather than an individual, achievement.

Rāhera

I am the granddaughter of Matapakia o Taupai Maguire (Atiu, Cook Islands) and John Maguire (Galway, Ireland); as well as Wimke Meinders and Ben Meinders (Kroningen, Netherlands). All my grandparents were lured to Aotearoa by what Sleeter (2015) terms “pull factors” (p. 5): enticing conditions that attract migrants away from their homelands. In the case of my grandparents, they were drawn to job opportunities (Matapakia), adventure (John), and sanctuary from post-war Netherlands (Wimke and Ben). I have learnt a great deal from my grandparents throughout my life; however, it was my Atiuan grandmother, Nan, who proudly passed down her cultural knowledge and pride to me and my sisters. It is for this reason that, when asked, I will always identify as Atiuan first.

‘Akarongo ki te tangi o te kāhara e pākūkū mai nei nā Maungaroa.

Listen to the music of your ancestors. (Moana, 1968, as cited in Jonassen, 2005, p. 147)

A key message I learnt from my Nan is that our traditional knowledge is valuable and can guide us in our lives. While being a devout Christian, Nan did not discard the cultural knowledge that appeared to conflict with her faith. She was guided by both. It enabled me to understand that one person can have a multiplicity of identities and that those identities can start with one’s culture. For example, Nan was Christian, a mother, and a grandmother and she navigated all of these roles as an Atiuan woman. When I think about the kama’atu (proverb) above, I can see how my Nan danced to the tune of our drums throughout her life.

Nan only went to school until the age of 9, yet she was steadfast in her view that education was the path to a good life. As a child, she would constantly tell me: “Baby, education is the key.” I knew that it meant it was important in some way, but I wondered: “The key to what?” Nan was also a great support to me and my sisters throughout our schooling. She always showed up. She showed up as herself, fiercely proud of us. Nan was present for netball tournaments, school prizegiving, and cultural performances. No matter how mundane the event, she was there. The presence of my Nan was a supporting factor that allowed me (and still allows me) to make progress in education.

My relationship with the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand has been as a student, as a teacher, and as a researcher. In my own experience, I have had the fortune of having whānau guide me throughout the journey. Whilst I have mainly talked about my Nan, my parents have also been great sources of encouragement throughout my education. However, schools can be inhospitable environments for Pasifika families. I am grateful for the participants in this study who have shared their wisdom about the education their tamariki experience. It is my hope that educators will read the rich responses and consider how they might improve conditions for Pasifika students in their schools. I-E-KO-KO

Jean

I am the eldest daughter of a Tongan father and a New Zealand European mother. My father arrived on a plane from Tonga as an 18-year-old in search of a more economically stable life—a life where he could send money home to his parents and 10 siblings in Tonga. My mother’s family are from a range of places across Europe. She is one of nine siblings who grew up on a dairy farm on the West Coast of the North Island in Aotearoa. Both parents in different ways grew up knowing about the importance of the collective, the importance of contributing, collaborating, and working together with others to

achieve specific goals. However, as an interracial couple, finding their way, navigating society was not easy. But they persevered and by doing this were my first examples of how to push through, navigating and negotiating what can sometimes be uncomfortable and challenging spaces:

Lūsia ki taulanga (Tongan proverb)

Though weather worn, the boat sails right into the harbour. Even when facing many obstacles, be determined to press on to your destination. (Movono et al., 2021, p. 139)

Part of the journey towards success for us as a family was through education. Education was central to our family. My father, who had little more than an intermediate-level education, was determined to provide more opportunities to his children. My mother had a tertiary education, and was a primary school teacher, moving on to later become a principal. Both held high expectations for me and my brother, and instilled in us the importance of education, doing well at school, and achieving our goals for a future that they always dreamed we would have. Education was believed to be the vaka we needed to not only sail on but also navigate us towards success:

Papata pē ka na`e lalanga (Tongan proverb)

It may be coarse in texture, but it was woven well. The outward appearance of a child is not as important as ensuring they are ‘woven’, this is, educated and socialised in cultural values. (Movono et al., 2021, p. 24)

Now, as a mother and educator myself, I hold similar aspirations for my own tamariki. My point of departure from my parents is that, as part of my children’s education, I also hold aspirations for them to learn and develop in their cultural contexts. Through no fault of my parents, we were not taught our Tongan language as, at the time of my childhood, it was believed that assimilation was the best policy. Now, we know how important ethnic identity development is and we are journeying together to learn more about our Tongan heritage. Therefore, it seems almost serendipitous that I am working on this project, writing a report on parents’ beliefs regarding the place of culture, education, and their aspirations for their children.

Fangota kihe kato ava (Tongan proverb)

Fishing with a bag that has holes in it. You can have all the skills in the world but if you don’t look after your basic needs, you will fail. (Movono et al., 2021, p. 105)

One way that my basic needs are met and something that helps me navigate educational spaces as a Pacific woman is the importance of the collective and developing relationships. In the prior COMPASS report, we saw how important relationships between students, teachers, and whānau were. Just as these relationships and working together for student success was paramount, so was the collective work of the authors of this study. Working on this report, brought Renee, Rāhera, and myself together. This is the power that Melinda Webber’s Kia Tū Rangatira ai project has. It has provided space for us to form connections, support each other, and work on a data set that centred the importance the collective, of whānau, and the strengths they bring to these spaces, as parents, as Pacific, as “us”. It has been an honour to work in such a mana-enhancing space, on a topic I am deeply passionate about and contributes to strengths-based articulations of success for our peoples now and in the future.

3. He tukanga | Method

This study is a part of a large-scale project that explored ākongā, whānau, and teachers' understandings and experiences of learning, thriving, and succeeding at school. Specifically, the current study focused on the perspectives of whānau of ākongā Pasifika to answer the research question: What are the Pasifika values that guide whānau as they navigate educational spaces and how are these anchored in Pasifika measures of success?

Design and approach

This study utilised a qualitative exploratory research design, giving precedence to what whānau of ākongā Pasifika had to share about their experiences and perspectives of supporting their tamariki to be successful at school. It is not just the learner who undertakes this learning journey, but the whānau and communities that support them as well (Cooper & Hedges, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2009). Ultimately, this study aims to provide in-depth parent perspectives about what is already working well, and what further can be done, to facilitate the success of ākongā Pasifika in the classroom and beyond.

Data collection instrument

The data used for COMPASS were taken from a national research project led by Professor Melinda Webber entitled *Kia tū rangatira ai: Living, thriving and succeeding in education*. The broader strengths-based research project investigated how ākongā learn, succeed, and thrive at school. This nationally representative project has large numbers of ākongā (n = 18,996), whānau (n = 6,949), and kaiako (n = 1,866) respondents from 102 schools across Aotearoa New Zealand. The project was funded by a Rutherford Discovery Fellowship, administered by The Royal Society Te Apārangi.

Kia tū rangatira ai employed surveys to gather quantitative and qualitative data from students over a 2-year period. The survey comprised a combination of 49 open-ended and closed questions. Initially, students were asked to provide demographic data and then complete multiple-choice questions, Likert scale items, and open-ended questions. The surveys were distributed via online or print surveys during school hours.

For this report, data were gathered from the surveys that captured closed- and open-ended responses from whānau of ākongā Pasifika. To address this study's overarching research question, responses to the following open-ended questions were analysed:

- What is the best thing about your child's ethnic/cultural background? What aspect of their cultural identity are you most proud of?
- What is the most important thing whānau can do to help their children be successful at school?

Participants

The participants for the present study were whānau who identified their tamaiti as belonging to one or more Pacific Island ethnic groups (Table 1). Overall, we analysed survey responses of 362 whānau members of primary-aged ākongā Pasifika (years 0–8).

TABLE 1: Ethnicity of primary-aged ākonga Pasifika identified by their whānau (n = 362)

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Sāmoan	112	31
Tongan	94	26
Cook Islands Māori	73	20
Fijian	25	7
Niuean	22	6
Tuvaluan	11	3
Other	25	7
Total	362	100

Data analysis plan

Qualitative coding and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) were applied, and the data were coded by the three researchers using both Excel and NVivo qualitative analysis software. Reflexive thematic analysis involves the researcher becoming familiar with and immersed in the data and then recognising patterns and developing initial codes. With these same codes, overarching themes are generated and later refined and renamed.

To analyse the question, “What is the best thing about your child’s ethnic/cultural background? What aspect of their cultural identity are you most proud of?”, categories that emerged across the dataset were coded in an Excel spreadsheet. Examples of the categories coded for this question included values such as “whānau”, “love”, and “respect”. These broad categories were used to aggregate the data and describe the aspects of the cultural identity of ākonga that whānau were most proud of. All other data were entered into NVivo for further qualitative analysis.

For the question, “What is the most important thing whānau can do to help their children be successful at school?”, initial codes were created based on analyses of the first 50 responses. These codes were then grouped together under the theme of “attributes”, with new codes developing organically throughout the analysis. These new codes were grounded by the data, our own experiences and knowledge, and literature about ākonga Pasifika schooled in Aotearoa New Zealand (Allen et al., 2009; Fletcher et al., 2011; Siteine, 2014).

When becoming familiar with the data, keywords were drawn out from responses. Using these keywords, sub-themes were developed under each question. The sub-themes were used as codes and, during the coding process, some codes eventually collapsed into others. When the sub-themes were being developed and refined, it was then that two separate themes emerged.

Several research team meetings were organised for coding frameworks to be presented and refined. The frequent meetings between researchers and peer analysis approaches ensured consistent quality assurance checks were undertaken (Shenton, 2004). These team meetings also enabled discussions about synergies, coding schedules, and other aspects of the COMPASS project to happen.

In the next section, the results from the data analysis of whānau data will be discussed and illustrated.

4. He kitenga | Findings

Overall, the analysis identified key Pasifika values and Pasifika characteristics that seemed to shape notions of success for ākongā Pasifika, according to whānau Pasifika. The main values were: belonging; whānau; respect; and the enactment of culture. Secondly, we identified key characteristics that whānau thought were essential in guiding their tamariki to educational success in Aotearoa New Zealand. The following characteristics were evident in the data and will be explored in detail in this section: being involved in school life; encouraging tamariki to succeed; offering practical support to tamariki; and having a curriculum focus.

The characteristics of whānau Pasifika in this current study resonate with Pasifika values. We define whānau characteristics as the way whānau enact their values. Bradley (2020) suggests that there are key tasks that caregivers need to undertake to set their tamariki up for success. He produced a framework that he calls the “7 Ss of Effective Caregiving”. The framework asserts that caregivers must:

1. provide sustenance
2. assure safety
3. provide stimulation
4. generate socioemotional support
5. engage in surveillance
6. provide structure
7. facilitate social integration. (p. 20)

The characteristics identified in this study—being involved, encouraging tamariki, being supportive, and being curriculum focused—are closely aligned with four of the 7 Ss: generating socioemotional support; engaging in surveillance; providing structure; and facilitating social integration. This will be evident in the second half of the Findings section where they will be explored in more detail. Essentially, whānau identify that there are key ways that whānau contribute to tamariki success in education. Pasifika ways of doing closely align with Pasifika values.

Values that guide Pasifika success

Belonging

In this study, the notion of belonging included feeling a connection to whānau and culture and feeling secure in enacting multiple identities. Also, it seems that the vast Moana that separates Pasifika peoples from their homeland, and the stifling monocultural societal norms that they must contend with in Aotearoa New Zealand, are not enough to disrupt such a powerful cultural pillar.

Culture not only provides connection, but also a code of conduct to guide behaviour (Kipuri, 2011). Whānau were keenly aware of the positive effects of belonging and the negative effects of disconnection. One participant identified that:

When children know their roots, they know who they are and the values they should uphold and hold on to. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan boy)

The consequences of not belonging were highlighted by other participants:

A child's identity is everything. If a child does not belong, then they don't feel grounded or supported. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan girl)

According to participants in this study, belonging is a key ingredient for students to thrive.

Belonging to multiple ethnic groups is a reality for many people in Aotearoa. According to the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2021) "[t]he number of multicultural Pacific individuals is on the rise" (p. 4), with 13% identifying as Pacific and European, 9% as Pacific and Māori, 2% as Pacific and Asian, and 0.2% as Pacific and other. Whānau in this current study considered having mixed identity as positive. Rather than a complication, they considered mixedness as being an opportunity to belong in multiple contexts and places. Such views provide a counternarrative to historical and contemporary depictions of mixedness as being detrimental to one's identity:

Being mixed ethnicities makes them proud to be Sāmoan, Welsh, Niuean NZ born. No matter where they go, they are home whether it be in NZ, Sāmoa, Wales, Niue— they have family everywhere and are accepted for who they are. Love has no boundaries. Whānau is everything to us. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan boy)

Whānau

Whānau of ākongā Pasifika shared that the connectedness of whānau is one of the most important things about their child's ethnic background. Whānau Pasifika unpacked three key understandings with regard to the importance of whānau: 1) "whānau" and cultural transmission; 2) the stability/foundation that whānau provide; and 3) the teaching and learning of values within the whānau.

The structure of whānau Pasifika is often complex and extends beyond the "nuclear" whānau. Many different whānau members can contribute to the growth and development of tamariki Pasifika, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge is commonly used to support their development. Participants spoke of their appreciation towards the older generations of the whānau and their involvement with the learning of tamariki. They also valued their contribution to the identities and success of tamariki:

I am proud that my daughter can learn from her grandparents' wisdom and be encouraged in all that she does. (Whānau member of Year 3 Tongan girl)

How the older generation of family want to teach the children traditional practices. (Whānau member of Year 3 Cook Islands Māori boy)

The participants consider the complexity and diversity of whānau as a strength for tamariki Pasifika. The complexity of whānau Pasifika in this study also reflects the diversity of ākongā Pasifika in New Zealand classrooms. One participant was proud of the ethnic diversity of their tamaiti and recognised that, even with the cultural differences, both ethnic groups valued whānau. Diverse whānau contexts also brought about opportunities for tamariki to learn about the different ancestral histories that they have. Historically, being multiethnic has been perceived as detrimental to belonging (Manuela & Sibley, 2014b). Yet for whānau in this study, their mixed ethnic identities of their tamariki were seen as beneficial:

Being Sāmoan/Arabic, our 2 cultures are very big on family. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan girl)

They have the best of both worlds and learn different things. [They] can learn about the history of ancestors on both sides. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan girl)

For many tamariki Pasifika, whānau provides them with a strong foundation and source of stability. When asked what aspect of their child's cultural identity they were most proud of, one whānau member spoke to the importance and role of whānau. When speaking about their whānau and the foundation they have set for their tamariki, many participants included and acknowledged past and present whānau. For one whānau member, being able to reflect on one's whakapapa was important in terms of grounding their child in their identity. Whānau also value the collective nature and constant presence whānau provide for tamariki. The whānau collectively share responsibility and work towards shared aspirations for their tamariki. Ākonga Pasifika have a strong support system and foundation in their whānau that they can ground their identity and future aspirations in:

The emphasis on family and the importance of being there for each other. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan girl)

My child's cultural and ethnic background is so rich in history that she knows the wāhine that came before her, and what they did to help her become the girl she is today. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan girl)

There's a saying, 'it takes a village to bring up a child', everyone looks out for the best interests of each other. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan girl)

Whānau demonstrated pride for the values that were taught and embodied by whānau. For several tamariki Pasifika born in Aotearoa, whānau is a site of learning and practising values. One participant wanted to teach values to their tamariki, just as their own whānau had done with them. Teachers have the opportunity to draw on the two elements of whānau and values to better engage ākonga Pasifika at school:

Family is important in our culture. [We are] most proud of how important values are in our Sāmoan culture. (Whānau of Year 4 Sāmoan girl)

Raising our children similarly with the same values as to how [we] were raised by our Island-born parents. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan girl)

Respect

Respect is one of the key waypoints identified by whānau members as central to the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their tamariki. Whānau in this study articulated that giving respect includes prioritising humility, engaging in respectful reciprocal relationships, and revering and upholding their cultural practices.

Respect as humility

Whānau Pasifika in this study articulated that a key component of being respectful was being humble and demonstrating humility. Humility can be demonstrated in a range of ways and several whānau spoke about humility as a value that they encouraged their tamariki to reflect. Whānau identified humility as a part of being successful and enacting Pasifika identities. While humility was central to these whānau members, it could also be seen as being in tension with educational success. The participants explained that, while they wanted their tamariki to be proud of their educational success, they also expected them to balance this with showing humility:

We are humble people, and we love our families. (Whānau of Year 5 Tokelauan boy)

The best thing is what makes him to be who he is ... [be] humble and proud. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan boy)

Respect is the utmost importance, next to humbleness. (Whānau of Year 2 i-Kiribati/Tuvaluan girl)

While humility was a central value to whānau, it can often be misunderstood within educational settings and seen as a sign of disrespect, especially when students bow their heads when being spoken to by a teacher or person in a position of authority (Uehara et al., 2018). This is in direct contrast to understandings of humility by whānau in this study, and by scholars more broadly who position humility as central to culturally and socially just education (Cervantes & Clark, 2020; Rimoni et al., 2022). Hence, humility as a means of respect can be understood from different viewpoints, but within a classroom setting power relations dictate how humility is understood, and it is often in direct opposition to whānau perspectives as articulated above.

Respectful relationships

Relationships are of central importance to Pasifika cultures and ākonga in Aotearoa settings (Pacific Early Careers Research Collective, 2022; Rimoni et al., 2022; Suaalii-Sauni, 2017). Relationships can vary between individuals and groups, but for whānau Pasifika in this study, relationships built on the value of reciprocity were central to their understanding of respect and a key element of enacting Pasifika cultural identities. Reciprocal relationships involved the sharing of knowledge and power where they could learn with their tamariki, ensure they participated in an exchange that was mutually beneficial rather than following a more hierarchical “banking model” (Freire, 2000) of learning where teachers or adults deposit knowledge in students, while students’ role is to memorise what they are taught:

When she learns, teaching me. Informing me, explain [to me]. (Whānau of Year 1 Sāmoan girl)

Very important in the culture is ensuring good manners, to behave well ... and also reciprocity. (Whānau of Year 1 Tongan girl)

Reciprocal relationships are understood by whānau as important to their values and the success of their tamariki. However, in educational settings, reciprocal relationships require a level of power sharing and include challenging educational hierarchies (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop & Glynn, 2011). Addressing unequal power relations is articulated by Paris (2012) as part of a move towards “culturally sustaining practice” (p. 93) where education not only focuses on academic achievement but also on sustaining cultural knowledges (Paris, 2012; Tuck & Lang, 2019). It is this type of framing that whānau in this study identify as important and reflective of their understandings of respect.

Enactment of culture

Whānau Pasifika members identified the importance of enacting their culture. They defined enacting culture as: speaking one’s reo Moana; participating in celebrations of culture (including eating cultural kai and wearing Pasifika clothing); and participating in cultural performances.

Ko tōku reo i’o ‘o taku peu tupuna.³ (Moana, 1965, as cited in Jonassen, 2005, p. 45)

The wisdom of Pasifika cultures is encoded in reo Moana. According to whānau members in this study, a characteristic of enacting culture includes being able to speak their reo Moana. Whilst membership of a culture is not predicated on being able to speak the language, knowledge of Pasifika languages in Aotearoa is highly revered due to the distressingly low number of under 15-year-olds acquiring their reo Moana at 16% (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2022a). Speaking one’s language is a key determinant for pride in culture, partially because language and culture are so closely intertwined:

Acquiring the language means that they’re proud of the identity as a true Niuean. (Whānau of Year 3 Niuean boy)

She understands the language and is able to speak it. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan girl)

³ My language is the essence of my culture.

In the study, eating and preparing kai was a key feature of enacting culture. Akbar et al. (2022) identify that the preparation and sharing of cultural foods enables people to form social connections.

Therefore, whānau Pasifika living in the diaspora see kai as a way to connect to others, both from their own cultures and from other cultures:

... it can be engaged in school with cultural days and shared lunch. That they can wear personalised shirts and say out loud where they're from! (Whānau of Niuean Year 2 girl)

Cooking. Celebrations. Feasts. (Whānau of Sāmoan Year 2 boy)

To learn different ways of doing things plus different foods. (Whānau of Cook Islands Year 2 girl)

In addition, whānau identified that engaging in cultural performances was not only pride-inducing, but also a powerful site of learning. Faitala et al. (2022) articulate that whānau pride in cultural performances often comes from the crucial role that cultural groups play in the transmission of cultural knowledge and practices. Pasifika performance, like cultural events, are key to cultural expression and embodied knowledge:

Music and dance [are] one of the major parts that make Sāmoans happy. (Whānau of Year 1 Sāmoan girl)

Coming from a Tongan background my son enjoys the performance side of things. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan girl)

Loves drumming and culture. (Whānau of Year 2 Cook Islands boy)

She is keen to learn about her Sāmoan background by joining the cultural group and performing for her school. (Whānau of Year 1 Sāmoan girl)

Because Aotearoa is becoming more ethnically diverse with a number of tamariki belonging to more than one ethnic group (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2021), cultural identities and cultural practices are becoming more complex and nuanced. In addition, cultural groups are central to supporting whānau aspirations and can be a site for the development of diasporic identities (Mackley-Crump, 2012, 2013).

Characteristics that shape Pasifika success

In this section, we move into reporting on the whānau characteristics that shape Pasifika success for whānau. The four characteristics are: involvement; encouragement; practical support; and having a curriculum focus. We begin by exploring involvement as a key characteristic.

Being involved in school life

A key characteristic that whānau thought contributed to success at school was their involvement in the school life and communication with schools. To whānau, involvement meant being physically present at school and interacting with teachers of their tamariki.

School-based involvement was considered a vital attribute by whānau to support the success of their tamariki at school. One facet of school-based involvement is being visible to one's tamariki in the school environment. One participant gave some explicit instructions as to how whānau can achieve visibility at school:

Parents be present. Attend school functions. Volunteer and randomly show up for lunch at least once a week. (Whānau of Year 1 Cook Islands girl)

Another facet of school-based involvement is being engaged in organisational structures such as being a part of the board of trustees. As one whānau member advised:

Get involved at all levels including Governance and influence policy and practice that is culturally responsive for all children. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan boy)

Involvement in school is not always possible for whānau Pasifika, but there's a clear sense that whānau in this study saw being involved as central to the success of their tamariki.

Parent–teacher interviews were seen as another key method of communication with the school. One whānau member mentioned:

Be there for them, like going to ... parent conferences. (Whānau of Year 2 Cook Islands Māori boy)

Being aware of the progress of their tamariki was considered an important way to support them.

Encouraging tamariki to succeed

One of the most important attributes that parents and whānau members proposed as helpful for their tamariki being successful at school was to be encouraging. The types of encouragement whānau gave to their tamariki varied but generally focused on areas such as the future success of ākongā, pursuing their own passions/interests, growing perseverance, and using strengths-based parenting approaches.

Whānau believed that encouraging their tamariki to learn good practices at school helped them achieve success later in life as well. According to participants, this idea of success in the future was described as the tamariki having “a good life”. Two participants used this same description but with encouragement towards tamariki developing different attributes. For whānau, the encouragement of life skills/attributes and practices to achieve success for tamariki Pasifika will extend beyond their time at school:

Encourage independence at a very young age to lead to a good life later on. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan boy)

Always encourage the children to feel important and go to school because school can get them a good life. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan girl)

Encouraging tamariki Pasifika to realise their own aspirations was seen as another stepping stone towards achieving success at school. One participant saw that the attributes of being a dreamer and hard worker are equally important when achieving success in school. As well as helping ākongā recognise their own aspirations and set goals, whānau were also willing to help fulfil those goals in any way that they could. Whānau wanted their tamariki to dream big, develop a good work ethic, and have familial support to pursue their dreams and aspirations:

Encourage them to be a hard worker and a dreamer. (Whānau of Year 2 Fijian girl)

Listen to any sort of situation. Whether it be learning inside or outside of class and help set goals and what steps they need to follow to achieve it. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan girl)

When discussing the importance of providing encouragement to ākongā Pasifika, whānau also spoke of academic perseverance. Whānau wanted their tamariki to learn how to be resilient and be encouraged to keep moving forward when learning at school. They also wanted to be the source of encouragement for their tamariki and ensure that personal circumstances would not deter their academic success. Whānau aimed to be that foundation and stability for tamariki Pasifika to develop their own academic perseverance and work diligently and with a determined attitude towards their academic goals:

Be there for them and keep encouraging them even when at times they may not feel successful. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan girl)

Be a source of encouragement to [their] children ... not let personal circumstances be an obstacle in the children's learning. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan girl)

As well as learning to persevere, whānau wanted the tamariki to be challenged and to grow self-confidence. Whānau wanted the tamariki to achieve the best outcomes as well as become the best versions of themselves. In addition to growing self-confidence, whānau wanted their tamariki to be challenged into trying new things as a way of achieving success in school. Whānau recognise the potential the tamariki have in developing life skills and attributes and want to encourage practices that use this:

The most important thing would be to encourage [the child] to do the[ir] best. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan girl)

Encourage and challenge them by telling them to try new things. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan girl)

Whānau spoke of encouraging and working with the strengths of tamariki to achieve success in school. Whānau want to encourage strengths-based practices such as affirming the academic strengths and interests of tamariki, as a means of scaffolding their learning and helping them see the links between what is learnt at school and who they want to be in the future:

Teach them at home. Give them every opportunity they need to learn from, praise them, forgive things they do. Encourage them to do better. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan girl)

Encourage. Listen. Encourage strengths of child. Know own child's abilities and work with those. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan and Indian boy)

Offering practical support to tamariki

Whānau identified that being supportive was one of the most important characteristics in terms of helping tamariki be successful at school. While being supportive and encouraging can be very similar, we separate them here because the focus on support in this section revolved around the practical ways whānau supported their tamariki and their learning. There was a range of ways that whānau provided support for tamariki with their learning including taking a collective approach to supporting students with their schoolwork and learning, working alongside them, engaging with them through discussion, and providing opportunities for their tamariki to teach whānau about what they are learning in school:

Support their learning. Know what they are learning at school so they can better support them at home. (Whānau of Year 2 Sāmoan girl)

Communicate with children, spend time with them with homework and quality time. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan girl)

Always asking about their day. Encourage the child to follow a home routine. This will help them with time management later in life. Revising and reflecting what they did at school for the day. As parents, showing support, care towards their learning and willingness to help with their questions. Even if parents cannot answer their questions, help them, guide them or direct them to where they can possibly find the answer. (Whānau of Year 2 Tongan boy)

To work with them and alongside them. To acknowledge new things that they have learnt. When a child feels and knows that his or her parents or whānau acknowledge them and congratulate them on the things they learn, then this encourages them to keep going. (Whānau of Year 1 Niuean boy)

The whānau in this study were very clear about not only encouraging the success of their tamariki through being supportive verbally but went further in unpacking the practical means by which they

support them. This included working alongside them, showing an interest in their learning, and communicating openly with them. Home-school partnerships have been identified by a range of scholars as being central to student success at school (Anthony & Ogg, 2019; Graham et al., 2021; Tett & Macleod, 2020). However, focus is often on the relationship between the school and the parents. The discussion from whānau in this study highlights how tamariki are contributing to this partnership between school and home by working alongside their whānau to smooth the transition between home and school contexts.

Having a curriculum focus

While whānau identified cultural practices and the enactment of their culture as a means of steering their child's cultural identity, they also articulated the importance of focusing on the curriculum within the home context. Focusing on curriculum to complement what was being learnt at school was understood as a core element to contribute to the success of their tamariki at school. Whānau members specified the importance of supporting their tamariki by helping them achieve the highest possible educational standard at school, while also providing an environment at home that was conducive to learning. In addition, some whānau were more specific about supporting the success of their tamariki via being curriculum focused at home. These whānau not only articulated the importance of completing homework, but also provided comments focused on specific curriculum areas and topics. Focusing on these particular topics and curriculum areas was seen by whānau as an important contribution they could make towards helping their tamariki succeed at school. Whānau focused on goals such as reading daily, learning spelling words, and revising and practising mathematical knowledge:

Support and encourage children to achieve the highest possible standard/qualification. (Whānau of Year 3 Fijian girl)

Continue to support them and encourage them to do homework. Create an environment where there is always an opportunity to learn. (Whānau of Year 3 Sāmoan boy)

Encourage reading daily. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan boy)

To learn more of her times tables/fractions. We need her to read more books. (Whānau of Year 3 Tongan girl)

Sitting with them to read, spelling, math, and just to be able to bond with them while doing homework and to encourage about school learning was key. (Whānau of Year 1 Tongan boy)

Therefore, success for whānau is not only focused on thriving through ethnic and cultural identities but also through educational experiences and academic identities. This moves discussions from an either/or framing to a working together type of framing, where cultural and ethnic identities and educational schooling identities can work together to support success both at home and in school settings.

5. He matapaki | Discussion

What is wayfinding?

Oceanic wayfinding is a knowledge system that is embedded in Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, seeing, and feeling. It is an ancient method of voyaging through the Moana that involves intuition and a deep understanding of the natural world, including “the behaviour of animals, natural phenomena like the wind and tides, the patterns of ... sand, waves, the movements of the stars, sun and moon” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 7). Wayfinding has also been deemed a philosophy (Spiller et al., 2015) which can guide contemporary Pasifika peoples through various lived experiences. The wayfinding metaphor has been applied to leadership (Spiller et al., 2015), autoethnographic research (Iosefo et al., 2020), and a range of other fields. In this paper, we utilise wayfinding to make sense of how whānau of ākongā Pasifika use cultural knowledge and practices to guide their tamariki in their educational journeys. What follows is an outline explaining how our findings can be understood through a wayfinding lens.

Why are we using it here?

As articulated in our positionality piece earlier on, it was paramount that our work reflected the values of Pasifika people while honouring the diversity and richness of all Pasifika nations and peoples. As articulated by Iosefo et al. (2020), “In the Pacific wayfinding cannot be viewed as belonging to any one person, and wayfinding is never done on one’s own” (p. 21). Hence, wayfinding as a collective Moana practice was an appropriate approach to exploring whānau Pasifika aspirations for the education and culture of their tamariki. All Pasifika nations had distinct wayfinding practices and this nuance is important because we, like our ancestors, have developed our own ways of wayfinding within this project.

Whānau Pasifika as wayfinders

We propose that the whānau of tamariki Pasifika can be seen as wayfinders. Oceanic wayfinders have “a deep understanding of themselves, their crew, their waka and the environment” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 3). Like wayfinders, whānau Pasifika must understand their responsibility to their whānau (the crew), the culture (the waka), and the society in which they live (the environment). Whānau will sometimes encounter calm school conditions and at times there may be inhospitable school conditions. Schooling is one of the environments that whānau will have to support their tamariki to navigate through, and we propose they do this by remaining steadfast in their enactment of deeply ingrained values.

Following the star path: Pasifika values

Pasifika values are what guide whānau of tamariki Pasifika. Pasifika values in our wayfinding model can be conceptualised as star paths by which navigators find their way. Spiller et al. (2015) describe a star path as “... a succession of rising or setting guiding stars that the navigator uses to steer by” (p. 8).

There are a number of values that are imbued in Pasifika cultures that help whānau and their tamariki navigate the seas of life including, but not limited to, education. The values that were most prominent in the data were: belonging; whānau; respect; and enactment of culture. We acknowledge that this is not an exhaustive list of Pasifika cultural values, but they are a powerful statement of what is revered in Pasifika cultures. It's important to also point out that, "steering a star path is a complex skill that requires understanding of numerous context-dependent factors" (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 8). As such, aside from Pasifika values (star paths), there are other important contextual factors that help whānau navigate school contexts alongside their tamariki, such as the need for learning materials and books at home as well as the knowledge and means to implement home routines and rituals that support learning. We now turn to a key tool for navigation: the hoe.

Steering the waka: Attributes to support tamariki Pasifika

The characteristics that whānau display can steer tamariki Pasifika towards success in education. In this way, the characteristics and actions of whānau can be seen as the hoe (rudder) of the waka. Spiller et al. (2015) describe the hoe as being a potential stabilising or destabilising force, depending on how the steerer utilises it. Likewise, the actions and characteristics of whānau can put students on the right path for education. As previously outlined, the hoe in our model is whānau. Essentially, it is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to decide what support and guidance their tamariki need and to respond accordingly, including being involved, being encouraging, being supportive, and being curriculum focused.

Following the star path and steering the waka simultaneously: Pasifika values aligning with characteristics and actions

Whānau of tamariki Pasifika balance multiple responsibilities, just like oceanic wayfinders. For wayfinders, it is not just a matter of either following the star path or steering the waka; they must be able to do both simultaneously (Spiller et al., 2015). This is where, as authors, we have followed the star path (the Pasifika values identified in the findings) and have aligned each with a characteristic or action that whānau thought would help tamariki Pasifika be successful at school. Table 2 reflects how we have paired the Pasifika values and characteristics of whānau in the remaining sections of the discussion. The pairing of these Pasifika values and characteristics were a purposeful choice made by the authors, as values on their own can be interpreted in a range of ways. However, pairing the values with the characteristics works to bring the values to life, through the embodiment, and enactment of each characteristic.

Each characteristic is enacted and underpinned by key Pasifika values which extend the characteristics from ordinary traits, descriptive words, to Pasifika value-laden behaviours and ways of living, being, knowing, and doing. We also unpack how the first three values and characteristics (belonging and being involved in school life; whānau and encouraging tamariki to succeed; and respect and offering practical support to tamariki) are complementary of each other, whereas the last pairing (enactment of culture and being curriculum focused) provides a salient anomaly. Each pair (Pasifika characteristic and value) has been named according to key concepts in Spiller et al.'s (2015) book *Wayfinding Leadership: Ground-breaking Wisdom for Developing Leaders*.

TABLE 2: Pasifika values paired with whānau characteristics.

	Pasifika value	Whānau characteristic
Pair 1—“[There’s] a wayfinder in all of us” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. iii)	Belonging: feeling connection to whānau and culture and feeling secure in multiple identities.	Being involved in school life: being physically present at school and interacting with the teachers of their tamariki.
Pair 2—“Keep[ing] the waka steady” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 105)	Whānau: a complex structure of relationships guided by whakapapa, extending beyond the “nuclear” whānau.	Encouraging tamariki to succeed: by focusing on future success of tamariki, positive familial role models, pursuing their own passions/interests, growing perseverance, and using strengths-based approaches.
Pair 3—Nurturing wairua (Spiller et al., 2015)	Respect: reflecting humility, engaging in respectful and reciprocal relationships, and having a deep reverence for their cultural practices.	Offering practical support to tamariki: being present to help with homework, being communicative, and encouraging tamariki to feel and express cultural pride and connectedness.
Pair 4—“Adapting to change” (Spiller et al., 2015, p. 141)	Enactment of culture: participating in cultural events (including eating cultural kai and wearing Pasifika clothing), participating in cultural performances, and speaking one’s reo Moana.	Having a curriculum focus: focusing on supporting learning across core curriculum areas and helping tamariki to value their cultural knowledge and practices.

“There’s a wayfinder in all of us”

In this section of the discussion, we explore how the Pasifika value of belonging aligns with the whānau characteristic of being involved.

The concept of belonging is an inherent value in Pasifika cultures. The whānau members in this study recognised that belonging was a key source of pride and contributed significantly to the identities of their tamariki. Pasifika cultures encourage connection through being a part of the collective. Social Identity Theory (Abrams & Hogg, 1990) explains that this strategy is useful because “[w]hen social identity is salient, one acts as a group member, whereas, when personal identity is salient, one does not” (p. 4). As a result, belonging can be seen as a manifestation of collective identity for Pasifika peoples. For example, in Cook Islands Māori culture, piri’anga (relationships) are a vital foundation of operating according to akono’anga Māori (Cook Islands Māori culture). James et al. (2012) articulate that:

All [Cook Islands Māori] are born into a network of piri’anga (relationships) formalised by their papa’anga tupuna (ancestral genealogy). Genealogy confirms [one’s] place, and culture defines role(s) and responsibilities which are understood in relation to others of the same genealogy and those of other genealogies. (p. 10)

Whānau Pasifika also express their desire for their tamariki to simultaneously have strong social and personal identities. In this study, whānau members elucidated the positive effects of belonging to their distinct Pasifika cultures as well as celebrating their tamariki for their individual aspirations.

Interestingly, whānau members primarily discussed belonging in the context of their cultures, rather than organisations such as schools. Schools are still working towards embedding meaningful cultural practices and values into their daily routine.

Whānau Pasifika thought being involved in a child's education was a key ingredient for their child's success at school. Both school-based involvement (SBI)—being physically present at school events—and/or home-school communication (HSC)—being in contact with the school (Anthony & Ogg, 2019) were considered the best forms of involvement. By being involved in the education of their tamariki, whānau create an essential link between the culture and school experiences of their tamaiti. Unfortunately, in schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, tamariki Pasifika do not always experience belonging in the culturally nuanced way whānau described in our first research question. In 2021, Pasifika primary children accounted for 10% of the total primary school student population (49,206), yet Pasifika-descent primary school teachers made up only 4% (1,730) of the teacher population. Tamariki Pasifika are unlikely to find deep and authentic representations of their own culture while at school (Fowler, 2023). Furthermore, Savage et al. (2014) found that whānau Māori involvement in school was beneficial because it both conveys the importance of education to tamariki and demonstrates the vested interest of whānau in what their tamariki are doing at school. Therefore, by whānau being involved, it is more likely that primary school tamariki Pasifika will see some representation of themselves at school and feel a sense of belonging, but they will also understand the importance of education to their whānau.

The responsibility for fostering home-school relationships cannot be left to whānau Pasifika. Schools have a significant responsibility to ensure that whānau feel welcomed into their school environment. The *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* policy proposes that a senior leader:

[e]vidences and visibly demonstrates strong collaborative and respectful relationships and reciprocal partnerships with Pacific learners, parents, whānau, and communities that is linked to learning outcomes and achievement". (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 13)

In this study, the whānau responses indicate their willingness to be involved in their child's schooling, yet whether their school communities reciprocate by establishing a culture of belonging remains to be seen. Creating a strong school learning community is a way that schools can ensure that whānau Pasifika feel welcome at their school. Epstein and Salinas (2004) define school learning community as including "educators, students, parents, and community partners who work together to improve the school and enhance students' learning opportunities" (p. 12). Many schools in Aotearoa New Zealand could draw on the Pasifika values to foster belonging in their schools. In their book on Pacific values, Rimoni et al. (2022) provide a range of ideas that schools and educators can draw on to help Pacific students and their whānau feel a sense of belonging within the school setting. They suggest that learning environments have visual representations of Pacific peoples and places visible, that they play Pacific music, have Pacific arts and crafts on display, and include Pacific languages (Rimoni et al., 2022). They also take these ideas further by highlighting how Pacific songs, dances, and stories can be included in the curriculum, and how drawing on whānau expertise and passions is a way to encourage broader community involvement. Embracing some of these ideas and others can strengthen connections between schools and community whānau, ensuring that they feel a sense of belonging and are welcome in educational settings.

“Keeping the waka steady”

This section focuses on how whānau Pasifika are encouraging of school success and engagement.

According to the 2018 New Zealand Census, over 60% of Pacific peoples were born in Aotearoa and one-third of the Pacific population are under the age of 15 (Stats NZ, 2018). The Census also saw an increase, since 2013, in the percentage of Pacific peoples who identified as mixed ethnicity, and from this same group the majority were between the ages of 0–29 years (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2021). The migration of whānau Pasifika to Aotearoa is commonly fuelled by their aspirations for their tamariki to gain opportunities in education and employment (Cunningham et al., 2022; Siope, 2011; Tautolo et al., 2020). It is not uncommon for whānau to share these aspirations with their tamariki, in the hope that they will be motivated to strive for success (Tautolo et al., 2020). When sharing their aspirations, whānau will often use storytelling, embedded with values, detailing different lived experiences and worldviews, as a practice of intergenerational transmission of knowledge (Cunningham et al., 2022). In this study, whānau Pasifika were able to teach and share cultural knowledge with their tamariki and contribute to the development of a positive sense of cultural identity. This was enhanced by the complexity and diversity of whānau, as tamariki were able to learn from different whānau members and generations. Whānau recognised that, as tamariki are learning to appreciate different worldviews, knowledges, and histories, this is also building on the richness of multiple ethnicities and will benefit their learning.

There is a strong element of collectivism for educational aspirations in the *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a) and other literature (Flavell, 2014; Rimoni, 2016). The *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* states, “[d]ecisions regarding learning, pathways and employment are often based on the needs and aspirations of the wider whānau and/or community” (Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 7). However, whānau in this study clearly argued that tamariki Pasifika should be involved in decision making as well, articulating their own hopes and dreams and giving voice to the most appropriate pathways for achieving them. Whānau wanted tamariki to realise their own aspirations, as they believed that when tamariki Pasifika pursued their own passions and interests, while being equipped with the necessary life skills and knowledge, they could achieve the best outcomes for their futures. For whānau, the aspirations of tamariki must influence and guide the decision making spoken of in the *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

The navigation of educational seas is done as a collective by tamariki Pasifika, their whānau, their teachers, and their communities (Ministry of Education, 2018, 2020b) and an important aspect within these groups is the reciprocal and respectful relationships between whānau Pasifika and their tamariki (Cunningham et al., 2022; Manuela & Sibley, 2014b; Tautolo et al., 2020). In the study, *Exploring Success Amongst Pacific Families in New Zealand: Findings from the Pacific Islands Families Study* (Tautolo et al., 2020), a key finding related to the criticality of “whānau connectedness” and the supportive relationships between whānau and their tamariki. In higher education, ākongā Pasifika achieve success in their educational pathways with the support and encouragement of whānau as a main factor as they develop academic perseverance and overcome challenges that test their capabilities (Chu-Fuluifaga & Ikiua-Pasi, 2021). Equipped with this foundation and stability, whānau Pasifika spoke of ākongā developing academic perseverance and coping with challenges during the pathway to achieving success in school. Sitiveni Ratuva (2007) wrote that for a Fijian who has ventured away from home, they “... will always return to the yavu [foundation] as a form of pilgrimage and as a form of self-reassurance, refreshing one’s identity and re-provisioning for one’s journey in life” (p. 95). The whānau are the yavu for tamariki Pasifika when they need that grounding and wrap-

around encouragement to be reminded of who they are and what they are capable of. The navigation of choppy educational seas is alleviated by whānau maintenance of reciprocal relationships and the *yavu* that tamariki Pasifika have.

There are several cultural-sustaining values that are shared across Pasifika groups (Ministry for Pacific Peoples, 2022b). *Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners* (Ministry of Education, 2018) has proposed an educational framework in the design of a Pasifika Success Compass. In this compass are values that are significant for tamariki Pasifika, whānau, and communities: Respect, Service, Leadership, Spirituality, Belonging, Family, Love, Inclusion, and Reciprocal Relationships (Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 4). In alignment with the findings of Hunter et al. (2016), whānau Pasifika in this study stated that cultural values underpin the identity, language, and relationships of many tamariki Pasifika. Whānau also spoke of encouraging more strengths-based practices with their tamariki to support their learning and success in school (Hunter et al., 2016). The *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* supports this notion, encouraging educators to “build [their] understanding of specific Pacific cultural values ...” to ensure that they “become culturally competent with diverse Pacific learners” (Ministry of Education, 2020a, p. 32). There is common understanding between whānau of tamariki Pasifika, educators, and policy makers that cultural values are a strength and can support ākongā Pasifika towards achieving success in school. However, enacting and embedding these values into the teaching and learning of tamariki Pasifika is not possible when the disengagement and achievement gaps still exist. Some schooling experiences of tamariki Pasifika consist of having classroom-specific cultures that: a) clash with their own cultural values; b) lack teachers with cultural knowledge and competency; and c) are rife with negative cultural and academic stereotypes that fuel low teacher expectations (Allen & Webber, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2020b). These experiences contribute to the disengagement and achievement gaps experienced by ākongā Pasifika.

“Nurturing Wairua”

Respect is a common value for Pasifika peoples, but it is one that can be employed and defined in a range of ways. Rimoni and Averill (2019) articulated that “respect is a complex value vitally important to the essence of Pasifika cultures cherished by Pasifika learners and their families” (p. 3). The Ministry of Education (n.d.) defines respect as “acknowledging someone’s status and observing proper etiquette when students view and speak to teachers and people in positions of authority” (Ministry of Education, n.d, para. 8). This focus on expected behaviour towards various peoples, especially elders, is representative of collective and intergenerational approaches towards raising and engaging tamariki. While there is no unified articulation as to why respect is such a core value for Pasifika peoples, some research provides clear links between respect, intergenerational interactions, and positions of authority (Hawk et al., 2002; Hunter et al., 2016; Rimoni & Averill, 2019). For whānau Pasifika in this study, respect was an important and complex value that they defined as being shown or embodied through three clear framings of respect: respect as humility; respect through relationships with others; and respect for their cultural practices. Whānau Pasifika uphold demonstrating respect for others, in relationship with others, and with their ancestral practices. It is this notion of relationality that allows whānau Pasifika to work collaboratively to support and learn alongside their tamariki.

While whānau identified respect as a core value for the success of their tamaiti, they also placed emphasis on their role as whānau and the importance of steering their tamariki towards success through actively supporting them. The act of support for their tamariki could be understood as the

way whānau were embodying respect. Whānau acknowledged a range of ways they encouraged the success of their tamariki through working alongside them to support their learning and schoolwork, by providing quality time with their tamariki, and communicating with them about school and their learning, as well as whānau supporting students' overall wellbeing. These interactions between whānau and their tamariki can also be understood with the framing of vā. Respect as a guiding waypoint can be understood through the Tongan concept of vā and its embodied expression of tauhi vā. Vā is a term employed in Tongan culture to signify the relational space and relationship between the environment and people (Allen & Veukiso-Ulugia, 2023). A range of other Pacific nations also use notions of vā as a relational space of negotiation such as va (in Sāmoa), vahaloto (in Niue), veiyaloni (in Fiji), and wā (in Hawaii) (Aporosa & Fa'avae, 2021; Smith & Wolfgramm-Foliaki, 2021; Togatama-Otto, 2015). The vā between adult whānau and their tamariki can be seen as the relational space that is negotiated through the value of respect. Tauhi vā, the nurturing of the value of respect with and between tamariki Pasifika and their whānau. It is negotiated in a manner that upholds expectations, maintains harmony, and ensures balance in a whānau. Working within vā allows for the needs of all members to be communicated and met in a way that is mana enhancing and relational. It works on a range of levels between a range of people, which brings into sharp focus the nuances of working with and alongside whānau. This has clear implications for educational settings where there needs to be a shift in understanding respect as relational as well as hierarchical. This means that respect does not go one way, but rather moves between peoples. For whānau in this study, respect and support for their tamariki was relational, a form of maintaining harmony where whānau walked alongside their tamariki, steering them towards success.

“Adapting to change”

Unlike the other values and corresponding whānau characteristics, we see a divergence between enacting culture and being curriculum focused. However, there is also an important connection between the two.

The enactment of culture was a key value for the whānau participants in this current study. Whānau recognised the benefits of enacting culture, including participating in cultural events (including eating cultural kai and wearing Pasifika clothing), participating in cultural performances, and speaking one's reo Moana. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples (2022a) has identified multiple barriers that prevent the acquisition of reo Moana by Pasifika descendants, including (but not limited to):

- Perception of English as the language of success
- Low perceived value of Pasifika languages
- Difficulties connecting younger generations with community elders
- Lower rates of intergenerational transmission
- Lack of shared and communal spaces to use and learn languages. (p. 19)

Yet a keyway to mitigate these factors is through the enactment of Pasifika cultures, particularly participating in cultural events and performances. It is for this reason that Pasifika peoples have spent decades creating events and spaces, such as Polyfest, “to transform physical and ideological spaces into sites for the continuation of cultural transmission” (Williams, 2022, p. 183). Therefore, educators must seek opportunities to authentically embed Pasifika cultural practices, celebrations, community events, knowledge, and values into the schooling of tamariki Pasifika. These are not limited, however, to cultural performances and kai. Teachers must also challenge educational institutions to interrogate the power and knowledge imbalances that exist in their walls and produce a curriculum that reflects the society in which they live (May & Sleeter, 2010).

Whānau Pasifika also emphasised the importance of the curriculum and educational achievement which is often a reason why their whānau migrated to Aotearoa (Salesa, 2017). As articulated by Macpherson et al. (2000), migration “assured them that their children would have opportunities they themselves had not enjoyed” (p. 65).

At first glance, participating in cultural practices and being curriculum focused seem like two aspects that are in opposition to one another. But the lens of wayfinding brings a new understanding to how being curriculum focused is enacting a cultural practice, rather than being in tension or opposition to cultural practices. What we mean by this is that curriculum focus and achievement through education have become part of the cultural negotiation that occurs through migration, particularly migration to a colonised country such as Aotearoa. This negotiation within the leadership context is referred to by Sanga et al. (2022) as straddling worlds or straddling domains. Straddling worlds can occur as part of a journey where Pasifika peoples are navigating and negotiating diverse terrains that may be unfamiliar. Similarly, Tupuola (2004) refers to this navigation and negotiation of worlds and terrains as “edgewalking” (p. 90) and posits that it is a means of resilience of identity. Pasifika peoples walk the edges between various worlds, especially as Pasifika within the diaspora. Therefore, whānau Pasifika reimagine the relationship between enacting culture and being curriculum focused for achievement as an example of “straddling worlds” or “edgewalking”. It is a means of negotiating place and space within the diaspora as whānau Pasifika work towards providing opportunities for their tamariki to achieve in Aotearoa New Zealand’s schooling system.

Some schools have already seen the potential of positioning culture as part of the curriculum, whether that is through dance, drama, Polyfest, or language rejuvenation. The *Action Plan for Pacific Education 2020–2030* (Ministry of Education, 2020a) suggests that educators should support learners’ cultural identities “... by reflecting their languages, cultures and histories in the content of their classes and the culture of their service, school or institution” (Ministry of Education, 2020a p. 30). Therefore, we challenge schools to bring more cultural knowledge into their classrooms and curriculums, not seeing culture and curriculum in tension or competition, but rather as complementary and part of how whānau in the diaspora are navigating and negotiating this land as the wayfinders they are.

6. He kupu whakakapi | Conclusion

Whānau Pasifika wayfinders were clear about the star paths (values) that guided their steering (characteristics) towards success for their tamariki in the educational seas.

Before tamariki Pasifika embark on their journey, whānau wanted to ensure that tamariki are proud of the whānau and distinct Pasifika cultures they belong to, alongside collectively celebrating the individual aspirations of each tamaiti. Whānau also want to be involved in the teaching and learning of their tamariki and positioned themselves as the bridge to integrating positive school experiences and the culture of the tamariki. In building on this aspiration of whānau, educators and school communities can learn and embed these same values into teaching and learning practices to foster the belonging of whānau Pasifika and tamariki in their schools to support their success.

Whānau Pasifika consider teaching and sharing cultural knowledge, contributing to the development of positive cultural identities, and upholding the collective aspirations they had for tamariki as central to their role as wayfinders. Alongside the aspirations of whānau, whānau encouraged tamariki to realise their own individual aspirations and wanted them to be equipped with the life skills and knowledge to fulfil them. As tamariki pursue their aspirations, whānau Pasifika will be their *yavu*—a solid foundation so that tamariki can be grounded and receive wrap-around encouragement related to who they are and what they can achieve. There needs to be a shared understanding between policy makers, educators, and whānau of ākongā Pasifika about how to embed and enact these values into school practices to support the success of ākongā Pasifika.

Whānau Pasifika framed the embodiment of respect as humility, respect through relationships with others, and respect for Pasifika cultural practices. These framings were then transposed to how whānau demonstrate practical support for their tamariki when achieving success in school. These acts of practical support nurtured respect with and between whānau and tamariki Pasifika—upholding the tauhi vā. Respect and support for their tamariki was seen as relational, involving walking harmoniously alongside their tamariki guiding them towards success.

Whānau of tamariki Pasifika have grounded themselves and their tamariki in valuing enactments of their cultures while also valuing the educational opportunities and achievements that are provided here in Aotearoa New Zealand. The ability to see that these two concepts are complementary of each other demonstrates the shift in thinking for diasporic cultures in Aotearoa. Schools can build on this by welcoming more cultural knowledge into the classrooms to support the wayfinding of success for ākongā Pasifika and their whānau.

In pursuit of achieving educational success, tamariki Pasifika are being guided and steered by whānau to acquire and retain the necessary values. Whānau want to ensure that, as their tamariki become wayfinders themselves, they feel secure and proud of their identities and know that their whānau want to be involved in their schooling life. The complex relationships within whānau and their collective encouragement for tamariki to succeed are what is keeping the waka steady for everyone involved in this journey. To nurture the wairua of ākongā Pasifika and their whānau, schools must give effect to respect by providing multiple opportunities for whānau to practically support their tamariki to adapt to change through the enactment of cultures through a reimagined, reinvigorated, and Pasifika-rich curriculum.

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