

## **O a'u o le Tama Toa**

Does the Faasamoa and Masculinity influence Samoan male  
educational achievement in New Zealand?

An exploratory study of the transition from high school onto  
university.

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## ABSTRACT

Pasifika students are a major group within the New Zealand school population. One student in every ten is of Pasifika descent and it is estimated this number will increase to one in five by 2051 (Parkhill, Fletcher & Fa'afoi, 2005). The 2013 census data shows the proportion of Pacific people gaining higher qualifications has increased with the largest increase in the bachelor's degree category (up from 4.5 percent in 2006, to 6.2 percent in 2013). However, of the five major ethnic groups in New Zealand (European, Asian, Middle-Eastern, Latin American, African (MELAA), Maori and Pacific) Pacific people currently have the lowest proportion of qualifications. (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). This is of major concern particularly in reference to the statistics referred to by the MOE by the year 2051. At the time of the 2013 Census, the Samoan ethnic group remained the largest of the Pacific ethnic group at 48.7 percent, it was also confirmed that of this group, 62.7 percent of Samoans were born in New Zealand. (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). For the Samoan population in New Zealand, further statistics confirm that of this group, Samoan males are less likely than their female counterparts to have post-school qualifications. For those that were partaking in study, 43.7 percent were men and 56.3 percent were women (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Given these statistics, my research focuses specifically on the Samoan group and specifically Samoan males to investigate what is taking place, to look at current statistics regarding their educational achievement and to examine if Faasamoa (culture) has an impact on their approach and participation in education. I have also chosen to include the study of Masculinity to see if gender based roles within the Faasamoa impact Samoan males' perspectives towards education. Because the Samoan population make up the largest cohort of Pacific peoples in in New Zealand, this is a critical area of research. The second concern is the impact this will have on future labour force and employment participation. These factors influence career opportunities and access to better life opportunities.

Research shows that girls are more likely to have positive attitudes towards reading and equally, boys are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards reading (Ministry of Education, 2007d.) However, these basic skills are needed to survive in a knowledge-based society. Callister, Newall, Perry and Scott (2006) state if this gender trend continues to grow, there will be negative implications for leaving a group of men 'behind' not only for the individuals themselves, but also for the community and on a national level. I used Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) as a framework and applied the Talanoa methodology (Vaioleti, 2006) to group and individual interviews. Using this framework and method enabled me to have a constructive, positive approach to my research thus removing it from a deficit perspective (Valencia, 2012).

Findings confirmed Faasamoa had an influence on their decisions about learning and accessing education. In regards to Masculinity, these students felt education was most certainly attainable for Samoan males and not seen as weakening their status within male peer groups. Instead, they highlighted factors that influenced their success and factors that can also contribute to negative outcomes, which at this stage categorically warrants further research.

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## Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed .....

Date .....

## DEDICATION

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Thank you first and foremost to the one who knows me best, who was there with me when I dared to start this post graduate journey and who gave me the strength and endurance to reach the end. I have used this verse all my life to gather strength, gain direction and act as a reminder that you are in full control. Thank you Lord for your undeserving grace and love that has followed me all my life! Words and deeds can never explain how much knowing you intimately means, and so all I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you. All glory goes to you who is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, Amen.

To my parents, thank you cannot summarise my gratitude for you both, I am the product of your sacrifice, hard work, determination and prayers and I dedicate this to you Sa'ulalotoa Vaoga Ioane Samuelu and So'oaemalelagi Samuelu.



You moved to New Zealand from Samoa in search of opportunity and new experiences, both on a new voyage of discovery. I thank you for your selfless love and direction throughout my life and I pray Gods abundant blessings upon you both. Your constant examples of alofa, tautua and fa'aloalo have taught me the essence of what it means to be Samoan 'O le ala i le pule o le tautua' the way to leadership is through service and you have shown me these characteristics. I also thank you for introducing me to God, to what it means to walk hand in hand with my maker and to acknowledge him in all that I do, I love you and thank you for everything!

To my spiritual parents, Reverend Apa Lealiifano and his good lady Fualole, thank you for the prayer support and spiritual covering over me while I was studying. Your words of encouragement, smiling faces and warm embrace gave me comfort and perseverance. I pray that God will continue to bless all your works, everything seen and unseen, thank you so much.

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Lastly, to my two sons Zion and Israel, I hope when you are older you will understand why mummy had to spend hours in the library during the weekend when we could have been playing at the park, my love for you both goes beyond this lifetime. Thank you for being patient with mummy and always giving me hugs and kisses when I really needed them, I love you both to no end. You are my all and this research journey was also inspired by you both, I cannot wait to see what God has in store for your lives as you grow up as Tama Toa!

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Finally, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude must go to the 22 Samoan men that I was able to Talanoa with regarding this research. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to engage with you in meaningful conversations regarding your learning journey. It was my absolute privilege to hear your stories and to see through your eyes what it means to be a Samoan male with academic aspirations for the future, being successful in your chosen paths and qualifications and goals of future success. Thank you for your time and for passing the torch onto me to impart your stories so that others may understand, learn from and be inspired. To the future generations of Tama Toa, in essence, I pray you will understand that you are an integral part of our progressive journey as Samoan people; this is my service to you...

I am not an individual; I am an integral part of the cosmos. I share divinity with my ancestors, the land, the seas and the skies. I am not an individual, because I share a "tofi" (an inheritance) with my family, my village and my nation. I belong to my family and my family belongs to me. I belong to my village and my village belongs to me. I belong to my nation and my nation belongs to me.

This is the essence of my sense of belonging

*Susuga Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi*

# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

E toe afua se taeao fou

A new morning will arise

I am Samoan. I was born here in New Zealand to parents who made the long journey to a new country in the 1970s, leaving Samoa behind to embark on a future filled with hopes and dreams. They left Samoa knowing tomorrow, a new day would arise. I was raised in a traditional Samoan home where my mother and father spoke Samoan ensuring we understood and embraced our Samoan culture. My two older sisters and I grew up in the first Pacific Island Presbyterian Church in Newton Auckland. Being a member of the first Pacific church in New Zealand and being surrounded by other Pacific peoples truly enriched my life, not only spiritually but mentally, it enabled me to embrace my identity as a young person and find a sense of belonging, to my family, my culture and to God. At home, we spoke Samoan; the English language dominated all other spheres, including my entire education. I feel fortunate to have grown up with two different schools of thought, firstly my Samoan culture which acts as the lens in which I see the world, and secondly being raised in Aotearoa and having the opportunity to be educated here. Growing up in Grey Lynn and attending school in the inner city allowed me to acquire various skills and knowledge and through both schools of thought, I learnt the skills and knowledge that formed my view of the world and my identity.

I have always enjoyed working with people I have an innate passion for learning and the value of education. I attended an all-girls high school, which had a high number of Pasifika and Maori students and then went on to University after a gap year. It was during this 1-year break that I thought seriously about pursuing a university education. I then started an undergraduate degree studying a Bachelor of International Communications, my interest in people instinctively drew me towards this qualification, which I thoroughly enjoyed. After completing my degree, a passion to share my learning journey and work with young people continued and so began my career in the tertiary sector. Throughout my academic journey, I have been acutely aware of the demanding journey one must take as a Samoan student when entering university studies and trying to meet family, church and other commitments. What guided me through the joys and trials of tertiary studies was a deep love of learning and I felt called to support other students to experience this as well.

Through the course of my career, I have worked 13 years in the education sector in roles specifically focused on the support and academic progression of Māori and Pacific students. At the time I started this research; I was working as the Māori and Pacific Student Coordinator in the Faculty of Business, Law and Economics at AUT. In this role, it quickly became evident that there were very few Pacific male students studying at AUT and for those that were studying, the majority seemed to face an array of difficulties that had a negative influence on their academic success. Given my own passion for learning and my personal appreciation of the opportunities a robust

education had provided me, I wanted to pursue this further. I started to query what was taking place that was influencing this phenomenon. Statistics from the Ministry of Education on Pacific participation within the tertiary sector soon confirmed my concerns; there are low numbers of Pacific participation generally in tertiary education, and alarmingly low numbers of Pacific males when compared with Pacific females. This situation was impossible to ignore as Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) write so compellingly:

The rising female advantage in college completion (and decline of male completion) is an important topic of study in its own right as a rare example of a reversal of a once persistent pattern of stratification, and because of its potential impacts on labour markets, marriage markets, family formation, and other arenas. Shifting educational attainment rates for men and women could affect gender gaps in wages, labour force participation, and a host of other labour market outcomes. (p. 517)

Views are that the focus of educational research achievement by gender has shifted a focus from the under-achievement of girls to the under-achievement of boys (Barnett & Rivers, 2006). Furthermore, Alloway and Gilbert (1997) state there is a need to explore different approaches regarding the teaching of boys and their construction of literacy, given the dynamic shifts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such as technology and media representation within contemporary culture. In their view, literacy skills are a fundamental requirement for active and informed citizenship, and a critical component to achieving a more equitable and just society (p. 51).

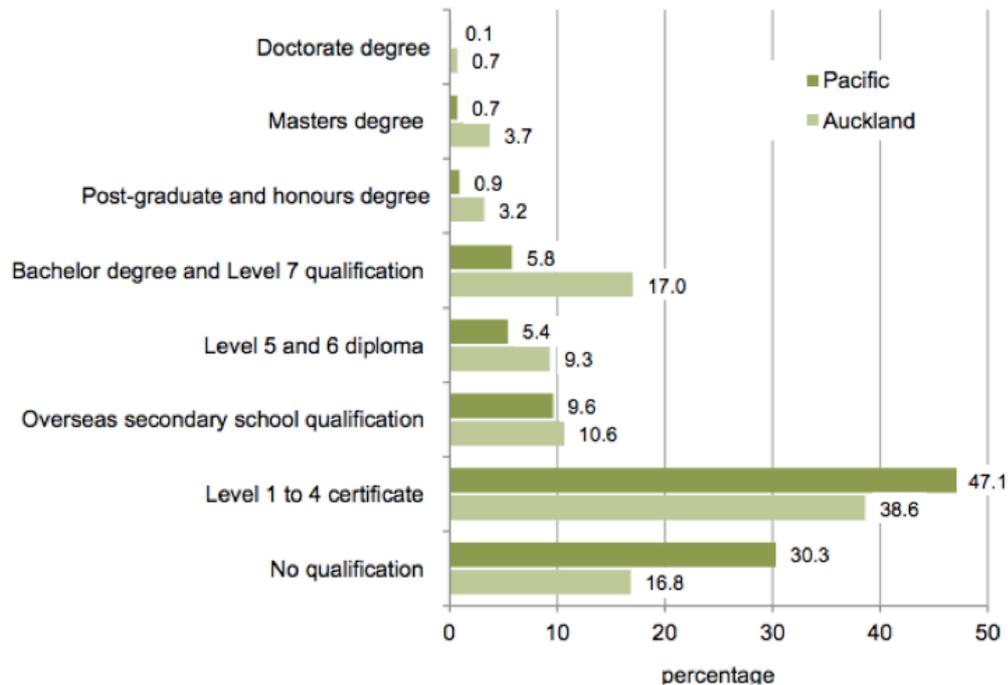
As a practitioner, I was witnessing the lack of Pacific males' educational achievement and their limited progression on a daily basis. It was at that point that I saw the urgency to carry out this research. I wanted to explore Pacific male students' attitudes towards education and to Talanoa about their experiences. Throughout my career, I had often spoken to parents and families about the value they placed on their children's education. They had continually re-affirmed that education was the key to success in New Zealand and attaining qualifications was essential to better life opportunities. If this was so, I contemplated what the factors were influencing Pacific male low participation rates and educational achievement. Did their attitudes towards education influence their decision-making process including goal setting, personal progression, and career planning and employment opportunities?

## **Pacific Population and Education**

Results from the New Zealand 2013 census show nearly half (47.1%) of Pacific peoples over the age of 15 years had a level 1 – 4 certificate while 30.3% had no formal qualification. There were significantly fewer Pacific people at the bachelor degree and post-graduate levels programmes compared to the Auckland population overall. Only 5.8% of the Pacific population held bachelor degrees and/or level seven qualifications. In comparison with the total Auckland population who were sitting at 17.0%, this was very low and a reason for concern. Furthermore, only 1.7% of the Pacific population had a post-graduate degree in comparison with Auckland overall – data which

was at 7.7%. (Auckland council, 2015) Figure 1. Below highlights the differences between Pacific peoples and the total Auckland population regarding highest qualification (p. 23).

**Figure 1:** Highest qualifications among those aged 15 years and over, Pacific peoples and Auckland total (2013)



Source: Auckland Council (2015)

The relationship of education and employment is key for the optimum success of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report, Education at a Glance 2015, which shows that across OECD countries, employment rates were 83% for those with tertiary education, 73% for individuals with upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education and 55% amongst people with qualifications below upper secondary education. New Zealand rank seventh in education among OECD countries behind Finland, Korea, Japan, Canada, the Netherlands and Australia. New Zealand rates above the OECD average on each of the scales (Statistics New Zealand n.d.) While this OECD report confirms New Zealand educational participation statistics rate well globally, the low rates for Pacific participation from this data indicates a need for a more critical review of these statistics. Furthermore, the issues of concern for Pacific learners must be addressed in order to create a more equitable education system in New Zealand.

### **Pacific Males – Participation Rates in Education**

Ministry of Education (2013) data in Table 1 gives a general picture of Pacific educational achievement, this confirms:

- Pacific females are reaching achievement levels higher than Pacific males

- This has been an ongoing trend throughout 2011 – 2015.

**Table 1:** Domestic Pasifika students gaining qualifications from universities by gender and qualification level 2011-2015 (Equivalent full time students)

Year	Gender	Certificates 1-3	Diplomas 5-7	Bachelor's degrees	Masters	Doctorates
2011	Female	3775	1790	4705	150	65
	Male	3020	1160	2515	105	55
	Total	6795	2950	7220	255	120
2012	Female	3645	1770	5160	175	70
	Male	3145	1140	2695	110	50
	Total	6790	2910	7855	285	120
2013	Female	4145	1530	5555	185	75
	Male	3360	1085	2850	100	50
	Total	7505	2615	8405	285	125
2014	Female	3785	1500	5925	215	80
	Male	3280	1020	2890	110	50
	Total	7065	2520	8815	325	130
2015	Female	3445	1450	6325	235	85
	Male	3110	965	3055	130	45
	Total	6555	2415	9380	365	130

Source: Ministry of Education (2015)

Table 1 provides an insight regarding achievement levels for Pasifika students overall. Again, this confirms the disparities in achievement between Pacific males and females, and that this has been an ongoing pattern which raises much concern.

By reviewing Table 2 data, I saw the value of focusing my research on this specific group - Samoan students only. The data in Table 2 below indicates that Samoan females have outnumbered Samoan males in tertiary qualification attainment from 2011 – 2015.

Table 1 and 2 data combined raises the question, why are females outnumbering males in every qualification category. Furthermore, for the purpose of this research, what influences Samoan males regarding their engagement/disengagement with education?

Table 1 and 2 data led me to go back one-step from university, to explore the education pipeline particularly focusing on high school. If fewer Samoan males were entering university studies, was it engagement levels at high school that were influencing this? I decided to look at the achievement of University entrance by Pacific male students, this was essential to review whether and how this stage of their education journey might affect the next stage.

**Table 2:** Domestic Samoan students gaining qualifications from universities by gender and qualification level 2011-2015 (Equivalent full time students)

Year	Gender	Certificates 1-3	Diplomas 5-7	Bachelor's degrees	Masters	Doctorates
2011	Female	1637	842	2136	69	37
	Male	1312	500	1194	48	19
	Total	2949	1342	3330	117	56
2012	Female	1651	798	2320	73	37
	Male	1404	487	1204	52	18
	Total	3055	1285	3524	125	55
2013	Female	1801	670	2474	73	42
	Male	1451	459	1295	41	22
	Total	3252	1129	3769	114	64
2014	Female	1602	635	2601	95	46
	Male	1314	453	1326	37	24
	Total	2916	1088	3927	132	70
2015	Female	1420	606	2795	114	48
	Male	1281	456	1441	59	26
	Total	2701	1062	4236	173	74

Source: Ministry of Education (2015)

Table 3 statistics show the leaving qualifications by school leavers in 2012. As seen that year, Pacific males had the lowest number gaining university entrance (U.E.) in comparison to other ethnicities (Maori, Asian and European) However Pacific males were achieving better results in NCEA level 2 as compared with university entrance.

**Table 3:** Leaving qualifications for 2012 boys' school leavers, by ethnicity

Qualification	Ethnicity	Boys school leavers N	%
UE	Maori	287	26.1
	Pasifika	164	23.7
	Asian	592	76.1
NCEA Level 2 or higher	NZ European	2,465	52.5
	Maori	743	67.5
	Pasifika	534	77.2
No qualification	Asian	712	91.5
	NZ European	4042	86.1
	Maori	187	17.0
	Pasifika	95	13.7
	Asian	47	6.0
	NZ European	289	6.2

Source: Wylie and Berg (2014)

Reviewing the data in Tables 1 and 2 against Table 3 data indicated the critical importance of looking at two points of the education pipeline, to observe and analyse for a correlation between these two steps of learning. This supports Finn and Zimmer (2012) discussion of how earlier stages of learning contribute to and shape later educational attainment:

Educational risk factors (“events”) are educational outcomes at one age/grade that interfere with later academic achievement and educational attainment. Low grades and test performance in the early grades... and student misbehaviour are associated with more severe problems in later grades including school failure and dropping out. (p. 98).

As I reflect on my own life, I was reminded of the sacrifice made by grandparents and parents who chose to migrate to New Zealand for better opportunities such as education for their children. This was in the absolute hope that their migrant dreams would become a reality. Bedford, Masgoret, Tausi and Merwood (2010) highlight Pacific peoples are still choosing New Zealand as their destination for the same reasons (p. 377). If the educational statistics regarding Pacific males disfavoured achievement levels continue, this cohort’s progression will continually fall behind the statistics of Pacific females and in comparison with other ethnic groups.

**Table 4:** Characteristics of migrants

**TABLE 2**  
SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANTS AND THEIR REASONS FOR CHOOSING  
NEW ZEALAND (IN PERCENTAGE)

Characteristic	Pacific approval categories	All approval categories
Males	54.7	48.4
Under 30 years	41.6	31.7
Highest education level		
No qualification	17.9	7.7
Secondary school qualifications	54.3	24.8
Vocational qualifications	24.1	30.9
Degrees	2.0	31.2
Previous NZ experience		
Worked in NZ	27.8	54.6
Been in NZ before, no work	35.2	31.1
Not been in NZ before	32.7	12.4
Reasons for choosing NZ		
Economic opportunity	59.3	28.2
A better future for children	58.6	39.0
Educational opportunities	37.0	18.1
Join family members	37.0	22.6
Economic conditions	20.4	13.4
To study	17.3	10.2
Accompany family members	17.3	7.3
Relaxed pace of life/lifestyle	12.3	44.1

Source: (Bedford, Masgoret, Tausi and Merwood, 2010, p. 377)

## **The Importance of Education**

Education enhances people's ability to meet their basic needs, and increases their choice of career options and participation in the labour force. Strong evidence shows that full participation in education is linked to full participation in society and the labour market. The International Labour Organisation (2010) highlighted the value of education with a specific focus on economic factors below:

1. An education empowers people to develop their full capacities and to seize employment and social opportunities;
2. raises productivity, both of workers and of enterprises;
3. contributes to boosting future innovation and development;
4. encourages both domestic and foreign investment, and thus job growth, lowering unemployment and underemployment;
5. leads to higher wages;
6. When broadly accessible, expands labour market opportunities and reduces social inequalities (pp. 4-5).

In summary, education is the door to access labour and employment opportunities, improves social and quality of life prospects and positively impacts on the quality of life of individuals, families and communities.

## **Research Gap**

Most research on Pacific education has focused mainly on academic outputs (Ministry of Education 2011, Ministry of Education, 2012, Chu, Glasgow, Rimoni, Hodis, and Meyer 2013). There has been less research on cultural factors such as traditional expectations, accepted behaviour, gendered roles and how these might influence the educational aspirations and achievements of Pacific male students today. There is also a plethora of research focused on the gender imbalance and performance of boys in education locally and globally (Gibb, Fergusson, & Horwood 2008, Alton-Lee and Praat 2001, Weaver-Hightower 2003, Evers, Livernois and Mancuso, 2006) but less research on influencing factors such as culture.

The need to review educational achievement through a Pacific gender lens was identified by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) who asked whether education was seen by Samoan males to be more of a female aspiration than a male one. This article by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) has been pivotal to this research. The critical need to review educational outcomes through a Pacific gender lens is essential to identify the impact (if any) cultural expectations may have on the school experience of Samoan males today. This article was fundamental to my research and ignited a passion to investigate this phenomenon further, especially in line with my experiences as a practitioner who had worked in the education sector with Pacific males for over a decade.

I started to think about the expectations relating to gender roles and behaviours in the Faasamoa and family based systems. Might these gendered roles influence educational aspirations and

achievement for Samoan males? Taking this further, I saw the value in exploring whether there was a relationship between Samoan perceptions of male roles (Anae, Fuamatu, Lima, Marriner, Park, and Suaalii-Sauni 2000, Park, Suaalii-Sauni, Anae, Lima, Fuamatu and Mariner, 2002) and global masculinity theory relating to how males are expected to act and behave (Connell, 1996). I contemplated how Samoan society expects a Samoan man to conduct himself and how this might influence his perceptions of education and his participation.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) questioned both gender and culture in relation to the Samoan male experience of education and by doing so moved from a Pan pacific view to a specific Samoan worldview. What was most evident about this research was that historically Pacific educational data has not been disaggregated by gender which is to identify any difference in male and female experience or by Pacific ethnic group. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) also alludes to ways Samoan men are gaining and maintaining status outside of academia, such as the sporting arena that may be encouraged by their peer group and possibly parents including the community. She comments on two critical factors relating to this:

Firstly, the importance of the peer group to these boys (“the brotherhood”, the “bros”) and the power of the peer group and peer group norms to influence male attitudes to education. Second, the comment that the boy who had achieved UE had “won, but he’s lost it” indicates students are making a distinction between school and other learning and that academic study is not highly rated. In- depth research is needed to identify what the “it” represents and how this can be used to foster and encourage academic success. (p. 147)

Findings indicate that Samoan males and females experience cultural values and cultural expected behaviours in varying ways. Clearly Samoan women have embraced educational opportunities more than Samoan males in New Zealand. These educational endeavours warrants further research.

The concept of Masculinity has been researched, critiqued and defined in many ways (and will be discussed further in chapter 2.) The work of Connell (1996) aligns most clearly with my research regarding the fact that there are multiple factors that must be taken into consideration in explaining masculinity. Connell (2014) states we study masculinities because gender is one of the main structures of the human world; because gender inequalities are fundamental to issues of social justice; and because patterns of masculinity are relevant to happiness, health, and even to human survival on the planet (p. 5). Connell (1996) states that to speak of masculinities is to speak about gender relations and the position of men in a gender order, there are patterns of practice by which both men and women (though predominantly men) engage in and live out in their everyday lives. Connell (2014) also highlights that in-depth ethnographic research has proved there is no single masculinity, but rather multiple masculinities, both locally and on a world scale. Furthermore, masculinities can and do change on a regular basis and are not ‘fixed’ (p. 7). This was imperative in acknowledging the predisposition in the mass media and popular culture to treat “men” as a homogenous group and “masculinity” as a fixed, ahistorical entity. (p. 7).

This leads to the understanding that specific ethnic groups have unique descriptions of what it means to be a man, and for this research of what it means to be a 'Samoan man' in New Zealand today. I will explore this further in the masculinity literature (noted in chapter 2) to discover what links (if any) these understandings of masculinity have with Samoan male gendered roles and, in turn, whether this impacts Samoan males educational participation.

## Research Questions

This study explores the influence of Samoan cultural and gendered factors on the educational experience of Samoan males in New Zealand. It does so by looking at male attitudes and expectations of education at two different points of the educational pipeline – secondary school and tertiary level while looking for correlations between the two. I will then set these findings against global masculinity theories. My three research questions are:

1. What are your views on the importance and place of university education generally and for Samoan males?
2. Does Faasamoa (being Samoan) have any influence on your decision-making process regarding education and how you perceive its value?
3. Drawing from the responses gathered in Questions 1 and 2, to what extent did students' views align with Masculinity theory.

I have chosen a qualitative research approach for this study because I am seeking to understand Samoan male students perspectives and draw from their experiences. As Marshall and Rossman (1999) confirm, qualitative inquiry and initial curiosities for research come from real world observations emerging from the interplay of the researcher's direct experience, tacit theories, political commitments, interest in practice and growing scholarly interests (p. 25). The exploration of multifaceted and contextualised social interactions enabled by a qualitative approach assists increased understanding of views shared. In addition, a qualitative approach enables me to set my perceptions and understandings alongside those of the participants.

To Talanoa (Vaiolleti, 2006) with students and to be given the privilege of listening to their stories was imperative to understanding their perspectives. Engaging in Talanoa enabled me to reflect on their journeys. This was critical to hear their voice and to understand their perspectives of school as stated by Singh and Sinclair (2001), "It is important to draw on an analysis of students' narratives of schooling in order to contribute to systematic understandings of 'which pedagogies might make a difference, for which clientele of students, and in which contexts'" (p. 73).

Because I am Samoan, I have chosen to focus this research on Samoan male students only, rather than adopting a 'Pan-Pacific' approach. Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau (2001) agree and share their perspective on the continuous use of the term Pacific:

There is no generic 'Pacific community' but rather Pacific peoples who align themselves variously and at different times along ethnic geographic church groups. Therefore, it is important that these various contexts of Pacific communities are

clearly defined and demarcated in the research process (p.7).

Anae et al also emphasises the disempowering effect that grouping all Pacific peoples into one research group has:

Closely related to this is the fact that the assumptions and power relations underpinning the use of generic models has effectively ignored or devalued the understandings, beliefs and practices which Pacific peoples bring to the research process and which could have added to the pool of knowledge from which creative solutions could be made (Finau, 2006; Smith, 2004). As a result, research which could have been a mutually enriching, knowledge-sharing experience has proved to be disempowering. (p. 80)

Aims are to carry out group and individual Talanoa with participants from students in their final year at secondary school and with male students at tertiary level in Auckland. Given data showing increased intermarriage of Pacific peoples in New Zealand (Callister, Potter & Didham 2007 p. 4). It is likely that my sample will comprise of Samoan and 'other' or of mixed ethnicity.

## **Significance of the Study**

Firstly, the 2013 Census confirms that Samoans form almost half of the Pacific population in New Zealand and comprise 3.6% of the total population of New Zealand. In between 2006 and 2013, the population increased by 30% (2013 Census, Statistics New Zealand n.d.) The Samoan people as a group have the following characteristics:

- A higher birth rate than the national population, because of this they also have a higher number of children per family.
- The Samoan population overall is therefore very youthful and expected to grow.
- The majority of Samoans in New Zealand are New Zealand born.

The increasing Pasifika populations coupled with an aging European population, indicates Pacific communities will be major contributors to the New Zealand economy in the future. These statistics confirm there is an urgency to address issues relating to Samoan male success and educational participation, which reinforces the clear need to engage with key stakeholders such as the government, schools and social services to improve policy, enhance educational achievement and develop specific support services that focus directly on improving the lives of Pacific peoples. This will assist with generating targeted change for the Pacific community overall.

Secondly, the positive relationship between education, economic and social participation, and quality of life indicators suggest there is a critical need for the enhancement of educational achievement by Samoan males.

Thirdly, this study will also add to the current body of knowledge on male educational achievement in New Zealand providing a specific Samoan data and strategies, which will enhance Samoan and Pacific learners to attain increased educational success. This can lead to improved participation in the 'knowledge economy' as positive contributors to New Zealand society. The

tertiary education system has a vital role providing for a skilled and productive workforce that meet the demands of its stakeholders (Tertiary Education Commission, 2010).

Lastly, this research also adds to Global debates about minority groups' educational achievement, specifically males from these groups and their low-participation in higher education. Steady education failure rates leave men in a systematically unjust position that is difficult to escape from (Jennings and Marvin 2005, Jackson and Moore 2006, Saenz and Pojuan 2008, Noguera 2003)

In summary, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the experience of Samoan male students in the New Zealand education system and to evaluate if 'cultural factors' influence their learning journey. This research highlights the value of applying a Samoan gender lens to educational outcomes and the likelihood of the need for ethnic specific strategies and solutions.

## **Structure of Thesis**

This thesis comprises six chapters and is in the following order:

Chapter 1 Introduction: An overview of the research topic, its importance, the research purpose and aims.

Chapter 2 Literature review: a critical review of literature that contributes to this research; these are organised under five sub-headings: Culture and Education, Faasamoa, Male participation in education – a global perspective, Ministry of Education reports and policies and finally Masculinity.

Chapter 3 Research design and methodology: this will outline the qualitative research method used and the use of Appreciative inquiry. Because this research focuses on Samoan male students, the Talanoa methodology was selected as the most suitable research approach.

Chapter 4 Findings: This chapter gives permission to the student's experiences and voices regarding their experience of education at two points of the education pipeline, secondary school followed by tertiary level.

Chapter 5 Discussion: This chapter highlights and discusses the findings from engaging in Talanoa with my two participant groups. These responses are in reference to my three research questions. The results are then aligned against literature provided in chapter 2.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: This chapter provides a summation of my main findings of this research; it also outlines contribution to the literature and finally areas for the future.

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

O le tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu ma tala, a o le tama a manu e fafaga i fuga o laau.

The offspring of men are fed with words, but the offspring of birds are fed with seeds.

### Introduction

I see the Samoan alagaupu above as a representative of the education journey for Samoan children. Samoans traditionally pass down knowledge orally, with words full of custom and purpose. An example of this is the matai; a matai will use words to deliver an eloquent speech to guests, the village, or another important formal occasion. Such oratory elegance and skill is acquired by listening, observing, and practice. Faasamoa and one's faasinomaga is imbedded in the deep meanings and connections nurtured through words and actions.

The focus of my literature review for this study was on four main areas. Firstly, culture and education, specifically the Faasamoa and how this might influence Samoan males' educational experiences in New Zealand today; Next, current data on the educational experiences of Samoan male students as highlighted in research and Ministry of Education reports. I will then conclude with a review of masculinity theory as a baseline for examining whether and how this may influence Samoan males' attitudes to education.

### *Does Culture Impact Education?*

Because this research is exploring for a relationship between culture (Faasamoa) and educational outcomes, a definition of culture is necessary. Weiss, Kreider, Lopez & Chatman (2005) define culture as:

A set of values, norms, beliefs and symbols that define what is acceptable to a given society, are shared by and transmitted across members of that society and dictate behavioural transactions within that society. (p. 137)

Masemann (2003) proposes culture refers to all aspects of life, including the mental, social, linguistic, and physical forms of culture. It refers to ideas people have, relationships between family members and with larger social institutions, language, symbols, art and music. It also refers to the relationship people have with their physical surroundings and use of technology (p. 113). Ferguson et al (2008) notes a distinction between culture and ethnicity:

...ethnic groups are essentially social and political rather than cultural. Traditional customs are used as idioms and as mechanisms for group alignment... ethnic groups call upon their cultural distinctiveness, not out of conservatism or traditionalism but rather as a tool for maximising group interests.... (p. 8)

A question often raised in educational research is whether and how does culture or ethnicity affect ones approach to learning and participation in education. There is clearly a need to give these

questions more urgent focus, especially given that education today must cater and engage with students from differing cultures and ethnicities. Nasir and Hand (2006) explain the struggle to truly understand this relationship and that the underachievement is often blamed on the students themselves, without considering other impacting factors:

Understanding the links between race, culture, and learning has been a core issue in education and educational psychology. There is a large body of research, spanning many different traditions, that has struggled to make sense of this intersection in ways that have often positioned underachievement of minority students as the problem and has sought to both explain its genesis and offer possible solutions. (p. 449)

### *Sociocultural Theory*

Lantolf (2000) refers to Vygotsky's (1978) pioneering reorientation of learning theory, which drew attention to sociocultural factors affecting learning. This enabled researchers to look at the interplay of other factors such as culture and socioeconomic influences, Lantolf highlights how as humans we utilise different artifacts or tools to establish relationships between ourselves and what we learn from our worldly surroundings:

We also use symbolic tools, or signs, to mediate and regulate our relationships with others, ourselves and thus change the nature of these relationships. Physical as well as symbolic (or psychological) tools are artifacts created by human culture(s) over time and are made available to succeeding generations... Included among symbolic tools are numbers, arithmetic systems, music, art and above all language. As with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or mediated, relationship between ourselves and the world. (Lantolf, 2000, p. 1)

Nasir & Hand (2006) support Vygotsky's approach adding that while there is considerable research on the influence of culture and social factors impacting educational outcomes, there is still less understanding about the interaction of these factors and how this affects children learning outcomes. Gauvain (2008) agrees noting that Vygotsky's approach emphasizes how the social world is instrumental in the development and use of these mediational means. The contributions of the social and cultural experience provides and supports the development of human intellectual functioning. (p. 405). One's culture and ethnicity is central to what Vygotsky's labels as 'cultural tools' and the most important cultural tool is language. Language is the way humans communicate and share social meaning.

In summary, individuals relate with one another in social situations (such as families) and this is where they learn to communicate and convey meaning. A person's development cannot be fully recognised by a study of the individual alone. There must be an examination of the external social world in which that person's life has developed. Sociocultural theory recognises the inclusion of culture, cultural experiences and how these can influence a person's acquisition of language. Language impacts the way a person obtains knowledge, interacts with that knowledge and how these tools fundamentally influence learning and development.

Vygotskys (1978) proposed that culture is continuously being created and re-created. This notion of culture as a dynamic process resonates with the situation of Samoan youth in New Zealand today. For example, how do New Zealand born Samoans learn Faasamoa and what are other influences? Macpherson (1997) comments:

New Zealand-born Pacific peoples are educated in a system that stresses the language and values of palagi society... As a consequence, fluency in their Pacific language and knowledge of their island's social structure varies for the New Zealand-born and raised generations... While these young children consider themselves Samoans, and identify publicly as Samoan, the content and style of their 'Samoanness' varies within the group and differs in quite significant ways from their parents' 'Samoanness'. (p. 94)

Vygotsky (1978) suggestion that culture as a system of meaning is continuously being created and re-created also links to the scope of traditional Samoan culture, and the ever changing dynamics of the New Zealand born Samoan and of culture being learnt, acquired and practised in Aotearoa. Tupuola (2004) refers to the research of Krebbs, which discusses the ever-changing dynamics for diasporic communities; she refers to this as the concept of edge-walking. This involves the transitory and ever-changing positions of minority youth:

...An edge-walker is resilient to cultural shifts and able to maintain continuity wherever he or she goes, walking the edge between...cultures in the same persona. (p. 90)

Tupuola states Pasifika youth are undeniably edge-walkers, the cultural boundaries they navigate during their identity development involve significant global forces and effects.

Kwauk (2016) provides a different point of view, she highlights in today's modern society there is a critical need for Samoans to have the ability to speak the English language, a tool needed to enable Samoans exposure to a global world:

One's capacity to speak in English not only indicates one's prior exposure to things global, it also demonstrates one's level of preparation for engaging a world beyond Samoa. Not being able to converse in English, however, revealed one's parochialism as well as one's lack of preparation for a transnational future. For many, speaking English represents the line between mediocrity and success. (p. 652)

Research on the experience of New Zealand born Samoans has identified cultural identity as an ongoing issue that many face. Anae (1998) looked at the identity journey of New Zealand born Samoan youth and noted that this can include various stages of internal and external opposition. Similarly Tiatia (1998) refers to the identity journey for NZ born Samoans Tiatia (1998) says this cohort often feel they are 'caught between cultures, feeling shunned from New Zealand society for being different, and in Samoan circles being labelled a foreigner.

## **Faasamoa and Gendered Roles**

As Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) states, Faasamoa was a holistic system encapsulating firstly spiritual social and physical needs into one integrated system. The legitimacy of the chiefly system of rule

was its sacred link to the creator deity Tagaloa o le lagi (p. 66). The role of the matai (chiefly systems) represented families ancestral Gods and chiefly power included supernatural forces. Fairbairn-Dunlop highlights the chiefly system represented links to the Gods, which greatly influenced human activity. This spiritual link to the Gods was the presence of sacredness in every day life.

Aiono (1992) refers to the Faasamoa as a system of strong links as demonstrated in the Faamatai, which denotes all facets of life: economic, political, social and cultural. As well reported, gendered elements are embedded in the Faasamoa social structure, which influence Samoan males' and females interests, approaches and participation in education. Faasamoa has been defined in many ways by different sources, Schmidt (2010) says that Samoan identities are predominantly socio-centric and relational, and take place as a series of contextual, situational and collectivist arrangements. Schmidt refers to Faasamoa as consisting of the psychological, socio-cultural and community practices that incorporate and influence their everyday lives. Mulitalo (1998) states that Faasamoa is the unmitigated framework of Samoan culture, including both visible and invisible characteristics. The Faasamoa sets the foundation of principles, beliefs, and values that influence the behaviour and attitudes of Samoan people. Larchy (2008) states the Samoan village consisted of a household or a group of households (au'aiga, pui'aiga) that are deeply linked to each other by bloodline and through their support of the matai:

Any society is a complex organism but Samoa's is more complex than most. From top to bottom, it is shot through with a nuanced criss-cross of ranks and statuses, each of which carries a title that also serves the holder as a personal name. The titleholder, as is abundantly illustrated in the present instance, is thereby identified not just as an individual but as one who occupies a particular niche, and with it a role, within a family or district or in the nation. (p. 11)

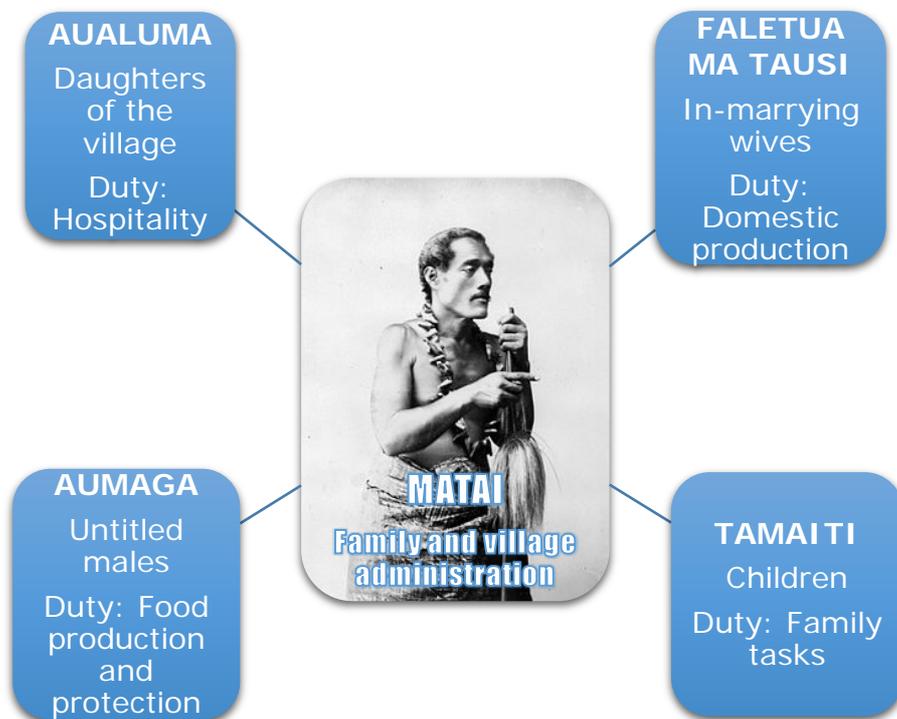
### *The Faamatai*

Huffer and So'o (2005) state in the Samoan polity today, the indigenous institution of the matai (chiefs) continues to play a pivotal role in governance. In determining leadership, the Faasamoa and the faamatai are the most influential factors. (p. 311).

The Faamatai (chiefly systems) are parts of the socio-metric wheel on which Samoan society revolves (Aiono, 1986). The faamatai indicates the division of different groups within the village, each group are assigned different village tasks, areas of responsibility and village maintenance. As Huffer and So'o (2005) state, the Faamatai system involves important concepts such as pule (authority, power); soalaupule (joint decision-making); 'autasi (consensus); alofa (love, compassion, care); fa'aaloalo (respect); mamalu (dignity); fa'autaga, töfä, and moe: which refer to wisdom (p. 312). Aiono (1996) outlines the Faamatai social structure:

The faamatai arranged the socio-economic and political groups within the nu'u in a way that mirrors the philosophy of unity. The five groups – the Faamatai, the aumaga, faletua ma tausí, the aualuma (tamaita'i), and the matai exist side by side and operate in concentric connections of blood-ties and marital reciprocity (p.31).

**Figure 2: The Faamatai**



Source: adapted from Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) and Aiono (1986)

Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) refers to the Faamatai as an ideological framework of the village. As shown above, women were considered the holders of mana (sacred power) while men held more secular and utilitarian power known as pule (p. 72). This division created a sacred and secular separation of roles within the village. It was essential for everyone in the village to understand this to contribute to the smooth administration of village affairs and create unity. The understanding of mana and pule is also demonstrated in the sacred bond between brothers and sisters known as the feagaiga. The responsibilities given to females and males were assigned according to their mana and pule; hence, girls were closely guarded and looked after where families preferred to have them in close proximity to the home. Women were in charge of producing traditional artifacts and taking care of tamaiti (children). The sphere of men was the production of food, defence and warfare. (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010) In Faasamoa, men were commonly the matai and heads of the aiga (women were also matai but were the minority) Vaai (1999) outlines the Matai as the quintessence of Samoan leadership:

As the primary instruments of traditional authority matai are the epitome of leadership in families, villages, districts and the country as a whole... a matai is a complete and separate entity that speaks in specific vocabulary, that behaves in a distinctive manner and is dedicated and committed to the achievement and maintenance of peace (p.30).

Matai also needed to possess in-depth knowledge not only of his family history but also the family place within the chiefly ranking systems.

## *Samoan Oral Traditions – Transmission of Knowledge*

Efi (2005) emphasises that for oral cultures like the traditional Samoan culture, rituals, dances, chants, songs, honorifics, family genealogies and names of places, peoples and events were tools for recording indigenous history (p. 62). These were learnt and reinforced in everyday life events. The telling of stories are specific in communities where the transmission of information through generations is only orally. The Samoan community continues its robust cultural and oral traditions even in the face of increasing levels of development (Nemeth and Cronin, 2009).

Samoans were taught their gafa or faaulupega through oral traditions, older matai would teach younger matai through the sharing of traditional myths and legends. Whether spoken or sung these stories carried with them the histories of ancestors gone before. This oral transmission of knowledge was vastly different from westernised forms of learning conducted through reading and writing. Taisi (2008) refers to this as traditional knowledge transfer.

### *Summary*

For Samoans their total belief in sacred links to the creator Tagaloa o le lagi, support of the Faamatai chiefly system, fulfilling their roles within the village context and the importance of these linking to mana and pule, the traditional transmission of knowledge and how this was connected to purposeful learning. The understanding of all of these factors supported them to fulfil their roles within the village and to understand their place within it as Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) states:

The goals of education as of society as a whole, were to learn the behaviour that would appease the gods and spirits, who were the givers of knowledge and security. Consequently, the important learning in the Faasamoa concerned how to act rather than epistemological learning. (p. 67)

My study challenges this assumption in the New Zealand learning context.

## **Male Participation in Education – A Global Perspective**

The shift in gender and education research or the “boy turn.” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003) highlights what has been described as the boy dilemma in education. The ABC of Gender Equality in Education report (OECD, 2015) shows disparities between male/female performances in education across OECD countries (statistics were from a combination of secondary and tertiary school results). In 2012:

- 14% of boys and 9% of girls did not attain the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) baseline level of proficiency in any of the three core subjects.
- 34% of women across OECD countries had attained a tertiary education, compared with 30% of men.
- In 2012, more young women (87%) than young men (81%) had graduated from an upper secondary programme.
- On average, 54% of graduates from upper secondary general programmes were women and 43% were men of that age group. This trend was even more

striking among students younger than 25 (OECD, 2015, p.23). This data was notably not disaggregated by ethnicity.

### *Low Participation Rates of Males from Ethnic Minorities*

In seeking answers to the question of low male participation, the ABC of Gender equality in education report (OECD, 2015) states that many boys said they do not fit within the school system and that school clashes with their interests. As often documented, boys can feel alienated and unmotivated to work in school. Some resolutions in the OECD study suggested that for reading, students should be given a greater choice in what they read. This was especially the case for boys as they are less likely to read for enjoyment every day, are less likely to read fiction and were less likely to read a range of materials (p. 155). It was argued that having a selection of materials that boys may be interested in rather than a prescribed text may increase interest in reading, and for young boys, any reading is better than no reading at all.

Noguera (2003) found that the educational performance by ethnic minorities such as African American males are impacted by the hardships they experienced as minorities within the larger majority. Furthermore, data on important quality-of-life indicators suggested that African-American males continue to be in a state of despair. Not only that, Saenz & Ponjuan (2009) propose a similar situation of despair occurs for Latino men in the U.S. that even though the total number of Latino youth attending college and gaining degrees has increased in recent years, the number of Latino males is declining relative to their female peers. KewalRamani (2007) highlights status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the U.S. He confirms there is a lack of males from ethnic minorities entering university education when compared to females from ethnic minorities.

In noting how critical it is for African American males to participate in higher education, especially how this can create a vehicle for systematic change, Jackson and Moore (2006) state that the research on African-American male participation has been limited and fragmented:

Literature neglects to examine collectively the educational experiences of African American males throughout the educational pipeline... Previous works on African American males have primarily examined their challenges from a myopic point of view while focusing on one aspect of the educational pipeline - e.g. school counsellors, college students or university presidents. (p. 202)

In addition to the importance of a holistic rather than a myopic approach to researching male educational achievement, a second point by Jackson and Moore (2006) reaffirmed the importance of looking at two different stages of the educational pipeline. This strategy of exploring what happens at different stages in the education pipeline rather than focusing on one stage only can create a broader perspective of what is taking place at each stage, and how this affects the next stage. This strategy is also supported by Roderick (2003) who outlines the significance of understanding what happens to students as they move through various stages of learning, such as high school and other transitions:

What happens as adolescents move through their early high school years that could explain declines in motivation and school engagement and increasing divergence between gender and racial groups? There is an emerging body of evidence that school transitions are critical points in students' school careers (p. 539).

This supported my research stance, looking at both the high school experience of Samoan males, then university experiences.

## **Looking at Different Stages of the Education Pipeline**

Recent literature on the achievement of Pacific Island male students in New Zealand has come largely from postgraduate theses; there has also been a specific focus on how Pacific students learn and their attitudes towards education. (Thaman 2004, Manuatu 2000, Amituanai-Toloa, 2004) However, there has been less attention on the influence of culture and the impact of gendered roles for Pacific students.

### *Secondary Schools*

Research by Evans (2011) explored the teaching practices that supported high achievement by Pacific males in a single sex high school. He investigated pedagogy and aimed to highlight what enhances Pacific male student success. His participants included both students and teachers and interviews were conducted. Three findings from his research confirmed that Pacific boys preferred specific methods of learning as outlined below:

1. Pacific boys clearly preferred group work as opposed to individual reading and writing; lessons that kept them involved and active as opposed to self-directed tasks; and where possible hands on activities as opposed to simply completing written tasks such as assessments. (p. 71).
2. Pacific boys enjoyed sharing knowledge and experiences within the classroom context and working together. This concept of 'togetherness' is bound in Pacific students' cultural identity and if teachers can incorporate it into lessons then students appear to be more comfortable and more willing to participate and contribute. (p. 72)
3. Pacific students' appreciated mutual respect. The findings of the teacher interviews found that if the boys in their care believed that respect existed in the classroom they were more likely to engage and thus achieve. (p. 73)

Evans findings confirmed Pacific boys enjoyed learning collectively, enjoyed Talanoa with fellow students to confirm their learning and appreciated reading literature that identifies with who they are as Pacific peoples. It is important to note however that this research was of Pan Pacific students and were not disaggregated by ethnicity. This is often the case with Pacific statistics and signals as assumption that all Pacific are a single and homogenized community. I do however agree with the comment by Evans (2011) who states there is a plethora of literature available

regarding strategies to improve Pacific education overall and, there is a considerable amount of literature focused on the the minimal success of boys in education generally. However, there is a prominent gap in joining these two enquiries together.

Rimoni (2016) focused specifically on the educational experience of Tama Samoa in secondary school. She looked at their sense of belonging and future aspirations and how this influenced educational outcomes. Rimoni found that these Samoan youth were entrenched in a mix of social, economic and political developments, which influenced their participation within education. In addition, statistically these students have continually been represented as socio-economically underprivileged. She asks what we truly know about Samoan male learners

Yet what is known about these tama Samoa? What is known about the living, breathing, vibrant tama Samoa who make up the statistics on Pacific educational failure? What is known about the complex, nuanced, and finely calibrated identities that sit beneath the bleak figures and graphs about educational underachievement? (Rimoni, 2016, p. 12).

In Rimoni's view, Pacific male identities were seriously impacted by their cultural upbringing and mainstream westernized influences as well (p. 35). The study presented key features regarding positive experiences of tama Samoa within high school. These were acknowledging tama Samoa and their multiple identities, reinforcing a sense of belonging daily (including peers and academic staff) and that socialization within school assist students to make future decisions. AS noted, both Rimoni (2016) and Evans (2011) focus on one stage of the education pipeline. As indicated, my study highlights two stages of the education pipeline.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (2013) has also highlighted the influence of Pacific youth connecting with secondary school through the utilization of joining Polynesian cultural groups. Despite high retention levels of Pacific students are doing 'just enough' to pass exams and certificate endorsements lag significantly behind all other groups (p. 440). In her view, Pacific research has been culturally restricted and has not acknowledged the robust relationship between cultural identity and educational achievement. She highlights that Pacific students need to be secure in their Pacific identity to enhance further learning. Participation in these groups builds youth sense of self-esteem, belonging and wellbeing, which in turn foster positive school achievement and confidence to participate in other learning spaces (p. 442). The research showed that these boys that joined Poly groups had (a) higher educational achievement in NCEA results.

Outcomes from this research confirmed that participants saw joining Polynesian cultural groups at school provided:

- A safe space for students to engage in cultural activities and processes, which contributed to creating a sense of belonging and cultural identity
- Taught student how things are done in the Pacific such as Faapasifika
- Contributed to educational success through the relationship between membership in the club and educational outcomes.
- Demonstrated a teaching/mentoring model that connected students to wider community engagement. (p. 453)

## *University*

Fanenes (2006) research focused on academic writing issues faced by New Zealand born Samoan students at tertiary level. In her view, Samoan students experienced a lack of adequate preparation in high school to meet the demands of academic studies at this level. She highlights the lack of reading as important in early years for Pacific children, and that absence of books within the home contributes to this. Fanene felt having the ability to be engaged in reading at an early age would assist in meeting the complex demands of academic writing in later schooling years, and especially at university level. Fanene (2006) also highlights the role of Samoan parents and their responsibility to the early stages of their children's education. Samoan parents reasoned that while it was their duty as parents to meet the financial and material costs of educating their children, the responsibility of teaching their children academic knowledge and skills was that of the teacher and school. (p. 43). Parents would encourage students to 'do well' in school, but they also expected children to be committed to extended family, church and other commitments which at times took priority over or clashed with school work (p. 44).

Utumapu-McBride, Esera, Toia, Tone-Schuster and So'oaemalelagi (2008) research reviewed Samoan students learning styles and their impact on their achievement in education. They asked which cultural practices supported Samoan students' achievement and which do not? For example, Faasamoa places high importance on faaaloalo and this can have a varying impact in the classroom. On one hand, students know to respect authority within school and to follow school rules and guidelines. On the other hand, it can also have an opposite effect where students do not feel it is their place to question authority. This can include asking the teacher questions or perhaps having a different point of view from the teacher, this may be seen as disrespectful. Utumapu et al confirms skills needed for success in education and the significant impact culture has on students learning experiences, which supports this research:

The literature clearly identifies the importance of the relationship between students and their lecturers and the environment in which learning is taking place. It also highlights the significance of communication skills, learning strategies and the external factors that often impact on students' success in their studies. The cultural background of students also influences the way in which learning is conducted and the form in which it is valued... (p. 155).

## **Ministry of Education Reports and Policies**

The MOE have produced a number of reports and publications since 2002 relating to Pacific education. I highlight three key documents to see what recommendations have been made and if data is provided that focuses on culture or gender, I will do this in chronological order starting from the oldest report to the newest.

### *1. Boys' Achievement - A Synthesis of the Data (2007)*

In this report, the aim was to provide an amalgamation of data focused on the educational achievement of boys in New Zealand. The aim of the report was to update the knowledge of boys' participation, achievement, and engagement in schooling, with a specific focus on secondary schooling. This was the first report of its kind by the MOE to a gender-specific focus.

The major concerns about Maori and Pacific boys' performance in education are highlighted in a summary of key findings. First are in regards to truancy levels, in addition Maori and Pacific boys had significantly higher levels of being stood-down, suspended, expelled and in gaining early leaving exemptions. Second Maori and Pacific boys were most likely be involved in reading recovery programmes. Lastly Maori and Pacific boys are less likely than other groups to leave school with university entrance or higher qualifications (p. 4)

Although this MOE report mentions 'cultural differences' this refers to the cultural differences and expectations between the student and the culture of the school (or what is expected of them) This does not refer to 'ethnic cultural differences' so dismisses the opportunity to identify what approaches work best for these unique cultural groups. Regrettably, since the release of this report, there has been no update by the Ministry of Education or any further gender-specific reports relating to the educational outcomes of boys in the New Zealand education system.

### *2. An Analysis of Recent Pasifika Education Research Literature to Inform Improved Outcomes for Pasifika Learners (MOE, 2013)*

The purpose of the review was to summarise evidence across a ten-year timeframe regarding approaches linked with educational outcomes for Pacific learners. Five key areas were identified:

1. Governance and leadership
2. Families and community engagement
3. Literacy and numeracy
4. Effective teaching
5. Transitions

While there was a focus on culture and gender within the category 'Families and community engagement,' a number of factors were raised recognising connections between Pacific communities and tertiary institutions are critical to educational success. It was also noted schools needed to be proactive bridging the 'cultural divide' between schools and in this case, the Samoan community (p. 16). A specific mention of the Samoan community was encouraging to see, however, for the gap to be minimised, there must be an understanding of what Faasamoa (Samoan culture) actually is in order to establish what the cultural divide actually is. For example, a definition of Samoan culture would have been valuable so that all involved in the education of

these students can understand the cultural and social context the Samoan student experiences daily.

Previously, the MOE state in the Pasifika Education Plan Monitoring Report (2009) the importance of engagement and participation of Pacific peoples within education, also acknowledging 'diverse world views.' At the same time, the term 'Pasifika' is used as a generic term to describe all Pacific peoples. The following statement made by the Ministry of Education (2009) is incongruent in relation to the right that peoples have to 'self-identify' (Smith, 1996). There is no one single Pasifika culture:

Pasifika people have multiple worldviews and diverse cultural identities. They are able to operate and negotiate successfully through spiritual, social, political, cultural and economic worlds. Success in education requires harnessing Pasifika diversity within an enabling education system that works for young people, their families and communities. This requires the education system, leadership and curricula to start with the Pasifika learner at the centre, drawing on strong cultures, identities and languages' (p.3).

### *The Pasifika Education Plan 2013-2017*

The aims of the Pasifika Education Plan (PEP) 2013-2017 are to increase the numbers of Pacific children enrolling and participating in education, also to increase literacy, numeracy, and achievement of qualifications in schooling. These will result in higher participation and completion of qualifications in tertiary education, the report notes to achieve this:

Five out of five Pasifika learners will be participating, engaging and achieving in education, secure in their identities, languages and cultures and contributing fully to Aotearoa New Zealand's social, cultural and economic wellbeing (p. 3).

The overarching goal is to accelerate literacy and numeracy achievement and to ensure students gain NCEA Level 2 qualifications as a bridge to further education and employment. The PEP say they will achieve this by doing the following:

Create PEP activities that ensure they are responding to the identities, languages and cultures of each Pasifika group, this includes the PEP acknowledging ... the various knowledge's that are Faasamoa, Faka-tonga, Faka-Tokelau, Faka-Niue, akano'anga kuki airani and Vaka-Viti. (p. 3).

Underpinning the PEP is the believed right of Pacific learners to be included appropriately in all processes of education, acknowledging the right to "be themselves" and to "see themselves" reflected in the classroom environment. This plan highlights the need to take a closer look at culture but does not outline exactly what cultures are referred to and their unique difference and similarities. Also critical to this is the need to include a specific gender focus and increase the success rates of Samoan male students (since this is the largest cohort).

## Summary

In summary, there has been little focus on in depth research in consideration of culture and gender across literature regarding Pacific achievement in education. Instead, the usual factors repeatedly examined such as students' educational capability and skill, teaching, pedagogy, and family and community support. Culture and gender must be included to generate new approaches and solutions to this phenomenon. The challenge now is for government agencies, schools and communities to identify other such factors that impact Samoan male achievement and to imbed this knowledge into schools and classrooms across to New Zealand to create a truly inclusive education system.

## Masculinity

There has been a plethora of studies of masculinity and masculinity theory, attributes and behaviours. The considerable debate as to whether masculinity is socially constructed or is biological is acknowledged but will not be discussed in this thesis. Instead, this study will focus on gendered roles learnt and practised within the Faasamoa. However, a brief account of some of the literature is presented, for example in answering the question what does it mean to be masculine? Franklin (2012) focuses highlights stereotypical traits as shown below:

**Table 5:** Stereotypical traits

<b>Stereotypic Traits</b>	
	<b>Male-Valued Traits</b>
<b>Aggressive</b>	<b>Feelings not easily hurt</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>Adventurous</b>
<b>Unemotional</b>	<b>Makes decisions easily</b>
<b>Hides emotions</b>	<b>Never cries</b>
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Acts as a leader</b>
<b>Easily influenced</b>	<b>Self-confident</b>
<b>Dominant</b>	<b>Not uncomfortable about being aggressive</b>
<b>Likes math and science</b>	<b>Ambitious</b>
<b>Not excitable in a minor crisis</b>	<b>Able to separate feelings from ideas</b>
<b>Active</b>	<b>Not dependent</b>
<b>Competitive</b>	<b>Not conceited about appearance</b>
<b>Logical</b>	<b>Thinks men are superior to women</b>
<b>Worldly</b>	<b>Talks freely about sex with men</b>
<b>Skilled in business</b>	
<b>Direct</b>	
<b>Knows the way of the world</b>	

Source: Franklin (2012, p. 5).

In Table 5 above, male behaviours are classified as aggressive decision makers, competitive, logical and scientific thinkers and are not inclined to show their emotions or expected to act in

that way. By way of contrast, females are usually defined as and expected to be the opposite. If they do demonstrate these behaviours, females are then described as 'acting like males'.

It is critical to note that there is no assumption being made that all men meet these characteristics or that they feel it necessary to do so. As Carrigan, Connell, & Lee (1985) state, all men live, engage and perceive their manliness in different ways:

The very idea of a "role" implies a recognizable and accepted standard, and sex role theorists posit just such a norm to explain sexual differentiation. Society is organized around a pervasive differentiation between men's and women's roles, and these roles are internalized by all individuals. There is an obvious common-sense appeal to this approach. However, the first objection to be made is that it does not actually describe the concrete reality of people's lives. Not all men are "responsible" fathers, nor "successful" in their occupations, and so on. Most men's lives reveal some departure from what the "male sex role" is supposed to prescribe (p. 578).

Earlier work by Brannon (1976) aligns with Franklin's list (2012). Set in the 1970s noted that men should be active, achievement oriented, dominant, strong and self-controlled. To summarise, Brannon suggested the male role was underpinned by four principles:

1. No Sissy Stuff: Males must avoid anything seen as vaguely feminine.
2. The Big Wheel: Traditional expectations demand that men be successful in all they undertake, especially as breadwinners.
3. The Sturdy Oak: This aspect of the expectations men encounter is best captured by the phrase "the strong silent type." They must never show any weaknesses.
4. Give'Em Hell: This dimension underscores a man's love of adventure, danger, and violence. A man is considered to be dull unless he is willing to take risks.

As noted, I will reflect on Franklin's stereotypical traits and Brannon's masculinity scale after listening to my participants. I will compare their experiences and responses to see whether they resemble any traits as noted by these authors; however, the main theoretical framework I will apply will be the work of Connell (1996) which I will discuss later in this chapter.

### *Masculinity and Education*

Klein, Richardson, Grayson, Fox, Kramarae, Pollard and Dwyer (2014) explain gender differences as a result of existing systems of social hierarchy. Furthermore that expectations of male/female behaviours have a tremendous impact on educational structures including teacher – pupil relationships:

Gender is a social hierarchy that many use as an excuse for disparities in treatment and judgements, therefore correcting the effects of this for girls and boys, and women and men in education. The settings requires not so much the pinpointing of sameness and differences but (a) highlighting inequalities (b) search for remedies and (c) determination to achieve equity. Yet

much of the research in the content areas is still rooted in the paradigm of sex-based differences. (p. 232).

In discussing the curriculum and teaching of English, Alloway and Gilbert (2010) found that male students viewed English as feminine and as threatening to their masculinity, they note some of the tensions below:

Some boys may reject the requirement to engage in the feminised practices of literacy as the friction with their masculinity is too keenly experienced. With respect to boys' performance in secondary English, Wayne Martino (1995) claims what it means to be a man and how to behave as a man are produced within specific institutional apparatuses and involves a denial of expressing emotions and an avoidance of intimacy and this appears to be at the basis of boys' rejection of English as a girls' subject (p. 56).

### *New Research on Masculinity and Gender Strategies for Schools*

According to Connell (1996), hegemonic masculinity is highly visible as a representation of the privilege men have over women. Connell sees hegemonic masculinity as generally accepted by society and condemns any signs of frailty or emotional vulnerability. Hegemonic masculinity is concerned with the ways that:

... Particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance (p. 592).

The mass media plays a huge role in sustaining this masculine image as does popular culture that, he proposes treats men as a homogenous group. It is viewed that all men share the same masculine characteristics based on 'it's just 'boys being boys.' An example of such hegemonic masculinity or highly visible masculinity is seen for example in the case of U.S. Samoan gridiron players in the national football league (NFL) Henderson (2011) outlines the narratives focussing on the physical size and strength of these Samoan males. Furthermore, that in dominant popular discourse, many cases reference the archetypes of Samoan masculinity, men are either the football player, the wrestler, the bouncer or bodyguard, or the gangster (p. 277). Henderson also emphasised the importance of the U.S. media presenting an accurate portrayal of Samoan males rather than 'myth creation' or stereotypes and he claims these prevailing mythic representations must be exposed, engaged, and examined.

Interestingly Samoan researcher Uperesa (2014) described the increase of Samoan participation and success in American football as a complex manifestation of imperial legacies, constrained economic opportunities, and socioeconomic discrimination underpinned by what he saw to be the faasamoa priority to fulfilling duties, and obligation (p. 284).

Secondly, Connell (1996) argues that there are multiple masculinities and there is no one pattern of masculinity found anywhere. Different cultures and different periods of history construct masculinity differently for example some cultures make heroes of soldiers and give esteem to

violence for example in defending ones country and, displays of patriotism. There are for example difference in masculinity between races (American men and African men) between classes (working class and middle class) and between the rich and poor.

Thirdly, as described by Connell (1996) the concept of collective masculinity relates back to the gendered structures of society and how certain patterns of conduct are classified as either masculine or feminine. These structures are integrated incorporated and maintained in daily life but also including multiple organisations such as corporations, armies, governments and schools. Collective masculinity also strongly reinforced in media such as video games, music and music videos. This also takes place in sports where winning is seen to be the only acceptable option, as in the saying: “real men win; no one remembers who comes in second.”

### *Samoan Males and Masculinity*

There is a small amount of research relating directly to issues of Samoan masculinity and/or the understanding of the Samoan male role. Drawing on Talanoa with a group of older Samoan women, Anae, Fuamatu, Lima, Marriner, Park & Suaalii-Sauni (2000) found two main aspects of Samoan masculinity, first the Samoan male as a virile ‘stud’ and second as the protector and provider for his family. Some of the group emphasised that Samoan men were very chauvinistic and that their sexuality often led to adultery. This view was confirmed in a study by Park, Suaalii-Sauni, Anae, Lima, Fuamatu & Mariner (2002) which found that in the traditional Samoan context, male sexuality was relatively uninhibited and was seen to be a sign of *avi* or virility. However, for Samoan females, they were expected to refrain from any signs of *amio leaga* (negative individual impulses or behaviour) and to show more positively *amio teine* or *aga* (socially accepted and controlled behaviour for females). This shows the different expected and accepted behaviours between Samoan men and women in Samoa. In addition, while men were allowed to be away from home for lengthy periods, girls however needed to be kept closer to home to protect their virginity, which aligns with Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010). Maliko (2012) adds a further point that Samoan masculinity is directed more to ensuring the concern for a greater good of the collective, rather than personal gain:

Although Samoan masculinity also identifies with being powerful, strong, competent and in control, it does not identify with the individualistic hyper-masculine form... Instead, it identifies with the roles and responsibilities of the body—responsibilities for one’s family, village and church; it is a non-individualistic form of masculinity where duties and responsibilities are of immense importance. Duties entail action and repeated action defines gender, according to Butler (1990): —Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being (p. 44).

## Summary

This chapter has outlined a range of factors that are significant to the educational success of Samoan male students. These include cultural influence of the Faasamoa, how this might affect participation in the New Zealand education system. Specific Ministry of Education strategies and policies and finally masculinity. The literature reviewed for this research indicates that these critical factors have continually been dismissed and not considered as an important influential factor – specifically the impact of culture. There is a plethora of literature focused on Pacific education, and the poor academic performance of Pacific students, but there has not been a connection made between the two.

## CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A leai se gagana, ona leai lea o sa ta aganu'u,  
a leai la ta aganu'u/agaifanua, ona po lea o le nuu

If there is no language, then there is no culture,  
if there is no culture, then all the village will be in darkness

### Introduction

The Samoan alagaupu above highlights the connection between language and culture and the impact these have on ones view of the world. Traditional concepts and knowledge influences the lives of many Samoans today and form the foundation of an indigenous viewpoint. Especially noted is the distinctive transition for Samoan generations born in New Zealand moving from the village experience to the global metropolis. This research emphasises the fact that Samoan culture influences ones everyday interactions in life, from identity, to understanding ones place amongst the aiga, from meaningful learning of knowledge to practice as a skilled expert. In essence, if there is no language and no culture, if one has no identity of who they are as Samoan, then all else is lost.

This chapter will be organised three main parts; the first part will present the design of this research that outlines the use of methodological frameworks. I have selected Talanoa (Vaioloti 2006) and a focus on Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) these methodologies closely align with a Pacific worldview or the Faasamoa. The second part of this chapter will outline the research methods used and the process by which data was collected, analysed and reported. To conclude, part three will outline the ethical considerations and I will share my reflections on this research process.

For this study, it was critical to Talanoa with my participants and to learn about their lived experiences as learners and students. From this, I wanted to bring their thoughts and opinions to the forefront to understand the concept of success in education through their eyes as Samoan males. The Samoan male learner's perspective of education is a story that I believe has not yet been told, I believe their story to be an account of perseverance, ambition and untold possibility. Through these Talanoa, my aim is to engage, listen and observe; and to share with academic their academic journey with the aim of creating increased positive change for Samoan male students in education.

## Part 1: Research Design

### Qualitative

My aim was to capture Samoan males' experiences and expectations of education during their Year 13 at high school and those of tertiary students. For this reason, I chose to use a qualitative approach, which I saw as integral to the production of high-quality research. All qualitative researchers share a similar goal in that they desire a methodology that enables them to arrive at an understanding of a particular phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it, Hennink, Huttler and Bailey (2010) confirm:

Qualitative methods are used for providing an in-depth understanding of the research issues that embraces the perspectives of the study population and the context in which they live... these are useful for explaining people's beliefs and behaviour and for identifying the social or cultural norms of a culture or society (p. 10).

Crotty (1998) proposes the qualitative researcher's intent is to make sense of the meanings others have about the world. As human beings, we connect with the world and make sense of it established in our viewpoints from a historical and social standpoint. Crotty explains that when we are born, we are immersed into immeasurable meaning ordered by our experiences and culture. It is also critical to note that this understanding is also shaped by the researchers' own life experiences the researcher impacts the study simply through their own lived experiences including their culture, identity and beliefs, A researcher therefore does not enter research as an 'empty vessel.'

Jacob (1987) also highlights the importance of qualitative research regarding the context or setting. Research should take place in a natural setting so that the participant feels at ease and open to communicate freely. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) support this:

Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of a meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as case study, personal experience, life story, interview, cultural texts and describes routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (p. 4).

The vigour of qualitative research is its ability to reveal complex documented accounts of how people experience a given research issue. It provides and understanding of the human side of a subject including opposing behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships between individuals. Qualitative methods also enable and bring to light elusive factors, such as social norms, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, whose place in the research issue may not be instantly evident. I chose to use a qualitative approach because the aim of this research was to give voice to the participants.

## *Appreciative Inquiry*

In order to capture the lived experience of my Samoan male participants, I chose to apply the approach of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) describe it as (a) Valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems (b) To increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms include words such as valuing, prizing, esteeming, and honouring. (p. 2). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) outline AI in the following way:

Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question"... instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. (p. 3)

A.I. was precisely how I wanted to approach my research and more specifically my participants. Current statistics regarding the participation and achievement of Pacific males in education are overshadowed with connotations of failure, unsatisfactory levels, and deficit views with a pessimistic outlook towards the future. Anae (2010) highlights this:

The socio-economic positioning of Pacific peoples in New Zealand is gradually improving and there is a small but growing cohort of Pacific people, many of them NZ-born, who are upwardly mobile with middle-class incomes (Anae, 2004). However, the Pacific cohort of the New Zealand population is generally marked at the bottom of all social indicators (Macpherson et al., 2001) and it is clear that, as a whole, the cohort is marginalised especially in areas of health and education and in situations of crisis. As such, all efforts and links in terms of research programmes, evidence-based policy and service delivery must include focus on alleviating poverty and suffering. (p. 4-5)

My qualitative approach is finding the lens of a Pacific/Samoan world view.

## *The Pacific Worldview*

As well reported, Pacific peoples are deeply connected to who they are. Their identity as a person is located in the Pacific worldview, which sees a connection between the heart of people, social networks and links to natural resources such as the land. As discussed, the term "Pasifika" embodies the similarities between the beliefs and values of Pacific Island groups. Havea, as quoted in Suaalii-Sauni, Wendt, Fuamatu, Va'ai, Whaitiri and Filipo (2014) comments on what we do share, some similarities that tie us together as people from Oceania:

This is an expression of deep gratitude for the gifting of words. Koloa refers to both oral and material wealth. The expression is entrenched with meanings because the one who is being thanked is appreciated for both having and giving (ma'u) koloa (wealth)... The Richness (another meaning of koloa) of the cultures in Oceania is undeniable. There is richness or koloa across and within the cultures in each of the major groups – Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. ...Borrowing between our languages and our various ways of knowing and understanding, is also part of our Oceanic koloa. (p. 95-96)

Culture as a westernized concept as outlined by Hofstede (2001) is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category from another, it also determines the uniqueness of an individual, and the two interact. Faasamoa (Samoan culture) is a communal system based on a family, villages, districts, islands and country. It is a hierarchy in which everyone has a place and function based on status and rank. Faasamoa is based on relationships and the maintenance of those relationships, whether with family, community, or God; they embody a person physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally.

### *Talanoa*

This research will use a culturally sensitive method of discussion known as Talanoa (Vaiotei, 2006). I have chosen to use this method as Talanoa is not merely about 'data collection' but more of an engaged conversation, a discussion, an exchange of ideas or thinking, which is engaged in a reciprocal, respectful manner; identifying the *mana* (honour) of the information being shared, and the respect and appreciation shown to the person sharing.

Pasifika researchers Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu, & Finau (2001) have advocated the use of Pasifika research methodologies that are sensitive to contemporary Pacific contexts, advance Pacific issues and include the Pacific concepts of collective ownership. Vaiotei (2006) highlights that more recently there has been a substantial shift from traditional research approaches to a wider range of qualitative approaches that are closer to Pacific ways. Bishop and Glynn (1999) state that fundamental to this progress has been the recognition of the importance of meaning and interpretation of people's lives within their cultural context. Talanoa is a derivative of oral traditions. When applied correctly by researchers, it permits appropriate interaction with Pacific participants that generates more authentic knowledge. Manu'atu and Kepa (2002) prefer Talanoa as a qualitative, collaborative approach to research which permits continuity, legitimacy and the honour of culture. Smith (1999) highlights the necessity of indigenous methodologies and for a more ethical approach to the research:

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values, and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways and in a language that can be understood. This does not preclude writing for academic publications but is simply part of an ethical and respectful approach (p. 15).

The most common form of information exchange and discussion is the talanoa. When a talanoaga (meeting) takes place, it enables people to come together to mafuta (fellowship) to express their manatu (opinions). When considering the nature of customary Talanoa, Robinson and Robinson (2005) found it useful in their research to consider Talanoa in relation to the “four Ps” – place, process, participants and purpose. The main data to consider in a talanoa are listed below and I shall adhere to these principles:

- Place: where does this talk happen?
- Process: how do people interact with each other?
- Participants: who takes part and what roles do they play
- Who talks, who reports the outcome
- Purpose: why and when is this kind of talk used and who decides on the issue/s to be discussed

## **Part 2: Research Methods**

### *Sample*

In order to capture the stories and lived experiences of Samoan males in this research, I decided to incorporate talanoa with two different groups. Finding suitable participants to engage in any research is critical and ensures a rich narrative can take place between the researcher and participants. As Glasser (1978) states in the preliminary stages of a study, researchers should seek key groups which they hope will maximise the possibilities of obtaining robust information. The researcher aims to engage with people who have had first-hand experience of a particular phenomenon. For this research, I believed the experts were the students themselves. I purposefully chose them, as it was critical that the focus of this study was solely on the students themselves to listen, learn and understand their perspective on their progress in education. I did not want to interview any other participants (such as teachers, parents, families, community groups etc.). The two cohorts of students I used as my sample were high school students in Year 13 and Samoan male students currently at university in their final year of their degree; or who have just recently graduated in that same year.

### *Recruitment*

The importance of looking at two different points of the students' learning journey became evident as I reviewed the literature. I decided to highlight these to show a broader view of the educational landscape that these students occupy, and to highlight that one stage of learning prepares a student for the next stage and that there is a distinct connection between stages. For the recruitment of participants, I observed the following steps as listed below.

## 1. High school students

For high school students, I decided to focus on students from two different single sex male high schools in Auckland. One high school was located in South Auckland, and the other was located in West Auckland; this was done purposefully as I wanted to find out if these young Samoan men would have different experiences due to their location and surroundings (the context in which they were engaged with on a daily basis)

### *South Auckland focus group*

The first focus group I spoke to was a single sex male high school in South Auckland with a high number of Pasifika enrolments. I was given the opportunity to meet with the head teacher of the music department. The focus group questions in this project (see Appendix) were semi-structured questions. I felt it was the right approach to start the talanoa so that there was flexibility with how the talanoa was to advance. I felt this would encourage the sharing of the rich stories of the student's experiences with their learning journey but also to create a safe environment, it is critical that the students felt at ease with me and trusted me to share their thoughts.

### *West Auckland focus group*

I spoke to the principal of this school and we had a meeting to discuss my research. He was supportive of my study and so agreed to help me with access to students. He asked the Pacific Island dean to assist me by approaching students. The Dean contacted a group of year 13 students and forward them the information sheet I provided about my research. Those that were interested confirmed their attendance to meet with me in alignment with the school calendar and agreed to by the dean. I was provided a meeting room for the Talanoa to take place on the school grounds.

The group talanoa at the high school in west Auckland had 10 students while the other group from south Auckland had eight students. Eight or more is a number that Kvale (2007) suggests is common and appropriate in qualitative research. I am content with my decision to use focus groups first as an initial opportunity to meet with these students; this enabled the students to concentrate on the topic as they all wanted to be involved and participate. Kitzinger (1994) states group work allows priority to be given to the respondent's 'hierarchy of importance' and thus shared in the students own unique way. It also allows group participants to provide an audience for each other, often ideas and comments are stimulated by the comment of another. This helped to boost contribution to the Talanoa and the sharing of their lived experiences.

## 2. University students

The technique I used to recruit participants at university was the snowball sampling technique (Patton, 2002). This is based on a system of referrals and is a non-probability sampling technique where existing participants recruit other participants from among their acquaintances. I initially

spoke with one university student who was very interested in participating in my research, he filled out the required consent form and we conducted our talanoa. At the end, I asked him if he knew any other students that I may be able to contact, he then referred me onto one other and thus the snowball technique commenced. The cycle continued until I met my quota for university participants I needed.

The total number of participants I recruited for my research were 22. 18 of those students are from high school, and 4 of them are university students. Of my participants, 18 of the 22 were born in New Zealand and only four were born in Samoa. Out of all the members of the two high school group talanoa (18 in total) only four students had a parent who attended university themselves. For the four university participants, only one student had both parents attend university, which was unique. It was evident to see that these young men felt education was something productive, education would benefit not only themselves, but their families, their futures and communities as well. See Table 6 below for background information of my participants from high school and university.

**Table 6:** Profile of student participants

Participant	Age	Studying at	Country of birth	Ethnicity	No of Parents attended University
<b>Luke</b>	17	High school - West Auckland	N.Z.	Samoan	1
<b>Samuel</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>David</b>	17	"	Samoa	Samoan	0
<b>Christian</b>	16	"	N.Z.	Samoan/European	1
<b>Psalms</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Ephraim</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan/European	0
<b>Peter</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	1
<b>Benjamin</b>	16	"	Samoa	Samoan	0
<b>Daniel</b>	17	"	Samoa	Samoan	0
<b>Ezra</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	1
<b>Paul</b>	17	High school South Auckland	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Jacob</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan/Tongan	0
<b>Simon</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Phillip</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Noah</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan/Maori	0
<b>Moses</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Kane</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Damian</b>	17	"	N.Z.	Samoan	0
<b>Thomas</b>	27	University	N.Z.	Samoan/Niuean	0
<b>Zachary</b>	24	"	Samoa	Samoan	0
<b>Nathaniel</b>	28	"	N.Z.	Samoan	2
<b>Matthew</b>	21	"	N.Z.	Samoan/Niuean	0

## Ethical considerations

Ethics for this research project was approved on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Ethics was essential for this research project as I was engaged in talanoa and gathering rich stories, experiences known as data from human subjects. Being involved in research involves particular rules and ethical

principles that must be followed. The ethical principles involved issues around access to participants, informed consent and confidentiality and ensuring no harm came to any students (physically, emotionally or mentally). I as the researcher needed to follow these guidelines to ensure respect for all persons involved and to prevent any exploitation of participants. This has also been ensured by the applying Samoan concept of faaaloalo (respect) and alofa (love). In aligning these Samoan concepts with the ethics application, I ensured that participants were not seen merely as a means to 'extracting data' but that they were respected at all times not just as students, but also as human beings.

In summary, participants were made to feel empowered to know they had rights and that as the researcher; I was privileged to Talanoa with them. I outlined that I was not there as a figure of authority who works at a university, but someone interested and wanting to listen to their unique story as Samoan male students.

All participants' names were confidential and pseudonyms applied when referring to them in this research. This was to ensure they could not be identified in any way and so they could share their stories freely. The ethics process enabled me to follow guidelines and to set the between myself as the one seeking to listen to their stories, and for them as students to have the courage to tell them.

## Transcription

The writings of such authors as Thaman (2003), Smith (1999), Anae (2010), Efi (2003), Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) and so many others have continued to encourage and direct me to reflect on our own Pasifika stories and for this particular research, the Samoan student voice. It was for these reasons that I chose to do all the transcribing myself. I felt this was vital to ensure that I encapsulated the richness of the stories told; this was also because I conducted the actual talanoa so though it was essential to do this. The importance of transcribing was having the ability to recall/replay different scenes mentally which tie in with what was being said when listening to the recordings. An example of this was when a student was sharing; he paused and started to become emotional. He shared openly about his father who was his motivation, and how he had since passed on. On the recording it is silent when he cries, you cannot hear any actual noise, but I recall vividly the tears running down his face, I will never forget the power in that specific moment. I believe if I had someone else transcribe my talanoa, this may have been missed. As mentioned, I wanted to ensure I could embody not only the words that were said, but the emotion, body language and passion I witnessed during these sessions when writing about my findings.

### **Part 3: Data Collection**

#### *High school focus groups*

The Talanoa for the focus groups took place on the school premises. This was to comply with ethics to ensure the student was in a safe environment. I wanted to ensure all participants were in a familiar context, and one that was easily accessible to them. Information regarding the study was made available to all participants both verbally and in a written document before the beginning of the talanoa session, a consent form was presented to each participant as requested by AUTEC. Consent from participants indicates that they have made a conscious decision to participate in a project and not persuaded or influenced by others.

This is critical to this research process as emphasized by Greaney, Sheehy, Heffernan, Murphy, Mhaolrúnaigh, Heffernan and Brown (2012):

Self-rule that is free from both controlling interference by others and from certain limitations such as an inadequate understanding that prevent meaningful choice in research. (p. 39).

For both individual focus groups I purchased food for the students to enjoy before we started our discussion (a platter of 15 Subway sandwiches and fruit) so as to create a relaxed atmosphere for the discussion. This to honour the relationship also known as the Samoan concept referred to by Anae (2010) called 'Teu le va' this focuses on the centrality of reciprocal 'relationships'. In Samoan culture, the ability to 'break bread' together and share a meal is customary of many important gatherings and is common practice within informal and formal settings.

During data collection, I noted down where everyone was seated and took notes relating to body language, facial expression and emotions. They cannot easily be indicated on a recorded audio file so did this to enhance my memory of the event later when I would be reviewing these recordings for transcription and data analysis. Each Talanoa session lasted for 1 hour.

#### Individual Talanoa

At the end of each focus group, I invited any students who wanted to carry on with this discussion to participate in a one to one individual Talanoa. Several students were very eager to participate and so we exchanged details to meet again at a future date on school premises. In this way, I recruited four high school students for individual interviews. When these took place, I was able to offer a mealofa (gift) to each student and presented them with a \$20 Westfield gift voucher; as in Faasamoa, presenting of gifts is a custom to show your appreciation to others. The students appreciated this gesture and were thankful. I made sure I followed protocol and attained signed consent from each individual before conducting our conversation and each participant understood his rights. The duration of the Talanoa took 1 hour and were held on school premises.

## University individual Talanoa

For the individual Talanoa, I was able to meet with four students. Two of these students were in the last year of their degree, and two had recently graduated. Three of the interviews took place at the university in a private meeting room, as it was easier for them. For the other participant, I drove out to his workplace where our Talanoa took place in his office. I also made sure I attained signed consent from each individual before conducting the Talanoa and each participant understood his rights during this time. All the interviews lasted for 1 hour and all audio was recorded on a Dictaphone.

## Reflections on Talanoa

Prior to the commencement of the data collection process, I had a pre-conceived ideas regarding how my high school participants would respond, engage and interact with me as a female researcher and the proposed study. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that I was incorrect and would like to comment on this. The main pre-conceived idea I had (or fear) was the following...

- a) Male students may be hesitant to share personal information in front of their male peers as well as myself as a female researcher.

Instead, students spoke freely about a number of quite personal situations such as talking about family, loved ones who had passed on and what motivated them to want to succeed. I would like to note however that there was a distinct difference between the talanoa at the high school in West Auckland and South Auckland. The students in West Auckland were very open and some were quite emotional when talking about their experiences. These students were open in front of their peers and when one student started to silently weep when speaking about younger brother who had passed on. The other students supported him, said encouraging words and even patted the student on the back for moral support. I thought that young men would not be as open as they were in front of each other due to the fear of ridicule, looking weak or not being masculine in front of the boys. However, the students at the high school in West Auckland had created a bond with his peers, a brotherhood that ensured it was a safe place and space to share and that they could trust each other.

The students out South however were also open but responded in a different manner. When they shared their experiences, there was a level of mockery or jokingly added to a comment; this was to lessen the serious tone of the matter. When someone would share, another student would often make a funny comment and everyone would laugh together, no one was being singled out or teased, instead the students used laughter and mockery as what seemed to be a safety net, to ensure there was always a level of bravado maintained between each other. The major differences I found after talking to the two different groups was they both had different ways of maintaining the relationships between each other, one group through openly sharing and offering support to each other, while the other group used mocking and laughter.

At the end of the focus group Talanoa at West Auckland, one student thanked me saying he has never been asked about his story and it was great to share with his fellow Samoan brothers. He said he had also been encouraged to hear others experiences and find commonalities in their journeys and future aspirations.

I was confident I chose Appreciative Inquiry and Talanoa for my research as it enabled me to approach this study with the point of view that these students had something very powerful, constructive and productive to contribute to this research and that our discussions were engaged and meaningful.

## CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS

la outou ole atu, ona foaiina mai ai lea ia te outou; ia outou saili, ona outou maua ai lea; ia outou tu'itu'i atu, ona toina ai lea ia te outou. 8 Auā ai se ole atu, e maua e ia; o lē saili foi, e iloa e ia; e toina foi i lē tu'itu'i atu.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

This bible verse encapsulates the meaning of this chapter; the purpose of this research was to Talanoa with my Samoan male students to seek new knowledge regarding their experiences within education. These findings will positively contribute to the aims of this research and promote in the discovery of viable resolutions regarding this phenomenon.

### Introduction

This chapter presents research findings from my talanoa with students and is divided into three sections according to my three research questions, they are:

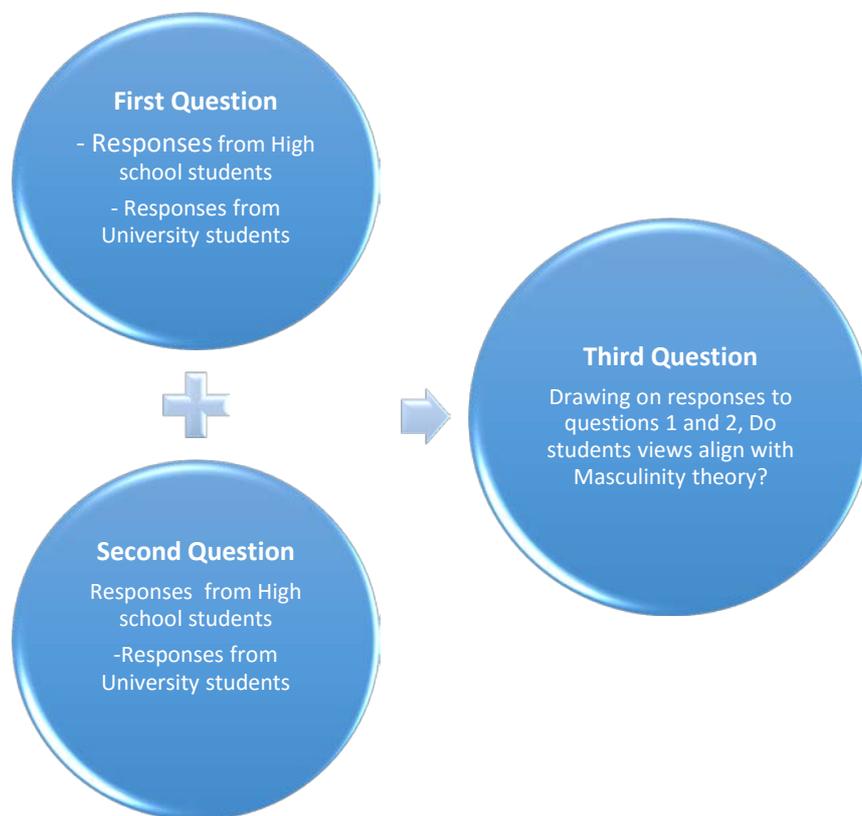
1. What are your views about the importance and place of university education generally and for Samoan males?
2. Does Faasamoa (being Samoan) have any influence on your decision-making process regarding education and how you perceive its value?

Then, drawing on a summarising of responses to questions 1 and 2, I answer question three:

3. Do students' views align with Masculinity theory?

For each question, I present the high school views first, followed by those of the university students and highlight similarities and differences in views shared. For questions one and two, the responses from the two high schools have been grouped together (total 16) because their views were quite similar. To note, profile on students and pseudonyms is located on page 52 in chapter 3. The responses from questions one and two will then be aligned against question 3 regarding Masculinity theory (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Order of research questions**



### **Key Words: Both Focus Groups**

I started the group Talanoa with students from both the South Auckland and West Auckland schools by asking ‘what does education mean to you?’ I asked them to think of two or three key words to share with the group, explaining or giving an example of each. Most answers from these two Talanoa were very similar and all of the key words used were positive, aspirational and motivating, the words were:

- Future
- Family
- Opportunity
- Knowledge

These words were powerful and insightful and in my view provided insights to their valuing of education. This also showed the similarities between the two groups even if they were from two different parts of Auckland. This introduction to the Talanoa took us straight to the heart of our discussion questions that I present now:

**Question One:** *What are your views about the importance and place of university education generally and for Samoan males?*

The most mentioned response by high school students was that university education was of extreme value. This gave a mix of responses regarding education value personally for them and to family:

I think education is important because to me it means pathway, knowledge and happiness. Pathway because education can lead us to find our own journey and lead us to happiness. When you learn new things it can be endless. Education can expand what you know. LUKE (West Auckland).

Education means going to school and having a future. You need education to learn and build your pathway, like a pathway to better opportunities. So yeah education is really important, you can't have a bright future without it. SIMON (South Auckland)

For me personally it means future and career. Having a solid foundation in education can lead you onto a good job and give you more opportunity. Like for myself, I was just thinking of looking into a Police course, but then this year I started to realise I have other options too, all my life I only thought of one career but through education, I have choices. EPHRAIM (West Auckland)

Life related goals were also mentioned by Kane and Psalms:

Career, skills and knowledge; I think my skill level is helped through my education. It can enhance my skills and it helps me to try and figure out what I want to do with my life. KANE (South Auckland)

Education means life goals! Because that's what I use my education for, it's to achieve my goals. It's about being successful and making it to end of my Year 13 studies, that's an achievement! PSALMS (West Auckland)

Interestingly, whatever views were raised, it always came back to family:

Personally, for me an education means learning, for your future and family. Family because it's not just us doing it for ourselves but doing it for our families as well, that's why it's really important to do well. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

I think it means opportunity, learning and expression. The opportunity to find out what you are interested in, then express yourself in your learning and what you are passionate about. PETER (West Auckland)

For these students' education was a fundamental component to be able to achieve success, not just for achieving personal goals, but also to ensuring successful employment in the future that would also benefit their families. For example Moses saw education as clearly connected to financial gain and a 'way out' from the limited choices one would have without an education. In his view, learning and being successful in education would enable him to gain a good job leading

to a more stable income and financial security. Even though Moses response sounded like more of an individualistic response, he also brought his success back as meaning his families' success:

Education for me means money and to have skills. This means a good job that will support me and my family. Education is also preparation for life, what you learn can change how you think about the world, that's why education is important to me.  
MOSES (South Auckland)

#### *What motivates you?*

The ideal of success for these high school students came from watching and observing their fathers. Each acknowledged their fathers as being successful in their own fields and given opportunities. Their fathers had instilled in them the importance of working hard and persevering to achieve in the different fields offered in New Zealand, e.g. success in formal education and to make use of all the learning opportunities New Zealand had to provide. In summary, these students saw these to be different success goals or pathways between them and their fathers. The fathers were the 'bread winners' of the family achieving success in being able to support their families financially through paid employment. To these sons, their fathers held power and authority through being the head or the matai in their family. On the other hand, these students were urged by their parents to seek success in education as being the new way to achieve success in New Zealand. Here Ezra and Samuel explain:

My dad tells me the stories of working on the Taro patch back in Samoa, he sacrificed everything when he came here for his kids for a better future. It makes it easier for me to work hard in school, yes it's a lot of hard work, but you'd rather do that hard work, putting pen to paper, then working hard in that ma'umaga, working and looking after the land. My dad worked hard so that I could get the benefits, that's why school and doing well is so important, not just for my success but for my family and future, a small sacrifice compared to what my Father did for me. LUKE (West Auckland)

The example of success in my life is my Dad, he's hard working and is always behind the scenes. He worked long hours at his job to make sure we were all well looked after, the bills were paid and we had food on the table. He is also the Matai of our family so people lean on him for support. When he's called to make decisions and stand up in front of others to talk, he knows exactly what to do and what to say. I want to be the same way, just like Dad and I will try and do that with my studies, I can't get to the next expert level without having the knowledge and confidence that you get with learning. I know that education will help me get there, I can't achieve my goals without education! For us Samoan brothers, education is necessary! EZRA (West Auckland)

As Samoan men, we need to remember we are dominant in our families in terms of being decision makers, like my dad. We are so proud of our culture and what makes us who we are as Samoan people, but being successful means a man who dominates in all areas, not just one area (like guys in school who are only mean on the rugby field) that's small minded stuff, you need to be successful at school too! When you are successful in all areas, including your studies, that's when you

can call yourself a successful Samoan man! SAMUEL (West Auckland).

*What were other influences?*

These students saw a lack of seeing the bigger picture influenced other students' value of education, more specifically for the group, their fellow Samoan peers who had since left high school not completing Year 13. Comments showed these participants had been saddened by this:

I think education used to be valued heaps by my boys, but it's slowly fading away for some of the brothers, some don't see the bigger picture. You know we want to do something with our lives but sometimes we don't know how to go about it. My parents pushed me to do my best in school but I think it depends on the person. The person has to make the decision to take up the opportunity at school and really push themselves hard; you have to be in charge of your success! SAMUEL (West Auckland)

I have had a few friends that dropped out, which is sad knowing that they didn't finish school when they could of. To be honest I think it's because they didn't see the true value of school and understanding how it will affect their future. KANE (South Auckland)

For Daniel, his motivation was seeing the financial difficulties and sacrifices made by his parents:

I definitely think education is still important because I've learnt from my parents experiences. I saw them go through hard times financially, when you see that with your own eyes, you know you don't want to go through the same thing. You also want to provide for mum and dad as well. I know education is important to my future, yes, the hard times will still come, but you will have more choices when you have your education, no one can take that away from you. DANIEL (West Auckland).

**Key words: High School Individual Talanoa**

The individual Talanoa were a more personal conversation. As noted, students from the group talanoa were asked if they would like to discuss there education journey and ideas more deeply in an individual Talanoa with me. Four individual students indicated they would like to participate and so this was organised. Key words that were shared by the individual students were:

- Passion
- Future
- Sacrifice
- Self-reliant

Having individual Talanoa with these high school students allowed them to share their thoughts and personal experiences and to probe ideas raised in the group Talanoa. In explaining their stories, Ezra and Samuel shared the following:

When it comes to education you have to rely on yourself and your personal desire and passion, if there is no fire in you when it comes to school then you can't achieve anything. Doing well in high school is important because it will help me to keep pushing when I go onto university and will push me to go hard. SAMUEL (West Auckland)

My education is everything! It means a lot; it means my future and family. How well I do in education will reflect how well I do in my life and how well I can look after my parents, how I can provide. My teachers have told me that I'm a confident speaker, great communication skills so I've thought about going into Law, maybe criminology, but without education, I can't get there. EZRA (West Auckland)

### *Is Rugby or Education more important during high school?*

Drawing on these responses, I decided to ask participants to compare educational achievement to another topic that I felt these male students would likely admire and appreciate, specifically rugby. I wanted to find out who they felt was more important or given more prestige amongst their male peers. Would the Samoan student who is getting A-grades in all of his subjects be commended more or the Samoan student who is the captain of the first XV rugby team?

This question drew a mix of very well considered responses. I present three of these responses starting with Daniel who laughed light-heartedly and asked if this was a trick question:

Is that a trick question? (Laughs) Everyone thinks we are well known for Sports and sports only, but I think that's just in our blood, like in our genes, we are built for Rugby. However, in saying that, I know heaps of Pacific Island boys who are also talented in the classroom too. All of us can make it in school but it's just stereotypes of who we are and what we are able to achieve, sometimes others looking down on us can drag us down too, but we are succeeding at school, it just isn't celebrated enough. DANIEL (West Auckland)

After much thought, Simon pointed out that respect was awarded differently by context, e.g. schoolmates versus family. Simon gives most commendation to the student who was the 1st XV rugby captain as opposed to the straight A student but agrees that your academic ability last longer than physical skills and capability through sports:

Amongst my mates, the 1st XV captain would get more respect definitely, but if I'm talking about my family, if they were the audience then the straight A student gets more respect, your schoolwork shows your ability. I think your success with your schoolwork will last longer than your sports achievements on the rugby field. SIMON (South Auckland)

For Christian, passing academic subjects and being dedicated to education is the ultimate epitome of what it means to be called 'the man' and is saddened that even though this is his view, amongst his school peers, respect is given to the rugby captain instead:

A person that's actually passing all his subjects and actually cares about his education, that's what you call the man! Someone who actually wants to do something with his life, it's

sad though because the rugby captain gets more respect right now, it's just how it is. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

Ezra summed up his view by referring to how Pacific males are portrayed in the media. In his view, he says there are more to Samoan men than just success on the sports field:

The only Pacific male role models we see in the media are in Sports, and even if you make it at that level, I feel the media don't truly celebrate a players' success or maybe even highlight his failures more, an example would be to look at what they did to Jerry Collins. I think it's bad because our kids need to know how well we can be and what we can achieve, not just in Sports. There is actually a saying that goes "Why do we say the sky's the limit when there's footprints on the moon!" To me this means all brown kids can do it, push higher and go further than what others think you are capable of!. EZRA (West Auckland)

### *Is Education more for girls and is it seen as nerdy for males?*

I then asked students if they or their peers saw education as more of a pursuit for women and girls than males, or if being a studious male student was seen to be nerdy. I wanted to understand if this attitude existed and whether this was an obstacle for young men to pursue education. Christian's and Pslams response was a firm no:

No I don't think guys see education as nerdy, it's more about the motivation to do the actual work, sometimes students lose focus or get lazy. Sometimes we start in high school really eager and study hard, then we lose that drive and just lose everything. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

I don't think education is seen as nerdy or just for girls, its more about being in charge of your own growth and development, like where you start and where you see yourself heading, when you're learning, there's never really a finish line. It's more about creating a better version of yourself all the time. PSALMS (West Auckland)

Damian felt that some Samoan male students did see education as more for girls, however he reminisced that some students have a negative mentality regarding their academic capability:

Yes I think some guys see learning as more for girls, sometimes the boys think they're not good enough for study either or they can't make it! They think it's mainly something for the palagi boys and their talent is more on the rugby field, but it's not true and not just for palagis, it's just how you look at it, it's how you value education and how important you think is it for you. DAMIAN (South Auckland)

In summary, comments shared by the high school students in both Talanoa confirms education is revered and has high importance, it has a tremendous impact on their lives and that of their families. The comments about education being seen as nerdy by Samoan males warrants further study. Also, is success in education for Samoan males as a sign of alofa and fa'aaloalo to parents/families a good internal motivator for personal progression?

## University Students' Individual Talanoa

The four university students also spoke positively about the valuing of education, however three were differing perspectives. I also wanted to discover what motivated and influenced these students.

### *What motivates you?*

It was pertinent to understand what encouraged; inspired and led students from high school to university as well as what supported them to their final year of university and graduation. For university students, the aiga was a powerful motivational factor in the pursuit of success in education. Students confirmed education is worth working hard for to show their appreciation and faaloalo to their parents. Students continually outlined that a goal of theirs was to work hard to pay their parents and families back through success in education, this shows reciprocity and alofa. Nathaniel provides an example of this in his life:

Education was always important, my parents always ensured we did our best and stayed focused even at a young age. Ever since we were little we were told the same message repeatedly, learn, learn, and learn! My education and success is a way I can give back to my family for everything they've invested in me. NATHANIEL (University)

This meant that university was already very familiar to him during his childhood. In fact, the expectation had been normalised for him at a very young age and a topic they would discuss often in the home:

When growing up, Education was necessary. I grew up with bilingual parents, who spoke English and Samoan seamlessly, they were able to transition easily into both languages, whether with friends or family. They were both professionals and both studied at university. They encouraged all their kids to go into higher education as well and because of their own studies in Law, encouraged us all to study Law too. NATHANIEL

Nathaniel also goes on to talk about the influence of his parents and mother especially:

My mother would say university was a pre-requisite to do well in life. Obviously, it wasn't everything but this is what my mother wanted for her children, especially going into Law. If I had a dollar for every time my mother would tell me to study Law, I would be a millionaire. NATHANIEL

### *What were other influences?*

Thomas from university shared the same thoughts as participants from high school. He recalls during his time in high school, many of his friends did not truly understand the importance of this stage of learning:

I felt when I was in high school, for some of my Samoan friends, they didn't appreciate their time there. At times there was a real lack of motivation. Education is so important at this stage; it can prepare us for bigger opportunities and for a future outside, for

later life so it's really important we pass. This is what motivated me and what my parents would always tell me, it's for my own future! ZACHARY

Nathaniel felt there was a lack of maturity shown by other students:

I reckon guys my age do see education as important, but sometimes they don't see the bigger picture as to why it's important to get stuck into your books. It probably comes down to how mature you are at the time as well. When you think about it, your family is working hard to pay your school fees for your future. Guys need to know why they're at school, their purpose and why they need to do this, you need to stay focused, that's what helped me anyway. NATHANIEL

University students confirmed staying motivated and knowing the value of school while in high school was critical to their success. The need to see the 'bigger picture' was also essential and that other students did not fully understand the value of their education and the opportunity to learn. The bigger picture also related to seeing parents struggling financially so learning from their sacrifice the blessing it is to be able to attend school. Another student felt the level of maturity for some students influenced their approach to school. When engaged in Talanoa with these students, they agreed that their needs to be a level where students need to push themselves and take more 'ownership' of their learning to understand its true merit; this means being fully engaged and utilising all aspects and occasions to learn.

University students had different experiences

Both Nathaniel parents had attended university and this had undoubtedly influenced his views. In summary, university was already very familiar to him during his childhood. In fact, the expectation had been normalised for him at a very young age and a topic they often discussed at home:

When growing up, Education was necessary. I grew up with bilingual parents, who spoke English and Samoan seamlessly, they were able to transition easily into both languages, whether with friends or family. They were both professionals and both studied at university. They encouraged all their kids to go into higher education as well and because of their own studies in Law, encouraged us all to study Law too. (NATHANIEL)

He described the influence of his parents with their words:

My mother would say university was a pre-requisite to do well in life. Obviously, it wasn't everything but this is what my mother wanted for her children, especially going into Law. If I had a dollar for every time my mother would tell me to study Law, I would be a millionaire. (NATHANIEL)

By way of contrast, Thomas said he grew up in a family where education was not a topic often discussed at home. His parents were labourers and when he enrolled in university as a mature student in his mid-twenties, he was the first to in his immediate family to do so. He said that

becoming a young parent had triggered a deep desire to push himself further and create improved opportunities for his daughter. Becoming a parent quickly matured him to think more seriously about the future and the opportunities he could better utilise. Thomas had found his first year at university particularly difficult due to feeling out of place but he had persevered and learnt quickly how to push forward. He knew that succeeding in New Zealand meant one thing; he had to go to university and gain a university education:

Now Education means a lot, before it wasn't so much. I was sort of brought up in an environment where being the top of my class in school wasn't what I was interested in, I wasn't that guy, especially in high school, There's that term, "Just go to school to eat your lunch" yeah that was me. Now education is very important to me and especially my little family. You can't get very far in New Zealand without a degree. Education is that pathway to make it in New Zealand. In Samoa you can live off the land, the plantation, but here in New Zealand you have to pay for that land you live on. Education is critical to one's success! (THOMAS)

Interestingly, in Matthew's view, education was related to power, success and to gaining experience. I thought that was very interesting to highlight power as his first thought of education, but in further talanoa, I came to understand why he chose that word. Matthew said he always knew he would go onto university, even when he was at primary school. He said it was sad for him to see his family struggling financially even though his parents tried their very best to hide this. Bearing witness to this gave him more passion to want to strive for more:

These days you must have an education to get any type of job, you need qualifications behind you to get to where you want to go. I've always wanted to go to university; for some odd reason I knew it would take me places one day. When you complete a degree, there is a sense of power behind it, you feel like you are geared up to take on the world, that's how I feel. What comes with power is success, it's more like what's to come, your future, it's like a sense of achievement. Also your education can take you places, like getting a good job where you can travel, you can gain new experiences instead of sticking to the norm. (MATTHEW)

Matthews use of the word 'power' could relate back to him being an openly gay Samoan male. In his view, his education and his success, knowing who he was, and being comfortable with his sexuality also gave him a source of strength to work hard with his studies and be successful. He said he was thankful to share his story with me as he said he had never been asked before, he wanted to emphasise the importance of education for Samoan men, and that Samoan males must think outside the box:

I think the value of education has to be taught to our young men earlier on in life, I think it needs to be 'built in'. In my family, some of my male cousins felt that education wasn't for them, and they focused more towards Sports just like most typical Island guys do. They all went for Rugby League and that dream of making it

big. There's nothing wrong with league, but we have to be realistic and understand that only a handful will make it. I notice now players are thinking smarter and getting qualifications. Samoan guys need to be aware of this! Sports can stop at any time but your education can never be taken away from you. (MATTHEW)

Zachary had moved to New Zealand from Samoa with his family when he was 8 years old. His parents believed education was the way forward towards a better life and a different lifestyle. Zachary's two older siblings had both completed university studies and his sister completed a Masters qualification. However when Zachary first arrived in New Zealand, he began to discover another passion which he wanted to pursue professionally after high school, this was to become a rugby player. His parents however encouraged him to go to university first:

My parents told us when we came to New Zealand that education is the key to success, opportunities, and a better lifestyle. They always thought education was the best option, not sports. My parents encouraged us to pursue university so we would have different opportunities. I didn't want to study at first but I feel like I'm in a better place. Now that I'm at the end of my degree and soon to graduate, I want to get a good job and help give back to my parents. They have put me in a better position for life. (ZACHARY)

In summary, Zachary's parents believed rugby (or sport) was not sufficient and that their son needed to have a different set of skills to succeed in today's society. Zachary's comments suggest a generational difference (between parents and child) in what was seen as critical to success in New Zealand today.

## Summary

All high school and university students viewed education as positive and essential to their future success. They understood the relationship between education and the ability to make informed positive decisions regarding their lives and aspirations for the future. These views from different points in the education pipeline indicated education and university study confirms to be highly valued by these students.

These students validated the importance for Samoan males to attain higher-level qualifications. These reasons were linked not only to personal future progression, but also to the success of the family and community. It was agreed that a university qualification requires a high level of self-motivation, focus and the ability to 'take ownership' of one's learning in order to reach success. The overarching premise was that success in education was also to reciprocate love and to honour parents and elders who had supported them in life. The responses from students highlight education is irrefutably of high significance to Samoan male students as they see success in education as the pathway to better life opportunities.

***Question Two: Does Faasamoa (being a Samoan) have any influence on your educational decision-making and how you perceive the value of education?***

There were differing opinions of whether or not the Faasamoa influenced these high school students' educational journeys. Each view related back to participants understanding and personal experiences of Faasamoa. I felt this question was appropriate to ask because all my participants self-identified as Samoan although some participants were of mixed ethnicity (e.g. 6 out of the 22 participants were mixed ethnicity)

I wanted to gain their insight of 'being Samoan' first and then ask how they felt this had influenced their educational journey. For example, what does 'being Samoan' mean to you? Their first response confirmed that Faasamoa was connected to who they were, understanding this and having the ability to identify with Samoan culture. As noted the high school students are presented first

***Faasamoa Means Identity***

Knowing who they were as Samoan men, knowing their culture, language and traditions was of central importance, even for those participants who said they they knew very little about the Faasamoa, they said they were willing to learn more. As well reported, the Identity journey for New Zealand born Samoans has varying dynamics that can influence people in different ways (Anae, 1998). Simon, Damian and Noah explained this with their words:

I believe Faasamoa means Identity, like whatever you do, it's your roots and you're always identified by your Samoan culture. It means knowing who you are all the time, and who you represent as well. SIMON (South Auckland)

Faasamoa means respect and value. It's about how we respect our elders. Samoans have strong values, the way we do things. And also the love we have for each other. The language too, you need to know who you are, when you know who you are, you know your identity. DAMIAN (South Auckland)

To me Faasamoa means Water, Earth, and Air. When you pour water into a cup, it takes the shape of the cup but it's still water. Pour water into a bottle, it takes the shape of the bottle but it's still water. You put a Samoan into World Wrestling Entertainment and he becomes champion, he is still Samoan. If you put a Samoan on the rugby field, and he captains the All Blacks, he is still Samoan and proud. If you put a Samoan man in parliament, he reaches out to community with his Samoan ways. Our culture is like our roots, they are strong, and we stand with our roots which are long and grow deep. Air is what we use to breathe and to speak our Samoan language, the ways of the Faasamoa lifestyle are all around us. NOAH (South Auckland)

In his view, Noah explains that no matter what context a Samoan person is in, that person will represent Faasamoa proudly and use it to his/her advantage. He talked about his favourite celebrities like Dwayne Johnson also known as 'The Rock' an American actor, producer and semi-

retired professional wrestler. He highlighted also the success of Tana Umaga, former All Blacks captain and his success on and off the rugby field. Lastly Su'a William Sio, a politician who became a member of the New Zealand House of Representatives. All these people were role models to Noah who he feels are successful proud Samoan men who know their identity and are proud to share that with the world.

The question of identity was also uppermost in the individual high school Talanoa. Similar to the group Talanoa, these students felt being Samoan impacted their success at school, but they also stated that on a personal level the significance of why it's important to know who you are and where you come from. The high school students gave three main reasons of what the Faasamoa meant to them, each is discussed.

### *Faasamoa Means Family*

For these students, ideas about the Faasamoa were clustered around family, but quite wide ranging. Most students confirmed that Faasamoa personally symbolised the family and in particular parents. Students said to respect and love your parents and family was the epitome of what Faasamoa is and the aiga in Faasamoa is a huge motivational factor towards their working to achieve educational success. All students felt Faasamoa had an impact on their educational decision-making but in various ways:

Faasamoa for me means family, culture, and fa'aaloalo. Respect goes a long way, especially in our Samoan culture. Respect is needed mostly when dealing with family members, different groups like elders, or when you're at church, you have to show respect in our culture, that's who we are. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

For Psalms, he discussed growing up in New Zealand as a Samoan but feeling more like a palagi due to not being brought up in the 'Samoan' way like some of his fellow students. In sharing, he outlined what the Faasamoa meant for him:

Faasamoa to me is culture, family, a way of life and background. One word that stands out for me is family. For me I didn't grow up knowing much about Faasamoa, I think I'm more palagi than Samoan. For everyone here they were brought up the Samoan way and went to church, I didn't really have that life. When I think of us here at school and our education, we all try to stick together. Here we're all family, like a brotherhood which to me is just like Faasamoa. PSALMS (West Auckland)

Even though Psalms believed he had not been brought up in a traditional Samoan way, his responses paralleled those of other students relating to the importance of family and the 'brotherhood' he has with his fellow Samoan friends at school.

Noah felt his experience was similar to Psalms. He identified himself as being Samoan and Maori and did not feel that he knew very much about his Samoan culture. However, he answered the questions in a very poetic or metaphorical manner which as some would say is very Samoan, he replied:

Education is like us as children, we are like steel and education is like a flint, and when you rub them together you have a spark, a future, this spark can turn into a fire. When you have a fire, you can cook food, you have light, you can provide for your family. That is what education can do, it can ignite a flame within to provide for yourself, prepare you for the future and support your family. NOAH (South Auckland)

Noah showed a lot of intensity in the words he used and even tended to exaggerate at times. However, he spoke in a manner which was very similar to a Matai using metaphorical language and analogies to explain the meanings of what he was sharing. He may not have realised it but he portrayed the oratorical skills and characteristics of a Matai delivering a formal speech. I found this very interesting.

### *Faasamoa Means Honouring Your Parents and Their Sacrifices*

Most students mentioned, not only was 'making it' in education for their own futures, but was to honour and reward their parents and family. Students said they felt accountable to their parents to succeed:

Hard work and influence, they relate to each other because education is hard work. I've seen my mum work hard, long hours and it's influenced me to work hard as well. I'm an only child but I'll be the first out of my cousins to go onto University and I do it to make mum and dad proud. PETER (West Auckland)

My education and success is a way I can give back to my family for everything they've done, all the sacrifices so that I could have different opportunities in life. SIMON (South Auckland)

My mum helps me focus, on Sundays when we have our family talks, she tells me to faamalosi, stay strong and keep going, you're nearly there son. She says that she's tired of working in that hard factory job, and that motivates me. I promised I would finish my degree and get a good job so I can support her one day. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

The role of parents in teaching the importance of education showed hope and promise for the future. As mentioned above, many Samoan parents recounted the cost and reminisce just how far their parents' migrant dreams, that their sacrifice was for the hope of a brighter and better future for their children.

At the same time for some students doing their best to honour the family brought family pressures to excel in all areas both inside and outside of school. For example when Kane was a year 11 student, his mother who would often say "I can't wait for you to become a doctor" Kane added at the time he had no plans to pursue a medical profession, in fact he was more interested in studying music. Jacob said that during the week he was expected to play the piano for choir practice and this could be twice a week. Sometimes he would defer completing his assignments to late at night so he could please his parents wishes. Others said they struggled to communicate

with parents how difficult it was to be seen as doing everything well simultaneously, whether at home with family, at school or other commitments such as church and community.

When parents placed pressures on students, especially regarding career choices, students said this was more for their parents' satisfaction rather than their own aspirations, career goals, or even in some cases their skills base. Students felt these expectations were at times driven by their parents desire for them to have a 'good life but at other times was directed more to maintaining the family status. Kane referred to a level of competitiveness between Samoan families, especially if another family member who is the same age was excelling in their studies:

Sometimes it's hard because you feel like you're always getting compared to other cousins or relatives who are doing really well at school. That's great for them but just because they're studying to be a lawyer doesn't mean I want to do the same thing. My mum wants me to study Law because she said I'll have a good life in the future, but what about what I want to do? I want to study music and sing, it's not all about the money. (KANE South Auckland)

I could see that while their parents meant well, sometimes they did not stop to ask their children what their dreams and aspirations were. Instead making some decisions regarding study options and career selection. Students commented they would prefer the opportunity to make decisions for themselves.

### *Faasamoa Means Learning and Understanding Cultural Traditions*

Students commented on how understanding Faasamoa had enabled them to recognise what was considered to be culturally appropriate Samoan etiquette, knowing how to conduct oneself as a Samoan man and understanding the value of cultural traditions. They said it is knowing where you're from but also understanding why things are done in a certain manner or fashion. As Samuel describes, it's 'knowing your roots' Ezra, David and Christian were also vocal on this point:

Faasamoa is based on the aiga and our ethnicity, it's so important to know where you come from and our ways that make us unique. Even though I was born in NZ, it's important to know about my culture and my background. I want to know where my parents came from and I don't want to forget my roots, I want to carry on my ancestors traditions, and to pass the torch onto my children one day in the future. EZRA (West Auckland)

For me Faasamoa means family, fa'aaloalo and alofa. I always think my parents did the right thing for us, teaching us the culture in Samoa when we were little. When I saw them in Samoa working hard, it made me want to work extra hard. It was good to be in Samoa for ten years, being born there then moving to NZ. I learnt new things, met new people and so many family. Coming here to NZ it's a different culture, and it's good to learn both, you know? Faasamoa also helps to know what's right and what's wrong. DAVID (West Auckland)

What I've learnt from my parents about Faasamoa is how to be respectful, this is a very important part of our culture. Being

proud of who you are as a Samoan, representing ourselves and knowing how to respect and act around others is important because you are always representing your family and parents. Education has always been a priority for my parents and I know through the chats and growling's they give me when I act up! I know they care and they want me to do well in life, it's really important to them so I try my best. CHRISTIAN (West Auckland)

I wanted to ask these students if they felt their Samoan male peers showed such characteristics of Faasamoa within the school, for example faaaloalo towards all teachers and tautua within the school:

Some boys treat different teachers with different levels of respect. When I just came from Samoa and started high school here, I was shocked to see how some of the Samoan boys were acting. Some were trying to pick a fight with the teacher, others were swearing in class. When my dad taught me respect for elders, he said it was for everyone, not just Samoan elders, but everyone. BENJAMIN (West Auckland)

If the teacher was palagi, some of the boys would automatically just act up in class. But if the teachers was a Samoan or a Pacific Islander they quickly got respect. It's like you respect the island teachers because you knew each other in that island way, whereas sometimes you feel there's no connection with other teachers so you don't care. SIMON (South Auckland)

In summary, some of these Samoan students felt secure in their Samoan identity, knowing they had strong connections with the Faasamoa, they understood the traditions, spoke the language, and knew how to conduct themselves appropriately as Tama Samoa. For others they felt they were still trying to find their way.

Honouring the family was of the upmost importance and acted as a motivator for many, especially because they continually thought back to the sacrifices made by their parents. Others felt understanding cultural traditions and norms was what taught them what was important in their lives; understanding Samoan norms such as faaaloalo, tautua and alofa were crucial to knowing how to behave accordingly in any situation for example, at home, school and in the community.

### *University Student Responses*

While the views of university students were quite similar to the high school students, they showed a different emphasis. First, they underlined the need for young Samoan men to 'think outside the box' and to look to the past to be able to look forward towards the future and beyond the horizon. The emphasis was to ensure that they never forgot where they came from. All the university students agreed that their knowledge and understanding of Faasamoa formed their unique view of the world and brought an added knowledge to their university study and to their future goals and aspirations. The university students felt they were able to 'look back' at their lived experiences and wanted to pass on advice, encouragement and support to the next generation of Samoan male students thinking of embarking on a new journey at university.

## Faasamoa and looking beyond the horizon

Matthew talked about the 'norm' in his family for his male cousins to be heavily involved in sports during high school, furthermore most had dreamt of a career in the NRL (National Rugby League) competition in Australia. In his family, Matthew was the first male to ever consider going to university and he felt he had 'broken the mould' and stepped out. He also said he knew at a young age that university was what he wanted in his life, so it had become a goal he worked towards throughout his schooling years.

Nathaniel also knew at a young age he was going to university and says this was due to the fact his parents made it an everyday conversation around the dinner table, as a result university was not a foreign concept to him as he became older. For Nathaniel, looking beyond the horizon was the fact that he knew how to navigate his way there at an early age, he saw university as a natural 'next step' after high school. Was it going to be hard? Yes, but not impossible. Matthew and Nathaniel explain in their own words:

I knew in Primary that I always wanted to go to Uni. I can't explain it but I loved being at school and learning. When people would talk of the next level of school, I always got excited! Whether college or University, I had a deep love of learning which has taken me to levels of success, its open new doors for me that have truly allowed me to experience different opportunities. MATTHEW

When I was younger, I thought Uni was going to be hard. I thought that only very intelligent people could attend, and I thought you had to be the top of your class. I thought you needed to be an 'A' grade student throughout all your years. If I could go back in time, I would tell myself anyone who works hard can go to University, that 'You can do it' to persevere and not quit! As I got older I realised "it's just the next step" it's not a considerable leap! Sometimes people think after high school it's going to be a huge leap, but it's just a natural progression when you work hard at high school, you've already laid the foundation. NATHANIEL

For Thomas looking going to university took an immense amount of courage to achieve. It meant as a husband and father of young family, he would resign from his full time job and instead enrol into university and pursue a 3-year degree. He said this had been a leap of faith. He talks about that journey and how that faith resulted in an abundance of blessing and opportunity:

It wasn't until I had my daughter that I said to myself 'man I can't work as a temp in a factory for the rest of my life.' Every day for 6 months I worked hard at this job and they always said to me 'we're going to make you permanent soon.' I then noticed they were making other people permanent. My manager was really bad and didn't treat any of the workers right so I thought, if I can't do anything about it I might as well join them. That's when I thought I should study HR and knew I should go to university. I didn't want my daughter to grow up and say "Daddy you were born in NZ, raised here, but what you have to show for it? My mum said to me one day 'it would be sad if you ended

up working in a factory alongside someone who came from Samoa, who had nothing growing up, and yet you had all these opportunities' I felt then that I woke up, it was like I knew what I had to do. THOMAS

At university, Thomas was offered an opportunity to participate in a cadet programme with a local bank while studying. He claims this had changed his life and that of his family. He took a year to focus on the cadet programme and now two years later, he is working as a Lending manager, has purchased his first home and has just graduated with his Bachelor's degree. He has graduated and is already in full time employment in an industry he never thought he would be in. Thomas says if he hadn't of had the courage to 'Look beyond the horizon' and address the obstacles that confronted him, it would have been too hard, but he is so glad he made the choice to study at university.

### *Faasamoa and transferable skills*

Another very interesting point made by university students was that Faasamoa added value to their career and working life. They saw the Faasamoa knowledge and skills as an added bonus which enhanced their jobs, careers and prospects. Skills such as the ability to work co-operatively, be empathetic, have the ability to work effectively in groups and team projects. Nathaniel and Zachary explain:

Faasamoa, Aganu'u, being Samoan, my language is vitally important. Maybe I'm being an idealist but I see a future Samoan, the Samoan professional who wants to have some relevance, not only in their own communities but NZ society, must know their language and Samoan customs, respect, Fa'aaloalo, alofa. I actually feel that if you want to be the consummate professional in your industry, and if you want relevance in your community and the workplace, then Faasamoa goes hand in hand with who you of work. When I think of Faasamoa and where I learnt it, it started at home, but also in the church. Tautua is applicable to all different realms of our lives. When I think about Youth, I think about leadership; I learnt how to run and work with a group of people and how to delegate authority, all these skills helped me when I started working (NATHANIEL)

There's a lot of Faasamoa that impacts my thoughts on school. In Samoa you had to respect your teachers in the classroom which shows Fa'aaloalo. What I learnt from Samoa I carried it through here in NZ. I learnt how to respect my elders and I did that in the classroom too. For sure I learnt this from my grandmother, she passed away early this year, she helped raise me and I carry that with me always. I treat others with respect and know this will help me too when I graduate and find a job. (ZACHARY)

I asked these students what one aspect of Faasamoa they felt would guide and support Samoan boys in high school today, what could be taken from Faasamoa and applied in any setting making them transferable...

I think it's Fa'aaloalo, be respectful of your teachers and of others all the time, you have to be polite. I've seen some students speak without respect to teachers in the classroom, it's really sad to see. ZACHARY

These university students felt very strongly that Faasamoa, equipped them with transferable skills they could apply in the workplace and in every aspect of their future life. Identity and self-worth are irreplaceable values that come from understanding your culture and your view of the world; but also finding your place in it. I felt quite inspired by these students and how they valued their culture and to hear of the two very unique views of the high school students compared with the university students. In reviewing my talanoa with both groups, I felt I was given the view from different views and mind-sets.

### *Summary*

Students highlighted there were many influential factors when it came to their decision making regarding their education in high school and further university. Some factors were positive and others more challenging. Students felt families were supportive, encouraging and nurturing regarding their success in education, but at other times they also felt pressure to pursue a career they had little intent on following through. The university students on the other hand were well fitted into the university programme and working hard to achieve their self-established goals.

### ***Question Three: Drawing from responses to questions one and two, did these align with masculinity theory?***

As noted, I wanted to explore and understand whether these students regarded education as strictly for females – and Samoan females. I also wanted to discover whether there was something in the Faasamoa ideals of male roles which was impacting Samoan males lesser educational engagement.

Critical to this research was to understand the active construction of the Samoan male in New Zealand today. I wanted to discover how my participants valued education and whether the Faasamoa played a role in their decision making towards education. Furthermore, I also wanted to discover if their responses aligned with Masculinity theory. Answers to questions 1 and 2 confirmed these students highly valued education.

Taylor (2008) says that in the Pacific, as elsewhere the discussions or application of theories of masculinity have long proven to be problematic: while the classification of 'men' is constantly linked to negative and disparaging qualities. Dialogues of gender and development have been an ongoing subject of review and investigation within academic research. This supports the notion of this study, to assist in finding possible solutions to the current issue of the minimal number of Samoan men entering university level qualifications.

Jolly (2008) noted although much has been written about men in Oceania, there has been less hypothetical cross-examination of diverse and changing masculinities. Jolly states Oceanic masculinities are enhanced when examined relationally and historically, linking pasts, presents, and futures. Such Indigenous masculinities are shaped in relation to, and in resistance towards hegemonic foreign models (p. 3). How does this impact Pacific males engaged in education, today and in what ways? Does this impact educational engagement?

As noted, in relation to Masculinity and the theories chosen for this research, I focused on the work of Connell (1996) while also looking at Brannon's (1976) outline of what was considered masculine behaviour and traits of that era (see chapter 2, page 37.) I chose to use this older model by Brannon as I felt this aligned to the traditional gendered roles in the Faasamoa. For example, before becoming matai, young men were involved in the aumaga and assigned duties of heavy manual labour such as cultivating land for food production and for protection in times of village warfare. (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010) In relation to warfare and protection I saw Brannons characteristics of being the *Sturdy Oak*, *Give 'Em Hell* and *No sissy stuff* were all applicable regarding this example.

### *Connell's Masculinity Paradigm*

As noted I reviewed participants responses above, against Connell's paradigm of hegemonic, multiple and collective masculinities. In my view, the connections with some of these types were not direct links, but more regarding new forms of masculinities. Both high school and university students responses are brought together to assess this question.

### *Hegemonic Masculinity*

Hegemonic masculinity is highly visible as a role model promoted by society and is also linked to ways men have been privileged over women. Talanoa with these Samoan males highlighted that they had a differing perspective of what it means to succeed and what is critical to accessing further opportunities in life. These male students said in the findings that education was definitely something they aspired to achieve and critical to their success in life to be a successful Samoan man. All students saw education as the key to their future:

Education means life goals! Because that's what I use my education for, it's to get to my future goals. It's about my future and achievement because yeah, making it to end of my studies this year, that's an achievement! PSALMS (West Auckland)

These students did not buy into the image of machoism referring to education as a pursuit more for women, or that it was nerdy which would influence their status amongst their male peers. This made me contemplate whether these students had created a new norm; was this a new form of masculinity where Samoan males considered education to be highly prominent and

critical to their future success.

## 2. *Multiple Masculinities*

Connell's second category proposes there is no one or uniform conceptualization of masculinity and that people construct their ideas of masculine behaviours differently according to time and context. To my mind these students' views were aligned with this concept of difference as seen in Luke's response. He compares the time when his father was growing up compared to his upbringing currently and what he is trying to achieve now with education:

My dad tells me the stories of working on the Taro patch back in Samoa when he was a young man. That was his duty, to provide for his family that way. Looking back he sacrificed everything when he came here for his kids for a better future. It makes it easier for me to work hard in school, yes it's a lot of hard work, but you'd rather do that hard work, putting pen to paper than working hard in that Taro patch, looking after the land. My dad worked hard so that I could get the benefits, that's why school and doing well is so important, not just for my success but for my family and future, a small sacrifice compared to what my Father did for me. LUKE (West Auckland)

I saw this was an example of multiple masculinities including differing ideals of what it meant to be a successful Samoan man; there was not one constant characteristic. As noted during his youth, Luke's father worked to cultivate and maintain the land to produce food to support his family, that was his father's ideal and application of the role of a Samoan male. For Luke, now educated in New Zealand, the goal was still the same (support and to gain prestige for his family) but this would be achieved through education. They are both Samoan men but coming from the perspective of two different periods in time and two different lived experiences. On reflection, this group of students displayed multiple masculinities in relation to what was traditionally considered as the duties, characteristics and accepted behaviours of a Samoan man in Samoa.

## 3. *Collective masculinities*

Connell's concept of collectively held masculinities applies and is defined and maintained across institutions such as armies, corporations, governments, families and schools. School communities undeniably played a role in the maintenance of specific or particular perceptions of masculinity. An example here was my question (see page 68) regarding who would be more admired amongst their school peers - the captain of the first XV rugby team, or the student gaining straight A's therefore succeeding academically? The following student made an interesting comment:

Is that a trick question? Everyone thinks we are well known for Sports and sports only, but I think that is just in our blood, like in our genes, we are built for Rugby. But in saying that, I know heaps of Pacific boys who are also talented in the classroom too. All of us can make it in school but it's just stereotypes of who we

are and what we are able to achieve, sometimes others looking down on us can drag us down too, but we are succeeding at school, it maybe just isn't celebrated enough.  
DANIEL (West Auckland)

While all students agreed that the first XV captain would likely gain more prominence amongst his peers, they also said academic success was also valued highly. In addition, they talked about what they saw as a need for more focus on Samoan and Pacific role models in other arenas besides sports. This is something to consider regarding collective masculinities, the impact of what is highly visible in the media and culture plays a role in influencing masculinity views. New Zealand is a nation that loves rugby and Samoan rugby players who are clearly visible in the media and successful. The school in west Auckland where I gathered some participants from had a deep appreciation for the game and had a competitive culture regarding the sport. At one stage, they were the world high school rugby champions and so success on the rugby field was a central part of the school culture. In my view, the school community plays a huge influence on the active construction of masculinity.

### *Brannon's Masculinity Scale (1976)*

In Table 7, I classify student responses according to Brannon's masculinity scale (see chapter 2). Brannon's four principals are to the left of the table, followed by students responses which have been collated, then lastly, did students views concur with Brannon's scale. This is outlined in Table 7 below:

In my view, participant responses did not match Brannon's scale (1976) or Franklin's stereotypical traits (2012) therefore, these educational decision making was not impacted by the need to maintain what Brannon's outlined as masculinity traits. To my mind, their Faasamoa beliefs had a more substantial impact on students pursuit of success and influenced their decision making process towards learning.

See Table 7 below of Brannon's masculinity scale:

**Table 7:** Brannon’s masculinity scale

Brannons Masculinity scale	Students response	Did students conform to Brannons taxonomy?
<b>No Sissy Stuff</b> <b>Males must avoid anything seen as vaguely feminine. A man who shows emotional vulnerability is weak.</b>	During talanoa a male student openly cried in front of his peers	No
<b>The Big Wheel</b> <b>Men must strive to be authoritative and admired. To gain this needed status, males must achieve. Traditional expectations demand that men be successful in all they undertake, especially as breadwinners</b>	All my participants said they aspired to go onto university. Only one student said he had to work straight after high school to support his family financially - a ‘bread winner’	No
<b>The Sturdy Oak</b> <b>This relates to men as "the strong silent type." Men must remain calm in the most hectic and frightening situations. They must be able to handle difficult problems on their own, never show any weaknesses, and keep intimate aspects of their personality to themselves.</b>	Students were open in sharing their experiences of learning, family, their trials and tribulations. A few students were very emotional when they spoke about their families and other experiences. One student shared about losing his brother who had passed away at a young age.	No
<b>Give'Em Hell</b> <b>This dimension underscores a man's love of adventure, danger, and violence. A man is considered dull unless he is willing to take risks.</b>	Students talked about their love of sport, and putting their ‘body on the line’ in terms of contact sport, but there was no reference to any dangerous activities. Violence was only mentioned in relation to a current affairs story in the news where a young man (high school age) had been stabbed at a party. Students highlighted how quickly young men can escalate things when it is not necessary. They all disapproved of any violence and felt it was just about making right choices.	No

## Summary

To contemplate and understand the differing face of masculinity in the time of grandfathers and fathers who were born and raised in Samoa, to those generations of New-Zealand born Samoan males today requires understanding of Faasamoa and the shift in the identity journey young Samoan males face here in New Zealand.

After talking to these students, I believe that Samoan male students are creating new parameters of masculinity highlighting what it means to be a Samoan man. The valuing of education was extremely high with these groups of students and they confirmed education as critical to their success today and to the future. Education was something they strived to attain and worked hard to achieve. In New Zealand, these Samoan males have to attain Samoan cultural knowledge

through their family, the church and the wider Samoan community. Simultaneously, they are also trying to discover who they are as New Zealanders, young men who were born in this country where there is no need to fetch fire, or cultivate the land for food, a far cry from traditional island living.

These students were frustrated at being pre-judged regarding their abilities as Samoan male students. They were frustrated at being labelled 'not academically capable' and 'only good at sports' alongside other labels they felt society placed on them. They outlined the need for more Samoan male (and other Pacific) role models who represent success in other areas representing what opportunities are possible for them as well. They are pushing the boundaries and challenging ideologies of what a Samoan man is in the 21st century. These students felt the Faasamoa, support of parents and family contributed significantly to their success and will continue to be a major force to implement changes for the success of future Samoan male students, and even for the wider Pacific community.

## CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

O le upega e fili i le po, 'ae tatala i le ao

The fishing net is knotted at night, but untangled in the morning.

### Introduction

The Samoan proverb above highlights the rationale of this chapter. Prior to this research and Talanoa with my participants, there were disparities in my understanding and knowledge of this phenomenon: the experience of Samoan males within education. Having the ability to embark on this research, to look at current literature and students experiences; has allowed me to reach a level of awareness and appreciation of the passage they take. It is by listening to their stories, triumphs and concerns that this understanding has been achieved.

However, just like the journey of the fisherman, the task is a long and arduous one and there is still much work to be done to ensure the catch is bountiful. This to sustain the fisherman and his entire aiga.

### The Value of Education

The first major finding was that both the high school and university students valued education and saw this as a positive experience, aspirational and essential to their success and future success.

All high schools students confirmed that they intended to enrol in university study after their year 13. One shared that he was not going to do so immediately due to family financial pressures; he would instead seek full time employment and planned to attend university in the future. Even though this was the case, he confirmed he and his aiga still were optimistic for his education - but for the moment, it was his priority to support his family financially. For all these students, they felt it was their responsibility to succeed in education: as a way of honouring their parents sacrifice, commitment and dedication to their lives.

### The Impact of Faasamoa

The second major finding related to their strong sense of Faasamoa (being a Samoan) While participants had varying definitions of what Faasamoa meant to them, they all valued being Samoan and their 'Samoan identity' and behaviours. This was powerfully displayed through their love and support for their parents and families in New Zealand and in the homelands.

To these participants Faasamoa meant family, each knew their place in the family and were committed to maintaining the family good and overall wellbeing, this included honouring of relationships and the feagaiga between brother and sister (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2010, Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush 2005, Anae 2010, Latai 2015.) Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) highlights

that for Samoan families, maintaining relationships was central to all behaviours and included tautua instead of seeking individual gain; respect to those of higher status; support during faalavelave and understanding the importance of protecting relationships – as in the concept of va fealoai. (p. 148). Furthermore, Faasamoa meant honouring of parents and family. Firstly, honouring parents was a huge motivation for both groups to succeed in education links to faaaloalo. All students described the sacrifice made by parents physically (working gruelling hours at mainly manual labour jobs) as well as contributing financially towards their overall wellbeing and payment of schooling. Parents endeavoured to apportion their limited resources so that their children could access educational opportunities they never had as is reported in many migrant journeys (Macpherson, Bedford, Spoonley 2000, Beford, Ho and Lidgard, 2000, Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2009) Overall, students agreed that because parents made such huge sacrifices, they too could achieve such levels of success but within the realm of education. Many students said to be able to repay parents with success in education was a personal goal and a way to show their appreciation and faaaloalo and alofa.

At the same time, this strong parental influence also brought pressures relating to high expectations regarding schooling. There was also a demand that they commit to other activities (e.g. church, family obligations) For these students, being involved in other family based activities was a way to honour their parents, but also to display Tautua. One student said he played the piano at church and was expected by his parents to be at church twice a week for choir practice. At times, he struggled with balancing schoolwork and honouring such activities but did not want to disappoint his parents. Fanene (2006) agrees; while parents encouraged students to 'do well' in school, they also expected them to fulfil their duties to extended family, church and other commitments which at times took priority over school work (p. 44). A compromise must be reached regarding honouring parents, meeting high expectations and being involved in other commitments that at times may take priority over study. However in saying this, because it is likely that Samoan female students were also subject to having family pressures, it cannot strictly be said that 'family pressure' is the only significant impact on Samoan male educational achievement.

The third major finding confirmed especially by the high school students was that education was definitely for males and not just for girls. They also expressed that boys could 'do it too!' To this group, education was not nerdy or as one student said un-macho. In some ways, these responses go towards answering the questions raised by Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) regarding whether Pacific males lesser educational achievement than Pacific females was due to education being seen to be a female activity.

Fairbairn-Dunlop (2010) referred to the importance of the peer group (the brotherhood, the bros) and the power of the peer group and such norms to influence male attitudes towards education. She refer to the boy who had achieved U.E. (university entrance) as being labelled as having 'won but lost it' This signifies students are making a distinction between school and other learning and that academic study is not highly rated (p. 147). Interestingly, none of my participants suggested this and identified education as crucial to their success. Furthermore, these students

did not support the notion that Samoan females are more intelligent than Samoan males or vice versa.

While the ABC of gender equality in education report (OECD, 2015) highlights that many boys felt they did not fit within the school system and that school clashed with their interests; and as a result boys felt alienated and unenthusiastic to work in school (p. 155). This was not the case for these participants. These students enjoyed their school years and saw education as integral to their achievement, now and in the future.

Students said they enjoyed working in groups and supported each other in both academic and non-curricular activities. These findings align with Evans (2011) who research confirmed that boys preferred such styles of learning and the concept of 'togetherness' which in turn fuelled their feelings of cultural identity.

## **A Sense of Belonging**

Rimoni (2016) emphasised the importance of Tama Samoa developing a strong sense of belonging within academic learning environments. Rimoni asked how this built or contributed to their identity as a school achiever. (p. 14). While both groups of school students felt they connected with their schooling, such connections had been created in differing ways.

The students from south Auckland identified social clubs they had joined which connected with their interests and passions. They specifically outlined being involved in music, some were members of the choir while others performed at the Smoke free rock quest - New Zealand's only nationwide, live music youth event. They felt they represented their school with pride and were highly successful. Students felt engaged and a sense of belonging through such activities, which gave them a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment. This aligns with Fairbairn-Dunlop (2013) regarding the positive relationship between being a member of the Polynesian club, positively connecting to other school subjects and NCEA achievement.

For the student group from west Auckland sports was a major connector - specifically rugby. A school with a long history and admiration of the sport, the school had even produced some members of the all blacks (past and present). However when I asked students to compare the value of being highly successful in education or rugby it was interesting to note the varying responses. Some felt the rugby player was more respected by peers. Others said it depended on whom the audience was making the judgment that if it were family, the successful academic. These students also confirmed they made positive connections with high school through joining Polynesian cultural groups. Participants commented on how they had increased their understanding of the Faasamoa (and Faapacific) through participating in the Polyfest. This highlights as Fairbairn-Dunlop (2013) refers to the importance of schools creating spaces such as Polynesian clubs where cultural knowledge and identity are promoted and in turn how the secure identity fostered in these activities contributed to students connecting more strongly with other school activities to better educational outcomes. (p. 441). My participants used words like brotherhood, relationships, leadership often as they honoured their relationships between each

other. They supported and encouraged each other's academic success as well as non-curricular activities and knew they could 'lean on each other' in times of need. This aligned with their collective identity as 'being Samoan.' This also refers to the Samoan concept of Teu le Va (Anae, 2010) and Va Fealoai (Va'a, 2009) both refer to the reciprocal relationships and mutual respect.

The high school students also commented very strongly on what they saw to be the negative influence of the media on Pacific male representation and that the only Samoan or Pacific male role models observed were rugby players or other sportsmen (see Uperesa 2014, Grainger 2006, Grainger 2009.) Students said this gave them limited options to aspire to. Ezra made the bold comment regarding the limitation of Pacific male role models in the media:

I think it's bad because our kids need to know how well we can do and what we can achieve, not just in Sports. There is actually a saying that goes "Why do we say the sky's the limit when there's footprints on the moon!" To me this means all brown kids can do it, push higher and go further than what others think you are capable of! (Chapter 4)

## **What Influences Educational Decision Making?**

Some of the high school students alluded to the critical need for their peers to 'take ownership' of their learning. As stated by one student named Samuel 'a person has to make the decision to take up the opportunity at school and really push themselves hard; students must be in charge of their success.'

As I reflected back on the Talanoa it seemed that in many cases students were abiding by decisions made by their parents and their desire to fulfil their parents' aspirations. This was evident for example in their choice of programme of study or career. For example, a student commented 'I wanted to study music, but my parents wanted me to do Law.' Notably Samoans are family based collectivist communities and decisions made are always for the overall good of the family. Kurman (2001) states individualist cultures tend to promote an independent self that is autonomous while Collectivist cultures, in contrast, tend to foster an interdependent self that is part of a comprehensive social relationship and that is partially defined by others in that relationship. One of the suggested differences between these two self-systems is the strength and centrality of self-enhancement. (p. 1705) This aspect of Kurman's relating to Samoan male achievement in education warrants further research.

For the students already in tertiary study, 'taking ownership' of one's learning was achieved with maturity and when they had gained an understanding of the bigger picture, and for one student when he became a father. This included knowing why you were at school and the success it could bring not only to the student themselves, but for the success of the aiga as well. Nasir and Hand (2006) highlight the struggle to truly comprehend the relationship between race, culture and learning and how this is a fundamental issue in education and educational psychology. As the research regarding the experiences of Samoan males within education is limited (as well as Pacific male students' experiences overall) it is essential this gap be researched and better understood. As Rimoni (2016) has asked, 'what is truly known about Tama Samoa and the

complex, nuanced, and finely calibrated identities that sit beneath the bleak figures and graphs about educational underachievement? (p. 12). Furthermore, does it take the added maturity of being responsible for 'someone else' (a child) to encourage Samoan males educational achievement?

The four university students in this research all had vary unique learning experiences including the paths that directed them to higher education, however each student felt the trials and triumphs they experienced by attending university were all worthwhile and beneficial. After completing a university degree, these students felt they were able to pursue their career goals and find suitable employment, which would enable them to provide and support their family financially (displaying faaloalo, alofa and tautua to their parents and families.) For university students, the value of education is intrinsically connected to honouring of parents and duty to the family, self-progression and accomplishment.

## **Masculinity frameworks**

For this research the Masculinity frameworks provided by Connell (1996) seems most applicable in capturing the views of these participants. These Samoan students are pushing the boundaries and creating their own definitions of what it means to be a successful Samoan male today. Regarding the three aspects of masculinity by Connell as highlighted in this research, what was most profound was the finding that Samoan male students responses most strongly aligned with multiple masculinities, this concept supports the fact that there is no one form of masculinity anywhere and that people construct masculinities differently according to where they live and even social class classification.

The research findings confirmed that there has been a progressive shift between traditional Samoan gendered roles between the generation of Samoan fathers (born in Samoa) and their sons born in New Zealand. Samoan fathers who migrated to New Zealand felt supporting the family financially , being the classic 'bread winner' was the sign of a good father. This finding aligns with Anae, Fuamatu, Lima, Marriner, Park & Suaalii-Sauni (2000) who comment that Samoan masculinity relates to the male as the 'protector and provider' for his family. In comparison, today's generation of Samoan sons born in New Zealand see success as investing in education and attaining knowledge which in turn, equates to better employment opportunities and financial stability. From the students recollection of their fathers experiences in New Zealand, both generations agree that Samoan men should always be the archetypal 'provider for the family' but now in increasingly different ways.

My participants' responses were not congruent with Brannon's (1976) masculinity scale or Franklin's (2012) stereotypical masculine traits. The aim of providing these references was to show the progression towards different concepts of masculinity such as those provided by Connell (1996) specifically multiple masculinities. This verifies Samoan male students are establishing new progressive identities, which include the elevated value of education.

## Finally, a few points on my Research method

My decision to explore two points in the education pipeline proved to be a good choice. Jackson and Moore (2006) provided a different perspective, which enabled me to approach this research with a broad view. Each participant group brought a different view that added to this discussion. The high school students provided the 'futuristic view' looking forward to the possibilities education could provide them. For the university students, they provided the view of 'looking back' a reflective journey on their personal experiences and success achieved while on their learning journey.

As Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush (2005) state, it is important to have multiple perspectives to gain a broader understanding. Silipa (2008) agrees and clarifies the need to gain insight into different perspectives, particularly through the relationships between Western social science discourse and traditional cultural contexts and standpoints. This was achieved by the intertwining, interweaving and inter-relatedness of different orientations to concepts, modes and contexts of Samoan thinking traditions and to Western educational concepts. (p. 29).

Through the group and individual Talanoa, my research has gained two unique perspectives from Samoan male students within the New Zealand education system. Their views, stories, triumphs and tribulations enrich this research and are invaluable. The use of Talanoa (Vaiotele, 2006) and by applying Appreciative Inquiry (Copperrider and Whitney, 2005) enabled students to share their lived experiences and stories. These are essential to the development of viable and positive solutions to enhance Samoan male educational success; Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave and Bush (2005) refer to the value of having multiple perspectives and how these enhance problem solving:

In Samoan culture, there are three perspectives. The perspective of the person at the top of the mountain, the perspective of the person at the top of the tree, and the perspective of the person in the canoe who is close to the school of fish. In any big problem, the three perspectives are equally necessary. The person fishing in the canoe may not have the long view of the person at the top of the tree, but they are closer to the school of fish. (p. 301).

The talanoa method used for this research (Vaiotele, 2006) and the application of Appreciative Inquiry (Copperrider and Whitney, 2005) was very successful in enabling me to listen, critique and understand the positive experiences of Samoan male students experience in education. Having a specific Samoan focus as opposed to a Pan-Pacific approach was very enlightening and rewarding for myself as a Samoan researcher. I am also very satisfied that I approached this study looking at two points of the educational pipeline as it enabled me to gauge a better appreciation and view of the learning landscape these students occupy. In summary, what is good for Samoan male students may possibly cross over to suitable solutions for other Pacific male students to also enhance their participation in education.

## CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

Ua o gatasi le futia ma le umele

We must be of one mind in the undertaking. While the fisherman swings the rod, the others must assist him by paddling hard.

The alagaupu above highlights the work that lies ahead in relation to increasing the number of Samoan males participating successfully in education and progressing onto university. This proverbial expression refers to the expertise of the fisherman and working together in union to ensure the catch is bountiful. The reference to 'others' relates to key stakeholders who play a crucial role in supporting Samoan and Pasifika student success in Education in Aotearoa. There is an urgency for engaged collaboration to occur in order to ensure these students experience a bountiful learning journey.

### **Samoan Male Students in Education**

The two participant groups I was privileged to talanoa with provided rich personal insights into their experiences of education, their trials and triumphs and what factors outlined what enhanced their success within education. Responses showed these students felt:

1. Education is highly valued by males and is linked to more life opportunity and future success (not only for themselves but for their families)
2. Faasamoa - specifically relating to honouring parents and the overall wellbeing of the aiga has a significant impact on the decision-making process of Samoan males' students regarding education.
3. A connection and belief in progressive aspects of masculinity such as 'multiple masculinity' as provided by Connell (1996)

These students' responses confirmed that Faasamoa influences their perceived value of education and contributes to their identity and self-esteem. Masculinity was not an influential factor in deterring them from education; instead, other issues came to the forefront such as lack of motivation and at times family pressure.

### **Contributions to the literature**

The ongoing debate concerning low rates of male participation in education continues to be a matter of urgency. Even more troubling is the lower number of males from ethnic minorities who

are disengaged with education. On a global scale, this matter must be given deliberate attention.

I believe this research contributes to literature by providing the lived experiences and stories of the successful Samoan male student in the New Zealand education system. This research adds their voice, which is often unheard, silenced or ignored. Findings confirmed Faasamoa and the aiga acted as an anchor for students who transitioned from high school onto university. It is my hope that these findings contribute to 'best practice' and a possible comparative study for other males from ethnic minorities (specifically in the Pacific region) who also aim for success in education.

## **Research Limitations**

I felt I had a good number of participants to engage with in Talanoa (22 students) however I believe there were some limitations as this study was based in Auckland only. Perhaps Samoan males from different parts of New Zealand are having different experiences within education. It would be beneficial to understand what the experiences are of Samoan male students in Samoa and their transition from high school onto university to make further comparisons. In addition, although it was not planned, it turned out that all high school students intended to go on to further study. Perhaps it would be useful to carry on Talanoa with students from Years 10-12 for example. It may be that by Year 13, the decision to carry on with further education has already been made.

## **Suggestions for further research**

It was evident that there has been a gap in research regarding the experiences of Samoan males within the New Zealand education system, and furthermore, the disaggregation of educational outcomes for Pacific students by gender and Pacific ethnicity. The Ministry of Education have provided multiple reports, policies and plans (listed in Chapter 2, pages 22-28) however they have focused on 'Pacific peoples' as a complete unified group. There has been less research regarding the focus on 'males' educational performance and outcomes generally for all students' within the New Zealand context. There has also been limited research by the MOE focused on the impact of one's 'culture' on educational performance and outcomes. I believe this is critical to be able to specify positive solutions for individual ethnic groups (e.g. Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island, Niuean, Fijian etc.) As Samoans make up the largest Pacific cohort in New Zealand today at 48.7 percent of Pacific peoples (Statistics New Zealand, 2013 Census) a specific research focus on the educational performance and outcomes for Samoan males while applying a Samoan gender lens (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2010) is critical. This to elucidate the links between Samoan gendered roles and the differences in educational outcomes for Samoan males (as compared to Samoan females.) This is critical because of the relationship between one's level of education and economic and social engagement. Critical also is considering how this will influence New Zealand society as a whole. This research is imperative not only to safeguard the future of Samoans living

in New Zealand, but also the ongoing maintenance of family structures which are fundamental to Faasamoa.

## Concluding statement

I have been challenged by this research journey to ensure such talanoa continues to occur and is shared with the world. Faasamoa encapsulates our past, present and future as a people, the characteristics of alofa, faaaloalo and tautua lay the platform for us while navigating new waters impacted by global political, economic, and social realignments. In an ever-changing world, Tama Toa are challenged to navigate their education, while simultaneously navigating their Samoan cultural lens and worldview. Findings from this research determine they are progressively doing so in differing ways.

I conclude this thesis with the challenge to future generations of Tama Toa, to move fluidly between these two worlds knowing that it takes skill and expertise to be able to do so successfully. Take ownership of this and understand you are an amalgam of these two realities may both skill sets drive you forward to move beyond the horizon just like our forefathers did who navigated the vast oceans guided only by their hopes, dreams, faith and understanding of the stars.

I started my thesis with the wise words of Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi and I wish to end with the intelligent words of one of my participants from the high school talanoa:

There is actually a saying that goes “Why do we say the sky’s the limit when there’s footprints on the moon!” To me this means all brown kids can do it, push higher and go further than what others think you are capable of!

Moreover, this is my prayer, that Tama Toa will be deeply rooted in their faasinomaga. That they would offer alofa, faaaloalo and tautua not only to their parents, aiga and wider community; but also to love, respect, serve and honour their individual God-given talents.

To fulfil **your potential** in all that you say, do and aspire to, and understand that education is but one key to achieving this.

*I le ava ma le faaaloalo lava – Soifua ma ia manuia*

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AI:	Appreciative Inquiry
AUTEC:	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
MOE:	Ministry of Education
NCEA:	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NFL:	National Football League
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Development
POLYFEST:	ASB Polynesian Festival
U.E.:	University Entrance

## GLOSSARY

<i>Samoan Language</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
Alofa	love, compassion, care
Aiga	family
Au'aiga	a group of families/households
Aualuma	daughters of the village
Aumaga	untitled men of the village
'Autasi	consensus
Tautua	service, to serve others
Faaaloalo	respect, pay respect to
Faamatai	Samoan chiefly system
Faasamoa	the Samoan way of life – cultural traditions, norms and values
Faaulupega	naming of Samoan chiefly titles
Faletua ma tausí	wives
Feagaiga	sacred bond between brother and sister
Gafa	genealogy
Ietoga	fine mats
Mamalu	dignity
Mana	honour
Matai	chief
Pule	authority/power
Poto/fa'autaga	wisdom
Siapo/Tapa	Samoan cultural art form - a fine cloth made from the bark of the mulberry tree
Soalapule	joint decision making/shared authority
Talanoa	to talk with meaning and purpose/having engaged conversations - referring to the Pasifika research methodology
Tama Toa	Tama: Male, Toa: Strength – strong Samoan man similar to ancient warrior
Tamaiti	children
Tapu	sacredness

## SAMOAN PROVERBS OR PHRASES

### *Samoan Language*

### *English Translation*

*O le ala I le pule, o le tatua*

the pathway to leadership is through service

*E toe afua se taeo fou*

a new morning will arise

*O le tama a le tagata e fafaga i upu  
ma tala, a o le tama a manu e  
fafaga i fuga o laau.*

The offspring of men are fed with words, but the  
offspring of birds are fed with seeds.

*A leai se gagana, ona leai lea o  
sa ta aganu'u, a leai la ta  
aganu'u/agaifanua, ona po lea  
o le nuu.*

If there is no language, then there is no culture, if there  
is no culture, then all the village will be in darkness.

*La outou ole atu, ona foaiina  
mai ai lea ia te outou; ia outou  
saili, ona outou maua ai lea; ia  
outou tu'itu'i atu, ona toina ai lea  
ia te outou. 8 Auā ai se ole atu,  
e maua e ia; o lē saili foi, e iloa  
e ia; e toina foi i lē tu'itu'i atu.*

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find;  
knock and the door will be opened to you. For  
everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds;  
and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.  
Matthew 7:7-8

*O le upega e filli i le po, 'ae tatala  
i le ao*

The fishing net is knotted at night, but untangled in the  
morning.

*Ua o gatasi le futia ma le umele*

We must be of one mind in the undertaking. While the  
fisherman swings the rod, the others must assist him  
by paddling hard.

*I le ava ma le faaaloalo lava*

With all respect and humility

*Soifua ma ia manuia*

Farewell and be blessed

## APPENDIX 1: Ethics approval



AUTEC  
SECRETARIAT

9 July 2014

Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Peggy

Re Ethics Application:14/153 O a u o le Tama Toa: Investigating influential factors for Samoan men entering university and the impact of Fa'a Samoa and masculinity.

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 9 July 2017.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 9 July 2017;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 9 July 2017 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz).

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Janet Akeripa [jakeripa@aut.ac.nz](mailto:jakeripa@aut.ac.nz); [jakeripa@gmail.com](mailto:jakeripa@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX 2: Participation information sheet

Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

March 2014

Project Title

Does the Faasamoa and Masculinity influence Samoan male educational achievement in New Zealand?

An Invitation

Talofa lava, my name is Janet Akeripa and I am currently a postgraduate student at AUT University studying towards my Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree. My supervisor for this research is Tagaloatele Prof. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop. This research is a component of my Masters qualification and involves investigating influential factors for Samoan men entering university and the impact of Faasamoa and Masculinity. I would like to invite you to be part of this study.

What is the purpose of this research?

While the overall number of Pasifika students enrolling at university is not in proportion to their number in the total New Zealand population, the data undeniably shows that Samoan females are more likely than their male counterparts to have post-school qualifications. There is a lack of research looking at the views of specifically Samoan male students and their experiences within education, and so I would like to explore this further and find out what influences our Samoan brothers and sons to go onto university and how Faasamoa (the Samoan way of life) and masculinity influences these decisions.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have indicated your interest after the presentation that was given to year 13 students at your high school; or if you are a university student, you were selected via the use of 'snowball sampling' A form of non-probability sampling in which I as the researcher identified 1 appropriate participant/student. This student was then asked to identify another potential student, your participation was because you were referred by someone else and you agreed to participate.

What will happen in this research?

For this research, I will be working with two specific groups. Group A will be a group of five-year 13 students at high school. Group B will be a group of five university students (all will be Samoan and male) I will be interviewing each group through a face-to-face Talanoa (informal conversation

or discussion) conducted at a time and place that is convenient to you. Recordings of voice recordings and participation in the Talanoa will occur. You are in no way obliged to agree to an interview or group Talanoa session. Should you feel the need to withdraw from the project at any time, you may do so without question prior to the completion of data collection.

The Talanoa, discussions and voice recordings will be taped or digitally recorded so that I can capture your responses, your story and the essence of the conversation and your contribution. These conversations will be carried out in English, but you are free to respond in Samoan or both languages. I will transcribe each conversation and return it to you for your approval. This is to ensure that I do not misinterpret any words or meanings; the responses I collect will form the basis of my research project and will be incorporated into the thesis.

What are the discomforts and risks?

No risks and discomforts are anticipated. As in the practice of *va fealoai* (respectful relationships) which is paramount to Faasamoa, your participation will be treated with the utmost respect.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

All data collection Interviews will be carried out at a time and place most suitable to you. All personal details, information and opinions will be kept strictly confidential and you will not be identified in the writing of the thesis. No other person besides my supervisor or myself will see the transcripts. All interview transcripts, tapes and observation notes will be destroyed six years after submission and approval of the final research report. Furthermore, while the report will remain in the form of an unpublished thesis, a copy of the final report will be made available to you. Research findings may be published in academic journals and or disseminated at academic/professional conferences.

What are the benefits?

Your participation in this study is the opportunity to share your story and experiences as a Samoan man within the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand. The aim of this research is to highlight the positive influential factors that have affected your decision to go onto higher education. This thesis is to highlight what is working well for you as a student as opposed to research that focuses on a deficit (negative) view of the student. I hope that this research will extend the current body of knowledge surrounding what works well for Samoan male students and that it can influence policies created around Pasifika success in education in the future. As a Masters student, your participation directly contributes to my thesis, and so I thank you for your time in considering this.

How will my privacy be protected?

I will be transcribing the information and your identity or the identities of any other person mentioned in the thesis will be kept strictly confidential and will not be revealed. Pseudonyms will be used to name each participant. I will not engage in any casual conversations in relation to interviews or interview materials and will ensure that the interviews are not overheard in any way, shape or form. Because of the nature of this research, there may be a fellow student involved as well so I encourage you not to reveal your participation to any fellow students to assist in protecting your privacy.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs. However, your participation and the volunteering of your valuable time is of significant value to this research.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I will arrange a time suitable for you to meet and discuss with you whether you would like to participate in this research. Should you decide before the arranged time that you agree to participate, you may contact me on the contact details provided. I am planning to make initial contact with you in May 2014. Once you have read and understood this form, I will give you a week to make a decision as to whether you would like to participate in this research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

As part of research procedure, you will be asked complete a written consent form if you are a university student, this is done before any data collection takes place. If you are a year 13 student at high school, you will need to take a form home for your parents to sign to give parental consent for you to participate in this research. I have attached both forms. Please take the time to read over the form relevant to you. Please note that you do not have to feel obligated to take part at this stage and that you are welcome to contact me at anytime for clarification.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, pfairbai@aut.ac.nz, +64-9-9219999 x 6203.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Janet Akeripa, School of Social Sciences and Public Policy AUT University jakeripa@aut.ac.nz +64-9-9219999 x 5006 (work) +64-21339886 (mob)

Project Supervisors Contact Details: Tagaloatele Prof. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

Primary Supervisor School of Social Sciences and Public Policy AUT University pfairbai@aut.ac.nz +64-9-9219999 x 6203 (work)

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date final ethics approval was granted, AUTEK Reference number 14/153*

## APPENDIX 3: Consent Forms

Consent Form

Individual Talanoa/Interviews



Project title: Does the Faasamoa and Masculinity influence Samoan male educational achievement in New Zealand?

Project Supervisors: Tagaloatele Prof. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

Researcher: Janet Akeripa

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated July 2014
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that quotes from transcripts and/or excerpts of audio files may be quoted in presentations, publications and in the final thesis.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes  No

Participant's signature :

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date :

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th July 2014 AUTEK Reference number 14/153 Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Consent Form

Group Talanoa/Focus group



Project title: O a'u o le Tama Toa: Investigating influential factors for Samoan men entering university and the impact of Faasamoa and Masculinity

Project Supervisors: Tagaloatele Prof. Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop

Researcher: Janet Akeripa

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 17/09/2014
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions in the focus group is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the focus group and that it will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that quotes from transcripts and/or excerpts of audio files may be quoted in presentations, publications and in the final thesis.
- I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- If I withdraw, I understand that while it may not be possible to destroy all records of the focus group discussion of which I was part, the relevant information about myself including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will not be used.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes  No

Participant's signature :

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date :

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 9th July 2014 AUTEK  
Reference number 14/153 Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

## **APPENDIX 4: Indicative Questions**

Does the Faasamoa and Masculinity influence Samoan male educational achievement in New Zealand?

### **General**

What is your age, where were you born, what is your ethnicity/ties?

What languages are spoken at home?

Where is your family from in Samoa (village) if you do not know, tell me a little about your family background (number of siblings, parents)

What occupation do your parent/s or caregivers have?

What activities are you involved in outside of school? (Church/community/sports)

### **Education**

What does education mean to you?

Write down three key words and we can explore them as a group

How has your experience of education been so far at high school? (This is to gauge their perceptions of schooling, learning and valuing of education)

Name one positive academic experience this year

Name one negative academic experience this year

What is one of the most important things you have learnt while being a student here at this school?

What events does your school participate in that affirm and encourage you as a Samoan student?

What were your expectations of high school in Year 9?

Since it is your last year of study (year 13) what are your plans for next year? Looking back on your high school years, describe them in 2 words – explain

What are your plans next year (since you will finish Year 13 this year)

For those of you who have indicated you will work next year, what is the main reason for this?

For those of you who have indicated study, what value do you see in pursuing further education?

What is your career goal and how will university/other study help you to achieve this?

If you're in your final year of university, looking back, how would you describe your journey?

Where do you see yourself in the future in 5 years' time? (Career, what qualifications will you have? what country will you be living in? what type of lifestyle will you have?)

Was there a Pacific support programme or any support for Pacific students while you were studying? Did you use these services? If so why? If not why?

## **Faasamoa**

What does Faasamoa mean to you? Write down three words each and we can discuss as a group

What is one key thing you have learnt from your parents/ family about Faasamoa?

In your view, what are three elements that make up a Samoan male?

Regarding your education, has Faasamoa influenced your view of education?

If so why? If not why?

How do your parents influence you and your education? How do your parents communicate this to you?

As Samoan people, we generally have very busy lives outside of school (e.g. church, family, taking care of elderly grandparents, community events, sports etc.)

Have there been times that you have not been able to commit to your studies due to other obligations you have to meet? If so, what do you do in these situations? (e.g. try your best to catch up on your own, talk to a teacher, fall behind and not hand in work, catch up in marks in the next assessment, discuss with parents?)

What aspects of our culture (Faasamoa) do you think help/encourage more Samoan males to engage with education and even consider university study?

## **Masculinity**

Describe what being a Samoan male means to you?

How is your life different from what your father's life was like at the same age? Do you think you had any similarities?

What are your favourite subjects at school? Why did you choose these subjects?

How important are your bros or peer group when you were growing up during school? (high school/university)

Did you have leadership roles in the school? If so what? What did you learn from this leadership?

If you could go back in time to when you were Year 9, what advice would you give yourself?

Who do you think gets more respect during high school? The captain of the rugby team who is strong and popular? Or the student whose a straight 'A' student and passing all his subjects?

## **Influence of Peers**

Were you part of any groups at your school?

Who were your friends mainly (same culture? Different ethnicity? Popular kids or smart kids? Mix of both?)

Why were they your friends?

Did your peers have a mainly positive/negative influence on you?

How much time did you spend with your group/peers?

How would you think your peers would describe you?

Have all your peers that you started school with made it to their final year?