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Kinship and belonging: Pacific children's perspectives on the diaspora

Claire Freeman
University of Otago, New Zealand

Anita Latai Niusulu
Niusulu National University of Samoa Lepapaigalagala Campus, Samoa

Michelle Schaaf
University of Otago, New Zealand

Tuiloma Susana Taua'a and Helen Tanielu
National University of Samoa Lepapaigalagala Campus, Samoa

Christina Ergler
University of Otago, New Zealand

MaryJane Kivalu
University of Otago, New Zealand

Abstract

Our study with 71 children aged 6-14 living in New Zealand and Samoa, provides a new child-centred perspective on transnational diasporic families. We use the Pacific concept vā to frame the study, in which children's transnational-kinship connections reflect relational rather than physical approaches to space. Familial habitus surpasses spatial habitus as children's primary reference point. For diasporic children, family keeps alive their sense of Pacific Island belonging. Transnational kinship ties give Pacific children additional resilience in adapting to unknown futures.

Keywords

Pacific islands, New Zealand, transnational families, diaspora, belonging

Corresponding author:
Claire Freeman, School of Geography, University of Otago, Po Box 9054, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand.
Email: cf@geography.otago.ac.nz

The Pacific diaspora

Transnational families are an increasing reflection of global lives (Skrbiš, 2008) and for Pacific Island children migration is a familiar part of their lives, either as they or family members migrate. However, as Bertram explains: "the typical Pacific migrant does not become separated from the home community simply by virtue of migration" (2013: 337). Kinship relations are fundamental to Pacific life, with great importance placed on retention and maintenance of family networks even in a more global context (Lindstrom, 2013). One way to understand the reality of transnational family life is through the adoption of a transnational imaginary, but we know little of how this transnational imaginary appears from the perspective of children. Understanding this imaginary is critical given children's increasing representation in transnational lives, lives that differ markedly from the idealised notion of childhood as rooted in place (Katartzi, 2018). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, requires researchers and policy makers to consult with children on issues concerning their lives and to treat them as active citizens. In the Western context this has led to children's more active involvement in research projects (Skelton, 2007). In contrast it is largely absent from Global South research, (Holloway, 2014; Punch and Tisdall, 2012), and in this respect Pacific children's voices have been only a whisper in research. More needs to be known about how Pacific children experience identity, belonging and kinship relations through the migratory process. Their diasporic experiences have been little studied compared to those of adults and older teenagers (Spencer, 2019; Schachter and Wentworth, 2017; Lee, 2016).

Pacific scholars point to vā a relational concept of space. Vā references cultural identity constructed around relationships and spaces between people, and their spiritual and physical environment. Its value is in understanding Pacific Peoples relationships, and for us, Pacific children's space-culture relations (Kennedy, 2019). We apply Pacific concepts of socio-spatial connection through vā to the following questions: What is children's knowledge and understanding of the Pacific diaspora? How does this relate to their sense of Pacific identity and temporality (their past, present and futures)? And, does it differ for children living in their Pacific home of Samoa compared to children living in a diasporic community in New Zealand? In the temporal aspect of our study we wanted to understand what is referred to as "the chain of memory", the passing on of cultural identity over time (Bak and Von Brömssen, 2010). Is it broken or intact or different for diasporic children and children in the Home Island? Our study provides children with a platform to reveal new child-centred perspectives on their transnational diasporic families, to uncover socio-spatial understandings as shaped by their Pacific cultural identities. We worked with 71 children aged 6-14 living in New Zealand (Dunedin) and Samoa (Apia). Our research enables us to argue that there needs to be a more complex and fluid socio-spatial conceptualisation of children to be applied to understanding childhood in Pacific contexts.

The Pacific Island context

Many Pacific Island countries are currently experiencing rapid and challenging rates of urbanisation (Kiddle et al., 2017), high rates of inter-island, rural-urban migration and

migration of family members to Pacific Rim countries such as New Zealand. By international standards Pacific Island populations are small, low density and predominantly still non-urban. Samoa has a population of 202,506, its capital Apia 40,407 and Tonga, a population of 100,651, its capital Nuku'alofa 22,400 (Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Tonga Statistics Department). In 2020, some 381,642 Pacific Islanders were estimated to live in New Zealand including 182,721 Samoans and 82,389 Tongans. Pacific Islanders in New Zealand are predominantly urban. Auckland has a Pacific Island population of 194,000 including 118,403 Samoans and 62,403 Tongans (Auckland Council, 2019). Many diasporic young people are also negotiating multi-ethnic identities (Lee and Craney, 2019).

Diasporic childhoods negotiating complex socio-spatial worlds

Child centred research is important as Gardner articulates for: "once efforts have been taken to see the world through [children's] eyes, much might be learnt about the nature of cultural identity, human mobility and the complex ever-changing interconnections…" (2012: 892). Outside the Pacific studies have been undertaken, which though still limited in number, are helpful in respect to diasporic childhoods. Bak and Von Brömssen's (2010) Swedish study of immigrant children from Iran, Iraq, Turkey, former Yugoslavia and Somalia, found most children had frequent communication with their ethnic homeland through relatives and take part in a range of festivals, rituals, family reunions and other ethnic and kin related practices. This connection was important to the children in shaping their identity, but they were, nonetheless, decisive that Sweden was where they expect to live their lives. A United Kingdom study investigated the experiences of transnational Bangladeshi children whose families come from the Sylhet region (Mand, 2010). Most of the children have been to Sylhet and maintain connection through money exchanges, and other means. Transnational families can sustain meaningful relationships despite physical separation through for example; remittances and money exchange, language, regular communication and family gatherings for religious or other significant events (Dreby and Adkins, 2012).

Children move along a spectrum of spatial and multiple, often parallel connection pathways, with regard to their connection with their country of residence and with country of ethnic origin. In Katartzi's (2018) study of immigrant children found a sense of belonging or lack of it to their host country, Greece, was exacerbated by discrimination, hostility and exclusion from the host population. An enhanced sense of precariousness was associated with uncertain resident status. Despite or because of their transnational links and practices, children can still experience challenges associated with their transnational identities. For recent migrants/refugees especially those whose stay is temporary, the sense of being transitory is greater and their place of belonging much less clearly determined. They can be part of a circulation process, described by Stryker and Yngvesson as: "a form of flexible movement, non-fixity or multiple stabilities (the act of living in multiple physical or social locations)" (2013, p. 297).

Children's transnational experiences shape their sense of self, personal and cultural identity (Halse, 2018). They are social actors; they actively help construct their understanding of their own and their family's attachment to home, their island of origin and

their place in a globalised world (Bak and Brömssen, 2010). They shape their own socio-cultural worlds negotiating, often with apparent ease, the multiple places and social groups to which they belong and assert these actively (Ni Laoire et al., 2010).

Pacific children's relational experience of place, habitus, and the concept of vā

'Habitus 'refers to the perceptions and beliefs that individuals carry with them … the practices they transfer to and from the spatial spaces in which they interact (Costa and Murphy, 2015: 3). Bourdieu the architect of the habitus concept recognises that: "In rapidly changing societies habitus changes constantly, making it particularly relevant in a fast-changing world" (2017: 47). This is especially the case for societies experiencing significant migration such as the Pacific nations. For children, transnationalism and its practices are indicative of a multiply scaled and relational experience of place. Mand, refers to Bangladesh children's experience of a 'familial habitus' as transcending country borders. (2010: 278). Like Mand we recognise the potential for applying the familial habitus to a Pacific analysis given the centrality of social membership. However, we additionally suggest that the concepts of *fa'a-Samoa* and *angafaka-Tonga* should be integrated into the (familial) habitus discussion. These two concepts describe cultural frameworks in which relationships are fundamental (Faleolo, 2020). They form the basis of the (familial) habitus providing a more nuanced notion of family practices for our study participants. Family is the primary socialiser for 'habitus' across borders.

Pacific children's families cross borders, countries and oceans. As Gershon explains; the Pacific is not just a 'sea of islands but a sea of families' (2007). Good (2019) contends that Tonga has "self-consciously constructed itself as a globally connected nation" (p. 53). Lee (2011) in her study of Tongan young people describes them as having transnational rather than migrant identities. Recognising these types of transnational constructions, Massey proposed the notion of making space through interactions, with spatial identities created relationally in spaces that are essentially unboundable (2004: 5). Habitus can serve as such a relational classificatory basis for individual and collective diaspora practices, while (re)producing the structures (social and place related aspects) from which it is derived. The habitus of an individual and groups is: "bounded and constructed within the limits of personal experiences (past), socialisation processes and the historical conditions of its production (history)" (Ergler and Wood, 2018: 5). This notion closely reflects the concept of vā which refers to both social relations and space, including the spaces in-between.

Vā is social space that connects (Ka'ili, 2005). It is not space that separates but space that relates and unites irrespective of geographic and residential location (Liliomaiava-Doktor, 2009: 21), and in this sense vā differs from more commonly held concepts of space as distancing and separating. Vā is shaped by places and the social context and thus directly shapes the familial habitus. Lee (2011) argues that for Tongans connections are maintained through a process of intra-diasporic transnationalism, across the Pacific region to create a 'global nation". We conceptualise vā as a substantial aspect of children's expressed habitus in assessing the socio-spatial and cultural relations in our study but also

recognise it is a concept particularly relevant to Samoa and Tonga rather than being a pan-Pacific concept.

Pacific research: The process and methods

Research with Pacific Island children in Samoa and New Zealand presents several challenges. Firstly, the need to ensure that children's voices are heard and that children feel comfortable in being able to speak in what can be an unfamiliar process. Secondly, research occurs through interactions that are perceived as having strong hierarchical connotations (undertaken by academics and institutions that are held in high esteem). There can be strong cultural practices overlying modes of interaction between adults and children. Thirdly, the research needs to be conducted in ways that are relevant to the children. A fourth layer of complexity is, that it needs to be relevant to children living in both Apia, Samoa and Dunedin, New Zealand (where they are a minority group demographically and culturally). In this respect the methods used were adapted from those tested in other parts of the Pacific, in comparable research (Freeman, et al., 2015). To ensure the research was culturally appropriate, a preliminary project with a small group of children aged 6–13 from the home village of one of the Samoan researchers was undertaken (Ergler et al., 2020).

We argue there is a need to co-produce knowledge and explicitly reverse what Tisdall (2017) refers to as the usually adult dominated hierarchies of knowledge, instead recognising children's expertise, assets and skills, where children work as creators of knowledge, alongside professionals and other adults (2017: 69). After all, children are the experts on their own lives (Tisdall and Punch, 2012). To achieve this however, especially in traditionally hierarchical societies, can be challenging. The concept of *talanoa* was identified as appropriate to use with children as it was a process they would be more comfortable with. *Talanoa* emphasises the exchange of oral information and has been described as engaging in dialogue with or telling stories (Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Vaioleti 2006). Talanoa is about understanding derived from the perspective of the person with whom the conversation and interaction is occurring (Farrelly and Nabobo-Baba, 2014), in our case the children's perspectives.

Participants and location

The research was undertaken in two countries, one Pacific Island, Samoa and New Zealand (a focus for Pacific migrants). It responds to the identified need for multi-sited research in different nation states that allows for comparative family studies (Mazzucato and Schans, 2011). In the Home Island children are connected to transnational families/communities with diasporic experience but are resident in an island community. In contrast the New Zealand children are directly part of the diaspora being first or second generation Pacific migrants and mostly New Zealand born. This two-country study enables teasing out how these children perceive themselves and their kinship ties in relation to their or their parents' Home Island over time.

Table 1. Participants' gender, age, and community affiliations.

	Dunedin	Number of Children	Apia	Number of Children
Age	6–9	18	5–9	16
	10–14	18	10–13	19
Community	Tongan church community	17 (9F, 8M)	Church community	10 (3F, 7M)
	Samoan church community	10 (6F, 4M)	Family community	10 (5F, 5M)
	Other church community	9 (4F, 5M)	Village community	15 (6F, 9M)
Total	Participants	36	Participants	35

The researchers discussed and negotiated participation with the community and parents, using their own community connections. The interviewers were ideally people children knew, the pastor, someone from their church but as a minimum someone from their ethnic community familiar with cultural precepts and ways of interacting, or Pacific Island university students with connections to the children's communities. Research was conducted with three communities living in Apia (Table 1); a family community (the children lived in the same locality and were mostly related), a church community (children lived in different parts of Apia but knew each other from church) and a village community (a small close-knit community close to Apia centre). The Dunedin communities were recruited through church-based connections. Churches are important Pacific Island gathering places. The Apia research took place in a family home, a church hall and the village *fale.* Dunedin research took place in church halls and family homes. Ethical approval was obtained from The New Zealand and Samoan Universities involved. Parental consent was gained through a signed consent form, or verbal consent. All children similarly signed a special child friendly consent form or gave verbal consent.

Methods: Setting and interviewing

Our research reflected Talanoa methods thorough creating a shared narrative encounter with the children, using not just words but a range of methods to allow the children to tell their stories. The research was conducted in the children's preferred language English, Samoan, or Tongan, in a setting that was comfortable and familiar to them. The methods used were drawings, interviews and photos.

1. Drawing: Children were asked to draw a map of their neighbourhood showing people and places that were important to them. The drawings were used as discussion points for the children to help make them comfortable and as prompts during the interviews, e.g. when asked about family the interviewer could ask them about relatives' houses on their drawings.

2. Interview: Questions were asked about themselves such as age, their family/extended family, where they live, their neighbourhood/community, whether they think Apia/Dunedin is a good place to grow up and why, and their hopes for their future. These questions provided information on the primary research question of what is children's knowledge and understanding of the Pacific diaspora, how does this relate to their sense of Pacific identity and temporality (their past present and futures) and does it differ for children living in their Pacific home of Samoa compared to children living in a diasporic community in New Zealand? The interviews were direct one-to-one between the interviewer and the child but other children, and families would usually be present elsewhere in the setting (like preparing food). Efforts were made to ensure only the child was engaging with the interviewer, siblings and other children could be close (e.g. sitting at the same table) but not any other adults.
3. Children after their interview were given an iPad to take up to 20 photos of their home and places and people that are important. Although the photo data is not included in this paper it was important in providing a fun, child centred activity, enabling children to feel comfortable as they were keen to talk (*talanoa*-shared encounters) about their photos.

Food was also provided for the children. Sharing food is a material expression of vā and building relations. They were given a small gift to thank them for their participation. Community events were held to feedback the findings to the children, their families and invited guests.

Data analysis

The interview data was coded and entered into excel for analysis. Frequency counts were done for responses to all 28 key data entries, such as: do you have relatives who live away from Dunedin/Apia, with a follow up question of where they live. All named places were recorded and relatives' home locations mapped in GIS. Data were analysed by location Dunedin/Apia, age and gender. The explanations provided in the interview were used to build up ethnographic profiles of children's family relationships. Names and identifying information have been removed for confidentiality, gender and culturally appropriate pseudonyms are used instead.

Results

Belonging and kinship: at home and transnationally

Defining family can be challenging and there are various ways of defining family. We used: "a network of related kin" (Steel et al., 2012) where the children self-defined who they included as family. When asked about family living in their household, the Dunedin average family size is 6.2 (2.19 adults and 4.08 children). In Apia average family size is 9.04 (3.79 adults, 5.25 children) and four families in Apia had more than six adults. Some

75% of children in Dunedin and in Apia 86% had relatives close by in neighbouring homes or in the same neighbourhood.

This interconnection with extended families can be seen in the children's drawings. Talia a 9-year-old girl lives with her mother, father, two sisters. Her drawing (Figure 1(a)) shows an Aunt and Uncle living next door with their children and they share a *faleo'o* (Samoan open house) and a garden area. When walking around the village in Apia with the children, their comfort in going into relatives' homes was very apparent. Lagi a boy aged nine described these close kinship connections that form his sense of vā as a *village community*. He lives in a family of 5 with his mother, father, brother and sister (one sibling died). He explains; "there are six families who live close to us, they are our neighbours. Most of our neighbouring families have connections to Tokelau. My mother is also Tokelauan". Relatives live in Lotopa, Ululoloa - they are Tokelauans. Overseas are, "My grandmother and my mother's sister live in Australia, also my uncles. My other relatives live in Tokelau, Fakaofo, Atafu and Nukunonu". This pattern of physically close and distant kinship networks has transferred into the diasporic communities locally and nationally as evidenced by Joshua a boy age 11, (other church community, Dunedin Figure 1(b)). He describes himself as Tongan and Samoan, lives in a family of five in Dunedin with his mother, father, sister and brother. Close by are Aunty, Uncle, and three cousins. Elsewhere, "Mum's family lives in Australia, Auckland, and Samoa. Dad's family live in Auckland and Tonga". In Dunedin the free flow observed in Apia is constrained by a more geographically dispersed kinship community whose connections are often indicated through and their sense of vā is shaped by communal meeting places. This is shown by Joshua in his inclusion of the Breakthrough/Nations church and his sports places which function as places where the Pacific community connects. The children's habitus in Dunedin is formed through their socialisation processes and vā in these locations and the wider historical structural processes of migration.

In Apia, all children were born in Samoa and said they were from Apia, only seven parents migrated from outside Samoa. Children only mentioned 15 other places where

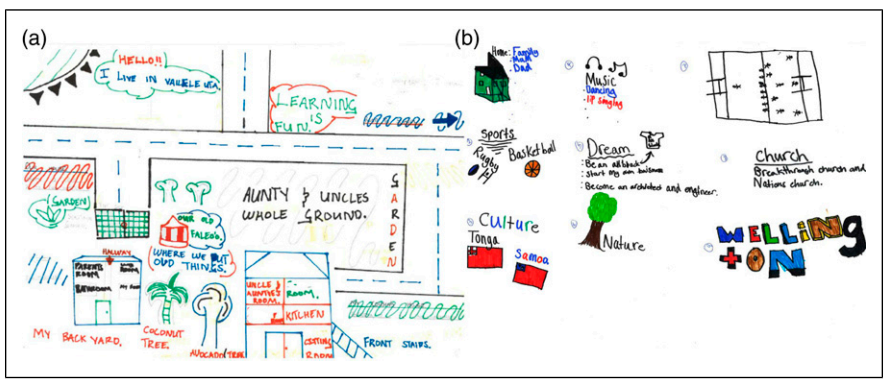

Figure 1. (a) Drawing by Talia, girl aged nine showing family connections. (b) Drawing by Joshua showing family and cultural connections and future dreams.

they had lived, usually briefly, mostly elsewhere in Upolo (the main island). For Dunedin children their and their parents place of origin was far more varied, 11 children were from Dunedin (born there), some children had lived in multiple places including the Pacific Islands and 25 other places were mentioned where they had lived. Most Dunedin parents were from Auckland, Tonga and Samoa and had moved to Dunedin.

Staying connected

In Apia and Dunedin, children had strong networks of family living overseas, most frequently New Zealand and Australia for Apia children, and Australia and the Pacific Islands for Dunedin children. Dunedin children's families also demonstrated a 'sub-diaspora' occurring within New Zealand with outmigration from Auckland to smaller cities. This is clearly demonstrated by Tessa (Figure 2(a)) whose map shows connections across New Zealand. Tessa's own family comprises Mum, Dad and 4 siblings. Her Grandpa, 2 uncles, 3 aunties and 3 cousins live in a close by suburb. Her map includes her Auckland family, maternal grandparents, aunties, uncles and cousins where she goes for 1–2 week visits. Transnationally she has her father's relatives in Samoa, the USA (Alaska, Arkansas and California) and her mother's relatives in South Asia. She keeps in touch with family through family reunions, cell phones, and video. Tessa also acknowledged a deceased relative's spirit as an active family member. She is connected to a transoceanic diaspora and a more localised national Pacific diaspora from Auckland. For her, the concept of vā, space is relational, both sides of her family on the map are physically and 'familially' connected transcending the geographical spaces in-between.

The composite map (Figure 3) shows the main movement trajectories across the Pacific but also includes some relatives in Europe and North America. The Pacific diaspora as a two-way process between the Islands and Australasia is clearly apparent. This network raises interesting questions about how kinship networks can be maintained across distances and how Pacific families maintain their Pacific identity once they leave their home island. The commonest methods being by visiting (mentioned by 23 Dunedin children and 22 Apia children), phone (Dunedin 19, Samoa 18) or some type of technology based 'face

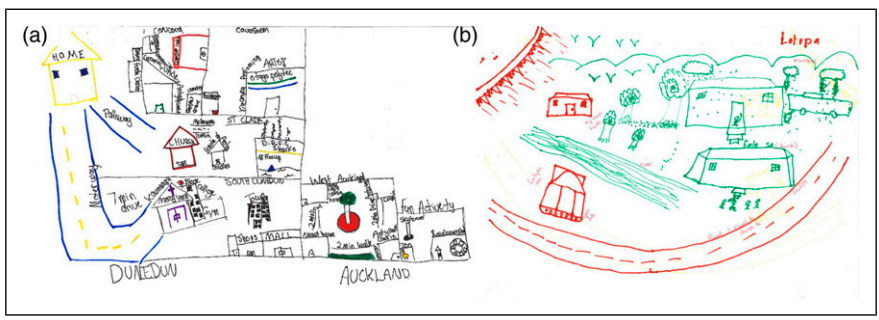

Figure 2. (a) Dunedin, Tessa an 11-year-old girl draws her community and Auckland family links. (b) Apia, Samu a boy age 10 draws important cultural and geographic features for his home village.

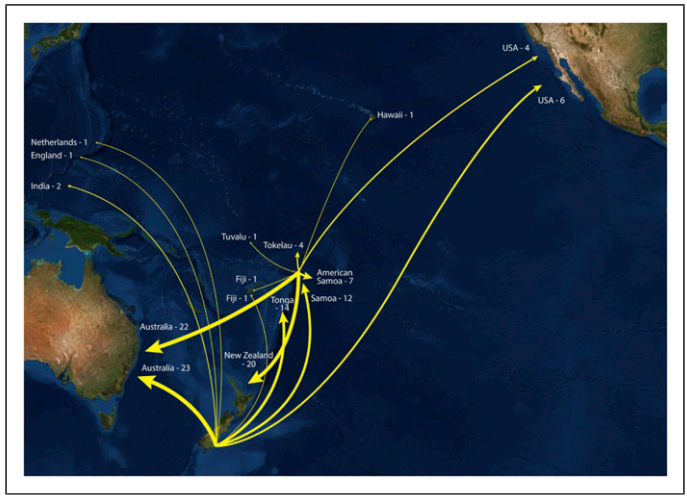

Figure 3. Kinship links across the Pacific.

to face' contact (Dunedin 21, Samoa 5). Both Dunedin and Apia children mentioned visiting relatives as the primary means for maintaining relationships. The findings replicate those of Mand (2010) with UK Bangladeshi migrant children's visits to diasporic family and the Sylhet region. In the Pacific narratives though, the Dunedin children also talk of a more two-way process of extended family from the Islands visiting Dunedin for long periods. A few children from Dunedin have visited the Islands but usually not often, and a few from Apia have been to New Zealand and elsewhere. Vā in this context then spans both the physical relations in space and the virtual relations that form children's particular familial habitus.

Belonging, culture identity and temporality: An interrelated past, present and future

All the children were able to articulate their own identity and their family's identity even where this was different to the majority ethnic identity. For example, Lagi a boy in the urban village in Apia ensured the interviewer was aware he and his family were from Tokelau, though his village was predominantly Samoan. Several children in the Dunedin cohort had mixed Pacific Island and wider ethnic heritages, including Indian and 'Palagi' (European). In the latter their primary affiliation was to their Pacific Island ethnicity. Past was important as a source of their identity and linked back to their parents' home island. The present was evident in their current expressions of cultural belonging. Pacific identity was expressed as in Joshua's drawing (Figure 1(b)) through the inclusion of cultural centres and symbols such as flags. Samoan identity was expressed through cultural features such as *fale/faleo'o*, family plantation/garden and geographic features such as

mountains, rivers and trees, often coconut, avocado and fruit trees (see Samu's drawing Figure 2(b) and Talia's Figure 1(a)).

An indication of temporal family linkages was through graves (commonly around the home in Samoa, see Ergler et al., 2020). This was shown in drawings for Apia children and in photographs taken by Dunedin children, indicating connection between the past and present. One 9-year-old child Milika who had moved to Dunedin from Tonga combined her past Tongan and Dunedin life in her drawing in a very interesting way incorporating coconut trees and a *fale* into her Dunedin playground drawing. Thus, fusing her life experiences of place. She exhibits her embodiment of vā through the fusion in her drawing.

We asked children to envision their futures, where they wanted to live in the future and where the adults in their lives, (parents, teachers, church ministers, etc.) tell them they should live and what work they should do. Most children wanted to live in the country they were already living in, echoing the findings of Bak and Von Brömssen (2010) in their Swedish study. The children and their families, therefore, mostly want to remain settled in the country they currently live in and can see potential futures where they currently live. One 10-year-old girl in Apia and her family prioritised their home community and its opportunities: "My father said that when I grow up, I will lead in doing good things for our family and the village; I want to be a *taupou* (high chief's daughter/lead dancer) in a dance group. I also want to be a teacher like my mother". Another Apia boy aged 11 values where he lives: "The place I'm living in now is good because of the breeze and the beautiful environment".

When asked directly where they wanted to live in future, of those Dunedin children who named a place, small numbers mentioned Australia (2) Auckland (2), Tonga (4) somewhere else (4). In contrast, Apia children mentioned New Zealand (7) and Australia (5). Children, particularly those that had moved between places, had experiences of living in other places and compared the attributes of both. For example, children who had lived in Tonga mentioned Dunedin was cold, some said that is ok, others that warm was better. When asked if they thought their families wanted to leave Dunedin or Apia, 16 children in both Apia and Dunedin said, "stay here" and similar numbers (10 and 11) said "it depends". Second generation Dunedin children often displayed ambivalence about leaving New Zealand, as for them "the chain of memory" was less binding as indicated by this 14 Samoan boy: "Dad talks to me about living in Australia and the opportunities available [Dad lives/d in Sydney]. I just don't think Samoa or Australia is right for [me] and I don't know people there". Another boy aged 12 Samoan/Māori said: "I think I'd like to live in Dunedin because it's my home". Where children said they wanted to live elsewhere it was usually based on extended family locations and family advice.

Children's transnational kinship relations also provide important considerations around future possibilities,. A girl in Apia, age 12 was aware of her parents' overseas aspirations for her: "My Dad said I should live in New Zealand when I grow up. I want to be a teacher and be at the bank. My dad wants me to work at a bank. They want me to work overseas". Another boy age 10, in Apia prioritises his overseas relations in his future hopes:

> "We have relatives in Leauvaa, Moamoa and Vailima [close to Apia]. We also have family in Savaii [the second main island]. I have family in New Zealand. My aunt x, and aunty x lives in Australia. All my aunties are from Leauvaa. I want to go to New Zealand because we have many relatives there".

Some parents encourage overseas opportunities: boy age 13 Tongan: "Brisbane has better job opportunities. My parents say Dunedin if I study or Brisbane [brother and cousin live there]". Few children in Dunedin had direct experience of their Pacific home island but for one Dunedin Tongan girl, age 10 who did, ties to Tonga are still strong: "I prefer to live in Tonga because most of my family lives there, I would like to move to Tonga so I can go to the beach all the time". Finally, for some children either is fine as for this Tongan boy age 9, who wants to be a police officer: "I want a family and we will live in Tonga or Dunedin". Their knowledge of their transnational kin is seen as a base for providing them with wider Oceanic opportunities, but at the same time in most cases, there is a realistic assessment of the positives and difficulties of their local and diasporic opportunities. There were no identifiable differences based on gender.

Limitations

Although we were extremely pleased with the amount and detail shared by the children, the youngest were 5–6 years old and more in depth information on transnational identities would be ideal. Our sample was relatively small and based in two cities. Undertaking the research was challenging. We had 71 children for a limited time, 2–4 hours at most and in that time worked with making them comfortable, doing a drawing, interview, taking photos, chatting with them and having a thank you tea. Although in general terms some findings in this paper are not entirely new for diaspora researchers, we extend the diaspora discussions by privileging children's voices. The Pacific diaspora is increasingly well understood, but what is new here is the extent to which this understanding is also well understood by children and so clearly articulated by them. We hope the sharing of evidence from children in this study can lead to more in-depth insights on younger Pacific children's hitherto largely ignored perspectives, complementing the work already done with older Pacific youth (Lee 2019).

Transnational identities and futures: Tying experiences, socialisation processes and historical processes together

These children's imaginary is one in which their transnational identities are self-evident. The Pacific diaspora was an integral part of their daily lives maintained through regular communication, family visits and was part of their ethnic and cultural identities. For many, the spatiality of their futures is fluid given their awareness of possibilities offered for living elsewhere in Oceania.

In terms of identity and belonging, place seems to be less important than being part of their community and family, which for Dunedin children is their ethnic identity and/or church community. For Apia children, place is important but again the reference is to their

identity as Samoans and to family connections where they see their future lying outside Samoa. Familial habitus invariably surpasses spatial/local habitus as children's primary reference point. The concept of space as socially relatable rather than as a spatial ontology is encapsulated in the concept vā. Vā is central to the children's own 'imaginary' of their habitus in relation to their sense of cultural identity and belonging. This applies whether in the Home Island or living in diasporic families in New Zealand. Ka'ili (2005) traces the 3000 year-old roots of Pacific migration – the Moana people (Moana means ocean in many Polynesian languages) travelling vast distances across oceans and whilst doing so developing a complex, and we argue, a still present view of socio-spatial connectedness.

Perhaps because of the long history of circular migration in the Pacific, traditional assumptions around space as fixed and locational seem not to apply. Relational space is, to use Massey's (2004) terminology indicative of 'heterogeneity', it encompasses children's multiple Pacific identities, languages and transcends Pacific and western cultural practices and even locational spaces. It creates a Pacific familial habitus within and across locations.

Temporal relationality is also important in analysing children's experiences, Family practices includes recognition of family who have passed on (as in Tessa's inclusion of a deceased relative in her family), and reflected through the importance of graves, which can be adjacent to the home in Samoa. Past present and future are brought together through connections to those who have passed, current lived experiences of families, cultural ties, a sense of reciprocal support, and connection to future opportunities offered through transnational kin. This spatial and temporal relationality gives Pacific children additional resilience in adapting to flexible and unknown futures.

Many children perceive they have options for where they will live in their future which are fluid and open. They embrace transnationalism as an important part of who they are and it is central to their concept of family and family belonging. Belonging is supported through outward displays of cultural identity, church celebrations and participation in cultural activities such as singing and dancing. Dunedin families often negotiate three levels of diaspora, a national (From Auckland), a Trans-Tasman diaspora to Australia (see Figure 3) and an Oceanic diaspora. Their transnational supportive framework of cultural belonging and encouraging outlook and receptiveness to opportunity contrasts with findings in some other studies on diasporic children. We did not find evidence of the sense of hostility or precarity associated with migrant children in Katartzi's Greek study (Katartzi, 2018). Rather, a positive sense of options and multiple belongings. Hearing children's voices in this research provided new insights into children's own sense of opportune resilience gained through their currently strong Pacific identity rather than the vulnerability identified as too often being the dominant discourse (White et al., 2013). There are significant challenges for families in maintaining and supporting their children's sense of belonging and maintaining the Pacific familial habitus across borders when the 'chain of memory' weakens as direct connections to the Islands decrease. A sense of identity and embracing of their Pacific heritage for future generations may not be so evident and easy to maintain as it seems to be for the children we interviewed in this research.

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ORCID iD

Claire Freeman https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4287-2435

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