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Risk, Offending Behaviour and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Cultural Resilience

Margaret May Perkins

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Abstract

This thesis begins with the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Australian prisons and the suggestion by Homel, Lincoln and Herd (1999) that cultural resilience might be a protective factor in Indigenous communities. The concept of cultural resilience appeared in the literature when Native American educators observed that there were specific cultural factors, such as family strength, tribal identity, spirituality and ceremony, which were protecting Indian families and communities (Heavyrunner and Morris, 1997).

The Cook Islands is a previously colonised, self-governing Māori nation in the South Pacific with a low rate of incarceration and no juvenile detention facilities. As the rate of incarceration in the Cook Islands is approximately one sixth of that for Māori in New Zealand and less than one tenth of that for Indigenous Australians, it was thought that cultural factors might be protecting the young people in the local communities.

Following Bhabha (1974) culture is seen as ever-changing; new and hybrid cultures arising when traditional Indigenous cultures meet colonisation or global capitalism. This is a hybrid thesis, a psychological and phenomenological study of offending behaviour embedded in an ethnographic study of a South Pacific community, recognising the history of Western imperialism in research noted by Tuhiwai Smith (1999). The principles of the Indigenous research paradigm, as described by Chilisa (2012), have been adhered to; research that promotes transformation and social change, guided by respect and relational accountability, and informed by postcolonial discourses.

Semi-structured interviews or conversations with young prisoners and young people under supervision on the main island of Rarotonga revealed that risk factors include the general factors found by Homel et al. (1999); poverty, child abuse, and school exclusion. In addition, out migration of young people or their parents to New Zealand or Australia and/or returning to the islands creates risk, as does the death of grandparents, who are frequently the principal carers for the children.

Semi-structured interviews or conversations with adult community stakeholders and participant observation on Rarotonga suggested that protective factors include the kōpū tangata or traditional extended family as the source of aro‘a (loving kindness and compassion) and that the Polynesian cultural tradition of tamariki ‘angai or informal adoption extends and strengthens the attachment bonds between family members. Group

memberships in church, village and island communities create further connections to land and people, strengthening the social networks. Cook Islanders also benefit from polycultural capital, being well versed in traditional culture, exposed to a Western but bilingual education and, as citizens of New Zealand, having the opportunity to study and work overseas.

Postcolonial theory is used as the lens to analyse the community risk factors in the Cook Islands; the ongoing economic domination by European settlers, the low wages for local people, and the ever-expanding tourist industry, described as devastating to the Indigenous peoples in other Pacific nations. Tourism on Rarotonga creates employment for foreign workers, alienates valuable land, pollutes the lagoon, drains the water supplies in the villages, turns mana (spiritual power) into a name for a cheap ballpoint pen, and the ancient Gods of Polynesia become ticky tacky airport art.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states that self-determination is the centre of the Indigenous research agenda. Self-determination theory suggests that autonomy, relatedness and competence are necessary for emotional and social well-being and these factors may be protecting the Cook Islands community in the face of the disheartening postcolonial legacy. The people enjoy strong interpersonal relationships and high levels of competence in traditional arts and crafts, as well as in Western education and training. Most significant, almost 50 years of self-government have allowed Cook Islanders the freedom to practice their culture and so to maintain a high level of cultural resilience.

These findings suggest that the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the prisons of settler countries, such as Australia and Canada, is linked to the historical disruption of connections between people, their extended families, their ancestors and their land. Drawing on the wisdom of the Cook Islands Māori people, Jonassen quotes Teina Lily Napa as saying “ka nā roto mai te aro‘a i te pito” (2005, p. 27); “love and compassion arise from connectedness”. It would seem that it is piri‘anga, relationship or connection, both in a physical and emotional sense, which facilitates the socio-cultural processes which act as protective factors in the face of risk (Rutter, 1987), so creating resilience.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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The Cook Islands Māori Culture and Language

Language is the essence of my culture (Jonassen, 2003).

I am aware of the colonial and imperialist history of research in the Pacific and the writings of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). She says that the word "research" is one of the dirtiest words in the vocabulary of Indigenous people, seen as offensive and exploitative. In this study I have attempted to do research according to Indigenous principles, focused on the positive, acting only with permission and in collaboration with Cook Islanders, and always writing for the eyes of the Cook Islands people as well as for the academy.

As a supposedly "white" person, born in Africa and living in Australia, I have learned from my life experience, from the decolonising literature, and from my friends, clients and colleagues in Indigenous communities in Africa, Australia, Aoteoroa and the Pacific Islands, that the idea of race is a social construction and that humanity is not divided into an essentialist Self and Other. As a Cook Islander author has noted "being European or Māori is, to some extent, a matter of attitude" (Mason, 2003). Nevertheless, as a Papa'a, I have not tried to become an expert on Cook Islands culture. That would be impossible and it has not been the intention of this study.

What I have been trying to understand is the concept of cultural resilience, a process of building resilience through cultural practice. How does cultural practice protect a young person from antisocial behaviour and exclusion, especially the most extreme form of exclusion, incarceration? In the Cook Islands young people under 17 or 18 years of age are very rarely locked up, there is no juvenile detention centre, and studying risk and resilience on Rarotonga has been a very exciting and illuminating journey.

It would be impossible to write about the Cook Islands without using some words of the Māori language, such as ariki which means king, paramount chief, or ruler. The British called all the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Australasia and the Pacific "Indians" and all of their leaders "chiefs", but the ariki are royalty, more than chiefs.

There are some differences between the Cook Islands Māori language and the Māori language used in Aotearoa/New Zealand but there are many similarities. For example, 'ānau and whānau mean family, 'angai and whangai mean feeding or nurturing. According to Māori oral history, the original vaka (canoes) that colonised Aotearoa set off from

Ngatangi‘ia, on Rarotonga and so Cook Island Māori are said to be tuakana, older brothers and sisters, to the people of Aotearoa.

In this thesis Māori words are used as a sign of deep respect to the Polynesian culture and are deliberately not italicised as that would seem to imply that they are exotic or Other. The words are translated into English the first time that they are used in a chapter. Occasionally the English word is translated into Māori if the sense of the sentence requires it. There are also a few words that could be classified as Rarotongan English or Cook Islands English in the same way as Australian English is differentiated from the English used in Great Britain. One of these words is “outing” which means “going out”. These are included at the end of the Glossary.

The pseudonyms used for the research participants are also Māori words, but they are listed in the appendices as they are words used as names, not words used according to their meaning. For example, the young prisoners are named from one to seven, Ta‘i, Rua, Toru, ‘Ā, Rima, Ono and ‘Itu. Other participants are named after various local fish, birds, trees and other natural phenomena, such as Tamanu, the stingray, Taina, a shrub, and Tavake, the red-tailed bird.

The ng sound in a word such as tangata (people) is pronounced as in sing and the inverted apostrophe is a glottal stop or click. The macron, as in ā or ū, indicates a long vowel. In everyday use the inverted apostrophe may be omitted.

Glossary of Cook Islands Māori words used in the thesis

‘Aka‘aka	humble, low
‘Aka‘aravei‘anga	introduction
‘Akakoromaki	patience, endurance
‘Akapapa‘anga	genealogy
‘Anau	biological family, children (blood, adopted, married to one’s children)
‘Angai	nurturing, feeding, adopted
Ara metua	ancient road
Ariki	royalty, hereditary title holder, paramount chief
Aro‘a	love, kindness, compassion
Aro‘a nui	much love
Arongamana	people of power, hereditary leaders
Atua	God
Avai‘iki	the land of the ancestors
‘Ei	garland
‘Eke	octopus
Irinaki	faith and trust
Iti tangata	the common people, everyone in the community
Kai	food
Karakia	prayer
Kia Orana	be well/healthy/live long
Kite	wisdom, competence, skill
Kitepakari	wisdom of the ancestors
Kiva	vast, enormous; blue
Kōpū	stomach, source of emotion, connection
Kōpū tangata	extended family, all of those connected by birth, marriage or adoption
Mana	spiritual power and authority
Marae	sacred ground
Matai‘apo	aristocracy, hereditary leader, sub-chief
Maunga	mountain
Metua	parent
Moana	ocean
Moana Nui	great ocean

Nakunga	wise saying
Noa	freedom, unrestricted
Ora	life, life in the land
Pa ‘enua	Group or row of islands
Pa‘ata	chair or platform of honour
Papa‘a	European
Pāreu	Sarong
Piri‘anga	relationship, connection
Rangatira	hereditary leader
Rota‘i‘anga	cooperation, loyalty, unity
Taihoa	going slowly/wait
Tamaiti	child
Tamariki	children
Tangata	people
Tapu	sacred
Tatau	tattoo
Ta‘unga	expert, wisdom speaker, priest
Te Reo	the (Māori) language
Tiki	carved God box, place to meet the spirit
Tīvaevae	appliquéd quilt
Tuakana	older brother or sister
Umu	underground oven
Vaka	canoe

Rarotongan English

Carrying	pregnant
Cruisin’	driving around
Notch	marijuana
Outing	going out
P	methamphetamine

DEDICATION

This thesis
is dedicated to my ancestor
Lea van de Kaap
a “slave girl” at the Cape of Good Hope
manumitted in 1786 to marry a European settler

In recognition of the desire of all peoples
to live in freedom

Chapter One

Conscientização

AKA‘ĀRĀVEI‘ANGA Introduction

TEI‘EA TO‘OU MARAE? Where is your sacred ground?

TEI‘EA TO‘OU MAUNGA? Where is your mountain?

KO‘AI KOE? Who are you? (Jonassen, 2003; p. 128)

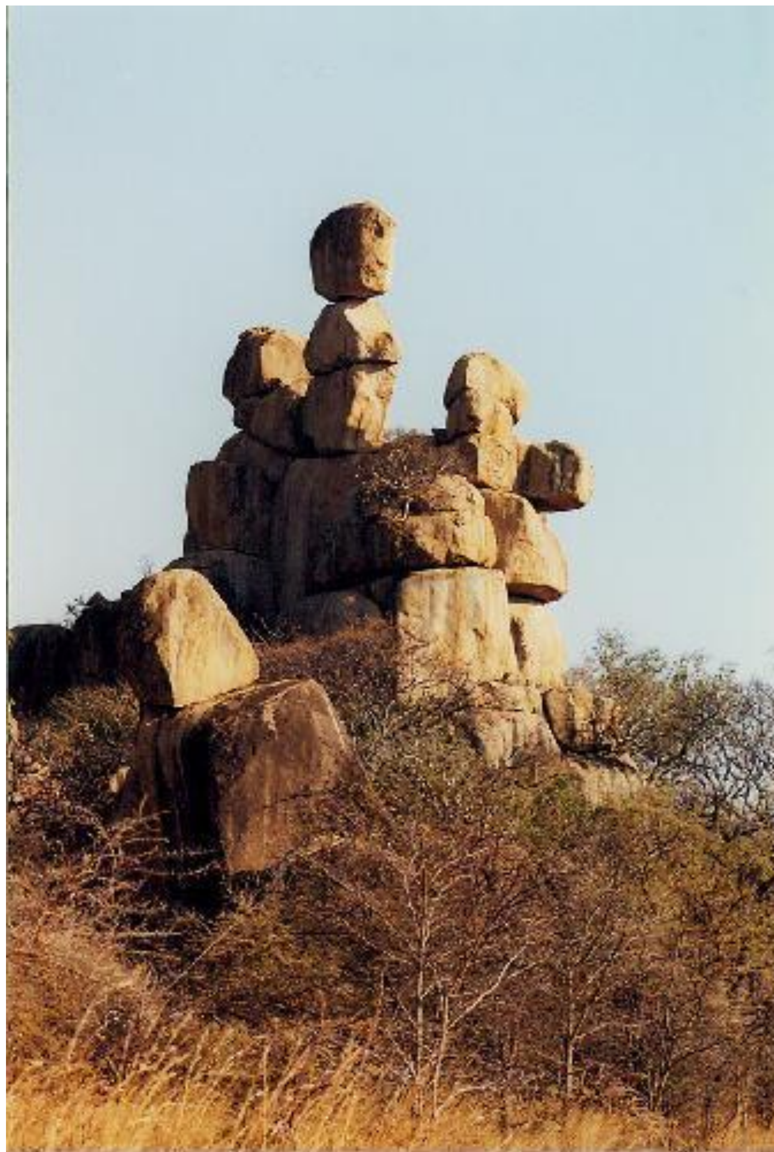

Figure 1.1. **The sacred rocks: Matopos Hills, Bulawayo.**

1.1 Beginning in Bulawayo

This research study was suggested by the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in prisons in Australia and New Zealand, indeed, the overrepresentation of Indigenous and other marginalised peoples in the overcrowded prisons of the Western world; a serious challenge to the concept of social justice in countries that once described themselves as "civilised". Critical race theory arose in the United States of America in the context of the continuing disadvantage suffered by people of colour in the legal and criminal justice systems, many years after civil rights had been won (Bell, 1995).

In contrast, in the previously colonised Cook Islands of the South Pacific (Kuki Airani, te Moana Nui a Kiva), there is a very small prison population and there are no juvenile detention facilities. Cultural resilience has been mentioned as a protective factor for Indigenous people in Australia (Homel, Lincoln & Herd, 1999), and the question arises as to the role of cultural resilience in protecting the young people of the Cook Islands. In doing this research, I hoped that learning about cultural resilience in the Cook Islands might offer some insights into cultural resilience in general, and, specifically, into the role that cultural resilience might play in closing the enormous and ever-widening gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous incarceration rates in Australia.

It goes without saying that mainstream Australia cannot impose solutions on Indigenous Australian communities and hope for effective change. It is white Australians who have been imposing their laws, their police forces and their courts on the Indigenous communities for 200 years with disastrous results. In Western Australia, Indigenous people are twenty times more likely to be sent to prison than non-Indigenous people (ABS, 2012) and the national figure is fifteen times.

In searching for the meaning of cultural resilience as a protective factor for Indigenous youth at risk of incarceration, I, as the non-Indigenous researcher, was confronted with the question of my own identity. Chilisa (2012) states that a postcolonial researcher can assume many different identities and must answer the questions "Who am I writing about? Self or Other/s or both? Whose side am I on?" (p. 190). Morseu-Diop (2010) presents the researcher with a longer list of questions, including "Why am I conducting this research? Who am I as a person? Where do I come from and how will my own cultural beliefs and values influence my research methods?" (p. 95). In doing this research, I have searched for answers to these questions as well as answers to the questions about risk and resilience. In addition, I have searched for answers to questions about cultural resilience

that apply not only to the people of te Moana Nui a Kiva, but to Indigenous Australians, and to myself. What is cultural resilience and how is it developed? How does cultural resilience relate to a psychological sense of community or belonging (Sarason, 1974) and to the concept of identity as being grounded in one's history and culture (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003)?

I, the researcher, am a hybrid child of Africa, not British, not Indigenous, but, like many of the world's people described as Creole, a child with a complicated, mixed heritage. I was literally born in the kraal of the great king Lobengula. He was the son of Mzilikazi, a Zulu leader who had escaped the wrath of the legendary Shaka by moving north with his impis (warriors) and crossing the Limpopo River, to a place he called Bulawayo, the place of killing. The grass grows long and brown in this southern part of central Africa, huge granite rocks balance one upon the other, and, in the days of Lobengula, the lion, the leopard and the cheetah hunted antelope across the wide, empty grasslands. At night the drums beat through the darkness, sending messages from kraal to kraal, from village to village.

By the time that I was born, in 1950, the infamous colonial empire builder, Cecil John Rhodes, had obtained a concession for mining rights in Lobengula's country and the white settlers of the Pioneer Column and their armed guards, the British South Africa Police, had arrived. The king was dead, and his kraal, Bulawayo, had become a colonial town with wide streets, laid out so that an ox wagon could turn around in them. The drums continued to beat in the darkness as a hundred thousand white settlers dominated millions of Africans in their own land, growing tobacco and raising cattle for world markets. The Indigenous people, forced off the best land into dry and stony reserves or tribal trust lands, had rebelled twice against white rule but their warriors had been defeated by the Europeans' use of rapid firing maxim guns, an early version of the machine gun.

My father's family were descended from the 1820 settlers, working class people enticed from England by the British government to form a white buffer along the Great Fish River, between the warlike Xhosa people and the Dutch settlers of the Cape Colony. My mother's family were descended from a German settler at the Cape and one of his slaves, freed or manumitted with her two year old son in 1786. The son, born into slavery, married into the Dutch families at the Cape and his grandson, my great grandfather, owned three farms in the Beaufort West area. The many descendants of the "coloured" slave woman, hid their Indigenous origins and "passed" for white under apartheid.

As a child, I knew nothing of colonialism, imperialism, exploitation and oppression. Black African people, speaking a language we did not understand, worked in the homes and gardens of the white settlers and ran errands for my father at his workplace, the local bank. We were taught to be polite to all adults, no matter what the colour of their skin, but the servants were called “house boys” and “garden boys”. The black people on the streets were dressed in rags, in cast off European clothes. We were told that Africans did not wear clothes in the villages and that they all had their mud huts and their vegetable gardens in the bush. Nobody mentioned that many of the Africans worked on the white owned cattle ranches for not much more than basic rations.

By 1960 the winds of change were blowing through Africa, as British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan noted in a speech he gave in the South African parliament. I remember the cartoons in the local newspapers about voting rights and black children using (white) public swimming pools. The white settlers talked about “civilisation”, sometimes Western and sometimes Christian, and vowed to defend it.

By the time I was married in 1971 there was a civil war raging across Lobengula’s country. British colonisers had drawn the boundaries of Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland and the latter two colonies had been “given” their independence, becoming Zambia and Malawi. The former, a self-governing British colony since 1923, had made a unilateral declaration of independence and was fighting a guerrilla war against ZAPU and ZANU, African nationalist movements headed by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, supported by the Soviet Union and China respectively. We were told that evil communist agitators were fomenting unrest among the uneducated native peoples of Africa in order to overthrow the benign colonial governments and take over the world.

It was when I was first married that I began to understand what was happening in Africa and to develop what the South American educator, Paulo Friere (1996), calls conscientização, or critical consciousness. When we moved into a little rented house, Robert came to work for us. He cleaned the house, did the laundry by hand in a tub, and cooked our meals. He lived in a small room attached to the garage, with a basic shower and toilet and a concrete floor, standard “servant’s quarters” at that time and in that place. One night he asked if his new wife and her little toddler from a previous relationship could come and live with him in his little room. He said that he could not afford to rent a place for them in the African township on the other side of town from where we lived, and that they

were living in one room, without a door. He didn't think that they were safe there and he wanted to bring them to our house.

I would have agreed immediately, but it turned out that there was a law against African children living on the residential properties in the white towns. Robert's wife could have joined him as an extra house servant, but if the child had been found on the property a fine would have been imposed. The owner of the house said no. The child could not come to live with us. Robert would have to stay with his family in the black township and ride his bicycle across town very early in the morning and very late at night in order to keep his poorly paid job as a house servant.

I was appalled by the injustice of this situation. I imagined another young wife, waiting in her room without a door for her husband to return, after he had cooked our dinner and washed up our plates. It did not occur to me to cook my own dinner, nor to wash my own plates. I was a colonial child of the white settler culture, not at all aware of the social and political system behind the problem, and I did not know that separating black workers from their families was standard practice in southern Africa.

I did know that violence and death had come to our community. Young white men were being conscripted into the army and terrible things were happening in the bush. Villagers caught between the government forces and the insurgents were apparently being tortured by the communist backed "terrorists", their noses, lips and ears cut off. Land mines were maiming white farmers and their families, and government soldiers (white and black, regular army and national servicemen) were being killed and wounded. It was some years before I realised that the local people saw the "terrorists" as "freedom fighters", and it was many more years before I discovered, by listening to a conversation between two veterans of the war, that the villagers had been tortured and harassed by government soldiers as well. Waterboarding was a common practice in Africa in the 1970s, accomplished by ducking the person's head repeatedly in a bucket, sometimes wrapped in a towel. Ears were hacked off by both sides and worn around the soldiers' necks. Villages and crops were burned to the ground.

Our solution to the problem at the time, as we could not stop the war, was to flee, as war refugees have done for centuries. We packed our personal possessions into the car and left the country. We heard the drums beating in the villages as we drove south through the darkness to the Limpopo River.

1.2 Becoming Aware in South Africa

We were very young in the early 1970s and we had no money. We thought about going to America, or to Europe, but we knew it was difficult to get a green card and we did not think that we could live in cold, wet Britain. As an interim solution, we drove across the Limpopo River and into South Africa, back to the land of Mzilikazi and Shaka. We needed time to work out what we should do. Many of our friends and family at home refused to speak to us, as we had joined the traitorous, cowardly “chicken run”.

We had visited South Africa as children and had heard whispers about the forced removals of mixed race “coloured” people from their homes in “white” South African suburbs. We had been assured that there was no apartheid in Rhodesia, which did not forbid interracial marriage. In fact, there was a suburb in Salisbury (now known as Harare) especially for mixed marriages and mixed race people. We truly did not see the irony of this, nor did we realise that the segregated suburbs, schools and hospitals in Rhodesia were just as much apartheid there as they were in South Africa.

We had not been in South Africa for very long when our eyes began to be opened. A friend was working at a company where the workers had to sign for their wages, paid in cash. One of the black workers was arrested for gambling. He had been sitting with friends, playing a game using bottle tops on a square drawn in the dust at the side of the road. He was held for more than a week and then released without charge, as the law allowed. He had been beaten so badly in custody that he was almost unrecognisable when he returned to work. He could not sign his name because his hand was shaking so violently. When I heard this story I felt a deep unease but I still did not fully understand.

In South Africa I had two children, and I began to study Psychology and Sociology by distance education at the University of South Africa. The university offered tuition in English and Afrikaans (the South African form of Dutch) but the course curricula were mainly derived from European (Dutch and German) philosophers and theorists rather than their American or British counterparts. It was, in fact, an Afrikaans university. Given this, it was fascinating to learn about the racist history of South Africa from a sociological point of view, and to hear that Africans were being kept deliberately poor and uneducated to serve political purposes. At school we had only been taught Greek and Roman history and the history of British kings and queens. I had known nothing at all about the history of colonisation in Africa. I slowly began to understand.

In South Africa, since apartheid had become official policy under the Afrikaner government in 1948, suppression and repression had become more and more draconian. By 1970, black and white critics of apartheid were “banned”, not allowed to meet with more than one person at a time. Neither their photographs nor their words were allowed to be published in the newspapers, so that inside the country the discourse of dissent was totally silenced. Black and white activists were either in prison or in exile. On 16 June 1976 the schoolchildren in Soweto (a sprawling black township near Johannesburg) marched in protest against plans to teach them in Afrikaans, and some of them were shot dead by the police. Shocked by newspaper images of dead children, I finally understood that white supremacy was the true goal of the government; certainly not the much vaunted defence of Christian civilisation.

Figure 1.2. **The death of Hector Peterson June 1976: Image Sam Nzima.**

As the next few years went by, more and more of the African children refused to go to school and the violent protests continued. I became more aware of the totalitarian nature of the white supremacist South African government and the struggle for freedom that was being waged by both black and white South Africans. One afternoon I watched the police chasing demonstrating students across the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand with sjamboks (long leather whips), while I cowered in an upstairs classroom with my young daughter, thankful that we had not been caught up in the violence outside.

Years later I read “Kaffir Boy” (Mathabane, 1986), a book written by an African man who had grown up in a black shanty town in Johannesburg, within a few kilometres of where we had been living in relative luxury. I was shocked and saddened by his descriptions of his life as opposed to ours. I had not known the depth of the poverty or the extent of the violence that black people had been suffering at the hands of the police due to government policies. At the time I only knew enough to greatly admire those who were prepared to risk the wrath of the Security Police by open protest, although I was not in favour of violent revolution. The bombs in the shopping centres and the executions by burning tyres (necklacing) horrified me, especially when they were shown on live television, but I would have liked to have joined the peaceful protests of the brave women of the Black Sash (Bernstein, 1975).

Much as I would have liked to have had a voice in South Africa at the time of the struggle, the truth is that my priority was the welfare of my two young children. I was simply not prepared to risk them losing their mother to house arrest, a banning order, a prison sentence, death in custody or death by letter bomb, as had been the fate of the well-known activist Ruth First, a mother of three, the wife of Joe Slovo, both members of the South African Communist Party (Slovo, 1997).

Frankel (1999) points out that there was a very high cost to political activism in South Africa. By the 1980s it was actually an offence to criticise the government in public. I stayed quiet, but I resolved that my son, who was then approaching his teens, would not be conscripted into the South African army to fight for apartheid. He had been sent to a progressive Catholic school which was bussing black children in from the townships, in defiance of the government’s demands for segregation in education. It was unthinkable that he should go into Soweto in an armoured car to shoot his classmates. Black children had adopted the motto “liberation before education” and the violent protests continued. I began to plan another move, another migration. In my thoughts, I spoke to the black

children that I saw walking along the road with their mothers. I hope you will soon be free. I cannot fight for your freedom, but I, and my children, will not fight against it.

Steve Biko (1978) wrote that it was not appropriate for the “white liberals” to organise the opposition to apartheid, that that was just another version of paternalism and white domination. He believed it was up to black South Africans to demand their freedom and their land, and the Pan African Congress did not attempt to recruit white people (Mphahlele, 2010). Biko died of head injuries in the back of a van, after being beaten by the Security Police, and the white Minister for Police said that his death left him cold. Biko, like many others, was “banned” in South Africa; no one was allowed to publish his writings or statements, and most of the white people heard his name for the first time only after his death. He is now considered to be one of the great martyrs and heroes of the struggle.

Although most of the educated world now accepts that race is a social construction, in the 1950s Western people thought very differently. White Australian scientists measured the physical characteristics of Aboriginal people in order to decide whether or not they could be “civilised” (Anderson, 2002). In the time of slavery, and during apartheid, many Europeans believed that black people had been cursed by God to be “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (Joshua 9:21, New International Version). The less religious adopted Social Darwinism and believed that it would take many generations of European education before black people could be expected to perform to the standards required by European civilisation. *Wood’s Natural History* (1861) devotes the first chapter to making the argument that all men [*sic*] are of one species, and that ”the Negro is not but an improved monkey” (p. 2). In order to prove the point, the author cites the poisoned arrow technology of the people he describes as the “most abject of the human race, the (hunter gatherer San) Bojesman … far lower in intellect and much less civilised than the … Negro” (p. 4).

It was with these ideas of racial inferiority and superiority as a foundation that the edifice of apartheid was erected in South Africa, begun by the British and completed by the Afrikaans Dutch. Many South Africans had become accustomed to seeing race as the most important characteristic of a person. As for me, my conscientização was growing more robust. It was time for us to move on, to bring up our children in a free country, free from prejudice, racism and violence.

1.3 Australia: Expectations of Freedom

One of the political parties in South Africa, the Progressive Federal Party, was known by the initials PFP. Members were against many of the apartheid laws and South Africans joked that PFP stood for “Packed for Perth”. The implication was that anyone who thought that black Africans should be allowed to vote would bolt for Australia as soon as the barriers came down and things began to change. So, once again, as we prepared to go to Australia, we were seen as traitors and cowards, and accused of the “chicken run”.

I was quite sure that I was doing the right thing. I had refused to support the losing battle for white minority rule in Rhodesia, and I would not sacrifice my son for what I realised was white supremacy in South Africa. I sincerely hoped that the black children of that time, the young people bravely and desperately protesting against the apartheid system, would be able to live in freedom as adults. I also looked forward to living in a free country, Australia, a beautiful country where one could voice one’s opposition to the government and where, I believed, people of all colours and cultures could live at peace together. Staying in South Africa in the 1980s meant that we were tacitly supporting the apartheid government, paying taxes that would be used to finance the shooting of black children by white police officers, as had already happened in Soweto in 1976. I could not do that.

One of the first things I did once I arrived in Australia was to search the newsagencies for teaching tapes or dictionaries of Aboriginal languages. I have always enjoyed learning new languages. When I discovered that such resources did not exist, it was the first hint that things were not as multicultural as I had believed they would be. I lived in an Australian city for three years without ever meeting an Indigenous person. That seemed strange, too. It was a long time before I realised that the British had erected the edifice of apartheid in Australia as well, and many years before I was able to visit Indigenous communities, to see the geographical isolation and the economic deprivation of many of the communities, places of exile and incarceration in their beginnings, and to hear about the life many Indigenous people had lived “under the Act” in Queensland and other states. In fact, I may never have learned about the lives of Indigenous people in Australia if I had not applied for a psychologist’s position with the Queensland Corrective Services Commission.

1.4 Incarceration, Trauma and Racism

I have never forgotten the first time I went into a jail. It was Boggo Road, Brisbane, December 1991, and a very hot day in the north-eastern Australian state of Queensland. I

walked into the shade under the high walls and through the gate, emerging into a sandy courtyard in the hot sun.

All around me were three storey high metal cages, with the cage roofs attached to the inside of the walls. Inside each cage, and crowding up to the bars to see who was visiting, were dozens of young men who looked about the age of my then 17 year old son. They were all wearing brown cotton shorts and rubber thongs or flip-flops on their feet; most of them were bare-chested in the heat.

I felt dizzy, as if I had suddenly lost touch with reality, and I was transported back in time to my childhood in Africa, when wild animals such as lions and monkeys were kept in cages like these. I could only think about the fact that it was no longer acceptable to keep animals in cages. There were no old-fashioned zoos in Australia. How could men be kept in cages, crowds of men, hundreds of men?

I spent the next two years working as a psychologist in a prison and I saw the utter despair of prisoners addicted to heroin, prisoners suffering from mental illness, prisoners who had suffered severe trauma as children, such as the murder of their mother or the hanging suicide of a sister, prisoners who could not read, who had left school in grade 8 or 9 and prisoners who had run away from home at 10 or 12 years of age. One prisoner had tried to sleep in the family car, in the driveway, after his drunken father had thrown him out of the house. The father came out and doused the car with petrol, threatening to set it alight.

One of the prisoners I worked with jumped off a building soon after he was released and another stole a car outside a police station, driving up and down until he was arrested and sent back to prison, where he would at least have food to eat and a bed to sleep in. Dr Patrick McGorry, a former Australian of the Year, remarked that detention centres are factories for the production of mental illness (Cresswell, 2010). Prisons are more so. Disadvantaged people, who have already been exposed to trauma, are re-traumatised, and the community is not safer as a result (Morseu-Diop, 2010).

In Australia there is a particular issue with the massive overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison. In 2012 an Indigenous person was 15 times more likely to go to prison than a non-Indigenous person, an increase since 2011 when the figure was 14 times (ABS, Prisoners in Australia, 2012). There was a non-Indigenous incarceration rate of 129 per 100,000 and an Indigenous incarceration rate of 1,914 per 100,000, a rate which has been steadily rising, year after year (Heffernan, 2010). These

incarceration rates are age-adjusted, as the Indigenous population is younger than the non-Indigenous population, and so the absolute numbers are higher. Ninety per cent of prisoners are male, which also affects the statistics. Behrendt (2003), states that “one in four Indigenous men are in jail” (p. 22).

In juvenile detention centres in 2010, 50 per cent of the inmates in New South Wales and South Australia were Indigenous, 60 per cent in Queensland centres, 73 per cent in Western Australia, and 85 per cent in the Northern Territory (Kasinathan, Gaskin, & Nunn, 2010). Indigenous people were only two and a half per cent of the general population in Australia (ABS, 2010b), three per cent in New South Wales and 30 per cent in the Northern Territory (Bamblett, Roseby, & Bath, 2010). Even in the Northern Territory, with a much higher proportion of Indigenous people, the rate of incarceration of Indigenous young people is almost three times that of non-Indigenous Australians.

I listened to many stories told by Indigenous people in my role as prison psychologist and later, in private practice and as a contract counsellor, paid by the Forde Foundation, for people who had been abused in children’s institutions. I did psychological assessments and court reports for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service in Queensland and the Aboriginal Legal Services in New South Wales. I consulted family members of prisoners (with their consent), in order to obtain information about their family and social background. I also met Indigenous welfare workers, teachers, volunteers, community leaders, researchers and academics at conferences which focused on prison issues. I found that some people in custody were very willing to talk to me about their families and communities, even though I was a woman and a whitefella/migaloo.

I heard about beatings, sexual abuse and rape on mission stations, wages withheld, forced separation of children and parents, rules against speaking their own language, imprisonment on bread and water for refusing to salute the British flag. I also heard about Indigenous people being refused accommodation in white towns, being forced to camp by the river, the white Australian Police arresting the men on flimsy pretexts and raping the women. I heard first-hand accounts of white men humiliating black men, throwing coins on the floor for them to pick up, black women and girls treated as sexual objects (known as Black Velvet), and black children being kidnapped in order to be used as house servants (“my grandfather was kidnapped, a slave for the missus”). I was told that “we were born incarcerated” and I found that it was literally true. In Queensland it was an offence under the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* (1897) and the

Aborigines Preservation and Protection Act (1939) for an Indigenous person to try to "escape" from a native reserve, such as Cherbourg, and a person attempting to escape could be punished by being sent to a prison reserve such as Palm Island.

And so, listening to the voices of Indigenous prisoners, their families and their friends, I discovered that Indigenous Australians had suffered greatly, through colonisation, dispossession, forced removals, dispersion (massacre) by the Native Police, physical and cultural genocide. "F… them white" had actually been a policy of the Protector of the Aborigines in the North in the 1930s. Dr Cecil Evelyn Cook, a British physician, had more politely described his policy as "breeding out the colour" (Rowse, 2007). The blatant racism echoed in the deep places of my heart. It was Africa all over again, the British, once again, and their racist laws and customs. Here we were, in Australia in the 21st century, and people who had suffered under the Australian version of apartheid were being arrested and locked up for minor offences, beaten by the police, kneed in the ribs, separated from their families, dying in custody. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were in custody, of course, but the brutal prison system was entrapping a far greater proportion of Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people. Poverty, inequality, and dysfunctional, struggling families were producing youth at risk in both communities, but the risk to Indigenous youth was far greater than that to non-Indigenous youth.

The Australian government's "Closing the Gap" policy is all about health, education and employment, when it should also be about incarceration. This issue was ignored in 2008 when the six targets were set by the Federal government to address Indigenous disadvantage. On 6th February 2013, the National Congress of Australia's First People called for a seventh target, reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prison (*Close the Gap Campaign Shadow Report*, 2013). Sadly, in February 2014 the *Closing the Gap Report* continued to refer to only the original six targets, although the gap between incarceration rates is far greater than the gap between life expectancies (Harrison, 2014).

As a young mother in South Africa, I had chosen the welfare of my children over taking an active part in the struggle for social justice. Now, as a grandmother and a professional woman, confronted with the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in Australian prisons, I could choose to work for social justice. The enemy was the same: racism, colonialism, Western cultural hegemony, and the postcolonial legacies of poverty, ill health and inequality. The weapons were different in this new struggle, however. I hoped that the pen

was indeed mightier than the sword; research, dissemination of knowledge, writing, and conference presentations, rather than bombs, machine guns, or landmines.

1.5 Investigating Resilience in the Cook Islands

I had been thinking about a research project focussing on people involved with the criminal justice system when, in March 2009, I was invited to visit the Cook Islands for a family wedding.

I had only heard of these South Pacific islands once before, having met a Cook Islander on a previous visit to Aoteoroa/New Zealand. The Cook Islands are a popular wedding and honeymoon venue for New Zealanders, described by both locals and visitors as “a tropical paradise”. After the wedding, we toured the volcanic, mountainous island of Rarotonga, flying over the green slopes and rocky peaks in a small aircraft and sailing out beyond the reef on a small boat into the dark blue waters of the deep ocean. Rarotonga is, without doubt, a tropical paradise; a magical place, evoking the legendary images of white sand, coral reefs, towering palm trees and brilliant red flowers of Tahiti and the 1960s movie Mutiny on the Bounty. I almost expected to see the sails of tall ships and the young Marlon Brando on the wharf at Avatui Harbour.

One afternoon, on a bus tour of the island, the prison was pointed out. I asked the driver to stop the bus and took photos of the gate and the palm trees in between the road and the prison building. We were told that there were only thirty people in the prison and I was immediately interested. This was a prison in paradise and there were just a handful of people in the nation’s only prison. It seemed a unique opportunity to study the social circumstances surrounding crime, conviction and incarceration and to understand what was keeping the incarceration rate low in the Cook Islands. I knew that colonisation had affected the Indigenous people of Australia and Homel et al. (1999) had suggested that cultural resilience was a protective factor. How had colonisation affected the people of the Cook Islands, what were the risk and protective factors in this community, and was cultural resilience protecting the young people in the Cook Islands communities?

I began, late in 2009, by writing to the Cook Islands Ministry for Justice and asking if it would be possible to conduct a research project into offending behaviour on Rarotonga, interviewing people in custody at Arorangi Prison. The reply that I received was encouraging. Another visit to Rarotonga, in July 2010, to discuss the project with the Secretaries and senior staff at the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Internal Affairs

(who managed Child Welfare Services), led to my enrolment at the University of Queensland and the obtaining of a research permit from the Cook Islands Prime Minister's office. After the acceptance of my research proposal and obtaining ethical clearance from the University, I flew to Rarotonga in July 2011 to spend four weeks in the village of Nikao, living in a rented cottage on the edge of the airport runway, not far from the prison. I had been assisted in finding suitable accommodation by one of the Cook Islands government departments, for which I was very grateful.

Unfortunately, I was ill most of the time that I was on Rarotonga in 2011. I tried to avoid drinking the water, knowing that I would not be immune to any local bacteria, but I seemed to have problems nevertheless. I discovered later that the quality of the piped water is an ongoing issue on the island (www.environment.gov.ck). There is no water treatment plant, so the rain water flows down the mountains and into the reservoirs, which are sometimes drained by the hotels and holiday resorts to the detriment of the local villages. I suspect that, July being the peak holiday season, there were some problems with the water supply in the village of Nikao. The hotels filter the water for the tourists but, apparently, the villagers are left with the murky dregs in the bottom of the reservoirs or use water from rain water tanks. My constant illness seemed to be a demonstration of the issues that arise for local people when the tourist industry overwhelms the available resources; a lived experience of the negative effects of global capitalism on local populations.

Living alone on the island of Rarotonga for four weeks was challenging for another reason. Western food was not readily available to a temporary resident. I did not have a backyard in which to grow fresh vegetables. I could not kill the wild chickens or fish in the lagoon. I found fresh food difficult to get. There was no fresh milk in the shops and I could not drink long life milk. Fresh meat, fruit, yoghurt, eggs and cheese were also difficult to obtain. As far as I could see, the Papa'a (European) owned supermarkets were filled with junk food for the tourists; chocolate, biscuits, beer, and Coca Cola. There was some fresh food available at the Saturday markets, but my ability to cook meals for one with unfamiliar ingredients on an unfamiliar gas stove in an unfamiliar kitchen was somewhat limited. I found some delicious iced tea imported from New Zealand, bought large bottles of water and ate very little. Luckily, the takeaway shop at the Avatui harbour produced home-made hamburgers which filled the gap occasionally without causing any obvious problems.

I did enjoy some home cooked local food at the feast I attended in honour of the new Catholic bishop. 'Eke (octopus), whole piglets and delicious chicken casseroles were laid

out on tables, surrounded by pink potato salad with beetroot and other tasty vegetable dishes. ‘Eke was the most delicious dish but it was all wonderful and demonstrated the true island cuisine – quite different food from the pizza and steak at the resorts.

The Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice generously assisted me to arrange meetings with senior staff, as had the previous Secretary in 2010. So did the Secretaries for Education and Internal Affairs and I owe them much gratitude. The people I met were unfailingly helpful, and I managed to interview a number of knowledgeable informants and key community stakeholders, such as police and prison officers, asking them about Cook Islands culture, and about the risk and protective factors affecting the young people.

I then interviewed the youngest inmates at the prison and other young people involved with the criminal justice system. I also attended the independence celebrations, the annual health conference, and other community activities.

I used an ethnographic approach in my study of the culture and the community and wrote up my field notes every night on my notebook computer. I read the theses relating to the Cook Islands stacked on a shelf at the Sir Geoffrey Henry National Library and books from the Pacific Collection at the private library. I took more than 300 photographs in 2011 to add to those taken in 2010 and 2009 and more in 2013 when I visited to provide feedback to the community. I wanted to gather as much information as possible about the Cook Islands communities in order to understand what cultural resilience might mean.

A non-Indigenous researcher in an Indigenous community must be aware of all of the issues relating to research as a tool of colonialism and Western cultural hegemony. I studied the work of Māori researchers (Bishop, 1994; Mila Schaaf, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999) at the Universities of Waikato and Otago, Indigenous Australian researcher Morseu-Diop (2010) and the work of Chilisa (2012) at the University of Botswana in Africa, and found that a postcolonial researcher could use Western methodologies, such as ethnography, while taking Indigenous worldviews, projects, and recommendations for respectful research into account. Chilisa (2012) describes the transformative and Indigenous research paradigms; an emphasis on social justice and critical theory, multiple socially constructed realities, respect for the rights of the researched, participatory research designs and culturally responsive methods of data collection.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) had stated that Indigenous research projects include reframing social problems such as mental illness, substance abuse, offending and incarceration in

Indigenous communities as the outcome of colonisation and lack of collective autonomy, rather than as individual psychological deficits. This pointed to Critical Theory, and Postcolonial Theory in particular, as a framework for the analysis of the research data. This theoretical lens fitted my academic background in Sociology as well as Psychology, my life experience of racism, colonialism and resistance, and my own personal values.

Frantz Fanon (1963) is the father of Postcolonial Theory. His writing about the Algerian War supported revolution in South and Central America as well as in Africa; Che Guevara and Steve Biko are known to have been influenced by Fanon (Alvarez de Toledo, 2010). As a student of Sociology in South Africa in the 1980s, I was not permitted to read Fanon's work. I have no doubt that his books were banned; they were certainly never referred to by any white South African lecturer in our Sociology department. Like Karl Marx before him and Steve Biko after him, Fanon would have been perceived in South Africa as a communist agitator of passive and naïve Indigenous peoples, all supposedly content to be subject to their kindly, paternalistic white masters.

1.6 Multiple Realities, Interconnectedness and Identity

The Indigenous research paradigm includes ontological assumptions that point to an awareness of multiple realities, and connections between humans and other beings, in the natural world and beyond, including connections with the earth, the environment and the cosmos. After more than sixty years on this earth, I am open to the reality of these connections, clearly seeing the power and energy of the natural universe and the deep strength of the bonds between living beings, their land, and their ancestors. I was raised to follow the teachings of Jesus, but Jesus was not a white man (Moore, 2009) and Jerusalem was not built in England's "green and pleasant land" (Blake, 1988/1804).

When I was fifteen years old I spent two weeks camping on a beach in Mozambique on the east coast of Africa. It is very beautiful, not dissimilar to the east coast of Australia, with palm trees and wide sandy beaches with coral outcrops under the water. It is, however, completely wild and remote from any form of so-called civilisation. We had to float the cars across a river on a raft in order to get to the camping ground at Nova Sofala, a lonely beach visited by Vasco da Gama when he travelled from Portugal to India in 1502. There was nothing there except the stone cross that marked da Gama's visit, a small village of thatched huts, a mud oven bakery producing Portuguese bread, a store which sold beer and cigarettes, and a few showers near the beach where we pitched our tents. The piped

water ran out early in the day but the local people would bring buckets of fresh prawns to the camping ground to sell on the beach in the evening.

Walking on that deserted beach at night among the palm trees, the sky was ablaze with more stars than I had ever thought it possible to imagine. The brilliant stars were alive with cosmic energy, and so was the sea. The palm trees quivered with the sea breeze and I knew without a doubt that I was surrounded by the Presence of Something, or Someone, who was connected to me in a way that I could not fathom. My spirit was awake and alive and communicating with the Beyond, with the Source. I knew then, intuitively, that the Unseen was as much a part of reality as the Seen.

Forty years later I discovered my ancestor, Lea van de Kaap, through the internet and a family website. A slave born at the Cape, her mother would have been kidnapped from a beach on the island of Madagascar, or the east coast of Mozambique, and brought to the Cape in one of the slave ships of the Dutch East India Company (Shell, 1994). She was probably very young when she was captured, just a child, as the slavers had found that children survived the shock of enslavement better than adults did. When I saw that she may have been taken from Mozambique, I remembered that night I walked on the beach. Did she walk on the sandy beaches of East Africa two hundred years before I did?

Figure 1.3. **Slave "girls" at the Cape of Good Hope.**

Jean Rhys, the white Creole author of Wide Sargasso Sea, the classic postcolonial novel, was born in Dominica, in the Caribbean. Her father was Welsh and her mother was descended from a Cuban woman suspected of being non-white. As a child Rhys lived among the recently freed slaves in Dominica and she put into words the thoughts and feelings that I had as a supposedly white person in Africa: "(was I) the only one who knew or cared that there were two sides? … I longed to be identified with the other side but it was impossible. I could not change the colour of my skin." (Rhys 1979). Raiskin (1999) believes that for the Creole of any race there is a pervasive feeling of inauthenticity, a double identity; for Rhys it was both British and Caribbean, but then, at the same time, neither British nor Caribbean.

Creole communities have mixed ways of knowing, neither the Western cultural hegemony nor the Indigenous resistance being exactly to their taste. Creole is a word that originally referred to locally born people with foreign ancestry, famously used in the French colonies which became part of the United States. There are many versions of the word, such as *kriol* and *criollo*, often meaning people of mixed ancestry, living in previously colonised countries. It also refers to the languages spoken by such people, using the vocabulary of one or more European languages and the grammar and syntax of one or more Indigenous languages, such as the Torres Strait Creole spoken by Torres Strait Islanders.

The word Creole was never used in South Africa, the Coloured and the Afrikaans communities being the locally born people with foreign ancestry. Under apartheid, the Coloured (as opposed to black) people were considered to be mixed race, while the Afrikaaners were considered to be white. In fact, both groups spoke the same indigenised or Creole language, Afrikaans, a version of Dutch which includes many words from local and other foreign languages. Any family that had been in South Africa for 200 years or more was likely to have some mixed ancestry, as ours did, and the division of local people into separate Coloured and Afrikaans groups was a social construction of apartheid. Creole is a term that covers locally born people of any heritage, foreign or Indigenous or both, and could well be applied in the South African context. My beloved grandmother was born in the Cape, the descendant of a slave, and spoke both Afrikaans and English. Here is where I found my own personal identity, my family beginnings in a Cape "Creole" Dutch family, born on the grasslands of Africa with the lions and the antelope, growing up surrounded by African sights, sounds, beliefs and customs, the violent thunderstorms and the magical *tokoloshe*, hearing lullabies sung in Zulu and in Dutch. Connected to Africa in

so many ways, it is impossible for me to think as a Western European or as a White Australian, but, of course, I do not think as a person Indigenous to Africa.

Meredith (1999), talks about “hybridity” in such cases and so, although I am not an Indigenous researcher in the context of the South Pacific, and I am not able to privilege Indigenous knowledge, I have my own experience of multiple realities and the spiritual connections to the ancestors, the land and the cosmos. I have felt them in the singing of the people of Africa, in the constant beating of the drums in the African night and in the shining stars over the white beaches of Mozambique.

As a postcolonial researcher, I am able to embrace the work of Chilisa (2012) and Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and to steer a hybrid course between Western positivism and the Indigenous methodologies of the Māori and other South Pacific peoples. My research paradigm has been largely an Indigenous research paradigm (Chilisa, 2012), falling back on the transformative paradigm, with its emphasis on values and social justice, in those places where a non-Indigenous researcher cannot go.

It is relatively easy and straightforward to work with the logic of Western science; much more complicated to work with the social constructions of the interpretive paradigm and the values of the transformative paradigm; more complicated still to work with the relational knowledge of the Indigenous paradigm (Chilisa, 2012).

1.7 An Outline of the Thesis

This thesis begins with the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in white settler prisons worldwide and the suggestion by Homel et al. (1999) that attachment bonds, self-confidence and cultural resilience might be protective factors.

Cultural resilience as a protective factor was studied in the Cook Islands, a remote South Pacific nation once colonised and now self-governing. The Polynesian people of Rarotonga and the pa ‘enua (outer islands) have a community based criminal justice system and very rarely have a young person under the age of 18 in detention.

The study is a hybrid one, a psychological study of offending within an ethnographic study of a culture and community; criminology integrated with cultural studies using Indigenous research methodology (Chilisa, 2012). Hybridity, as described by postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha (1994), is embraced as a theme running through the thesis, colonisers and colonised, hybrid identities, cultural resilience and polycultural capital.

The thesis uses words of the Cook Islands Māori language throughout the text with a translation the first time a word is used in a chapter and without italics which would imply the exotic Other (Said, 1979). Language is the essence of a people's culture (Jonassen, 2003) and te reo (the language) is used as a sign of deep respect.

Cultural resilience has been studied in the context of the eight traditional pillars of Cook Islands culture described by the musician, cultural specialist and academic Emeritus Professor Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen (2003) and each chapter of the thesis after the introduction is linked to one of these pillars as described below.

Chapter One Aka'aravei'anga – Introduction.

This chapter describes my experience of colonialism and racism in Africa and my meeting with Indigenous Australians behind prison bars. It is the positioning of the researcher and the introduction to the research problem.

Chapter Two Kitepakari (the wisdom of the ancestors) – the literature review.

In Chapter Two, criminological theories of offending behaviour are examined, including studies on risk and protective factors. Concepts of resilience and cultural resilience are also explored, as well as critical theory.

Chapter Three Irinaki (faith and trust) – the research design.

In the third chapter theoretical influences on research design are described; there are reflections on community psychology, the Indigenous research paradigm, ethnography; research methodology, qualitative research, case studies, visual analysis; the theoretical lens, postcolonial theory and self-determination theory.

Chapter Four Aka'aka (humility) – The Prisoners' Stories

The prisoners tell their stories in this chapter, describing seven major risk factors: returning to the Islands, loss of feeding parents, family violence, motor vehicle accidents, mental illness, head injuries, neurobehavioural disorders. The prisoners are highly anxious, depressed and impulsive, and their cultural resilience scores are low.

Chapter Five Aro'a (loving kindness) – Caring for our Children

In Chapter Five young people under supervision by Child Welfare and Probation Services as well as young people attending College (high school) tell their stories. Cultural resilience scores are high for students and low for offending young people.

Chapter Six Rota'i'anga (unity) – Explaining Cook Islands Culture

Community stakeholders explain both traditional and Christian Cook Islands culture in this chapter. Risk factors are thought to be poverty, alcohol abuse, and family violence. Spirituality, family support, and cultural identity are seen to be protective factors.

Chapter Seven Ora (life is the land) – observing life and land in the Cook Islands.

In Chapter Seven I am the participant observer, the papa'a or papalagi writing with love and respect, as suggested by Albert Wendt (1976); writing about celebrations, dancing and sport, the health conference and a community meeting. This chapter includes a visual data analysis of 20 images of the vibrant hybrid culture of the Cook Islands.

Chapter Eight Akakoromaki (long suffering) – the endurance of the people.

Postcolonial theory is used to analyse the community risk factors in this chapter and the Indigenous research projects of remembering the colonial past and reframing the missionary, colonial and adventure narratives are part and parcel of the analysis. These projects demonstrate that social problems in Indigenous communities are often the result of cultural trauma rather than individual psychopathology.

Chapter Nine Noa (freedom) - self-determination and cultural resilience.

In this last chapter the contribution of trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder to the victim-offender overlap is discussed. The powerful protective factors of the extended family and the feeding child tradition in Polynesian communities are noted.

Self-determination theory, autonomy, relatedness and competence are compared to the protective factors described by Homel et al (1999), cultural resilience, attachment bonds and self-confidence. Cultural resilience flourishes when people are free to practice their culture, to develop relationships and competence.

Finally, the importance of connection to people, spirituality and place is emphasised; social processes cannot ameliorate risk when families and cultural traditions have been disrupted by forced removals to foster families, boarding schools or native reserves.

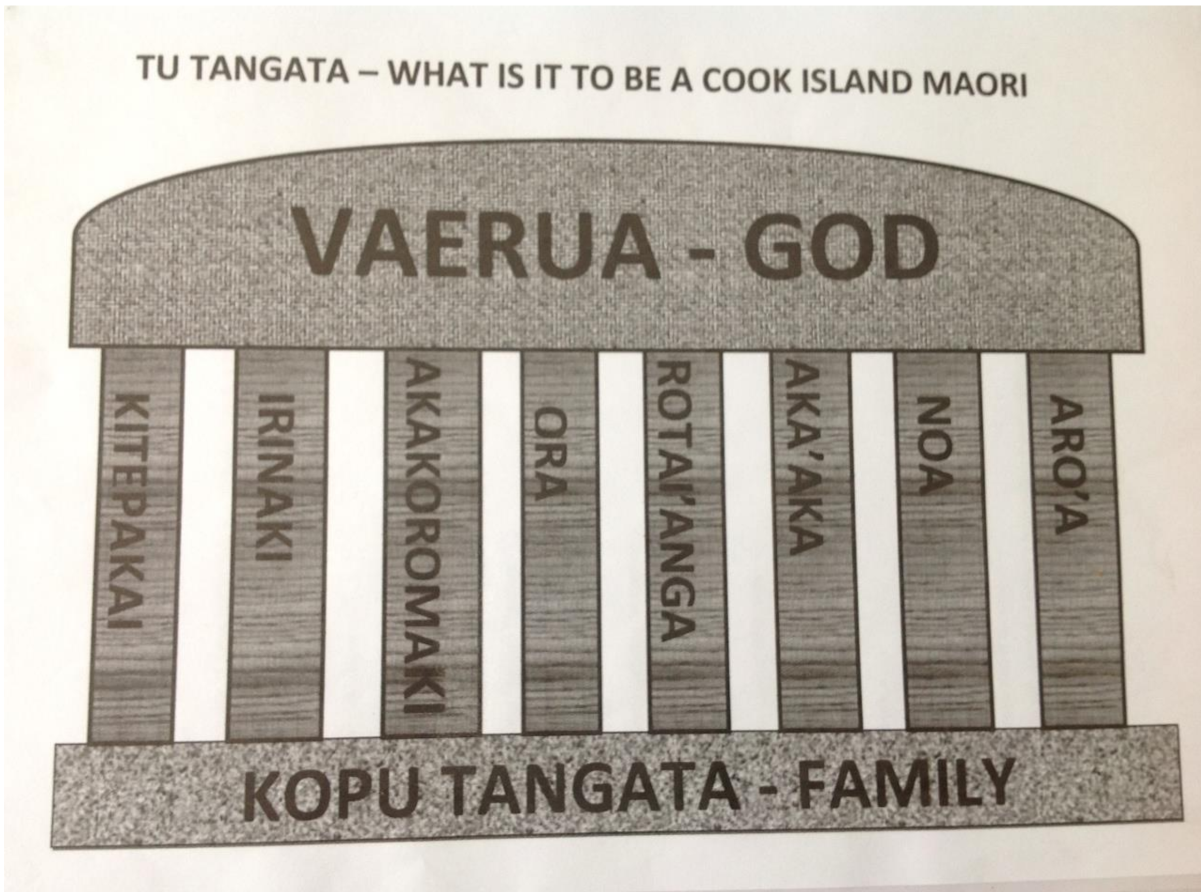

Figure 1.4. **The Eight Pillars of Cook Islands Culture (Jonassen, 2003).**

Chapter Two

Literature Review

KITEPAKARI wisdom

This literature review, or study of the wisdom of the academic elders, examines theories of offending behaviour, as well as studies of risk and protective factors, resilience and cultural resilience. Critical race theory and postcolonial theory are mentioned here as well as self-determination theory.

Figure 2.1. **Academic elder, Dr Marjorie Tua'inekore Crocombe.** Educator, author, translator and editor, Cook Islands history, literature and culture. Image: *Cook Islands News*.

2.1 Theories of Offending Behaviour

Punishment for offending behaviour in many cultures has included exile, slavery, torture and death. There was no thought of rehabilitation as perpetrators were seen as agents of evil. However, by the nineteenth century, reformers in the Western world were attempting to use imprisonment as a means of “producing a religious conversion in the convict” (Morris & Rothman, 1998, p. 85). Offending was seen as a moral and spiritual failing and religious adherence was seen as an essential protective factor.

Siegel (2004) explains that criminology as social science developed from the classical theories of Jeremy Bentham (2014/1789) to the rational choice theory exemplified by Martinson (1974), as well as branching out to include psychological trait theory, Marxist theory, sociological theories and multifactor theories. The Department of Corrections in New Zealand published a review of the research on offender rehabilitation programs in 2009 under the title *What Works Now*? Targets for intervention focus on such individual factors as literacy skills and employment skills.

Farrington (2008) mentions various classical theories of criminology such as strain theory, social disorganization theory, differential association theory and social control theory. Greenwood (2006) describes the changes in theoretical ideas from the early 20th century when offenders were thought to be mentally defective, through the years when children were sent away from their families to be better socialized in institutions, to the 21st century idea of the dynamic interaction of risk and protective factors.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) propose a general theory of crime which attempts to explain all of the research findings in criminology in terms of a lack of self-control, which leads to the impulsive pursuit of self-interest at the expense of other people’s rights and the perpetrator’s own future. These authors assume that a lack of self-control is a product of socialization and is therefore due to failure by the family and the school to apply appropriate discipline in the developmental period. It is now understood that unheeding impulsivity may be due to brain damage and dysfunction, for example, due to the effect of exposure to alcohol in utero (Streissguth & Kanter, 1997; Catterick, 2014).

The conventional wisdom that says bad or immoral people go to prison is not supported by recent research which strongly suggests that disadvantage and disability are important risk factors in offending (Ewing, 2007; Hammill, 2006; Lewis, 1998; Margo & Stevens, 2008; Solomon, 2004). Since the late 20th century closing of the large mental hospitals and the

institutions for the care of those with intellectual disability, more and more of the former hospital inmates have become prison inmates (Rogers, 2008). A whole wing of the maximum security Woodford Prison in Queensland, Australia has been allocated to prisoners with intellectual disabilities.

It is true that the concept of a criminal, antisocial or psychopathic personality (bad not mad) has been widely accepted in the Western world (Black, 1999; Hare, 1999; Yochelson & Samenow, 1976) and the study of psychopathy as defined by Robert Hare is described by Lahey and Waldman (2008, p. 31) as “a large and important literature”. It is difficult to see how the 70 year old Freudian construct of the psychopath, as described by Hervey Cleckley (1976/1941), and diagnosed today by using the Hare checklist, can survive the ongoing research into the brain and behaviour (Strueber, Lueck, & Roth, 2007), trauma and behaviour (Ewing, 2007) and language impairment and behaviour (Snow & Powell, 2004). In the manual for the Psychopathy Checklist – Revised (2003), Hare quotes ongoing research from as early as 1979, in which he and his colleagues found significant neurological and cognitive deficits in people he defined as psychopaths. Nevertheless, in his book, *Without Conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us,* he described the subjects of his research in pejorative terms as selfish, ruthless, manipulative “social predators” (Hare, 1999, preface, p xi).

Personality disorders are now being attributed to childhood abuse or other early trauma (Lonic, 1993) rather than to bad character, weakness or moral deficits. Socially acceptable behaviour appears to require a healthy, well-functioning brain. Ongoing trauma in childhood may significantly affect the development and functioning of the brain (Ewing, 2007). Farrington and Welsh (2007) note that “many important risk factors for offending (such as low intelligence, impulsivity and lack of empathy) … may reflect executive functioning deficits in the brain” (p. 54).

Aichorn (1951), first published in German in 1925, described offending by young people in developmental terms. He believed that delinquency has multiple causes, including neglect and cruelty, and that relationship difficulties are important risk factors. In recent times Farrington (1985, 1994, 2008) has written extensively about the developmental and life course trajectory theories of offending behaviour. Offending by juveniles is associated with developmental factors such as immaturity and poor judgment, with individual risk factors such as low intelligence and school failure, and with a multiplicity of family, peer, school

and community risk factors as well as the influence of life events and life transitions (Farrington, 2008).

The study of risk and protective factors began in earnest with multidisciplinary studies of the effects on children of stress and adverse circumstances (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983) and with the definition of developmental psychopathology by Sroufe and Rutter (1984). Rutter (1987) expresses the opinion that protective factors are not simply the opposite of risk factors (as in school failure or school success) but dynamic processes that come into play in the presence of risk. The longitudinal research done by Werner and Smith (1982) and Werner (1993) in Hawaii on resilience, defined as the successful adaptation of children affected by multiple risk factors, has been described as “groundbreaking” by Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker (2000, p. 544). Garmezy (1996) explains that it is the magnitude and multiplicity of stressors in the life of the child that is the key to understanding the development of behavioural disorders, rather than the identification of specific causal factors. Resilience is understood by Ginsburg (2011) as the ability to cope with challenges, building resilience as giving children roots and wings, security and confidence.

The interaction of risk and protective factors may produce a situation where the young person is at risk of offending, yet other factors, such as opportunity, may influence the actual commission of an offence (Farrington, 2008). Lahey and Waldman (2008) describe an extension of the social learning model to include the individual factors of the child’s temperament and cognitive functioning in theories of offending. Greenwood (2006) states that seeking knowledge about the interaction of the various risk and protective factors over the life-course is the “current frontier” of research (p. 25). There is a large and growing body of research on the pathways that young people take into prison, as described by Bower, Carroll, and Ashman (2011). Protective factors (such as adequate and consistent care, being seen as attractive by others, and social competence) which may produce resilience in adversity were described by Garmezy in 1996 and are now routinely being measured, as well as risk factors (Rennie & Dolan, 2010).

2.2 Risk and Protective Factors

Five types of risk factors have been described by many authors, relating to individual, family, peer, school and community characteristics (Wasserman, Keenan, Tremblay, Coie, Herrenkohl, Loeber, & Petechuk, 2003; Van der Put, Dekovic, Stams, Van der Laan, Hoeve, & Van Amersfort, 2011). Protective factors may be classified in the same way, or as one of two types, either risk continuum factors, such as intelligence being high or low,

or as interactive processes or mechanisms (Rutter, 1987). They have also been classified as support factors and divided into three types, external, internal and existential, by Gunnestad (2006). The SAVRY (Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth) lists prosocial involvement, strong social support and strong attachments and bonds as protective factors, among others (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2006). Protective factors are seen as creating resilience in the individual child and/or in the community or cultural group that the child belongs to, and so the constructs of protective factor and resilience are closely linked. If resilience is seen as the ability to bounce back from adversity, the protective factors (social processes) may weave the safety net that provides the bounce.

2.2.1 Individual risk factors

Individual risk factors for offending include physiological and physical attributes. Mitropoulou, Zale, New, Trestman, and Siever (1996) found that impulsive, aggressive behaviour was associated with low levels of serum cholesterol and Repo-Tiihonen, Virkkunen, Halonen, and Tiihonen (2002) found that these low serum cholesterol levels were associated with childhood onset conduct disorder (that is, before the age of ten). Biochemistry may influence offending behaviour in ways other than the fluctuation of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and cortisol, acknowledged to contribute to overt mental illness and aggression (Walinder & Rutzt, 2001). Unfortunately, as these biological factors are likely to remain invisible to the criminal justice system and to most researchers, it is difficult to determine the extent of their influence on offending.

Various studies have found that 40 to 80% of people brought before the courts have suffered significant head injuries and traumatic brain injury (Perros, 2010; Williams, 2010). Lewis (1998) described the very high incidence of brain damage that she found in young men on death row in the United States. In any study or assessment of offenders it is therefore essential to ask about head injuries. Delayed oral language development and poor communication skills have been cited by Snow and Powell (2004) as leading to antisocial behaviour. Autism and Asperger's syndrome may also be a factor in offending behaviour due to poor social skills and inappropriate social behaviour (Attwood, 2007; Clements, 2005). Any damage to the brain, or neurological dysfunction, becomes a risk factor for offending as the person with a neurological disability may be less able to negotiate the social world. Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, and D'Ambrosio (2001) have pointed out that 20-60% of incarcerated adolescents have "a special education label" (p.

120). The estimates of the prevalence of head injuries and cognitive impairment vary according to different studies but nevertheless indicate a significant problem.

Substance abuse is a well-known risk factor in offending behaviour but is not seen as causative, rather as a factor associated with many types of antisocial behaviour (Legosz, 2007; Rosevear, 2010). Use of psychoactive drugs may be closely linked with other types of offending, such as the stealing and fraud associated with heroin addiction and the armed robberies associated with amphetamine use (Fraser, 2007). Heffernan (2010) states that 75% of the Indigenous people in custody in Queensland in 2007 were intoxicated at the time of their current offence. The historian Joanne Watson (2010) mentions that “alcohol was involved in almost all forms of crime on Palm [Island] in the late 1970s” (p. 133**)**. In other communities illegal drug use is a major factor in crime. In both Australia and the United States, prison populations have increased dramatically due to possession of illicit drugs being severely punished (Greene, 2003).

Dr Jan Hammill (2006) has pointed out that fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in Aboriginal communities may play a significant role in causing cognitive or language dysfunction, school failure and unemployment. These difficulties may lead to offending behaviour and incarceration. Hammill argues for diagnosis and remedial treatment of these disorders whereas others have seen the suggestion of high rates of fetal alcohol disorders in Indigenous children as harmful, racist and discriminatory (Plevitz, Smith, & Gould, 2008). Rabson (2011) notes that 10 to 25% of young offenders in Canada are thought to have fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

Hearing impairment has been linked with the incarceration of Indigenous Australians. Queensland ear, nose and throat surgeon, Dr Chris Perry (2007) has noted that 90% of Indigenous children suffer from significant hearing loss due to chronic ear infections which may result in learning and behaviour problems, school failure and unemployment. In November 2010 the ABC program Lateline referred to statistics in Western Australia which showed that 40% of Indigenous children in metropolitan schools suffered from hearing impairment as did 45% of Indigenous prisoners at Bandyup prison (ABC, 2010).

It is interesting that poor mental health is not often mentioned as an individual risk factor. Mental illness in the parents is mentioned by Wasserman et al. (2003) but it is possible for young children to suffer from such conditions as depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, bipolar affective disorder and schizophrenia (Angold & Egger, 2007; Lyon & Koplewicz, 2007; Papalos & Papalos, 2006). As with substance abuse, mental illness may

not be seen as causative and it seems that some of the risk factors for offending, such as trauma, neglect, victimization and loss, are the same factors that may affect mental health (Legosz, 2007). Lahey and Waldman (2008) note that “most youth who engage in serious and persistent juvenile offending also have serious mental health problems” (p. 32). Any factor that promotes good mental health may also be a protection against offending. Good mental health is essentially healthy brain function and it is poor brain function (cognitive deficits, impulsivity, depression, anxiety, outbursts of anger) that facilitates substance abuse and offending behaviour (Ewing, 2007).

Raine (1993) argued that crime (or criminal behaviour) is a clinical disorder, in and of itself. It is probably not necessary to create a separate psychological disorder to account for offending behaviour as it is now known that many people in prison are suffering from either a mental disorder (Heffernan, Anderson & Dev, 2012) or a neurological disability (Perros, 2010). The Director of the Prison Reform Trust states that 90% of young people in prison in England and Wales are suffering from “a diagnosable mental disorder” (Lyon, 2004; p. 24). Grisso, Vincent and Seagrave (2005) refer to the “extraordinary proportion of youths with mental disorders who are in the custody of (American) juvenile justice facilities” (p. xi). In Australia, Butler, Andrews, Allnutt, Sakashita, Smith, and Basson (2006) found that 80% of prisoners in New South Wales had a diagnosable psychiatric illness according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) versus 31% of people in the community.

Posttraumatic stress disorder or PTSD may be a particularly significant risk factor for offending behaviour. Symptoms include irritability and outbursts of anger which may lead to violence, and PTSD is closely associated with both depression and substance abuse (Najavits, 2002). Studies in New Zealand, New South Wales and Germany have shown that 25-39% of prisoners are suffering from PTSD (Butler, et al., 2006; Garieballa, Schauer, Neuner, Saleptsi, Kluttig, Elbert, Hoffmann, & Rockstroh, 2006). This may explain why such life events as the sudden death of a parent or child sexual abuse are commonly associated with increased risk for offending behaviour. The trauma results in an anxiety disorder which results in substance abuse which results in offending.

The lived experience of child abuse and neglect has been explicitly linked to offending behaviour by criminologists. It has been noted that children are frequently the victims of crimes, such as physical or sexual assault, and witnesses to domestic violence, even the murder of a parent, and that many child victims may become perpetrators of antisocial or

otherwise inappropriate behaviour (McCartney, Lincoln & Wilson, 2003). It has also been reported that young sex offenders have usually been exposed to multiple forms of child abuse and trauma (Smallbone, Marshall, & Wortley, 2008), and many have been sexually abused themselves (Barbaree & Langton, 2006).

Biological risk factors seem an unlikely source of differences between communities. For example, hyperactivity and delayed language development are considered to be important risk factors (Lahey et al., 2008). It is unlikely that Cook Islanders, Māori people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians differ greatly on the prevalence of biological/neurological factors such as these. However, if a community is suffering from a high rate of any risk factor affecting the individual, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, hearing loss or child abuse, that high prevalence will, in itself, become a significant community risk factor.

2.2.2 Family risk factors

There are people from healthy, supportive families in prison in every country but they are the exception, not the majority. Lahey and Waldman (2004) state that "parenting plays the key role" in the development of conduct problems in vulnerable children. Piquero and Moffitt (2008) claim that effective parenting is compromised by poverty and "disrupted family bonds" (p. 53). McGee, Wicker, Corcoran, Bor, and Najman (2011) found that disruption in the family was a major predictor of antisocial behaviour at age 14 years. A study by Jacobson, Bhardwa, Gyateng, Hunter, and Hough (2010) found that three quarters of young offenders in their sample had absent fathers and one third had absent mothers. In addition, parents may be functionally absent due to mental illness, excess use of alcohol and other drugs or even long working hours. For one thing, they will not be able to provide their children with the level of supervision required to protect them from engaging in antisocial behaviour (Thornberry & Krohn, 2008). Having a parent sent away to prison increases the risk of his or her children also going to prison by six times (Australian Government, 2003) and perhaps the absence of an effective parent is one of the major links in intergenerational criminality. Debus (2011) states that 60% of young Indigenous offenders, in custody in New South Wales in 2009, had a parent in prison.

Much of what is known about prison inmates points towards families under stress, trauma, ill health, child abuse and neglect (Wileman, Gullone, & Moss, 2008). Physical abuse by parents has been implicated in juvenile delinquency since at least 1921 when Homer Lane's experience with young offenders influenced A.S. Neill to attempt radical reforms in education (Neill, 1960). Leach (2002) states that corporal punishment by parents is

associated with an increase in offending behaviour in adolescence and a meta-analysis by Gershoff (2002) found that criminality was significantly associated with the experience of corporal punishment. The literature refers to “harsh discipline” (Raine, 1993, p. 259) as a risk factor, but prison inmates tell stories of guns being held to their heads, being held under water, and beatings that resulted in blood on the walls. Extreme cases of family violence have been redefined as torture by Queensland courts since a particular child abuse case outraged the community. Middleton (2004) compares living in a violent family to surviving a train wreck, in terms of psychological damage to the child.

Home and family factors were prominent in a recent English study. Jacobson et al. (2010) randomly selected 200 children from the 6000 who were given custodial sentences by the courts in England and Wales from July to December 2008 and obtained information about their social circumstances. The results give the proportions of the incarcerated youths who suffered various risk factors and suggest an additive and cumulative effect. Absent parents, bereavement, domestic violence, the involvement of child protection agencies, running away from home, abuse, neglect, self-harm and suicide attempts indicated that family risk factors are very influential in behavioural outcomes (Jacobson et al., 2010).

Many offenders in North America and Australia, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were children who were removed from their families at an early age by child welfare officials (Jonson-Reid & Barth, 2000; Pridemore, 2004; Weatherburn, Snowball, & Hunter, 2008). Indigenous children in Australia and Canada were usually removed in order to assimilate them into the dominant culture. Although Cook Islanders experienced massive cultural change after European contact and suffered the trauma of losing their loved ones to Peruvian slave traders (Beaglehole, 1957) and deadly epidemics of European diseases (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003), they did not suffer the systematic removal of children from their parents and the consequent breakdown of their family systems. In the Cook Islands today there are large, extended families living in close proximity and there is no orphanage or Children’s Home. In Polynesian communities the care of children may be shared with grandparents or other relatives, or close friends (Dodson, 2009) but the children remain in contact with their biological parents, their family networks, and their cultural heritage.

2.2.3 Peer and school factors

Peers are most influential during the time that the young person is attending school, and so these two factors are considered together. School is a place where learning takes place in groups, whether the learning is academic, or involves sports, art, music or another

cultural pursuit. The social adjustment of the young person is crucial to their ability to learn and develop adaptive skills, as anxiety inhibits learning. Those children who are vulnerable to rejection due to any kind of difference (appearance, disability, culture) may find that they are bullied. Garmezy (1996) notes that children who are seen as attractive by their peers are less likely to become involved in antisocial behaviour and, conversely, Raine (1993) has described large scale studies that showed that 50-60% of male and female prisoners have obvious facial defects and disfigurements. Selekman (2008) has stated that rejection by peers is "social death" (p. 6) to an adolescent and that bullying is a form of violence that may have very serious consequences.

Wasserman et al. (2003) suggest that children are rejected by peers because of their antisocial behaviour which leads to more antisocial behaviour. On the other hand, Fast (2008) describes a vicious culture of bullying at Columbine High School where Harris and Klebold shot 12 students and a teacher in 1999. The victims of the bullying were the socially isolated, the younger students, and the disabled.

As far as academic learning is concerned, it is well known that prisoners have usually left school early and have problems with literacy and numeracy as well as oral communication (Snow & Powell, 2004). Bower et al. (2011) studied the schooling experiences of three groups of adolescents, early onset offenders, late onset offenders and non-offenders, by listening to their personal stories. This research describes risk and protective factors in the school environment such as low academic ability and boredom on the one hand, and social competence and positive relationships with teachers on the other hand. The researchers conclude that it is essential to keep youth at risk engaged in a positive learning environment. Bullying and academic failure, as well as being suspended or expelled from school, are powerful factors in premature disengagement (Thornberry & Krohn, 2008).

In the study by Bower et al. (2011) of school experiences, many of the young offenders were Indigenous Australians. In custody, Indigenous and non-Indigenous juvenile offenders are associating with disadvantaged, poorly functioning, antisocial peers and so it seems that incarceration is creating yet another risk factor in the lives of at risk young people. Peer influence is considered to be very important in the adolescent years as "peers replace parents … as major sources of … approval" (Thornberry & Krohn., 2008, p. 194). Incarceration keeps young people out of the mainstream school system and away from a potential source of prosocial influences. Offending peers are more likely to approve

of risky or antisocial behaviour. It also exposes young people to the risk of sexual assault by institutional staff or peers (Denborough, 1996; Jones & Pratt, 2008), with the ongoing negative sequelae of sexual trauma such as anxiety and drug abuse (Legosz, 2007).

The rate of offending appears to be low in the Cook Islands. Most significant, as far as peer influence is concerned, is the fact that there is no juvenile detention centre in the islands. In January 2011, no person under the age of 17 years was incarcerated in the Cook Islands (Tangaroa, personal communication, January 2011). Juvenile incarceration is a major predictor of adult imprisonment (Debus, 2011; Bernstein, 2014).

2.2.4 Community risk and protective factors

Different communities suffer from different rates of crime and of incarceration. Community psychology is an area of psychology that seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals as members of an interconnected community (Rappaport, 1977). This perspective sees the community as playing a crucial role in the prosocial development of young people and posits a psychological sense of community (Sarason, 1974). This concept is linked to the idea of cultural resilience as exemplified in the study by Bishop, Colquhoun, and Johnson (2006) which investigated psychological sense of community and Aboriginal social structure in Western Australia. Culture and community are not equivalent constructs, but the culture of a people is very relevant as it permeates all aspects of their community life.

The overrepresentation of Indigenous people in prisons in Australia and New Zealand, and what factors might be risk or protective in Indigenous communities has received little attention from researchers (Day, 2003; McCausland & Vivian, 2010; Weatherburn et al., 2008). It is instructive that Farrington (2008) states that "more research is needed on … community risk factors in particular" (p. 89). Kasinathan et al. (2010) claim that, in Australia, once the juvenile offender is incarcerated, there is no significant difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youths in terms of risk factors such as social disadvantage, individual disability or mental health issues. This finding, as well as the finding by Garieballa et al. (2006), that there was no significant difference in the incidence of posttraumatic stress disorder between German and Sudanese immigrant prisoners in German prisons, indicates that it is the prevalence of political, economic and health-related disadvantage in a community that is the issue. A similar finding was made in New Zealand; Māori did not have an increased risk of offending if confounding factors such as socioeconomic status, family dysfunction and individual psychological adjustment were

controlled for (Marie, Boden, & Fergusson, 2009). It seems that it is the prevalence of these risk factors in a particular community that creates the risk for individuals.

Focus on individual choice as the cause of offending behaviour is a particularly Western linear point of view and non-Western communities may find this focus irrelevant and inappropriate (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). In the United States many offenders are African-Americans, living in poverty as a result of generations of slavery and discrimination (Douglass, 2013/1845; Du Bois, 1903; Hannon & DeFina, 2005). Native Americans, many impoverished and marginalized, also have a higher than expected rate of substance abuse and incarceration (Pridemore, 2004). In New Zealand, the indigenous Māori people are imprisoned at three times the rate of the Pakehā or New Zealanders of European descent (Reeve, Department of Corrections, personal communication, 14 December 2010). McGee et al. (2011) state that "a community's level of socioeconomic disadvantage is strongly associated with crime" (p. 5) There is the distinct possibility that high rates of crime and incarceration then have an ongoing negative impact on the communities affected, creating unemployment, poverty, absent parents and other major risk factors for the next generation (Clear, 2007). So it seems that community disadvantage creates crime and incarceration creates community disadvantage. Within a cycle of social disintegration such as this, the choices available to individuals may be limited. This may be particularly true for adolescents, not yet able to access employment opportunities or community resources.

It is thought that colonised and dispossessed communities are especially at risk for poor mental health and antisocial behaviour (Watson, 2010). Suicide rates are high in Aboriginal Canadian communities (Lalonde, 2006) as they are in Indigenous Australian communities. Heffernan et al. (2012) found that the prevalence of mental illness among Indigenous prisoners in Queensland was very high. Almost 30% of Indigenous women in prison had suffered a psychotic episode within the twelve months previous to a study conducted by Prison Mental Health Services, and the rates of mental illness were elevated for male Indigenous prisoners as well. Individual factors, such as mental illness, substance abuse, hearing loss or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, that increase risk for an individual, may be seen as community risk factors when there is a high prevalence of that factor in a particular community.

Fleming and Ledogar (2008), and Morseu-Diop (2010), refer to historical grief issues as well as ongoing grief and loss in Indigenous communities. The latter author indicates that the trauma suffered by the Stolen Generation and their families is one of the causes of

crime and subsequent punishment by incarceration. In May 2007, the then President of the Australian Psychological Society, Amanda Gordon, referred to the intergenerational trauma suffered by Indigenous people in Australia. She said that the individual and social problems such as substance abuse, family violence and sexual assaults occurring in Indigenous communities were better understood as the "well known effects of trauma" (Gordon, 2007). The trauma suffered by Indigenous people from 1788 until 1968, and afterwards, has been documented by many authors including Elder (1998), Lindqvist (2005), Kenny (2007) and Watson (2010).

It seems that colonisation, forced removals from country (traditional lands), incarceration in government reserves, racial discrimination, lack of access to education and health care, all become community risk factors for poor mental health, substance abuse and offending behaviour (Blake, 2001; Homel et al., 1999; Kidd, 1997). McCausland and Vivian (2010) in their pilot study "Why do some Aboriginal communities have lower crime rates than others?" noted the presence of strong leaders and elders as well as less racism and segregation experienced by the community as having protective effects. Greenwood (2006, p. 25) notes that "exposure to … racial prejudice" is a community risk factor.

Racism and harassment by police have been mentioned by a number of Australian authors (Behrendt, 2003; Homel et al., 1999; Walsh, 2007; Waters, 2008; Watson, 2010) as a risk factor for certain communities. Fleming and Ledogar (2008) indicates that perceived racism is a risk factor for Native Americans. Waters (2008) is particularly insistent that racism is an ongoing risk factor for Indigenous Australian communities. Although racism is not a characteristic of the communities, being the object of racist attitudes is. The incidence of racism in the Cook Islands under New Zealand rule is well documented by Scott (1991), and Beaglehole (1957), a New Zealand academic, expressed patronizing colonial attitudes when writing about social change in the Cook Islands. It was said by Gilson (1980) that the missionaries and the British administrators considered the Islanders to be "children" (p. 73) and the New Zealand government considered them to be "a semi-civilised people" (p. 113). Thorogood (1960), a member of the London Missionary Society, shared the racist attitudes of the times, writing about a European who "married a native girl, lost his self-respect", and the children of "intermarriage" [as the] "brightest children in the islands" (p. 8).

Homel et al. (1999) believe that it is essential to understand the social background of the offending individual. They found that the historical trauma and ongoing racism in the

criminal justice system were unique meta-factors for understanding offending behaviour in Australian Indigenous communities, along with such general factors as poverty, child abuse and school failure. Protective factors were thought to be cultural resilience, personal self-confidence and interpersonal attachments. Weatherburn et al. (2008) found that completing Year 12 at school and being employed were protective factors. Pridemore (2004), in his review of the literature on risk and protective factors for offending behaviour among Native Americans, also mentions the "protective value of … culture and tradition" and includes spirituality and the use of a native language. The concept of cultural resilience was used by educators in the early 1990s when working with students at Tribal Colleges of American Indian Higher Education in Montana, USA. The following were seen as culturally based protective factors: spirituality, family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, and tribal identity (Heavyrunner & Marshall, 2003; Heavyrunner & Morris, 1997).

A birth cohort study conducted in Wuhan, China attempted to address the interaction of various factors in causing offending. Taylor, Friday, Ren, Weitekamp and Kerner (2004) concluded their report with the following statement.

> We encourage future researchers to continue examining risk and protective factors in different cultural contexts in order to help understand not only the factors which influence offending behaviours, but how these factors interrelate (p. 27).

2.2.5 Interaction of risk and protective factors

The dynamic interaction of risk and protective factors (or protective mechanisms) is recognised by a number of authors. Raine (1993) suggests that "criminal behaviour … is driven by a complex, interactive system involving diverse biological and social factors" (p. 18). Hoge, Guerra, and Boxer (2008, p. 280) state that "research and theory have advanced our understanding of the individual and situational factors placing youth at risk for criminal activity. However, knowledge of the dynamics of those risk factors is limited". Farrington and Welsh (2007, p. 3) say that "after decades of rigorous study … across the Western world … a great deal is now known about early risk factors for delinquency and later criminal offending" but admit that much less is known about the influence of protective factors.

Bartol and Bartol (2009) commented that the developmental pathways approach is at the cutting edge of research although there are many unanswered questions. Separate groups of young offenders who have travelled different pathways have been identified, for

example, early onset life course persistent and adolescent limited offenders (Moffitt, 1993). Bartol and Bartol recognise that not all offenders will fall into these two groups, but suggest that it may be the degree of social incompetence suffered by the child that distinguishes early and late starters. They also make the point that focusing on resilience and protective factors is probably the most effective way to prevent offending behaviour.

Werner (1993) mentions that the children who do not succumb to the negative effects of such factors as community poverty and family breakdown are often seen by others as friendly and easy to manage, as well as intelligent, having more than adequate cognitive skills. Moffitt (1993) discussed the interaction of neuropsychological disabilities with an antisocial environment and Fleming and Ledogar (2008) refer to robust neurobiology as a protective factor. These authors seem to be implying that children with brains that are functioning well are able to overcome environmental or community risk factors and become responsible, prosocial adults. On the other hand, those with brain-based impairments in cognitive or language skills who also suffer adverse life experiences may need powerful protective factors to avoid rejection and marginalisation by the community.

It is usually the family that protects the child with cognitive impairments such as learning disabilities, autism, or speech and language delays by acting as his or her advocate at school, obtaining assessments, therapy and skills training, taking action if there is bullying and finding ways for the child to participate in social activities. If the parents or family are not available to take on this role in the life of the child, his or her inappropriate behaviour may soon lead to rejection by peers and school teachers, exclusion and an antisocial lifestyle. The family intervention may, therefore, act as a protective process, ameliorating risk factors at school and with peers. In the same way, the school may provide counselling or intervention programs that assist the child with poor social skills, and peers may provide a safe haven in their homes for a neglected or abused child. If the child is young, the family has more power to act as a protective mechanism than the school or the peer group does. As the child grows older, so the power of the peer group, the school, and the community grows, for good or ill (Van der Put et al., 2011).

Another relevant factor in the study of offending behaviour is development and the developmental pathways approach referred to by Bartol et al. (2009). Bronfenbrenner (1979) has made the point that the individual is involved in a series of systems, beginning with the microsystem of child and family. Each of these systems, from the family to the school, to the mesosystem of community agencies and the macrosystem of the community

or the nation, has an influence on the individual and on his or her development. This was well illustrated by J-F (2010) in his study of the desistance of offenders. Culture, however, is not merely a super system on a level above the community and the nation. Different communities may share similar cultural practices but culture permeates every level of the social ecology, from the family to the national government, and is the medium in which these systems operate. Different cultures are like different geographic environments, in that a person used to one physical or social environment may feel confident and competent there but struggle to adapt to a strange environment.

2.3 Resilience and Cultural Resilience

Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings (Ginsburg, 2011) was published by the American Academy of Pediatrics as a guide for parents and teachers. Resilience is described as the ability to rise above adverse circumstances, to face difficult challenges and to bounce back, and the influence of culture and communities on the development of resilience is noted. Physical punishment is dismissed in one sentence as harmful to children, according to “ample evidence” (p. 279).

Fleming and Ledogar (2008, p. 17), when reviewing the literature on resilience, note that the influence of culture on resilience is a “very little-explored field”. It has also been said that the literature on cultural resilience is limited (Strand & Peacock, 2003). The reasons for this “research lacuna” (Brasche, 2008, p. 93) are thought to be partly a lack of measurement instruments for cultural resilience and partly the difficulties involved in research involving more than one culture. Brasche recommends research in this area as the first step towards improving the social conditions of marginalized and dysfunctional communities. Morseu-Diop (2010) has described the effective use of culture-as-rehabilitation in prisons in Aoteoroa/New Zealand and indicates that a strong sense of cultural identity is essential to restoration and reduced recidivism.

Cultural resilience, or the resilience of a culture, has been thought to be important when a community or nation has been confronted with change through colonisation, war, occupation or amalgamation (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). For example, the Polish people clearly had a strong and resilient culture which enabled them to survive years of occupation by the Nazis and by the Soviets and to regain their independence. Resilience as a cultural factor is also being discussed in the wake of natural disasters in Japan and the calm determination of the Japanese people (Beech, 2011). However, both Homel et al. (1999) and Heavyrunner and Marshall (2003) use the concept of cultural resilience in a

different sense, not to describe the resilience of the culture or the community but to describe the cultural strengths that Indigenous people can draw on to ameliorate the risks inherent in the marginalisation and poverty resulting from colonisation and dispossession.

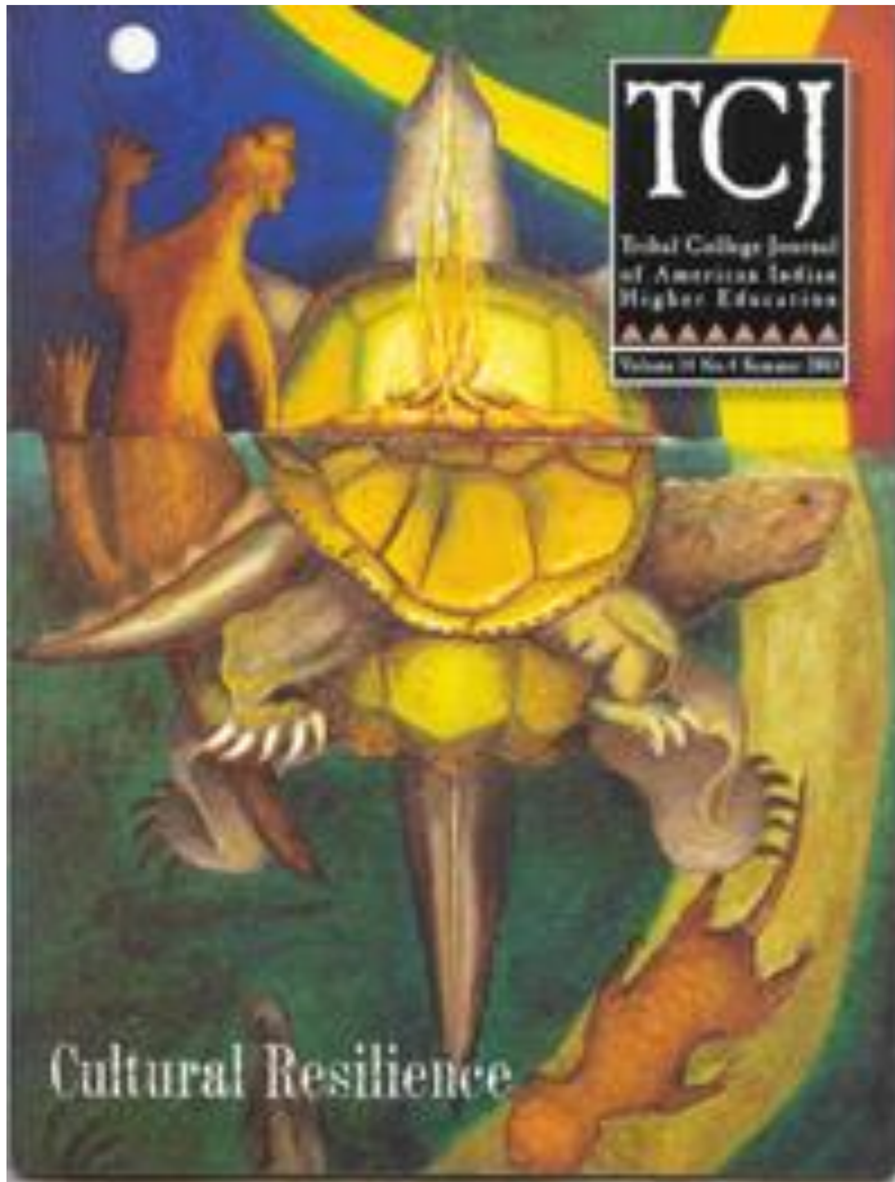

Figure 2.2. Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education.

These ideas can be traced back to Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990) who describe Native American child rearing practices as building resilience, and Friere (1993) who writes about resilience and the cultural circle in the context of oppression. Duran and Duran (1995) focused on Native American knowledge and traditional healing in response to social problems such as substance abuse and suicide. Cultural resilience has been defined as "the use of traditional life-ways to overcome the negative influences of oppression, abuse, poverty, violence and discrimination" (Strand et al., 2003, p. 28). Whitekiller (2004) tested Heavyrunner's theory of cultural resilience and found that spirituality, family strengths, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity and support networks did contribute to resilience.

There has been some recent research focused on culture and resilience. Gunnestad (2006) compared the way that resilience is generated in Southern Africa and Norway. She concluded that culture is a resource in resilience and that building on a child's culture is an effective way to create resilience. Erby (2006) studied cultural resilience as social capital in American high schools with both white and black students. Brabham (2011) studied indicators of cultural resilience for African American students. Romero (2011) reviewed articles related to resilience and coping in African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American students, and Montanez (2011) studied resilience and recidivism among Hispanic male adolescents. A particularly interesting study observed the effects of teaching traditional cultural skills to youth in an Alaskan community (Allan, 2011). They were found to develop cultural resilience and leadership skills.

Caroline Clauss-Ehlers (2008) has investigated the relation of cultural factors to measures of resilience in students and young adults and concluded that "cultural background and experiences influence the development of resilience" (p. 197). She emphasized the importance of research on cultural resilience, or the cultural factors that promote resilience, and the need to develop an appropriate measure. The Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist for Youth (Westerman, 2007) which was used during the interviews with offending young people in the Cook Islands includes a cultural resilience scale; statements such as "I know a lot about my culture" and "I speak my traditional language".

Resilience and Māori culture have been discussed by Moewaka Barnes (2010) and the association of resilience with traditional, pre-colonial culture is questioned. She notes that "research that sets out to study diverse forms of connections and their links to Māori identity and well-being has not been conducted, leaving a gap in our knowledge" (p. 29).

There are some reservations about the usefulness of the concept of resilience both in individual people, and in communities. Garmezy (1996) indicated that much research and theory building was needed to validate or legitimize the construct. Lalonde (2006) discusses the danger of assuming that resilience, or the ability to succeed in spite of adverse life circumstances, is a trait possessed by certain children, as this does not assist in the development of intervention and prevention practices. He goes on to ask whether a concept "developed for explaining individual differences [can] be made to work at the level of whole cultural communities" (Lalonde, 2006, p. 6). Although he believes that it is important to see resilience as a process rather than a trait and to avoid the assumption that only certain communities are resilient, Lalonde concludes that the concept is useful. He sees resilience being built up in aboriginal Canadian communities that take responsibility for, and control of, important aspects of their lives. In later papers, Lalonde refers to "cultural continuity" rather than cultural resilience (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008).

Ungar (2008) implies that resilience lies in the interaction between the individual and the culture and notes that resilience is defined differently in different communities. He defines it as "both the capacity of individuals to [seek] resources … and a condition of the … community and culture" (Ungar, 2008, p. 225). Ungar states that there has been "little cross-cultural validation of findings" (p. 119) on resilience. Fleming and Ledogar (2008), state that there is a growing interest in the resilience of communities and cultural groups. They suggest that more research is needed into the relationship between culture and resilience.

Zolli (2012), a Fellow of the National Geographic Society, discusses resilience in social, economic and business systems, as well as in ecosystems, communities and individual people, as adaptation to change. Noting that volatility and disruption are widespread in the world of the 21st century, he states that social resilience grows from shared beliefs and values, trust and cooperation, and leaders who are able to skilfully weave social networks together. He describes studies that have shown that religious faith creates psychological resilience in group members and also that "members of a culture affirming strong in-group loyalties will exhibit greater personal resilience" (p. 169).

The idea of protective cultural factors interacting with community risk factors to produce resilience indicates that a strong, vibrant and enlivening culture may offer increased opportunities for interpersonal and social support. A psychological sense of belonging (Sarason, 1974) may be dependent on cultural signs, symbols and practices, on people

being able to identify their own language, their own religion or spirituality, their own customs, art, music and dance. Sociocultural research may be the ideal way to study cultural resilience as every aspect of the research process must be constantly examined and re-evaluated through the lens of cultural awareness. It is essential to see the participants in the research in their particular social and cultural context (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005), a perspective that may not always be obvious to a researcher working within his or her own culture. If cultural resilience is an important factor, however, it would be an important factor for people in all cultures. All the world's peoples are indigenous in their ancestral homelands but there are questions of identity for people whose parents or grandparents or even great-grandparents were migrants (Raiskin, 1999) as well as for people with a mixed or intercultural heritage (Meredith, 1999). This makes it even more essential to understand the dynamics of cultural resilience.

If resilience is a quality associated with the overcoming of risk (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008) then cultural resilience would imply that the culture itself has been at risk or under threat, but has survived to strengthen and protect the people. This is the sense in which the term was originally used (Heavyrunner & Marshall, 2003). There is also the term "cultural resistance" which has become preferred in Aotearoa/New Zealand as a more emphatic rejection of the dominant culture and a return to traditional values (Borg, personal communication, November 2011). The term "survivance" has been used in North America, from the French Canadian "la survivance" referring to the survival of French culture in an Anglophone environment. Survivance in this context refers to more than the survival of a culture, but also to native presence, endurance and resistance (Vizenor, 2008).

It is clear that two factors are involved when examining resilience – the risk and the positive outcome. If it is the culture that has been at risk and is now thriving, the culture is said to be resilient. If it was the individual who was at risk and who has been supported by cultural strengths, then resilience has been built up in the person. Resilience as a process can be seen as the process of falling into the safety net and bouncing back up, just as trapeze artists in a circus might do. It might be the individual, supported by the strong culture that bounces back, or it might be the culture, held onto by strong individuals, that rebounds. The reciprocal interaction between the individual and his or her culture may, in fact, be strengthening both. The postmodern idea that resilience is something within all people has a clear spiritual focus. Heavyrunner and Marshall (2003) mention inner wisdom and spirituality, and it is accepted that traditional spirituality is a major protective factor for

Indigenous people (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008). J-F (2010) found that “faith”, or spirituality, was a major factor in desistance for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ex-offenders.

McGuire – Kishebakabaykwe (2010), has described concepts of Canadian aboriginal resilience as place-based and land-based, implying relationships with the land and relationships in the context of the land. She says that “indigenous resilience is concerned with the interconnected relationships in a specific place” (p. 124) and includes spiritual relationships with features of the land, animals and unseen beings and forces. The mention of relationships as essential to resilience fits with Rutter’s (1987) definition of resilience as social process and with the idea of networks and the weaving of safety nets.

2.4 Postcolonial Theory and Self-determination

A living culture is constantly changing (Kenny, 2009) and the Cook Islander culture is no longer the communal, subsistence culture that it was in 1814. Two hundred years later Cook Islanders maintain their language, their art, craft, tattoo, music and dance, their recognition of their hereditary leaders (ariki, mata’iapo, rangatira and ta’unga), their extended family structure, and their respect for the wisdom and spirituality of their ancestors (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003), but they are largely practicing Christians and live in a community heavily influenced by their continuing ties with the Euro-Western culture and economy of Pākehā New Zealand. These pervasive changes raise questions with regard to colonialism, acculturation and the sociological perspective of Critical Theory.

Critical theory began with the writings of Karl Marx in 1848 and was developed by the neo-Marxist Frankfurt school, before and after the Second World War, in order to continue the critique of the institutions of Western society. Critical Race Theory arose in a legal context as African-Americans noted the persistence of disadvantage and discrimination, particularly in the criminal justice system (Bell, 1995). Postcolonial theory is a branch of Critical Theory which focuses on the ongoing effects of Western colonialism and the postcolonial legacies of poverty, dispossession and marginalisation due to economic and cultural domination. It includes the effects of racism in the European colonies and was chosen as the theoretical lens with which to analyse the findings of risk in this research.

Major works in Postcolonial theory, used in literary, historical and cultural studies, are those of Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Friere, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Said, *Orientalism* (1979), Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1994), and Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (1994), as well as Trask (1999),

From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i. Postcolonial novels include those of V. S. Naipaul from Trinidad, *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), Jean Rhys from Dominica in the Caribbean, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1999/1966), Athol Fugard in South Africa, *Tsotsi* (1980), and Salman Rushdie from India, *Midnight's Children* (1980).

In contrast to postcolonial theory which emphasises the negative consequences of colonialism for Indigenous peoples, self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012) is focussed on social and emotional wellbeing. It has been applied at the community level in this thesis and used in the analysis of the powerful protective factors in the Cook Islands. The United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states that self-determination is necessary for economic, social and cultural development (Streich, 2009), and Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes that self-determination is a goal of social justice, a process of decolonisation and healing, central to the Indigenous research agenda.

In Australia, Sam Watson, (*The kadaitcha sung,* 1990) and Kim Scott, (*Benang: From the Heart*, 1999) have written about recovery and restoration, stories of active decolonising, rather than passive postcolonialism.

2.5 Cultural Resilience in the Cook Islands

In this study, definitions and explanations of risk and cultural resilience were sought from the people of the Cook Islander community, especially workers associated with the criminal justice system, and by observation of the community as it went about its business. Jonassen (2003) is a Cook islander who has described eight "pillars [of the] Māori personality and culture" (p. 128) and lists these as respect for the wisdom of the elders and ancestors, faith and trust in a higher power, life connected to the land, unity and loyalty of the people, freedom, love, patience and humility.

In the book *Akono'anga Māori* or *Cook Islands Culture*, Crocombe and Crocombe (2003) discuss the problems of changing values and increasing crime in the Cook Islands in the 21st century and state the following as an antidote to social disintegration.

> Nothing will do more for children's confidence, integrity and success in life than a positive identity and pride in who they are. This necessitates grounding in one's culture and history, a good knowledge of language and expression, and awareness of a consistent and workable value system (p.331).

Crocombe and Crocombe (2003) suggest that a positive self-identity and a psychological sense of belonging to a social group (being grounded in one's culture), with recognised

ways of communicating, making decisions and solving problems leads to confidence and integrity. Integrity can mean wholeness and also the ability to adhere to moral and ethical values. The question is whether these positive attitudes towards self and others can be created or maintained in the face of known risk factors for offending such as educational failure, peer rejection, family violence and/or child abuse and neglect. Taikoko, Crocombe and Ko‘ai (2003) are quite clear that domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, gambling and sexual abuse of children occur at all social levels in the Cook Islands. There remains the fact that the incarceration rate is low and that the existence of risk factors has not led to high levels of crime. If there are risks in the community there is also resilience.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

IRINAKI faith and trust

One of the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture is irinaki, faith or trust. The spiritual worldview of the people of the Cook Islands points directly to the philosophies underlying the Indigenous research paradigm described by Chilisa (2012) and Tuhiwai Smith (1999). Any research project conducted in the Cook Islands must be based on the recognition of multiple realities, and the importance of genuine relationship; faith and trust between the researcher and the Cook Islander people, working together to produce knowledge that will be valuable and useful to both the Cook Islands community and to the academy.

Figure 3.1. **Cook Islands Christian Church: The historical heritage.**

3.1 Reflecting on Research Design

> I still feel a sense of excitement when I think about the work in Polynesia. I had found myself on an island in the middle of the Pacific staring out at the ocean beyond the reef and overcome by a burning desire to find the answer to a question (Sykes, 2001, p.89).

The geneticist quoted above proved by studying mitochondrial DNA from Rarotonga that the Polynesian peoples came originally from the coast of China or Taiwan, through Indonesia to the Pacific, rather than from South America as had been thought. He noted that (Western) scientists have been doing fieldwork in the South Seas for a long time. One thinks of famous names such as Darwin (1859), Mead (1928) and Malinowski (1932).

I had also found myself on Rarotonga, possessed by a strong desire to find the answer to a question. What were the reasons behind the local people's low rate of involvement with the criminal justice system, in stark contrast to the high rates for Māori in New Zealand and higher rates for Indigenous people in Australia? Following on from the first question was another. Was this a community where cultural resilience was protecting the young people, a sociocultural process as suggested by Homel et al. (1999). This thesis is the story of the journey of discovery that ensued, and a story of the Cook Islands Māori people, their colonisation, their resistance, their celebration of self-government, and the cultural resilience created by the traditions of their communities.

Beginning with my first meeting with Torres Strait Islander academic Noritta Morseu-Diop, reading Indigenous researchers Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) from the University of Waikato, and Bagele Chilisa (2012) from the University of Botswana, and meeting Cook Islander psychologist Evangelene Daniela on Rarotonga in 2011, I became very much aware that research was a sensitive issue in the context of the lived experience of Indigenous peoples. The famous researcher Margaret Mead is not looked on kindly in the Pacific. In fact, her work was mentioned as an example of colonial attitudes and "cross-cultural" misunderstanding (Daniela, personal communication, 30 July 2011).

When I read Mead's classic anthropological study, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1972/1928), and the stringent criticism by Derek Freeman, *The Fateful Hoaxing of Margaret Mead* (1999), it seemed that Mead had betrayed the trust of the young women who confided in her. One of them had been identified by Freeman many years later, interviewed, and questioned, as an elderly woman, with regard to her behaviour as an adolescent.

Defending the tone of her text, Mead (1972) notes that the primitive and exotic Samoans did not read English in the 1920s. The English missionary and amateur ethnographer, William Wyatt Gill, seems to have had this inability to read English in mind when he wrote that the spiritual stories of the Cook Islander people, a precious oral tradition that had been shared with him on the island of Mangaia over a number of years, were mythology rather than theology and that the stories contained elements that were "puerile and absurd" (2012/1876, p. 1). It is no wonder that Indigenous peoples are somewhat suspicious of the ethics, motives and attitudes of European researchers (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

It was clear that the only ethical way I could conduct research in the Cook Islands was to follow the principles of Indigenous research methodology as closely as possible. I would need to work respectfully with Cook Islanders as collaborators and co-researchers, and aim to investigate issues that would produce results and findings useful and valuable to the community, as well as to the academy. As an outsider and a Papa'a I would need to focus on the positive aspects of the island communities rather than on deficits (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), and take careful precautions against causing any harm, discomfort or embarrassment to the Cook Islands Māori community who were so generously assisting me. This was not to be a values free positivist study, searching for one "objective" reality, but a transformative study based in Indigenous values of social justice, interconnected personal relationships, reframing and multiple realities.

A well-known author and academic from Samoa wrote that if the papalagi (Europeans) are going to write about Pacific peoples, they should do so with love, honesty, wisdom, compassion and respect, writing with aroha (Wendt, 1976). Teve, one of the Cook Islander participants in the research project, wrote in an email. "I pray that you will be given the wisdom to present (the research) from that place which crosses the cultural divide … which is aro'a". The word aroha, aro'a or aloha in all its forms is used in the Pacific to mean real, unconditional, unselfish love for others.

With all of this in mind, the research was designed to begin with a study of offending behaviour in the young people. Although this was a focus on risk, it was intended that the information obtained would be helpful to the Cook Islands Ministry of Justice, as well as the operators of the tourist industry, who are very keen to prevent crime of any kind in their "tropical paradise". Thereafter, the social processes in the Cook Islands communities, which are presumably acting as protective factors, keeping the crime rate and the incarceration rate down to very low levels, would be carefully studied. It was hoped that

understanding these processes in the Cook Islands would assist in understanding the functioning, or the barriers to functioning, of similar social processes in Australia and New Zealand, particularly in Indigenous communities.

Most of the observations in the Cook Islands during the visits in 2010 and 2011 were related to the Rarotongan community, as visiting the far flung islands of the pa ‘enua was not possible. However, nearly half of the offending young people and some of the adults interviewed were originally from the outer islands. This meant that it was possible to learn a little about life on the islands of Manihiki and Tongareva in the northern group, and Mangaia, Aitutaki, Atiu and Mauke in the southern group.

During 2012 and 2013 I communicated by email with a number of the people who had assisted me in 2010 and 2011, sending them information about initial findings and preliminary results and making every effort to check my perceptions and interpretations with members of the community. I then returned to Rarotonga in 2013, two years after the data collection, to provide feedback to the community at the Te Marae Ora annual health conference. A Cook Islander doctor based in New Zealand commented that it was “hard to hear” about some of the risks to the young people in “our community”, but a number of people working for the Ministry of Justice and other government departments stated that they were pleased with the information provided in the presentation.

During the visit in 2013 I was able to consult with a number of people who were working directly with young people on Rarotonga, in the Ministries of Education, Internal Affairs and Justice. They all agreed that the risks were as real as the resilience and that it was better to be open about the poverty, family violence, substance abuse and child abuse that does occur. Cultural resilience is very clearly operating in the Cook Islands community, however, created by the multiple affectionate attachments between people in the extended families and communities, and the self-confidence that comes from the polycultural capital enjoyed by the people living on their own land in an ever-changing hybrid culture (Mila-Schaaf & Robinson, 2010). These are the very same protective factors, cultural resilience, attachment bonds and self-confidence, that were suggested by Homel et al. (1999), in their study of risk and protective factors for Indigenous Australians.

In July 2011 I asked a number of the senior officers in the Ministry of Justice, including the Secretary for the Ministry of Justice, to approve the publication of my findings by reading through a summary of the major points and signing an attached letter. They all did so (see appendix F), as did other participants from the Ministries of Education and Internal Affairs.

Although some people in the Cook Islands deny that poverty, substance abuse and child abuse are a problem, I am confident that my perceptions and general conclusions have been validated by the key community stakeholders.

During the writing up and emailing back and forth process my work was given the blessing of a ta‘unga, who described himself as a member of the hereditary priesthood, and the blessing of a Christian educator who was particularly supportive. I was extremely grateful for their kind words of encouragement, their assistance, and their prayers.

3.2 Theoretical Influences on Research Design

This research study is based on the principles of Community Psychology, focusing on the links between individuals and their communities and on concepts of social justice (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007), survivance (Vizenor, 2008) and cultural resilience in the context of the criminal justice system (Homel et al., 1999). A transformative Indigenous research paradigm (Chilisa, 2012) has been used in order to learn from the success of the Cook Islands Māori community in managing offending young people without having recourse to detention.

As cultural hybridity is inevitable in the postcolonial global community of the 21st century and has become a major theme of this thesis, the study is situated in the hybrid Third Space (Bhabha, 1994), the in between or negotiating space described by Mila-Schaaf & Hudson (2009), neither completely Indigenous research methodology nor completely Western case study. In addition, the study consists of two parts; a psychological/phenomenological study of the lived experience of young prisoners and young people under supervision on the island of Rarotonga, and an ethnographic case study of the Cook Islands criminal justice system and community. The theoretical framework for the study was critical theory (Derrida, 1989), specifically postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1979), as the Cook Islands people have lived the experience and are living the legacy of colonisation. However, self-determination theory has also been used in the analysis, creating a hybrid lens, as Cook Islanders have been self-governing since 1965 and some of their political leaders have devoted much effort to the restoration and revitalisation of language and culture (Alexeyeff, 2009; Hancock, 1979).

3.2.1 Community and cultural psychology

Community psychology sees the community as playing a crucial role in the prosocial development of young people, positing a psychological sense of community or belonging (Sarason, 1974). This concept is linked to the idea of cultural resilience as exemplified in the study by Bishop et al. (2006) which investigated psychological sense of community and Aboriginal social structure in Western Australia. In one sense culture is the highest level of analysis in the social ecology described by Bronfenbrenner (1979), as many of the Pacific Islands communities share similar cultural norms and practices. However, culture affects and so is present at every level of the social ecology, from the clothing worn by individuals, to the structure and function of the family and the school, to the economic, artistic and spiritual traditions of the people.

Shinn (1987) described the goals of Community Psychology as prevention (of problems) and empowerment (of people). Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) explain that Community Psychology sees people in the context of their communities, incorporates cultural relativity, diversity and social activism, and acknowledges more than one way of knowing. It is said that “research is conducted to create knowledge and change social conditions” (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p. 6). This echoes the definition of the transformative research paradigm found in Chilisa’s work (2012). Seeking information on the various community factors that protect young people from the danger of being trapped into long-term involvement with the criminal justice system is intended to create knowledge that can be used to change social conditions and thus reduce crime, the financial and social costs of incarceration and the overrepresentation of particular communities in prison systems.

Community Psychology emphasizes liberation and wellbeing, as well as prevention and empowerment (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). These are concepts highly relevant to the study of offending and incarceration. Community Psychology also uses qualitative research, case studies, ethnography (Hill & Kral, 2003) and collaborative research methodologies, well suited to exploratory investigations using an Indigenous research paradigm. In addition, Prilleltensky and Nelson (1997) state that Community Psychology uses a multilevel perspective, as does this research study, of the people, the justice system and the community on Rarotonga.

Cultural Psychology is a growing discipline, where authors such as Cole (1996), Heine and Ruby (2010), and Valsiner (2007), argue for a human science of psychology as well as the stimulus response natural science; a psychology where human behaviour is studied in the

context of culture and the human mind is co-constructed in social activities, stories and artefacts. This thesis employs concepts of Cultural Psychology in a study of Indigenous young people in the context of the postcolonial Cook Islands.

3.2.2 The Indigenous research paradigm

Kuhn (1962) describes paradigm shifts in the practice of scientific research, suggesting that ways of constructing knowledge are constantly changing, and that subjectivity as well as objectivity is involved when the academic community agrees to validate new and different ways of knowing. A research paradigm has both an underlying philosophy and ontological assumptions, as well as a methodology, or sets of methodologies.

Chilisa (2012), of the University of Botswana, discusses the different research paradigms recognised in the postcolonial and postmodern 21st century. Euro-Western positivist and post-positivist paradigms are based in Greek philosophy, involving an assumption of objective reality, empirical data and deductive reasoning. A positivist researcher is considered to be a neutral observer and the research value free.

The interpretive paradigm is based on the work of German philosophers, such as Husserl, the construct of Self and Other, and the idea of phenomenology, seeing reality as socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), and culture bound. Research is conducted in order to understand the experience of people in their natural settings and research questions evolve as the data is collected. The researcher describes and notes his or her values, purpose and bias.

The transformative paradigm is based on the ideas of radical authors such as Marx and Engels (1932) and the neo-Marxist theorists of the Frankfurt School, and Fanon (1963), who worked in Algeria during the war of liberation. Social reality is seen as bound up with history, the class struggle and exploitative colonisation, and those in power are seen to have created knowledge which serves to perpetuate their domination of the perceived Other; the other who is not like us. Transformative research is conducted with the aim and purpose of changing society, creating knowledge from the perspective of the participants, knowledge which will empower the dispossessed and the disadvantaged. Such research is considered a moral and political act based on values of social justice, which involves the liberation of the researcher as much as the participants or co-researchers.

Finally, Chilisa (2012), an African academic who has worked in the United States, describes the Indigenous research paradigm. This is a particular type of transformative paradigm, based on Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous perceptions of multiple realities, and using culturally responsive methodologies to construct knowledge that will offer hope of transformation and social change for previously colonised, exploited and oppressed communities. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and other Māori researchers write about similar Indigenous research projects in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the Pacific.

Māori researchers have developed Indigenous research methodologies according to kaupapa Māori protocols, and some believe that non-Indigenous researchers ought not to engage in research with Indigenous people as participants (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). On the other hand, Bishop (1994) at the University of Waikato believes that Pākehā researchers, with their hearts in the right place, can be useful allies. Davies (2007) discusses the objections to the idea that only Indigenous researchers can work with Indigenous participants. Firstly, there is no way to measure the degree of Indigeneity of a person and the idea of an essentialised pure "native" identity is as outdated as the idea of a pure white race. Secondly, as simply being female does not guarantee that one will produce feminist research, neither does being Indigenous guarantee that Indigenous research methodology will be used. Awareness of oppression and political issues is the crucial factor, the development of conscientizaçāo or critical consciousness as Friere (1996/1968) described it. In the context of the Cook Islands, it was noted by Mason (2003) that being European or being Māori is mainly a matter of attitude.

This study is not an example of Indigenous research, by an Indigenous researcher using the Indigenous research paradigm, and neither is it an example of Western social science, using a positivist or interpretive paradigm. It is a hybrid creation, by a researcher with a polycultural hybrid heritage and life experience, which attempts to investigate the protective cultural strengths of one postcolonial community and the implications for a transformative understanding of cultural resilience in other such communities, through an ethnographic case study design (Parthasarathy, 2008).

The English term "hybridity" once referred to plant and animal biology, and such racist ideas as "mixed blood" or "half caste". It has been used by Māori researchers at the University of Waikato (Meredith, 1999), to denote the strength and value of polycultural capital (Mila Schaaf, 2010), itself a recognition of the resilience and resistance of the colonised. As Homi Bhabha states in *Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences*

(2006/1995), the idea of a pure or essentialist culture is no longer tenable. Culture and cultural products, including research studies, are now being actively constructed from the traditions of the past and the innovations of the present.

3.2.3 Ethnography

A study of a community is also ethnography and community psychologists such as Michael Kral at the University of Illinios, use ethnographic methods (Kral, Garcia, Aber, Masood and Dutta, 2011). This research design is clearly ethnographic. In order to learn about a people and their culture by first-hand experience, it is necessary to participate as well as to observe. Traditionally, ethnographers spent a year or more living in a remote and isolated "exotic" community in order to learn the local language, which enabled them to participate as much as possible in the daily lives of the people. Recently ethnography has been used in urban settings and in a wide variety of contexts (O'Reilly, 2012). One sociologist spent nine years living in poor American neighbourhoods (Jankowski, 2008). Murchison (2010) mentions a female ethnographic researcher who participated as a stripper for a relatively short period of time, just a matter of weeks, in order to study the male customers in strip clubs (Price, 2003). In the present study, there were financial and other constraints on the amount of time that it was possible to spend in the Cook Islands. Formal data collection took place over a period of four weeks in 2011 but three weeks had been spent on Rarotonga previously, and another week was spent on the island in 2013.

Every effort was made to participate in the life of the community. As the study was not intended to include all aspects of the lives and culture of the Cook Islanders, but was focused on the criminal justice system, it was thought that eight weeks would provide an opportunity to take a snapshot of the social processes that were relevant to the crime rate and incarceration rate. Murchison (2010) says that ethnography is well suited to the study of social connections and interactions, and to the study of change in a community. Being on site or in the field, the researcher becomes the research instrument or the instrument of measurement. This means that, to a large extent, the social and interpersonal interaction between the researcher and the participants, within the context of the community, creates knowledge. The researcher, being present, is able to perceive attitudes and experience behaviours that may be important to the study. Social processes and behaviours unknown to the researcher would be completely missed if such instruments as emailed or mailed questionnaires were the source of the data.

Since the publication of *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) postcolonial and postmodern ideas of collaboration with participants, rather than studying subjects, have become important. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) makes it quite clear that Indigenous people may see research as just one more humiliation and exploitation of a once colonised people by the strangers who visited trauma on their ancestors. Murchison (2010) also mentions the power and privilege of the researcher at a time when European imperialism and racism were part and parcel of the social fabric. The ethnographic research design must include meeting with elders and community leaders, seeking out knowledgeable informants or interlocutors, and chain sampling; that is asking informants to introduce the researcher to other people who would be knowledgeable about the matter in question. Showing appropriate respect for the leaders in the community, for the traditions and culture of the people, and for the valuable contribution of all the participants is an example of the social skills that make up cultural competence, a quality essential to the successful practice of Indigenous research methodology (Ranzijn, McConnochie & Nolan, 2009).

Many of the texts on ethnography warn against the researcher "going native" (Creswell, 2014; Stake, 1995), adopting the worldview or cultural attitudes of the research participants, or "siding with the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 99). Western novelists, anthropologists and ethnographers have used the expression "going native" with a pejorative connotation. "Going native" was seen in a very negative light by white colonial administrators and others and equated with dirt and degradation. Escaped convicts and sailors who had jumped ship (beachcombers) lived in huts with the natives (Wragge, 1906). Even the author Robert Frisbie, who was married to a Cook Islander, wrote that going native was a sure way for a white man to lose the respect of the natives (Hall, 1952). The fact that this expression endures in the 2014 edition of Creswell's text would be likely to confirm the perception of some Indigenous researchers that the academy is part and parcel of the Euro-Western colonial enterprise (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

Madden (2010), an Australian ethnographer, is more sensitive, and discusses the issue of "going native", using quotation marks, as the delicate balance between presenting the participants' point of view and maintaining objectivity as a researcher.

The Indigenous research paradigm does demand a commitment to the cause of Indigenous people. "Siding with the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p.99) in this case means joining forces with Indigenous people as they pursue the Indigenous research agenda of

decolonization, transformation, healing and self-determination (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This agenda is “politically interested rather than neutral and objective” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.117) and so is very different to the agenda of most scientific organisations or programs. Tuhiwai Smith also mentions her colleague Russell Bishop’s belief that non-Indigenous researchers “who have a genuine desire to support the cause of Māori” (1999, p. 184) should be included as useful allies and partners.

3.2.4 Phenomenology

In the postmodern world, the interpretive idea of phenomenology, first developed by Husserl in 1900, is being used as a way of understanding the lived experience of research participants from their own subjective point of view (Daniels, 2005). The data is not to be understood through the lens of another person’s culture or preconceived ideas, such as those contained in the academic literature of the English speaking world.

This approach suggests that to see phenomena in the present one needs to distance oneself from past assumptions (Giorgi 2006), and this in turn creates respect for such issues as cultural diversity. A phenomenological approach does not involve the testing of hypotheses or theories but addresses gaps in knowledge by developing exhaustive descriptions of the participants’ personal experience of the phenomenon being studied (Sokolowski, R, 2000). The data is then analysed by seeking common themes in order to synthesise a general description. This approach has been relevant to the study of the life experience and mental health of the young prisoners and the young people under supervision on Rarotonga.

3.3 Research Methodology

Indigenous research methodologies make use of transformative approaches that may include quantitative and qualitative designs (Chilisa, 2012). This study uses phenomenology and ethnography, qualitative methodologies which seek to document and understand phenomena rather than test hypotheses. Young people involved with the criminal justice system discussed their lived experience and their offending behaviour; knowledgeable informants were asked about risk and protective factors in the Cook Islands, and asked to comment on Cook Islands culture as described by Jonassen (2003). Observations in the community, participation in community activities, the study of relevant texts in the local libraries, and taking photographs on Rarotonga added to the ethnographic case study of the Cook Islands community.

There was a psychological aspect to the study and that was the use of the Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist for Youth, the WASC-Y. This instrument was used to assess the mental health of the young people but also to obtain a score on the cultural resilience scale. The WASC-Y was developed in Western Australia for use with Indigenous youth and the cultural resilience scale included questions about relationships with peers and mentors, as well as cultural practice and identity.

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Patton (1990) describes qualitative research as the creation of case studies, using direct observation, in depth open-ended interviews and written documents, undertaken in order to learn about an aspect of the social world in a detailed, holistic way. He states that case studies are internationally recognised as providing useful and relevant information that is difficult to obtain in large scale surveys of population data.

Qualitative research is suitable for the study of complex situations and may lead to new hypotheses and the generation of theory. Patton (1990) claims that qualitative studies of unusual situations that puzzle the researcher are likely to yield valuable insights. The low incarceration rate in the Cook Islands Māori community, previously colonised by Britain and New Zealand, contrasts sharply with the high incarceration rate for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand and is certainly puzzling.

3.3.2 Case studies

Yin's classic book *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2009) describes in great detail the use of case study methodology. He states that case study research is very challenging and difficult to do, not at all the soft option that some people believe it to be.

In case study research different methods may be used to obtain data from multiple sources (Gilgun, 2011). Case studies are considered to be particularly useful when the research questions ask "why" or "how", when the researcher has little control over the phenomena to be studied and when the research problem is a contemporary one in a real life situation. Yin (2009) notes that case studies are not necessarily exploratory only but may be descriptive and/or explanatory. Writing skills are very important in case study research in order to communicate the findings effectively.

According to Yin (2009), case studies have been criticized for lacking rigor and systematic procedures, for producing lengthy, uninteresting narratives, and for their inability to show

cause and effect relationships. He explains that case studies can be done in systematic and rigorous ways, that they can explain why and how something works, and that they can be written up in ways that make them easier to read.

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) agree that case studies begin with the collection of as much data as possible from as many sources as possible, using multiple methods.

Stake (1995) explains that case studies involve observation, interviewing and the review of texts. These three methods may be used to triangulate and so validate the findings. In this study there were three methods used in the ethnographic case study of the community; semi-structured interviewing, participant observation (events and conversations recorded in field notes and photography) and the review of texts.

Stake (1995) discusses validation through member checking, but found that the "most frequent response [was] not to acknowledge that I [had] sent anything" (p. 116). Members of the Cook Islands community were asked to comment on my writings as I produced summaries of the results and outlines of the thesis. I had no response from some people, some very positive responses such as, "your summary covers it all, and it is the truth of the matter" (Mato), and one letter to the local newspaper that described the idea that dysfunctional families were associated with offending behaviour as "absolute crap" – in a banner headline (*Cook Islands News*, June 2012). When I returned to the Cook Islands in 2013 I was able to present a short summary of the findings to the key informants and to ask for their comments, which were very encouraging.

3.3.4 Visual analysis

In recent years visual images have become much easier to capture, store and transmit. The analysis of visual images as data rather than their inclusion as illustrations has spread from cultural and social anthropology to many other disciplines including criminology and social psychology. Knoblauch, Baer, Laurier, Petschke, and Schnettler (2008) have written about the newly developed methods of interpretive analysis of photographs and videos and Bohnsack (2008) describes the links to the sociology of knowledge, semiotics and philosophy in this endeavour. He goes on to say that the analytic methods of art history have become relevant to the work of social scientists today.

This research design included the intention to take as many photographs as possible in the Cook Islands community. Preparatory visits to Rarotonga had indicated that Cook

Islanders accept being photographed by visitors as part of their support for the tourist industry. They are photographed when they are dancing, taking visitors on guided tours, selling goods in the markets, fishing, playing the hukalele, singing in church and in almost any other situation where they are under observation. As much as possible, permission was asked before taking photographs, especially if children were involved.

The Editor of the *Cook Islands News* gave permission for published photographs to be used, as long as the source was acknowledged. Photographs taken and collected were analysed for themes that related to Cook Islands culture and cultural resilience.

3.4 Postcolonial and Self-Determination Theory

Critical theory first developed as a critical theory of society from its philosophical and Marxist roots at the German Institute for Social Research before the Second World War of 1939-1945. During the war many German intellectuals fled to the United States but afterwards two of the neo-Marxist theorists, Horkheimer and Adorno, returned to Germany. Their work on the intellectual basis for social transformation became known as that of the Frankfurt School. Positivism and phenomenology, with their fixed theoretical structures, were both seen as obstacles to freedom of thought and subjectivity (Bronner, 2011).

As academic theorists such as Derrida (1989), continued to criticise the structuralist ideas of the mid-twentieth century, post-structuralism arose, followed by post-colonialism, critical race theory, feminist theory and queer theory, all seeking to critique the accepted knowledge and ways of knowing of the white-heterosexual-male dominated Euro-Western academy. These postmodern theories were intended to facilitate social change and so were continuing the struggle for liberation in the tradition of Marx and Lenin.

As the group of South Pacific islands now known as the Cook Islands is a nation created by colonisation, heavily influenced by British missionaries from 1823 and administered by the British and their colonists in New Zealand from 1888 to 1965, the branch of critical theory known as postcolonial theory was initially considered to be an appropriate lens for the analysis of the results.

Postcolonial theory is an interdisciplinary discourse that does not necessarily refer to the time after colonisation and does not assume that decolonisation has taken place, but rather refers to the condition of having been colonised, the effects on colonised and coloniser being enduring (Roy, 2008). In Australia, Indigenous people have objected to the term “postcolonial” (Heiss, 2003) and prefer “decolonising”. It has also been criticised by

Tuhiwai Smith as a “convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world” (1999, p. 14). In this study it will be used in the context of the community risk factors in the Cook Islands. This is not to imply that the nation of the Cook Islands has been decolonised but that the people of the Cook Islands, still citizens of New Zealand, have lived the experience of being colonised.

One of the most influential of the critics of colonialism was Fanon (1963), born the descendant of an African slave in the Caribbean. He was working in Algeria when he became aware of the violence being perpetrated by the French colonial administration against the indigenous Algerians. In his books Fanon describes the extreme poverty and desperation of the dispossessed and exploited native peoples, as well as the endemic tension and anger said to cause high levels of violent crime in the colonised communities.

Critical race theory arose in the United States in the context of the legal system as African Americans continued to be disadvantaged many years after civil rights had been won. In the colonial and postcolonial world, race and colour are issues inextricably entwined with the class struggle described by Marx. Ireland is one example of violent dispossession and forced removals of white by white (Ignatiev, 1995), but in recent history Europeans colonised Africans, Asians, Indigenous Australians, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, all people of colour considered by the white colonists to be inferior races in need of civilization (Rhys, 1979; Rushdie, 1980). A similar process occurred within the Soviet Union when the Russians ruled the peoples of Central Asia (Turchin, Hall, & Adams, 2006). The tenets of Social Darwinism convinced the “white people” that they were the most advanced race in the evolutionary hierarchy of humanity (Walsh, 2012), although the fair-skinned Anglo-Saxons had been considered savages and barbarians by the darker skinned Romans and Greeks (Painter, 2010).

Critical race theory and postcolonial theory are both needed in order to understand the situation in the Cook Islands today. A Polynesian people, considered to be beautiful, intelligent and adventurous by the first Europeans who arrived on the islands (Beaglehole, 1957), were nonetheless seen as primitive and child-like by the missionaries and the colonial administration (Buzacott, 1985/1866; Gilson, 1980). The traditional leaders apparently chose Britain as their protector, rather than the French, although Scott (1991), suggests that they were manipulated by European interests at the time. The British then tried to break the power of the leaders, instituted a land tenure system foreign to the local

culture which continues to create difficulties in the community, and attempted to introduce Western capitalism to the islands in the hope of plantations, profits and taxes.

Although this study uses postcolonial theory (Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1979), including the French Canadian concept of survivance (Vizenor, 2009), as a lens through which to examine the community risk factors in the Cook Islands, self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012) is used to analyse the protective factors and therefore the cultural resilience. In the final analysis, postcolonial theory, with its emphasis on deficit, was not adequate to the task of understanding the resistance of the Cook Islands people to Western cultural hegemony and the resilience demonstrated by their success in diverting the young people away from crime and incarceration.

3.5 Research on Rarotonga

The research design for this study is a hybrid qualitative design, a series of psychological/phenomenological case studies of offending young people, embedded in an ethnographic case study of a remote island community; following, as far as possible, the transformative principles of the Indigenous research paradigm. It is a hybrid design because it is both community and cultural psychology, interpretive phenomenology and transformative ethnography, a study of the mental health and behaviour of individual young people in the context of their culture, using a theoretical framework that balances self-determination with the postcolonial legacy; a research project of the Western academy in collaboration with the Māori people of Rarotonga and the pa enua.

Kral et al. (2011) note that the use of qualitative methods is still on the margin of psychology but that when culture is added to psychology, an expanded epistemology is needed. Inductive methods, intersubjectivity and first person points of view become legitimate in research and an anthropological imagination is considered an asset to the researcher. Gutmann (1987), a clinical psychologist, used ethnographic studies in different cultures to demonstrate the universal nature of psychological processes in older adults. He referred to his unusual work as ethnopsychology, believing that culture and personality create each other. This research study focuses on cultural influences on resilience, on the ability of the individual to thrive in the face of adversity with the support of the group.

3.5.1 Research questions

The underlying research problem is the overrepresentation of Indigenous and other marginalised people in Euro-Western prisons. Taking a positive, strengths-based perspective, the research questions in this study focus on the reason for the low rate of incarceration in the Cook Islands and the idea of cultural resilience as a protective factor (Homel et al., 1999). According to the International Centre for Prison Studies at the University of Essex, in November 2011 there were 25 inmates in the Arorangi Prison, an incarceration rate of 109 per 100,000. The Cook Islands census taken in December 2011 noted that 24 people were in prison. This is a rate much closer to the remarkably low rates in Scandinavian countries than to the very high rates for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand (approximately 700 per 100,000 in 2012, www.rethinking.org.nz) and even higher rates for Indigenous Australians (1977 per 100,000 in June 2013, www.abs.gov.au). To answer the question as to why people from different communities go to prison at different rates, one must examine both risk and protective factors.

The literature review discussed in Chapter Two indicated that seeking knowledge about the dynamic interaction of risk and protective factors over the life-course of the offender is the "current frontier" of research in this area (Greenwood, 2006, p. 25) and the developmental pathways approach is said to be cutting edge research (Bartol & Bartol, 2009). Much research has been focused on risk factors but these studies have been done in urban settings; less is known about risk in rural and remote settings and about protective factors (Farrington, 2008). Farrington states that "more research is needed on … community risk factors in particular" (2008, p. 89).

Homel et al. (1999) believe that it is essential to understand the social background of the offending individual. They found that historical trauma and ongoing racism in the criminal justice system were unique meta-factors for understanding offending behaviour in Australian Indigenous communities, along with such general factors as poverty, child abuse and school failure. Protective factors were thought to be cultural resilience, personal self-confidence and interpersonal attachments. Pridemore (2004), in his review of the literature on risk and protective factors for offending among Native Americans, also mentions the "protective value of … culture and tradition" and includes Indigenous spirituality and the use of a native language. The concept of cultural resilience as a protective factor in at-risk communities originates in the work of Native Americans. Heavyrunner and Marshall (2003) report that educators at a Tribal College in Montana in

the early 1990s identified cultural factors that would be protective in Indian families and communities: spirituality, family strength, elders, ceremonial rituals, oral traditions, tribal identity and support networks.

Taking into account these perspectives from the research literature on offending behaviour and young people, the research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What risk factors for offending behaviour are operating in the Cook Islands?
2. What protective factors are available to ameliorate these risks?
3. Does the dynamic interaction between these risk and protective factors create cultural resilience in the young people?

The answer to the first question was sought in the interviews with the young men in prison. What had happened in their lives to lead them to prison in a tropical paradise? What pathways or trajectories had they travelled? Adults in the community, knowledgeable informants and key stakeholders, such as police, prison and probation officers, were also asked what the risk factors were that resulted in crime on the islands.

The answer to the second question, regarding protective factors, was sought in semi-structured interviews with adult community stakeholders, and discussions with young high school students; as well as many informal conversations and observations on Rarotonga; attendance at community meetings, functions and celebrations; reading of texts in the two local libraries, including academic theses related to the Cook Islands; and the analysis of the more than 400 photographs taken on Rarotonga. This data collection was intended to create a dynamic picture of the Cook Islander community, as an ethnographic case study, focusing particularly on the care and protection of the young people, including the criminal justice system, and highlighting the social processes that ameliorate risk and produce responsible, prosocial adults. In doing this, it was hoped that answers to the third question, focusing on the interaction of the risk and protective factors, would emerge from the data and that the construct of cultural resilience would be more clearly understood.

It seems that the protective factor of cultural resilience and its link to the well-being of a community has not yet been studied to a significant extent. The reasons for this "research lacuna" (Brasche, 2008, p. 93) are thought to be partly a lack of measurement instruments for cultural resilience and partly the difficulties involved in what has been known in the Western academy as "cross-cultural" research. Research in different cultural contexts, and especially when Indigenous peoples are involved, is now more likely to be understood as

having a political aspect, and rather than engaging in “cross-cultural” research, the researcher is expected to produce “politically engaged and socially relevant research” (Davies, 2007). Brasche (2008) recommends research in the area of culture and resilience as the first step towards improving the social conditions of marginalized and disadvantaged communities. The broad theoretical questions then become “what protective factors create resilience in at-risk communities?” and “is the interplay of risk and these protective factors what we mean by cultural resilience?”

3.5.2 Data collection

The first step in the data collection on the island of Rarotonga was to ask adult members of the community for their opinions on the prevalence of risk and protective factors affecting young people in the community and for their definition of cultural resilience. Purposeful chain sampling was used. Knowledgeable informants or interlocutors were sought out who were key community stakeholders, people who were directly involved with the criminal justice system or with young people, either as workers or volunteers.

Beginning with the Prime Minister’s Office and the Secretaries for the Ministries of Justice, Education and Internal Affairs, introductions were sought to people such as the superintendent of the prison, police officers, prison officers, probation officers, child welfare officers, school counsellors, youth workers, youth pastors, prison volunteers and others involved in the care and support of youth or youth at risk. Most of the 27 people interviewed were Cook Islanders but a few were expatriate workers from New Zealand or other Pacific nations. Exact numbers are not given in order to protect the identity of the participants in a small community. Half were women (13) and half were men (14).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, using a checklist of risk and protective factors and an open question about the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture. This checklist appears as appendix D. The interviews were very much participant directed, with different people focusing on different aspects of the questions. Many of the participants illustrated their opinions with stories from their own or other’s lives which provided insights into traditional culture and colonialism as well as present day polycultural capital.

Interviews were conducted either in the participant’s workplace or at the local café, with the café owner’s knowledge and permission. Careful notes were taken but, as people did not seem comfortable with the idea of voice recording, the interviews were not electronically recorded. The notes were written up soon after the interviews were

completed, by the evening of the same day. All participants were given information letters (appendix A) and consent forms (appendix B). Parents of young people under the age of 16 were also asked to sign consent forms, and government workers who assisted in the recruitment of participants signed confidentiality agreements (appendix C).

The second step in the data collection was to interview the young prisoners and the young people under community supervision. It was intended that these interviews should be similar to those conducted in Australia when performing a psychological assessment for the purpose of a presentencing court report. It was hoped that information would be obtained about family and social background, education, medical history, trauma history, mental health, cognitive functioning, substance misuse and offending behaviour. The information obtained about each young person would then become a case study and cross case analysis would search for themes and patterns in the lives and characteristics of these young people. A standardised checklist of mental health issues and cultural resilience indicators (Westerman, 2007) and semi-structured interviews were used with the offending young people.

In practice, the time with each person was limited and both adults and the young people were more inclined to tell their stories their own way than to answer direct questions. The interviews were intended to be semi-structured but they became less and less structured. The Samoan word talanoa refers to a culturally sensitive approach to interviewing, a talking about nothing which then becomes a talking about something. This more relaxed, respectful and relational approach to the interviews, similar to the yarning approach suggested by Morseu-Diop (2010) and other Australian researchers, produced most of the desired information as well as rich data on Cook Islands culture.

In order to be able to refer to the voices of the community without identifying anyone, pseudonyms were used when writing up the stories of the prison, the criminal justice system and the community. In a small community using real names might have been misleading, so neutral or positive words were used instead, taken from the Cook Islands Māori Dictionary (Buse & Taringa, 1995).

When not conducting interviews, attempts were made to attend as many community meetings and gatherings as possible, for example, at the Saturday markets, at the Cook Islands Christian Church at Nikao, at the Catholic Cathedral in Avarua, at the annual Te Marae Ora Health Conference (in 2011 and 2013), the installation of the new Catholic Bishop from New Zealand (in 2011) and the feast in his honour, the annual Career Expo

for high school students (in 2010 and 2011), the World Youth Day camp at the Catholic Primary School (2011), the community meeting with the police and accommodation owners at Titikaveka (2011), the village dance practice at Arorangi (2011), the celebration of Gospel Day (the coming of the missionaries) at Arorangi (2010), and the Te Maeva Nui celebration of Constitution Day (celebrating independence or self-government) in 2011. In all of these public spaces attempts were made to meet people and to have informal conversations. In August 2011 there was a Cook Islands Gala Dinner held at Jupiter's Casino on the Gold Coast at which the Prime Minister, Mr Henry Puna, spoke to the Cook Islands Gold Coast community. It was my privilege to be able to attend this event as well.

On the first visit to Rarotonga in 2009 I had taken a bus tour of the island with a local guide, seeing an ancient marae and some of the sights on the back roads, including the prison. In 2010 a new cultural village had been opened. Talks were given about traditional culture, at least the version offered to the tourists, and artefacts were on view.

There are two libraries on Rarotonga, a private library and the Sir Geoffrey Henry National Library. The former has an extensive collection of Pacific literature of all kinds and the latter has a number of hard copies of academic theses related to the Cook Islands, lying on dusty shelves at the back of the room. Books were borrowed from both and the theses were carefully searched for relevant topics.

Photography was included as a method of data collection. There was so much that was unfamiliar to a stranger on the island that capturing the visual images was considered to be very important. There were some obvious themes, the contrast between the beauty of the land and sea, and the ugliness of the incongruous rusty trolleys outside the supermarket and the uncollected plastic rubbish next to the lagoon at Panama. Then, even more confronting, there was the crass commercialization of the traditional culture; the carved image of the Polynesian deity Tangaroa advertising hamburgers at the lunch bar, Mana (spiritual power) as the name of a cheap ballpoint pen, the Coca Cola can tossed into the traditional carved vaka (canoe).

3.5.3 Analysis of data

As there was a dearth of literature regarding risk factors in rural or remote communities (Western or non-Western) the study of the offending young people was not hypothesis testing but a description of their lived experience and psychological functioning, influenced by a phenomenological perspective. The existential philosopher Heidegger (2010/1953),

wrote about Dasein or being-in-the-world, which refers to the way of life shared by members of a community. In this case, the being-in-the-world is that of the offending young people in the Cook Islands, known as the “thieves”. I have used this terminology as it is used on Rarotonga and is part of the local language. I did not hear the offending young people referred to as criminals, offenders, antisocial personalities, juvenile delinquents or anything other than “thieves”. They were also referred to as “our children”. A phenomenological study attempts to describe the experience of the participants from their point of view. Lester (1999), states that this approach is a powerful way of gaining insight into the motivation that drives people to act in a particular manner.

The ethnographic case study of the community was first analysed through the lens of postcolonial theory, using Said’s Orientalism (1979) as the foundational text. In the 19th and 20th centuries the Cook Islanders were regarded by Westerners as the Polynesian Other, missionised, colonised, patronised, and infantilised by comments such as “the natives are delightful … what an innocent, happy, child-like lot” (Wragge, 1906, p. 128). They were also eroticized and Wragge, an Australian meteorologist, refers to the “Tahitian darlings” encountered on his travels across the Pacific; and the “pretty native girl [on Rarotonga], scarce fourteen, wishing for a sweetheart who will give her a fourpenny brooch” (1906, p 130). This exotic and erotic view of Polynesian women and girls by European men was described as “ethnoporn” by Teve, one of the participants.

Reading postcolonial theory one encounters the positive “survivance” lens; *la survivance* implying survival, endurance, resistance and resilience in French Canadian culture (Vizenor, 2008). This study is focused on the cultural factors that create and enhance resilience, the strong and multiple attachment bonds within the extended family networks and the ability of the Cook Islanders to adapt to Western culture, building valuable polycultural capital that has allowed many to travel around the world, living and working successfully in the United States and other countries, as well as in Australia and Aotearoa. The existence of these protective cultural factors, in the context of 50 years of self-government, led to the use of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2012) as a lens to analyse the protective factors in the community and the resulting cultural resilience.

3.6 Summary

At the centre of this qualitative research project in Community and Cultural Psychology is a psychological study of the lived experience, mental health and cultural resilience of seven young prisoners and ten young people under supervision on the island of Rarotonga in

July 2011. In order to put the experiences of these young people in context, and to examine the idea of cultural resilience as a protective factor, an ethnographic case study was undertaken of the Cook Islands Māori community.

The research was undertaken with the permission of the Cook Islands government, the approval of the Ministry of Justice, the assistance of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the blessing of influential members of the community. The guidelines and principles of Indigenous research methodology were followed as far as is possible for a non-Indigenous researcher, grateful for the opportunity to learn from a community succeeding in minimizing the incarceration of young people.

In the Cook Islands, the prisoners and the other offending young people are the unusual cases, the young people who, for one reason or another, are struggling to survive in a largely nurturing and resilient community. The study of the community focuses on the cultural influences on resilience, the social processes which protect the vast majority of the young people in the face of significant risk. A branch of critical theory is used as the first theoretical lens through which the ethnographic data have been analysed; in this case, postcolonial theory, as the Cook Islands were previously colonised by Britain, annexed by New Zealand, and are still (self-governing) citizens of New Zealand. The second lens is self-determination theory, applied to a South Pacific community in order to understand social and emotional wellbeing in the face of the enduring effects of colonisation.

Chapter Four
Prisoners in Paradise

‘AKA‘AKA humility

Jonassen (2003) notes that ‘aka‘aka (humility) is one of the pillars of Cook Islands culture. Although some Cook Islanders see being humble and meek as a Christian virtue, Jonassen relates it to colonial domination and the corporal punishment inflicted on the people for speaking their own language. Buse and Taringa (1995) translate the word as low, lower class, modest or humble, as in “the humble people”. The young thieves in the Cook Islands are at the bottom of the social scale, te aronga ‘aka‘aka.

Figure 4.1. **Arorangi Prison: 24 inmates in December 2011.**

4.1 Prisoners in Paradise

Cook Islanders talking to visitors at the Saturday markets on Rarotonga refer to their islands as “our own tropical paradise” and there are very few prisoners in this paradise. The rate of incarceration in the Cook Islands is approximately six times lower than that for Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, with 109 people imprisoned per 100,000 in 2011 (www.prisonstudies.org).

In order to understand risk factors in the Cook Islands community, all of the seven prisoners who were 20 years old or younger in July 2011 were interviewed, as well as five of the seven young people under the supervision of Child Welfare, and five of the youngest people under the supervision of Probation Services. Family and social background, medical, educational and work history, alcohol and other drug use, mental health, suicide risk and cultural resilience as assessed by the WASC-Y (Westerman, 2007), were all intended to form part of a psychological assessment.

The results of the assessments of the young prisoners are reported in this chapter in narrative form and those of the young people under supervision in Chapter Five. The young people were free to discuss their situations and circumstances as the history taking interviews were semi-structured rather than structured. This flexibility ensured that the personal information obtained was more likely to be relevant for that person.

4.2 The Prisoners’ Stories

These are the stories of the seven youngest prisoners who were at Arorangi Prison on the island of Rarotonga in July 2011. Following Mila-Schaaf (2010), personal details of the research participants such as age, place of birth and family structure are deliberately withheld. Island communities are very small and the privacy of the participants is an ethical imperative. Nonetheless, the total picture is an accurate representation of the lives and circumstances of the prisoners.

A semi-structured interview process was used to talk about the life history and offences of each prisoner and a youth-friendly symptom checklist, developed by an Indigenous psychologist for Indigenous youth in Australia, was used to assess mental health and cultural resilience. The colourful checklist was well accepted by the young Cook Islanders, who were happy to substitute phrases like “my Cook Islander culture” for “my Aboriginal culture”, and “Papa‘a” for “whitefella”. The Indigenous Australian norms are not applicable

to Cook Islanders but the results offer an insight into the psychological functioning of the young people interviewed.

The seven prisoners' stories represent seven major risk factors, the first two specific to the Cook Islands; young people returning to the islands after having lived overseas, and children given into the care of grandparents, who may die while the child is still young. The stories also illustrate five general factors: head injuries, mental illness, alcohol abuse during pregnancy resulting in a neurobehavioural disorder, alcohol abuse by parents associated with family violence, alcohol abuse and driving.

Drink driving is a behaviour problem that appears to be widespread in the Rarotongan community, at least amongst the young men. The road death rate in the Cook Islands is the highest recorded rate in the world, 45 per 100,000 of the population (WHO, 2009). Helmets are not compulsory on bicycles, scooters or motorbikes and neither are seatbelts in motor vehicles. In July 2013 three young men died in one midnight accident.

Violence, injury and death are major themes in the lives of the seven prisoners. Bullying by peers, fighting, beatings by older relatives, severe hidings that left welts and bruises, hanging suicides in the community, and accidental deaths on the roads all seem to have contributed to the high levels of anxiety and depression experienced by the young prisoners. These young men had not grown up in safe environments.

The prisoners have been given the names of the numbers one to seven in Cook Islands Māori. The Māori words convey the cultural setting without identifying anyone. Using figures (P1, P2, P3,) seemed inappropriate when using a research paradigm based on interpersonal respect and genuine relatedness. Here are their stories.

4.2.1 Risk factor one, returning to the islands: The story of Ta‘i

"What the hell have I done?"

Ta‘i lived overseas for some years. There was no domestic violence. The children were not beaten; sometimes they were "smacked" and the parents would "growl" at them.

Cook Islands Māori (Rarotongan dialect) was the family's first language but in Auckland Ta‘i lost the use of it. He speaks fluent English and says that he relearned Māori at about 12 years old, listening to his parents and other relatives. He understands the local Rarotongan people but still hesitates when attempting to speak the language.

Ta‘i reports that he couldn’t wait to start school at the age of five and did well until he became very ill with meningitis at 10 years of age. He was hospitalised and returned to school after three weeks very thin and tired. He says that he was not interested in school for a while, that it was in Year Six that “everything dropped out for me”. He started hanging around with “the wrong crowd”, boys who wagged school and spent their time in downtown Auckland. One problem was the science teacher. Ta‘i liked science but he says he “couldn’t understand anything” in this teacher’s class. There was also an English teacher who was “always screaming” at the children. Ta‘i did not like Maths. He did his homework when he was young but “didn’t bother” as he got older.

There were some good times in school when Ta‘i was about 12 years old and learning to play musical instruments. He can play drums, guitar and the hukalele. This Cook Islands instrument is similar to the ukulele. Ta‘i has been asked to join the local cultural dancing groups as they always need musicians but he says he is a bit shy. Not having grown up on the island he does not know how to do the traditional dances.

In early adolescence Ta‘i was bullied. He was called “black” and “Negro” by his white friends in Auckland. They seemed to think it was a joke but it upset him. After six months of being bullied Ta‘i stood up for himself and knocked another boy down. After that he was left alone. He had not wanted to tell his parents about the bullying as he thought any intervention at the school would lead to more trouble. Gangs of boys from different schools would often fight at the train station. Ta‘i says that there was a lot of fighting.

Ta‘i remembers the first time he smoked a joint of marijuana which he refers to as “weed”. He and two friends were on their way to school in the morning, aged about 13, and a young man was in the park trying to sell marijuana. He gave them the joint to try. He remembers being quite intoxicated. At about 16 years old Ta‘i started drinking alcohol. His parents were shocked when he was caught drinking at school.

Ta‘i was 16 years old when his parents decided to return to Rarotonga. Ta‘i did not want to leave Auckland. He says that he had many friends, a girlfriend and he had applied for a factory job. He says “everything just dropped for me”. Ta‘i did not say goodbye to his friends when he left Auckland. He just got on a plane and flew to Rarotonga. He says he was crying on the plane and missing everybody.

Ta‘i obtained employment as a kitchen hand and was unhappy with the wages that he was being paid. In Auckland he had applied for a warehouse job at $15 per hour but on

Rarotonga he was being paid $5 per hour. Other people at the restaurant were being paid $6 an hour and he asked the manager for a raise. She promised that he would get a raise “next month” but it was always “next month, next month”. He began to feel hopeless, started using more alcohol and marijuana, and committed a variety of property offences.

Ta‘i says that the young men on Rarotonga see drinking as a social event. There is nothing else to do at the weekend so they “get on the piss”. They will meet at a bar or club, “try not to drink too much, say six beers”, and then ride their motor bikes to someone’s home. There they will keep drinking and sleep over if they are not picked up by their girlfriends. He says that once they settle down and get married they tend to drift away from the drinking group. Ta‘i says that the young men sometimes ride their motor bikes at 100 kph after they have had their six beers. The speed limit on the island’s narrow little roads is 50 kph, 30 kph in some places. There had been a funeral for a well-known Rarotongan man the day before the interview, who was killed on his motor bike at 2am on a Sunday morning. Ta‘i thinks that he collided with a bike ridden by his cousins.

Ta‘i says that he has had nightmares since he has been in prison and he has struggled to sleep. The prisoners have one meal a day; vegetable soup with rice or noodles at lunch time. The other two meals are four slices of bread with a cup of tea. Now that he has been in prison for a few weeks, however, Ta‘i is feeling good. He is drug free as there are no drugs in Arorangi Prison. (He says that the Big Man won’t let them in.) His mind is beginning to clear and he is looking forward to getting out of prison and back to work. He was given a new job just before he went in to serve his time, and it is a much more pleasant job than kitchen hand. Ta‘i will be working with the tourists.

Ta‘i says that there are positive aspects to life on Rarotonga; the beaches, swimming, surfing in the breaks in the reef and kayaking in the lagoon, helping uncles to fish in the deep ocean, and catching the big fish. He has friends on Rarotonga now and they play rugby league together and watch the New Zealand and Australian games on TV. He loves being a Cook Islander but he is hoping to visit Australia soon as he has relatives on the Gold Coast. He thinks about half the people on Rarotonga are happy and like the fact that everybody knows everybody else. Some also like growing oranges and pawpaw on the plantations, selling the fruit and making money. Ta‘i thinks the other half may be unhappy because they see few opportunities and nothing to do in such a small island community.

Ta‘i sees playing football and learning music as good choices. Getting his latest job was a good choice as his boss is waiting for him to get out of prison and get back to work. Bad

choices were drink driving on the bike and also driving without a licence in Auckland. He says that he was “showing off to the girls in the back seat” and once he was stopped by the police. He managed to convince them that he had left his licence at home and they let him go. At the time he did not think of the consequences, he “just did those things”.

At the time of his first offence on Rarotonga, Ta‘i says that he “just didn’t care”. He was feeling hopeless about his life and using alcohol and marijuana in an attempt to feel good. After he was caught he was frightened, and sorry for causing pain to his parents. They were shocked by the offences but Ta‘i was not only feeling hopeless, he was also feeling angry. He felt that he had been cheated and exploited by his employer and it seems that there was some degree of payback in his offending behaviour. He had offended alone and afterwards thought “what the hell have I done?” He says that he was not under the influence of alcohol or marijuana when he committed the offences.

Ta‘i has the support of his parents. He says that he loves them and he knows that they care about him. They are visiting him in prison. He also has a very good friend who bailed him out of the police cells when he was arrested. Ta‘i is looking forward to getting out of prison and helping his parents. He has a family, a home and a job to go to. He does not go to church with his parents anymore but he says that he believes in God. He believes that he is a good person “most of the time” and that people like him.

This story suggests that Ta‘i may have suffered some learning difficulties after his hospitalisation for meningitis. It is thought that about 32% of survivors may suffer from cognitive deficits and/or behaviour problems (Hoogman, Van de Beek, Weisfelt, de Gans & Schmand; 2007). He certainly seems to have had difficulties at school after his illness and began to drift into an antisocial lifestyle with “the wrong crowd”. If he had stayed in New Zealand he may have been arrested eventually as he had already been pulled over for driving without a licence. In addition, for Ta‘i the return to the islands was a migration to a strange country, a very stressful process for an adolescent who had been attached to his peer group in Auckland.

Risk factors in this case were migration by his family, serious illness, school difficulties, bullying, returning to the islands, low wages, depression and substance abuse.

4.2.2 Risk factor two, head injuries: The story of Rua

“The voices talk about my past.”

Rua presented as drug affected, unfocused, a bit slow to speak, and his eyes were a bit glazed. He kissed me absent-mindedly in greeting and in farewell, smiled a lot, and giggled at times. It turned out that he was taking medication for a psychosis, although whether schizophrenic or drug-induced was not specified. Rua says that he hears voices talking about the past, his past, when he does not take the medication. He was not willing to disclose what the voices had been saying.

Rua says he liked school, especially Maths and Science. He did not do his homework, though, because he was “having too much fun”. He spent some time in New Zealand when he was younger, which was “awesome” but he “didn’t mind coming back”. He was excited to be going home, at first, but then he found Rarotonga boring. He missed the skate park and says that the rugby in New Zealand is “faster and they teach you more skills”. He liked the New Zealand school “for learning” but he preferred the teachers on Rarotonga. Sometimes he was called a “coconut” at school in New Zealand but he “didn’t mind”. He just laughed.

Rua had been going to church with his grandmother as a young child but his family did not attend church in New Zealand. He likes listening to the preachers but finds the singing of hymns very boring. He stopped going to church after a few weeks back on Rarotonga. He met up with old friends and enjoyed fishing until his Dad sold the boat. He does not sing or dance or play a musical instrument.

Other people allowed him to ride their motor bikes when he was 14 years old and he says that he has done 100 kph on the island roads. He also found that there were “lots of drugs” available to him. He smoked marijuana but refused to inject P (methamphetamine). He says that he drinks every day, about eight cans of Bourbon and Coke per day, paid for by “working for family”. He was expelled from school in Year 10 for smoking “dope”.

Rua says that he was hospitalized with pneumonia as a small child and also had Dengue fever. He says that he “cracked his skull” falling on a BMX jump while riding without a helmet. His head was bleeding but he says he did not go to hospital. He has also been concussed twice while playing rugby and has hit his head into a pole while riding his motor bike. He says that he was just dazed by the accident. He denies having headaches but

says he takes tablets to make his brain relax. If he does not take the tablets there are “too many voices” in his head.

Rua says that he is close to his family, especially to his Mama (grandmother) and his mother. He feels close to all his family, siblings, uncles and cousins. He can talk to them when he is in trouble or upset. He says he “didn’t have a job” for over a year and just did “bad stuff”. He corrected himself and said “not bad stuff, just naughty stuff, riding a bike without a licence, things like that”.

As a child Rua was given a hiding if he did the wrong thing, being hit with a broom, a hose or a stick. These implements left marks but did not break the skin. He says that he was not afraid of his parents and does not consider these hidings to have been a problem. He attended Boys Brigade and was taught to tie knots as well as learning “respect and honour”. He has never been suicidal and has never been under the supervision of Child Welfare. When he is older he wants to play rugby league and work as a steel tier on a building site. Tying steel cables keeps the house together, he says.

Rua has been having trouble sleeping in prison, wakes in the night and has bad dreams. He has a cell mate and they have bunk beds. Some inmates sleep on the floor. There is no TV but they are allowed to read and he has a crossword book.

Rua is good at playing sports. He says he made a good choice when he refused to inject methamphetamine. He made a bad choice when he tried marijuana in New Zealand. His use of marijuana on Rarotonga was due to the ready availability of the drug. He says that he thought “why not?” When he looks back on that choice now, he feels all right about it.

Rua first committed an offence by smoking marijuana at 13 years old. He calls marijuana “notch”. He was speeding on a motor bike at 14 years old and never thought that his offending might hurt others. When he was asked how he would feel if the motor bike had crashed into somebody, he just smiled and shrugged.

Rua liked group activities at school, drawing pictures and writing stories. He had to study Māori on his own when he returned from New Zealand as, although he speaks his language fluently, he had to learn to write it. He wrote a story in Māori which was to be published in a book. In New Zealand he was put into detention for not handing in his homework. It did not change his behaviour. On Rarotonga the teachers gave him “a smack on the head” or hit him on the hand with a ruler.

Rua says he has lots of friends but he does not hang around with them. He has his relatives and he is a loner, preferring to do things on his own. He is angry that he is in prison but he says he just turns his anger into happiness. When he was asked how he did that, Rua said "I just do" and smiled broadly. He then said that he gets angry easily, still smiling.

Rua feels that his life has been getting worse, however he looks forward to the future. He feels a bit ashamed of what he does when he is drunk or affected by drugs, and admits that he does stupid things without thinking. He feels a bit anxious.

Rua believes that people like him and that he is a good person. He is good at sports and his parents care about him. He knows his language and his culture and likes being a Cook Islander. He likes going to work. He knows someone he respects and he says he is able to soothe himself by going for walks.

The major risk factors in Rua's case appear to be the head injuries that he has suffered. He fell on a BMX jump, was concussed at rugby more than once, and hit his head into a pole while riding a motor-bike.

In addition, he has experienced a psychotic episode which may be an indication of a major mental illness. His medication may be affecting his cognitive functioning. Rua is clearly unwell and requires further medical assessment and treatment.

Other risk factors in Rua's case are the migration and return to the Islands, the availability of alcohol and other drugs, and the exclusion from school.

4.2.3 Risk factor three, trauma: The story of Toru

"I dream that I am a killer."

Toru speaks Cook Islands Māori and English is his second language. He says he loves his family, and he's close to his Grandma, to his aunties and uncles. They tended to support him if his parents got angry with him. They "talked to my parents. If I go straight to Mum and Dad, they will kill me!" He got hidings with a stick as a child.

Both his mother and his father belonged to a Christian church. Toru says "I was a good boy, helpful to my family, before I started to change. I was a good mechanic, my father taught me. I was also a good carpenter, because my uncle taught me." Toru worked with

his family repairing houses, planting taro and fishing. He is also good at cultural dancing and drumming. He loves his Cook Islands culture.

Toru left school in Year 10 after he got into trouble for “not listening, sleeping in class, playing in class”. He was given many warnings but he “didn’t like school …too much talking, too much reading”, and he was glad when he was expelled for smoking cigarettes. He used to have to rake up the rubbish and clean the classroom. Toru says that he failed everything except Maths at school. He was good at Maths but no good at other subjects. “They teach me any subject, I always ignore it. I don’t like school. Mostly all my friends are still at school. Was there something bad in my brain?”

When Toru was 15 years old he was caught riding a motor-bike without a licence. The police officer gave him a warning. When he turned 16 years of age he obtained a licence to ride a motor-bike and started drinking alcohol. Just a few months later, he and a close friend were drinking together. His friend had wanted to celebrate that evening.

“My friend was drunk, I asked him if I could drive (the bike), but he said he would drive and we went two together. He fell off and went under a car. I picked him up and took him to the hospital. I rode at 90 (kilometres per hour). He died at the hospital. He was still breathing when I got there, but when the doctor came, he had passed away. You feel like it’s your fault … feeling like I want to die.”

Since the accident, Toru dreams that he is a killer. During the day he thinks about his family, at night he kills. Toru blames himself for his friend’s death. He is depressed and tired and he wants to die. He has tried swimming out to sea and he thinks about dying every day. He does not use drugs and he never has. He only drinks alcohol. Toru thinks he might join the army so that he can get killed. One of his uncles hanged himself around the same time that the accident occurred.

Toru says “in my heart I’m a weak person, I easily get tired’.

Toru has always had a lot of friends. They used to fix motor-bikes together and go fishing. On Friday and Saturday nights they used to go drinking. When he was 17 (after the accident) Toru got drunk one night and broke into a local shop to steal alcohol, Heineken beer and Jim Beam bourbon whiskey. He was seen by the people next door, who reported him to the police. It was his first offence and he was fined. His parents paid the fine. He says that is when he started to change.

Toru says that his friends started talking about him being “the best thief”, being good at it, able to open doors. He was “shy” about this, ashamed because his family heard about it. He became angry on one occasion because he could not open the shop door and smashed it with a hammer. He also got angry about being called a thief. The third time he broke into a shop he took alcohol and cigarettes.

Toru appeared to be friendly, shy, anxious, ashamed and remorseful. He does not know that he has symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder; recurring nightmares, anxiety, outbursts of anger, substance abuse, depression and suicidal ideation. He thinks that he “changed” after he left school, but it seems clear that the change in behaviour came after the accident and the death of his friend. There had been no problems with his family apart from some harsh discipline, and the suicide of his uncle occurred at about the same time as his friend died.

Toru’s anxiety and impulsivity scores were very high as was his score on suicide risk (Westerman, 2007). He was strongly advised to talk about his suicidal ideation with a volunteer counsellor who visited the prison.

Risk factors in Toru’s case were difficulties at school and drink driving on motor-bikes. When his friend died, Toru developed a severe posttraumatic stress disorder, a mental illness which became a potent risk factor. It is common for people with an anxiety disorder to engage in substance abuse, which may lead to offending behaviour. Toru is urgently in need of treatment for his mental health issues but there are no psychologists or psychiatrists resident in the Cook Islands.

4.2.4 Risk factor four, parent’s alcohol abuse: The story of ‘Ā

“There was no food in the house.”

‘Ā’s father became violent when he drank a lot of alcohol. “He would come home and give Mum and the kids a hiding for nothing. Mum tried to help us and we tried to help if Mum was getting a hiding, and then we got a hiding. He used sticks and we got bruises”. Both parents worked. ‘Ā was not close to his uncles or aunties. His Nana was in New Zealand and his grandfather had passed away.

‘Ā had trouble learning to read. He was often late for school or he “didn’t go to school”. He says that he could not concentrate at school and he could not keep up. He started smoking “weed” at age 10 or 11, given to him by older children. He was “hanging out with

a bad crowd", with his brother who was four years older. He started drinking alcohol at 13 years old and staying out on the streets at night. In primary school the local teachers used to smack him and hit him on the back with a ruler. In high school he was suspended from school for two weeks for fighting and then expelled at 14 years old for selling "weed".

'Ā's mother arranged for him to go and stay with a relative in New Zealand. "I wanted to come back at first but I got used to it". Unfortunately, his mother was not aware that there were relatives in New Zealand who were heavily involved in crime. 'Ā attempted to attend school for the first term as he was keen to study, and to learn English. "I was into my work, I started reading, watching TV, speaking English. I wanted to stay in school but it was too noisy. You need quiet in class". The local school had many students who were not interested in studying. "Kids playing, not doing their work". They were noisy and disruptive in class and 'Ā could not concentrate on what the teachers were saying. In addition, there were some students with racist attitudes towards Māori people and Pacific Islanders. He asked if he could transfer to another school but it was not possible. "I tried to focus for a while and then I just gave up. I tried to get my auntie to move me to another school, but she couldn't, it was the only school in our area. I gave up. I went to school for one term and a few weeks of the second term. Not even half a year".

So 'Ā stopped attending high school and joined his cousin, "one of those bad ones", in drug dealing and violence. 'Ā admits that he "did all sorts of crimes, smoked marijuana, trips on LSD, smoked P in pipe and sold drugs. I grew up too fast, I was doing men's stuff". He went to live with the gang members. His aunt and his other cousins believed that he was working and he would give them money to help with the bills.

'Ā says that he was charged with assault while high on P and was sent back to the Cook Islands. "I couldn't find a job. I tried cutting people's grass. I didn't know what to do when I came back here. It was like nothing was for me. I tried to save up to go back because the judge said I could come back after a year. I gave up. I couldn't get work or money."

At about this time 'Ā's mother passed away. "There was no food in the house. Dad was still drinking. I started stealing food and stuff, breaking into places. I was having problems sleeping and bad dreams. Then I was thrown out of the house and living on the street. I slept in abandoned buildings, no money … no food. There was nobody to help. I tried to hang myself". There are no unemployment benefits in the Cook Islands and no vans with soup and coffee for the homeless. 'Ā stole food and alcohol. He also managed to get marijuana from the friends he made on the streets of Rarotonga.

‘Ā was eventually arrested and convicted on a number of counts of breaking and entering. He spent a year in prison and when he got out he says that he became very depressed. He “didn’t want to talk to anyone, didn’t want to go out” or socialize. He was feeling “alone, sad and tired”. He says he “didn’t care”. He has been in and out of prison a few times since that first sentence, and the last time he was sorry to leave, as he was enjoying doing literacy classes with a volunteer prison visitor.

‘Ā says that he is good at soccer and cultural dancing. He has learned to play the guitar since he has been in prison. He would like to join the army, as he thinks he would like the discipline, the training and the fitness. He used to go to the Catholic Church every day with his mother before he went to New Zealand. He does not go to church now but when he was asked if there was anyone that he could talk to, he said “God”. He believes that God is his only support now. He is studying in prison and says he wants to read books.

The risk factors in ‘Ā’s life were his father’s substance abuse, the family violence, physical child abuse, and neglect. School difficulties, substance abusing peers and school exclusion added to the risk. Then, being sent away to feeding parents became another risk factor. The new home was too far away to be assessed or monitored by his mother. Auckland is 3008 kilometres away from Rarotonga, four hours flight by jet, two hours behind and a day ahead, on the other side of the international dateline.

There were criminal gang members in his new family who offered ‘Ā an easy way to earn money and, as he continued to have difficulties at school, he joined them. When he returned to Rarotonga, there were additional risk factors; unemployment, hunger and homelessness. These factors have remained a problem, ensuring that ‘Ā has returned to prison, and unless he is offered a job and a home by somebody on the island, he may become one of the “old hands” who keep coming back to Arorangi.

Farrington (2008) has noted that little is known about the dynamic interaction of risk factors. This story shows that family risk factors (child abuse and neglect) can induce individual risk factors (such as anxiety) which can affect performance at school and so induce school risk factors (learning difficulties, behaviour problems and exclusion). Exclusion means that the young person may spend time with other excluded or antisocial young people, which exacerbates the risk of offending. ‘Ā was excluded from school on Rarotonga and, after trying another school, ended up working with his criminal cousin. Once a young person has been in prison, unemployment adds to the risk of recidivism and homelessness may

be the end result. It seems that each risk factor creates another risk factor, taking the young person further and further away from the prosocial norm.

4.2.5 Risk factor five, loss of grandparents: The story of Rima

"I wanted to kill myself when I was nine."

Rima was abandoned by both of his parents. Although it is not uncommon for a Polynesian child to be brought up by his grandparents, Rima says that his father was "chucked into prison" when he was very young, and his mother went to another island, married and started another family. He did not see her for about 10 years and he is not happy about what he feels was her neglect. "I don't like it!"

Rima presented as a friendly, smiling young man. He said that he was a "happy little child" who went to school at age six, singing, playing sport, learning two languages and reading. Reading "was hard, [it was] shame reading in front of heaps of kids. I didn't like kids being boss of me. I always wanted to be the boss." There was hitting at school by teachers, "the stick on the butt" and fighting between the children.

Rima was very ill with pneumonia and with Dengue fever as a child. He once fell on a wet floor and hit his head against a wall, resulting in bruises. He says that he was regularly beaten up by his uncle who was 10 years older than him. Rima did travel between the island he lived on and the island where his mother lived occasionally. He was on one of the islands during a cyclone, which was very frightening. Waves crashed through the building and the coconut trees were falling. His grandmother, his Mama, died when he was twelve and he says that her death was very hard on him.

Mama brought him up as a Catholic and he says that he went to church "from young". Rima thought that was a blessing, and said he would like to be baptised when he gets out of prison. He wants to talk to someone because he thinks "I have received the Lord maybe 50%. I am still doing the things I like to do". His grandfather has now died too, and Rima is very sad because "there is no one to go to". He may go to the Youth with a Mission Christian centre when he is released.

Rima says that his uncle beat him with his fists and he described this as abuse. He remembers being nine years old and his uncle punching him on the head and ears. Rima is still angry with his uncle. His grandfather also hit him with a stick and a hose but Rima

says that he beat him for a reason, unlike his uncle. He also says that four years ago he was beaten up and kicked in the head.

By the time Rima was eight or nine he had started stealing from his teenage uncle, marbles, cigarettes and toys. He also stole money in the house whenever he could. He says that he "quit school" at 14 years old and went to work. He liked going fishing, playing volley ball and touch rugby, dancing, singing, hukalele, guitar, and keyboard. From the time he left school he says he has been drinking alcohol and "smoking weed".

Rima has been getting into trouble with the police since he was about 14 years old. He has done community service for various offences, usually committed when he was drunk. He has broken into shops with his "mates", stealing Jim Beam and cigarettes, as well as food, rice and corned beef. They liked to eat corned beef because at home they usually ate fish, pork and cabbage. Rima said he "didn't really think" about the consequences.

Apparently Rima got drunk one night and stole a motor-bike. He tried to ride through a police road block, hit a mango tree and ended up in prison.

Rima said that he was good at art and music at school. When he was asked about good choices he had made, he said that he "didn't make any good choices. I never think of that. All I think of is having fun." He did not know if he had made any bad choices.

Friends have been an important part of Rima's life. He has had many friends and sometimes he "tells them what to do". He has fun drinking, singing and playing sports. He knows how to make home brew from coconut, pineapple and mango.

Rima also said that he tried to hang himself in 2008 and that he has been trying to kill himself since his uncle started beating him up at nine years old. He once tried to stab himself and he ran away many times. A friend of his recently hanged himself.

Rima's grandmother cared for him and took him to church, and his grandfather administered discipline, but his uncle appears to have abused him from an early age. Sibling abuse has only recently been recognised as a serious issue (Tucker, Finkelhor, Turner & Shattuck, 2013) and in this case the uncle, or feeding brother, would have been ten years old when the new little boy arrived in the family. Teasing and bullying are not uncommon between older and younger brothers but Rima's uncle appears to have been particularly violent. The fact that Rima wanted to kill himself to get away from his uncle is a measure of his rage and despair.

The risk factors in Rima's case were the loss of his parents and then his grandmother, and the physical abuse. There was no one in the family able to protect him. His aggressive, acting out behaviour at school would have increased the risk; fighting with other children, refusing to let them be "the boss of me" and rebelling against teachers. It seems that Rima left school as soon as possible and continued to rebel against the community. He may be suffering from a developmental posttraumatic stress disorder (Ewing, 2007; Montgomery & Morris, 2013) associated with the changes to the brain which would have occurred as he grew up in fear of his uncle's beatings. His love of music and ability to play musical instruments may be a major protective factor in his life and music may soothe his anxiety.

Notwithstanding his anger and his suicidal impulses, Rima does have the capacity to enjoy life, to play sport, to sing and dance, and so the care he received from his grandmother may have acted as a protective factor. Rima is a rebel and a fighter but he also has the capacity to form friendships, and he may find a home with the people at Youth with a Mission, who have been spending time with him. Sometimes people who have been antisocial from an early age and have spent time in prison find religious faith very helpful in building a new life for themselves (J-F, 2010).

One can hope that Rima will be one of them.

4.2.6 Risk factor six, neurobehavioural disorders: The story of Ono

"You might explode your head."

Ono was brought up by his grandparents, another feeding child. Dodson (2009) mentions that a previous researcher interviewed all of the "juvenile delinquents" on Rarotonga and concluded that they were all feeding children. That is not what was found in this study. Five of the seven prisoners grew up with their own parents and four of the families were supportive and helpful to the offending young people. It is thought that about 20 or 30% of the children in the Cook islands are feeding children (Tavake) so one would expect two of the seven prisoners to be in that category. Ono's father was in prison in Australia.

Ono was "not interested in school". He liked to experience nature, the birds and animals, fishing – "that side" – spearfishing on the reef. He used to take packets of cigarettes to school and stay away from school whenever he could. The "cops took me to school".

He said that he was sick “a lot when I was a baby, taken to Rarotonga for an operation”. Ono “doesn’t know what the operation was for. He said that he had never had any head injuries but that he sometimes had a pain in his head.

Ono said that his mother did not want his grandparents to give him hidings. “Mum is nice, angry at grandparents sometimes”. “When I’m in trouble they won’t help me. We are always stealing, me and my mates”. They steal new clothes, beer (home brew, local beer) and Jim Beam bourbon whiskey.

“The police always blame me” said Ono. “They know I’m the best thief on the island, it’s not only me but they look for the easiest person”. He was charged with assault when he was 16 but he escaped from custody. He says that he served one year and 8 months and time for escaping. “I give a fella a hiding. [I was] drinking, the fella was drunk”.

When Ono was 14 years old, he broke his arm. His uncle gave him home brew to drink and he got very drunk. He did a back flip on a trampoline and broke his arm. He also hurt himself riding a push bike, another man was on a motor-bike and hit him. “I walked away with my leg bleeding”. Ono has had “heaps of crash … fell from high places … coconut tree, mango tree”.

Ono is “never scared … my whole life I never scared. I just do anything … have fun. I done so many bad things … when you get angry, it’s too hard to control. You might explode your head! I was in trouble my whole life out there. No good life … bad life. That’s how most kids get in trouble … their Dad. Mum said don’t go see Dad. He’s a gangster in Australia. Stay away from him”.

Apparently Ono’s mother used to drink a lot of alcohol when she was younger and he frequently moved between her care and the care of his grandfather when he was “a little kid”. His grandmother passed away. Then his mother got married and stopped drinking. She had other children. Now she is a Catholic and goes to church.

Ono does not approve of the Catholic religion. “Too much praising statues. Lucky I came in here, I learn from the Bible. The Bible helps you. It’s got the right answers. I’m a Christian. I believe in Jesus, but I always go back to my old ways, smoking, go cruise around the island on a motor-bike.”

Finding a job is Ono's greatest ambition. He has had a job, cleaning. He says he is good at playing cards, chess and fishing. He also likes touch rugby and soccer. Ono says he does not have a girlfriend. "I don't think about girls. It's bad for your mind".

Ono's history of behaviour problems indicates the possibility of neurological impairment. He was able to read English, but presented as hyperactive and had difficulty staying on task. A comprehensive assessment would be needed in order to understand his cognitive functioning. There is a clue in his family history which might explain his ongoing difficulties with the authorities; his mother used to drink a lot of alcohol when he was very young.

If Ono's mother drank alcohol when she was pregnant with him, he might have acquired a developmental disorder in utero, suffering from learning disabilities and hyperactive, impulsive behaviours. Ono's life story has been what one might expect with this condition, and his score on impulsivity (Westerman, 2007) was very high.

Although we cannot be sure that Ono has an alcohol related neurobehavioural disorder, his presentation is consistent with it and serves as an example of another risk factor operating in the Cook Islands. Clear guidelines for the diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in Australia have only recently been developed (Elliott, Latimer, Fitzpatrick, Oscar & Carter, 2012). Pipi predicted that there will be a problem with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in the Cook Islands in the future as so many of the young women are now drinking alcohol. In traditional times only men drank kava in the Pacific Islands and in the missionary times the bush beer meetings were also male only (Scott, 1991).

The risk factors in Ono's case were an absent, imprisoned father, which makes Ono six times more likely to go to prison himself (Butler et al. 2006), as well as possible exposure to alcohol in utero, and the instability of the frequent transfers of the child between mother and grandparents This was not a case of a stable feeding child arrangement but a grandfather who provided emergency care. Ono mentioned that his mother was angry when his grandparents gave him severe hidings, so there may have been harsh discipline, another proven risk factor (Raine, 1993).

Ono suffers from anxiety, but his dismissive attitude towards the norms of the community goes far beyond what one would expect from an anxious young person. He seems to be absolutely unconcerned about social expectations or the consequences of his actions. He says he has never felt fear and this appears to include related emotions or feelings such as guilt, remorse or empathy. Yet Ono is a very pleasant young man, who also appears to

be free from malice and hostility. He was only moderately depressed and his suicide risk was very low. His cultural resilience score was also very low, perhaps indicating that he is not well integrated into the community. He said that there was “not really” anyone he could look up to and admire, and that if he needed to talk to someone he would talk to his “boys”, his friends, not to an adult or older person. As noted above, Ono’s presentation is consistent with a diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder or perhaps another neurodevelopmental disorder.

4.2.7 Risk factor seven, drinking and driving: The story of ‘Itu

“I’m allowed to go to work.”

‘Itu was serving a prison sentence as a result of being involved in a fatal motor vehicle accident. He had been drinking and driving. He had spent six months in prison and had learned to make hukaleles for sale to the tourists. He had then been allowed to return to work for the remainder of his sentence, spending his nights and weekends in the prison.

As ‘Itu was an unusual prisoner, with a good job as well as a very supportive family, he tended to talk about the prison rather than about his personal issues or his family life. His risk factor was alcohol abuse and he had accepted the justice of his punishment. That one, very powerful, risk factor had resulted in a two year prison sentence. ‘Itu was not anxious or depressed and his cultural resilience score was high.

The prison at Arorangi is a very unusual correctional centre. It appears to be a community rather than an institution. The inmates are friends rather than enemies and the prison officers are helpful rather than harmful. ‘Itu said that there is no obvious violence in the prison, between prisoners or between inmates and officers. The only violence that occurred during July 2011 was an injury that an officer sustained when a man with a mental illness was locked up before being transferred to a secure facility in Auckland. This was reported in the local newspaper, the *Cook Islands News*.

‘Itu also repeated what Ta‘i had said, that there are no drugs in the prison at Arorangi. Apart from the four cells behind a locked door in maximum security, there are only eleven cells and one small compound. The smell of marijuana could not be hidden in such a small place. The prison officers are men and women with conservative values, many of them church-going Christians, who aim to rehabilitate the prisoners and would not tolerate the use of drugs. There are also many volunteers from the community, both local and Papa’a,

who visit the prison and spend time with the inmates, teaching them literacy and Maths, running AA meetings, Bible studies and religious services, and offering counselling. The emphasis seems to be firmly on healing and recovery, restoration and rehabilitation.

Extensive repairs had to be carried out in 2010 in order to prevent prisoners escaping, but the generally friendly atmosphere of the prison, the laughter that can be heard in the workshops, and the pet animals wandering in and out of the compound as the gate is unlocked, tell a story very different to that associated with prisons in Australia.

4.3 Prisoner Characteristics

The seven prisoners who were interviewed are not a random sample of the prison population but the total population of young prisoners between the age of 17 and 20 years. Four of the young prisoners were from Rarotonga, and three from the outer islands.

The four prisoners who obtained high and moderate scores on cultural resilience on the Westerman (2007) checklist also enjoyed support from their parents and families. Two of these had been involved in road deaths, one had suffered head injuries and one had had meningitis. The three who obtained low scores on cultural resilience had suffered physical abuse and neglect in very dysfunctional families. Two of these had fathers in prison.

Six of the seven prisoners presented with symptoms of mental illness as measured by the Westerman (2007) symptom checklist, indications of neurological impairment or both. Ta'i had had meningitis and school difficulties, was anxious and moderately depressed, Rua had been diagnosed with a "psychosis" and had suffered a series of head injuries, Toru was suffering from a severe posttraumatic stress disorder, both 'Ā and Rima were severely depressed, with a high risk of suicide, and Ono was highly anxious, hyperactive and impulsive, possibly suffering from a neurobehavioural disorder. Six of the seven young prisoners were suffering from high levels of anxiety and very high levels of impulsivity. All seven prisoners were rated at medium high to very high risk of substance abuse.

All of the young prisoners could speak English and read English, although some requested help with reading the Westerman (2007) checklist questions. Those from the outer islands whose first language was Māori were well able to communicate in English, even if their grammar and syntax reflected their bilingual status.

One of the prison volunteers discussed this research project with some of the slightly older prisoners who were not involved. All of them requested an interview, which, due to time

constraints and the research design, was not possible. The class became an impromptu focus group, however, and made comments which were very valuable in terms of understanding the circumstances and attitudes of antisocial young people in the Cook Islands. Major contributions from this group were:

> We are left with our grandparents and then they die and we have to go back to our parents. They are so busy outing and drinking that they don't want us.
>
> I never know what my father wants me to do. One day I get a hiding for something and the next day it's fine to do it.
>
> Nobody wants us. They point fingers at us and talk about us.
>
> They won't give us jobs.
>
> The government should give us jobs.
>
> We have no jobs so we take our revenge.

4.4 Summary

It was clear that there are some general risk factors operating in the Cook Islands, such as poverty, child abuse, and exclusion from school. This is consistent with the Western literature, and what Homel et al. (1999), found in Australian Aboriginal communities.

There are also specific community factors, such as the high rate of outward migration and the feeding child tradition, which can be double-edged swords. Migration offers opportunities for education and employment, as well as remittances, but also leaves gaps in the family networks, such as in the case of 'Ā who became homeless due to lack of family support. The feeding child who has been given to relatives may be very well cared for by aunts, uncles and grandparents, or even be regarded as a favourite (Vini, 2003), but he or she may suffer abuse or neglect if the grandparents die while the child is still young.

In addition, there are meta-factors involved in community risk. In Australia these are thought to be colonialism and dispossession and all the trauma that that implies (Gordon, 2007). In the Cook Islands there has been colonialism and neocolonialism; the impact of the English missionaries' middle class culture associated with conversion to Christianity, loss of collective autonomy and traditional leadership, racism, subtle forms of dispossession, economic domination by foreigners, and the tourist industry, devastating in itself for Indigenous people, according to Trask (1999) and Johnston (2006).

Inequality is a major issue for Cook Islanders today, brought about by the change from the family communism of the precontact society to individual greed, recommended by the British Resident in 1893 as the path to prosperity (Gilson, 1980).

These meta-factors will be discussed further in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Five
Young People in the Cook Islands

ARO‘A love and compassion

One of the main pillars of Cook Islands culture is aro‘a, also known in the Pacific as aroha, aloha, alofa, loloma (Wendt, 1976), meaning love. The English word love can refer to Greek words for affection, friendship, romance or unconditional, altruistic caring for other human beings (Lewis, 1960). The Māori people of the Cook Islands use aro‘a as a verb to refer to welcoming, presenting with gifts, forgiving, or sympathising with, and as a noun to mean love in the sense of kindness and compassion (Buse & Taringa, 1995). Young people are treated with aro‘a (compassion) by the justice system on Rarotonga, every effort being made to rehabilitate rather than punish.

Figure 5.1. **New school prefects: Welcomed with ‘ei.**

5.1 Listening to the Young People on Rarotonga

In addition to the seven youngest prisoners at Arorangi Prison, 15 other young people between the ages of 14 and 19 years were interviewed on Rarotonga in July 2011. Five of them were high school students attending one of the Colleges. Of the ten offending young people, five were under the supervision of the Child Welfare Services and five were on probation. The participating College is not named to protect the identity of the students. One of the educators very kindly assisted in the recruiting of five students of the same ages as the children under the supervision of Child Welfare, and the principal generously gave permission for them to participate in the research at the school during school hours. The parents of young people under the age of 16 years were asked to sign consent forms.

The number of young people involved with the criminal justice system in the Cook Islands is very small and it is essential that participants in research studies are not identifiable. The young people interviewed have been given pseudonyms taken from the Cook Islands Māori Dictionary (Buse & Taringa, 1995). As suggested by Mila-Schaaf (2010), identifying personal details are deliberately withheld and family situations are disguised. In addition, the stories told by each of the young people have been randomly reported in this chapter without classifying them into Child Welfare, Probation Services or College Students.

The interviews with these young people and the comments made by the police, probation and prison officers about them give valuable insights into the operation of the criminal justice system in the Cook Islands. It is a very different, more compassionate, merciful and actively helpful system than that operating in most of the Western world. As an example of how the community manages behaviour, six young people were expelled from one of the Colleges in 2013 for being involved with the use of marijuana, and four of them were later given a second chance and allowed to return. One of the Papa'a (European) teachers stated that Cook Islanders are a very forgiving people.

The Westerman Aboriginal Symptom Checklist for Youth (Westerman, 2007) was used to measure depression, anxiety, impulsivity, suicide risk, substance abuse, and cultural resilience. The cultural resilience score on this checklist is a function of a positive self-image, positive relationships with others and a positive sense of cultural identity.

This was not a random sample but the majority of the youngest people involved with the criminal justice system at the time of the interviews, suggesting that the risk factors described are important in the context of offending in the Cook Islands.

The word “thief” is used in this thesis instead of “young offender”, “juvenile delinquent”, or “criminal” because it is the word used by the Cook Islands community, by the justice workers and by the young people themselves, to describe those who break the law. Almost all of the offending young people had been guilty of theft, although a few had committed other offences as well, such as assault. There was only one who had not been a “thief”, and two young men claimed to be “the best thief on the island”.

5.2 Working with Young People on Rarotonga

The police, probation, prison and child welfare officers know that most of the young thieves on Rarotonga are abused and neglected children. Far from the “rough justice” approach recommended by the local Papa‘a business owners, justice workers on Rarotonga are more likely to address the causes of crime, an approach suggested by Kinner (2006). They are involved in arranging adequate food and alternative accommodation, employment, training, or, if possible, a return to school for the young people that come to their attention. So the criminal justice system in the Cook Islands has a welfare arm, with officers using their family, friends, church and social networks to assist the offending young people. Justice workers act as education and employment consultants, and as providers of food, clothing and shelter to the homeless. It is said that there is no poverty in the Cook Islands (Mako), but the justice workers are witnesses to the struggle of the children and the elderly, left behind by adults who have migrated in search of work, as well as the people living on the minimum wage (Maire, Rupe, Tamanu).

When asked what the underlying causes of criminal behaviour in their community were, the responses from justice workers were as follows:

> Their needs are not being met.
> They are not loved.
> They are hungry.
> We visit their homes at night. We see the poverty.
> It comes down to the family.
> They want what the other children have.
> There is one thief in our village. His father drinks and beats him up all the time.
> They have no-one. I see them sitting alone on the road at night.
> No one has bothered to look at the root of the problem.

5.2.1 Child Welfare Services

The Child Welfare services are under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In July 2011 the Secretary for Internal Affairs kindly allowed me to spend time with the child welfare officers, both of whom were very generous with their time, knowledge and practical assistance.

In July 2010 I had briefly met another Child Welfare worker, who had retired by 2011, a woman who had explained to me that, sometimes, the parents just needed to talk about the children and to recognise their needs. She said that meetings with parents and other family members were routine when a child was found to be offending and often served to rectify the situation. She mentioned that sometimes the children were only stealing because they were hungry and needed to be given more food.

5.2.2 Probation Services

The probation officers on Rarotonga were supervising about 60 people in July 2011. On a Saturday morning a number of people are taken out on a truck to work on homes and yards around the island, helping elderly or unwell people in the community. The probation officers in charge of this community service start the day with prayer.

On one Saturday morning, one of the probation officers stayed at the office in the Ministry of Justice building to supervise the young people that I had arranged to interview. I had asked the Chief Probation Officer if I could interview the seven youngest people on probation and he had kindly organised it for the Saturday. Two of the youngest people on probation had not been willing to participate in the research so I saw four that morning and a fifth on another day. The probation officer organised cleaning tasks for the young people while they waited to see me and after their interview was completed. All of these young people were very willing to talk about their lives, their families and their offending behaviour and the Westerman (2007) checklist was used to assess mental health and cultural resilience.

I was told that there was no government funding available for educational or therapeutic programs for people on probation, but that the probation officers had taken some of the young people away on a weekend camp to learn life skills. This camp was not funded by the Ministry of Justice and the probation officers were not paid to conduct the training. It was done voluntarily because the probation officers, many of whom are also volunteer

church workers, care about what happens to the young people in their community; because “we do not want our children to go to prison” (Mato).

The young people on probation all appeared to be suffering from the after effects of traumatic stress in childhood, the result of living with abusive parents and family violence.

There has been a counselling service for women and children on Rarotonga for some time (Punanga Tauturu, Place of Help), and there is now a counselling service for men, known as Rota‘i‘anga Men’s Centre. Rota‘i‘anga means unity or cooperation. Some of the young people may benefit from the assistance these organisations offers.

Sometimes, as a last resort, rebellious young men are sent to live with distant relatives on one of the remote outer islands, where there is “nothing very much to do except work at fishing or black pearl farming, learn to climb palm trees for coconuts, and swim in the lagoon” (Ngatae). It has been known to be beneficial for some young people as there is no access to marijuana and very little opportunity to engage in antisocial behaviour in an isolated community of a few hundred people.

5.2.3 College students on Rarotonga

It was very interesting to meet the non-offending young people who were still attending high school on Rarotonga and to hear their stories. They spoke very fluent English and completed the Westerman (2007) checklist independently, without any hesitation. All of the young students had tried drinking alcohol but none were regular drinkers, and none had tried marijuana. None had suffered any head injuries. All five of the students came from church-going families and attended church themselves, at least occasionally.

The young students were more self-confident and more relaxed than the offending young people. Their language skills were better, and their mental health and cultural resilience scores indicated a higher level of social and emotional well-being. It was notable that only one parent gave her child hidings and one student had never even been smacked.

5.2.4 Young women on Rarotonga

Six young Cook Islander women, between the ages of 14 and 17 years, were interviewed on Rarotonga in July 2011; some had offended, some had not.

Two of the young women interviewed had been sexually abused. These stories are told very briefly without any personal details as the privacy of the participants is of paramount

importance. Some details have been changed so that the identity of the two young victims is further protected.

Three of the young women were feeding children, and three had been separated from their biological parents by migration between the Cook Islands and Australia or New Zealand. Two lived on different islands to their parents, at least some of the time, and the one who had not been separated from her mother, lived with a stepfather.

One of the young women who had been sexually abused was very angry and antisocial. In Australia it has been estimated that 90% of the women in prison are sexual abuse victims, anxious, depressed and substance abusing (Olsson, 2005). Sexual abuse has been linked with depression and drug abuse (Legotz, 2007). It is clear that young women or girls who are sexually abused at home will be at significant risk of drinking, smoking marijuana, exclusion from school and offending behaviour.

5.3 Stories told by Young People on Rarotonga

5.3.1 Rau‘ao’s story: I learned to calm myself down

Rau‘ao was living with his parents on Rarotonga and attending College. When he was younger he was smacked with a wooden spoon but, as he got older, he would be subjected to “growlings” or be grounded. He says that he is good at schoolwork.

Rau‘ao broke his arm when he was younger but he has not suffered from any serious illnesses or head injuries. He is active in the community and takes part in soccer, touch rugby, tennis, and cultural dancing, at school and at church. He does not play any musical instruments. He first tried alcohol with his friends when he was 14 years old, does not drink regularly, and has not used marijuana. He has never been in trouble with the law.

School has not always been a happy place for Rau‘ao as sometimes “people are friendly to your face, then backstab behind your back … gossiping about you”. He says that he has broken things when he was angry. Now he has learned to calm himself down and he “listens to music” or puts “on [his] shoes and goes for a run”. Rau‘ao says that he learned these anger management skills from a poster that was put up on a wall at school.

There have been some other challenges. His grandmother has been very ill and Rau‘ao says he has been depressed lately because “my girlfriend cheated on me”. His cultural resilience score was “low”. He does not speak very much Cook Islands Māori and he does

not feel that he can talk to anyone when he is upset. He is not sure whether people like him, whether he has many friends or whether he knows very much about his culture.

Rau‘ao knows two people who have killed themselves on Rarotonga but, although he has thought about ending his life, he says he would never do it. He feels a “little bit” sad and pessimistic about his life and his future and he worries about doing well at school. Although there are some negative factors in Rau‘ao’s life, he seems to be intelligent, self-aware, and focused on his education.

5.3.2 Tamatea’s story: I only get the hidings I deserve

Tamatea was given to her grandmother when her parents left Rarotonga some years previously. This is a traditional practice and Tamatea does not seem to mind very much. She says “it feels normal”. Her grandmother passed away so Tamatea went to live with another relative. Apparently her feeding Mum gives her hidings, but “only the hidings I deserve”. She is not allowed to go out but she has “sipped” alcohol at home. She does not smoke marijuana but has smoked cigarettes.

Tamatea participates in cultural dancing and singing. Her family are members of a church and attend services. She says the services can get boring but “I like it … I believe in God”. She is good at singing but could not think of any good choices she had made. Her bad choices were smoking and having a boyfriend, which upset her feeding Mum.

Tamatea’s checklist scores for depression, suicide risk, anxiety and impulsivity were “very high” (Westerman, 2007) and she has been seeing a counsellor. Risk of substance abuse was “very low” and the cultural resilience score was “low”. Tamatea does not have a positive self-image. She sees herself as unattractive, not a good person, not liked and not having a lot of friends. She has a positive cultural identity, likes being a Cook Islander, speaks Māori, and knows a lot about her culture but it seems that her relationships with the people in the community are not so positive. She has not been in trouble with the law.

5.3.3 Katoti’s story: I set fire to the school

Born to Cook Islander parents, Katoti lived overseas as a young child. He was not allowed to see his father, who had apparently been in trouble with the law. Katoti says that he suffered a head injury at the age of nine, having to be taken to hospital to have his head “stitched up … after a fight”.

Katoti left home and started drinking alcohol at the age of twelve. He says that he "took off because I was bored". His mother was a member of the local church and Katoti says "church is all right, depending if you are up for it … or not ready". He went to live with his mother's sister and stayed with her until he was 16 years old. His mother had given him severe hidings with "whatever she grabs … you don't talk back to Mum".

School was "bad … always a problem", and he was expelled in Year Nine after setting fire to the principal's office. The principal "dissed my mate's family … I didn't like him." After he was expelled Katoti started smoking marijuana, jumping train tracks, doing graffiti, breaking into shops for food and into schools to steal laptop computers to sell. He says he made a lot of bad choices, including "jumping someone walking by themselves" but he did once make a good choice and "gave a lady her money back".

Katoti returned to the Cook Islands to try to make contact with his father. He intended to live with his grandparents, hoping to "look after them, clean their yard" and do other chores. He was soon "kicked out of the house" for "mouthing off at (his) grandfather" and so went to stay with his uncle, where he got into more trouble, "mouthing off again". He had been given a labouring job, but "I quit!"

On the Westerman (2007) checklist Katoti obtained a "very high" score for depression, impulsivity and risk of alcohol and drug abuse. One of his friends has taken his own life but Katoti denies ever having thought of doing the same thing. He likes to be alone, he sleeps a lot and sometimes he feels that everyone would be better off without him. When people say racist things to him, he gets very upset. This may be due to his experiences overseas as most of the young people who had gone to school in the Cook Islands did not react strongly to the question about racism. Some just laughed at the idea.

Katoti was wearing a hoodie in warm weather and seemed to be acting out the role of the returned "trouble maker from overseas". Karavia had said that the young men returning from New Zealand thought that they were better than everybody else, that they were "cool". In this case Katoti was not sure if people liked him or if he had many friends. He suffered physical abuse by his mother and he says that he missed having his father in his life; he is struggling with emotional regulation; anxious, angry and rebellious. His own grandparents found his angry "mouthing off" too much to cope with and "kicked him out of the house". Since he has been back in the Cook Islands he has seen his father and he described the meeting as "good". The justice workers have been trying to help him to find a job and integrate into the community.

5.3.4 Amu's story: I wanted an iPod

Amu has always lived with his own parents and was punished by "big smacks" administered with a stick. He has been in hospital with pneumonia and he once hit his head into a pole while playing rugby. Alcohol and marijuana have never been part of Amu's life, although he does smoke cigarettes. He goes to church with his family and he believes in God, but he feels that the services are "very long".

Amu is not very articulate in English and he says that he does not speak Cook Islands Māori very well. He has a long history of difficulties at school. He says that he once ran away from school because "the teacher was so angry" and tried to walk home. The police were called to take him and his friends back to the school. When he reached his second year of high school he refused to attend any longer. He stayed at home to "plant vegetables, drive the tractor and feed the pigs". He likes doing this and sometimes his Mum helps him. At school his "brain starts to get sore".

Amu said that he has stolen property "about five times", mostly taking DVDs. He had "wanted a mobile phone and an iPod" to listen to his music. He had not thought about the consequences of his actions at all. He says he will "never do it again" as he has now joined the village rugby club and has new friends. "Mum told me, no more fights. It's safe at home". He says he had no friends before he joined the rugby club.

Amu's score for depression was "high" and his score for anxiety was "very high", but he says he has never wanted to kill himself. He does have a problem with anger. He tries to manage his anger, to "bring it down" but he "couldn't do it". He does not think that people like him much and he does not really think he is a good person. He knows his parents care about him and he likes being a Cook Islander, but he says that he does not know a great deal about his culture. His cultural resilience score was "low".

Amu has poorly developed verbal skills. It may be that he has been subjected to harsh punishment, the "big smacks" with a stick, when he has not fully understood what it was that was required of him and he may have had interpersonal difficulties with his peers as he mentions "fights". He is showing signs of posttraumatic stress (the anger problems), low self-esteem and depression. Justice workers have been spending time talking to his parents, who have bought him an iPod and enrolled him at the local rugby club. Amu says he has been feeling happier recently.

Amu happened to mention that his cousin is in prison at Arorangi and that he likes being there. He gets to eat there and to play rugby. “Eating” was the main reason the cousin likes being in prison, where bread and tea is served for breakfast and supper, with vegetables and rice for lunch (Ta‘i).

5.3.5 Rai’s story: My parents tell me what’s right and wrong

Rai lives with his ‘anau parents (biological parents) although he often has a sleepover at his cousin’s house. Rai says that he did get smacked when he was younger but “not hard”, and his parents generally just explained to him what was right and what was wrong.

Rai has not suffered any head injuries, only sprained his ankle playing soccer. He has had Dengue fever. He tried alcohol when he was 15 years old but has only had “a little”, does not drink regularly and has not used drugs. Rai says that he was given alcohol when he was five years old by his family, “to make [him] eat [because] it makes you hungry”.

Rai plays soccer and he participates in cultural dancing, at school and at church. He used to go to church every week and still goes occasionally. He enjoyed the Boy Scouts.

Rai obtains high marks in science and has no problems with school work. He learned to read English first but soon learned to read Māori as well. It “was easy”. He speaks both languages at home and he is “fine with both”. Rai says that “trying to get high marks in science” was a good choice.

A bad choice was going out with his friends and causing his parents to worry about him. Now he tells his parents where he is going and texts them when he is out. At school there have been “a few arguments … no real bullying. [The] fights are mostly name calling … the children call each other “poop or shit … or use the Māori words … it dies off quickly”. Rai does not have an issue with anger. He just walks away from aggressive behaviour. Neither he nor any of his friends have been in trouble with the police.

Rai’s scores for depression, suicide risk and impulsivity were “very low”. His anxiety score was “low” and his cultural resilience score was “high”. These scores are the opposites, almost a mirror image, of the scores for most of the young people involved with the criminal justice system. Rai has a positive self-image, seeing himself as “okay looking”, a good person, good at dancing and schoolwork, liked by others, having lots of friends and parents who care about him “all the time”. He also speaks Māori, knows a lot about his

culture, likes going to school, has someone to look up to and someone to talk to if he is upset. He likes being a Cook Islander and also has Papa‘a friends.

It is interesting that Rai, like Rau’ao, has not been given the “hidings” with belts and brooms that the offending young people have had.

5.3.6 Kamaki’s story: He tried to have sex with me when I was five

Kamaki’s father left the family when she was a baby. Her mother had beaten the children with sticks, brooms and hoses, and Kamaki had been bruised by the beatings.

At school Kamaki had been “not good at Maths … reading was okay”. She said that she was good at Māori and science. She did not dance but enjoyed playing volleyball.

Kamaki is a very angry young woman. When she was asked about her family she immediately denounced a male relative, who had “started trying to have sex with me when I was five”. She had spent all the years of her childhood trying to get away from him, trying to avoid the sexual abuse, and had often been unsuccessful.

Kamaki told her mother and other relatives about the sexual abuse but they did not believe her until one of her cousins confirmed that it was happening. There was nowhere for them to go. They stayed in the household as the family members put food on the table.

As Kamaki got older and more assertive, and was able to refuse to participate in the abuse, the relative had begun to threaten to turn her out of the house. The mother threatened to tell the police about the abuse unless he allowed her to stay in the home.

Kamaki began to drink alcohol at the age of twelve. She spent a lot of time out on the streets in order to avoid her family members but she does not smoke marijuana.

On the Westerman (2007) checklist Kamaki’s scores on depression, suicide risk, anxiety, impulsivity and substance abuse were all very high. She is very sad, very tired, finds it very hard to sleep and cries a lot. She knows someone who took their own life and she has attempted to do the same. Kamaki is not entirely sure that she will not try to take her life again. She feels that her life is getting worse.

On the other hand, Kamaki’s score on cultural resilience was high. She has lots of friends, she thinks she is a good person and she knows that she is good at sports. She really likes being a Cook Islander, speaks Māori very well and knows a lot about her culture. She liked

going to school and there is someone she can look up to and admire. She says that when she is upset, there is usually something she can do to make herself feel better. In this case, the multiple social connections do seem to be protective.

5.3.7 Kaute's story: I was the bully, expelled for selling drugs

Kaute lives with his natural parents and with ongoing family violence. His parents fight "constantly", engaging in domestic violence, and he has been beaten "with sticks and kikau brooms" (a broom made from a large palm leaf). At school he says that he was not bullied, "I was the bully", and he admits that he has a "short temper". He "wasn't interested" in school work. In Year 11 he was expelled for "wagging school and selling drugs". He had been smoking marijuana for some time and had "grown [his] own crop". He had been drinking alcohol since the age of twelve.

Kaute has been injured in a motorbike accident and he had Dengue fever as a child. He goes to church with his grandparents and he believes in God "a little bit". Kaute really likes music, drumming and dancing.

On the Westerman (2007) checklist, Kaute's depression score was "high". His scores on anxiety and impulsivity were "very high" and may indicate that he has a posttraumatic stress disorder as a result of the domestic violence and physical abuse perpetrated by his parents. His cultural resilience score was in the average range and reflects the multiple attachments that he has in the community. He says that he has many friends and relatives, and he can always talk to somebody if he is upset.

Kaute has been using psychoactive substances since the age of twelve and his history of family violence suggests an anxiety disorder with a secondary depressive disorder and substance abuse. He would benefit from treatment from the appropriate mental health professionals. The Men's Centre, Rota‘i‘anga, is beginning to play a part in the management of offending behaviour on Rarotonga, with a counsellor supporting men in their court appearances. People in the community are calling for a drug and alcohol counsellor to be appointed, preferably male and preferably Māori (Tara).

5.3.8 Aneane's story: Don't bother to come home

Aneane had been drinking alcohol and staying out late at night with the boys. Some of these "boys" had been in prison. Her mother had accused her of being promiscuous and had given her a hiding in the street. She had told Aneane not to bother to come home.

There are a number of old or partly completed empty houses on Rarotonga and Aneane tried living on her own, stealing what she needed, and sleeping in an abandoned house. It was difficult to steal sufficient food and she was apprehended by the police. Justice workers arranged for her to live with a feeding mother.

More details of this story have not been reported in order to protect Aneane’s identity.

5.3.9 Rori’s story: I never made a bad choice before

Rori lives with his grandparents as his parents are overseas. He says that he has been smacked sometimes but they “mostly growl me”. He goes to church, “just to find faith”, although he does not “believe in a God who made the earth”. Rori likes the singing and he knows that his grandfather “wouldn’t let me miss a single service”.

Rori was hospitalized when he had pneumonia. He has never suffered a head injury and never used alcohol or other drugs. He has not been in trouble with the law.

One of the traditional crafts of the Cook Islands is at the centre of Rori’s life. His grandfather has been teaching him the skills and Rori intends to earn his living at this craft. The craft is not specified in order to protect Rori’s identity. His good choice was definitely to learn the craft. When Rori was asked about bad choices, he said “I don’t know. I never made a bad choice before.” He plays the hukalele but does not dance.

English is Rori’s first language and he found it difficult to learn Māori at first. Now he is “good at Māori … not good at Maths … it’s my weakness”. He says that there are some bullies at school and he has been angry about being bullied sometimes. The bullies get sent to the teachers by the student counsellors or the prefects in Year 13.

Rori’s scores for depression and substance abuse were “very low”, suicide risk and anxiety were “low”, impulsivity and cultural resilience were “average”. Rori reported that he had lots of friends, he is good at his craft, he is also good at “talking”, and his feeding parents care about him “all the time”. He really likes being a Cook Islander, he likes going to school and there is always someone he can talk to if he is upset. Rori knows someone who killed themselves and he has thought about it a “little bit” but he says he has never had a plan to end his life and he would never do it.

Rori is attached to his grandfather and glad to learn from him, respecting his values by going with him to church on Sundays. He is not anxious about being punished or abused, but quite relaxed with his feeding parents, enjoying listening to the singing in the church.

5.3.10 Kupa's story: There was not much food at home

Kupa has been living with his mother and father. He says that his father has "drinking problems" and the justice workers have found him another place to live. "Dad used to give me hidings. He hit me with a stick or a broom. I would get scared and run out of the house. I don't want to stay, I just go. I get scared to come back, wait until dark … I stay outside the house. Dad always got angry with my brother, hit him bad … every day. [He] has arguments with Mum … he hit her heaps of times".

Kupa suffers from asthma and he has been involved in a few motorbike accidents, including "one big one … I broke my leg." He smokes cigarettes and marijuana but has not consumed alcohol for about 18 months. He has a friend who does not drink and spends a lot of time with him. Kupa started drinking alcohol and "smoking weed" when he was 14 years old. He "got caught smoking weed at school" and was given a number of warnings, then he was expelled in Year Nine.

Kupa says "I didn't learn much at school … I had a big problem learning to read. I had a slow mind. I didn't understand how to do maths … I just pretended to listen." Kupa does not play sport or dance but he does like to play the drums and the hukalele. He has had a job at a bakery and used to work six days a week. "It was hard". He also got a job laying bricks but he was "smoking and drinking and staying at home". He is good at "building things, fixing things … and surfing".

When he was 13 years old Kupa began to get into trouble with the police. He had been breaking into shops and stealing money. "There was not much food at home … I wanted money for food and to get away from home … I just wanted to get out the house, buy weed … takeaways … have fun". Kupa was eventually "locked up [in the prison] for nine months … it was a very long time."

When Kupa is angry he speeds on his bike, "a dirt bike, a trail bike", and does "wheelies on the road … I don't like fighting". His alcohol and drug use and his impulsivity scores on the Westerman (2007) checklist were "very high" but he does not report symptoms of anxiety or depression. His score on cultural resilience was "very low". Kupa does not have

a positive image of himself or his abilities and he is unsure about being able to talk to someone, or look up to someone. He does not believe that his parents care about him, and he is one of the few young participants who is not enthusiastic about being a Cook Islander. He does not speak very much Māori or know much about his culture.

It is very likely that Kupa is suffering from a posttraumatic stress disorder, having grown up in a family experiencing high levels of family violence, although his substance abuse would mask anxiety symptoms such as sleeping problems. He was unable to learn at school and was probably not able to concentrate due to the stress of his family situation. Kupa admits that he worries a lot, sometimes feels on edge, as if something bad is going to happen, and that sometimes he feels that everybody would be better off without him.

5.3.11 A'ore's story: I've been stealing food since I was six

A'ore was left with an auntie on one of the outer islands while his parents were working on Rarotonga. He said that he was always hungry and that he has been stealing food, or money to buy food, since he was six years old. When he was in the fourth grade he was sent to Rarotonga to live with his parents. They have been giving him "big hidings", using a stick or a hose, and he often sleeps at his uncle's house.

A broken arm was the only injury or illness reported by A'ore. He has never been in the hospital. A'ore was bullied at school and he had difficulties with reading and with maths. He says that he was expelled from school in Year Nine for "giving someone a hiding … [he was] taking my bag, my books". He started drinking alcohol at 15 years old and he drinks "sometimes every day". He uses marijuana, or "notch", sometimes. He likes to play rugby league and he says he goes to church. He lost his job recently because he "didn't listen to the boss".

A'ore needed a little help with reading the questions on the Westerman (2007) checklist but he was able to understand them and respond. His scores on depression and anxiety were "high" and his suicide risk was "moderate". His cultural resilience score was "very low". He does not think that his parents care about him, he does not speak his Māori language or know much about his culture, and there is no one he can look up to and admire or talk to when he is upset.

It seems that A'ore has been a neglected and physically abused child from a very early age. He had difficulty learning at school, but the justice workers have been helping him to

find employment. Although he was expelled from school and lost one job because he did not “listen”, he was working again at the time he was interviewed. He has also found a refuge from his parents’ domestic violence with a family member, his uncle.

5.3.12 ‘Ao’s story: My aunt made me promise not to tell

‘Ao was 12 years old when she was left on Rarotonga to live with her young aunt and her boyfriend, while her parents were working in New Zealand. The aunt and her boyfriend used to drink a lot of alcohol and were always fighting. One night the boyfriend was drunk and attempted to rape ‘Ao. When she told her aunt, she was made to promise not to tell her mother. The aunt was very worried that if the grandparents found out what had happened, she would not be allowed to live with her boyfriend any longer. The boyfriend continued to sexually harass and abuse ‘Ao.

‘Ao did not tell her mother about the attempted rape. She spoke to her mother on the phone quite often and would beg her to return to Rarotonga or to allow ‘Ao to go over to New Zealand. Her mother would say no, you need to work hard at school and we need to work over here. By the time the parents did return, ‘Ao had fallen behind in her schoolwork and begun to stay away from classes, associating with the young thieves.

5.3.13 Kūkupa’s story: I was carrying so I had to leave school

Kūkupa, who had been in trouble with the law, was working to support her baby son who was being brought up by her mother and her grandmother. The baby had been the result of a teenage pregnancy, and she had been only fifteen when she had given birth to him.

Kūkupa had been very ashamed and distressed when she discovered that she was “carrying” and had to leave school. She is currently living with the father of her child and the baby visits them at regular intervals. Kūkupa disclosed that she and the baby’s father fight a lot, that he drinks heavily and that she is a victim of domestic violence.

5.3.14 ‘Atuke’s story: I am always alive!

‘Atuke lives with his mother and father. His parents both drink a lot of alcohol and he says that he does not remember a lot about his childhood. His father “gets drunk every night” and ‘Atuke has been out on the streets at night, drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana, since he was about nine or ten years old.

‘Atuke does not remember being ill or ever going to the hospital but he has been “knocked out in fights” and he has “fallen down when I’ve been drunk”. The alcohol and marijuana were given to him by his friends and older siblings. For a number of years he would “only go home to eat”. His mother goes to church but he does not want to go. He is “always with my mates, I sit around with my boys”.

School was never fun “it’s like, I’m sitting in the classroom and I’m bored”. ‘Atuke was expelled from school when “someone snitched”. He had been “wagging school” for three months and smoking marijuana. He was suspended four times for smoking “ciggies” before he was expelled. ‘Atuke does not like “reading those books with just writing … those chapters … I just like picture books”. He is not really good with money or working out the correct change in shops.

According to the scores he obtained on the Westerman (2007) checklist, ‘Atuke is not depressed or anxious. His cultural resilience score, however, was “very low”. He says that he does worry a lot but he has a lot of friends and he really likes being a Cook Islander. He does not speak much Māori, he has no one to look up to and admire and he does not think he does anything very well. ‘Atuke has a sense of humour. One question on the checklist asks if there is anything you can do to make yourself feel better when you are upset. ‘Atuke smiled and said “yes, smoke weed!”.

The first time that ‘Atuke was questioned by the police he was 13 years old. “I was questioned for burglaries ... They tried to blame me … I stole booze a lot … and got busted for planting weed.” Now that he is under supervision he is not allowed to see his old friends and he has to live with his family. He says that he is trying to find a job, but “I drink at weekends … smoke weed every night”.

After talking about all the problems he has had, ‘Atuke said, cheerfully, “but I am always alive!” He seemed to mean that although he is having problems with the police and is under supervision, he is still enjoying his life, still glad to be alive. He is one of the young people who has been forced to survive with very little support from the adults in his family. He has his “mates” and spends his time with “his boys”. ‘Atuke was expelled from school but he has never been in custody. He is still young and if he can find a job, or if the justice workers can find him a job, he may be able to avoid prison in the future.

5.3.15 Taina's story: My family are all so good to me

Taina has been spending a year with her parents and a year with her grandparents on another island since she was about fifteen months old. She does not remember the first separation from her mother and sometimes the year becomes 18 months or more because transport between the islands is unreliable. She says that she has always been happy in both of her homes as all of her relatives are "so good" to her. She has never been smacked or given a hiding and she says "I always knew it was wrong".

For the last few years Taina has been living on Rarotonga in order to attend high school but a ship was due to return to her grandparents' island within a few weeks of the interview and she would soon be on board the ship, heading back to a remote atoll. Taina says that she is perfectly happy to go, even though it means leaving her parents and all of her school friends. The outer island is her home too.

The Westerman (2007) symptom checklist indicated that Taina's risk of anxiety and depression is very low, her level of impulsivity is very low and her cultural resilience is very high. These scores indicate a very healthy emotional and social adjustment.

Taina's story challenges all of the assumptions that Western psychology makes about the importance of a stable attachment to a primary caregiver in the first few years of life. Taina was sent away from her mother and father for more than a year, and then had to leave her grandmother and grandfather and other relatives on the island and return to her parents, all before she was three years old. The SAVRY or Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (Borum, Bartel, & Forth, 2006) mentions stable care as one of the protective factors for young people and at first sight this backwards-and-forwards arrangement seems to be unstable, and a risk to the social and emotional wellbeing of the young woman involved.

In practice this is clearly not the case, and further research indicates that multiple attachments may be even more protective than attachments to just one or two carers (Ginsburg, 2011). In Africa, the Efè foraging people practice multiple caring for infants (Tronick, Ivey & Morelli, 1992), as do the Lese farmers (Morelli & Tronick, 1991). It seems that alloparenting, parenting by other than the biological parents, is a well-known biological and sociological phenomenon (Valeggia, 2009).

5.4 Summary: The Typical Thief in the Cook Islands

This composite profile of the young thief in the Cook Islands is based on the 17 interviews with offending young people (seven prisoners and ten under supervision) conducted on Rarotonga in July 2011. The five young people who had not offended were very different. Their physical and mental health was much better and their extended family relationships were much more positive. They were also more confident and articulate.

Seven of the offending young people, aged 14 to 20 years, were born on the outer islands and some were arrested on their home islands and sent to prison on Rarotonga. One was born overseas but, as nine of them were born on the main island or mainland, the typical thief is a Rarotongan. Thirteen of the 17 were male, and so the thief of this profile is male and the male pronoun is used.

Six of the offending young people were feeding children or tamariki ‘angai and two were living with stepparents, their mother’s new partner. Nine were living with their biological parents. The typical thief has, therefore, been living in a home with his own mother and father, but he is a frequent witness to alcohol abuse and domestic violence. Only three of the biological fathers were described as good parents who loved their children. Four of the young people had fathers or uncles who had been in prison but the typical thief has parents who are not known criminals.

The typical thief has been given severe “hidings” by his parents and the beatings with belts and brooms have left marks, cuts and bruises. “Smacks” that did not injure the child were not counted as hidings. Twelve of the 17 young people were victims of physical abuse and/or family violence. They were afraid of being beaten and stayed away from home to avoid the abuse. The typical thief stays away from his family home as much as possible, because he is not safe there. He stays out on the streets at night with other young people and smokes marijuana given to him by friends and relatives. Thirteen of the 17 offending young people smoked marijuana.

The typical thief had difficulties at school, did not understand some of the work, was unable to concentrate, and spent his time staring out of the window. He was bored, pretended to listen, and soon started to stay away from school, eventually being expelled for non-attendance or misbehaviour. Nine of the 17 young people were expelled from school and another two were asked to leave or withdrawn

The typical thief does not attend school, has no job, nothing to do, and no money at all. He steals food when he is hungry, and steals alcohol, clothes, jewellery, DVDs and electronic toys, such as iPods, cameras, or computers, as well as money. He wants what he sees other young people have and he can see no other way of getting things. He is very impulsive and takes risks, such as breaking and entering houses and shops, drink driving, and speeding on a motor-bike, sometimes borrowed or stolen.

The typical thief experiences feelings of anger and sadness. He cannot see his life getting better and is suffering from depression. He knows someone who has killed themselves but has not thought about ending his life. (On the other hand, most of the young prisoners at Arorangi Prison in July 2011 had thought about ending their lives, and two had attempted to hang themselves.) The thief is very anxious, stressed and fearful, and worries about a lot of things. He may be suffering from a posttraumatic stress disorder related to family violence or to the sudden death of a friend, as both the road death rate and the suicide rate are a concern in the Cook Islands (Tara). His anxiety and depression have not been recognised or treated as mental health issues, and the typical thief uses marijuana and alcohol on a regular basis to manage his distress and physical discomfort.

In a church going community, most of the offending young people do not believe in God, but some pray when they are in trouble and some attend Bible study classes in prison. The typical thief does not belong to a church, a dance troupe or a sports team.

However, the typical thief believes that his friends like him and that his parents care about him, at least some of the time. His mother tries to help him. He says that he has friends to talk to when he is upset and that he has someone to look up to and admire. He says that he is happy to be a Cook Islander, and that he speaks his language. He believes that he knows quite a lot about his culture.

Stress due to ongoing family violence is the most common trigger for anxiety and depression, which may exacerbate school difficulties, and lead to exclusion from school, staying out at night, drinking, smoking marijuana, and petty crime. Road deaths, hanging suicides of friends and family, bullying and cyclones are other major stressors.

This pattern of family dysfunction and school difficulties leading to marginalisation and alienation of young people is found in urban studies of offending behaviour throughout the Western world (Farrington, 2008; Jacobson et al. 2010). It seems that the same dynamic processes are operating in very remote island communities in the South Pacific.

Chapter Six
The Voices of the Community

ROTA‘I‘ANGA a sense of belonging

This pillar of the Cook Islands culture is unity, loyalty or cooperation. It can refer to the people working together to care for their children, to complete a work project or to plan a celebration (Buse & Taringa, 1995). Jonassen (2003) links rota‘i‘anga to family histories and heritage, to that strong sense of belonging that allows people with mixed ancestry to be recognized as Cook Islanders with duties to the family, the village and the nation. It is the unity and sense of belonging that recognises the young thieves as “our children”.

Figure 6.1. **Celebrating Self-Government: Te Maeva Nui.**

6.1 Listening to Community Voices

As well as interviewing the young prisoners and other young people on Rarotonga, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 27 knowledgeable stakeholders, adult members of the Cook Islands community. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify the cultural and social context in which young Cook Islanders are very seldom incarcerated, a relatively small number of adults is incarcerated in the prison at Arorangi at any one time, and the recidivism rate, at approximately 33%, is much lower than that in Australia (Heather, H., personal communication, 17 August 2011).

The word “participant” has been used in this thesis for the sake of clarity but I believe that the word “co-researcher” is equally appropriate. The Cook Islander people who offered their ideas, opinions and life stories as data were interested in the research questions and in the answers that might be found in our shared discussions. Some people participated by being involved in a brief conversation at the markets. Others assisted me by introducing me to key community stakeholders or facilitating my meetings with young people. Those who were most involved have been gratefully acknowledged as collaborators and consultants in the front pages of this document.

Voice recording was not used as the subject matter was sensitive and the first people I consulted did not seem to be comfortable with the idea. Field notes were written up every night on a notebook computer from handwritten notes and memory, and details from the day’s interviews that seemed to be particularly important were recorded there as well.

The participants were shown a checklist of risk and protective factors which might be operating in the Cook Islands community, asked to comment on the list and on the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture as described by Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen (2003), and to make any other comments that they felt were relevant to offending behaviour in their community and to the concept of cultural resilience. The Cook Islands RPC checklist (Risk, Protection and Culture), had been constructed by examining the literature as described in Chapter Two, by speaking informally to people in the Cook Islands during the exploratory visit in 2010, and by drawing on 20 years of experience of listening to the life stories of prisoners in Australia. The RPC checklist is included as appendix D.

The 13 female and 14 male community stakeholders are referred to by pseudonyms, Cook Islands Māori words which are not necessarily actual names, listed in appendix E. The participants were knowledgeable interlocutors who had been recruited by purposeful chain

sampling (Patton, 2002; Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003). Nine were justice workers, seven were educators, five were health workers (government and non-government), four were church workers or pastors and two were other government workers.

People were free to respond as they wished, discussing whichever risk or protective factors seemed important to them. Many told stories of their own lives or the lives of others. One participant did not respond to the checklist at all but launched into a general opinion with regard to the Cook Islands community and human behaviour. Others thought that they needed to see the official statistics before they could answer the questions but were assured that it was their opinions that were wanted. In this chapter, it is perceptions which are being studied, the perceptions of the adult members of the community with regard to the risk factors for offending behaviour of young people in the Cook Islands and the protective factors operating in the community.

Particular questions were asked about the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture as described by Jonassen (2003), as well as cultural institutions such as the extended family, the local schools, the churches, traditional Māori parenting and the feeding child.

The checklist used reflects the idea that risk factors emerge in the individual, the family, the school, the church and other social groups, the peer group and the local community, as well as in the wider society. This ever enlarging circle of social influence on development is described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as a social ecology or as a bioecological systems theory. Gregory Bateson (1972) applied systems theory and cybernetics to the social and behavioural sciences in the 1950s, noting that problems, such as mental illness or juvenile delinquency, need to be understood in the context of the family and other social systems (Hoffman, 1981). The emphasis has now shifted to a postmodern perspective and to social constructivism, collective ideas, conversations and shared meanings (Hoffman, 1993). It is these collective ideas on risk and resilience in the context of the Cook Islands culture which are the focus of this study.

Rupe is a justice worker. He stated that some of his colleagues had not wanted to talk to a researcher “as she might find out things we don’t want her to know” but he had “jumped at the chance”. He said that “nobody on this island has bothered to look at the root of the problem [of the young people who are offending in the community]”.

Although, from an Australian perspective, Cook Islanders are successfully maintaining a low crime rate and a low incarceration rate, from the Cook Islanders’ perspective there is a

problem with “thieving” by young people. There is a particular concern that petty theft will affect the lucrative tourist industry, the mainstay of the local economy. Cook Islanders were interested in finding out why there is thieving in the community; I was also interested in finding out why the rate of offending and incarceration is relatively low, and much lower than that for the colonised Indigenous peoples of Australia and New Zealand.

6.2 Voices from Rarotonga

Two of the most interesting and informative interviews conducted were with men who were associated with the spiritual life of the Cook Islands. Tamanu said that he was descended from the priests of the traditional religion, known as ta‘unga or “experts”. In some Pacific cultures these would be referred to as the “clever men”. Ngatae was the pastor of a Christian church and both men also worked in the Cook Islands public service.

Two interviews with women that were particularly revealing were one with Pipi, a young person working with youth, and another with Mako, an older woman involved with the church. As suggested by Mila-Schaaf (2010), details of the participants’ background, work and family situations are deliberately withheld. The community is very small and it is essential that participants are not identifiable.

6.2.1 Tamanu: The ta‘unga, the traditional wisdom speaker

Tamanu works closely with offending young people and agreed that almost all of the factors mentioned as possible risk factors on the checklist were applicable to the Cook Islands, endorsing individual, family, school, peer and community factors. He was, however, one of very few people who ticked “historical trauma (slavery, war, colonisation, racial discrimination)” as a community risk factor. Talking about the British missionaries, Tamanu stated that:

> The so-called saviours of the Cook Islands … came out here to civilise the savages. Our people were civilised. They uncivilised us. Gudgeon [the second British resident] disrupted the marae [sacred sites] and sabotaged the political system, the ariki and the mata’iapo [the royalty and aristocracy]. They brought racial discrimination and even today there are low wages and exploitation. We have the British queen. She is not my queen, Mama! Does she ever come to visit these kids in Her Majesty’s Prison?

As far as protective factors on the checklist were concerned, Tamanu agreed that strong families and good schools were protective in the Cook Islands. He thought that the church was a very strong protective factor but “there are too many religions here … and they

banned the Scientologists”. He said that the culture was “being watered down … made into entertainment, not the real thing”.

When asked about Jonassen’s eight pillars of Cook Islands culture, Tamanu stated that “there are a lot more pillars”. He continued …

> The ariki [queen or paramount chief] on the western side of the island [of Rarotonga] has quite a lot of mana … the arongamana are the traditional leaders … it is another level of social control, separate from the police. They will reprimand people. They used to club your head! The traditional system is still operating. I am from the priestly line … the priests of the creator God ‘Io. I am a traditional wisdom speaker, an orator, who speaks the wisdom of the old ... I talk to them .. the ancestors in the spiritual world. They talk to me. They were the speakers of the traditional values before European contact. I can feel it. I can sense it. They are here. They are telling you something, the ancestors… a channel for traditional values. I lived with my grandmother, she was always reciting things to me. I was destined to follow in the footsteps of the orators, the wisdom speakers.
>
> We are the ta‘unga, we put [the ariki] on the throne and we take off … now, when we have a church coronation, we also have a marae coronation. We say the church prayers and we also say the old prayers. Now we are going to have a day to honour the ariki, the traditional leaders, instead of two Gospel Days.

Gospel Day has been celebrated on each island in the group as the day when the missionaries arrived, and a second national Gospel Day was celebrated to commemorate the day when the first missionaries arrived in the group, what is now the Cook Islands, landing first on the island of Aitutaki.

Tamanu described the problems in the Cook Islands as follows:

> There is bullying at school… rejection. Rugby rivalry … we are competitive people… jealous of each other. There are changes developing … in the social structure, within the families. There is Christianity, but ignoring the true value of the people, the future of the nation. The government is not targeting the real issues.
>
> Every day some crime is committed, seen and unseen. There is a lot of sexual abuse and drug abuse. People say it is not happening, that is a lot of bullwaste. There is pornography. There is hidden sexual abuse. It is wrong to hide it. I am sure there is sexual abuse of boys … it should be brought into the light. And alcohol, spending money on housie [bingo], they don’t feed their children. Flocking to housie games. Domestic violence, one of the biggest things. People trying to be Western. I speak Māori, it is my identity. I am an orator … speaking the wisdom of the old times. Some of the people are homeless. Brothers are in prison, also father and son. I saw an ex-inmate sitting by himself on the side of the road at night. They ask the prison officers for food and they come around to my house. I won’t give them money… they might buy drugs but I will give them food. They steal for food.

He went on to talk about migration and social problems, creating

> an epidemic of lost children, fatherless, motherless, they need a shoulder to cry on… there is re-offending, no halfway house, no teaching them to be independent. It is a big label, they are a thief, labelled for life. Then the police target the ex-cons, it is not safe for them. I am mother, father, doctor, nurse, counsellor and babysitter to these guys. They have no one else.

He was asked about suicide and violence in the prison.

> Suicide? Not really. There was one once, a few years back.
>
> There is no violence in the prison. It is a kindergarten compared with overseas prisons. Everyone knows each other. You can see two officers and two inmates sitting here under the tree, chatting, they are trying to help them. This is the only family they've got. Some of them keep coming back.
>
> Education prevents crime. We are trying apprenticeships now or trying to find sponsors for an inmate, an individual or a group. The hotel industry should help. We can't find the final answers but we can find ways of dealing with the problem, better resources.

Tamanu thought that the hotels pose a problem in the community.

> Sir Albert Henry [first premier of the Cook Islands] said that no house should be built taller than a coconut tree. Foreigners are leasing the land and building these big hotels, for example, the Edgewater Hotel is owned by an Australian, and there are problems with the water. The villages have no water because the hotels are taking it all. They must clean up the image of this island. There is no water treatment plant. The government is not addressing the problem of the youth. They are migrating. We love to travel and we love sailing but there is nothing here for them. We should be developing the islands for the people. The earth that you walk on is the soul of the people. It gives you everything you need. People are mortgaging their land to build houses and losing it. It can't be sold but the banks take it and lease it to someone else.

He came back to the problem of acculturation.

> Some of us are too white in a brown skin, eating carrots, not taro. Trying to be someone that we are not. The parents go overseas to get money and the children are left with Nana and they are resentful.

In summary, Tamanu was keen to explain the traditional culture of the Cook Islands and to emphasise that it was not lost when the British missionaries and the British government took over in the 19th century. He indicated that the Polynesian God ‘Io and the God of the Christian Bible are one and the same Creator and that the wisdom of the ancestors still speaks through the ta‘unga. He says that the social problems in the community are caused by people adopting a Western materialism and leaving their homes to earn money

overseas. This often means leaving their children with grandparents or other relatives and the children suffer when the adults are drinking or gambling, sometimes needing to go out and steal food. He says that the young “thieves” are labelled for life and there are no programs or facilities for rehabilitation other than the kindness of the justice workers.

6.2.2 Ngatae: The pastor, the leader of a Christian Church

Ngatae picked out alcohol and drug abuse as the only individual risk factors contributing to offending behaviour among young people in the Cook Islands. He denied that there was a problem with homelessness, saying that “the children want to go away. There are homes available.” He did agree that some children were neglected or ran away because there was violence in the family. “Adults don’t mind the kids. There is a lack of supervision.” There are problems with absent parents or parents who drink and gamble. “Relatives take over, jump in, but the child can be upset when the relatives find out.”

> Years ago children loved to come to church, to sing songs and to learn. Now they prefer night clubs and reggae music. The kids want new ways. Now the young ones take drugs and they tell me that I am living in the past. Foreign ideas have come into the country with violent films and DVDs. In the USA children kill. It is not natural for children to kill. In the old days on Rarotonga the police were always at the movies and no kids were allowed to watch violence.

Included in the family risk factors on the checklist was physical abuse, defined as beating a child with an implement and leaving marks. Ngatae said that it had not happened in his church, but that he had heard of it. He said that “smacking is okay to teach the child … but parents may lose their temper, that’s not right. We should make sure we don’t hurt them. New Zealand laws [against corporal punishment] are influencing the [way we treat] children. In the Cook Islands, we don’t hit them at school.”

Ngatae said that “there is sexual abuse in the Cook Islands… a very small scale … we can’t deny it. I visit the prisons.” He went on to say “I don’t think there is poverty here”. He was asked about a local newspaper story about an old man who was found sleeping in a wheelbarrow as he did not have a bed. “That is neglect, not poverty. Our culture cares for old people [but] people are spending money on alcohol and neglect their families, their children. They are selfish parents.”

School risk factors noted were inability to do school work and bullying. “Some get bullied. There is conflict between people from the southern group of islands and people from the

northern group. The culture is different. Also [there is] bullying by older boys … younger children in the class."

Community risk factors were "a lot of unemployment", alcohol and other drug problems, pornography being smuggled in, and gambling. "Oh yes! Housie [bingo] is a big problem. Children are neglected and hungry." Ngatae also said that there was a problem with domestic violence.

> A few. It is not reported, it's concealed. I would report it. It is against the law and against the Bible. They need to understand, why does this happen? We were a very violent people before [Christian] knowledge came. We leave the old ways [but] we don't understand how to solve problems. We are not a violent people, but we don't attack the problem, we attack each other.

Ngatae agreed that good parenting, strong extended families and good, supportive schools were protective factors in the Cook Islands. He thought the schools could do more.

> They could add more support … sex education. I teach it in the church. They need to know the risks. Also alcohol. The churches are strong. The pastors teach you who you are… a child of God. Live a good life, stay on the right path, obey your parents, submit to authority.

He thought that "culture", defined as the performing of cultural dancing, took time away from school and was not always a positive thing.

The eight pillars of Cook Islands culture (Jonassen, 2003) were affirmed by Ngatae but he explained that one had to be strong before one could be patient and humble. He also expanded on rota'i'anga, the idea of unity and loyalty.

> It is shameful to harm someone. You will taint the family tree. There is a very strong network of relationships and principles in the culture, the family's respect, standing and reputation are important… you will bring shame to everybody. But you will still love your child. Very few ignore their children. If a son is using drugs, your love increases. A true Cook Islander will never abandon their loved ones, it is a blood culture, based on blood relationships and the feeding child treated as your own.

The changes occurring in the Cook Islands were discussed and Ngatae thought that they were very great. He said that the Christian church is struggling in the United States because the contradictions between "Bible teachings and licentiousness" were confusing the children.

> It's inconsistent, the law contradicts the Bible. Children need consistent rules and examples. For example, here, abortion is against the law and against the Bible. The tourists and their families are not a major negative factor. They are separated from

> the community, on the southside. The hotels do cause some problems but Cook Islanders love money and are happy to lease the land. People are leaving the outer islands. I would rather live out there (on his home island) but we live on Rarotonga for the education of the kids … We are losing educated people. They go overseas and there is nothing for them to come back to. Cook Islanders don’t want to work for $5 an hour here when they can work for $18 an hour in New Zealand. We should encourage outer island development, farming, using wind, rain, currents… natural power. There are 1500 people from the island of Penrhyn [Tongareva] living in Cairns, in Australia. And we have so many natural resources.

Ngatae explained that he teaches, preaches and counsels people in his role as pastor of a church. Sometimes he and his colleagues will do outreach evangelism and preach out on the streets. He likes to do counselling and to “focus on the good”. He teaches Sunday School and teaches Bible studies during the week. He explained the traditional shame based teaching methods.

> You have a normal child. He is loved. You tell him stories like, if you throw stones you will lose an eye and then you won’t be normal. You will be one-eyed. It will be shame. People will say, look at that fellow’s child. Shame on the family. Bad things will happen to you. The child will be outside the group. You teach them to fear the consequences of bad behaviour.

In summary, Ngatae does not deny any of the social problems in the Cook Islands community. He attributes them to foreign influences, violence and “licentiousness” in the movies, selfishness on the part of parents, alcohol abuse and gambling. He believes that Christianity has the answers to moral living and that a true child of God would obey their parents and the authorities. He emphasizes the traditional Polynesian “circle of love and responsibility” and that social inclusion protects while exclusion is shameful and to be feared. Ngatae was not particularly enthusiastic about exhibitions of cultural dancing for tourists. He was deeply committed to the spiritual beliefs and practices, and the traditional family relationship networks in the Cook Islands culture.

6.2.3 Pipi: The young woman, not involved with the church

Pipi was very knowledgeable and articulate, although, as she was quite young, she laughed and joked about being considered an adult for the purposes of the interview.

Looking at the individual risk factors on the checklist, Pipi picked reading difficulties as a big problem for some of the young people in the Cook Islands. She said that the children who could not read well, or had “lower ability”, became “frustrated, fighting, and bullying”. There were a few children who had been taken to New Zealand for assessment and

diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders. They received “a lot of support and a teacher’s aide” at school but Pipi thought that was mainly because their parents were prominent members of the community. She emphasised that the Cook Islands “is a class conscious society”. She did not know of any children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders but said that “it will be a big problem in the next generation … mothers are drinking and smoking weed [marijuana]”. She did know one person who had suffered a brain tumour and had been convicted of crimes, “fighting, stealing, speeding”. Pipi was not sure about the definition of child homelessness. She said that the young people may have been “kicked out” and they probably could “go to someone”.

Pipi went on to describe a situation that had occurred when she was at school.

> About 10 years ago, we used to get broken into. A girl from school had run away. She had been raised by her grandparents and had been fighting with them. She broke into our house and stole food and clothes, and used the shower. She was living in an abandoned house. My parents went and spoke to her grandparents and eventually she went home. I was pretty angry at the time but I can understand it better now.

She said that there was “definitely no-one living on the streets. One mentally ill old man chose to sleep on the streets, on the benches at the BBQ tables”.

Pipi mentioned that teenage pregnancies were a source of great shame and that, until recently the girls had been forced to leave school. They can study Form 6 and 7 at the University of the South Pacific but there is a cost involved. It is not free and so it is not available to most of them. She stated that alcohol abuse and the use of marijuana were “huge” risk factors in the Cook Islands. She estimated that one third of the young people in their twenties were regular, perhaps even heavy, users of marijuana.

Family factors such as parents drinking, gambling or absent were definitely risk factors. Pipi said that domestic violence occurred but was not talked about. “We are not supposed to discuss that”. She knew of a woman who had been “thrown through windows”, whose sons had grown up to be violent towards their partners. Sexual abuse also occurred.

> A girl in my class at school had a child to her father. Her mother said that she seduced the father. She was kicked out of the house so she went to the police. Child sexual abuse is a shameful secret. The girls keep it to themselves. They are accused of lying if they say anything. The mother supports the father.

Looking at community risk factors, Pipi said that the problem of “domestic violence is not as bad as it used to be. The younger women are more aware.” Physical abuse of children

was "definitely" a problem. She had been horrified at the hidings that some of her friends had had.

Poverty definitely does exist in the Cook Islands, according to Pipi, "among our minimum wage families. They are just scraping by, the kids are going without, the parents buy alcohol and cigarettes. There are quite a few." Unlike most other participants, she also thought that there was a significant gap between rich and poor. "There is a class structure here … the wealthy foreigners. The people making the money are the foreigners … by law they have to have a Cook Islander sleeping partner in the business but they pay them only a tiny percentage of the profits".

When asked about prostitution, Pipi described the following incident.

> I don't know about money. The girls like presents. One night we wanted a bottle of alcohol and the shop was closed. My friend got us to drive her to one of the tourist resorts. We waited for her outside and she came back with the alcohol. She had slept with a tourist and he had given it to her. It was not the first time she had slept with him. We all shared the drinks.

Strong extended families were seen to be protective, and the feeding child phenomenon was "very common". Nearly half of the children in the government schools would be feeding children, sent to the mainland from the outer islands to school, and staying with relatives or friends. Pipi thought that the schools "could do better" and that traditional culture could be a negative factor, allowing "parents to beat their kids". The strong church influence could be positive and could be negative. "A lot of youth act out because of the restrictions placed on them by religious parents. They are forced to go to church. "

Considering the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture, Pipi thought that the emphasis on the wisdom of the elders meant that "the young people have no voice. This is causing problems." She wondered where the idea of freedom fitted in and asked "does it exist?" She said "I don't agree with the patience and humility. They make people vulnerable to oppression. Things are changing. We don't have to accept the beatings."

In summary, the interview with the young woman, Pipi, indicated that there are widespread problems with drug use and family violence, and that attitudes are changing among the younger people. She saw the cause of the problems as the old-fashioned, rigid, patriarchal ideas of the elders, rather than bad influences from outside the community. She also saw the foreign business people as exploiting Cook Islanders.

6.2.4 Mako: The older woman, very involved with the church

Mako noted mental illness, including depression, and alcohol and drug misuse as the individual risk factors operating in the Cook Islands. She stated that there was no homelessness as “the extended family cares for people”. There were teenage pregnancies but she did not think that they were relevant to offending behaviour. Family risk factors noted were separated or divorced parents, domestic violence in the family and sexual abuse as “we have had cases”. She said “we don’t have poverty here”.

Children having difficulty doing school work and being bullied by their peers were also noted as risk factors. Community risk factors were seen to be (extended) families breaking down and outward migration, as this meant “no one to look after their homes and lands, a burden on the families left behind”. Poverty, unemployment, inequality, crime, substance abuse, gambling, domestic violence and child abuse were not considered to be prevalent in the community.

When it came to protective factors, Mako stated that

> Fifty per cent of the parents are good parents, trying to educate their young ones. The others couldn’t be bothered, they are working, earning an income, unable to spend quality time with their children. On the outer islands, the family networks are very strong, they are not so strong on Rarotonga. The schools are good as far as education goes but they are not social workers. Strong culture and pride in culture is a big [protective factor] … we have annual cultural events like Te Maeva Nui, [the great happiness, celebration of self-government] and other cultural festivals. We have strong spirituality and religion but the children don’t really all go to church, or to the youth groups.

Mako said that the eight pillars of Cook Islands culture were all Christian values.

> Life and the land are God’s gifts. The unity of the people is in Christ. The Bible is our historical heritage and our belief in the Gospel is our strength. The family all used to eat together, work together, and live next door to each other. Now on Rarotonga there are strangers and foreign workers next door. Families are fighting over land – always.
>
> There used to be only four churches, the Cook Islands Christian Church, the Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, and the Mormons. Now there are more. Christianity is our culture. We have a high level of spiritual and cultural programs, visits, recital of Bible verses, drama, and debates. We are a story-telling people, every movement of a dance tells a story, is there for a reason.

Mako explained that she has a feeding child and that she and her husband were very privileged to have him. It is a second marriage and the children from the first marriages are grown up.

> Thank God I have found the child. He was adopted at three weeks old. We wanted a child, someone to look after us as we got old. We have a new house and we had his hair-cutting ceremony when he had his fifth birthday.

In summary, Mako does not believe that poverty and homelessness exist in the Cook Islands although there are a few cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse. She believes that parents separating, people working long hours and migrating overseas in search of work, and young people using alcohol and other drugs are all risk factors that are having a negative impact on the community. She believes that strong cultural and spiritual programs and teachings will assist the people to find their family values again. She supports counselling and the privately funded Health and Wellbeing Centre (Te Kianga O Pa Ta‘unga), which was founded by a Cook Islander who has worked overseas as a psychiatric nurse.

These four interviews have been reported as examples of the different perspectives in the Cook Islands community. There is the conservative Christian perspective of Mako and Ngatae, the “historical heritage” which has been powerful in the community for almost 200 years but which may be losing its influence on the younger people. There is the traditional Polynesian perspective of Tamanu, which, due to the knowledge of genealogy and the hereditary leadership roles, has not been eliminated from the culture by colonisation. The ariki are recognised as powerful and the ta‘unga speak wisdom. Then there is the perspective of the young and Westernised Cook Islander, Pipi, who does not care much for church or the elders, whose friends smoke marijuana and sleep with the tourists, and who says “we don’t have to take the beatings”.

All four of these very different people agree that there is an unacceptable level of substance abuse and family violence occurring in their community. They agree that people are trying to make better lives for themselves by working hard and by migrating. Two of them say that “there is nothing here for them, nothing for them to come back to.” On the one hand, the land is said to give you everything that you need and the islands have a wealth of natural resources. On the other hand, people are scraping by and children are hungry. Young people are stealing food. There appears to be an inconsistency, a dissonance, between the land and life of the islands, the so-called “tropical paradise”, and the way the community is functioning. Pipi suggested that this is caused by the gap

between the rich and the poor (inequality), and the exploitation of the local “minimum wage people” by foreign (Papa‘a) investors and business owners.

6.2.5 Community risk factors: More voices

Many of the other people interviewed had valuable contributions to make with regard to the prevalence of risk factors in the Cook Islands community. Their responses to the checklist are noted as follows.

Tara told the story of a woman who drank heavily during her pregnancy, was frequently seen drunk in public and was known to have been an alcoholic for some years. When her baby was born, her family decided that she would not be able to care for it and it was adopted by a Papa‘a family on the island. The little boy suffered from numerous learning disabilities and behaviour problems and was taken to New Zealand for a medical and psychological assessment. It was said that he had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD and Tara thought that he was the only child on the island who had been so diagnosed. It seems very likely that this child may have had a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) but that diagnosis had not been made.

Child abuse was seen as a major risk factor by most of the participants. A few, such as Tiare and Rupe, argued that there was “no evidence” for any sexual abuse and that corporal punishment was appropriate in their culture. Kuriri said that “physical abuse is culturally acceptable in the Pacific” and Rupe said that “Polynesian children would laugh at European discipline”. However, Pipi said that she had been horrified by the terrible hidings that her friends had received from their parents. Teve and Karaka both said that they had known female high school students who had been knocked to the ground by their parents or hit across the head. Karaka could not understand this, as he thought that the head was tapu (sacred) in traditional culture. Teve said that he had been given a hiding by his mother when he was a University student in New Zealand. He had wondered if he was the only student at lectures that day with welts on his legs.

Panga and Mato mentioned that it was acceptable for any adult to give a child a hiding if he or she was found breaking the rules. Members of the community have traditionally kept an eye on each other’s children, especially the children in the extended family. It was more than accepted, it was expected, that discipline would be imposed on the children by any adult that had anything to do with them.

Rara said that she grew up on a small remote outer island and that she and her sisters were regularly beaten and poked with burning sticks taken out of the fire. She admitted that that was a hard way to be brought up and said that she "just punch(ed) the children in the mouth" if they did the wrong thing. "Punch the husband in the mouth too".

Sexual abuse was noted as a risk factor by some, but participants were vague about whether or not it occurred and to what extent. It was said that a few girls have complained to their teachers or to the police about their fathers, but the mothers then accused them of lying and the charges were dropped (Pipi, Kate). There is a counselling service for women operating now, Punanga Tauturu, which may be providing more support than was available in the past. Sexual abuse of boys was mentioned by a prison officer who believed that some of the prison inmates had been abused by adult men.

The vast majority of community stakeholders consulted believe that alcohol and drug misuse is an individual problem, a family problem and a community problem. Marari believes that the Cook Islands is the highest per capita importer of alcohol in the world, even after taking into account the effect of the tourist industry. Domestic violence and absent parents were believed to be a significant problem. Most stakeholders did not see poverty or inequality as an issue, but about half saw migration to Australia and New Zealand as a disruptive factor. The English word "family" is not defined as a nuclear family in the Cook Islands but, as Panga explained, an extended family with roles and responsibilities for both genders and for the different generations. When members of this family network are missing, having gone overseas to find work, Mako notes that the family support networks, which are the traditional welfare services, will suffer.

Five stakeholders stated that there is no poverty in the Cook Islands as people own their land and can live from the land. The nine justice workers, who have to visit offending young people at home, disagreed and Kate explained that children are no longer allowed to pick their neighbours' fruit as it is sold in the markets. Tiare noted that there are 1700 foreign workers on Rarotonga and many people from the outer islands. The non-Rarotongans are renting houses and do not have access to agricultural land. It seems that many Cook Islanders define poverty in terms of starvation (Maroro) and yet there are people on Rarotonga living in shacks with no shower and no toilet, or who cannot afford to have the electricity turned on or to repair the houses left to them by their parents (Maire). Tou mentioned that one family was sending their children out to steal food for the dinner table and other stakeholders said they knew which family was being referred to. Rara

claimed to be paying her rent in food brought from an outer island by relatives. The police officers, in particular, were adamant that the young thieves were hungry, neglected and deprived members of the community. “Their needs are not being met” said Maire, when asked for the reasons behind the offending behaviour.

6.2.6 Community protective factors: More voices

Most of the stakeholders thought that Cook Islanders were good parents, but some did not agree. Nono indicated that the schools were hoping to provide parenting training, Kuriri, an educator, stated that parenting skills in the community were “a concern”. The concerns of the educators interviewed were mainly focused on the harsh corporal punishment, or physical abuse, of adolescents, especially girls.

Most stakeholders said that the schools in the Cook Islands provide a good education and support for their students. A few were doubtful and Pipi stated that they “could do better”. Interestingly, Kaiatea stated that “anyone who could afford it” sent their children to school in New Zealand, although he himself had hated being sent away from home.

Two thirds of the stakeholders consulted agreed that pride in culture was protective in the community. Some were concerned about the survival of the traditional culture. Tamanu believes that the Cook Islands culture is being “watered down, [made into] entertainment [for the tourists], not the real thing”. Marari mentioned that Cook Islanders are losing the ability to speak their language. Children have been forced to speak English at school since New Zealand annexed the islands in 1901. Tara can remember being punished for speaking the Māori language at school. Pipi said that the local culture can be a negative thing as “the people beat their kids”.

Three quarters of the stakeholders saw a strong spirituality and/or religion as a protective factor in the Cook Islands. One participant, Karaka, saw the issue as one of negative religiosity rather than positive spirituality, and Pipi saw positive and negative aspects to religion. On the other hand, Rara believed that there were only a very few truly saved people on Rarotonga and those were the ones who went to her particular church.

6.3 Cook Islands Culture

Traditional Māori shared parenting, Christian and Polynesian spirituality linking the people to Life and all life, and a positive cultural identity are recognised as protective factors in the

Cook Islands community. Access to a high standard of Western education is also recognised as protective – as Tamanu says “education prevents crime”.

Stakeholders were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with Dr Jon Tikivanotau M. Jonassen’s eight pillars of Cook Islands culture and personality as described in the book *Akono‘anga Māori*, edited by Crocombe and Crocombe (2003). Dr Jonassen of Brigham Young University, Hawaii, had been contacted by email and had given his permission for his article to be used in this way. (Personal communication, 23 June 2011).

6.3.1 Culture: The eight pillars

The eight pillars of Cook Islands culture are kitepakari, wisdom of the elders and the ancestors; irinaki, faith in God or a higher power; ora, life intimately connected to the land; rota‘i‘anga, unity, cooperation and loyalty; ‘aka‘aka, humility, acceptance of authority; ‘akakoromaki, patience, endurance and longsuffering; aro‘a, love and concern for the welfare of others; and noa, freedom. Jonassen notes that “the strength and depth of commitment to these pillars differs between various island/tribal groups” (Personal communication, 23 June 2011).

Mako pointed out that the eight pillars are traditional Christian virtues and are now more typical of the people of the outer islands than the people on Rarotonga. Mako also stated that Christianity is the historical heritage of the Cook Islanders and so is seen as part of the traditional culture. Aku and Ava thought that things were changing in the community and so some of the traditional characteristics were “waning” (Aku) or “deteriorating” (Ava). Ngatae and Rupe mentioned that faith in God is fading or absent and Mako stated that many of the children are not going to church.

Aku stated that a sense of freedom and personal autonomy was strong in the people as demonstrated by the fact that they had refused to wear helmets when riding motorbikes. A law requiring this had been passed but then had had to be repealed. Pipi believed that the traditions of respect for the elders, patience and humility meant that the youth had “no voice” and were “vulnerable to oppression”. She also thought that things were changing.

Kaiatea said that “culture is who you are. If you don’t know who you are, you’re nothing”. Marari described the previously warlike Cook Islanders as a “peaceful people” now and said that there had been a “huge change when God came to these islands”. Tamanu believes that there is more to Cook Islands culture than the eight Jonassen pillars as the

traditional system of the arongamana or powerful hereditary leaders is still operating. Just as there are descendants of the ariki and mata'iapo, the hereditary leaders, on the islands, there are also descendants of the ta'unga, the priests or wisdom speakers. Love and unity is understood as loyalty and attachment to family, village and island (Kaiatea) and the land is understood as God's gift (Mako), the source of life (Tavake) and a sense of belonging (Mato). Land also creates a spiritual connection with the elders and the ancestors (Ngatae). In a vast ocean, the gift of solid land provides sanctuary, food, water and an opportunity to create a family and a community, a sacred space.

6.3.2 Culture: The feeding child

The strong family networks in the Cook Islands were referred to as protective by all of the community stakeholders, and the tradition of the feeding child was mentioned again and again. In Māori or Polynesian societies it is very common for a child to be raised by relatives or close friends rather than by his or her biological parents (Tavake). These are not legal adoptions in the Western sense, as the upbringing of the child is usually shared, and he or she remains in contact with the biological family. The child may be given to the feeding parents at birth and often the grandparents may be the feeding parents, especially if the parents are very young. The Māori child does not belong to his or her biological parents, but belongs to the extended family, the kōpū tangata (Kuriri).

Senior members of the family make decisions about who will raise the child and this tradition is as strong today as it ever was. Marari stated that he did not know a Cook Islander family that "does not have this structure", that is, a feeding child in the house or one of their children in somebody else's house. The feeding child tradition seems to strengthen the already strong extended family networks by creating more links between people and an even stronger sense of community. In the Cook Islands, the word "family" always means "extended family" and includes the feeding children.

Tavake referred to the practice of giving a child to another family as "special" and Teve said that "there is nothing as valuable as a child … it is a gift like no other". Mako talked about a mother who was going to New Zealand to terminate her pregnancy but was persuaded to give the child to an older couple, who were very happy to have him. Panga is delighted to have a friend's little girl staying with his family every weekend. The child was named after him and so, traditionally, she became his feeding child. Only Maroro, an ex-police officer, sounded a note of caution and said that sometimes a feeding child can be treated "like a slave in the house".

In New Zealand feeding children are known as tamariki whāngai and in the Cook Islands tamariki ‘angai. Various reasons are given for the practice, such as very young parents, childless couples, older couples wanting a child, a family struggling to support a lot of children, grandparents wishing to pass down traditional knowledge to a grandchild and strengthening of family, clan and tribal or interisland ties.(www.teara.govt.nz/en). New Zealand passed laws on legal adoption in 1881, 45 years before England did, but it seems that adoption originated in Māori culture as an open and transparent process. In French Polynesia the same tradition has been practiced for centuries and the child is seen as a precious gift, adoption being a demonstration of trust between families and a hope for a better life for the child (www.leblogdeladoption.blogspot.com/2009).

The tradition of taking in a feeding child is not restricted to babies. Children under the supervision of Child Welfare Services, young people on probation or those released from prison may be placed with a feeding family. Probation and prison officers have been known to take homeless young people into their own homes. The feeding family is not paid anything for this and does not get money from the government to help feed or clothe the child. Miru, a young runaway, abused at home and charged with stealing food and clothing, was under supervision and living with feeding parents. Tavake explained:

> From 20 years of experience being a probation officer, no payment has ever been paid to families or caregivers to look after children or anyone placed in their care by the courts or juvenile crime prevention committee. However this has been included in the new Family Law Bill that is yet to be enacted by Parliament. We are hoping this will eventuate sooner than never. We tried to get some sort of benefit [for] Miru’s last caregiver and it was not approved by the board.
>
> I have also accommodated children like Miru in the past … especially in such situation that families give up on their kids and there is no one else to go to. I could easily relate to the families who are doing this today and that is why when we place children in foster care, we go out of our way to tap into church friends for clothing supply and other necessities for the children. Otherwise, a lot of the times I seek assistance from my own family members and close friends that I feel would help.

6.3.3 Culture: Corporal punishment

Authors such as Miller (1983) and Gershoff (2002) have concluded that corporal punishment is a risk factor even if it is not severe or defined as physical abuse. Teague, Mazerolle, Legosz and Sanderson (2008) have linked physical abuse in childhood to offending behaviour. Kuriri, with some irony, stated that “physical abuse is culturally acceptable” in the Pacific. Pipi was shocked by the hidings that local parents give their

children and Ava, from one of the outer islands, was distressed by the bruises that she saw on young people in her community. Alexeyeff (2009) noted that young people on Rarotonga frequently get into physical fights after arguing while drinking alcohol and that their peers do not seem to be surprised or particularly concerned about it.

Two men, Panga and Pirita, who were prominent and well-respected members of the community, affirmed that it was acceptable in the Cook Islands to hit an adolescent daughter with a belt and to hit her across the back. Another man, Rupe, said that "a Polynesian child would laugh at European discipline". As flogging was a particularly British form of punishment at the time of the first contact between Polynesian and European people (Day, 1986), there may be some misunderstanding here.

Corporal punishment of children is associated with the ancient Hebrew Scriptures and with conservative Christian practice, especially in the United States (Dobson, 1996, Greven 1992). Flogging was used by the British ships' captains, missionaries and colonial rulers in the Pacific (Scott, 1991), but corporal punishment of children was not part of traditional Polynesian culture according to Vailaau (2008) and a report on "traditional Māori parenting" by Jenkins and Harte (2011). Panga and Rupe noted that Cook Islanders do not smack children under the age of seven or eight as they are not considered to be capable of distinguishing right from wrong. In contrast, smacking, spanking, or giving hidings has been seen in Western culture as a way of teaching a young child to distinguish right from wrong. Babies of nine months old were "whipped" in Germany in the 19th century (Miller, 1983), and Focus on the Family's James Dobson (1996), recommends that American Christians smack their children from the age of 18 months.

It was explained by Ngatae and Teve that traditional discipline in the Pacific Islands consists of shaming and humiliation. For example, a child would be told that everybody would laugh at him and mock him if he lost his eye through careless behaviour. People would also point at his parents and so the honour of the family would be affected. These lessons are deeply absorbed so that personal honour and family reputation are very important. Pirita noted that children who have been physically or sexually abused or women who are in a violent relationship are very reluctant to disclose the family secrets.

6.4 Summary of Community Voices

The participants in this study described a close knit community, with strong traditional values, both Christian and Polynesian, showing some signs of strain. The minimum wage

earners struggle with rising costs of living and most Cook Islanders live and work overseas. Substance misuse, domestic violence and gambling are seen as prevalent; and child abuse is beginning to be acknowledged. Younger people are beginning to question the right of their elders to use physical violence as a means of discipline. The people who migrate to New Zealand and Australian cities to find work, leave behind a simple life of subsistence farming and fishing, but also their strong family support networks.

The community stakeholders see alcohol and marijuana misuse as major risk factors for offending but also recognise the importance of a stable family background for prosocial development. Risk factors are seen to be physical and sexual abuse of children, neglect if the parent is drinking or gambling, and the gaps left in the family support networks by people moving overseas. The community protective factors are believed to be the strength in the remaining family networks, including the feeding child tradition, which provides care for children whose parents are absent or having difficulties. Attempts to build a children's home or a halfway house for youth on Rarotonga have been blocked in the past because people believe that "the family must take responsibility" for their children (Mato).

In addition, the churches, the sports clubs and the village cultural groups (focused on music and dancing) provide prosocial activities for young people and keep them engaged with the community. A tradition of teaching by shaming is said to keep young people committed to doing the right thing. The influence of the outside world is seen as negative by older people in the community but the tourism industry is seen as providing necessary income. The community is believed to be class conscious, with Papa'a ancestry seen as an advantage and associated with relative wealth and privilege, as is descent from the people of power, the arongamana.

Those participants who work closely with offending young people, such as police officers who visit them at home to check that they are obeying curfews, or prison officers, who spend a lot of time with them, are clear that poverty and hunger frequently drive young people to steal. Almost all of the offending by young people involves stealing, and the young "thieves" are considered to be the most neglected and abused children on the islands. People who are not closely associated with the offending young people, such as some church workers, are more likely to see them as wilful, badly behaved, materialistic, and refusing to obey their parents. These participants are not convinced that poverty, domestic violence or child abuse are significant issues in the community. As Panga said, "I read about this in the newspapers but I don't see it".

Community risk factors are generally less well understood than family factors (Farrington, 2008). Cook Islands community risk factors were identified by stakeholders as, first and foremost, the prevalence of alcohol and drug misuse, followed by domestic violence. Out migration is seen as a problem by more than half of the stakeholders but only about a third identified the gap between rich and poor as an issue. Tiare jokingly asked "what rich people?", although it is clear that there are relatively wealthy and relatively poor members of the community. Inequality has been identified by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) as a major factor in community risk worldwide and tourism has been identified as a destabilizing influence in the Pacific (Berno, 1995; Johnston, 2006; Kahn, 2011; Trask, 1999). These issues are just beginning to be recognised as significant in the Cook Islands.

Protective factors in the culture are thought to be the multiple attachments formed by the extended families, the kōpū tangata, and the feeding child tradition, the sense of belonging to the land and to the community and the tradition of aro'a, the loving kindness demonstrated in gifts and sharing with others less fortunate. The traditional Polynesian community sees children as gifts from the Divine and engages in ongoing reciprocal generosity. As Moss, the British Resident appointed in 1890, reluctantly put it "the [extended] family [in the Cook Islands] … flourishes in all its vigour … It gives a refuge to all and under it there cannot be pauperism, which is an inestimable gain." (Gilson, 1980, p.83). Moss wished to replace the Polynesian tradition of "family communism" with individual gain and individual greed. He did not succeed.

Chapter Seven
The People of the Land

ORA life and the land

Ora is life and the life of the people is attached to the land, te pito ‘enua, as if by an umbilical cord. The newborn child’s placenta is buried in the soil where he or she is born and if at all possible, a Cook Islander who dies overseas will be flown home to the islands for burial. The people of the land are tangata ‘enua; the land gives life, identity, security, traditional knowledge and responsibility. The land is life; “a living entity with the capacity to reward the generous and swallow the greedy” (Jonassen, 2003; p.133).

Figure 7.1. **Planting taro at Matavera, Rarotonga.**

7.1 With love and respect

Chapter Seven describes my interaction with the people of the land, the themes that emerged in the conversations that I had at the markets and in the shops, at the meetings, conferences, and celebrations that I attended, and in the photographs that I took.

I explained to all of the people I met on Rarotonga that I wanted to know why the incarceration rate is so low in the Cook Islands and what the community is doing to protect the young people, particularly as the criminal justice system in Australia is condemning so many young people, especially Indigenous young people, to detention.

All of the Cook Islanders who were asked to assist with this research project were kind and helpful, and people in very senior positions went out of their way to facilitate my access to key stakeholders, and youth at risk. Participants were willing to talk at length about their lives, other people's lives and their community. People who were not participants in the interviewing process readily engaged in informal conversations.

Nobody showed any hesitation about talking to a stranger and a Papa'a (European) about Cook Islander business except one professional woman who was living in New Zealand and asked if I had read the book about research and Indigenous peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). I was familiar with the book, which discusses academic research and Indigenous peoples in the context of exploitation, abuse and arrogant colonial attitudes, and I agreed that neo-colonialism in the form of research is to be strenuously avoided. I was hoping to follow the Samoan author and academic Albert Wendt's recommendation; that the Papalagi (Europeans) should write about the people of the Pacific Islands with aro'a, love and respect (Wendt, 1976).

So, rather than as a participant observer in the colonial ethnographic tradition, I explored the churches, libraries, offices, and meeting places of Rarotonga, read the newspapers, took hundreds of photographs, and listened to the many voices of the Cook Islands people as a postcolonial researcher, with an attitude of respect, and with a real desire to understand what cultural resilience might mean in the Pacific. My question was: what are the cultural factors that are protecting the young people in the Cook Islands?

7.2 The Influence of the London Missionary Society

The first missionaries who came to the Cook Islands in 1821 were Polynesian men trained by John Williams of the London Missionary Society (Gilson, 1980). This organisation was

formed by Englishmen from evangelical Protestant churches who believed that people throughout the world needed to be saved from eternal damnation by turning away from worshipping idols and accepting the Christian God.

The London Missionary Society churches in the islands eventually became the Cook Islands Christian Church but the missionary arm still exists today as the Council for World Mission (www.cwmission.org) and the website mentions John Williams as “the Apostle to the Pacific”. Williams spent some years on Rarotonga translating the Christian Bible into the local language, but he was killed and eaten while attempting to make converts in the New Hebrides, now Vanuatu, in 1839.

Driving around the island of Rarotonga today one sees Cook Islands Christian Church buildings in every village and three Catholic churches, including a Catholic cathedral in the main town of Avarua. There are churches of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons), Seventh Day Adventists, Youth with a Mission (YWAM), the Bahai Faith and various independent and Pentecostal groups. A bank robbery on the island of Aitutaki revealed the fact, reported in the world press, that there are more churches per capita on Aitutaki than in any other place in the world (*Mail Online*, 18 August 2011). This was widely reported because there had never been a bank robbery in the Cook Islands before. The local police stated that it was, technically, a burglary and not a robbery.

The churches are one of the major sources of the psychological sense of belonging for the people living on the islands. It is considered to be very important to belong to a church and to attend services. The Cook Islands preachers are passionate evangelicals who deliver lengthy sermons in the Māori language in church on Sunday, and in the schools and in the prison during the week. Nono said that, if you watch the children at school assemblies, you can see that they are in awe of the orametua. On a Sunday morning in the Cook Islands churches, the people are almost all wearing white dresses or white shirts, even the toddlers, and they sing loudly and enthusiastically. Tourists attend to hear the singing, but many people leave the church just before the Holy Communion as that is apparently reserved for members in good standing. In the Catholic churches the clothes are more colourful, but the singing is just as impressive, and there are two services at the cathedral on a Sunday morning, one in English and one in Māori.

7.3 Effects of Colonisation, Land and Language

At first glance, Cook Islanders do not seem to be in any way hostile or resentful towards the former colonial powers, although Rupe stated that “we don’t understand what happened to us”. Although the Cook Islands has been self-governing since 1965, New Zealand still provides significant assistance to the islands in financial aid and fly in fly out skilled workers, such as judges, medical specialists, nurses, teachers and educational psychologists. Parents are keen for their children to speak good English and get a good (Western) education. Pipi stated quite definitely that Cook Islanders did not mind being colonised and that colonisation is generally seen to have been a positive thing.

On the other hand, it depends who you talk to about colonisation. The voices of those who see the negative aspects of the colonial history are not silent. One prominent older man, a small business owner, stated that the British came to the South Pacific “disguised as missionaries” and “conned” the people. He said that the missionaries took good land that was offered to them as a gift by a hospitable people, a gift that was intended as use of the land, not ownership of the land. In fact, the most frequent complaint was that the British colonial administration had completely misunderstood the land tenure system and the establishment of a Land Court had caused major problems on the islands that continue to the present day (Crocombe, personal communication, 2 July, 2011).

It is clear from the historical literature (Gilson, 1980), that the British residents took over the administration of the land tenure system from the traditional leaders of the community, and initiated a private ownership system hoping to stimulate settlement and commercial gain. British island colonies in the Caribbean had become very profitable producers of tobacco, sugar and coffee. This did not happen in the Cook Islands, for various reasons, and Tara said that the land now has dozens of claimants to every quarter acre block as family members argue about who has the right to use family land. In order to register ownership of a block of land at the Land Court, written consent has to be obtained from various family members who may be living overseas and difficult to contact. In addition, the Land Court has a long waiting list of matters to be resolved (Kina) and the expense of legal representation has been an insurmountable barrier for many people. It has now been decided that people can represent themselves in Land Court matters and do not need to employ a solicitor (Manins, 2011).

Cook Islanders on Rarotonga speak English well, with fluency in Māori dialects said to be dying out among the younger people (Goodwin, 2003). The weakening of the Indigenous

languages is one of the legacies of colonisation as the schools changed the language of instruction from Māori to English when the British protectorate was declared (Gilson, 1980). In the late 19th century the Māori literacy rates in the Cook Islands were thought to be over 90%. Now, the Ministry of Education statistics show that the Māori literacy levels of schoolchildren are lower than English literacy levels and declining (Townsend, personal communication, 27 November, 2010).

7.4 A Community Event: Our New Spiritual Leader

The Catholic Cathedral at Avarua installed a new bishop in July 2011, another Papa'a New Zealander to replace the previous Papa'a (or Pākehā) incumbent. The installation of the bishop was a major event in the community and I received a personal invitation to attend. When I arrived at the church a heavy, sweet-smelling 'ei or garland was thrown around my neck and I was escorted to a reserved seat. There were more bishops in that church than most people would see in a lifetime, all wearing the colourful tall hats called mitres. Most of them were Europeans but there were a few Indigenous people from Fiji and other Pacific nations. The bishops were from Fiji, Hawai'i, Samoa, Niue, Tonga, the French Society Islands, New Zealand and Australia. The Papal Nuncio, the representative of Pope Benedict XVI, read the letter of appointment and the new bishop prostrated himself on the floor as he vowed to serve the people of the Cook Islands.

It seemed strange that there were so many Europeans sitting in the front rows of the church but it turned out that they were mostly Pākehā friends and family of the new bishop. Even his aged mother had travelled from New Zealand to see his ordination. At the end of the ceremony an elderly Cook Islander handed the new bishop a staff shaped like the carved paddle of a traditional canoe and he addressed the congregation. There was not much said about local issues or local people, but many thanks were given to previous mentors and friends who had supported him in his ecclesiastical career.

After the ceremony in the church an extraordinary ritual was performed, extraordinary that is, to someone unaccustomed to Pacific Island culture. The new bishop came out of the church dressed in ordinary clothes and a sun hat. He was escorted into a large chair very much like a throne, with long poles to facilitate carrying by a number of persons. This is known as a pa'ata and there are various forms of it, a chair or platform on which an honoured person can be carried. It has its origin in the Pacific tradition which says that royalty must be carried to prevent their feet touching the ground (Aratangi, 1988). If the feet touch the ground, that ground will belong to the honoured person. It is now a way of

showing honour to someone like the Prime Minister when he visits a school or, in this case, a spiritual leader. When the Australian prime minister, then Julia Gillard, visited Rarotonga in 2012 for the Pacific Islands Forum she was carried in a pa‘ata.

As the pa‘ata was carried onto the street outside the church by six big strong men, a young Cook Islander dressed in a gorgeous yellow and black cultural dance outfit walked backwards ahead of the chair and shouted praises in the Māori language. Many people had said that the artificial grass skirts worn by the cultural dancers were “pure Hollywood” (Tamanu), and had never been worn by traditional dancers in the past, but this particular outfit was very striking and impressive. The chair was carried down the street, around the corner and down another street until it was put down on the lawns at the back of the big church. It was the middle of winter in the South Pacific, but the sun was hot and the Pākehā guests were all sitting on chairs in the shade under the trees. The drums started to beat and the young man started to dance, joined by three others.

Rarotongan drumming is best described as fast and furious and it is exciting and great fun to listen to it. It was said that the drums, made from hollowed out trees, and the drumming technique have been copied throughout the Pacific region. They are played as far away as Hawai‘i, so that many people do not realise that they originated on Rarotonga. Some local people resent this, but generally everybody seems to enjoy both the drumming and the dancing so much that the feelings of happiness are transferred onto the spectators, locals and tourists alike. The welcome for the new bishop was no exception. The very skilful young men were joined by young women and one very beautiful female lead dancer, apparently an award winner at previous years’ competitions. The dancing continued in the hot sun for some time and no one seemed to be at all concerned about whether or not it was entirely appropriate to welcome a celibate priest with a sensual display of youth and beauty. It was, after all, a dramatic celebration of ora, life, which the Catholic Church is known to hold most sacred.

After the dancing, everybody was invited to attend the feast which had been laid out in the grounds of the Catholic Primary School next door. There were white marquee tents with white plastic tables and chairs arranged in groups and long tables groaning with the weight of local food prepared by the Mamas. “Mama” and “Papa” are terms of respect and used in the sense of Elders in the community. They are also used as words for grandmother and grandfather by young people when referring to their parents’ parents.

The Mamas had prepared delicious chicken casseroles, big dishes of the local octopus, or ‘eke, cooked in coconut milk, plates of potato salad coloured pink with beetroot, piles of baked chicken and plates of rice and coleslaw. There were also whole piglets on the tables, probably cooked by the Papas in the umu ovens in the backyards, buried in the ground with hot rocks. There were bright yellow watermelons, unrecognizable by foreigners by sight, but having exactly the same taste as the red variety, and glasses of sweet fruit juice. There was no alcohol served at the feast.

Throughout the feasting the school children danced and the parents played the drums and the hukalele. The latter is an import, probably from Tahiti in the French Society Islands, but it has become a traditional instrument in the Cook Islands. The dancing started with the five year olds, boys and girls performing the gender specific dance movements, which are as fast and furious as the drumming. The boys move their knees and the girls move their hips, with hand and arm movements that tell stories of the past, present and future. Each class had a turn and then a middle-aged woman wearing a long white dress sang “Glory to God”, while the older children danced next to her. It was an amazing amalgamation of traditional and Christian expressive arts, hybridity in action.

7.5 Celebrations: Dancing with the Young People

All through the month of July the village cultural groups were practicing the dances that would be performed at Te Maeva Nui. This Māori phrase means The Great Happiness or The Greatest Celebration and it refers to the Constitution Day celebration of self-government, granted by New Zealand in 1965. Dr Crocombe stated that self-government had come too soon to the Cook Islands as “we were not ready for it” (personal communication, 2 July 2011). It is true that there are still not enough qualified people to teach in the schools or judge in the courts, nearly fifty years later. However, at Te Maeva Nui, Cook Islanders rejoice in their freedom to make their own laws and conduct their own business in the world (Sobel-Read, 2012), even though in some ways they are dependent on New Zealand aid, New Zealand business owners, New Zealand tourists and expatriate workers. In the global economy no country is completely independent and it was said that “we are the most privileged people in the world. We have our own tropical paradise but we can go and live in New Zealand or Australia any time we want. Not many people can do that” (Kanapa). It seems that some Cook Islanders believe that they have the very best of both worlds, enjoying both freedom and opportunity.

In the villages, the children and young people were required to attend cultural dance practice four nights a week during July so that they would be ready for the between villages competition at Te Maeva Nui. These dance competitions are sponsored by the government and there are cash prizes. It makes for a good spectacle for the tourists but also creates an opportunity for the adults to teach cultural activities to the young people, so strengthening the psychological sense of belonging in the community (Alexeyeff, 2009). I was invited to attend one of the practices.

On a Tuesday evening early in July the young people in the village of Arorangi straggled in to the practice, but eventually the large hall was full of dancers and the instructors were on the floor, giving orders and organising the movements; separate groups for the young men and the young women. There were a few dancers who were very skilled and it was wonderful to watch them working with the inexperienced or uncoordinated younger ones, teaching them by example and modelling what it was that they were expected to do. It was possible to see from the movements of hands, arms and bodies that the young people were vaka*,* sailing over the deep oceans, perhaps all the way from Avai'iki, the original homeland, and settling on Rarotonga, in Paradise.

As the young people wandered into the hall, so did their parents. One group, mostly women, practiced singing, and another, mostly men, practiced the playing of the musical instruments. The man who had invited me to attend the practice, a well-respected scion of a prominent family, lay propped up on his elbows on the stage watching the dancing. Although it was quite a warm evening, it was winter, and people wore their jackets and track suit tops. The Mamas and Papas came to watch and sat in chairs bearing a sign indicating that they had been donated by a Cook Islander community in Sydney, Australia.

One older man, a Member of Parliament, sat down after kissing another man on the cheek. It was clear that the physical expression of affection is ordinary and acceptable in Cook Islander society. Even the teenage boys gave each other a half-hearted hug. There were a number of toddlers running around, even running in between the dancers, but no one appeared to get angry with them and no serious attempts were made to stop them or control them. When they got into a situation that seemed to be causing a problem, someone went and picked them up. They were soon running around again. The entire village appeared to be in the hall on that Tuesday evening and everyone appeared to be enjoying the music, the dancing and the sense of community.

A year earlier, in July 2010, I had attended the celebration of Rarotongan Gospel Day in that same hall at Arorangi. The hall then was packed full of local people and they were dressed in brightly coloured shirts, each group with its own pattern or fabric, representing a village or perhaps a village church. Each group had a turn on the stage and performed not only a dance but an enactment of the time when the missionaries arrived and brought the gospel, the good news, to the islands. All the songs and speeches were in Cook Islands Māori, which seemed to contradict the idea that the language is losing ground, but we understood the gist of what was happening. One village group had constructed a large bottomless white ship with a white sail which was carried up to the stage from the back of the hall, containing two or three missionaries walking within decks, dressed in white suits and carrying large Bibles.

The Gospel Day celebrations were all great fun, with exuberant music and dancing, and there were very few tourists present. They had missed the best show in town, and a free show at that. The so-called "Island Nights" at the hotels, which include some traditional food and a little traditional music and dancing, are expensive items with far less to enjoy.

7.6 Activities: Sports and Camping with the Young People

Many of the activities I attended, cultural events, at school and church, involved music and dancing, as well as interaction between adults and children. Everybody appeared to be enjoying themselves and it seems that the parents and other adults are prepared to spend a great deal of time with the young people. It was said that all of the churches have strong and flourishing youth groups, most of the young people learn the cultural dancing and on Saturdays "everyone plays sport" (Mato). The schools do not provide sports programs as each village has sports clubs that provide whatever is needed.

The last week of July in 2011 was school holidays and the Catholic World Youth Day was due to be celebrated in Barcelona, Spain, in early August. No one from Rarotonga was able to go to Spain, so the local Catholic churches and their youth workers arranged for a week of youth celebrations and invited the youth from the outer islands and from Tahiti to attend. They camped in the same primary school that had hosted the feast for the new bishop and the young people slept in tents or on mattresses in the classrooms. The parents and youth workers cooked for them in an outdoor kitchen and took them out for rugby games and other fun activities. Walking around the school during the camp it was possible to see the relaxed and casual attitude of the adults and the young people, all apparently enjoying the get together of friends and relatives. Some of the adults had taken

time off work to be involved and there was a clear commitment to their children, to teaching them the values of their parents in an atmosphere of fun and play.

One day in July 2011 the island was excited by a visit from an ex-All Black rugby player, Jonah Lomu. Throngs of children and young people turned up at the harbour to ask for his autograph and there were pictures in the *Cook Islands News* of Jonah playing rugby with them on a nearby sports field. An ex-rugby league player, Cook Islander Kevin Iro, runs self-development programs for youth at risk. The program called Rakei Toa, or the Armour of the Warrior, aims at building resilience and Te Uki Tumanava teaches trades skills. Kevin is devoted to helping disadvantaged young people and is greatly admired for his work. He and the other famous football players are heroes to the Cook Islands youth and it is widely believed that Kevin's programs will make a dramatic difference to the petty crime rate on Rarotonga and other social problems (Nono). Staff at the Ministry of Education noted that Kevin Iro's programs were directly related to the issues raised in this study as general risk factors – family and school difficulties and school exclusion.

7.7 The Health Conference: Te Marae Ora

During July 2011 the annual conference arranged by the Ministry for Health, Te Marae Ora, was held at the National Culture Centre. The Director of Te Kainga O Pa Taunga, the mental health and wellbeing centre, Mereana Taikoko, spoke on providing mental health services in a country where there are no psychologists or psychiatrists.

Mereana is a psychiatric nurse who has worked overseas but returned home to help the people on Rarotonga. She has set up a community-funded clinic on her own property in Panama, near the Avatui harbour, which provides day respite care for people with mental illness as well as counselling for people in the community. Funds are raised by running a stall at the Saturday markets, growing plants for sale, baking pineapple pies and other activities. There is a doctor on Rarotonga who is interested in mental illness and he is able to provide medication to the Te Kainga clients who need it.

Mereana has compiled statistics on suicide for some years and has found that about two people per year are completing suicide in the Cook Islands. This translates to a fairly high suicide rate, twice that of Australia, when one considers that there are 2000 suicides a year in Australia (ABS, 2010a). She is hoping to provide drug and alcohol counselling as substance abuse is seen as a major problem in the community. Many of the clients of Te Kainga O Pa Taunga are suffering from "stress" which might involve a diagnosis of an

adjustment disorder, with associated anxiety and depression. There are no government funded services to assist people suffering from these conditions or from major mental illnesses. There is a counselling service for women, known as Punanga Tauturu, which deals with domestic violence and other women's issues. Very recently Rota'i'anga, a Men's Health Centre, opened in the village of Tupapa.

There were other interesting speakers at the 2011 conference, including a group of Pacific Islander psychologists from New Zealand. One of the psychologists present, Dr Evangelene Daniela, said that her father was Cook Islander and her mother was Papa'a, and that she had been studying the psychological adjustment of Cook Islanders living in New Zealand. She and her fellow researchers had found that there was an increased rate of mental illness among Pacific peoples compared to the general population in New Zealand, but that people born in the Cook Islands had better mental health than Cook Islanders born in New Zealand. She was wondering what was protective about being born in the Cook Islands and so was I, but in the context of offending behaviour.

7.8 Working with Young People in the Criminal Justice System

Without exception, the justice workers that I talked with, members and ex-members of the police force, the probation and prison services and the child welfare officers, were intelligent, compassionate, dedicated, and willing to do whatever they could to assist youth at risk and people who had become involved with the criminal justice system.

I heard that some young people had alleged that they had received a few bruises from scuffles with police officers at the time of their arrest, but there were no complaints of serious assaults, and none whatsoever of assaults by prison officers. There has not been a suicide in the prison for more than ten years. There were two deaths in custody in the 1990s and one in the 1980s. That means three deaths in 30 years. (Heather, personal communication, 17 August 2011).

Violence is a rare phenomenon at the Arorangi prison. Violent inmates are usually not offenders, but mentally ill patients about to be transferred to a hospital in New Zealand. There is no secure facility at the local hospital on Rarotonga.

Prison officers sit and talk with prison inmates and the fact that they are mostly members of the local churches means that they tend to have the attitude of a prison chaplain towards their charges – they are neglected children with souls to be saved rather than bad

people to be punished. Police and prison officers said such things as “their needs are not met”, or “they are not loved”, to explain the offending behaviour.

Volunteers from the community are encouraged to come to the prison to provide counselling, Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, literacy and maths classes and Bible studies. Family may visit during the week as well as at weekends. There were 30 inmates in July 2011 and there were only ten inmates who had been in prison before, meaning that 20 were first time prisoners. Most of them (two thirds) were not expected to reoffend.

7.9 Rarotonga: The Thieves and the Tourists

A manifestation of the ongoing tension between the Papa‘a business people and the indigenous community, mentioned by Mason (2003), is the angry and punitive reaction of the mostly foreign accommodation owners to the problem of local young people stealing from tourists. The police invited me to attend a meeting in one of the villages where the accommodation owners and the community police officers were due to discuss the issue.

Statistics were provided that showed an increase in stealing from tourists and the police asked the accommodation owners for their suggestions for solutions to the problem. In the first place, the accommodation owners refused to consider warning the tourists to keep their valuables locked up as they did not want to give the impression that there were thieves in Paradise. They allowed their guests to leave all their windows and doors open and to leave valuables, such as handbags containing money and prescription medicine, unattended in another room. When one man had critical medication stolen, the hotel owners were furious. They had also refused to warn the tourists not to leave valuables in the hired scooters and motor bikes and there had been a spate of thefts from these vehicles. The police are now warning people when they go to the police station to get their Cook Islands driving licences, and as a result the tourists are taking their handbags and wallets onto the beach and leaving them unattended when they go for a swim in the lagoon. The young people now simply wander along the beaches, helping themselves, with the police officers patrolling the area as best they can with limited resources.

There were a number of police officers at this community meeting and they stated quite clearly that the young “thieves” were hungry, that they wanted food and clothes, some wanted iPods and other things that their wealthier friends at school had. In other words, they were living in poverty, and the tourists had more money in their wallets than most of

the young people had ever seen. One tourist couple lost NZ$1400 from their room, a large sum for people who would earn NZ$5 an hour if they were lucky enough to have a job.

The accommodation owners were enraged by the information provided to them by the police. They refused to believe that anyone on Rarotonga could be hungry when there were coconuts in the trees and fish in the lagoon. They suggested that the young people should be given a hiding or “roughed up … Island justice”, and that the police were clearly not doing their jobs. One said “I am beyond angry! … being hungry is a pathetic excuse for thieving!”, and another suggested that the young thieves should be charged with something (anything), and locked up again the moment they were released. The police attempted to explain that these young people were the most disadvantaged in the community and asked again if the accommodation owners had any suggestions.

One woman, recognised as a leader in the community, offered to organise extra food for the children at school if the mothers would prepare it, but those offending young people who were hungry were probably not attending school. None of the Papa‘a accommodation owners offered any assistance of any kind, either to the police officers or to the young people. They talked about security and cameras, while Cook Islander police talked about poverty, neglect and deprivation. One of the hereditary title holders for the area said that his grandson and his nephew were already patrolling the area at night on their motor bikes. Sometime later it was reported in the local newspaper that the members of the village rugby club were being trained by a New Zealand security firm as volunteer security guards. It seems that the honour of the village was at stake.

7.10 Leadership and Politics in the Cook Islands

When I was taking photographs in the churchyard at Avarua, an elderly man came up to me and explained earnestly that the first Cook Islands Prime Minister, Albert Henry, had done great things for his people. Albert Henry’s bust was decorated with ‘ei, flower and shell garlands, and I followed up this encounter with history by reading his life story.

In ancient times the heroic warrior was the most admired man, and could sometimes take the leadership role from the hereditary title holders (Mason, 2003). The missionaries tended to uphold the status of the ariki, who they referred to as paramount chiefs, but when the British residents arrived at the end of the 19th century they went out of their way to destroy the power of the arongamana.

The second resident, Colonel Gudgeon, a veteran of the Māori wars, was “turned loose … to rule almost unchecked” in the Cook Islands (Scott, 1991; p.89). According to Scott, a New Zealand historian, Gudgeon was judge and jury, police, prosecutor and prison warder on Rarotonga, sending offenders to the outer islands to work on plantations that he owned. He ignored the wishes of the ariki council and the land rights of the people. Adults were treated like children and subjected to corporal punishment for minor offences. Scott’s book on Cook Islands history was specially commissioned to celebrate the centenary of the Cook Islands Trading Company, and entitled “Years of the Pooh-Bah”. It details the excesses of the colonial administrators and the greed and exploitation perpetrated by the European traders. It is interesting that the book is not available for purchase at The Bounty bookstore in Avarua.

Under the colonial administration, Cook Islands workers were paid far less than workers in New Zealand, the Papa‘a entrepreneurs reasoning that Cook Islanders did not need money as they had family land on which to grow crops. Albert Henry, a teacher from Aitutaki, became involved in protests against low wages and exploitation of workers from 1936 onwards, and he published an independent newspaper which was closed down by the administration. In 1942 he migrated to New Zealand where he became involved in talks with the Auckland Trades Council about the appalling conditions suffered by Cook Islands workers at a phosphate mine on the French island of Makatea. From these beginnings, Albert Henry began to be seen as a national leader and a passionate advocate for his people (Hancock, 1979). His Cook Islands Party won the 1965 election and he became the first Premier of the self-governing Cook Islands.

Albert Henry passed away in 1981 but he is remembered with love and loyalty by many Cook Islanders today. His commitment to the preservation of Māori language and culture is mentioned by Jonassen (2003) and his bust is always decorated with flowers in the graveyard of the Cook Islands Christian Church in Avarua. He was not popular with some of the ariki and the Papa‘a business owners, who regarded him as a socialist or a communist (Hancock, 1979). Apparently they persuaded Dr Tom Davis, a Cook Islander with a Welsh heritage, who had been working in the United States for many years, to return and fight Albert Henry in the 1972 Cook Islands elections.

After the new opposition arranged for Cook Islanders living in New Zealand to fly to Rarotonga to vote in the 1974 elections, and almost won government, Albert Henry borrowed money in order to fly his supporters, Cook Islanders who could not afford the

airfare, back to Rarotonga for the 1978 election. Unfortunately, it was determined by a New Zealand judge that Albert Henry had used government money for political purposes and his government was dismissed. Tom Davis took power and the green and gold flag of the free Cook Islands was rejected in favour of a blue one that retained the Union Jack. Jonassen (2003) mentions the power of metaphor for the Māori in the Cook Islands and the blue flag is a clear reflection of the British/Papa‘a influence.

This dramatic turn of events and the ongoing rivalry between the two political parties seems to demonstrate a clear division on the island of Rarotonga. There are the wealthy and powerful Anglophile business people, descended from the Polynesian aristocracy and the European traders, known as “the Cartel” (Mason, 2003), and “the locals”, the indigenous business owners and the ‘aka‘aka (humble) Cook Islands Māori people, who are neither wealthy nor related to foreigners living overseas. Many of the latter appear to have migrated to Manukau City in Auckland, New Zealand, but in 2010 the Cook Islands Party was once again in power and the story of the Henry family, “The Book of Tetaura Raru” (Henry, 2003), was prominently on sale at The Bounty bookshop.

7.11 Images of Rarotonga

Bhabha (1994) points out in his seminal work, *Location of Culture*, that a culture is always growing and changing and that contact between cultures will inevitably result in new and hybrid forms. The images of Rarotonga collected for this ethnographic case study of a resilient postcolonial community clearly demonstrate the vibrant hybrid culture formed by the Māori response to Euro-Western influence on a group of Polynesian islands.

More than 400 photographs were taken in all, but the 20 images that follow in this section have been placed together as particular examples of data for visual analysis, rather than being scattered through the text as illustrations.

The comments on these images by voices in the community indicate that resistance to Western cultural hegemony continues and that traditional Māori culture not only survives, but thrives. This is not to imply that the battle is won, as neocolonialism, global capitalism and individual greed is an ongoing threat to the peoples and cultures of the Pacific.

On the island of Rarotonga the major threat is tourism, described by Teve as “whorism” and by Trask (1999) as prostitution, devastating for the islands of the Pacific. Those who benefit from the tourist industry see it as “our livelihood” (Kina) but, as in other countries in the 21st century, the profitable return on capital invested tends to make the wealthy

wealthier and the poor poorer, increasing inequality in the community (Piketty, 2014). The social consequences of inequality include a higher crime rate (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2011). In the case of the Cook Islands, tourism brings water shortages, sewerage problems, pollution, junk food, easy access to alcohol and other drugs, and a pervasive disrespect for Māori spirituality which undermines the community and the culture. Some of the images provide evidence for the negative consequences of the tourist industry.

The other side of the coin is polycultural capital, the advantage that people able to walk in two cultural worlds enjoy (Mila-Schaaf, 2010). In the first image analysed in this section the young women are entertaining the tourists with traditional dancing but chatting away to their friends by text message in between routines. The young people who leave on the jet planes to work or study at university in New Zealand are fluent in English but retain the knowledge of their native language and the strong link to their culture. The traditional ties to family members and land create a psychological sense of belonging which means that Cook Islanders have a home to which they can return, even in death.

Spirituality, which includes relating to the unseen and the Divine, is a powerful force in the Cook Islands. Many of these images contain signs of the ongoing integration of traditional spirituality and Christianity in the Pacific. While some of the people embraced the Judeo-Christian scriptures as a message sent to the islands from God (Maroro), Cook Islanders have not abandoned their ancestors' faith and trust in a benign universe and the power of prayer, their respect for the marae or sacred places, their peace of mind, compassion for others, and hope for the future. The late Kauraka Kauraka, who is described as having been a great authority on Cook Islands culture (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003), writes that there is nothing inferior about the ancient Polynesian religion.

Figure 7.2. **Texting the dancers: Mobile phones.**

“Our culture is being watered down, just dancing, the costumes are pure Hollywood now” said Tamanu, but Kaiatea explained that “we use the dancing to teach our stories, our culture and our values to our young people”.

At the same time, the young people in the Cook Islands are using technology and social media as they do all over the world: iPods are especially popular.

Figure 7.3. **Glory to God: Dancing Polynesian culture.**

When the first Christian missionaries arrived in the South Pacific, they forbade the people to dance as many of the dances were an obvious celebration of life and sexuality. (Gilson, 1970). At the feast celebrating the installation of the new Catholic bishop, one of the members of the church, in a long white dress, sang a Christian hymn, “Glory to God”, while the young people, boys and girls, danced on beside her.

Figure 7.4. **Celebrating self-government: Remembering the Gods.**

The College students built a number of Christian floats declaring "Jesus is Lord" for the celebration of self-government, but the ancient Polynesian religion has not been forgotten. On the first float, a young man dressed as a traditional priest or ta'unga, stands solemnly before a symbolic image of Tangaroa, the God of the sea and of fertility. The sea teems with fish, and is the source of food, and therefore the source of life.

Figure 7.5. **College students: Te Maeva Nui, the Great Happiness.**

Mako explained that Christianity is the historical heritage of the people of the Cook Islands, and the churches are full of well-dressed people and harmonious song every Sunday morning. Many of the tenets of New Testament Christianity fit well with the Polynesian culture, such as living in community, showing hospitality to strangers, sharing possessions with the poor, caring for the widows and the orphans (Acts 2: 44-45).

Figure 7.6. **The God Box: A meeting place.**

In the pre-contact days, Cook Islanders carved wooden tiki or God boxes, which were understood to be meeting places where the spirits or Gods would enter, communicate with the traditional priests or ta'unga, and then leave. The English missionaries believed that the people were worshipping wooden idols but this was not the case (Aratangi, 1988). The divine Spirit was the object of devotion, not the wooden tiki.

The Catholic Church has a similar belief about the Host, the bread that becomes the Body of Christ in the Mass, and the consecrated wafers are kept in a tabernacle in the church. This is known as the Real Presence of Jesus Christ among the people. In the Catholic cathedral at Avarua, on Rarotonga, the tabernacle which contains the Host is carved out of wood, literally a God Box. It is of a similar shape to the ancient tiki.

Figure 7.7. **Honour: The new Papa‘a bishop.**

In 2011 the new Catholic bishop, a Papa‘a priest from New Zealand, was accorded the honour of being carried in the pa‘ata after his installation.

“He is our new spiritual leader” said Panga, but others have doubts. It is “disturbing that we still depend on foreigners to teach us about God” (Kauraka, 2003, p. 337).

Figure 7.8. **Images of Tangaroa: Ticky tacky airport art.**

Airport art (Kasfir, 1992) abounds on Rarotonga. Mass produced roughly carved images of Tangaroa sold by the dozen by the Papa‘a dominated tourist industry do not lessen the reverence with which the local people regard their ancient beliefs and the sacred marae.

Kauraka Kauraka, said that “God gave our ancestors our culture … and … there is nothing inferior in our ancient religion” (Kauraka, 2003, p. 338).

Figure 7.9. **Mana: A cheap ballpoint pen.**

The Māori word mana means power, specifically "spiritual power", and yet it is being used as a trade name for cheap ballpoint pens in the Cook Islands Trading Company store. Kauraka believed that the domination of European business owners affected the dignity of the local people. "Although we must accept a European presence in our business world as many of our people are married to Europeans, we must take positive action to create business ventures [ourselves]. … (2003, p. 337).

Figure 7.10. **Liquor: Sold in the shadow of the sacred mountains.**

The missionaries banned alcohol, but the bush beer parties continued (Koops, 2002). Many Cook Islanders do not drink at all, but those who do tend to drink a lot (Huakau, Asiasiga, Ford & Casswell, 2005). Alcohol is now available (for the benefit of the tourists) in every corner store, often presided over by young adolescents working for their parents after school. The imported beer and Jim Beam on the shelves is a great temptation for the thieves who may only have to break a window or the lock on a wooden door to get it.

Figure 7.11. **Once unspoiled paradise: Now commercial enterprise.**

Lavazza, Italian espresso coffee, is available at the Saltwater Café on Rarotonga. The lagoon is very beautiful, but it is polluted. At a gala dinner at Jupiter's Casino on the Gold Coast, Australia, in August 2011, the Cook Islands Prime Minister, Sir Henry Puna committed his government to working towards a green and clean environment. He noted that he would not allow his children to swim in the lagoon while it remained polluted. The impact of 100,000 visitors a year on a small island is considerable.

Figure 7.12. **Commerce: Competition on the lagoon.**

Papa‘a businesses and Cook Islander businesses exist side by side on the turquoise lagoon. The yellow sign advertises the Dive Centre at the Rarotongan Hotel. The roadside stall is selling taro and other vegetables. Another Cook Islander stall on the same road sells hand printed pāreu (sarongs).

Figure 7.13. **Takamoa College: Training missionaries for 200 years.**

In the past the ariki gave the missionaries land to use and so now the Takamoa Theological College stands in extensive grounds on the outskirts of Avarua.

Kotuku said that today traditional land owners are signing leases that have words like "in perpetuity" on them and they do not understand what the legal terms mean. The land cannot be sold but international banks are using it as security for building loans. When the people cannot make the repayments, the banks lease the land out to someone else. This is a neocolonial form of dispossession.

Figure 7.14. **Rust: Building homes the Western way.**

Traditional homes were built with materials obtained from coconut trees and pandanus trees, poles to hold up the roof and woven mats for walls. The houses could be maintained easily and the walls and roofing replaced regularly. Now the building materials must be shipped from New Zealand, windows may break and the roofs may rust away.

Figure 7.15. **Abandoned house: At the Beach Bar.**

Houses are sometimes abandoned when the owners go to New Zealand to find work. In this image the signs of out migration and the tourist industry are found side by side. The tourist industry may be forcing people to leave Rarotonga as the cost of living goes up, prices rise in the shops, and the jobs in the hospitality industry are out-sourced to people from Fiji and other Pacific nations. These are contract workers, earning $5 an hour, who have to repay their employers the cost of their airfares if they leave before the two years are completed. As they may not be able to repay the first airfare and buy another ticket to get home, some of them are effectively trapped on Rarotonga for that time. Some Cook Islanders liken the foreign workers' contracts to indentured labour.

Figure 7.16. **Island ride: The motorbike.**

Motorbikes have become an integral part of Cook Islands culture. Kina says helmets are not worn because they do not allow the women to wear flowers in their hair. Young children ride on the back of their parents' bikes.

The speed limits are 30 to 50 kilometres per hour on Rarotongan roads, and the serious accidents that do occur almost always involve young men, drinking, cruisin' and speeding around the island in the middle of the night, sometimes on bikes, sometimes in cars.

Figure 7.17. **Noa: The vaka and the boat.**

Noa is freedom. Freedom to travel across the deep blue ocean to new lands is a major part of Cook Islands culture. The art of building and sailing the vaka has endured in the Cook Islands and the highly developed navigational skills of the ancestors are acknowledged and much admired by locals and visitors alike. Here a vaka and an aluminium boat are anchored side by side at Avarua.

Figure 7.18. **Journey: Through the clouds to Nikao.**

Today the journey is through the clouds rather than over the water, and the Air New Zealand jets leave Rarotonga filled with voyagers bound for Aotearoa and Australia, as well as for Los Angeles via Tahiti. In the 19th century the young men sailed on European sailing ships as crew. In the 20th century they were encouraged to work in the factories in Auckland. In the 21st century they might be going to visit family in New Zealand, to Australia to work on the mines, or to Fiji to attend the University of the South Pacific.

Figure 7.19. **Resting in peace: Buried at the family home.**

Roofs built over the graves are an ancient tradition from pre-contact times. Bodies were not buried but exposed to the elements on a wooden framework covered by a roof. Eventually the bones would be buried, perhaps in a cave (Aratangi, 1988).

Today the grandparents may be buried close to the house and a lost child may be buried on the verandah. In this way loved ones are kept close and within the family circle. People who die overseas are often flown home to be buried with their families.

Figure 7.20. **Arongamana: The people of power.**

Outside the original London Missionary Society church in Avarua there are monuments to the Makea Ariki (1857), to the New Zealand High Commissioner, Judge Ayson (1948), and, in the background, to the first Cook Islands Prime Minister, Albert Henry (1981). There is a life-size bust on his grave with a fresh flower garland (‘ei) around his neck. It is a legacy of the colonial past that Judge Ayson enjoys pride of place at the entrance to the church alongside the Makea Ariki, and Albert Henry is in the side garden. But the ‘ei are always freshly hung around his neck and symbolize the loyalty of the people to the man who struggled with the colonial government for their right to be treated as equals with New Zealanders, to be paid a fair price for their labour and their produce (Scott, 1991).

Figure 7.21. **Aro‘a Nui: A much loved leader, Albert Henry.**

Albert Henry was, and still is, a polarising figure in the community. Some accuse him of narcissism, egocentricity and nepotism. To many of his loyal followers, however, he is a symbol of the resistance of the Cook Islands Māori to colonialism, exploitation, economic domination and Western cultural hegemony.

Chapter Eight
The Postcolonial Lens

‘AKAKOROMAKI endurance

‘Akakoromaki, translated as patience, longsuffering and endurance, is said to be one of the pillars of Cook Islands culture (Jonassen, 2003). There has been much to endure since the beautiful islands of Te Moana Nui a Kiva were occupied by missionaries, colonial administrators, foreign hoteliers and tourists (Trask, 1999).

Figure 8.1. **The vaka: rubbish bin for tourists.**

8.1 Indigenous Research Project: Remembering the Past

Resilience implies the presence of adversity and all is not sunshine in the tropical paradise of the Cook Islands. Colonisation in the South Pacific has led to subtle and not so subtle forms of dispossession, the threat of Western cultural hegemony, and ongoing economic domination by Europeans and their Cook Islander descendants. Neo-colonialism and the Coca Cola signs of global capitalism are accompanied by unemployment, frustration and substance abuse among the less fortunate.

There were only seven children under the supervision of Child Welfare Services on Rarotonga in July 2011, but, per head of population, that is twice the rate of involvement with the juvenile justice system than occurs in Australia, where 7200 young people are under supervision on any given day (Trotter, 2012). This makes the low rate of incarceration in the Cook Islands all the more remarkable. Of course, Indigenous Australian children are 28 times more likely to be involved with the justice system than non-Indigenous children.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) sees remembering the colonial past as an Indigenous research project which leads to understanding and healing. In Australia, Red Dust Healing (www.thereddust.com) is a program delivered by Indigenous men to Indigenous men in prison, which includes education with regard to the facts of colonisation and racism. This remembering as a precondition for healing was recommended by Said (1979) in his ground breaking postcolonial text, *Orientalism*.

8.1.1 Postcolonial Theory

Said's work is foundational to postcolonial theory. What he had to say about the attitude of Western Europeans and North Americans to "Oriental" people such as Egyptians, Arabs and Persians can be extended to apply to their attitude to any other peoples who have been colonised and dominated by the West. They have become the Other; as far as the West is concerned, those who are not like us, "not quite as human as" us (Said, 1979; p. 108), where humanity is defined by Western measures of intelligence and education. Indigenous, colonised people, non-Europeans, have certainly suffered under this Western arrogance. The Romans took the same attitude towards the barbarian German tribes (Painter, 2010) and the English sold the Irish into slavery (Ignatiev,1995), but the people now described as "brown" and "black", as opposed to "white", have been the despised or dismissed racialised Other since the first expansion of European commerce and

missionary endeavours in the 16th century (Higman, 2011). Western colonial administrators believed that they were bringing the light of civilisation to the primitive savage (Said, 1979), just as the ancient Romans believed that the Pax Romana (the Roman peace) was beneficial to the people conquered by their armies.

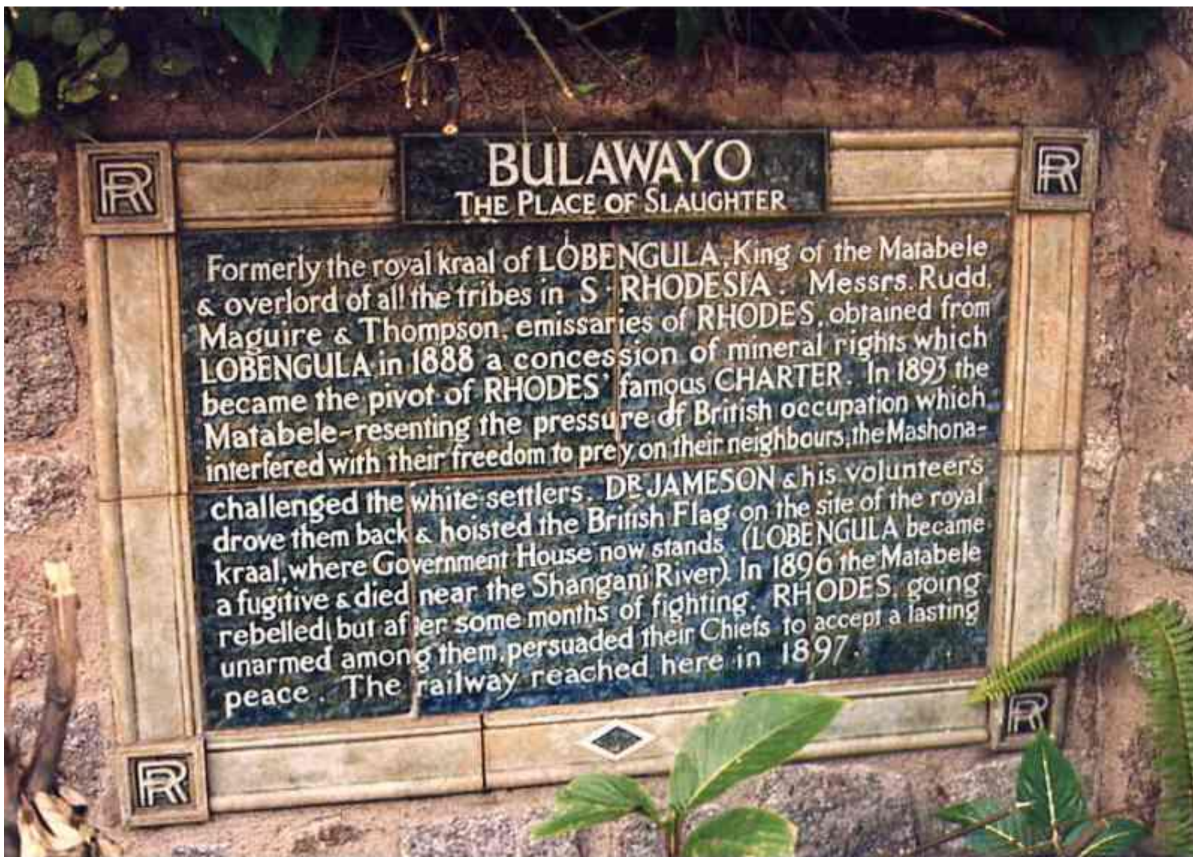

Figure 8.2. **The Matabele: Resenting the occupation.**

It seems to have escaped the attention of the colonisers that this so-called civilisation and peace was achieved at a high price, paid for in blood, rape and dispossession. The Spanish in the Caribbean exterminated the Indigenous people and destroyed their sophisticated system of vegetable gardens, replacing them with slaves and sugar cane (Higman, 2011). The British in Africa used an early version of a machine gun, the maxim gun, against people armed with spears, and ascribed rebellion by the native peoples to a desire to prey upon their neighbours (see photograph of colonial plaque above). In Australia, people who objected to the invasion of their lands were "dispersed" by the Native police, which was the official language used to describe killing sprees (Moses, 2004). In the Belgian Congo, ten million Africans were killed or enslaved and the colonial administrators used native skulls to decorate their garden beds (Hochschild, 1998).

After the killing stopped in Australia, Indigenous people were subjected to forced removals, rounded up and taken by the truckload to remote reserves, as far out of sight and out of mind as possible, and allowed to suffer poverty, illness, lack of education, loss of culture, loss of language. Parents had no rights as far as their children were concerned. All Indigenous people were wards of the state, legally children (Kidd, 1997); there was loss of land, loss of freedom, loss of autonomy. Germaine Greer's *On Rage*, describing the ongoing anger experienced by Indigenous Australian men (Greer, 2008), was greeted by derision in the white Australian press and yet in that year young Indigenous men in prison were writing poems such as this.

> *They say they discovered this great red land*
> *But we know the truth about the evil white man*
> *They came they tortured, raped and killed*
> *They done all sorts of things that gave them thrills*
> *They tried to wipe out this black man's race*
> *But with the knowledge of our ancestors we still stand in this place*
> (Cobbo, 2008).

Said (1979) described the tendency of newly independent nations to try to forget about the humiliations of the colonial past as soon as possible. Unfortunately, this leads to much confusion, as the obvious social problems of previously colonised countries, such as Uganda, then become difficult to understand. In countries where the settlers came to outnumber the native peoples, such as Australia and New Zealand, the social problems of the aboriginal inhabitants are just as poorly understood. The descendants of the original settlers are as keen to forget the conflicts and cruelties of the past as the newly independent nations may be. In Australia, a media release from the Australian Psychological Society (Gordon, 2007) pointed out that the intergenerational trauma suffered by Indigenous people results in social and individual problems such as substance abuse, family violence and child sexual abuse. Native American researchers call this phenomenon "lateral violence" (Brendtro et al. 1990). The social legacy of colonialism, disempowerment, exploitation and acculturation is pervasive and long lasting.

8.1.2 The colonial past in the Cook Islands

William Wyatt Gill, an English missionary on the island of Mangaia from 1852 to 1872, wrote extensively about the Cook Islands; and Richard Gilson, an American academic awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study in New Zealand in 1949, completed a thesis on the Cook Islands and a major study of Samoa before he died suddenly in 1963. In 1957

the New Zealand ethnologist and psychologist Dr Ernest Beaglehole used the collected records of the London Missionary Society to describe the social changes that came to the Cook Islanders with European contact and also described Cook Islands society as it was in the 1950s. All of these works were, of course, written from the perspective of the European coloniser. Gilson also wrote about colonial administration and colonial policy.

According to Western historians (Beaglehole, 1957; Gilson, 1980) Polynesian people arrived in the Cook Islands around 600 CE, possibly from Tahiti. They are acknowledged to have been expert sailors and navigators, travelling long distances across the Pacific while the Europeans were sailing along the Mediterranean coast. There is a road around the main island, Rarotonga, called the ara metua, which was made of coral and it is said to date from those early times. The arongamana (or people of power) were the hereditary rulers, the ariki and the mata‘iapo, and the priests or wisdom speakers, the ta‘unga.

The people worshipped ‘Io as the supreme being and other deities, including Tangaroa, the God of the sea, an icon of fertility. Most of the carved images of Tangaroa with a large penis were destroyed by the missionaries in the 1820s but are seen everywhere on Rarotonga today, used as a national symbol by the Tourist Board. Cook Islanders firmly believe that their ancestors sailed south and colonized Aotearoa (New Zealand); the languages spoken in the two countries are very similar (Carpentier & Beaumont, 1995) and the New Zealand Māori have similar stories in their oral histories. At Ngatangi‘ia harbour, on the eastern side of Rarotonga, there is a commemorative circle of stones, with a plaque recording the names of the seven vaka (canoes) that left for the Land of the Long White Cloud, around a thousand years ago.

In 1821 the London Missionary Society sent two evangelists from the Society Islands to preach the Christian gospel to the Cook Islanders. These men, Papeiha and Rio, appear to have ruled “as despots” (Crocombe, 1983, p.19) on Rarotonga until the English missionary Charles Pitman arrived in 1827, but they were said to have largely overthrown the traditional religious customs (Gilson, 1980). The Cook Islanders were apparently persuaded to adopt the Christian religion and many of the more violent customs such as infanticide and cannibalism of enemies killed in war ceased.

Some would say that the English missionaries were just as despotic as the Pacific Islander evangelists, attempting to enforce obedience to the Blue Laws, Victorian rules of behaviour, more cultural than Christian. However, Cook Islanders describe their pre-Christian culture as “very violent” (Marari), and the different village communities dance

enthusiastically at the celebration of the day that the missionaries came to the Islands. There are devout Christians in the Cook Islands who speak of God, and “the light”, coming to the islands, rather than the European missionaries.

The early missionaries enacted a legal code on Rarotonga that forbade polygamy, fornication (premarital sexual activity), adultery, premarital pregnancy, card playing, drinking alcohol or kava, tattooing, marrying a white person and “crying over a dead woman without being related to her” (Beaglehole, 1957, p. 57). Dancing was forbidden and seen as a great sin (Gilson, 1970). Punishments included fines, imprisonment, being put in the stocks, being tied by the wrist to a log, cutting a woman’s hair, and flogging. It is said that in 1850, 900 crimes were brought before the judges and about 250 offenders were punished in a population of about 3000. Church members and deacons were judges and police officers, with the power to arrest and punish offenders. If fines were imposed the proceeds were shared between the police and the ariki.

There was a prison on Rarotonga in 1833 and missionary reports indicate that many young people were sent to prison for the sin of “premarital experiment”; many missed school as a consequence (Beaglehole, 1957, p. 38). The prison house on the nearby island of Aitutaki was burnt down in 1839, as well as some churches and the houses of Christian converts, apparently as a protest against the strict rules of the missionaries.

The population was decimated by epidemics of infectious diseases, brought to the Pacific Islands by European sailors (Salzman, 2005). From approximately 7,000 people on Rarotonga in 1825, there were 2,300 in 1854 and only 2,060 in 1902 (Mason, 2003a). The people died of measles, mumps, whooping cough, influenza and dysentery. In 1851 they learned the art of fermenting orange and pineapple juice from visiting Tahitians, and in 1857 the English missionaries were complaining that many of the young men were “drunkards” (Beaglehole, 1957, p. 94). Fighting and domestic violence are said to have followed as a consequence of the drinking, although trauma was clearly a factor.

In 1888 a British Protectorate was declared, with the agreement of the ariki. It seems that French warships were nearby, in the Society Islands, and the English missionaries were concerned about the threat of Roman Catholicism. Under British administration some of the missionary laws were repealed and new laws were proclaimed. Apparently the only punishments in use were fines or forced labour, working on the roads or in the plantations. Alcohol was still considered to be causing a problem in 1897 and after annexation by New Zealand in 1901 it was only available to Europeans and then by medical prescription.

8.1.3 The colonial narratives

In the colonial literature of the Pacific Islands there is more than one historical narrative. The missionary records are one part of the story, and the Western academic historians and social anthropologists have produced another. There is also the fictional adventure narrative which Said refers to as the "imaginative and travel literature … especially rich" (1979, p. 99), making a major contribution to the Orientalist discourse (or the discourse of the Other). In the Pacific this literature speaks of beautiful women, palm fringed white beaches, lagoons teeming with fish, waves breaking on the reef, romantic moonlight, and English sailors jumping ship. The famous Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *Treasure Island*, spent his last four years (1890 to 1894) on the Samoan island of Upolu and a number of American writers followed him into the South Pacific (Hall, 1952). One of these, Robert Frisbee, wrote a series of books about his idyllic life on the island of Puka Puka with his Polynesian wife and their four children (Frisbie, 1928).

All of the colonial narratives are success stories from the point of view of the Europeans. The Pacific Islands were apparently the last part of the earth to hear the Christian gospel. Christians believe that Jesus commanded them to preach the Good News to the ends of the earth and that he would not return until this had been done. The missionaries enjoyed early success in the Cook Islands when the ariki on Aitutaki were converted and one of the ariki on Rarotonga soon followed. The Takamoa Theological College, a training school for local missionaries, was founded in 1839 and Cook Islanders were sent all over the Pacific, to Papua New Guinea and many of the other Islands of Melanesia. Christianity is now considered by many Cook Islanders to be part of their historical heritage and part of their culture. As a conservative Christian nation, homosexuality, termination of pregnancy, and prostitution remain against the law.

Colonisation occurred late in the Cook Islands. The British did not wish to take on long term responsibility for the Pacific Islands, and so they were annexed by New Zealand in 1901 after 13 years under British Residents. There were Māori representatives in the New Zealand parliament who became involved in the administration of the Cook Islands between 1909 and 1934. These men followed the policy of taihoa or wait a while/go slow, meaning that they recognised that hasty attempts at assimilation or Europeanisation were disruptive in Māori communities (www.teara.govt.nz). Assimilation remained the stated goal of the colonisers, however, and formal education was seen as the best way to achieve this. Cook Islanders who did well at school were, and still are, sent to New

Zealand to complete their education (Kaiatea). By 1965, the United Nations had recommended independence for all colonies and dependencies and the Cook Islands became self-governing in free association with New Zealand. This arrangement gave Cook Islanders autonomy at home while retaining their citizenship of New Zealand and the right to live and work in both New Zealand and Australia. It suited New Zealand as Cook Islanders were needed as factory workers and labourers at that time.

The adventure narrative has also been a great success from the point of view of the Cook Islands tourist industry, largely managed by Papa‘a business owners, the non-Indigenous Cartel mentioned by Mason (2003b). Rarotonga is advertised in Britain and in the cold, wet New Zealand winter as a tropical paradise with a range of holiday resorts suitable for weddings, honeymoons and family holidays. 100,000 tourists a year flock to the island and the wealthiest go to a luxury resort on the nearby atoll of Aitutaki. The sensual dancing, the drums and the exotic food complement the warm, balmy weather, the green mountain peaks, the pale lagoon and the deep blue ocean, making a week on Rarotonga the experience of a lifetime for anyone who has not visited the South Pacific before.

8.2 Reframing the Narratives

This research focused on the point of view of the people of the Cook Islands. It was not difficult to find people who were willing to talk about the missionaries and the colonisers from a Māori perspective. On my first morning on Rarotonga in 2011, I attended one of the Cook Islands Christian Churches, formerly the London Missionary Society. The music was as I remembered it from a previous visit, very beautiful singing with the men’s voices deep and strong. There were a few Papa‘a people in the church, including an Australian that I had met on the plane the previous night. After the service he introduced me to one of the respected older men in the community, referring to him as “this Papa”. The word Papa means grandfather but it also means elder or respected person.

I explained that I was a researcher, interested in offending behaviour, protective factors and traditional culture. He did not hesitate before telling me that the British had “conned” his ancestors, coming to the Islands “disguised as missionaries”. “We had our own Gods”, he said, “who had taught us to navigate the vast distances of the deep ocean, to fish and to grow crops. We didn’t need their God”.

8.2.1 Christianity and traditional beliefs

On my first visit to Rarotonga in 2009, a hotel receptionist told me that the Europeans had "gone after our religion". She sounded quite angry that the traditional religion of her ancestors had been targeted by the Papa'a. When I asked another man about the attitude of Cook Islanders to the "old religion" he asked me what I meant by the "old religion". A prominent woman in the community stated that the ancient marae (or religious meeting places) were to be respected, and a tour guide showing us the site of a marae asked us not to walk on the sacred ground. It seemed that the traditional spiritual beliefs of the Cook Islands people were not destroyed by Papeiha and Rio in 1821 as the missionaries and historians had believed. V.S. Naipaul (2010) has written a very interesting account of the co-existence of African beliefs and Christianity, showing that indigenous belief systems can survive centuries of suppression.

A thesis written by a student at a theological college in Fiji discusses the pre-Christian religion on the island of Mangaia (Aratangi, 1988). The author explains that the carvings on the marae in pre-Christian times were not worshiped as idols. A carving was simply a meeting place, a container for the facilitation of communication between the human and the spiritual, just as the Israelites believed the presence of the Lord was in the Ark of the Covenant, and Christians believe the presence of Jesus is in the bread and wine at the time of Communion. On Mangaia it was believed that the spiritual presence would leave the carving, the God box, after the meeting had taken place.

It was my privilege to meet a wise man, a wisdom speaker, on Rarotonga in 2011. He explained that 'Io is the Supreme Being, and the other spiritual beings such as Tane and Tangaroa are messengers with particular responsibilities. It suddenly seemed very inappropriate to have the image of the powerful Tangaroa sitting on hotel reception desks, sold as a liqueur bottle, and painted, cartoon style, on the side of buildings. The God of the sea and of fertility, the source of abundant life, is not a mere tourist attraction. It seemed unlikely that a Cook Islander would decide to use one of the greatest of the traditional Polynesian deities as a commercial icon. I wondered if this was an instance of the non-Indigenous business owners making decisions. Cook Islanders themselves had been unfailingly respectful towards traditional beliefs.

Figure 8.3. **Tangaroa: Burgers for Tourists.**

8.2.2 Colonisation and imperialism

If the Christian narrative was a little more complicated than it first appeared, what of the colonial or imperialist narrative? Did the Cook Islander arongamana request protection from Queen Victoria in fear of French warships and did the people benefit from the blessings of Western so-called civilisation?

Firstly, the missionaries had acted as de facto administrators for sixty years before the Protectorate. They had used the spiritual authority (or mana) that they enjoyed as the supposed representatives of the one true God to impose English cultural values on a group of Polynesian people. The wearing of long dresses and shirts on the island of

Rarotonga would have been a great trial to people accustomed to going almost naked in the warm humid climate. The missionaries moved the people from their farming lands on the lower slopes of the mountains to coastal villages, so that the Christian converts would not be influenced by their pagan neighbours, causing a great deal of practical inconvenience. Traditional arts and activities such as dancing and tattooing were considered sinful and outlawed. In large matters and small, the people were controlled as if they were children and the ariki were no longer in charge of the daily lives or the future of their people. The missionaries had adopted the role of advisors and also of mediators between the ariki and the representatives of foreign governments. It is thought that the ariki may not have understood that "protection" by a colonial power had implications for sovereignty (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003).

When the British Residents took over the government of the islands, the arongamana lost much more of their power to make decisions. The most significant loss was their traditional control over the allocation of land. The Europeans wanted the land to be privately and individually owned so that it could be used for commercial purposes. Colonialism was first and foremost an economic project, and they believed that nobody would settle on the islands and establish plantations without security of land tenure. The destruction of the communal Polynesian culture and its replacement with a capitalist system of inequality was their stated ambition. The first British Resident, Frederick Moss, noted that "family communism kills energy and enterprise in a people naturally clever and adventurous… the recognition of individual gain and the cultivation of individual greed are … the best possible foundation for national progress and prosperity" (Gilson, 1980, p. 83).

It seems that the British were determined to encourage individual greed in the Cook Islands so that some people (European traders, mainly) would prosper, at the risk of "pauperism" for others (the locals). A pauper in Victorian England was a person who was so poor that he or she required support from the parish workhouse.

Capitalists are still convinced of these principles. In 1999 the Chairman of the Daimler-Chrysler company, Robert Eaton, made a speech in Germany, during which he stated that free market capitalism is not always fair, that it creates great wealth for individuals and, sometimes, too much poverty. But he was adamant that the rewards (for the rich and the middle class), far outweighed the disadvantages (for the poor) (Eaton, 1999).

It is precisely the inequality mentioned by Eaton that produces the multiple social ills of the capitalist system. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) are epidemiologists who have studied the

social determinants of health in an international context. They write that the problems associated with mental health, physical health, teenage pregnancies, educational achievement, crime, substance abuse, violence and incarceration that occur in a society, are all affected by the degree of inequality that exists, rather than the level of poverty. The more equal a society is, the healthier, happier and safer the people will be. Countries like Japan and Sweden, one with more equal wages and the other with higher taxes, have very little mental illness and crime. Very unequal countries, like Brazil and South Africa, have a great deal. In addition, research is showing that the degree of inequality is increasing rapidly in Europe and the United States (Piketty, 2014).

Traditional indigenous communities, based on hunter gatherer and agricultural activities, tend to be fairly equal in terms of material possessions even if they are not egalitarian in terms of status and power (Mason, 2003b). It is only since the industrial revolution in Europe that the owners of the means of production have been able to make huge profits from the labour of the people, as Marx and others have pointed out (Singer, 1996). In the 21st century it is the senior managers and CEOs who command enormous salaries and bonuses while the workers on the factory floor struggle to pay their bills.

Is there inequality in the Cook Islands? It is not possible to talk about “pauperism” or welfare dependency as there are no charities handing out meals from street vans and there is no system of unemployment benefits for young, healthy people. Police officers state that the young thieves are often hungry. It is assumed by some Cook Islanders that there is no possibility of being hungry on a tropical island when there are fish in the lagoon. This seems to be an echo of the adventure narrative, the idea that seafood and fruit are always to hand. The reality is somewhat different as catching the fish is not easy for young people without a canoe, and picking fruit on someone else’s land could result in being accused of theft. Others assume that there is always someone who is willing to take a young person into their home. This may have been true once, but when the community includes strangers from the outer islands, foreign workers from other Pacific nations and expatriate teachers and health workers from Australia and New Zealand, and many of a child’s relatives are living overseas, it may not be true anymore.

Did the British succeed in creating individual greed? For people born in the Cook Islands, the world is their oyster, so to speak. They can attend university in New Zealand, Australia or Fiji and seek work in all the major cities of the Pacific region. Apparently, 85% of Cook Islanders live overseas. Many of the Cook Islanders who live on the Gold Coast in

Australia have become relatively wealthy. The Cook Islands gala evening that I attended at Jupiter's Casino, Broadbeach, in August 2011, showcased the success of the expatriate Cook Islanders. They were dressed in their best, eating and drinking at a very expensive venue, enjoying the musical acts flown in from Tahiti and Rarotonga, and talking about the good jobs they had in Australia. Western people call this success, not greed, but if there are hungry, unemployed relatives left behind on Rarotonga, Atiu or Manihiki then the traditional system of family communism is no longer operating as it once did.

The Cook Islanders who were encouraged to go to New Zealand to work in the factories in the 1960s and 1970s have not been as fortunate as some of their relatives and friends in Australia. A report by AusAid notes that the economic restructuring of the 1980s resulted in difficulties for the manufacturing sector in New Zealand, which was heavily dependent on labour from the Pacific Islands. Many of the Islanders lost their jobs in the 1980s and those who have remained in New Zealand have been earning incomes far below the national average. New migrants from the Islands still earn two thirds of what New Zealand born people earn (Stahl & Appleyard, 2007).

Cook Islanders are still going to New Zealand, however, because there are far greater opportunities for work in Auckland than there are on Rarotonga. The minimum wage in the Cook Islands is $5 per hour, in New Zealand it is $15. On the outer islands, work consists mainly of family taro planting or the family black pearl industry. In New Zealand, Cook Islanders are eligible for unemployment benefits, which do not exist in the Cook Islands, and are not available to them in Australia. This combination of factors may result in those people who are well educated and well able to support themselves choosing Australia, those who may need to rely on unemployment benefits or family connections to choose New Zealand, and those who are linked to the business owners on Rarotonga to choose the Cook Islands. Some choose to serve their people on the Cook Islands as education, health or justice workers. The people who have no choice may be the dysfunctional, the unwell, the depressed or the addicted.

In fact, staying behind in the Cook Islands and living in poverty implies a significant level of hopelessness and helplessness, as all Cook Islanders are citizens of New Zealand and would be eligible for unemployment benefits if they were living overseas. A seat on a plane to Auckland costs a few hundred dollars and it was said that the families can "easily pass the hat" and collect the fare for anyone who needs it (Tiare). For some families that is not true. The poorest people, the minimum wage workers, those accused of spending their

small child allowance on gambling and drinking, are clearly the less than capable, and cannot afford the airfares. It was said that Rarotonga is only for the rich people now (Kina); perhaps the rich and the poorest, with the middle class working overseas. Economic inequality would be a significant problem in such a community, especially if the poor include elderly people and children whose parents are overseas.

8.2.3 Romance and adventure

Figure 8.4. **Sunset in Paradise.**

The adventure narrative is now being promoted by the (Euro-Western) tourist operators. The surreal beauty of the South Pacific is no longer seen as a spiritual experience but a commercial transaction. Many of the hotel owners or managers are Papa'a from America, Australia and New Zealand; some are Cook Islanders, but as Mason (2003b) states, being European or Māori is largely a matter of attitude. The story that is told on the tourism websites is of a beautiful place, inhabited by warm and friendly people, where the visitor

can experience the most romantic wedding or honeymoon, surrounded by red and yellow flowers, the beating of the drums, paddling in carved canoes among the coral reefs.

The price of this über romance is very high. Some of the resorts charge NZ$600 per night and on Aitutaki the prices rise to NZ$1000 a night. The tourists are not aware that the local people are being paid $5 an hour and that most of the hotel staff are contract workers from Fiji, forced to repay their airfares if they decide to go home before the two year contract period is up. The tourists are also not aware that there is no water treatment plant on the island of Rarotonga, that the resorts use up water that is needed in the villages, that the lagoon they are swimming in is polluted, or that many of the Cook Islanders are offended by their skimpy clothes and Sunday activities. Even riding a bicycle on a Sunday is disapproved of by some of the local people (Panga).

Most of the tourists remain on Rarotonga, as the airfares to the outer islands are very expensive. Known as the mainland, Rarotonga is effectively divided into the southern coastal area, Titikaveka and Ngatangi‘ia, with most of the tourist accommodation, the wide lagoon and the narrow beaches, and the northern coastal area, the government offices in Tupapa, the airport in Nikao, and the main shopping centre in Avarua. The police station, the courts and the car hire offices are also in Avarua. The tourists visit Avarua to obtain their motorbike licences, but they spend most of their time on the other side of the island, as there are no beaches on the northern side of Rarotonga. The reef is narrow in the north, with openings to the two harbours, and rocks along the shoreline.

The local people, wealthy or not, tend to live away from the main road and the staring eyes of the tourists. There are houses on the inland roads, behind the town of Avarua and the villages of Nikao and Panama. Most visitors will never see them. There are also houses along the main road at Arorangi but as there are few restaurants or shops in the area, the tourists do not stop here. The local people live their lives away from the tourist resorts and the tourists flow in and out of the international airport, seldom staying for more than a week. They can be rude, thoughtless and arrogant, talking loudly about the lazy, useless Cook Islanders and the failed Sheraton Resort on the shuttle bus to the airport, while the driver listens in; or just thoughtless, leaving their wallets on the beach while they swim in the lagoon. They bring in a lot of money and luxury items such as watches, cameras, laptop computers and iPods that attract the unemployed, cash poor young people. The enormous gap between the tourists who can pay for light aircraft flights, Cook Islands designer

dresses and black pearls, and the young people who have no hope of finding a job creates a problem that is very far from a romantic adventure.

Crocombe (1978) and Berno (1995) warned that tourism in the Cook Islands would not be wholly beneficial to the community. Apart from the very obvious economic gap between tourists and locals, and the rising cost of living, one of the pastors interviewed, Ngatae, stated that the ideas coming in from outside the Cook Islands are threatening the culture and wellbeing of the young people. Smuggled violent and pornographic movies are considered to be a problem, as are the party drugs which may come in on the private yachts. There are stories of prostitution and payment is sometimes made in gifts rather than cash (Pipi). Kate mentioned that a young man had identified himself as a sex worker to a non-government agency on Rarotonga, even though both prostitution and homosexuality are illegal. The Beach Boy phenomenon, male prostitutes working with older women tourists, apparently exists "under cover of social activities" (Teve), although some people had never heard the term.

As Miriam Kahn noted in Tahiti Beyond the Postcard (2011), the tourist image of a South Sea island is very far from the whole story. Trask (1999) called the impact of tourism in Hawaii "devastating". The romantic adventure is the brief experience of the Western visitor. The reality of tourism for the Indigenous people may be a challenge to their culture, damage to the environment, economic exploitation and a far greater degree of inequality, accompanied by social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, family violence, crime and mental illness. It is worth noting that the tourists love to ride the hired motorbikes and scooters without having to wear a helmet, but young Cook Islanders cruise the roads late at night, drinking and speeding, making them extremely dangerous.

8.3 The Legacy of Colonialism

Having noted that the colonial history of the Cook Islands can be remembered in very different ways, the legacy of colonisation can be reframed also. The Queen's Representative continues to live in a large colonial homestead facing the lagoon and the Union Jack flies on the Cook Islands flag. Police officers swear allegiance to Queen Elizabeth II. The name of Captain Cook is a swear word in some parts of Australia and yet, the Cook Islands, or Kuki Airani, have not changed their name, almost 50 years after they became self-governing in free association with New Zealand. For some members of the Cook Islands community, the links with British tradition appear to be strong and valuable.

For others, the story is different. People from the different islands refer to themselves as Mangaians or Pukapukans. “Who would want to be a Captain Cook?” they ask.

8.3.1 Dispossession

Tourists are told that the land in the Cook Islands cannot be sold and that it belongs to the local families. The reality is somewhat more complicated.

In the pre-contact times, the ariki controlled the use of the land. There were five hereditary rulers on Rarotonga and each one controlled a section of the island. On the smaller islands one ariki was the ruler. The second-in-command was the mata‘iapo, a number of whom then controlled smaller portions of the land. Families were assigned land in order to grow taro and the land was theirs to use as long as it was needed. In case of death or desertion, the land would be used by someone else. If a father or mother died, the children could continue to use the land.

When the missionaries came, they advised against the sale of land to foreigners, but they were given land to use for themselves. Being Europeans, they would have assumed it was theirs in perpetuity and, indeed, the churches still stand, surrounded by the Christian graveyards, and the Takamoa Theological College is still set in sweeping lawns. The missionaries insisted that bodies were buried after death, rather than being exposed to the elements, and large, ornate graves now take up more and more space in backyards as well as in graveyards. The Catholic Church has built a cathedral in the main town of Avarua, two other churches and three schools, and there are large blocks of land being used by the Latter Day Saints, the Seventh Day Adventists and Youth with a Mission.

European and Chinese traders were also given land to use and today, apart from the shops and offices, there is an airport capable of handling jet airliners, a fuel depot, a bus depot, supermarkets and liquor stores on the scarce and valuable land, not to mention the numerous hotels and holiday resorts that encircle the island. It is possible to obtain a 60 year lease on a piece of land but, traditionally, when the lease is up, the buildings should be demolished and the land returned to the owners (Kanapa). This is hardly possible when there is a multi-million dollar hotel or an airport built on the land.

The colonial government also used land, including that for the luxurious residence of the Queen’s Representative. Land was needed for the parliament building and there are a

number of large colonial era government buildings surrounded by gardens and driveways, notably the Office of the Prime Minister.

In the end the British colonists did get their way and the land that was left over was allocated to private individuals. A Land Court was set up and is still struggling to cope with the land claims and disputes. The colonial system was complicated, as described by Professor Ron Crocombe in *Land Tenure in the Pacific* (1971), but individuals do own land. One government worker said that he owned a house and land, and he was thinking of building a rental property because his wife also owned a piece of land. It was often said that the British had misunderstood the traditional laws of inheritance.

Under the British version of the laws, children inherited from both mother and father and now many people have a claim on each property. In pre-contact times a child could inherit from either parent but only did so if he or she needed the use of a piece of land. The inheritance was not automatic. Land once claimed and registered with the Land Court cannot be sold, but it can be leased and the international banks will accept it as security for a loan to build a house. If the borrower cannot make the repayments, the bank takes over the land and leases it out. Losing land to such legal entities as long term leases and bank guarantees is a subtle form of dispossession, but it is still dispossession.

Most of the island of Rarotonga is mountainous and so the amount of land available for building houses and growing crops is very limited. Some of the smaller islands are mostly lagoon with tiny coral atolls which look like sandbanks running around the lagoons. Land is valuable and precious in the Pacific and much of it has been lost to churches, commercialisation and capitalism, and now to the banking industry.

The physical loss of the land, or the loss of the use of the land, is only part of the problem that faces Cook Islanders. The land has always been considered to be sacred and to provide a sense of belonging and identity (Crocombe, 1971). It is the loss of spiritual and psychological connection to the land that is the major issue for the people.

8.3.2 Economic domination: The Cartel

From the beginning the newcomers to the Cook Islands married into the community, from the Tahitian missionaries who arrived in 1821, to the American writer, Robert Frisbie who married on Pukapuka in 1928, to Ron Crocombe in 1950, who stayed, married, and became Professor of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific. Polynesian

hospitality demanded that guests be treated well and offered the use of land, which enabled them to marry local women and settle down. In addition, although there was an early missionary rule against marrying a white person, there were no colonial laws that prevented what is now known as “intercultural marriage” (Mason, 2003a).

The result of European, and to a lesser extent Chinese, traders and businessmen marrying women from aristocratic local families has been the establishment of a relatively large group of people with a mixed heritage, seen as wealthy, privileged and powerful. Tiare said that “the good families are the ones with the Papa‘a names”. These are the people who might be known as Creole in another part of the world, but who continue to be referred to as “mixed-bloods” in the Cook Islands (Mason, 2003a).

Fanon (1963) wrote about the people with a mixed heritage and a colonial education who became the bourgeoisie in colonised countries. He considered them to be more Western than Indigenous and thought that their presence and their influence created a barrier to freedom and autonomy for the local people. The business owners on Rarotonga, who are said to be European in attitude, rather than Māori, are described as “the Cartel” by Mason (2003b). There is said to be a tension between those Cook Islanders who espouse traditional Māori values of giving and sharing, and those people (European, Creole or Cook Islanders) who have adopted the individualist values of Euro-Western culture.

Pipi stated unequivocally that the European business owners were making all the money. She said that they were required to have a Cook Islander business partner but that many were silent partners and received a pittance as their share of the profits. The word “comprador” was used by Mason (2003b) in her analysis of the commercial life of the Cook Islands and derives from the Portuguese term for a local manager of a European business. It was used by Marxists and by Fanon (1963) as the “comprador bourgeoisie” and has been used more widely since the advent of global capitalism. Many of the multinationals use a local Cook Islander as the face of their promotions.

Global capitalism, as represented by the foreign business owners in the Cook Islands, the international tourist industry, with the sale of imported alcohol and soft drinks, and the fishing of Cook Islands waters by foreign fishing boats, has the potential to have a devastating effect on Indigenous people. A significant threat in the Cook Islands involves the 2012 granting of 17 fishing licences to Taiwanese fishing vessels for a fee of US$600,000 a year. The boats are not supposed to come within 48 nautical miles of any of the Islands in order to preserve their stocks of fish. Greenpeace Pacific Ocean’s team

leader said that the proposed fee was only 5% of the profit and that the boats were very difficult to monitor. Local fisherman are concerned that their oceans will be overfished and that there will be nothing left for them (Radio Australia, 4 January 2012). It seems the Cook Islanders will be getting a pittance, while the foreigners make a handsome profit.

In every society there are those who wish to exploit the natural resources of the country and those who wish to preserve the environment. According to Cook Islanders who were interviewed on Rarotonga, it is the Western orientated business owners and their associates who are pursuing the goals of capitalism and commercialisation, whereas the traditional Māori people are keen to live simply and in harmony with the environment. A member of one of the outer islands communities, Ngatae, said that there are abundant natural resources such as wind, sea, pearls, fish and birds, flowers and coconuts that could support people on the atolls. He believed that people who migrated to find work in urban areas were leaving all of these gifts of nature behind, abandoning their heritage.

In 2014 Thomas Piketty published *Capital in the 21st Century* which uses data from many different countries and at different times to explain how the gap between the rich and the poor becomes wider over time. This same process has occurred on Rarotonga where the Papa‘a traders continue to dominate the economy and the minimum wage remains low. The Cook Islands Trading Corporation or CITC was founded in 1891 and continues to monopolise retail business, with Mana as a trademark for clothes and gifts alike.

Mason (2003b) states that “corporate culture compartmentalises the indigenous and shapes it to its corporate purposes” (p. 187), alluding to the popularity of Cook Islands dancing in the tourist resorts. To some people in the Cook Islands, the word “culture” has come to mean Polynesian dancing, encouraged by competitions and cash prizes. Mason concludes her comments by suggesting that corporate culture will grow stronger and that traditional Indigenous culture will not only become less influential but that it will only survive as it serves the purposes of commerce. This is a very pessimistic statement and one that would not be endorsed by many of the Cook Islanders who were interviewed. The local people continue to see culture in terms of traditional values, spirituality and the interconnection of all Life; connection with other people, flora and fauna, the land, the ocean and the stars. Aro‘a (love) and piri‘anga (emotional connectedness or relationship) cannot be packaged up and served to the tourists by the Cartel.

Figure 8.5. **Mana: spiritual or economic power.**

8.3.3 Western cultural hegemony

Said (1979) refers to the strength of Western culture. He notes that by 1914 and the start of the Great War in Europe, the Europeans had colonised 85% of the earth's surface. He also refers to the fact that Europeans considered themselves stronger and, in every way, superior to the people they had colonised. Beginning with the Spanish and Portuguese, and then the Dutch, the French and the English, Europeans claimed the entire continent of the Americas, most of Africa, parts of western and south-east Asia, India, Chinese cities, Australasia and the Pacific. Russia was ruled from Caucasian Moscow, and so it was only the interior of China, Mongolia and some of the central Asian Islamic countries that escaped this Western domination.

According to Said (1979) the most powerful European empires were the French and the British, and the effect of this global influence can be seen in the worldwide use of the English language. French and Spanish are also world languages, but English has been the language of commerce for centuries. It is now a major language on the internet and is said to be the most widely used language (Crystal, 2003). This is one reason for the Western cultural hegemony as culture travels through language. When Europeans brought

the written word to people who had been using oral traditions it created another channel for the transmission of Western ways of thinking and understanding the world.

Judeo-Christian traditions are the basis of Western culture. Greek philosophy was integrated into Christianity by the early Church Fathers such as Aquinas and Augustine and so the thinking of the Greeks and the spirituality of the Hebrews, both Mediterranean peoples, became the Western cultural norm. In contradistinction to Judaism, Christianity is a proselytising religion, whose scriptures contain verses that instruct adherents to convert the unbeliever. As Europeans travelled the world, some were looking for a personal fortune, others were looking for souls to convert, and some were driven by both motives. Some attempted to win souls by their compassion and hard work, such as Mother Theresa in India (Greene, 2004), and some put the heathen to the sword, as the Spanish did in the Caribbean, in order to take the land for their own purposes (Higman, 2011). The British appeared to be comfortable with both God and Mammon, making a fortune out of the diamonds and gold in South Africa, for example, and at the same time sending missionaries to the Africans to convert them to a religion which preached the incompatibility of riches with the Kingdom of Heaven.

It has been noted that Christianity is growing fastest in the global south, in Africa and South America. The Christian lobby is significant in North America, Russians are returning to church since the end of the Soviet Union, and one in ten Chinese people are Christians. Christianity is the world religion with most adherents, said to be one third of the world's inhabitants (Zolli, 2012). This is another reason for the cultural hegemony of the West as culture is also transmitted through belief systems. There is, of course, a difference between cultural Christianity and spiritual Christianity. No one supposes that one third of the world's inhabitants live up to the ideals and ethics of Christianity, but as becoming a Christian has usually involved learning Western ways, Westernisation has been part and parcel of the religious conversion. Sometimes Westernisation has taken place without the widespread adoption of Western religion, as has happened in India. The Indians enthusiastically adopted cricket and commerce, but not Christianity.

It is undeniable that major innovations in technology have come from the Western world, such as television, Coca Cola, personal computers, and mobile phones. As these commercial products have spread around the world they have been accompanied by sounds and images of the West. Consumerism, that colonial and neo-colonial phenomenon that sees economic progress and prosperity in successful advertising

campaigns for high calorie sugary drinks and tobacco products in developing countries, has accelerated the spread of Western material culture. Culture is now being transmitted electronically as well as through language, religion and the written word, and this transmission is far faster, more intense and more penetrating than any previous method has been. It is not unreasonable to describe the internet in the 21st century as a deluge or tsunami of information. It is not yet flowing freely into the Cook Islands as wireless reception is poor, but it will increase as time goes on.

Western cultural hegemony continues to be a threat to traditional values in developing countries and to create community risk in the Cook Islands, but the Cook Islands traditional and spiritual leaders are well aware of the problem. The pastor, Ngatae, commented that the ideas coming into the country from outside are creating risk for young people in the islands. He and other community leaders create programs specifically to teach young people the values and customs of their people. One of the prison officers explained that the dance practices are used as a way to explain traditional culture to the young people, to teach them the stories and wisdom of their ancestors.

Figure 8.6. **Mama is wearing a rito hat.**

It is said that the Cook Islanders greatly admired the British queen, Victoria, and her emissaries in the Pacific (Beaglehole, 1957). Almost 200 years later, many Cook Islanders speak beautiful English, study in English speaking schools and universities, and grow up with English habits, such as wearing full skirted dresses and drinking tea. The making of quilts, the tivaevae, and weaving rito hats to wear to church, learned from English missionaries' wives, are now part of the culture of the Cook Islands. In some ways, it does appear that Western culture has become dominant in postcolonial Cook Islander society; the Christian churches, the schools with their expatriate teachers, the Westminster Parliament, the department store with the colonial name, the rugby games, all seem British or, at least, the New Zealand version of British.

There is another side to the Cook Island Māori communities, however; the enduring power of traditional culture, ongoing resistance and cultural resilience.

8.4 Summary: The Postcolonial Legacy

In this chapter, the colonial past and the different colonial narratives of the Cook Islands, religious, historical, and romantic, have been remembered and reframed, according to the projects of Indigenous research suggested by Tuhiwai Smith (1999). This has highlighted the community risk factors or meta-factors which are a legacy of colonisation.

The success stories told by the missionaries, the colonisers and the adventurers have been carefully scrutinised through the lens of postcolonial theory and from the point of view of the Cook Islander people, the iti tangata. From this perspective the postcolonial legacy has not been enlightenment, civilisation and economic progress so much as subtle forms of dispossession, the threat of Western cultural hegemony, and, most obviously, economic domination and exploitation by European settlers. This has led to economic inequality and some of the social problems that that implies, substance abuse, mental illness, family violence and crime (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). As the ta'unga said of the British colonisers, "Our people were civilised … [the British] uncivilised us".

Chapter Nine
Freedom, Culture and Resilience

NOA freedom

Buse and Taringa (1995) define noa as ordinary, the opposite of tapu (sacred). This implies a freedom to use or enjoy, a lack of restriction. Jonassen (2003) explains that noa as a pillar of Cook Islands culture means freedom. He relates noa to the freedom to enjoy activities once forbidden by the missionaries, such as tatau (tattoo) and dance. Freedom of expression in arts, crafts, music and dancing is an important part of Cook Islands culture. In the context of cultural resilience, freedom to practice culture, and especially the freedom to speak one's own language, is seen to be essential to emotional and social wellbeing.

Figure 9.1. **Dancing: Forbidden by the missionaries.**

9.1 Risk, Culture and Resilience: An Overview

This postcolonial research study of cultural resilience, based in community psychology and emerging as cultural psychology, has attempted to adhere to the principles and practices of Indigenous research methodology. Taking a strengths based approach, the study looks at the lives and characteristics of offending young people in the Cook Islands with an eye to the prevention of crime. Then secondly, the ethnographic study of the community focuses on the success of the Cook Islands criminal justice system in preventing high rates of incarceration. Although the study appears to be in two parts, focused on the individual young “thieves”, and then on the community as a whole, the psychological analysis of the individual-in-social-context is the basis for understanding the cultural functioning of the person (Valsiner, 2007); in this case, the cultural resilience of the Cook Islands Māori. The study is a hybrid one, an amalgamation of community psychology and cultural studies, psychological assessment and ethnography, taking shape in the negotiating space described by Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009). This in-between space is where Western science meets Indigenous knowledge and tradition.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Salzman (2005), and Gordon (2007) state that many social problems in Indigenous communities, such as child abuse, domestic violence, substance abuse, and sexual assault, are the result of the cultural trauma associated with Western imperialism. In the Cook Islands, the historical exploitation of the people and their land by European traders and planters (Scott, 1991) has resulted in subtle forms of dispossession and not so subtle economic domination. This includes the domination of the tourist industry by Europeans and their Cook Islander children (Mason, 2003b). As Tiare explained, many of the local people continue to migrate to New Zealand or Australia “in search of a better life”. Those who are left behind to struggle on the five dollars an hour minimum wage are described as “not … the dregs, but …” (Wichman, 2003, p. 145.). Economic inequality is a significant issue in the Cook Islands, an issue that is correlated with higher rates of lifestyle diseases, mental illness, substance abuse, family violence, and crime in communities all over the world (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

In the face of the risks that do exist in the Cook Islands communities, there is no juvenile detention centre. Criminal responsibility is limited between the age of 10 and 14 years, as it is in New Zealand (*Crimes Act*, 1969), and offending by young people has traditionally been dealt with by local families and churches (Kotuku). In the outer islands the local police officer may assign community service, such as working on the taro fields (Ava).

Over the age of 14 years, and on Rarotonga, offending will be dealt with by Child Welfare Services and, at 17 years old, by Probation Services. It is only very rarely that a young person under the age of 18 is held in the prison and then for as short a time as possible. Certainly there are no 10 or 12 year olds in custody, as there are in Australia (Richards, 2011). The youngest person held at Arorangi, Rarotonga, in July 2011 was 17 years of age. He was on remand, and was released on bail after a few days.

There are powerful protective factors in traditional Māori parenting (Jenkins & Harte, 2011) which includes the shared care of children, all members of the community taking responsibility for supervision and discipline, as Rupe explained. In addition the "feeding child" or tamariki 'angai tradition, which is not adoption in the Western sense (Dodson, 2009), multiplies the carers and the attachment bonds, extending the family networks and making it much less likely that a child will be abused, neglected, abandoned or homeless. Although there is some physical abuse of children in the Cook Islands, due to the use of "hidings" as corporal punishment, the fact that children are not usually smacked until they are seven or eight years old and "know right from wrong" (Panga), is a protective factor. In addition, Polynesian culture emphasizes sharing of possessions and property. There is no need to steal if you are allowed to borrow freely from cousins and other relatives. All in all, the importance of piri'anga (emotional connection), family relationships, and the high value placed on children creates a dynamic web of social processes which nurture a resilience deeply rooted in the culture and in the concept of aro'a (welcoming and love). Cook Islanders talk about "our people" and "our children".

Resilience, the ability to bounce back and to thrive in the face of adversity, has been discussed and debated at length, as noted in the review of the literature in Chapter Two. Cultural resilience, as the term is used in this thesis, is the influence of culture on the development of resilience in individual people, and not the ability of the culture itself to survive. However, colonised people throughout the world have been confronted with a challenge to both their culture and to their individual health and wellbeing. Indigenous people who have not been colonised, such as the peoples of Nepal and Thailand, have had to deal with the influence of Western culture and global capitalism, but not the cultural trauma suffered under colonial rule. Cultural trauma has been defined as circumstances that have been so traumatic that they have changed a people's perception of their cultural identity (Giesen, 2004).

In the settler countries, where the European settlers eventually outnumbered the Indigenous inhabitants, such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and many South American countries, the extent to which the Indigenous culture was able to survive has determined the ability of the culture to influence the social and emotional wellbeing of the people. So cultural resilience in the one sense is dependent on cultural resilience in the other sense. Conversely, if the culture produces resilience in the people, they will be better able to resist acculturation and preserve their traditional culture. However, extremes of cultural trauma, such as occurred with forced removals of people from their traditional land and the breaking up of family networks, may seriously weaken or extinguish the ability of the people to maintain a connection to their culture.

Indigenous cultures in these invaded countries are usually referred to as cooperative, collaborative and focused on relatedness or interconnectedness between people, the land and the unseen, in contrast to the Western focus on individual gain and individual greed (Gilson, 1980). The German sociologist Max Weber (1968/1921) referred to concepts of gemeinschaft (community based on personal interactions) and gesellschaft (society based on impersonal roles and indirect interactions) to explain the differences.

One does have to wonder if the individual explorers from Europe, who were willing to sail around the world on small wooden ships, far from home and separated from their families, flogging the press-ganged sailors, and killing whales, seals and human beings in their pursuit of the good life for themselves, were typical of their people. The cooperative and interconnected members of their home communities may have been content to stay at home, and the lone adventurers may have been unusually greedy. However, it was the latter who determined colonial policy and, one way or another, imposed the competitive capitalist way of life on peoples throughout the colonised world. In Te Moana Nui a Kiva, where "family communism" was the traditional way of life, the coming of Western ideas, values and mores was a major challenge to the culture and to the people.

Remarkably, the Cook Islander culture has survived 200 years of contact with the West; the proselytizing English missionaries, the disease and exploitation that came with the European sailors and traders, colonialism, the repeated attempts at disempowerment of the traditional leaders, acculturation, and the influence of Western capitalism which includes the ongoing migration to New Zealand and Australia. Kaiatea stated that "our culture was hidden, now it is beginning to show itself again". The most important factors in this cultural resilience (in both senses of the phrase) seem to be firstly piri‘anga, the close

relationships that Cook Islanders have with each other, with the land and the sea, with Atua (God) and the spiritual dimension, with tradition and with the wisdom of their ancestors, and secondly, polycultural capital, the ability of Cook Islanders to use Western education and international travel to include whatever seems useful and beneficial in Western or other cultures into their way of life (Mila-Schaaf, 2010).

In this final chapter, the insights gained from the stories of the young prisoners and the young people under supervision are discussed. The people of the Cook Islands are intolerant of any crime at all in a community economically dependent on tourism and are primarily interested in crime prevention. The issues of child maltreatment and the association of posttraumatic stress disorder with crime are examined, addressing the original research question with regard to risk factors.

The second research question referred to protective factors: extended family, shared parenting and community responsibility for “our children” are discussed as the basis for cultural resilience. Pacific cultures encourage multiple attachment bonds, rather than exclusive and intense parent-child bonds, which provide a safety net in case of absent, abusive or neglectful parents. This is an example of a cultural factor which creates social processes able to build resilience in children in the face of risk.

The third question focused on cultural resilience; what is it and is it a protective factor in the Cook Islands? The importance of self-determination, freedom and autonomy for the survival of culture and cultural practices is discussed. There is no cultural resilience without a strong and healthy culture and cultural subversion (Adams, 2014), cultural trauma (Alexander, 2004), or attempts at cultural genocide (Moses, 2004) may greatly weaken the practice of culture. The imposition of a foreign language, religion, education system and social customs during active colonisation may suppress a culture, but the resistance of the Indigenous people tends to continue until self-determination is restored. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007) makes it quite clear that self-determination is the right of all Indigenous communities. In the Cook Islands, 50 years of freedom to practice culture has meant that cultural resilience is strong.

9.2 Risk: The Victim-Offender Overlap

Farrington (2008) states that pathways to offending have generally been studied in urban populations, and that little is known about risk factors in rural and remote communities. The young “thieves” of the Cook Islands are condemned by the wealthy owners of the

tourist accommodation, who want them “roughed up” and locked up, and by the Members of Parliament, who recommend a “smack” as a solution (*Cook Islands News*, 20 June 2012). The results of this research study indicate that they are the young people at the bottom of the social scale, suffering from abuse, neglect, poverty, hopelessness, and helplessness. They have had difficulties at school, they cannot find work at home and they cannot afford a plane ticket to Auckland, much as many of them would like to go. They have no responsible adult family members able to assist them and they receive no welfare benefits, even though they are citizens of New Zealand. It seems that the risk factors experienced in the Cook Islands, poverty, child abuse, and school failure, are the same general factors noted by Homel et al. (1999) in Indigenous Australian communities.

These results support the theory of the victim-offender overlap (Entorf, 2012; Shaffer, 2004), which suggests that victim and offender are frequently the same person. Much of the research in this field has concentrated on the fact that young males in poor neighbourhoods are victims of violence and robberies as much as they are perpetrators; apparently preying on each other (Lauritsen, Sampson & Laub, 1991; Shaffer & Ruback, 2002). In this study of the Cook Islands many of the offending young people were victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and bullying in childhood, victims of crime before they reached adolescence. This pathway to the prison has been described by researchers worldwide (Jacobson et. al., 2010; McAuley, 2010; Topitzes, Mersky & Reynolds, 2011) and is an aspect of the victim-offender overlap mentioned by Shaffer (2004). Entorf (2012) notes that the victim-offender overlap, although well documented and supported by robust evidence, is still not well understood and Shaffer (2004) asks what the causal connection might be between victimization and offending behaviour. Human lives are characterized by complex dynamic processes, requiring creative synthesis in the development of models of human behaviour as well as analysis of the existing evidence (Valsiner, 2007). Studies of child maltreatment offer an answer to Shaffer’s question.

9.2.1 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Crime

It is well documented that children who have suffered abuse and other trauma are at risk of offending (Margo & Stevens, 2008; Miller-Perrin & Perrin, 2013). The first step on this pathway may be the psychoneurological response to trauma, a fight or flight response to danger that may become a chronic anxiety disorder (Widom, 1989). In the case of child abuse, the structure and function of the developing brain is affected by ongoing or severe stress, including the stress of living with poverty and family violence (*Kids Count: Policy*

Report, 2014). DeAngelis (2007) argues for a diagnosis of developmental trauma disorder for these children. Self-regulation and self-control is significantly impaired by traumatic stress (Van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 2007) which may increase the likelihood of offending behaviour. Studies in Australia and New Zealand have indicated that about 25% of prisoners are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorders (Butler et al., 2006). This figure would not include those inmates who were questioned but did not disclose their trauma to the researchers.

The mechanisms linking posttraumatic stress disorder to crime are straightforward. High levels of anxiety in childhood may result in an inability to concentrate on school work, challenging behaviours and exclusion; the anxiety and angry outbursts may be self-medicated in adolescence with alcohol and other drugs. Not every victim of child abuse will develop a posttraumatic stress disorder but for those who do, exclusion from school becomes more likely due to their difficulty with learning tasks and emotional regulation. For those who are excluded from school, offending becomes more likely as they tend to be unemployed and to associate with similarly marginalised peers. Substance abuse frequently accompanies posttraumatic stress disorder as noted by Najavits (2002), making both exclusion from school and offending more likely. Young people in the Cook Islands are expelled from school if found smoking marijuana, and those who are poor, unemployed, and drinking heavily tend to steal alcohol from local corner shops.

Crimes committed by young people under the influence of alcohol in the Cook Islands include drink driving and assault. The assaults may be seen as “fighting” or deserved punishment (Alexeyeff, 2009) and may not be reported to the police, but the drink driving contributes to a very high rate of death by motor vehicle accident. The sudden, violent loss of young friends or family members on the roads is another source of posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and substance abuse in the Cook Islands.

There is an intergenerational aspect to the idea that trauma and anxiety contribute significantly to offending behaviour. Traumatized parents who may have issues with anxiety, anger management, and depression (APA, 2000), and especially those who engage in alcohol abuse, may provoke chronic fear and anger in their children, and so produce a second or third generation of substance abusing, offending young people. This secondary traumatization is the basis for the assertion by Gordon (2007) that social problems like child abuse and sexual assault in postcolonial Indigenous communities are the result of historical trauma. Secondary traumatization as a phenomenon has been

particularly noted in the children of Vietnam veterans (O'Brien, 2012), who have a three times higher rate of suicide than their peers in the general community (Commonwealth Department of Veterans' Affairs & AIHW, 2000), but this risk may be present whenever a parent has suffered trauma. War is known to be a potent instigator of anxiety, substance abuse and family violence, but trauma due to accidental road deaths, hanging suicides, or the terrifying experience of a cyclone submerging a coral atoll may be equally damaging for some people (Van de Kolk et al., 2007).

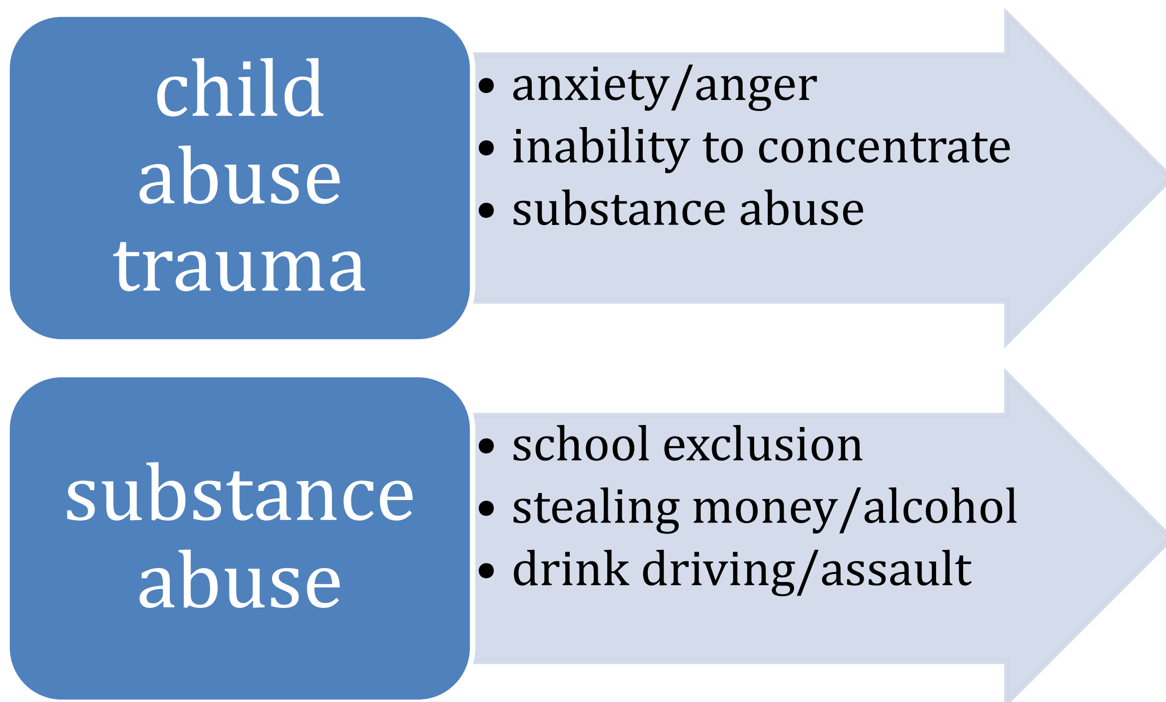

Figure 9.2. **Child abuse: anxiety, substance abuse and crime.**

9.3 Resilience: Protective Social Processes

Child abuse is a common form of trauma and victimization in the life history of young people who have offended (Jacobson et al., 2010; McAuley, 2010). The Cook Islands communities have a relatively low rate of offending by young people, even in those communities living in Australia and New Zealand (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003), and so one might conclude that the incidence of child abuse is low as well. On the other hand, there may be protective social processes that ameliorate the effects of any child maltreatment that does occur. As it is not possible to estimate the rates of unreported child abuse, physical or sexual, this thesis is focused on the protective social processes that are an integral part of the Cook Islands Māori culture. The welcoming love that Cook Islander

families have for their children (aro‘a), and the tradition of sharing the care, supervision and discipline of children among the extended family and close friends would act both as preventative factors and ameliorative factors with regard to the neglect and abuse of children. As Teve said, “there is nothing more valuable than a child”.

9.3.1 The feeding child tradition

The extended family, or kōpū tangata, is the foundation of Cook Islands culture, the source of aro‘a, and the major protective factor in the lives of the young people. The comment made by Moss, the first British Resident, about the family flourishing “in all its vigour” (Gilson 1980, p. 83) is as true today as it was in 1889. The family raises the children, supports the unwell, the disabled and the aged, provides education, taking in the children of relatives so that they can attend school on Rarotonga or in New Zealand, pays for airfares so that young people can seek employment overseas, contributes money for hair-cutting ceremonies, weddings and funerals, and flies home with the body to bury Cook Islanders who die overseas. It has been estimated that an average of ten relatives will accompany a body on the Air New Zealand flight from Auckland to Rarotonga, and that a body is flown home about once a month (Jonassen, 2003).

As stated previously, the opposite of a risk factor is not a protective factor. The death or absence of a parent has been identified as a risk factor (Jacobson et al. 2010) but having a parent is not a protective factor. The parent may be neglectful or abusive. However, if there is an aunt, uncle or grandparent willing to accept a child who has lost a parent, or run away from a parent, and to provide them with love and care, that is a social process that will function as a protective factor in the face of risk, building resilience.

It was said that Cook Islands “adoption” customs are much more complex and flexible than in European societies (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003). Vini (2003) has written about “adoption” or “tamariki hangai” practices on the northern island of Tongareva (also known as Penrhyn), a large atoll which is the most remote of the Cook Islands, 700 nautical miles from Rarotonga. Vini explains that the word hangai, pronounced ‘angai on Rarotonga, means feeding, but includes meanings such as nourishing and sustaining. So the feeding child or tamaiti ‘angai is nurtured and cared for by the non-biological parents. Vini also states that the feeding child is usually the favourite, given preference over the natural children, but that this does not cause hostility as all of the children are taught to love and respect each other. The adoption of a child is usually arranged before or during the pregnancy and the feeding parents may be present at the birth. Traditionally, the

arrangement may have been due to children, land or titles given to ancestors or to a desire to “uphold the lineage” (Vini, 2003, p. 281). The identity of the natural ‘anau parents is never a secret and, traditionally, the child is free to visit them and to choose to spend time with any of the members of the extended families.

A thesis submitted at the University of Otago focuses on the practice of tamariki ‘angai on the island of Manga‘ia, in the southern group of the Cook Islands (Dodson, 2009). Dodson explains that there are spiritual implications as well as practical considerations involved in Polynesian adoption. Newborns were dedicated to their father’s clan Atua in precontact times, and adoption could change their allegiance. The ‘akapapa‘anga (genealogy) dictates who a person can marry and adoption changes this too. Even more significant was the idea that the birth parents would be punished if they were asked to give a child up for adoption and refused. The child would become ill with maki tūpāpaku or ghost sickness. On the other hand, the London Missionary Society strongly discouraged any form of adoption, believing that it was the parents’ sacred duty to raise their own children and to show them God’s love in a Christian home (Thorogood, 1960).

In his book, *Not Quite Paradise*, Thorogood complains that almost 150 years after the missionaries arrived, there were very few “Christian homes” among the people of the Cook Islands. The Māori people firmly resisted the English cultural definition of a family as father, mother and their own children. They continued to take in other people’s children and to allow their children to live with grandparents and other relatives. Some may have seen the New Testament commands to give food and shelter to those who needed it as being amply fulfilled in the tradition of tamariki ‘angai. In any case, the missionaries did not succeed in discouraging the practice and Dodson (2009) describes it as a valuable tradition, a sharing of child care that is part of the general obligation to share in a small community, and intended to ensure that all children are welcomed, loved and well looked after. In the days when families on Manga‘ia had ten or more children, it made good economic sense to have childless or older couples care for some of the children in the village. Dodson (2009) notes that the feeding child tradition has always been part of the culture in the Cook Islands and that it continues as strongly as ever today. That was certainly the impression on Rarotonga in 2011.

Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand, Tongans, Samoans, Native Hawai‘ians, and Ma‘ohi in French Polynesia have similar customs. In Aotearoa the feeding child is tamaiti whangai, and in Tahiti, fa‘aamu te tamari‘i (Finney, 1973). As Newman (2011) explains, Māori

whāngai is not equivalent to European adoption because the child is not considered to be the legal possession of either the natural parents or the feeding parents. He or she is a taonga (treasure) belonging to the whānau (the extended family). One of the reasons given for the feeding child tradition is the strengthening of relationships with relatives, another is to give a child to a childless couple. If the mother becomes unwell or dies, the children will be whangai, and the first-born grandchild is often raised by the grandparents. This is to make sure that traditions are handed down and to keep the grandparents young. In the Cook Islands communities the first-born child is traditionally given to the father's parents and the second child to the mother's parents (Tavake).

In the 1970s Finney (1973) noted that about one fifth of all of the children in Tahiti were "adopted". On Rarotonga in 2011 about the same proportion of the children in the schools were thought to be feeding children (Tiare), many from the outer islands living with relatives for the sake of a better education. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes that multiple attachments create stronger resilience (Ginsburg, 2011), and having two loving families, two sets of parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers, would be expected to create multiple attachment bonds and wider and stronger social networks in the life of a child. Even those children who are not feeding children themselves, will be connected to other families in the community by the feeding children who live in their households. As Taina, the young woman being raised on two different islands, said, "I am very happy. Both of my families are always so good to me!"

9.3.2 Community care for our children

Emotional and spiritual interconnectedness, attachment bonds and a psychological sense of belonging are the natural heritage of all peoples in all cultures (Bowlby, 1953). This loving connection to a social group (aro'a) is the basis of prosocial behaviour and so disconnection, alienation and exclusion may provoke or create antisocial behaviour (Fanon, 1963). When people are sold into slavery, forced into indentured or migrant labour under physical or economic duress, or subject to forced removal from their homelands, they are disconnected from the most vital components of their culture, their land, family and language (King, 1981). On the American slave plantations and on the Australian missions, reserves, and island prisons, people from different family and language groups were forced to live and work together, frequently compelled to develop a new creole language, a new culture and a new sense of belonging, in a new place (Kidd, 1997). Much

was lost, especially when children were removed from their parents and placed in dormitories, boarding schools and foster homes.

This alienating process continues today in Australia, as Indigenous young people from the age of ten years are sent to juvenile detention centres and metropolitan prisons far away from family and country, developing a sense of belonging to their fellow inmates, other Indigenous prisoners; to a group of young people living on the margins of the dominant society rather than to their own land and their own families.

In the Cook Islands, although the people have always travelled, explored, migrated and worked in foreign, faraway places, the homelands have remained available for the families. The islands are referred to as "our own tropical Paradise", the place where the spirits of the ancestors remain, where the relatives live, a place to return to, a place to own land, to build a house, and a place to be buried. The islands are the place where the people belong, the land that gives life, te pito 'enua, the cradle of Polynesian culture, the place of the sacred marae, and the source of cultural resilience.

In these remote island places the Cook Islander people are free to practice their own culture and to speak their own languages. As a postcolonial nation they are not fully independent, as the removal of the Cook Islands government in 1978 by a judge from New Zealand demonstrated (Hancock, 1979), but they are self-governing and self-determining to a considerable degree. Schools are able to teach the children in English or Maori, or both, as the parents prefer. Child welfare officers are able to find useful work, school placement or feeding parents for offending young people rather than punishing them for their disadvantage, as Jacobson et al. (2010) suggest is being done in Britain.

The people of the Cook Islands were not always free. As described in Chapter Eight, the Cook Islands as a group were created by colonisation and have inherited the legacy of imperialism, racism and exploitation. Many local people refer to themselves as Rarotongans or Mangaians or Pukapukans rather than Cook Islanders; the "Cook Islands" is seen as a "slave name" by some. It is said that one is only a Cook Islander outside the Cook Islands (James, Mitaera, & Rongo-Rea, 2012).

The resistance of the people to Western cultural hegemony and the fact that the islands are very remote and inaccessible may have allowed the Cook Islands culture to survive and thrive despite the disheartening postcolonial legacy. Dispossessed to some extent on Rarotonga, the families have strongly maintained their claims to the land throughout the

islands, and to the oceans. In addition, they have done what Polynesian people have always done, sailed away to find new lands. Cook Islander communities are well established in Auckland and on the Gold Coast of Australia, among other places, and the new communities do contribute to the support of the people at home.

Confronted with the threat of Western cultural hegemony, the people have maintained their traditions in wise and creative ways. An example of this is the hair-cutting ceremony. Pre-contact the men wore their hair long and the women cut their hair when they were married. The missionaries insisted that boys and men should have short hair but the families allowed the eldest son, or another favourite son, to keep his hair long for some years, at least until puberty. When the hair-cutting occurred, it was a very special occasion and the tradition continues. Male relatives take turns to cut the boy’s hair and many presents are given (Ama, 2003). The missionaries also forbade the women to wear flowers behind their ears according to whether they were single or in a relationship. It is a testament to the ongoing resistance of the people that, after almost 100 years of missionary rule, followed by more than 60 years of colonial rule, these and many other social customs survive.

The economic domination of the Cook Islands by Papa‘a business interests and the resulting inevitable inequality in the community, has been met by the traditional “family communism” that the first British Resident complained about in 1893. The people continue to “pass the hat”, as Tiare described them doing when a member of the family is in need of an airfare. When people migrate to New Zealand or Australia they may spend weeks or months sleeping on the living room floor of their relatives until they find employment, and then the next relative to migrate will stay with them. “The family gives a refuge to all” (Gilson, 1980, p. 83), and provides opportunities for education and employment, all working towards a better life for all.

When the Cook Islands became self-governing in 1965, the police force came under the control of the local people. The police officers managed the small prison, and minor offences were, and still are, dealt with by a local community leader, a Justice of the Peace. Today there is a separate prison administration and a probation service. Children who are 16 years old and under are supervised by child welfare services. Judges from New Zealand fly in to Rarotonga to hear the cases which come to court and there are a number of Cook Islander lawyers who act for people accused of crimes. The fly in fly out judges

are usually Papa‘a (European) and so there is still something of a colonial atmosphere reigning in the court rooms.

Out in the community, however, the people are proud of their self-determination and autonomy. The police officers know all the families in the villages and they know which of the young people are hungry, which ones are being sent out to steal by their parents, and which of them are being regularly beaten by a drunken father. Fights among young rugby players outside a night club are broken up without anyone being charged with affray, and intoxicated members of the village communities are quietly taken home.

The *Crimes Act* of 1969 drew heavily on New Zealand law and the newer applications of the laws are sometimes controversial. Domestic violence is seen to be reciprocal in some cases, “both are drunk, both are violent” (Maire), and the wisdom of mandatory arrests is questioned. On the other hand, “the police will prosecute parents who physically abuse their children” (Maire), even though some Cook Islanders believe that the Bible allows them to use belts on their adolescent daughters (Panga). As the Bible also suggests flogging a man with 40 lashes, and cutting off a woman’s hand (Deuteronomy 25:12), the scriptural argument is not accepted by everyone.

The criminal justice system in the Cook Islands is not separate from the community but is an integral part of the community. Many of the child welfare and probation officers are members and pastors of local churches and are willing to take homeless children into their own families if no one else can be found to give them a bed and a meal. The families and the churches rally around and buy food, clothes and schoolbooks for the homeless child from their own or another village (Tavake). There are prison officers who will do the same thing, feeding the hungry young people just released from custody, although they admit that they “get fed up with the ones who keep coming back” (Kaiatea). Prisoners are allowed to work outside the prison and play rugby in the community. A story was told about two prisoners being given the car keys to drive down to the village to fetch supplies (Karaka). This is not an impersonal (gesellschaft) justice system with ongoing hostility and violence between justice workers and criminals, but a personal (gemeinschaft) community system where the young people and their families are known by the prison officers, and the Big Man (the Prison Superintendent) is respected by the prisoners. One of the young prisoners (Ta‘i) stated proudly that the Big Man would not allow drugs into their prison. There seems to be a spirit of aro‘a operating within the prison on Rarotonga as much as anywhere else in the community.

The influence of the churches and the traditional Māori belief system is very strong in the Cook Islands. The reality of the spiritual world is taken for granted. As one of the participants, Kuriri, remarked, “You can talk about God in the Pacific. People won’t look at you as if you are a bit strange, as they do in Australia”. Some people are devout Christians and others discuss spiritual matters in relation to the traditional Polynesian Gods, ‘Io, Tangaroa, Rongo and Tane. It seems that atheism and materialism do not have much to say to the Cook Islands people. Surrounded by the deep ocean and buffeted by cyclones, the people are keenly aware of their dependence on forces beyond their control for their very survival. The land is their connection to life and the land is very precious, so little land in so vast an ocean. So Jonassen (2003) describes the land as life, as a living entity, and Makirere (2003) speaks of the Gods of the sea and the wind and the sunlight.

The social value system of the Māori is also congruent with New Testament Christianity, where the members of the church shared their financial resources and happily distributed food to the needy, functioning as an extended family (Acts 2:44-46). Although the missionaries attempted to impose their own lower middle class English culture on the people, as stated previously they were not particularly successful. On the other hand, Makirere (2003) asserts that the core ethical values of Polynesian culture, such as love, compassion and forgiveness, as well as the practice of daily prayer and generosity to others, are to be found in the teachings of Jesus.

Today the people of the Cook Islands honour the spiritual heritage of their ancestors and their historical heritage, the Christian church. For many people in the community, alcohol is still to be avoided and Sunday to be observed as a day of rest. When a cruise ship arrives on a Sunday, the cafés and shops are firmly closed to the tourists. In addition to the effect on personal values and behaviour, church membership creates another social network, intertwined with the family networks, weaving the people of the village and island communities ever closer to one another. These attachment networks create social capital, described by Portes (1998) as supportive social networks and which Putnam (2000) suggests would tend to protect a community from social problems, including crime. In other words, the protective social processes inherent in the Cook Islands culture, such as family relationships, shared parenting, church and village activities, may well be creating resilience, which may then be described as “cultural resilience”.

9.4 Self-determination and Cultural Resilience

Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2012) suggests that there are three basic needs which must be satisfied in order to function well as a person or a community. These are competence, relatedness and autonomy. Colonised Indigenous peoples may be highly competent in many areas and preserve closely knit social networks, but the lack of collective autonomy involved in being a small minority in a settler society may result in serious and wide-ranging social problems. A report on educational outcomes and other measures of social and emotional well-being details the ongoing disadvantage of Latino, Native American and African-American children when compared to Asian and Anglo-American children (*Kids Count: Policy Report*, 2014). Even when Indigenous people are the majority, as in Algeria under the French, India under the British, or South Africa under apartheid, lack of autonomy may bring exploitation, poverty and anger, which according to Fanon (1963), may then result in high rates of substance abuse, crime and violence. Greer (2008) mentions anger as a significant factor for Indigenous men in Australia.

In the Cook Islands, even though the missionaries and the colonial administrators officially made the rules, the remoteness of the islands and the inaccessible mountainous interior of Rarotonga made it easier for the local people to resist the control being imposed on them by outsiders and to maintain their autonomy. Bush beer parties, dancing, tattooing and adolescent sexual activity continued (Jonassen, 2003). The ariki ruled and continue to do so to some extent today; "[they] have quite a lot of mana … it's another level of social control … they used to club your head!" (Tamanu). The ancient karakia (prayers) are still intoned. Self-government, although not quite independence, has increased the sense of competence and autonomy; "we have our own tropical paradise" (Kanapa), and "there are many pillars to our culture" (Tamanu).

Cook Islanders have a proud history of competence as sailors, explorers and navigators, Māori vaka (canoes) reaching Aotearoa many centuries before the Portuguese ships appeared in the Pacific. They have also taught their drumming techniques to other Pacific nations and regularly win international dance competitions. Singing, song-writing, tattooing, boat building, fishing, carving, quilting, and other arts and crafts, as well as oratory, oral literature and poetry are all areas where Cook Islanders have excelled and excel today. In addition, Cook Islanders continue to build up polycultural capital by excelling in the realm of Western education and training.

The schools on Rarotonga and the outer islands, first established by the missionaries using the local languages, have prepared many Cook Islanders for university education in New Zealand and further abroad. Although "native" Cook Islanders were encouraged by the colonial administration to go to Fiji to learn lesser medical skills, Sir Tom Davis attended medical school in New Zealand at the insistence of his Cook Islander mother, graduating in 1945. In addition to doctors, many Cook Islanders have trained as lawyers, scientists, psychologists, teachers, pastors and nurses. The Takamoa Theological College in Tupapa and the Teachers Training College at Nikao on Rarotonga have produced many graduates over the years.

The use of te reo (the Māori language) in the missionary schools may have been a crucial factor in attracting Cook Islander children to academic learning. Rather than being forced into a foreign cultural milieu when first attending school, learning could proceed in a familiar environment, reading the Bible and other written materials in the Māori language. Later, when the British insisted on the exclusive use of English in the schools, there was already a history of 80 years of Māori literacy in the islands.

Homi Bhabha (1994) emphasized that culture is not static but ever-changing and that colonised people develop new cultures that may be described as hybrid. The word "hybridity" has been used by Māori researcher Paul Meredith (1999) in a positive sense, to indicate a new, fresh and living culture, based in traditional wisdom and values but using 21st century Western tools such as smartphones and the internet. Polycultural capital enables people to operate competently and confidently in the hybrid, new culture, and yet still feel comfortable when spending time with the older members of the community. Language skills are the key to being able to walk and talk in two worlds, and so the people who are born in the Cook Islands, and are bilingual, have an advantage over those who are born overseas and do not learn the language of their ancestors (Mila-Schaaf, 2010).

As far as relatedness is concerned, Cook Islanders place great importance on piri'anga or relationship. As described previously, the Māori child is closely connected to a number of family members, including older siblings, as they share the care of the baby as he or she grows into a toddler. The feeding child tradition multiplies the family connections that a child has in the community and so the social networks are more extensive and stronger than those in Western urban communities. The family members share resources and provide for each other, and the relationships between people are strong, based in the traditional aro'a and rota'i'anga, loving kindness and cooperation. People hug and kiss

each other when they meet, creating a warmth and connection on a physical and emotional level. Most important, the people know their family histories, their ‘akapapa‘anga, which give them deep roots in the land and the community, a positive identity and a place in the social world (Dodson, 2009).

Self-determination theory suggests that it is autonomy that is fundamental to the social and emotional well-being of the people. Freedom (noa) is essential if relatedness, competence and polycultural capital are to develop. Homel et al. (1999) noted attachment bonds, self-confidence and cultural resilience as protective factors in Indigenous communities. Attachment and relatedness refer to piri‘anga (emotional connection) and self-confidence and competence refer to the development of useful skills and abilities. Cultural resilience will be stronger when the people are free to live their culture on their own terms. The three factors considered to be important in self-determination theory are thus related to the three protective factors suggested by Homel et al. (1999); see Figure 9.3. It is also interesting to note that Freud (1991/1917) believed that love and work were the foundation of community life, which would assume relatedness/attachment and competence/self-confidence.

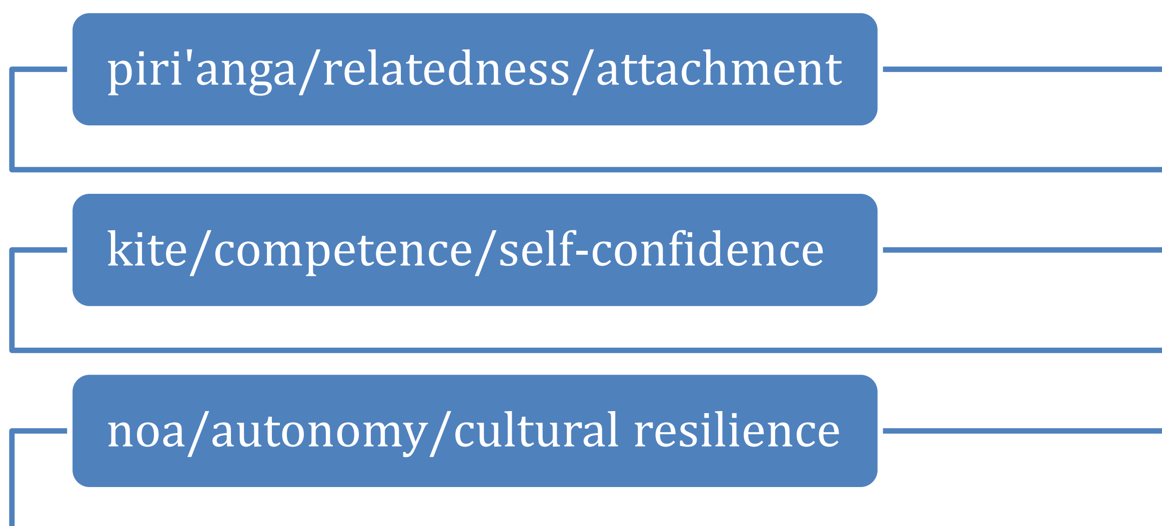

Figure 9.3. **Self-determination theory & protective factors (Homel et al. 1999).**

9.4.1 Language and cultural resilience

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* states that Indigenous peoples everywhere have a right to self-determination. The *Community Guide to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* refers to Article Three, and states that "we are free to choose our political status and our economic, social and cultural development"; and that self-determination in practice might include "control of the provision of basic services (for example health and housing) through our own organisations" (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010, p. 24). In terms of choice regarding social and cultural development, education would be a basic service that would be critical to Indigenous self-determination.

The British colonisers generally forbade the children of Indigenous or conquered peoples (including the South African Dutch after the Boer War) to speak their own languages at school. Both Cook Islands Māori and Indigenous Australians living in the 21st century remember being beaten for using their mother tongue at school but many of the languages survive nonetheless, and some are thriving.

Every child has the right to an education which respects his or her own language. It can be argued that the prohibition of the mother tongue and the forced use of English at school in the context of compulsory education amounts to forced assimilation to the mainstream Western culture. Article Eight of the UN Declaration states that "Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture". The Declaration explicitly recognises "the right of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children".

It was the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Australia that voted against this Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 – all four British white settler societies who dispossessed Indigenous people and remain in control of government. The Spanish conquerors of South and Central America and the European colonisers of Africa and parts of Asia were overthrown by the Indigenous and mestizo (mixed heritage peoples) populations in liberation wars. Where the white settlers have held on to power, it seems that the rights of the Indigenous people are being ignored.

If colonisation and dispossession are meta risk factors (Homel et al. 1999), then freedom, self-determination and sovereignty are meta protective factors. Culture, the ideas,

language, customs and social behaviour of a people, cannot survive without the freedom to engage in cultural practices. When Native Americans were forbidden to perform traditional ceremonies, such as the sun dance (Brendtro et al. 1990) and Indigenous Australians were forbidden to take part in corroborees (Scott, 1999), these restrictions contributed to the loss of culture, cultural identity and psychological sense of belonging experienced by some of the Indigenous groups at that time. Above all else, language is essential to culture. Jonassen (2003, p. 128) quotes a traditional Māori saying, or nakunga, which says “Ko toku reo te iʻo taku peu tupuna”; “my language is the essence of my culture”. It follows that the freedom to speak languages, live in traditional family relationships, practice religion or spirituality, perform dance and music, and engage in other significant cultural practices is the basis of all cultural resilience.

This study was focused on the people of the Cook Islands who will have enjoyed self-government for 50 years in 2015. It is clear that they have had the freedom to practice their culture and to maintain their language, and that cultural factors are protective in their communities. Studies in Canada (Lalonde, 2006) have suggested that when Aboriginal communities take responsibility for social services such as child welfare there is an increase in social and emotional wellbeing. Further research is needed to understand how self-determination and revitalised cultural practice might protect Indigenous communities in the settler dominated countries such as Canada, Australia and Brazil.

In Australia the proportion of prisoners identifying as Indigenous continues to grow and the number of Indigenous people imprisoned continues to increase. Statistics released in June 2014 include a figure of 28% of the total prison population when Indigenous people are 2% of the general population (www.abs.gov.au). This is an increase from 27% in the previous year and 22% in 2004 (Greer, 2008). Between March 2013 and March 2014 the number of Indigenous adult males imprisoned in Western Australia increased by 5% to 3,966 per 100,000. This is a situation that cannot be ignored or treated with indifference. It is important to understand what the barriers might be to the development of cultural resilience in Indigenous Australian communities, and, as school attendance has been shown to be protective (Bower et al. 2011), to study the inverse relationship between rates of school attendance and rates of incarceration.

The use of the Māori language in the schools of the Cook Islands suggests that it would be useful to study the effects of bilingual or multilingual education. The concept of “restorative community justice” involves building social cohesion and community solidarity to support

and divert young people at risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system (White, 2001). If language is the essence of culture there would be no better way to empower a community than to work to restore and revitalise language. The positive effects of the Māori language nests in New Zealand have already been successfully replicated in Hawai‘i (Hinton & Hale, 2001).

Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty and Panda (2009) in *Social Justice through Multilingual Education (Linguistic Diversity and Language Rights*), state that "marginalised peoples that undergo culturally and linguistically appropriate education are better equipped both to maintain and develop their cultures and to participate in the wider society … " (Editors' Foreword, p. xvii). The key to cultural resilience may well be language and the suppression of Indigenous languages by colonisers the beginning of cultural trauma and loss of cultural identity. If this is so, multilingual or bilingual education may be a particularly effective strategy for restorative social justice in Australia.

9.5 In Conclusion: Offending Behaviour and Cultural Resilience

In the prisons of the Western world marginalised peoples, such as migrants and Indigenous groups, are significantly overrepresented, indicating that there are important social determinants of crime and incarceration. African Americans, Indigenous Australians, Roma (Gypsies), and Turkish immigrants in Europe, are incarcerated at far higher rates than the mainstream white populations. These are the peoples on the peripheries or margins of Western society, the poor and disadvantaged, the people of colour who are excluded rather than included. They are peoples who have suffered cultural and intergenerational trauma through forced removals and relocations due to adverse circumstances such as the slave trade or colonial dispossession. Yet, some people survive and thrive in adverse circumstances. The Cook Islanders suffered fatal epidemics of European diseases, slavery in Peru, colonisation by the British and exploitation in the French phosphate mines (Scott, 1991), yet there is a low rate of crime and incarceration.

The summer edition of the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education* (2003) was dedicated to the subject of Cultural Resilience. Iris Heavyrunner and Kathy Marshall, in their article *Miracle Survivors,* describe the work that was done by Native Americans in 1993, studying resilience and identifying cultural factors that nurtured, encouraged and supported Indian students, families and communities. The seven factors identified as protective were family strength and community support networks, elders and oral traditions, ceremonial rituals and spirituality, and tribal identity. They note that "Indian

people believe that spirituality … [which includes] our interconnectedness with each other … has been the cornerstone of [our] survival through generations of adversity and oppression" (Heavyrunner & Marshall, 2003, p. 16).

Connection, relationship (or piri'anga) both facilitates cultural practice and is a result of it. People who live together on their own land are connected in a physical sense (they see each other) and an emotional sense (they care about each other). The grandparents teach their grandchildren the ancient prayers and traditions and so the connections are formed. The childless aunt and uncle are given a baby and the whole family is more closely connected. The placenta is buried near the house where the child was born and she is forever connected to the land. Culture flows through the connections between people, their land and their spiritual beliefs, creating higher levels of connectivity. This connectivity or social capital is perhaps what Jonassen (2003) refers to as "unity" or rota'i'anga.

This research focused on the risk and protective factors in the Cook Islands and whether the dynamic interaction between these factors produced cultural resilience. As resilience is defined as the ability to thrive in the face of adversity (Ginsburg, 2011), it was necessary to highlight the risks, both general factors, such as child abuse and school exclusion, and postcolonial meta-factors such as the low wages paid to local people by European owned businesses. The interaction of the family focused and intensely spiritual worldview of the Māori culture with the identified community risk factors, and the polycultural capital enjoyed by Cook Islanders, does seem to produce resilience; a people who sing, dance, learn, travel and work all over the Pacific region (Alexeyeff, 2009), seldom falling into the self-defeating trap of crime and punishment. This is cultural resilience, cultural factors protecting the families and the communities of Rarotonga and the pa enua.

In the final analysis what we refer to as cultural resilience may be a way of describing the social determinants of resilience. Every social group has its own culture, although no culture is pure and unaffected by contact with others (Bhabha, 1994). If social processes build resilience (Rutter, 1987) and social processes vary according to culture, then the development of resilience is highly dependent on cultural practice. It is cultural practice, whether expressed as shared parenting, dancing, speaking te reo or sailing the vaka, that provides the psychological sense of belonging, the positive identity, the self-confidence and the freedom to make good choices in life (Crocombe & Crocombe, 2003).

There is a narrative of hope and restoration in a study which begins in a prison and ends with an emphasis on freedom. Noa or freedom is one of the pillars of Cook Islands culture

and freedom is necessary to practice culture, whether traditional or the new hybrid cultures of the 21st century. Cooperative Cook Islands practices such as the sharing of financial resources, work obligations, group activities and child care, derived from the pillars of the culture, such as rota‘i‘anga (unity) and aro‘a (loving kindness), create many opportunities for social processes and the building of resilience.

The eight pillars of an ideal Cook Islands culture (Jonassen, 2003) can be conceptualised as follows: faith, trust, patience and humility, (irinaki, ‘akakoromaki, ‘aka‘aka,) are qualities developed in a wise and loving people (kitepakari, aro‘a) living in their ancestral homelands (ora) in unity, loyalty, cooperation and freedom (rota‘i‘anga, noa). Although the temptation of greed and individual gain (Gilson, 1980) entered the South Pacific paradise with the British colonisers, the traditional Cook Islands community orientated culture continues to resist the Western cultural hegemony, the neocolonialism and exploitation by foreigners, the resulting economic inequality, and the social problems associated with inequality (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). The battle is not yet won, but many of the Cook Islands people enjoy the autonomy, relatedness and competence necessary for social and emotional wellbeing within the context of the culture that they love. This is self-determination and cultural resilience.

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Appendices

A. Information Letters
B. Consent Forms
C. Confidentiality Agreement
D. Risk, Protection and Culture Interview schedule
E. Pseudonyms
F. Validation
G. Blessings

Appendix A: Information Letters UQ

Participant Information Letter for Adults: Study One

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

Kia Orana

The Cook Islands has a relatively small number of people in prison compared to many other parts of the world. We know that locking young people up increases the chances that they will offend again so it would be very helpful to people in other countries to know how this is being avoided in the Cook Islands. On the other hand, there are some young people committing crimes in the Cook Islands and if we knew why this is happening, social workers and others could try to intervene so that they don't reoffend and go to prison.

Australian researchers from the University of Queensland and members of the Cook Islands community are working together on this research project to try to answer questions about young people, crime and going to prison. Professor Robyn Gillies and Associate Professor Annemaree Carroll are the supervisors, and Meg Perkins is the visiting researcher on Rarotonga. We would be grateful for your help so that we can find out what adults in the Cook Islands think about young people and offending behaviour. If you are kind enough to agree, we will ask to talk to you in private. With your permission we can audio record the talk or take notes, whichever you prefer. We will also ask you to sign a consent form which will be kept securely for seven years and then destroyed. Your name will be kept separately from the information that you give us and no names will be used in any reports written about the study. Only the researchers will know the names of the participants. You may change your mind at any time and decide not to do the interview or to stop doing the interview. There will be quite a few questions to answer but they will help us to understand more about the problems that young people have in the Cook Islands. If you would like to know the results of this research project, we will write your name and address on an envelope and post a summary of the preliminary results back to you.

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Meg Perkins

Information Letter for Parents or Caregivers: Study Two

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

Kia Orana

The Cook Islands has a relatively small number of people in prison compared to many other parts of the world. We know that locking young people up increases the chances that they will offend again so it would be very helpful to people in other countries to know how this is avoided in the Cook Islands. On the other hand, there are some young people committing crimes in the Cook Islands and if we knew why this is happening, social workers and teachers could try to help the young people so that they don't go to prison.

Australian researchers from the University of Queensland and members of the Cook Islands community are working together on this research project to try to answer questions about young people, crime and going to prison. Professor Robyn Gillies and Associate Professor Annemaree Carroll are the supervisors, and Meg Perkins is the visiting researcher on Rarotonga. We need your help and the help of your child so that we can find out what young people in the Cook Islands think about young people and offending behaviour. If you and your child agree, we will ask to talk to him. If the child would like you to be present, that will be fine. With your and his permission we can audio record the talk or take notes, whichever you and he prefer. We will also ask you and him to sign a consent form which will be kept securely for seven years and then destroyed. Your names will be kept separately from the information that he gives us and no names will be used in any reports written about the study. Only the researchers will know the names of the participants. You and/or he may change your minds at any time and decide not to participate. There will be quite a few questions to answer but they will help us to understand more about the problems that young people have in the Cook Islands. If you would like to know the results of this research project, we will write your name on an envelope and post a summary of the results back to you.

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study you can contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Meg Perkins

Participant Information Letter for Young People: Study Two

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

Kia Orana

The Cook Islands has a small number of people in prison compared to many other parts of the world. We know that it is hard to go back to school or work after you have been in prison so it would be very helpful to people in other countries to know how the Cook Islanders keep people out of prison. On the other hand, there are some young people committing crimes in the Cook Islands and if we knew why this is happening, social workers and teachers could try to help the young people so that they don't go to prison.

Australian researchers from the University of Queensland and members of the Cook Islands community are working together on this research project to try to answer questions about young people, crime and going to prison. Professor Robyn Gillies and Associate Professor Annemaree Carroll are the supervisors, and Meg Perkins is the visiting researcher on Rarotonga. We need your help so that we can find out what young people in the Cook Islands think about crime and offending behaviour. If you agree, we will ask to talk to you in private. With your permission we can audio record the talk or take notes, whichever you prefer. We will also ask you to sign a consent form which will be kept securely for seven years and then destroyed. Your name will be kept separately from the information that you give us and no names will be used in any reports written about the study. Only the researchers will know the names of the participants. We will not tell anybody what you say to us using your name, but we will report what we learn from you. You may change your mind at any time and decide not to do the interview or to stop doing the interview. There will be quite a few questions to answer but they will help us to understand more about the problems that young people have in the Cook Islands. If you would like to know the results of this research project, we will write your name on an envelope and post a summary of the results back to you.

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Meg Perkins

Appendix B: Consent Forms UQ

Adult Participant Consent Form : Study One

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

I have read the information letter provided by the researcher, Meg Perkins, and I understand that she is from The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.

I understand that I do not have to answer any question that the researcher may ask me and that I can withdraw from the research interview at any time

I understand that my name will not be recorded with my answers to the questions, and that my name and personal details will be kept in strict confidence and stored securely

………. And this research will not benefit me directly.

I understand that the information provided to the researcher will be used

………. to write a thesis for a research higher degree and may be published in a journal or book

………..and that all data will be de-identified (no one will know who provided the information).

I agree to audio recording .... or to written records ....

I have had all of the above explained to me. If needed, my first language has been used.

Name of participant

Signature of participant Signature of interpreter (if used)

Date

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study you can contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Parent/Caregiver Consent Form: Study Two

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

I have read the information letter provided by the researcher, Meg Perkins, and I understand that she is from The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.

I give my consent for my child under the age of 16/18 to participate in the research project.

I understand that my child will be asked to consent to participation in the research, that he does not have to answer any question that the researcher may ask him and that he can withdraw from the research interview at any time. He will also be given an information letter.

I understand that his name will not be recorded with his answers to the questions, and that our names and personal details will be kept in strict confidence and stored securely

………. And this research will not benefit me or my child directly.

I understand that the information provided to the researcher will be used

………. to write a thesis for a research higher degree and may be published in a journal or book

………..and that all data will be de-identified (no one will know who provided the information).

I agree to audio recording .... or to written records ....

I have had all of the above explained to me. If needed, my first language has been used.

Name of participant

Signature of participant Signature of interpreter (if used)

Date

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University who is not involved in the study you can contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Participant Consent Form Young People : Study Two

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

I have read the information letter or had it explained to me. I have had the help of a support person or an interpreter if I needed them.

I understand that the researcher is Meg Perkins from The University of Queensland in Australia.

……… that the researcher wants to know why people go to prison in the Cook Islands

……….and also what helps to keep people out of prison in the Cook Islands

………. That I will be asked to answer questions and tell my story

I understand that I do not have to answer any question that the researcher may ask me

………. That I can leave the room at any time and I do not have to come back

I understand that what I say will be recorded and/or transcribed – written down

………. But my name will not be recorded with my story or my question answers

………. And my name and personal details will be kept in strict confidence and stored securely

………. And this research may not do anything good for me personally

I understand that the information provided to the researcher will be used

………. to write a thesis for a research higher degree and may be published in a journal or book

………..nobody will know that it was me who gave the researcher the information

I agree to audio recording .... or written recording .... of the interview.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of support person

Signature of interpreter (if used)

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study you can contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Appendix C: Confidentiality Agreement

School of Education
CRICOS PROVIDER NUMBER 00025B

Facilitation of Research: *Confidentiality* Agreement

Risk, Cultural Resilience and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Offending Behaviour

I

Name of official or worker ....

Occupation ....

Being a government official, teacher or community worker in the Cook Islands, and being involved in the recruitment of participants for this research project, have read the information letter and understand the need to maintain strict confidentiality in research.

I agree to keep the names and identities of the participants in this research project strictly confidential and not to discuss their participation with anyone in the community or elsewhere.

Signature of official or worker

Date

This research has been approved by the Cook Islands Research Committee at the Office of the Prime Minister, by the Acting Secretary for the Ministry of Justice in the Cook Islands and by the University of Queensland, in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. You may ask Meg Perkins questions at any time or email meginraro@gmail.com , and you may also contact Dr Annemaree Carroll at the University of Queensland at +61 7 3365 6277. If you would like to speak to an officer of the University not involved in the study you can contact the Ethics Officer on +61 7 3365 3924.

Physical Address

Level 4, Social Sciences Building (24)
The University of Queensland
St Lucia QLD

Postal Address

The School of Education
The University of Queensland
Brisbane QLD 4072 Australia

T + 61 7 3365 6227

F + 61 7 3365 7199

E secretary@education.uq.edu.au

W www.uq.edu.au/education

Appendix D: Risk, Protection and Culture checklist

Risk and Protective Factors Checklist

Kia Orana! Please tick any of these factors that you think are operating to increase offending behaviour in young people in the Cook Islands. Please tell us what the protective factors are in the Cook Islands. What is keeping the crime rate and the imprisonment rate down? Meitaki Ma'ata.

Individual risk factors

ADHD
Autism and Asperger's syndrome
Intellectual Disability or Low IQ
Dyslexia or difficulty learning to read and write
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
Delayed Speech and Language
Hearing Impairment
Head injuries
Mental illness (including depression)
Child homelessness
Teenage pregnancy/Pregnancy below age of consent to sexual activity
Alcohol abuse
Use of marijuana or other drugs

Family Risk Factors

Absent parents, death of parent or child in care of others
Parents mentally ill
Parent in prison
Parents abusing alcohol
Parents abusing marijuana
Parents gambling to excess
Parents separated or divorced
Child living with a series of mother's boyfriends or father's girlfriends
Child living with domestic violence (between parents or other family members)
Parents physically abusing child – beating child with implement, leaving marks
Parents or other family members sexually abusing child
Child being sexually abused by friends or neighbours
Family poverty
Child not given enough food
Overcrowded house, not enough space for child

School Risk Factors

Child not able to do school work
Child bullied by teacher
Child suspended from school
Child expelled from school

Peer Risk Factors

Child rejected by other children
Child bullied or abused by other children
Child has friends who get into trouble

Community Risk Factors

Widespread poverty
High rates of unemployment
A big gap between rich and poor
High crime rates
Alcohol and other drug problems

Widespread domestic violence
Widespread sexual abuse of children and adolescents
Pornography available
Gambling problems
Families breaking down
High imprisonment rates
Historical trauma (slavery, war, violent colonisation, racial discrimination)
Feuding or conflict between families in the community
People migrating to New Zealand, Australia or other countries

Community Protective Factors
Good parenting
Strong extended families
Good education and supportive schools
Strong culture and pride in culture
Strong spirituality/religion
Other factors

Cultural Resilience
Dr Jon Tikivanotau Jonassen describes Cook Islands culture and personality as being made up of…
Respect for the wisdom of the elders and ancestors
Faith in a higher power
Connection between the land and the life of the people
Unity between all the people of the Cook Islands
A sense of freedom and personal autonomy
Love for families and friends
Patience and humility
Do you agree that these are the main factors in Cook Island culture/personality?
Do you think that these factors are helpful to the people of the Cook Islands?
Please comment…

Appendix E: Participant Pseudonyms: Māori Words and Meanings

1. Prisoners

1. Ta‘i one
2. Rua two
3. Toru three
4. ‘Ā four
5. Rima five
6. Ono six
7. ‘Itu seven

2. Young People in the Community

1. Amu a chant
2. A‘ore a fish
3. ‘Atuke the sea urchin
4. Katoti a fish
5. Kaute the hibiscus
6. Kupa the underside of a wave
7. Rau‘ao hibiscus leaves
8. Rai a silver fish
9. Rori the sea cucumber, bêche-de-mer
10. Aneane delicate, tender
11. Ao dawn
12. Kamika a herb
13. Kukupa a dove
14. Taina a flowering shrub
15. Tamara the date palm

3. Adult Community Stakeholders

Interviews

1. Aku a fish
2. Ava a fish
3. Karaka a tree
4. Karavia the cuckoo
5. Kaiatea a tree
6. Nono a tree
7. Miro a tree
8. Tamanu a tree
9. Tavake a bird
10. Kuriri a bird
11. Mato a tree
12. Miru the evening star
13. Maroro the flying fish
14. Panga a fern
15. Pirita a yam
16. Rupe the pigeon
17. Tiare the gardenia flower
18. Teve a tree

19.	Mako	well behaved
20.	Rara	a tree
21.	Kate	the pelican
22.	Marari	a fish
23.	Pipi	a shellfish
24.	Maire	a fern
25.	Ngatae	a tree
26.	Tou	a tree
27.	Tara	the snowy tern

Conversations

1 Kotuku	the reef heron
2 Kina	sea urchin
3 Kanapa	flash of light

Appendix F: Validation and Approval Sought for Publication

In July 2013 I returned to Rarotonga to speak at the annual Health Conference about the mental health of young offenders in the Cook Islands. I also intended to speak to as many of the research participants and justice workers as possible. On the night that I arrived three young people died in a motor vehicle accident on the road outside the airport and one of them, Daniel Tepai, was the son of a prison officer. The community was grieving while I was there and many of the Ministry of Justice workers were attending the funerals. I was grateful for the generosity of those who were able to talk to me.

The Secretary for the Cook Islands Ministry of Justice, Mr Tingika Elikana, was asked to read a brief summary of the major findings of this study and to indicate whether or not he approved of the publication of the research. He did approve, and staff from the Prison, Police and Probation Services, Child Welfare Services and the Ministry of Education added their signatures and supportive comments as validation of the interpretation of the data. Providing names was optional in this member checking, validation or feedback process, as those who preferred anonymity were able to simply agree or disagree. The number of stakeholders consulted was small but they were all knowledgeable and respected people. All agreed to the publication of the research findings.

A senior police officer and two senior probation officers.

Secretary for the Cook Islands Ministry of Justice: Mr Tingika Elikana.

Acting Superintendent Arorangi Prison: Mr Beresford Heather

Senior Child and Family Services Officer: Mr Edward Browne

Child and Family Services Officer: Ms Anna Faye Newbigging

Guidance Counsellor Tereora College: Thomas Tarurongo Wynne

Scanned copies of the documents signed by these eight Cook Islands community stakeholders are included in this appendix.

Summary of Research Findings as presented to stakeholders.

Risk, Offending Behaviour and Young People in the Cook Islands: A Study of Cultural Resilience.

Meg Perkins
University of Queensland

A phenomenological study of 17 young offenders in the Cook Islands revealed that family violence and exclusion from school are the most common risk factors for offending behaviour. Alcohol abuse, domestic violence and physical abuse of children drive young people onto the streets at night, some from age 9 or 10. Exclusion from school means that young people are on the streets during the day as well. Smoking marijuana, underage and binge drinking, and stealing occur in this context.

An ethnographic study of the Cook Islands community revealed a society based on close relationships between extended family members and fellow members of churches, villages and island communities. The feeding child tradition continues, attachment bonds are multiple and strong. Spirituality, the land and love of culture are important aspects of life in the Pacific.

Critical theory and the postcolonial lens were focused on the legacy of colonialism in the Cook Islands. The traditional leaders were disempowered and dispossessed by the British and New Zealand administrations; land which once was communal is now claimed for private ownership in the Land Court and mortgaged to international banks. Capitalism inevitably brings inequality, and inequality increases levels of substance abuse, crime and other social problems. In addition, children were forced to speak English at school by the colonial administrators. The cultural wisdom of a people is closely associated with the language and language loss is a threat to traditional culture. The English missionaries of the 19th century brought corporal punishment of children to the Pacific and, although most Cook Islanders do not smack their children until they are seven or eight years old and know “right from wrong”, some parents use belts and brooms, leaving cuts and bruises.

A Western education has created a people who enjoy polycultural capital, and many achieve socio-economic success overseas. In the Cook Islands, the economy is dominated by Europeans and their Cook Islander descendants, a few wealthy families who are apparently known to be “the good families” by their Papa‘a names. Out migration for employment threatens the traditional structure of the community as children are deprived of contact with parents or other members of their families and social support systems are

weakened. Those Cook Islanders known as “our minimum wage people” struggle to survive on $5 an hour and their children may be hungry.

The ubiquitous tourist industry is a major threat to the Cook Islands environment, culture and way of life. Villages run short of water due to the demand from the resorts, the pale green lagoon is polluted, dancers wear bright, plastic, American colours, and imported foreign workers accept and perpetuate low wages. Sadly, wealthy tourists become targets for theft, with penniless young people sorely tempted by wallets full of dollars left on the beach.

Nonetheless, there are very few “thieves” in the Cook Islands; there is no juvenile detention centre and a very small prison population – 24 in prison on census night 2011. Self-determination theory states that autonomy, competence and relatedness are essential for social and emotional wellbeing. Cook Islanders have been self-governing since 1965, have long demonstrated competence in skills such as oral literature, tattoo, arts and crafts, dancing, drumming, and navigation, as well as in Western education and training, and enjoy social and relationship networks which offer considerable material and emotional support. It seems that Cook Islanders have had the freedom to practice their culture in arts, crafts, study, spiritual practices, work and relationships, thus creating and maintaining high levels of cultural resilience.

Key words
Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.
Piri‘anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.
Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.
Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.
Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. YES NO

Name (optional)

Position

Date

Comment

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. (YES) NO

Name (optional)

Position Police officer

Date 8/7/13.

Comment

This is a fair representation of the situation in the Cook Islands.

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. YES NO

Name (optional)

Position PROBATION OFFICER

Date 8/07/2013

Comment I AGREE TO THIS RESEARCH.

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. (YES) NO

Name (optional)

Position

Senior Probation Officer
Ministry of Justice-Rarotonga

Date

30/7/13

Comment

Great thesis.

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. YES (circled) NO

Name (optional) Tingika Elikana.

Position Secretary of Justice

Date 8/7/13

Comment I agree to the publication/research into these subject area.

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. YES (circled) NO

Name (optional) Beresford, Heather

Position Acting Superintendent

Date 09/07/13

Comment

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. YES NO

Name (optional) [illegible]

Position [illegible]

Date 9. July 2013.

Comment I support these report.

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

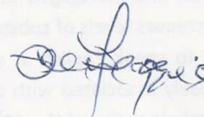
Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. (YES) NO

Name (optional) ANNAFAYE NEWBIGGING —



Position CHILD/FAMILY OFFICER

Date 9/7/13

Comment WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT THIS DOCUMENT WITH HOPE IT WILL BENEFIT OUR COOK ISLANDS PEOPLE.

THANK YOU MEG & MAY GOD BLESS YOUR WORK

Key words

Family violence, substance abuse, offending behaviour.

Piri'anga, the feeding child, spiritual wisdom, the pillars of Cook Islands culture.

Colonisation, dispossession, inequality, language loss, physical abuse.

Polycultural capital, out migration, tourist industry, low wages.

Self-determination, autonomy, competence, relatedness, cultural resilience.

I approve of the publication of these ideas. (YES) NO

Name (optional) Thomas Tararongo Wynne

Position Guidance Counsellor Tereora College.

Date 11 July 2013.

Comment I endorse much of what Meg has identified and find her findings insightful and provocative.

Appendix G: Blessings from Community Stakeholders

These blessings are reported with the explicit permission of those who offered them. I value my relationships with the people of the Cook Islands very highly; by including these messages as validation of the relational nature of the research design and methodology I do not intend any disrespect or trivialization of the piri‘anga (connection) between us. Rather, I am deeply touched and honoured by the blessings I received.

Kia kaha … you have my blessing wholeheartedly.

Remember you stand on many shoulders and are linked with many arms … you are connected to us forever as … a Papa‘a telling our story but, I know, one that has a real heart for us here in Rarotonga and the Pa Enua. I pray that God will give you the courage, words and wisdom to present (the findings) from that place that is universal and spans across the cultural divide, colour, sex and race … that is Aro‘a, the value of love that knits us all … Kia Ranuinui.

T.

Kia Rangi Marie kia koe. May peace be with you.

As a traditional speaker for my people I acknowledge your respect in regards to the Gods of Polynesia especially IO or Tane-A-Rangi or father heaven and his wife our mother earth Papa Tuanuku.

Good luck and may the Gods bless and give you wisdom … Kia manuia.

K.

Thank you Meg, and may God bless your work.

A.