

LITERATURE SEARCH OF COOK ISLANDS CULTURAL CONCEPTS TO INFORM FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTIONS AND PRACTICE

Jean Mitaera, Langi Paasi and Helena Filipo search literature on Cook Islands cultural concepts to inform family violence interventions and practice.

WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS?

- Practice interventions to support the safety and healing of Cook Islands victims, perpetrators and their families are promulgated from within western knowledge and theories of family violence
- Matters are further aggravated by the small number of Cook Islands family violence practitioners and the dearth of literature available to inform the design of interventions
- Social work researchers realise that the quality and depth of their practice can have a widespread impact on the wellbeing of an individual's social and kin relationships
- The filtering processes researchers adopt allows us to move beyond descriptions and interpretations of Cook Islanders and Cook Islands culture by religious and academic experts to cultural concepts conceived and/or identified by Cook Islanders for Cook Islanders
- An opportunity exists for research to be informed by those who live and practice the cultural concepts that inform Cook Islands family violence interventions

LITERATURE SCAN

The project identifies four pieces of Cook Islands literature, reviews and critiques each of them and the cultural concepts they present.

Scan 1: Akono'anga Māori: Cook Islands Culture

- To support the community to enact their kura, the author identifies three aspects of Cook Islands culture that affirm their values and practices as Cook Islanders to work together

- *Te kuru pou toru* (direct translation of 'three breadfruit pillars') refers to the leadership roles and responsibilities that exist for Cook Islands communities through, i) traditional leaders, ii) the church and iii) government
- *Ara tipoto, ara tiroa and 'are vananga* – the key platforms upon which Cook Islanders perform their cultural duties and responsibilities
- Kura (a formal request or application) provides individuals within a Cook Islands community collective an understanding of their individual roles and required actions. Kura also ensures that expectations and accountabilities within a circular process that re-distributes labour and resources are made evident and public

Scan 2: Pacific Pathways to the Prevention of Sexual Violence

- This qualitative research project discusses Cook Islanders' views of sexual violence, including protective and risk factors, and the extent to which traditional Cook Islands prevention methods have been upheld within the New Zealand context. It also aimed to understand what approaches could be developed further and identify key messages for prevention, intervention and post-intervention
- The report identifies two main concepts, mana and tapu.
- *Mana* is defined as the concentration of power in gods, spirits, individuals, rites or objects
- *Tapu* refers to spiritual prohibitions; those things that are forbidden and set apart to be avoided because they are either divine or corrupt
- Understanding one's own mana and that of others provides a cultural gauge to inform who and how one interacts with another. The report notes that tapu informs conduct and safety
- The report also identifies key terms relevant for sexual violence and family violence

Scan 3: Mou piriia te kōrero ‘ā to ‘ui tūpuna, aka’ora’ora’ia: Culturally responsive pedagogy for Cook Islands secondary schools physical education

- This thesis investigates culturally responsive pedagogy in physical education for Cook Islands secondary schools
- The author argues that culturally responsive pedagogy is important for Pasifika early childhood education as well as at other levels of schooling
- Six core values are identified as integral to culturally responsive pedagogy in physical education for Cook Islands secondary schools they are: Tāueue (participation); Angaanga taokotai (cooperation); Akarongo te tamariki or akatano (discipline); Angaanga oire kapiti (community involvement); Te reo Māori Kuki Airani (Cook Island Māori language); Auora (developing of the physical and the spiritual)

Scan 4: Tūranga Māori: A Cook Islands Conceptual Framework transforming family violence – restoring wellbeing

- Tūranga Māori is one of the seven original Pacific conceptual frameworks. The framework defines violence and its negative consequences to wellbeing are described and demonstrated
- Critical to the Tūranga Māori framework are its elements:
 1. *Akono’anga Māori* (Cook Islands Māori culture). *Akono’anga Māori is informed by papa’anga* (genealogy/ kinship) and to be expressed it requires the following four cultural concepts: *turanga*: (one’s position/standing), *piri’anga* (relationships), *akaue’anga* (duties and responsibilities) and *ngakau aro’a* (generosity to self and others)

2. *No teia tuatau* (being relevant and realistic to the environment and context within which people live today). The notions of *komakoma marie* (gradual conversation) and *kia maru to korua komakoma’anga* (calm and peaceful conversation) are cited as ways to engender deep and respectful conversation.
3. *Ta’anga’anga’ia* refers to the use of knowledge and tools, and argues that cultural concepts and tools are only useful when they are put into practice

THE REPORT MAKES SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Ministry of Social Development fund a Cook Islands family violence cultural concepts research project that is informed by Cook Islands *tumu korero* (orators) and cultural historians in Aotearoa New Zealand
2. That the Ministry of Social Development in partnership with Cook Islands communities develop a training plan for hosting and delivering the Cook Islands Family Violence Training Programme
3. Each of the cultural concepts identified by Hodges and Te Ava underpin research and development work with Cook Islands people

Pasefika Proud embodies a vision of strong, vibrant and prosperous Pacific children, young people and their families. Wellbeing for Pacific families occurs when all aspects of the individual and collective are in balance, co-existing with environments, kinship and support systems while recognising *mana* and *tapu*.

Pacific cultures are strengths that can be used positively to promote and enhance resilience within Pacific families.

Pasefika Proud mobilises Pacific individuals, families and communities to take responsibility for the issues they are facing, find the solutions and take leadership in implementing them.

‘OUR FAMILIES, OUR PEOPLE, OUR RESPONSIBILITY’

Find out more

Full research reports can be requested from Pasefika Proud. Email: Pasefika_Proud@msd.govt.nz