Tatau:

An exploration of the journey through pain and adversity

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ABSTRACT

This research is an exploration of the traditional practice of the *tatau*[1] in search of a Sāmoan approach to the notions of pain endurance, struggle, and coping with adversity. My interest in this topic emanates from a career as a social work/counsellor working with Pacific people in Auckland in crime intervention, mental health and education. Much of the literature on pain, struggle and coping with adversity is found in research on psychological resilience. Academic scholarship on coping with adversities and psychological resilience appears to be largely based on Western perspectives that privilege a mechanistic, clinical approach. However, for those from marginalised communities, such as indigenous peoples, a more relevant approach is required. There is an incipient and burgeoning body of research that seeks to understand coping with adversities through moving away from an approach that focuses on component parts of a system and towards an integrative, holistic approach that refers to networks of connection and relationships of the system. One of the key findings from this growing body of literature is that for those from minority or oppressed cultures, cultural identity is an important component of managing highly stressful circumstances. Another key finding is the efficacy of indigenous or 'native' approaches for such enquiries. Guided by these two premises, the foundational position of this research was to utilise an approach that gave preference to the Sāmoan worldview and seek out 'native narratives' about Sāmoan knowledges. Moreover, these worldviews and knowledges pertaining to coping with adversity are embodied in the *tatau* – the Sāmoan practice of traditional tattooing. The *talanoaga* methodology – akin to in-depth, semi-structured 'conversations' – was used to engage 20 male and female participants who wear the *pe'a*[2] and the *malu*[3]*,* and who live in Sāmoa, to share their knowledge of the customs and traditions of the *tatau*, their reasons for and experiences of undertaking a *tatau*, what having the *tatau* meant to them and in their lives, and their understanding of the meanings behind the motifs and patterns they now wear.

Two broad themes emerged from this research. First, it was found that there was a significant adversity that all participants had faced in their own life journey prior to

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[1] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

[2] *Pe'a* – the male *tatau*

[3] *Malu* – the female *tatau*

undertaking the *tatau*. That adversity resulted in a discovery of self, and essentially, their 'Sāmoan-ness' – that is, expressions of being Sāmoan. After navigating their adversity, the participants believed that the *tatau* was the ideal way to 'mark' that journey of confirmation of identity. In this way, the *tatau* served as a declaration of who they had become. The second theme was the descriptions of characteristics that the participants came to value and adopt as they emerged from their adversity. Those characteristics, inscribed on them as their new *lā'ei*[4], were described as a greater love for family, culture, knowledge and spirituality, resulting in a desire to *tautua*[5] and to *tausi le vā*[6]. The conclusion reached in this research from a Sāmoan ontological perspective was that adversity, hardship, and unexpected and stressful life events are journeys of transformation. While the adversity and difficulties must be traversed by the individual, their integration and connectedness to a network of relationships (with family, culture, knowledge and spirituality) help the journey, as it is in those network of relationships that the individual returns as a new person on the inside, marked with new 'skin' on the outside, and with a greater sense of belonging and purpose.

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[4] *Lā'ei* – literally translates as 'clothing'; an idiom for the *tatau* – a reference to an ancient Sāmoan phrase for the *tatau*, *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'clothing of Sāmoan men'.

[5] *Tautua* – to serve, or service rendered.

[6] *Tausi le vā* – literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.

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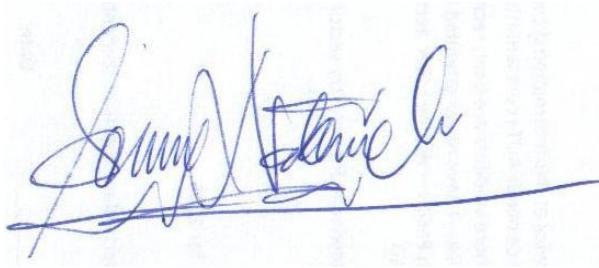
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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

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

Sonny Natanielu
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families, who all played significant roles in helping me complete my *pe'a* journey in 2012, as well as this research.

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While doing this research, my mother passed away (in 2017). She never got to see the end of this – she only saw my struggle with it, and looked forward to its completion. But I knew of her love for me, her hope for me, and the anticipation she had for the work I desired to do.

In the late 70's, my mum took us to her cleaning job this one time. Us kids were asleep in the station wagon while mum did her cleaning job. I woke up because of all the laughter going on when they finished their shift. Mum hopped in the car, and I asked mum what was going on. She explained her job to me. I asked her: why can't 'those *Pālagi'* (because it was pretty much the case at the time) clean up after themselves? *We* have to. Mum explained that it gives people like her and her cleaning crew a chance to earn some money to put food on the table. That kind of reassured me somewhat. As we drove away, I looked behind me at the building we just left, and the amount of cleaning mum had to do. Central city, Auckland, the 16-storey building had a massive blue sign at the top that read *State Insurance.* I asked mum what that meant. She explained the concept of insurance, and although it ran over my head, it was just comforting to hear mum's voice. I would've been about 8-9 years old at the time.

Fast forward 20 years … the Auckland Institute of Technology (AIT), central city, neighbour of Auckland University, was granted university status, and in the year 2000, became known as Auckland University of Technology (AUT). One of the first things AUT did was purchase the lease on a 16-storey building with a big blue sign on top that read *State Insurance.* AUT did renovations, put up their own big blue sign that read

AUT, and then declared that building the Faculty of Applied Humanities, later renamed Faculty of Culture & Society. Within that faculty, is the School of Social Sciences & Public Policy. This is who I am doing my PhD through. If all goes well, this will be the place that awards me a PhD. It's a beautiful little 'circle of life' moment for me: my parents left Sāmoa for education, only for me to go back to Sāmoa to get 'further' educated; my parents kept the *fa'asāmoa* from me to advance my education, and I am reaching the pinnacle of education using the *fa'asāmoa*; the very place that my mum used to clean, is going to be the place that awards me the title of 'Doctor', and in one generation, we have gone from being the cleaners of the building, to being a doctor in the building – sure, not a *medical* doctor, but still, it's not too bad!

This one's for you mum!

PROLOGUE

Originally, I set out on this research to explore a Sāmoan approach to psychological resilience. The initial impetus for that was a professional one, and I explain that journey in the opening chapter of this thesis. However, events in my personal life at that time revealed to me that this research was not just for a professional outcome, but that there was also personal significance in it. In 2009, my world fell apart when my wife and I separated. Over the following three years, while going through a divorce, I started a new job, moved into the city, completed my Masters, and started my PhD journey. It was an incredibly stress-filled time. In that period, what also became momentous for me was that at my mother's 60th birthday, I performed the principal orator's task of addressing those that had gathered, which is a role that my father usually performs. Of huge significance was that my father *allowed* me to perform the role, knowing I will face the scrutiny of all in attendance. We spent a lot of time together working on it, but *I did it*. A short time after performing that role, one of my closest childhood friends passed away suddenly. Her passing reunited my friends from childhood, from the Fetūao church. They all asked me to speak and deliver a gift on their behalf. Much to everyone's shock, I delivered it in the traditional way, using *matai*[1] oratory speech. One of the most telling remarks came from the elders of the church who felt that I was a worthy apprentice to my father (who was known for his oratory skill). All these events reinforced who I was, or more pertinently, who I was becoming. The final confirmation of my journey to getting the *pe'a* came when I was working for AUT University in the Pasifika Student Support unit. As I got involved in university life and student life, to many of the Pacific students, I became an uncle-figure to them, their advocate on campus; their 'go-to guy' in the institutions of higher learning. Reaching that part of my journey, I felt I was now ready to wear the *pe'a*[2], and champion the Sāmoan/Pacific cause, to *tautua*[3] the Sāmoan and Pacific community in Auckland. Thus, in 2012, I went to Sāmoa to get my *pe'a* done, and this was captured in a mini-documentary and can be viewed on Youtube[4].

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[1] *Matai* – Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.

[2] *Pe'a* – The male *tatau*.

[3] *Tautua* – to serve; render service to.

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIq8I_IgMA

In 2014, I got approval to begin this research. At the same time, in my own personal life journey, an opportunity to go to Sāmoa became an opportunity to make the move a permanent one, and not just a holiday, or even an extended time for the purpose of this research. Thus, going to Sāmoa was not for this research, but to set myself up there permanently; the activities I did and the lifestyle I set up – explained in Chapter Five – was for this purpose. As it transpired, conducting this research from the position of a local was important, so the move to Sāmoa also fulfilled this quality of the research.

One day, while 'hanging around' with my two nephews, Jedidiah and Josiah, on the sea wall in 'Āpia, waiting for the other two, Israelanna (niece, and goddaughter) and Jahaziel (nephew), to finish school, one of the boys asked me what 'that' was, pointing to something on the beach in front of what was then *Aggie's Hotel*. When I looked, I was struck with surprise and awe. It was *Gaualofa*. *Gaualofa* is the name of Sāmoa's twin-hulled traditional voyaging canoe – refer Figure 0.1 (below). I had seen the documentaries, I had read the social media about them, I had followed the voyages online, and I had even tried to e-mail them to make contact – to no avail. And now, there she was, right in front of me.

Figure 0.1: Gaualofa
Gaualofa with traditional sails pictured in the waters in Aitutaki, Rarotonga, 2012

Note.
Photo courtesy of Sāmoan Voyaging Society

I rushed the two boys to finish their food; we were going to the *va'a*[5] straight away. They saw my excitement, but I had still not explained to them what *Gaualofa* was. When we got there, I explained to the boys what *Gaualofa* was. They too were awe-struck. I asked the crew for permission to board, and upon given permission, the first person I spoke with was Andrew Banse. After a brief discussion, I had to go (with Jedidiah and Josiah) and pick up the other two kids. Once we picked them up, the excitement of the younger two got the older two excited, but the older two still didn't know what we were all talking about. So, after being cheered on by the kids, we returned to the beach where *Gaualofa* was anchored. Once we parked up, the older two were now in awe. Everyone wanted to board again, so we did. This time, Watch Captains Aunofo Havea, the captain from the Tonga Voyaging Society, and Tiatia Alex Taulelei[6] were there. They were generous with their time and knowledge and sat with us while we asked them all manner of questions. The kids were enthralled by what they were hearing, while I, already familiar with the *va'a* through the documentaries and literature, was revelling in the joy of being on board that which I had admired from afar.

Following our conversation, Tiatia Alex and Aunofo said that they would get in touch with Fealofani Bruun[7], the captain, who would contact me. A couple of days later, Fani got in touch with me and informed me that they were about to start a short voyage around Sāmoa to launch the documentary *Our Blue Canoe*[8], which documented the 2011 voyage, *Te Mana o te Moana*. The voyage would start in Sātuimalufilufi, then cross the 'Apolima Strait to Sālelologa, then Fagamalo, before returning to 'Āpia – refer to Figure 0.2 (overleaf). I was invited to join the short voyage, and I duly accepted.

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[5] *Va'a* – Sea vessel.

[6] Alex Taulelei carries the Tiatia chiefly title and will be addressed as Tiatia Alex. This appellative will be observed throughout this thesis.

[7] Fealofani Bruun preferred to be called 'Fani', and will be addressed as such throughout the rest of this thesis.

[8] https://vimeo.com/169711239

Figure 0.2: Sāmoa voyage
Map of Sāmoa with villages mentioned in the Prologue marked out.

I joined the crew while they were at the village of Sātuimalufilufi. After the weekend programme with the village, the Monday was a training day; it was going to be my first time handling the *va'a*, along with two others who were also new to the crew. The training was a set of core sailing drills that we had to learn and rehearse before crossing the 'Apolima Strait to Savai'i, for the continuation of the coastal voyage, which was to be done on the Tuesday.

At training, there were set stations on the *va'a* for us to begin with. The experienced crew were assigned to a station where they would teach us, the new crew, what to do at each station. I started off at the stern (rear) sheet line (for the sail), locking down the mizzen (rear mast) sail on the port (left) side; I was learning how to lock down the sail on the cleats of the deck. After a few repetitions on that, we rotated stations, and then I went to the next, and then the next. I was incredibly excited! I had been reading the literature, had watched the documentaries, and now here I was on the *va'a* in real life. It felt incredibly surreal for me, indeed a dream come true.

After an hour of rotating stations, my final station was the *foe* (steering paddle at the stern). The *foe* steers the *va'a*; it is the helm. As soon as I stood at the *foe*, my teacher

instructed me to take hold of the *foe* and stand strong – the *foe* is heavy. When I did, I had a 'moment', a sort of out-of-body experience. As I stood at the *foe*, in my 'mind', I saw a flotilla of ancient mariners on ancient traditional voyaging canoes come up alongside the *va'a*, looked at me, and nodded in approval. There were many of them, the surrounding sea was filled with them. Everything around me got drowned out. What seemed to be a giant hand reached out to me from behind, rested on my left shoulder, in a gesture asking me to not forget these ancient mariners, those who came before me. I had goosebumps all over my body, the hair on my arms stood up straight, and my eyes welled up in tears.

That 'moment' was interrupted when I saw the captain throw a 'floaty' (floatation device) over, and shout out "man overboard!". I was immediately overwhelmed by the lack of knowledge, and panicked; I let go of the *foe* and asked, "what did I do?", thinking I had done something wrong. Everyone laughed at me. Amid the laughter, my teacher instructed me that the *foe* is never to be dropped. I replied that I didn't know what to do. He then assured me that he would tell you what to do, and that I only had to listen. With that assurance, I picked up the *foe*, and we begin our man overboard manoeuvres. At the end of our sea trials, we docked back at the Sātuimalufilufi wharf, and I took some time to take in the incredible moments I had just experienced.

Over the following days, as we went around parts of Savai'i, it was one of the most incredible learning experiences, indeed, an experience of a lifetime. The sail back to 'Āpia to conclude the voyage added even more knowledge. The sail back was a 24-hour sail that took us about 100km north east into the open ocean, and then we tacked back to 'Āpia on an angle commensurate with the wind direction – refer Figure 0.3 (overleaf). In that time, I was taught the star/wind compass, and as the conditions worsened overnight, I was also taught how to manage the conditions: how to 'surf' the waves, how to read wind direction, how to observe currents and refracted waves. After learning those aspects of traditional navigation aurally, I was then given the helm, put back on the *foe*, to put what I had just learned into practice.

Figure 0.3: Return sail to 'Āpia
The red line shows the approximate course from Fagamalo Bay to 'Āpia. Heading north east from Fagamalo Bay, we travelled approximately 100km to the turning point in the open ocean, and tacked back to 'Āpia, approximately 80km in distance.
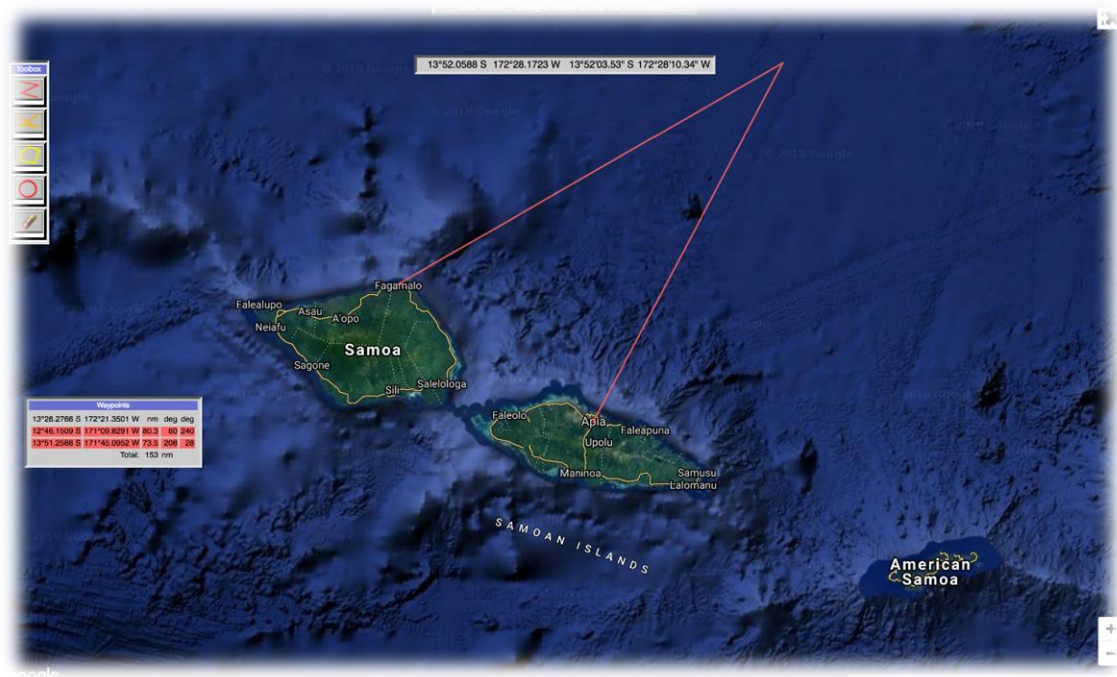
We returned safely to 'Āpia. Having negotiated near-storm conditions throughout the night, I was in awe of the experience and the mandate of _Gaualofa_ – to restore traditional navigation knowledge.

On board _Gaualofa_, there were four others who had a _tatau_, two of whom were Fani (with her _malu_), and Tiatia Alex (with his _pe'a_). Fani and Tiatia Alex were to become the first two participants of this research. For all intents and purposes, my association with _Gaualofa_ was the beginning of the research process.

As the body of knowledge began to build from the collection of _talanoaga_, I noted that the research participants were not familiar with the concept of 'resilience'. Even for those whose English was fluent, the concept of psychological resilience proved difficult to translate, or describe. In other words, it wasn't a matter of comprehension, but a matter of familiarity, or lack thereof. Accordingly, when I explained psychological resilience to the participants, I explained it as 'coping with adversity'. Thus, research conversations were conducted with that understanding of 'resilience'. This became more significant when I conducted _talanoaga_ in the Sāmoan language. I knew from

getting the Talanoa Indicative Questions translated – explained in Chapter Five – that 'resilience' has no equivalence in the Sāmoan lexicon, but I was also picking up that 'resilience' has no equivalence *conceptually*; I translated it in the Sāmoan language as 'ways people cope with adverse and difficult life circumstances', and used the examples of deaths in the family, weddings, and highly stressful times – including poverty, paying bills and struggles in life – to explain 'resilience'.

It became apparent that all conversations with participants were *not* directly or literally to do with 'resilience', but in fact, with the concept of 'coping with adversity'. There is incredible cross-over, but the literature, for all intents and purposes, treats them as different, phenomenologically. This is explained in Chapter One and Chapter Four. Thus, what started as a research to explore a Sāmoan approach to psychological resilience, became a research exploring a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity using the *tatau* as the site of enquiry, and exploring people's journeys – those with the *tatau* – through the oceans of pain, struggle and adversity.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

The context of this research

Proverbial expression:
E sui le faiga, 'ae tūmau le fa'avae.

Translation:
The expressions will change, but the foundations – or spirit, or intent – remain.

Meaning:
This proverbial expression is often used for two purposes. Firstly, it is a reference to the enduring nature of the *fa'asāmoa*[1]; although its expression may change, the foundation of respect, dignity and connectedness persists. Secondly, orators usually invoke this proverbial expression to excuse the breaking of tradition; sometimes, when a custom or tradition is observed and enacted different to its customary practice, this phrase is used to explain that the tradition may have changed and have a more modern expression, but the foundation of respect and dignity remain.

Reference:
I refer to this proverbial expression as an allusion to the notion of honouring the past while modernising its expression; I explain how the past – my own past, my career background, ancient Sāmoan knowledge and practice – is being brought forward to guide this research, to modernise ancient Sāmoan knowledge, and to indigenise a modern (therapeutic) practice.

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[1] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

Introduction

The idea for this research began twenty-five years ago while I was working in crime prevention as a Social Worker. Like all Social Workers, I was intent on making a difference in the lives of those I was working with, who were primarily people of Pacific ethnicity seeing me for some type of mandated (through the judicial system) therapeutic support. After some time, it seemed that the cognitive approach to therapy and support that I was using was not having the desired effect; I saw that the cognitive approach to therapy was based on Western (viz. Euro-American) worldviews and conceptualisation of 'the self', and had limited results with the Pacific people I worked with. After some reflection, I rethought my approach. I asked myself: what would an approach to therapy look like from the perspective of those I was providing therapeutic support for? Thus, I asked the people I worked with: if I were to have intervened in your life to prevent you choosing this pathway of crime, what should I have done (in your life) and when should I have done it?

At that invitation, they began to tell me their life stories. I got to hear many stories of the hurt and trauma that happened to them, the hardship and adversity they faced, and how that affected their decision-making. Their stories profoundly changed the way I saw them: not as 'bad' people, but as hurt people trying to find a way through the adverse and difficult situations life throws at them. I became less critical and judgmental of them and began to work with them more as a *person* (who had been hurt) and less to do with their crime. Moreover, this caused me to look at people's decision-making processes, particularly during times of stress, adversity and trauma.

Summing up all of the life stories that were shared with me, three significant elements stood out. Firstly, there was a common theme of feelings of 'lost-ness'. Through the various descriptions of 'lost-ness', there seemed to be an absence of a sense of identity and belonging. In all of the stories, there were experiences of abandonment, primarily associated with the absence, or an inadequate model, of family and culture that had left them feeling empty, lonely, uncertain and un-belonging. The descriptions of 'family' that I heard were to do with 'belonging'; the descriptions of 'culture' were to do with institutions and structures in their lives that instructed them on behaviour and conduct. Gang involvement and subcultures around criminal activity (for example drug rings and car theft syndicates) are examples of this. Secondly, the stories indicated that they struggled with decision-making particularly during times of stress and crisis; more often than not, criminal behaviour was a result of poor decision-making, where one bad decision followed another, until they found themselves in a situation where they chose

a criminal action (such as violence, abusive behavior, the use and abuse of addictive substances, theft) to resolve the crisis, adversity, and stress. As they made these choices, they continued to make poor decisions regarding who to trust, who to associate with, and actions to prove that trust, or connection – again, subcultures around criminal activity are examples of this. Consequently, searching for belonging (the sense of 'family' and 'community') for many led to gang involvement, prostitution, alcohol and drug addiction, physical violence and other harmful and unlawful behaviour. Thirdly, their feelings of 'lost-ness' and 'un-belonging' was compounded by a society that treated Pacific people with all manner of prejudices, consigning them to marginalisation and a second-class citizenry as experienced through their schooling, their treatment in the public health system, in seeking employment, further exacerbated through their treatment in the justice system. In summary, I learnt that there were indeed familial, cultural and psychological explanations for much of their criminal and anti-social behaviour and that elements of this could be attributed to the marginalisation and unequal treatment they experienced in society.

The accumulation of these life stories also showed me that the negative indices often used to portray Pacific people – in mental health (see Anae, 1999; Ataera-Minster & Trowland, 2018; Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010; Kokaua, Schaaf, Wells & Foliaki, 2009), crime (see Ministry of Justice & Ministry of Social Development, 2002; Tunufa'i, 2013; Ministry of Justice, 2010), and education (see Anae, Anderson, Benseman & Coxon, 2002; Ministry of Education, 2018) – are not a demonstration of their 'badness' or their failures, but a description (in part) of their 'lost-ness' or cultural displacement. The lost-ness (see Macpherson, 1999; Macpherson, Bedford & Spoonley, 2000; Nakhid, 2003; Tiatia, 1998) played a significant part in their decision-making processes as they journeyed through the adversities. Examples of the adversities they faced include the death of a loved one, instances of parental abandonment and neglect, abuse of all forms, rejection, failure and disappointment. I saw that not knowing who they were (a sense of identity) affected them particularly during these times of uncertainty.

One of the major discoveries from the collection of stories was the importance of 'identity' in their ability to navigate adverse circumstances. From these insights, I developed a therapeutic approach that centred on the notion of 'identity', called The Tānoa (see Natanielu, 2011 – provided in Appendix 5). This approach changed me as a therapeutic practitioner and as a person, and mainly because I became less focused on models and theories *about* people (including myself), and more focused on people's identities (including my own) that needed to be uncovered, *dis*covered, or in many

cases, *re*-discovered. Essentially, The Tānoa approach uses the traditional *tānoa* (refer to Figure 1.1, below) as a metaphor to describe a person.

Figure 1.1: The tānoa
A tānoa*, also known as a* kava *bowl, or* 'ava *bowl.*

The *tānoa* is a large wooden, curve-bottomed bowl that stands upright on four legs. In more recent times, the *tānoa* stands on many legs; Kramer (1995) alludes to the traditional *tānoa* being four-legged, and Buck (1930) adds that the more recent multi-legged *tānoa* is evidence of capitalism in Sāmoan material culture – the *tānoa* were made with many legs and sold at a price reflecting the extra amount of wood used. There are many uses for the *tānoa*, but there is a particular *tānoa* that is used for

ceremonial purposes, which is the mixing of the *'ava*[2] for the *'ava* ceremony, the traditional Sāmoan welcoming ceremony. It is this ceremonial *tānoa* that gives meaning to the model I developed. In my model, The Tānoa approach symbolically alludes to the person as the bowl part of the *tānoa*, the *'ava* is symbolic of the 'heart', or 'image of God' each person has, and shares with people in their encounters, and the four legs are symbolic of four institutions a person needs to be stable and to stand strong: family, culture, church and education. When the 'legs' become broken – symbolic of broken family, culture, church and education connections – the *tānoa* becomes unstable and the *'ava* spills. The spilling of the *'ava* is symbolic of suicide, mental illness, crime, addictions, and other social maladjustments.

This research, though, is not a confirmatory research to assess the therapeutic value of The Tānoa; this research sets out to explore a link between Sāmoan-ness (or 'cultural identity') and 'coping with adversity'. Much of the research on coping with adversity emanates from research on psychological resilience, which derives from cognitive and developmental psychology. However, a burgeoning approach to psychological resilience as well as coping with adversity that has been gaining momentum over the last twenty years is a *cultural* approach (see Fletcher & Sarker, 2013; Kaplan, 2002; McAslan, 2010; Prince-Embury, 2014; Ungar, 2004; Van Breda, 2001).

Noted in the Prologue chapter of this thesis, the original intention of this research was to explore a Sāmoan approach to psychological resilience. However, I found that the research on psychological resilience reveals a number of complexities (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Fletcher & Sarker, 2013; Kaplan, 2002; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Prince-Embury, 2013; Ungar, 2004, 2013; Van Breda, 2001). Principal among these is "that there is no universally defined concept of what constitutes resilient behaviour" (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005, p. 211), leading to the observation by Ungar (2013) that the research on resilience is a "large but disjointed body of work" (p. 256). Notwithstanding this observation, the research on psychological resilience is synonymous with coping with adversity. In other words, a significant portion of resilience research derives from research on coping with adversity, but some aspects of resilience research go further into other aspects of the human experience. The significance of the cross-over necessitates drawing from the research on psychological resilience to describe coping with adversity – this will be furnished in Chapter Four. Additional to the research complexities evident in the literature, translating the notion of psychological resilience

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[2] *'Ava* – in Sāmoan botany, *'ava* (L. *piper methysticum*) is a plant; its roots are used for the *'ava* ceremony where (after being dried) it is crushed into a powder and mixed with water.

to the Sāmoan language also proved difficult, and therefore, research conversations were principally about the notion of coping with adversity. For these two reasons, this research sets out to explore a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversities. Accordingly, these two areas, the *fa'asāmoa,* and coping with resilience, are two of the three central focal points of this research.

The third and significantly interconnected focal point of this research is an appropriate research design to explore that link. Key researchers on coping with adversity and psychological resilience contend for research in these areas to shift away from a quantitative approach that relies on mechanistic, reductionistic methodologies, and more towards culture-specific interpretive frameworks (see Kaplan, 2002, 2005, 2013; Prince-Embury, 2013, 2014; Ungar, 2004, 2009, 2013; Van Breda, 2001). Drawing further from Smith (1999), Thaman (1999), Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014), Tamasese (2002) and Tui Atua (2003, 2005a), the value of a culture-specific interpretive framework allows the research to get as close, as deep and as rich knowledge as possible. Moreover, such an approach can be extracted from the *fa'asāmoa*, and in this chapter the elements that make up that framework will be described.

These three significant research areas – coping with adversity, Sāmoan cultural identity, and a Sāmoan research framework – therefore, will be explicated in this chapter. In the next section of this chapter, titled *The research question,* the starting point for this research will be explained and this will outline the parameters of the research question pertaining to cultural identity and coping with adversity. To further describe the parameters of the research question, the section that follows, *Exploratory research*, unpacks the philosophical parameters that frame the research design. I then describe why I settled on the social constructionist research paradigm; that latter section is titled *Positionality*. This leads to the section titled *Purpose of the research* and the chapter will conclude with an explanation of the layout of the rest of the chapters of this thesis. Given the primacy of the *fa'asāmoa* in this research, the use of Sāmoan words and phrases is necessary. As the Sāmoan words appear, I will footnote their translation and meaning the first time they appear in the chapters. For the sake of pronounciation and recognition, I employ the phonetic method of spelling Sāmoan words, which includes the use of macrons and glottal stops – except in the case of citing literature where I will cite according to the source. For the sake of recognition, the Sāmoan words will be italicised.

The research questions

The heart of this research rests on two key concepts: the concept of 'culture', and the concept of 'coping with adversity'. Regarding the concept of coping with adversity, Snyder and Pulvers (2001) explain:

> Coping has become a central concept in psychology, as well as working its way into the lexicon of society more generally. For the average person, coping represents a description of what must be done to keep his or her life at a reasonably high level of satisfaction. . . . As psychologists have studied coping in the last two decades, it has become an increasingly complex construct. It is seen as the effortful attempt to deal with stressors that are beyond the 'normal' range of functioning, with the purpose of reducing the negative impacts of those stressors. (p. 4)

Complementary with the notion of 'coping' is the notion of 'adversity', or 'stressors'. Essentially, 'stressors' are phenomena that cause stress, and create adverse situations, viz. 'adversity' (ibid). Stressors "vary in ambiguity" (ibid, p. 9) in that some stressors are more, and others less, impactful and adverse. In other words, stressors are significantly subjective and person-specific (Kaplan, 2002; Rutter, 1985, 2007; Schoon, 2006; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). It is necessary to acknowledge that the notion of 'adversity', 'crisis', 'ordeal' and other analogous concepts is problematic due to the range of understandings, references, and definitions. This is further exacerbated by the *experience* of 'adversity'; that which is an 'ordeal' for one person, may not have the same effect for another, and thus, there is a contested acceptance of what *actually is* an 'adversity', 'crisis' or 'ordeal' (Kaplan, 2002; Rutter, 1985, 2007; Schoon, 2006; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). For this research, I am applying the notion of 'adversity' interchangeably with other analogous concepts, such as 'ordeal', hardship', 'stress', and any other term that refers to the experience of hardship, trauma, or great distress, to the point of experiencing a crisis or 'breaking point' (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Masten, 2001; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). More precisely, the focus of this research is on how *individuals* cope with adversity, and what they draw on to help them cope with personal tragedies and adverse circumstances as they try to bring order to their inner (emotional or psychological) chaos.

In trying to find ways to better understand the concept of stressors and their impact on people, a growing body of research contend that 'cultural identity' is a critical feature of marginalised and oppressed people who display remarkable strength amid adverse circumstances (see Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Marsella & Yamada, 2010; McCubbin,

McCubbin, Thompson & Thompson, 1998; Theron, Theron & Malindi, 2013; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Van Breda, 2001). In a review of resilience theory, Van Breda (2001) noted:

> Several writers have cited the importance of cultural identity as an important component of resilience in individuals, particularly individuals from minority or oppressed cultures . . . Having a healthy cultural identity requires identifying the innate cultural strengths of that culture. (p. 215)

Van Breda added that the strengths and values of an ethnic group's cultural identity may in fact be the same as the strengths and values of other ethnic groups, but the key was not in a comparative analysis of cultural distinctiveness, but in the articulation of the values and strengths of an ethnic group's cultural identity. It is for this reason that I have chosen the tradition of the *tatau*[3]. It is my contention that the *tatau* is not only tattooing, body art and initiation rites, as often described in the literature (see Braunberger, 1999; Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; Hanlon, 2003; Mallon, Brunt & Thomas 2010; Sims, 2011), but more importantly, as a traditional ritual laden with associated oral traditions – for example, *talatu'u*[4] and *alagā'upu*[5] – it is a knowledge-storage device where significant pieces of knowledge – for example, historical, genealogical, and cultural – are recorded (Maliko, 2012; Mallon et al., 2010; Tui Atua, 2005a; Vakauta, 2013; Wendt, 1999). In this light, the *tatau* also serves as an ontological and epistemological site; this assertion will be explained in the latter parts of this chapter, and further explicated in the next chapter. Furthermore, the *tatau* is arguably the most painful experience of the Sāmoan body of customs and traditions and therefore apposite for exploring Sāmoan philosophies, theories and customs pertaining to pain management. In line with this, the concept of 'culture' in this research is to do with expressions of being 'indigenous' (viz. 'indigeneity'), as evidenced through the body of customs and traditions belonging to an ethnic or cultural group (Gegeo, 2001; Nikora, Levy, Masters & Waitoki, 2004; Seiuli, 2015; Tui Atua, 2005). This concept of 'culture' as a reference to indigenous customs and traditions, and its effectiveness in a contemporary setting is well established by Alefaio-Tugia (2014) and Seiuli (2013, 2015) in psychology, Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009), Suaalii-Sauni et al. (2009) and Tamasese, Peteru, Waldrgrave and Bush (2004) in mental health, Anae et al. (2002),

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[3] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing.

[4] *Talatu'u* – Folklore; stories of people of note; literally means 'stories left behind'.

[5] *Alagā'upu* – Proverbial expressions.

Nakhid (2003) and Pacific Island Students Academic Achievement Collective (1993) in education, and Passells (2010), Tamasese (2002) and Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) in research design. Inevitably, as also noted by the aforementioned research, the discourse on 'culture' entails a discourse about 'identity': what *is* a Sāmoan? What does it mean to *be* a Sāmoan? For Sāmoans, expressions of indigeneity are couched in the *fa'asāmoa* (Seiuli, 2016; Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009) – the concept of the *fa'asāmoa* is in fact more than 'expressions of culture and indigeneity', and that discourse will be detailed in Chapter Three. Additionally, in a similar way to my aims in this research, Seiuli (2015) looked at the value of cultural and customary practices as critical to coping with death and the grieving process. Seiuli noted:

> Embedded within many Samoan traditions and rituals, such as those used during mourning periods, are intrinsic patterns which enable recovery. These avenues of support not only assist individuals and their families to manage death's impact, but provided vital stepping stones for returning to normal life routines. I have pointed out that these cultural processes have significant and worthwhile therapeutic value, supporting many Samoan people in their grief journey. (p. 304)

While Seiuli focused on grieving, I will be looking at Sāmoan customs and traditions pertaining to coping with adversity.

Considering the definitional and conceptual contentions within the two key concepts – that of cultural identity and that of coping with adversity – bringing them together to construct a research enquiry requires careful navigation. In the first instance, noting the different-ness of being Sāmoan, Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003) state:

> If the Samoan concept of 'person' is different from the Western, so too are the ways in which this 'person' should be expressed. (p. 28)

The idea of Sāmoan concepts of personhood will be given greater attention in Chapter Three, but the fact of a more appropriate way of expressing personhood for this research is drawn from Tui Atua (2005a):

> It is about how we as Pacific peoples might identify and sift through the clutter in order to gain appropriate focus, perspective and direction in terms of making sense of our indigenous knowledges and history for the contemporary present. . . . traditional rituals are authentic tools for

recording history" and are "in itself a language and communication medium transferring knowledge" (pp. 61-62).

Tui Atua implores researchers of indigenous knowledges to research the oral traditions and traditional rituals "for these cultural institutions are the history books of our ancestors. If we are going to recapture and keep these legacies, then we need to have access to that depth" (pp. 62-63).

Drawing from Tui Atua and Fairbairn-Dunlop, the *fa'asāmoa* serves two key functions in this research project. The first, as indicated earlier, the value of the tradition of the *tatau* is its cultural and traditional association with pain, pain management, and the deep historical roots of the *tatau* tradition that give insight to ancient wisdom that serve as indicators of Sāmoan ways, knowledges and beliefs. The *tatau* is the traditional Sāmoan tattoo; *tatau* refers specifically to the traditional male tattoo, but it can also refer generically to traditional tattooing, both male and female. More specifically, the traditional male tattoo is colloquially referred to as the *pe'a*, formally referred to as *tatau*, and in the *matai*[6] register[7], it is called *mālōfie*; the traditional female tattoo is called the *malu*. Images of their appearance can be seen in Figure 1.2 (overleaf). For the sake of this thesis, when referring to the traditional male *tatau*, I will use *pe'a* or *mālōfie*; for the women's *tatau*, I will use *malu*; and for tattooing in general, I will use *tatau*.

The second key function of the *fa'asāmoa* in this research is to frame Sāmoan knowledge and Sāmoan notions of personhood using Sāmoan references, tools and strategies, including a methodology that prioritises the *fa'asāmoa*. Further inspired by Tui Atua's entreaty cited earlier, and for this study, I take the view that an indigenous model of coping with adversity already exists in the *fa'asāmoa;* it is a matter of finding the appropriate frames of references, theories, methodologies and methods to uncover and present it. Moreover, these ways, knowledges and beliefs will be the foundation upon which this research will construct a research methodology that is reflective of the *fa'asāmoa*.

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[6] *Matai* – Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.

[7] In the Sāmoan language, it is commonly explained that there are two 'registers': the common register of everyday conversational Sāmoan; and the *matai* register, often referred to as the *gagana fa'aaloalo* (language of respect, or dignified language), which uses oratory devices such as ancient reference words, proverbial expressions and poetry (Duranti, 1992, 1993; Hunkin, 2009; Ochs, 1988).

Figure 1.2: The pe'a *and* malu

My niece, Manisha[8], displaying the malu[9]*; I am displaying the* pe'a[10]

In short, the *tatau* is an iconographic representation of Sāmoan history, knowledge, custom and ways of informing norms, modes of behaviour and ways of thinking and doing (Maliko, 2012; Mallon, 2005; Sulu'ape, 2011; Vaka'uta, 2013), and as such, it is an epistemological site that contains insights into understanding the process that shapes thinking and behaviour (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001), particularly as insight into the psychology of a culture (Vakauta, 2013). Therefore, learning the meanings of the motifs, structures and the stories of those who have the *tatau* will shed light on

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[8] Photos used with permission, and anonymity waived (refer Chapter Five).

[9] *Malu* – the female *tatau*

[10] *Pe'a* – the male *tatau*

elements of knowledges and beliefs of the *fa'asāmoa* that could elucidate a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversities and hardships. This research, then, will be guided by two key questions:

1. What are the beliefs and values that inform and reinforce Sāmoan identity as evidenced in the tradition of the *tatau*?
2. How do these values and beliefs facilitate the ability to cope with adversities, or inform stress-coping mechanisms?

To answer the research questions, I employed an exploratory research approach, preferring the social constructionist research paradigm, more specifically, from the perspective of a *soga'imiti*[11], which would allow me to get as close to the data as possible. In this regard, this research took the lead of Stebbins (1997), who stated:

> Researchers explore when there is little or no scientific knowledge about the group or activity they want to examine, but they nevertheless have reason to believe it contains something worth discovering. (p. 423)

Thus, believing that there is 'something worth discovering' in the tradition of the *tatau*, in relation to finding a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity, the perspective of the *soga'imiti* is critical as a way of positioning myself to get 'inside' the knowledge, 'inside' the community of those who have the *tatau*, for "without it, collecting sound data can become very difficult" (Attia and Edge, 2017, p. 38). Attia and Edge are in fact describing the value of the insider-outsider approach to research, and although I do not use this approach, I have extracted from them the import of getting as close to the knowledge as possible, or 'inside the narratives'.

> A solid base of trust is likely to generate accurate and candid data (Mercer, 2007), thereby facilitating the development of a *thick description* [emphasis in original] (Geertz, 1973), which in turn strengthens the validity of research accounts, and facilitates theoretical generalisations to other settings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Unlike outsider researchers, who build trust over the course of their work, for insiders, established trust is the foundation upon which they construct their research. (ibid, p. 38)

To enhance this positionality, that of a *soga'imiti*, I shifted to Sāmoa to live and from that perspective, conduct the research. The intention of this aspect of positionality was

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[11] *Soga'imiti* – The male who has a *tatau*.

to also use indigenous Sāmoan knowledge-seeking practices as the methodological approach. Moreover, in line with indigenous Sāmoan protocol, engage knowledge-keepers, viz. *matai* and *tufuga*[12], in the culturally appropriate ways.

Exploratory research

In any research, deciding a research design is critical; different methods and methodologies are likely to produce different data, a different analytical framework, and therefore, different conclusions. For this research, the use of oral traditions, traditional rituals and indigenous methodologies merited the flexibility of a research process that allowed me to 'chase' the data where it led me (see Creswell, Hanson, Clark & Morales, 2007; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Stebbins, 1997; Van Breda, 2001) and is consistent with a research framework constructed by an exploratory research approach with culture-specific interpretive elements. Those elements will be introduced here and explained in greater detail over the next four chapters.

As an exploratory research approach, I am not hypothesis-testing, nor testing the limits of a theory to explain a matter. I am, as Reiter (2017) and Stebbins (1997, 2001) explain, searching for a helpful or useful way of explaining and perceiving a matter, and in this case, how the *fa'asāmoa* might inform a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. The idea of 'helpful' and 'useful' are dependent on the aims of the research – which I explain in the latter part of this chapter – but Reiter and Stebbins argue that exploratory research should not be so focused on methodological accuracy of a particular methodology, or theoretical and philosophical framework, but should have flexibility of research design to enable the pursuit for other and different data, in a search to make more sense of the phenomenon under investigation.

> To effectively explore the group or activity, they must approach it with two special orientations: flexibility in looking for data and open-mindedness about where to find them. Oriented thus, the first step is to proceed from Max Weber's model to acquire an intimate, first-hand understanding (Verstehen) of the human acts being observed. It follows that the most efficacious approach is to search for this understanding wherever it may be found by any method that would appear to bear fruit. The outcome of these procedures and the main goal of exploratory research is the production of

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[12] *Tufuga* – Specialist, artisan; keeper/practitioner of specialist knowledge.

inductively-derived generalizations about the group or activity. (Stebbins, 1997, p. 423)

While exploratory research carries this level of flexibility, there must still be elements added to the research design to give the research a level of reliability and trustworthiness. Referencing Reiter, exploratory research "can be reliable and rigorous when performed in a structured, transparent, and honest way" (p. 148) but the researcher needs to demonstrate 'reflexivity' and 'positionality' as constitutive of such an approach.

The concept of reflexivity is "where researchers engage in explicit self-aware meta-analysis" (Finlay, 2002, p. 209) as a way of highlighting the researcher's influence and bias in the research encounter as separate from, and influential upon, the data collection and analysis of the participants. This makes the research process transparent and is particularly necessary in qualitative research enquiries (Creswell et al., 2007; Finlay, 2002; Leitz, Langer & Furman, 2006; Reiter, 2017; Scotland, 2012; Stebbins, 1997). In this light, reflexive researchers "open themselves up as one element of the phenomena that are to be investigated" (Attia & Edge, 2017, p. 36). Reflexivity can also be seen as "confessional tales" where the researcher "describes decisions and dilemmas of their fieldwork experience" and, with added critical reflection, the researcher can "continually monitor, or even audit, the research process" (Finlay, 2002, p. 210).

In contrast, Finlay proposes that post-modern researchers found that self-reflexive research, in spite of its attempt at transparency, did not necessarily equate to 'truer' or 'better' research, but reiterated the notion of 'outsider' researchers interpreting and portraying the researched culture to the outsider's world. The concept of 'misrecognition',' hermeneutical marginalisation' and 'epistemic injustice' have import in this context, and these are unpacked in Chapter Two. To accommodate this post-modern critique of 'confessional tales', Finlay, among others, suggests that the researcher must choose an appropriate position to carry out the research (Attia & Edge, 2017; Finlay, 2002; Reiter, 2017; Scotland, 2012; Stebbins, 1997, 2001).

> To legitimize and provide a solid epistemological basis for exploratory research in the social sciences, it has to be based on a philosophy of science; it must be articulated within an epistemological framework; and it must be able to formulate a comprehensive methodological framework to justify its methods. It must also be based on an explicit ontology of the

social sciences in order to determine what is accepted as 'real' and as factual. (Reiter, 2017, p. 131)

The researcher's position, or 'positionality', refers to the research paradigm – the ontological, epistemological and methodological frameworks that give rise to the research design – that the researcher has adopted. It is for this reason that I explained my *pe'a* journey in the Prologue chapter, and why I also provide the story as to how I changed my research focus from 'psychological resilience' to 'coping with adversity'. I will describe other aspects of the positionality of this research in the next section of this chapter and in the next chapter I will describe how this positionality is reflected in the research design.

Making the *fa'asāmoa* central to the research design also fits the exploratory nature of this research. The notion of a Sāmoan approach to knowledge-acquisition is, as Passells (2010) proposes, an approach that is "underpinned by obligations and responsibilities" (p. 36) and although flexible in terms of methodologies, methods and research strategies, the elements that make up the interpretive framework must be made explicit. Passells adds that the elements of the framework emerge from indigenous "research epistemologies and philosophies which are fast developing the tools with which Pasifika researchers . . . may become versed in and with whatever is necessary to navigate reciprocal Pasifika-specific research currents" (pp. 36-37). Within Sāmoan customs and traditions, great care is taken to ensure that relationships between people, *'āīga* [13], *nu'u*[14], nature, God and the spirit world are nurtured, maintained and kept in good order, not just in everyday encounters and in cultural and traditional customs, but also in knowledge-seeking practices and protocols – this is explained in greater detail in Chapter Three. Breaching these customs and traditions can incur serious consequences that includes being censured publicly, the refusal of knowledge exchange, and even ostracisation, all of which I have witnessed personally. To that end, those in search of customary knowledge must tread carefully to ensure these protocols are observed and relationships are cultivated. There is a growing body of research (see Amituana'i-Toloa, 2009, 2006; Sanga, 2004; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tamasese, 2002; Vaioleti, 2013, 2006) that offers guidance on culturally appropriate boundaries for research enquiries and research protocols that respect as many of these cultural boundaries as possible, and indeed, these literary sources guided the parameters of this research. Amituanai-Toloa (2009) states:

[13] *'Āīga* – Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'.

[14] *Nu'u* – Village; commune.

As a Pasifika researcher and more specifically a Samoan researcher, I tend to ask myself before conducting any research, from which perspective should a particular work come from and how would that apply such a perspective to a research project. . . . Echoing Deloria Jnr (1997) sums up the rationale for doing research work: "Every society needs educated people, but the primary responsibility of educated people is to bring wisdom back into the community and make it available to others so that the lives they are leading make sense" (p. 4) . . . . Moreover, it takes a culturally knowledgeable and a linguistically knowledgeable person to do that. Searching for a methodology in order for that to happen requires reflection, reminiscing, remembrance, retrieval, and love." (pp. 45-46)

Positionality

In Chapter Two and Chapter Four, there is a critique of positivist, objectivist research that highlights how these approaches to research marginalise indigenous knowledges. Undertaking this research from an indigenous perspective, therefore, became the highest value and the first consideration when designing the research parameters for this undertaking. Learning from Smith (1999), Taufe'ulungaki (2003), Amituanai-Toloa (2010) and Seiuli (2015), it became an imperative for me to undertake this research from the perspective of a *soga'imiti*. To carry out this research from an autochthonous perspective, being someone that lives in Sāmoa, using indigenous ways of acquiring knowledge, added to the notion of an 'indigenous perspective'.

There is also a personal aspect – a moment of clarity – that made this positionality an imperative for this research. Although the idea of this research originated twenty-five years ago, how to go about it started to take shape while I was completing my Master's degree in 2010. While exploring literature to support the efficacy of indigenous models of therapeutic practice, I came across an account of Captain Cook's encounter with a Tahitian war party which profoundly changed my perspective about indigenous knowledge, and 'being Sāmoan'. I will reconstruct the accounts of Beaglehole (1974), Kane (2006), Lewis (1972), Salesa (2004) and Salmond (2003) of that encounter.

In 1774, during Captain Cook's second of three excursions into the Pacific, Captain Cook visited Tahiti. While there, he came upon a Tahitian war party and expressed wonderment at the sight of reportedly 300 Tahitian 'war canoes' carrying over 7000 warriors. When I first read this, I was awe-struck. But as I reflected further on this, I

started to doubt the veracity of the story; my understanding of the 'canoes' that Pacific people *paddled* the ocean with is the outrigger canoes (in Māori, a *waka ama*; in Tonga, *popa'o*; in Sāmoa, *paopao*) which from personal experience – I used to paddle competitively in *waka ama* – would struggle to hold large numbers of warriors. I therefore dismissed these accounts as fanciful story-telling because it did not line up with what I had been taught at school about Polynesian migration. However, I could not let go of the imagery – it is difficult to describe why, other than to note an 'awakening' of a curiosity (about the Tahitian war party and their canoes).

As I continued to research this, I came across Kane's (2006) description of Captain Cook's encounter and I was completely absorbed by the imagery; it brought the splendour of what Captain Cook may have seen to life. That which Captain Cook had called a 'canoe', the Tahitians called a *pahi*. A *pahi* is not 'a canoe'; it is a twin-hulled sea vessel, a 'war canoe', capable of carrying up to 150 people. The Tongan version of such a craft is a *kalia*; the Sāmoan version, *'alia*; the Māori, *waka hourua*; the Fijian, *drua*. It is a common vessel in the Pacific and each island nation has a tradition of such vessels (Haddon & Hornell, 1975; Howe, 2006; Lewis 1972, 1978). Captain Cook also noted that the *pahi* was propelled under 'sail power', not 'paddle power' as I had been taught through the New Zealand education system. Whereas common European sails at the time were either quadrilateral or triangular in shape, the sail design of the *pahi* was a 'crab-claw' design. Lewis and Beaglehole recount that Captain Cook instructed the *Resolution* to pull up alongside a *pahi* and noted that the *pahi* was longer than the *Endeavour*[15] - for comparison's sake, the *Endeavour* is approximately the length of a basketball court. Captain Cook decided to test the *pahi* for speed and was amazed that the *pahi* outsailed his ship; for every two miles the *Resolution* sailed, the *pahi* sailed three. The *pahi* was not only bigger (than the *Endeavour*), but also faster (than the *Resolution*).

This account by Kane moved me; I was in disbelief that 'natives' could construct such a complex sea craft (with seemingly primitive materials and knowledge). I could not comprehend the level of complexity and skill required to construct these 'war canoes', and I marvelled at the sophistication and genius behind their construction. To this, Salesa notes:

[15] Although the comparison is with *HMS Endeavour*, the ship that Captain Cook used for his first voyage into the Pacific, this particular encounter was on Captain Cook's second voyage into the Pacific, which was on *HMS Resolution,* a slightly larger ship. Beaglehole (1974) names the *Endeavour* for the sake of comparison.

> Evidently, it is not hard to make the case that Pacific Island societies had extremely developed maritime knowledge and technology. When Europeans first came into the region (mostly in the 17th and 18th centuries), Pacific Island societies from the Marianas to New Zealand possessed a variety of seacraft and a wealth of ocean knowledge. Most of the ocean-going vessels were either catamarans or outriggers, ships which showed meticulous hull and sail design, and had impressive speed and handling. Early Europeans and American voyagers were surprised by these vessels, not only because those who built them were seen as illiterate and heathen, but because they were constructed without any metal tools or material. How was it that mere 'savages' could design, build, sail and navigate such vessels? (p. 4)

Upon reflection, I came to recognise the degree to which my understanding of the Pacific had been fashioned to me by non-Pacific teachers, historians, and the education syllabus; I knew so little about the complexity, sophistication and scientific innovation of Pacific people, and Pacific history. The conclusion I reached was definitive: we must tell the stories about ourselves, ourselves, or as King (2005) phrased it, 'native narratives'.

Hau'ofa (1993), Ka'ili & Ka'ili (1998), Linnekin (1997), Smith (1999), Thaman (2000, 2003) and Nabobo-Baba (2004) among many others have much to say about how Pacific (and indigenous) people have been fashioned by the Western education system, justice system, health system, economic system and political system. From these authors, there is a call for indigenous people to reclaim and use history, and to do it from an indigenous perspective with indigenous tools. Moreover, Western research traditions "do not always reflect local indigenous ways of knowing, of seeking knowledge" and has been responsible for the silencing of those voices (Nabobo-Baba, 2004, p.21). It is *our* voice that is absent in those stories. The way forward is for Pacific indigenous people to take (back) ownership of their knowledge and how it is understood and presented to the world.

For this purpose, positionality is paramount, not only *physical* positioning, but *philosophical* positioning as well. In the *fa'asāmoa*, physical positioning relates to philosophical positioning; being physically placed in the 'right', or appropriate places has cultural and philosophical implications. Duranti (1994) alluded to this idea when he was observing *matai* in a *fono*[16]. He confessed that, while he was able to make

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[16] *Fono* – meeting; caucus

observations, he became aware that Sāmoan oratorical art forms have no Western equivalent, where time and space have meanings, which he was unable to decipher. Moreover, he became aware that he was in a privileged space that is not open to the public where even the silences and seating arrangements spoke volumes; a discourse that he, as an outsider, could not comprehend nor make sense of despite the fact that it was easily observed. This is the necessity of an immersive and participative research methodology that seeks to get inside the narratives.

> I do remember, however, that while walking into my first direct encounter with Samoan politics in the making [the *fono*], I had the sense of having entered another 'space'. This feeling was not simply due to my realization of having violated the boundaries of an activity that is usually hidden from foreigners. It was more than that. It was an awareness of moving or placing oneself within a dimension of human interaction in which the location of the actors, the proximity of their bodies, their most minimal physical reactions meant more that I could understand. (Duranti, 1994, p. 54)

Further to that idea, and relating this discourse to a methodological approach, in describing his methodology, Va'a (2001) explained that he adopted an ethnographic approach, but described an interactive and immersive approach: he was fluent in the language and used it for data collection; held a *matai* title; lived among his participants and participated in their cultural and familial exchanges (weddings, funerals, fundraising). Va'a stated:

> It is not sufficient merely to observe, listen and record, as information gathered in this way is often incomplete or tentative… Participation and observation place the experience and context through the subtle interplay of the senses, on seeing the performance of ritual, for example, or hearing the speech of the orator … Equally important is giving attention to the observed symbolic action of the social participants, the significance of the body language as signs of inner feelings and dispositions and their interactions with others as constituting social action in the Weberian sense (pp. 44-45).

This is the power of the 'native narrative'. Thus, as noted earlier, it was imperative that I place myself physically in Sāmoa. Additionally, as also earlier noted, integrate any appropriate cultural and philosophical wisdom and thought to the design of the research approach. This includes drawing on ontological, epistemological, ideological, axiological, and any other philosophical consideration appropriate for designing this research. Further to this, Brannen (2013) noted that "life stories that combine narrative

and contextual/biographical approaches" are well situated to elicit rich and complex data (p. 8). Moreover, research that seeks out life stories and "filling in the wider context" – historical, geographical, and cultural – have the added methodological value where "contextualisation is part of the analysis" (ibid, p. 8). In other words, in indigenous knowledge-seeking protocols, data collection and data analysis are not two distinct phenomena, but can be one symbiotic process. As noted by Tui Atua earlier, such tools, for indigenous people, begin and end with oral traditions and traditional rituals. Of particular interest to this thesis is the need to explore conceptions around behaviour and pathologies of behaviour that are significantly informed by a social context embedded in traditional and cultural practices that are immersed in oral traditions, traditional rituals and ancient histories.

Further to this discourse, there is a dilemma of the use of oral traditions in Western academic institutions: it is requisite of all research to be presented in written form. The dilemma is that once oral knowledge is written, it has lost its orality (Brannen, 2013; King, 2005; Mercer, 1979; Vansina, 2006). Therefore, fulfilling the traditions of one nullifies the traditions of the other. Given the primacy of the *fa'asāmoa* and the oral traditions in this research, it is a perplexity that requires careful navigation. I find a solution to this predicament using modern technology: digital media. It is my intention to video record conversations with the research participants, rather than make notes or voice record. In this way, there is a record of data collection and data analysis for the sake of fulfilling the requirements of the thesis for the university. Additionally, the use of video recording means that this research has kept the oral accounts oral. Moreover, referring to Duranti's (1994) earlier-mentioned observation of Sāmoan oratorical art forms, the unspoken aspects of the knowledge exchange – for example, body placement, proximity, silences – become evident, and become part of the hermeneutical archive. To utilise the full value of the video recordings, I will also produce a documentary of the *tatau* which will serve as a reciprocal gift from this research to the people of Sāmoa, and this will be gifted to the Head of State of Sāmoa. In this way, the cultural act of reciprocity is carried out – this will be explained over the next two chapters.

The purpose of the research

Earlier, I explained the primary purpose of this research: to explore a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. Noting the value of the *fa'asāmoa* in this research,

and the experience of the Sāmoan community abroad, there is a secondary set of objectives for this research. In effect, this secondary set of objectives is the purpose for this research; it is the value of doing this research and what I hope to do upon its completion. The secondary set of objectives is threefold. Firstly, as explained throughout this chapter, is the therapeutic value. I want to explore a more meaningful approach to coping with adversity for Pacific people, and to establish effective cultural imperatives in therapeutic practices that are relevant, beneficial and functional for Pacific people. By 'therapeutic practice', I am alluding to those whose vocation is focused on bringing inner healing to a person through therapeutic discourse – for example, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and others in associated vocations. By 'cultural imperatives', I am referring to the different ways that indigenous cultures may *do* therapy so that the therapeutic setting is more meaningful, and more 'healing', particularly for those from non-Western cultures. A more detailed description of these two concepts is proffered in Chapter Four.

Secondly, the emancipation value. This research can contribute to the Sāmoan community (and other indigenous communities) in an attempt to reduce the disparities and inequalities that exist in New Zealand. As noted in the earlier sections of this chapter, many of the disparities and inequalities in today's society are primarily racially delineated and reinforce an abandonment of one's indigenous identity. This is exacerbated by the silencing of Pacific voices by a colonial agenda and politic that has perpetuated these inequalities and inhibited our progress (Gegeo, 2001; Kolig & Mückler, 2002; Novitz & Willmott, 1989; Ogan, 2005). Nelson Mandela states that such inequalities are "scourges of our time … [it] is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings … [it] is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice" (Mandela, 2005). Otherwise, Pacific people will continue to experience a second-class citizenry evidenced by a reduced quality of life with diminished emotional and psychological security. From this research, I hope to develop a series of community organisations that will work with the Pacific community in the areas of crime prevention and intervention, and mental health support.

Thirdly, the methodological value. Notwithstanding the value of indigenous knowledge in therapeutic service delivery, the value of indigenous knowledge in research, and for the further exploration of cultural and indigenous knowledge in psychological and cultural research, is immense. This research has extricated specific elements from the *fa'asāmoa* to derive an indigenous approach to research, but the literature referenced earlier in this chapter that advocates for a cultural approach to resilience research (Kaplan, 2002, 2005, 2013; Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Prince-Embury, 2013, 2014;

Ungar, 2004, 2013), and an indigenous approach to culture-specific interpretive frameworks (Smith, 1999; Thaman, 1999; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tamasese, 2002; Tui Atua, 2003, 2005a), are affirming and, as noted by Avegalio (2009): "affirmed my sense of heritage and strengthened my resolve to sustain, perpetuate and be guided by Sāmoan values" (p. 112). My hope is to add to that body of work.

This thesis

To summarise this chapter, I wish to draw on a Sāmoan proverbial expression: *ua aofia i futiafu tauasaga nai lagī,* which translates as 'many streams have gathered at the top of the waterfall'. This proverbial expression has two meanings, and the one I will draw on refers to a waterfall in Savai'i (Sāmoa's 'big island') where seven streams gather at the top of the waterfall, and the eighth stream is the one formed at the bottom of the waterfall. There is a reference of this waterfall to the ancient religion of the *fe'e* (octopus), but this proverbial expression refers to the eighth stream being formed by the gathering of the seven at the top of the waterfall. This proverbial expression is often used in oratory to refer to the many people, particularly *matai* and other people of rank, that are gathered at a traditional Sāmoan function. The assemblage at an occasion is being compared to the way the streams meet, or 'gather', at the waterfall. It is also used in everyday wisdom: the accomplishment of a task – the 'waterfall' – requires the assemblage of many elements – the 'streams'. I use this proverbial expression as an allusion to the many stories, experiences and serendipitous moments – the 'seven streams' – that lead to the undertaking of this research – the 'eighth stream'; the way many elements have been brought together to contextualise this thesis.

This thesis is made up of eight chapters structured to answer the research questions – an introductory chapter, an explanation of key concepts, a review of the literature, a description of the methodology, followed by an account of the findings, an analysis of what was uncovered and conclusions reached. However, I have drawn on various key themes and subjects – for example, psychological resilience, stress management, adversity and trauma, cultural and oral traditions, epistemology and methodology, paradigmatic approaches and positionality – to make sense of this research. These are the many streams that lead to the waterfall. It is necessary to explicate these 'streams' fully. Therefore, these key themes and subjects will be structured around chapter

organisation and will therefore be woven in and out of the chapters for the sake of answering the research questions, which is the primary objective of this research.

This chapter set the historical and cultural context of this research, and the research aims that emerge from this context. In this chapter, I alluded to several elements of this research: the notions of resilience, adversity and coping; the *fa'asāmoa*; a robust methodology that allows for the complexities of oral traditions, and indigenous methodologies. In Chapter Two, I unpack these key elements in greater detail and bring together the elements to construct the context of the research and the methodological approach I used as a result of the many considerations of the context.

Chapter Three explicates the Sāmoan cultural discourses relevant to setting the cultural context for this research. Chapter Four, is a review of the literature on psychological resilience, coping with adversity and other associated subject areas. This includes a discussion of the problem of inconsistent definitions evident in the literature and looks at the development of resilience and adversity research that considers the impact of culture on those concepts. Chapter Five considers all of the ontological, epistemological and methodological elements of the previous four chapters, and details the methodology used to carry out the research. Chapter Six, is a presentation of the findings from my discussions, formal and informal, and demonstrates the meaningfulness of the *tatau* in addressing the research question. A summary of the findings chapter and its exposition of a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity is provided in Chapter Seven, and this chapter will begin to answer the research questions raised earlier in this chapter. Chapter Eight concludes by summing up the research and the findings. In that chapter, I signal some of the shortfalls in the research scope and undertaking and give some thought towards possible directions forward.

CHAPTER 2

KEY CONCEPTS:

A discussion of the central discourses

Proverbial expression:
Ua 'āītua le vasa.

Translation:
The ocean is filled with spirits.

Meaning:
When a voyage is undertaken, the Master Navigator often placates the spirits that inhabit the ocean for guidance and safe passage. In oratory, this proverbial expression is a metaphorical allusion to the people of rank – for example, *matai*, ministers of religion, government officials – that have gathered at an occasion, and whose blessing is sought to proceed with protocol and custom regarding cultural exchanges that are about to take place.

Reference:
In this chapter, I refer to the 'ocean' of discourses and narratives that must be traversed, and unpacked, to make sense of this research. Hence, this proverbial expression is a metaphor for the explanation of key concepts necessary to position and navigate this research.

Introduction

This chapter is to position the *fa'asāmoa*[1] in this research. Given the centrality of positionality, one of the key discourses of this chapter is a discussion on the concept of 'epistemology', and although this will be elucidated throughout this chapter, a brief introduction will be given here. 'Epistemology' is a theory of knowledge that asks: what is knowledge? whose knowledge? how is knowledge known? There are differing views on how to define what knowledge is; an 'epistemological position' refers to the rationale a researcher subscribes to. Two such examples of epistemological positions are 'positivism' – where knowledge is based on 'scientific facts' – and 'interpretivism' – where knowledge is based on subjective interpretations of a social reality. Given that each epistemological position views knowledge differently, each position will also conduct research differently, and therefore, the body of knowledge accumulated through these positions will also differ (Al-Saadi, 2014; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001; Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014). This chapter unpacks the key concepts central to the epistemological positioning of this reearch.

In this chapter, I will define the research area which will be conveyed in the next section. In that section, there will be an elaboration on the concepts of 'culture', 'adversity' and 'The West' and their utility in this research. The concept of 'culture' will be briefly described, but the cultural context of the research, the *fa'asāmoa*, will be explicated in greater detail in Chapter Three. Additionally, the concept of resilience and coping with adversity will be described briefly in this chapter but a fuller account and review of the literature will be given in Chapter Four. The notion of 'The West' has been introduced in the previous chapter and in this chapter, there will be a more detailed description of its impact on indigenous epistemology through colonisation and missionisation, and the necessary de-colonisation aspect of this research. Building on the discourse of 'Westernisation', in the section that follows, titled *Native narratives*, this research will draw on the notions of 'epistemic injustice', 'hermeneutical marginalisation', 'othering' and 'misrecognition' as the rationale for not using a Western, or mainstream methodological approach, and as an advocation for an indigenous methodology. In discussing the value of the indigenous knowledge of indigenous peoples, Davis (2013)[2] states that "all of these peoples teach us that there

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[1] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

[2] Davis (2013) is a video presentation at the Oregon Humanities Centre based on his book, Davis (2009). The excerpts cited are the time stamps from this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk7bqPr5OjA&t=1160s

are other ways of being, other ways of thinking, there are other ways of orienting yourself in social, spiritual, ecological space" (11:36). Indeed, Western epistemology does exactly what a reliable epistemology and methodology must do: "make their social and physical worlds comprehensible in terms which are appropriate to them" (Macpherson and Macpherson, 1990, p. 141). Davis adds that while much has been achieved and learned through Western methodologies, premised on Western ontologies, there is still a vast array of knowledge and experiences that have not been captured, and unable to be captured, by Western frames of references, and remain unknown to Western society and education institutions.

> What this fundamentally means, then, is that the other cultures of the world aren't failed attempts at being you. They're not failed attempts at being modern. On the contrary, each is a fundamental answer to a fundamental question: what does it mean to be human and alive. And when the myriad of cultures of the world answer that question, they do so in 7000 different voices and those voices collectively become our human repertoire for dealing with the challenges that will confront us as a species in the ensuing millennia. (17:16)

Essentially, taking this as the starting position emphasises the power of native narratives, which is central to the undertaking of this research, as noted in the previous chapter. In the section that follows, titled *Epistemological positionality,* I contend for this position with a description of the epistemological framework, that of an interpretivist, co-constructionist approach and oral traditions as epistemological sites. This positionality will lead to the section titled *Methodological framework*, where there will be a description of the elements of the research design, and the methodology that was used to carry out this research.

The research area

From the starting point of the two key notions mentioned in the previous chapter, that of culture, and that of coping with adversity, are derived two significant areas of enquiry. Firstly, what does a Sāmoan 'cultural' exploration entail? Such an enquiry, as also noted in the previous chapter, requires looking at the *fa'asāmoa*, its customs, traditions and more specifically, the oral traditions passed down from generation to generation. Such enquiries necessitate an exploration of Sāmoan epistemology, and the

knowledge-making processes, and develop this into an appropriate methodology to carry out research (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Tui Atua, 2005a., 2009). Noting the earlier definition of 'epistemology', *indigenous* epistemology refers to an ethnic group's epistemological position, grounded in their native discourses and ways of communication (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo, 2001). Thus, in placing the *fa'asāmoa* as the highest priority in this research design, this research embraces the view that Sāmoan ways of research and knowledge cannot, and should not, be couched within Western approaches to research (Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014).

> In terms of developing Pacific research, we are more uneasy with the suggested practice of locating talanoa or faafaletui as research methodologies within phenomenology or interpretive constructivism, than with the coupling of talanoa and faafaletui as research methods with other social research methods. Our uneasiness lies in the difference between 'existing alongside' and 'existing within'. To 'exist within' presents the obvious difficulties of ensuring visibility amidst more dominant competing world views. But the problem is not just with voice; it is also with scope. To suggest that talanoa and faafaletui as research methodologies are merely part of the family of phenomenological research is, in our view, to risk making our Indigenous world views (including our forms of communication) subservient to the different world views that dominate phenomenology. Moreover, it is to unfairly limit Pacific research methodologies such as talanoa and faafaletui to the more qualitative fields of inquiry. (ibid, p. 336)

Essentially, an indigenous Sāmoan research framework needs to come from an indigenous epistemological and ontological premise. A *talanoaga* with keepers of specialised indigenous knowledge, as well as those who have the experience of getting the *tatau*[3] is the position being argued for.

The second area of enquiry is coping with adversity, and to a certain degree, resilience. There are many applications of the notion of resilience: civil engineering, architecture, agriculture, disaster management, business contingency planning and a vast array of other contexts (Adger, 2000; Gunderson, 2000; Louw, 1999; McAslan, 2010). However, the concept of resilience in being applied to the human experience is contentious:

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[3] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

Even though many psychologists are quick to use the word "resilience" in the context of researching coping and practicing psychotherapy, the field of psychology has offered a rather muddied view of this construct. Moreover, even where attempts have been made to operationalize this term, very little research has considered how resiliency can (or should) be synonymous with human strengths. (Miller, 2003, p. 240)

In Chapter Four, there will be a fuller review of the literature on resilience and coping with adversity, but in this chapter, I want to focus on and offer a critique of the epistemological assumptions that the prevailing understanding of resilience and adversity research is predicated upon, which will be the logic that explains the positionality of this research, that of a *soga'imiti*[4] in Sāmoa using indigenous knowledge-seeking customs.

Adding to the observation made in the previous chapter – that the research on resilience and coping with adversity is "heavily laden with subjective often unarticulated assumptions" and no universal agreement of what is resilient behaviour (Glantz & Sloboda, 2002, p. 110) – Louw (1999), Miller (2003), and Ungar (2004, 2013) noted that a significant portion of the literature on resilience and coping with adversity is developed from a positivist, quantitative paradigm favoured by the natural sciences and cognitive psychology.

Although many interpretations of resilience have been proposed, most of these represent a mechanistic world view in which scientific rigour and empirical investigation, necessarily reductionistic, are advocated. Behind the kind of research that involves qualitative enquiry and an emphasis on ecology and meaning is an epistemology of ecologic, rather than mechanistic, thinking. In such an [*sic*] paradigm, resilience is conceptualised in a way that embraces complexity and aims to understand, rather than to explain, how it operates in and between people. A conception of this construct from the point of view of a different paradigmatic frame could provide valuable insights to the concept of resilience to the benefit not only of research but also of clinical work. (Louw, 1999, p. 40)

The main point to be extracted from this viewpoint is that for a broader understanding of the concept of 'resilience', different approaches predicated on different epistemological underpinnings to research is required, and indeed, encouraged.

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[4] *Soga'imiti* – the male who has a *tatau*.

Liebenberg and Ungar (2009) add that for a broader understanding of 'resilience', focus should be on elements that build the capacity for withstanding adversity, rather than those that alleviate the symptoms of disorder. Liebenberg and Ungar contend that an approach to research with such a view requires "a more participatory, contextually attuned approach" (p. 9), and insist that for cultural research integrity, the researcher needs to get beyond "voyeuristically studying indigenous societies" (ibid, p. 12), get beyond research that objectifies indigenous phenomena, and focus on authentic representation of indigenous ways of knowledge. On this viewpoint, I have taken from Ungar (2004) that a constructionist approach laden with qualitative methodologies is perhaps better situated ontologically and epistemologically for such an undertaking. This viewpoint finds symmetry with a Sāmoan epistemological discourse and a contention for this position will be made throughout this chapter, with a more detailed description of the considerations requisite of a cultural approach to research on 'resilience' in Chapter Four.

To align this research in the manner contended for above, it is necessary first to confront the prevailing mechanistic, reductionist approach alluded to by Louw and Ungar. This approach is often referred to as a 'Western', 'Euro-centric' or 'mainstream' approach (Liebenberg & Ungar, 2009; Theron et al., 2013; Ungar, 2004, 2010, 2013). The concept of the 'West' refers to a worldview and ideology[5] associated with what is commonly accepted as 'Western' countries, namely those of Europe (hence, 'Euro-centric') and North America (Amituana'i- Toloa, 2009; Deloria Jr, 1997; Smith, 1999; Tangwa, 1999; Thong, 2012). It is essential to acknowledge that the notion of 'The West' is not necessarily a people, or universally, *all* European and American people, but an ideology and way of life that originates from those 'Western' countries. 'Westernisation', then, refers to Western ideologies. Historically and culturally, Westernisation can be considered an imposition and intrusion of Western epistemologies, pedagogies[6], axiologies[7] and ontologies[8] on indigenous populations as part of the colonisation mandate of the countries of the West, and is thus commonly associated with colonisation[9], missionisation[10] and modernisation[11] (Amituana'i- Toloa,

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[5] Ideology = a body of concepts and way of interpreting phenomena

[6] Pedagogy = a way of thinking about how knowledge is passed on

[7] Axiology = a way of thinking about values and ethics, and how they impact judgements

[8] Ontology = a way of thinking about reality and existence; a body of concepts that helps make sense of the world; a worldview

[9] Colonisation = the process of settling and establishing control over an indigenous people

2009; M. Meleisea, 1987; Salmond, 2004; Smith, 1999; Tangwa, 1999; Thong, 2012). I do not wish to offer a critique of 'The West' and 'Westernisation', as this is outside the scope of the research, but it is necessary to draw attention to the fact of The West's colonial past because the erasure and the demonisation of indigenous knowledge and indigenous practices (see Gunson, 1993; Salesa, 2004; Tangwa, 1999; Thong, 2012; J. Williams, 1984) and its present-day effects – which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter – emanates from this colonial past. On the practice of knowledge erasure, Gunson notes:

> Even though Polynesia is rich in material we can be certain that a great deal has been lost if only through warfare, disease and natural disasters. In many instances there was no one available to record specialised traditions known only to certain elders …. We know, also, that in the era of European contact many Christian converts who were the custodians of traditional knowledge deliberately suppressed much of this material because the narratives and songs celebrated ways of life and relationships which they not only felt would be offensive to European Christians but which they wished to forget themselves. The missionary David Darling actually destroyed a history of the Arioi society of Tahiti which he had assembled because he found it repugnant to his conscience. (pp. 140-141)

In describing Westernisation and its impact on indigenous populations, Tangwa (1999) states:

> The spirit of omnivorous discovery which the Industrial Revolution engendered and made possible in Europeans guided them to all parts of the globe where they discovered peoples and cultures so different from theirs that they felt reluctant to qualify them as `human'. From then on, Europeanisation (Westernisation) of other peoples and cultures appeared naturally in their eyes as humanisation and civilisation. (p. 220)

Thong (2012) adds:

> 'Westernization' refers to the influence of Western ideas, values, and practices on the non-Western world. 'Westernization' . . . 'is reconstructing

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[10] Missionisation = the work of missionaries; the process of establishing Christianity over an indigenous people

[11] Modernisation = the practice of replacing traditional practices with more modern ones

or shaping the rest of the world on western norms and institutions'. It is, in many cases, supplanting native culture with Western cultural values and practises. More specifically, the term here refers to colonial and missionary attempts at wholesale assimilation . . . . all colonized people suffered a similar outcome in their encounter with the West. (p. 894)

Tangwa, of African descent, and Thong, of Asian descent, are referenced to signal that the notion of 'Westernisation' and other associated ideologies is not a Pacific-only matter, but a matter concerning many indigenous peoples worldwide. The significance of indigenous peoples from other parts of the globe confronting their colonial pasts and its aftereffects will be made clear in Chapter Four when I discuss approaches to cultural knowledge restoration. The two main points to be elicited here is that Westernisation profoundly changed indigenous cultures, and secondly, that, despite a current restoration of indigenous cultures worldwide, they must still navigate the dominant Western system of society, of education, and of knowledge. Furthermore, the point to be emphasised is that the predominant positivist, reductionist approach to research, as well as research on indigenous peoples, have not included the voices of indigenous people, nor even considered their epistemologies.

> In New Zealand as elsewhere, western knowledge predominates in higher education and research, which are underpinned by western values, belief systems and epistemologies … the role of Pacific research is primarily not only to identify and promote a Pacific world view, which should begin by identifying Pacific values, and the way in which Pacific societies create meaning, structure and construct reality, but complementary to these is the need to also interrogate the assumptions that underpin western structures and institutions that we as Pacific peoples have adopted without much questioning (Anae Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau, 2001, p. 7).

Thus, as noted in *The purpose of the research* in the previous chapter, there is a necessary element of this research that seeks to challenge the prevailing epistemology, and add to the burgeoning de-colonisation narrative evident in much of indigenous research (see King, 2005; Smith, 1999; Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea, 2014; Thaman, 2003; Tui Atua, 2005, 2009). The decolonisation element of this research affirms the premise of Sāmoan frames of references to make sense of Sāmoan phenomena, that of a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. This affirms the perspective of the *soga'imiti* for this research, in search of native narratives.

Native narratives

The reason for the use of an indigenous approach to knowledge acquisition has been given in part in the previous chapter – that of an exploratory research in search of seemingly 'lost' or 'hidden' knowledge, as well as 'thicker' data for a broader understanding of 'coping with adversities' and psychological resilience, particularly for an indigenous populace. There is an additional explanation, complementary to exploratory research that will be furnished in this section. To contend for this assertion, there is a necessary philosophical discourse that needs to be disentangled. This discourse is necessary because of the "constant deprecation of indigenous knowledge" evident in the West (Salesa, 2004, p. 10). Early anthropologists and research denounced oral traditions as unreliable, reducing it to folklore and fairy tales, and vulnerable to distortions and manipulations (King, 2005; P.M. Mercer, 1979; Smith, 1999; Vansina, 1985, 2006). For the discourse on the validity and reliability of indigenous Sāmoan knowledge, of indigenous cultural practice (viz. the *fa'asāmoa*) and of oral traditions in research, I will use the notion of 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker, 2007) to convey a deconstructionist critique of the prevailing epistemology. The 'critique' is necessary because of how the dominant narrative views 'other' perspectives and knowledges (see Allen & Bruce, 2017; Bell, 2008; Keet, 2014; Salesa, 2004). The 'deconstruction' is necessary to decentre narratives about 'others', or, as Keet (2014) puts it: "undoing colonialism" (p. 23), that is, colonialism of thought, of knowledge, of existence, and of research. Moreover, the value of the notion of 'epistemic injustice' to construct this critique will concatenate key notions, concepts and ideas that will be described in greater detail in the ensuing chapters on the Sāmoan context, a review of the literature and the syncretisation of an appropriate methodology. Thaman (2003) challenges us:

> . . . to look at our western educational legacies, their philosophies, ideologies, and pedagogies, which for nearly 200 years have not fully recognized the way Oceanic peoples communicate, think, and learn – ideologies that sought to destroy the values and belief systems underpinning indigenous education systems in which the majority of Oceanic peoples were and continue to be socialized. (p. 2)

The notion of 'native narratives' espoused by King (2005) is a synonym for oral traditions, and to refer specifically to its epistemological value in research, particularly as explained earlier, research using a constructionist, qualitative paradigm. Essentially, the notion of 'native narratives' is an enabling discourse of indigenous epistemologies

and asserts the efficacy of oral traditions as an epistemological site (see Vakauta, 2013; Lee, 2009; Tui Atua, 2005a) – epistemological sites are contexts, spaces and places where a theory of knowledge, as well specific knowledges, can be stored, observed, or made manifest. For example, the *tatau* as an epistemological site bares the contention that knowledge, and a vast array of narratives, are stored on the body through the motifs and structure of the *tatau*, as well as the practice and every protocol associated with the *tatau*. Contained within these narratives are references to identity, both personal and communal, as ontological, pedagogical, methodological, and philosophical insights to the world of 'natives'. The notion of 'native narratives' contends for the value and validity of indigenous knowledge. Further to this critique, research to date on the *tatau* has looked at the art and practice, and while these expositions have been helpful in understanding the *tatau*, none have recognised its value ontologically and epistemologically not only for research purposes, but more so for the collective hermeneutical resource. In what follows, the notion of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical marginalisation, othering and misrecognition will be used to make the positionality of this research clear.

Epistemic injustice and hermeneutical marginalisation

Fricker (2006, 2007) describes 'epistemic injustice' as a "wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" or seeker of knowledge (2007, p. 1). Fricker notes two particular injustices: *testimonial injustice* and *hermeneutical injustice*. 'Testimonial injustice' refers to a prejudice that causes a hearer to devalue the knowledge (or testimony) of a speaker. This is evidenced as a "credibility deficit owing to an identity prejudice" (ibid, p. 28). 'Hermeneutical injustice' is the obscurity "of one's social experience . . . from the collective understanding" (2006, p. 99). The 'obscurity' is brought about by the same prejudice that causes testimonial injustice

It could be argued, though, that the notions of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice are more to do with *ignorance* rather than *injustice*. However, in many contexts, the ignorance *is* the injustice. The obscurity, or ignorance, does not come from nowhere; the obscurity emanates from "a background of inequality and marginalization" (Beeby, 2011, p. 484). More specifically, it is a "hermeneutical marginalization" (Fricker, 2007, p. 159), which refers to the obstruction of marginalised groups (for example, gender, social class and ethnicity) from participating in generating knowledge, theory and meanings that pertain to their social reality, and this includes articulating their social identities. Thus, the obscurity is a result of the implicit preferencing of dominant narratives based on dominant experiences and clarities of

what is meaningful, and real. In some cases, prioritising specific types of knowledge is appropriate, for example, the use of mathematic equations in quantitative research. However, as Fricker (2006) states, "from the epistemic point of view, what is bad about . . . hermeneutical marginalization is that it renders the collective hermeneutical resource *structurally prejudiced* [emphasis in original text]" (2006, p. 99).

Essentially, and what I want to draw attention to, is that the 'structural prejudice' manifests as an implicit preferencing of a dominant, or Western, epistemology and an associated deprecation of marginalised, or non-Western, epistemologies (Nobbs, 2017). The implicit preferencing renders the obscurity and leads to the knowledges and experiences of non-Western peoples being made invisible, invalidated, and silenced. The testimonial injustice and hermeneutical marginalisation that ensues emanates from this background of inequality and marginalisation. Hence, the ignorance *is* the injustice.

Extending this discourse of racial inequalities and marginalisations, Sāmoans did not (and still do not) play an equal part in the generation of theory and the collective hermeneutical resource that predominates today. While much has been accomplished to date to develop this resource, it remains apparent that there is unequal development of, and unequal access to, this resource (Smith, 1999; N. Williams, 2004).

Thus, society's understanding of 'what is knowledge?' and 'whose knowledge?' was, and still is, from a Western institutional regime (Beeby, 2011; Fricker, 2007; Kanuha, 2000; Keet, 2014; Nobbs, 2017) rooted in a colonial, racist past that renders indigeneity as inferior and not worthy of knowing (Bell, 2008; Kanuha, 2000; Salesa, 2004; Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2003). It is in this context that hermeneutical injustices take place; the obscurity, therefore, is deliberate and systemic; the ignorance that ensues *is* the epistemic injustice. Bell (2008) describes it thus:

> Belief in the superoriaty [*sic*] of western 'civilization' underpinned the white settler colonization of the Pacific 'New World'. Pacific peoples were relegated to the status of primitive and racial inferiority, while the West was extolled as the caretaker of universal Truth in the guise of Enlightenment philosophy and science. (p. 850).

Accordingly, because of the evident invisibility of the experiences of marginalised communities, and the silencing of their voices, there remains a distinct mandate for indigenous peoples who still live under colonial regimes to make their worlds known and on their terms. Indigenous communities, often referred to as 'others', must create

their own social worlds, articulate their social identities and challenge the dominant discourses that continue to marginalise and silence them. To this, Jensen (2011) notes:

> From a social science point of view, identities are in some sense always social. This means that ethnic minority identities are always situated within specific social contexts and conditioned by them. One theoretical concept offered to explain such processes is *othering*, originally coined within post-colonial theory. (p. 63)

Othering and misrecognition

'Othering' is primarily a separatist discourse; it seeks to control the narrative of who is 'one of us' (Hopkins, Botterill, Sanghera & Arshad, 2017; Keet, 2014; Jensen, 2011; Thaman, 2003). 'Othering' comes from discourses of power imbalances that lead to the oppressive treatment and devaluation of 'others': white communities are synonymous with narratives of civility and order, while the 'others' are "non-white" which is "equated with the savage, uncontrolled and deviant" (Jensen, 2011, p. 63), and that which is "undesired, irredeemable and alien" (Hopkins et al., 2017, p. 937). Hopkins et al. add that discourses of 'othering' are usually evident in differences delineated primarily for reasons of ethnicity and race, and includes 'othering' for reasons of religion, sexuality, socio-economic status, and gender. With reference to gender, Jensen explains:

> This understanding of self and other is prevalent in de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1997). Here, de Beauvoir describes how men are regarded as the norm and women as the other . . . She furthermore argues that the otherness of women produces subjectivity since 'women exist – and are only conscious of themselves – in ways that men have shaped' (Hughes & Witz, 1997, p. 49). (p. 64).

The idea being conveyed is that 'womenhood' is shaped by men; that women's identities, existence, consciousness, and functions, among other things, are formulated and legitimised through men's ideations. Thus, women are 'boxed' and 'pigeon-holed' through maleness; they are identified through male identities, defined through male discourses and seen through the male gaze, and more to the point, *expected to behave in ways men have shaped.* This is 'othering'; it is about controlling the narrative of "knowledge, power and space" (Keet, 2014, p. 24) where narratives about the 'others' are deliberately constructed to marginalise and subjugate. Moreover, in the same way that Fricker discusses epistemic injustices, Keet, in describing apartheid South Africa, discusses 'epistemic othering': not just the othering of communities of

people, but othering their knowledges and experiences; the experiences of the 'other' is considered 'not meaningful' and therefore rendered not worthy of knowing. Whereas Fricker notes that epistemic injustices do not necessarily entail deliberate action to enable the injustice, Keet states that epistemic othering is a deliberate act intent on denigration and ascribing second-class citizenry. These concepts shed light on the enablement of the marginalisation, subjugation and oppression of indigenous people, and indigenous knowledge. In the case of indigenous knowledge, Western academic institutions in particular are used to perpetuate these injustices (Nakhid, 2003; Nakhid et al., 2007; Nobbs, 2017; Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2000).

Aligned with the notion of 'othering' is Bourdieu's conceptualisation of 'misrecognition' (1990, 1998). Bourdieu maintains that the reason why oppression and systems of domination exist is because we 'misrecognise' what is happening. That is, we not only *fail to recognise*, but we also *recognise in error* the system's ethic, and the oppression it inflicts. Furthermore, we also misrecognise *ourselves* in the perpetuation; we recognise in error our part in the perpetuation of the oppression, and this is primarily accomplished through failing to recognise the impact of the oppression on ourselves (Buchanan, 2010; James, 2015; Nobbs, 2017). Putting aside the systemic misrecognition, and taking the personal misrecognition, this is best encapsulated in Buchanan's (2010) description where he likens 'misrecognition' to a person who looks in the mirror and *misrecognises* the reflection in the mirror as themselves; whatever the image of them in the mirror reflects back, they accept as true messages about themselves. Thus, if the mirror is cracked, the person believes that they *themselves* have that flaw. 'Misrecognition', then, is to recognise yourself in error, through the misbeliefs and perspectives of another, or more pertinently, that of a stranger.

Sociologically, 'misrecognition' requires four things: that "one party does not give the other party the acknowledgement it deserves" (Thompson & Hoggett, 2016, p. 17); that the dominant party asserts notions of 'othering' to de-legitimise the identity of the other; that the same dominant party also uses notions of epistemic injustice and hermeneutical marginalisation to create the misrecognition; and that the 'other' has "at least some sense of largely below-conscious complicity" with this narrative (James, 2015, p. 101).

I have drawn on the concepts of epistemic injustice, hermeneutical marginalisation, othering and misrecognition to highlight the significance of positionality, and why the necessity of a culture-specific research framework, and the perspective of the *soga'imiti* is imperative. That is, this positionality is crucial to establish engagement,

trust and closeness to participants and knowledge-keepers, which, noted earlier, is critical for looking for hidden or difficult-to-find knowledge.

Epistemological positionality

Krenz and Sax (1986) state that "the purpose of research is to obtain reliable knowledge" (p. 68). There are, in effect, two parts to this: the obtaining of knowledge, and the ascertainment of its reliability. At the heart of understanding these two parts, at least for this research, are the notions of 'ontology', 'epistemology' and 'methodology'. These are interrelated philosophical terms. 'Ontology' is about the nature of existence or reality; the nature of the world, and what we can know about it (Al-Saadi, 2014; Gegeo, 2001; Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012). In Chapter Three, there will be a depiction of Sāmoan ontology, a world interconnected spiritually. 'Epistemology' is about the nature of *knowledge* or experience of reality and how that knowledge is acquired, or how we experience 'reality' (Al-Saadi, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Gegeo, 2001; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). In the Sāmoan ethos, for the most part, knowledge is evidenced through the body customs and traditions – this will be detailed in Chapter Three. 'Methodology' is the process, or system of methods, used to collect and analyse information towards establishing 'knowledge' and making sense of 'reality', and establishing the reliability of the findings and conclusions of the search for knowledge (Al-Saadi, 2014; Gegeo, 2001; Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Vaioleti, 2006; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). In accordance with Sāmoan custom, the pursuit of knowledge is the task of all, but not all have access to knowledge; many bodies of knowledge are considered sacred (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2002; M. Meleisea, 1987; Smith, 1999; Tui Atua, 2005a, 2009; Wendt, 1987). To that end, there are customs and traditions pertaining to the way knowledge is stored and revealed, and even more so for specific bodies of knowledge, and this, too, will be expanded on in Chapter Three.

Research paradigms

Certain ontological views in many respects, make specific assumptions about epistemological positions, which results in specific assumptions about methodological approaches to research. This is known as a 'paradigm'; that is, a distinct set of concepts, beliefs, assumptions, thoughts and theories, evidenced by an ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012). Ultimately, the researcher's choice of paradigm has very clear and very different implications for

the way research is carried out, the type of data to be searched for, the analysis of the data and the conclusions to be reached (Al-Saadi, 2014; Boutellier, Gassmann, Raedar, Dönmez & Domigall, 2011; Krenz & Sax, 1986; Ungar, 2004; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). *Appendix 3: Philosophical paradigms in research* depicts the difference between two particular paradigms, that of the natural sciences, and that of the social sciences; other paradigms exist, but for the sake of brevity and simplicity, these are the two examples I will refer to.

If you subscribe to a natural science set of beliefs about reality (that is, an ontological position), you are likely to view reality and knowledge from an 'objectivist' philosophy. This suggests that you take the position that knowledge exists independently of our beliefs, that this knowledge can be observed objectively, that it is 'discovered', and thus, can be counted and measured. This is indicative of a 'positivist' approach to knowledge (that is, epistemology) and knowledge acquisition (that is, methodology). The positivist approach indicates the preference for quantitative research methodologies where the researcher is neutral, and observes phenomena from that 'outside', objective perspective. The methods for extracting and analysing data and information about phenomena would be through mathematical calculations, controlled experiments and survey questionnaires (that require a limited response from participants). This type of research enquiry relies on deductive reasoning where there is a hypothetical statement as the starting point, the research is used to test the hypothesis, and then an evaluation will confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis. (Al-Saadi, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007).

On the other hand, the social sciences view reality and knowledge from a 'constructivist' ontological position, where knowledge already exists and is situated, that is, it is socially constructed (Al-Saadi, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2007). Research therefore relies on exploring the constructs that underpin a situated reality, viz. constructionism, and the focus of research is on the meaning and interpretation that the participants place on the interactions between constructs and participants, viz. interpretivism (Al-Saadi, 2014; Creswell, 2003; Howell, 2013; Scotland, 2012; Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). It is for this reason that research enquiries premised on constructionist and interpretivist approaches rely on qualitative methodologies where "discursive power rather than objective measures" are used to gather and analyse data (Ungar, 2004, p. 345). Another important distinction is that the researcher is part of the research process; they are 'inside' the research, and "they inevitably become personally engaged in the research and, as such, findings are influenced by their perspectives and values" (Al-

Saadi, 2014, p. 4). Traditional positivist research, on the other hand, uses quantitative tools of analyses; it separates constructs, including separating the researcher from the social and natural environment, and therefore, lacks cultural-appropriate protocol and alienates (Anae et al., 2001; Smith, 1999; White & Tengan, 2001; N. Williams, 2004). Inevitably, this gives rise to the practice of othering and the misrecognition of indigenous peoples evident in Western academia (Anae et al., 2001; Salesa, 2004; Smith, 1999; Taufe'ulungaki, 2003; White & Tengan, 2001; N. Williams, 2004). Nabobo-Baba (2004) adds that mainstream and Western research traditions "do not always reflect local indigenous ways of knowing, of seeking knowledge" (p. 21); this makes mainstream and Western research traditions, and in particular, positivist research approaches unsuitable for researching indigenous and native phenomena. Moreover, Ungar (2004), Al-Saadi (2014), and Boutellier et al. (2011) assert that natural science research paradigms are ill-equipped to research social science phenomena, and vice versa, social science research paradigms are inadequate for investigating natural science phenomena.

Indigenous epistemologies

This research, then, assumes an interpretivist epistemological position. This type of approach suits cultural and exploratory enquiries and is particularly ideal for locating difficult-to-find knowledge (Creswell et al., 2007; Reiter, 2017; Stebbins, 1997), which, as I will describe in the next chapter, depicts the current state of the body of knowledge of *tatau*. An indigenous consideration to an interpretivist approach can be drawn from Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo (2001), that in indigenous cultures, "epistemological agents are communities rather than individuals" (p. 58). In discussing indigenous Solomon Island epistemology, which can be transferred to an indigenous epistemology generally (see Linniken, 1997; M. Meleisea, 1987; Wesley-Smith, 1995; Winduo, 2000), Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo add:

> All knowledge is subjective knowledge . . . there can be no detachment of the knower from the known as in mainstream Anglo- European epistemology, as exemplified in logical positivism with its focus on "objective knowledge," especially Karl Popper's concept of "knowledge without a knower" (1972). Thus the scientific notion of objectivity as classically defined in positivism does not exist in Kwara'ae. To the Kwara'ae knowledge is socially constructed by communities of knowledge-makers. (ibid, p. 62)

The notion of 'communities of knowledge-makers' therefore, insists not only a constructivist approach, but more pertinently, a '*co*-constructivist' approach, one that

arises from an ontological perspective to locate indigenous epistemology, and from which to articulate an indigenous methodology.

Another aspect of an indigenous epistemology that is evident in the above-mentioned citation is the 'situated-ness of knowledge'; if knowledge is constructed by *communities* of knowledge-makers, then that knowledge also belongs to that community. In the same regard, Sāmoan knowledge is not freely available (M. Meleisea, 1987; Tui Atua, 2005a, 2009), but is 'situated'; certain knowledges belong to certain *nu'u*[12], to certain *'āīga*[13], and certain situations, for example, *tatau*, carpentry, shipwrighting and traditional navigation. In this respect, Sāmoan epistemology is congruous with 'standpoint epistemology' espoused by Haraway (1988, 1991) and Harding (2004, 2008) in feminist theory, who assert that the way societies are structured have epistemological significance. That is, knowledge is not objective and universal, but rather it is "situated" and "partial" (Haraway, 1988, p. 583). In being 'situated', knowledge belongs to a locality and a specific people or community who inevitably enact and manifest that epistemology; in being 'partial', no one can know everything, and therefore, there is no universal, values-free epistemology, and therefore, partial to its situated-ness.

An example of the situated-ness of knowledge is an explanation given by many *matai*[14], that one of the Sāmoan words for 'customs and traditions' is *aganu'u*. More specifically, *aga* means 'custom', or 'tradition', and *nu'u* means 'village'. Therefore, a more pertinent translation of *aganu'u* is not a *nationally* recognised custom and tradition, but a *localised* expression of a custom and tradition. In 1994, the Sāmoan Ministry of Youth, Sport & Cultural Affairs began a series of books[15] titled *Samoa Ne'i Galo* (Faatonu, Wallwork & Ministry of Youth, Sport & Cultural Affairs), which is a tome of Sāmoa's myths, legends and folklore. In the introductory section of each volume, there is a statement that Sāmoan *talatu'u*[16] have many stories and have several versions of the same story, and that the differences are often based on the village that

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[12] *Nu'u* – Village; commune.

[13] *'Āīga* – Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'.

[14] *Matai* – Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.

[15] Volume 1 released in 1994, Volume 2 in 1997, Volume 3 in 2001, Volume 4 in 2002, Volume 5 in 2005, Volume 6 in 2010, Volume 7 in 2012, Volume 8 in 2018 and Volume 9 and 10 currently in print.

[16] *Talatu'u* – Folklore; stories of people of note; literally means 'stories left behind'.

are telling the *talatu'u*. Notwithstanding the differences, the books provide the key elements of the story and footnote the differences that each village narrates. In this way, this series of books point to the situated-ness of knowledge evident in the *fa'asāmoa*. This also affirms M. Meleisea's (1987) earlier-mentioned assertion that in the oral traditions, many versions of a story may exist, and all versions are accepted as true. Another and more pertinent example of this is the criticism among Sāmoans, that using Sāmoan knowledge removed from its context is inauthentic and disingenuous. I have been in conference discussions where distinguished Sāmoan academics have come under scrutiny by conference participants for applying Sāmoan metaphors, proverbs and knowledge outside of their historical, cultural, communal and familial context. There is an enduring discussion about the need for shifting contexts and fluid boundaries regarding a modern expression of the *fa'asāmoa*, but the located-ness of knowledge embedded in the *fa'asāmoa* brings about this contention.

This is the lesson I took from Duranti's reference in the previous chapter about not being able to comprehend the cultural conversations taking place through spatial inhabitation and body proximity. The cultural intellect required to performatively 'converse' in that cultural setting requires an embeddedness, and more pertinently, an acknowledgement that conversations, or an exchange of knowledge, can be conducted in such a way. Moreover, Seiuli (2015) and Tunufa'i (2013), although they do not describe these concepts in their research approach, there is still an evident level of embeddedness and connection in their research encounters with participants. It is interpretivism in that the behaviours, or actions, are contextually and culturally interpreted; it is co-constructivism in that the researcher and the participants work together to uncover, discover, or rediscover the meanings. Ungar (2003, 2004), Ungar, Clark, Kwong, Makhnach and Cameron (2005) and Rutter (1999, 2006) add that methodology that emanates from an ontological and epistemological position removes the practice of 'othering' – noted earlier in this chapter – because the researcher has embedded themselves in the world of the participants, thereby de-centering narratives of marginalisation, which allows a more immersed and deeper encounter with the reality of the participants.

Methodological framework

Having contended for a culture-specific research framework, in this section I describe the elements that make up the framework used for this research. This description is

necessary because qualitative methodologies are sometimes perceived as not being able to "conform to standards of intellectual rigor" (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007, p. 60) because of the lack of objectivity, which makes qualitative approaches prone to collusion and at greater risk of researcher manipulation (Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000; Smith, 1999). To this, I take the views espoused by Smith (1999), Thaman (2003), Wesley-Smith (1995), Winduo (2000) and Linnekin (1992, 1997) who assert that the significance of "indigenous post-colonial" academics (Linnekin, 1997), or "Pacific writer scholars" (Winduo, p. 609) – indigenous researchers who have the cultural building blocks to make sense of indigenous phenomena, and who are also familiar with Western scholarship and academia – are better positioned to navigate the complexities and ambiguities of exploring and articulating indigenous phenomenon to a non-indigenous populace; it is an advocation for the "indigenization of knowledge and research that cultivates an indigenous epistemology" (Wesley-Smith, 1995, pp. 125-126). Linnekin concludes her treatise by posing the question of how is indigenous knowledge to be written or recorded? Her reply is: with great difficulty and with great sensitivity and requires thinking outside the box. Winduo adds:

> Pacific writer scholars are intervening by articulating their cultural experiences, their social discourses, and are insisting on interpretation from within their own cultural contexts. Pacific writer scholars mediate between traditional and introduced cultures. It is impossible to exclude either one since they compliment, contradict and challenge one another. (p. 611)

As close as possible

Noted earlier, the positionality I, as the researcher, started with is that of a *soga'imiti* living in Sāmoa using indigenous, customary knowledge-seeking protocols. The key for this starting point is to get as close to the phenomenon as possible particularly where there is limited knowledge publicly available. Kanuha (2000) and Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain that the choice to undertake an approach to research that has characteristics resembling 'insider' research and components resembling 'outsider' research, rests on the degree of embeddedness and the depth of data the researcher seeks. Dwyer and Buckle noted that when their research participants recognised an affinity to the researcher by way of a shared experience, there was a divulgence of more and richer data that the researchers felt would not have been elicited had there not been that connection. Kanuha added:

> Common folkways, linguistic anachronisms, and cultural traditions naturally emerge in and influence the relationship between native researcher and

native study participants. This "inside information" often enhances the authenticity of, yet constrains, the detachment required in most indigenous research studies. What became apparent is that attempts to create distance from the personal–self to maintain the "objective" researcher–self were sometimes counterproductive to the research project—that is, distancing emotionally and intellectually from the substance of the material to enhance "abstraction of models or patterns of and for behavior" as a native researcher (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984 p. 584) resulted instead in distancing from the process of the research and the ability to attain "thick" descriptions of complex phenomena (Geertz, 1973). (p. 441)

Macpherson and Macpherson (1990), investigating Sāmoan health beliefs, stated:

> The expectation of the existence of highly integrated models marked by relatively precise definition of components, systematic descriptions of relations between them, and procedures for establishing these may be inappropriate. Such models are cultural products and reflect a secular culture in which scientific method has become the basis of both generation and evaluation of medical knowledge. In societies, such as Samoa, in which the influence of religion is strong, both the generation and evaluation of this category of knowledge *may rest on different foundations* [emphasis added].

> This is not to say that healers are not concerned with logical explanation of their activity. But that which cannot be explained in terms of some secular rational logic can be explained in religious terms, and that which can be understood in such terms may need no further explanation. Such an explanation is no way inferior to any other: *it simply rests on a different set of criteria of truth* [emphasis added]. It does for its adherents what any successful model must do, which is *to make their social and physical worlds comprehensible in terms which are appropriate to them* [emphasis added]. (pp. 140-141)

One of the key aspects of an indigenous research paradigm is that the methodological approach that the researcher settles on must state the rationale that qualifies the analyses and conclusions reached as a reasonable account of the findings of the research enquiry. With some Western methodologies, these tests for reliability and validity are built in. With other Western methodologies, the tests are constructed commensurate with a particular approach or theory. The difficulty with shifting away from a mainstream orthodoxy regarding a methodological approach is that the elements

that make for reliable and trustworthy research must still be evident. While the search for indigenous knowledge using culture-specific strategies for uncovering or (re)discovering knowledge is imperative, there still needs to be accountability (for the knowledge acquisition) and transparency (for the knowledge analysis) for the conclusions that will be reached. To attain reliability and trustworthiness using indigenous research approaches, Penetito & Sanga (2003) propose that "quality is measured in a number of ways, including the extent to which research:

- maintains the mana of the researched and researcher;
- enhances enduring relationships between the research and the researcher;
- is reciprocal for all parties involved;
- facilitates Pacific capacity and control of the process, outcomes and agenda;
- is Tongan, Samoan, Tokelauan and Pasifika in logic, method, reporting, experience and result." (p. 33)

Piecing together the elements that have been contended for, Sāmoan phenomenon thus requires a research approach that demystifies the phenomenon, and is able to make the phenomenon "comprehensible in terms which are appropriate to them". Summarising the position for oral traditions, including Penetito & Sanga's quality assurance methods, I have extricated three research imperatives to get as close to the data as possible: the imperative of native narratives; the value of Sāmoan customs, traditions and protocols; and the importance of reciprocity. Each research imperative will be described briefly here, but they will be developed further in the next chapter on the *fa'asāmoa*. These three imperatives are interconnected, and there is significant cross-over; each imperative is central to the others.

Native narratives

Oral traditions are where and how indigenous knowledge is stored. In other words, it is a library. By examining the oral traditions, it is possible to explore them for epistemological and ontological insights to the *fa'asāmoa*. Tui Atua (2005a) states:

Samoan history is the story of *tulaga vae,* or *turangawaewae*, footprints in the sands of time. For oral Samoa, the languaging and recording of these footprints were done by way of rituals, dances and chants. This is something not fully realised by many scholars, past and present, engaged in writing Samoan history. There are a number of reasons for this, some to

do with imperial arrogance, others to do with a lack of indigenous language competency. (pp. 61-62)

The prime position, as contended earlier in this chapter, is that a research on the *tatau* is to be undertaken from the perspective of a *soga'imiti*. This positionality was reinforced after speaking to many *soga'imiti* about their *tatau* story; they convinced me that reading and talking about the *tatau* gives incredible insight, but for the researcher to get the *tatau* gives a more intimate insight to the experience. Getting my *tatau* in 2012, therefore, was not only for my own personal journey – storied in the Prologue chapter – but for the purpose of a more intimate knowledge of the experience from which I will conduct conversations and knowledge-seeking protocols for the purpose of the research.

The notion of 'autochthony' exists as a biological and geological construct, of observing a phenomenon native to where it exists[17]. In geology, it is exploring a phenomenon, usually a deposit, sedimentary or otherwise, native to where it is found. In biology, it is the same principle of exploration of a phenomenon, typically flora, native to where it is found. For this research, of exploring coping with adversity through the *tatau*, an autochthonous approach entails conducting the research in Sāmoa, native to where the *tatau* is found[18]. In this way, it is giving preference to Sāmoan ways of knowing; that is, using native epistemologies, from a native perspective, in a native setting.

Talanoa

As discussed earlier in this chapter, a significant amount of traditional knowledge and experience of the *fa'asāmoa* and the *tatau* has been 'lost' or difficult-to-find. Explained in Chapter One, employing an exploratory research approach that gives import to indigenous methodologies and corresponding methods enables the researcher to get as close as possible to the *tatau* stories. In this way, an indigenous Sāmoan way of acquiring knowledge is best suited to locate and extricate lost and difficult-to-find knowledge. Drawing further from the notion of 'native narratives', an indigenous approach to finding knowledge is less likely to marginalise the participants and their knowledge, and more likely to value the relationship in the knowledge exchange. Thus, as referenced earlier in Chapter One, using indigenous ways of knowledge-acquisition

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[17] https://www.thefreedictionary.com/autochthony

[18] Many nations of the Pacific have their own *tatau.* Although there are some oral traditions that point to Sāmoa as a point of origin, this is also contested. This matter falls outside of the scope of my research. Therefore, I will only note this point, and maintain the focus on Sāmoan *tatau.*

establishes trust and the research encounter becomes more engaging. In this way, using indigenous methodologies and methods in this research is as Attia and Edge (2017) contend: crafting research procedures shaped from an on-going mutual relationship between researcher, researched and the research. This makes the research encounter more authentic, immersive, relational and principled, where research participants are enabled to story their realities and this is likely to "generate accurate and candid data … which in turn strengthens the validity of research accounts" (ibid, p. 38). *Talanoa* observes these key research protocols, and just as important in Sāmoan ways of seeking knowledge, *talanoa* also observes cultural protocols and respects the knowledge exchange process – that is, the relationship between researcher and participant.

Vaioleti (2006) explains that *talanoa* is a "conversation, a talk, an exchange of ideas or thinking, whether formal or informal … *Tala* means to inform, tell, relate and command … *Noa* means of any kind, ordinary, nothing in particular, purely imaginary or void … *Talanoa*, then, literally means talking about nothing in particular, and interacting without a rigid framework" (p. 23). *Talanoa*, therefore, is an open conversation where stories, meanings and knowledge is exchanged. It requires researchers to "partake deeply" in the cultural context "rather than stand back and analyse" (p. 24). *Talanoa* in this regard can be considered a method of data collection. As a methodology, *talanoa* is also dialogic and discursive where interplay between knowledge-seeker and knowledge-keeper is more than data collection but extends to data analysis and theorisation. As a methodology, Suaalii-Sauni & Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014) state that *talanoa* is "a process of storying and gathering of narratives", bringing together "culturally nuanced" knowledge made "manifest in words, gestures, silences, in all those things used to communicate culturally specific meaning" (p. 334).

It is worth noting that there is another definition of *talanoa*. In Sāmoan custom, if a matter is *tapu*[19] or *sā*[20], it is a taboo and sacred matter that is not allowed to be discussed openly. However, if that *tapu* or *sā* was lifted, the matter was declared *noa*, and therefore the matter can be freely discussed. Thus, *talanoa* in this respect means to talk about a matter freely and without restrictions. In talking about a matter freely, the practice of *talanoa* is also laden with cultural protocols; observing the cultural protocols of the *talanoa* cultivates trust between researcher and participant, or in more

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[19] *Tapu* – Taboo; restricted

[20] *Sā* – Sacred; forbidden.

indigenous frames of references, nurtures the relationship (or *tausi le vā*[21]) between knowledge-seeker and knowledge-keeper. The ethic of *tausi le vā*, and the concepts of knowledge-seeking and knowledge-keeping are at the heart of an indigenous Sāmoan research framework. The elucidation of these Sāmoan concepts will be conveyed in the next chapter beginning with a philosophical premise and the worldview from which these concepts emanate. It is for these reasons that Tui Atua (2003) urges:

> If researchers are not knowledgeable in Pacific ways … they cannot accompany the participants to the cultural, contextual and spiritual depths of their sharing and theorising. The research will be poorer for that, and misleading. (p. 32)

Furthermore, Tunufa'i (2013) adds another aspect of Sāmoan-ness to *talanoa*. He explains that Vaioleti, a Tongan, renders a Tongan definition of *talanoa*, and although generally applicable to most Pacific languages, there are subtle differences. Tunufa'i states:

> In the Samoan context, the word *talanoa* is a verb and has only one noun form, *talanoaga*. *Talanoaga* refers to a formal gathering to discuss specific issues. Ironically, while the verb form reflects a casual and less purposeful talk, the noun form is indicative of a formal and serious connotation. (p. 131)

Thus, I will use the noun, *talanoaga* when referring to the method and methodology, and the verb, *talanoa*, when referring to the act of conversing and dialogue.

Further to this, mentioned in the previous chapter, each *talanoaga* will be video recorded using digital media. The recording of the *talanoaga* also demonstrates the data collection and data analysis.

Reciprocity

The "ancient practice of reciprocity" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p. 12) is one of the cornerstones of Sāmoan protocol and custom (P.S. Meleisea, 2004; Niuatoa, 2007; Seiuli, 2013; Toso, 2011; Va'a, 2001); it is the "social and economic glue" that holds *'āīga* and *nu'u* together (P.S. Meleisea, 2004, p. 175). Such is the significance of reciprocity in the *fa'asāmoa*, it is institutionalised into the language and the culture (Taumoefolau, 2013), and this is evidenced in the customary exchanges at weddings, funerals, celebrations and many other occasions. Essentially, as a methodological cornerstone, this means

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[21] *Tausi le vā* – Nurture the relationship.

that built into the research must be elements of reciprocity, where the research gives back to the participants as well as immediate community and the wider community.

This research will reciprocate the gifts of knowledge by the participants to this research two-fold. Firstly, there will be a reciprocal gift to the participant at the conclusion of each *talanoaga*. Secondly, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there will be a video documentary produced – outside of the requirements for the fulfilment of the doctoral thesis – that will use the video recording of the body of *talanoaga* undertaken for this thesis. I noted earlier that I had had many conversations with many *soga'imiti* over many years, in preparation for this research. Many of those *soga'imiti* requested that I produce a documentary at the conclusion of the research to explain the tradition of the *tatau*, which would serve to dispel much of the misinformation that prevails today. Additionally, the documentary would serve as an educational resource to facilitate the safekeeping of traditional knowledge. Moreover, the documentary would help future prospective *soga'imiti* prepare for their *tatau* journey.

Summary

As with all research enquiries, there is a matter that oral traditions, or 'native narratives', in research must navigate: the test of reliability and validity (see Hau'ofa, 1993). Noted in the previous, early anthropologists criticised the oral traditions as unreliable and susceptible to falsehoods and revisions. Further to that, there is a limitation to oral traditions, as noted in Biggs (1976): "it is transitory; once it is spoken, it is gone" (p. 4). Furthermore, it relies on customs and traditions of people always storying in their various ways; once you stop singing, dancing, voyaging and performing the stories and knowledge, you start forgetting. Biggs adds that in a book, one can turn back the pages to review information; in a recording, one can press the 'rewind' button … but 'playback by word-of-mouth' is not only inaccurate, but can also be difficult to recover, especially, recovery of lost (through death) information. To place oral traditions in the centre of a research enquiry, therefore, this is the crossroad that this research must pass through.

Additionally, one of the prominent features of Sāmoan (and other Pacific) academics and their research is the evident negotiating and renegotiating of boundaries between a Western mainstream approach to research and a desire to represent Sāmoan and

indigenous ways of looking at the world and doing research. Avegalio's (2009) description captures this tension:

> The intellectual contrast between the notion of a mechanistic universe motivated by a rational process, and an organic universe genealogically connected, became an unrelenting point of intellectual and emotional discomfort for me. (p. 112)

As well as Avegalio, there was much I gleaned from the writings of Tamasese (2002), Seiuli (2010, 2012, 2015), Morgan, Coombes and Alefaio-Tugia (2013) and Alefaio (2009) who are able to balance this tension, navigating between cognitive and developmental psychology and the indigenous world of Sāmoans. Additionally, Amituana'i-Toloa (2009), Anae et al. (2001), Passells (2010), and Suaalii-Sauni and Fulu-Aiolupotea (2014), among others, also balance this struggle, but that of qualitative interpretivist research and Sāmoan epistemological and methodological approaches. Indeed, extracting further from the literature, I find myself agreeing with Tupuola (2004); in the editorial of an edition for a journal, she commended the Pacific authors – some of them diasporic, some of them indigenous – for "retelling the stories of these cultures in the voice of the community members themselves" and for articulating ways to "talk back to popular cultural paradigms" (p. 2). Tupuola states:

> What is critical about all these papers is the way the authors also grapple with intra-cultural disparities and talk about their own challenges as both insider and outsider members of their communities. Furthermore, many of these authors are to be applauded for taking the necessary step to move beyond their own comfort zone in sharing their work, knowing the risks involved as young scholars and educators as they readdress local and global stereotypes of themselves. (p. 4)

It is on this premise that the methodological framework I described in the previous section of this chapter informs the methodological approach I describe in Chapter Five. In answering the research questions posed in Chapter One, and having described the critical concepts and theories in this chapter, the next two chapters are literature review chapters – Chapter Three is a review of the literature on the *fa'asāmoa*, and Chapter Four is a review of the literature on psychological resilience.

CHAPTER 3

THE *FA'ASĀMOA*:

The setting for the research

Proverbial expression:
E lele le toloa, 'ae ma'au i le vai.

Translation:
The *toloa*[1] (albatross) will take flight, but it always returns to the water.

Meaning:
In oratory, this proverbial expression usually refers to a person who travels, who may learn of other ways and other knowledges, but the matters that are of greater worth, are those matters that refer to their place of origin. This proverbial expression is also used to encourage Sāmoans abroad to return to Sāmoa at some stage in their lives.

Reference:
In this chapter, I reference this proverbial expression to allude to the *fa'asāmoa* as that which ties all Sāmoans worldwide; no matter where Sāmoan go, it is their Sāmoan-ness that makes them distinct. This chapter discusses various and select aspects of the *fa'asāmoa.*

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[1] In Sāmoan vernacular, the *toloa* is believed to be the 'Pacific black duck' (*Anas superciliosa*). However, in traditional navigation, and in the language of every Pacific nation, the *toloa, toroa* refers to the albatross. Moreover, there is a constellation of stars known as *toloa* with the reference to the wingspan of the albatross – a duck is not known for such a feature.

Introduction

In this chapter, my objective is to draw from the wealth of literature that positions the *fa'asāmoa*[2] as the necessary principal consideration of the research design and demonstrate its efficacy in indigenous research enquiries. A second objective of this chapter is to provide a description of the cultural setting of this research. There are various descriptions, interpretations and definitions of what the *fa'asāmoa* is, but Seiuli (2016) does not juxtapose them to derive a single-narrative articulation but states that the various descriptions are the result of looking at the same phenomenon from different angles. Seiuli succinctly describes the *fa'asāmoa* thus:

> Firstly, *fa'asamoa* provides a firm foundation for Samoan people to centralise their cultural values, spirituality, customs, and beliefs. Secondly, *fa'asamoa* provides a safe platform upon which, and out of which, their sense of belonging is practiced, negotiated, maintained, reciprocated and passed on to the next generations. Thirdly, *fa'asamoa* as a way of life provides an important context for viewing a cherished heritage by offering a set of structural principles for ordering one's social life. Fourthly, *fa'asamoa* offers guiding principles for one's behaviour by forming an anchor that stabilises one's ethno-cultural identification. Finally, *fa'asamoa* serves as a moral praxis in achieving relational harmony with God, the gods, the environment, and one's people. It remains central to how Samoan people live out their existence in the past, in the present and in the future. (pp. 31-32)

For the purposes of this research, I will focus specifically on the third and fourth aspects of Seiuli's description: the *fa'asāmoa* as a way of life that provides a body of customs and traditions anchored in an extraordinary history and heritage that serve as a "set of structural principles", or a code of conduct, for "ordering one's life"; and the *fa'asāmoa* as a network of guiding principles to anchor an identity to, and through which expressions of that identity emanate from. In this chapter, I will describe select aspects of Sāmoan culture and tradition to set the cultural context and some of the customary practices relevant to this research. Of equal importance, I will also construct a discourse that will make known a Sāmoan ontological premise – how Sāmoans traditionally view reality; epistemological frameworks – how Sāmoans view knowledge

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[2] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

about reality; and methodological practices – how Sāmoans go about acquiring knowledge and in this regard, demonstrate the value of oral traditions in research.

The missionaries and colonisers found the Sāmoans to be a very spiritual people whose spirituality was premised on their connections to the world, both seen (viz. natural) and unseen (viz. supernatural) (M. Meleisea, 1987; Tui Atua, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Wildermuth, 2012; J. Williams, 1984). In the next section of this chapter, titled *Sāmoan spirituality: A network of relationships*, I discuss the network of relationships and the harmony that underpins Sāmoan spirituality and upon which cultural, traditional, historical aspects of the *fa'asāmoa* are derived. The section that will follow is titled *Tausi le vā*[3]*.* While the overarching objective of Sāmoan spirituality is to connect, the ethic that drives the objective is described in the *fa'asāmoa* as *tausi le vā*. This translates as 'nurturing and maintaining the network of relationships'; these relationships are conceived of as spatial and philosophical harmonies that need to be maintained through a framework of conduct displayed through customs and traditions.

The body of customs and traditions then, can be viewed as the foundation to centralise a set of beliefs and knowledge. I will explicate that discourse in the third section of this chapter, titled *Sāmoan epistemology*, which will explain the importance of knowledge, the role of knowledge-keepers and the task of knowledge-seekers. This will give utility to the following section, *Oral traditions*, which will explain further the value of oral traditions in academic research. This section is critical to the discourse of weaving together the tradition of the *tatau*, with indigenous epistemologies and with Western academia.

The culmination of these discourses and narratives will be explicated in the final section of this chapter, *The tradition of the tatau*[4]. It is necessary to make known what can be gleaned from the literature, and more crucially, I want to highlight the traditional and historical knowledge that is stored in the *tatau*, and equally important, what it has to say about the Sāmoan identity.

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[3] *Tausi le vā* – Literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.

[4] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

Sāmoan spirituality: A network of relationships

The most acknowledged aspect of the *fa'asāmoa* in the literature is 'spirituality'. A growing number of literary sources (see Betham, 2008; Niuatoa, 2007; Seiuli, 2012; Tcherkézoff, 2008; Tui Atua, 2005b, 2007, 2009; Toso, 2011) note that Sāmoan indigenous spirituality is "a communion with the whole of creation" (Betham, 2008, p. 3), connected to everything where "everything was a question of integration and of the relationship between a whole and its different parts" (Tcherkézoff, 2008, p.114). In other words, people are more than social, physical and emotional beings, but also as beings connected to the natural realm and to a divine source. Tui Atua (2005b), Niuatoa (2007) and Betham (2008) describe this interconnectedness as a four-way 'harmony': harmony between humans and the cosmos, humans and the environment, humans with one another, and finally, with one's self. Tui Atua (2003) clarifies that the 'self' in the Sāmoan context is different to that of the Western definition; it is not an individual, personal identity, but the individual's contribution to the whole:

> 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 my 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 belonging. (p. 51)

The Sāmoan sense of self is a person's relationships with familial, social and cultural structures rather than an independent, individual identity. This is exemplified by a Sāmoan's expectation to achieve for the advancement of the collective reputation (*'āīga*[5], *nu'u*[6], *lotu*[7]) rather than personal gain (Anae et al., 2002; Macpherson, 1999; Macpherson et al., 2000; Nakhid, 2003; Pacific Island Students Academic Achievement Collective, 1993; Schmidt, 2012; Tiatia, 1998). In this, the "primary markers of identity – family (and village) – are integrally relational" (Schmidt, 2012, p. 59). Irrespective of age and gender, people are valued by their *tautua*[8] to the total group (Niuatoa, 2007). Thus, although there are four elements in the harmony referred to earlier, it is essentially a three-way harmony, centralised through the individual,

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[5] *'Āīga* – Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'.

[6] *Nu'u* – Village; commune.

[7] *Lotu* – Church; ecclesiastical denomination.

[8] *Tautua* = To serve, or service rendered.

where all four elements integrally are still a part of the whole system (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Tui Atua, 2005b). This notion is portrayed in Figure 3.1 (below).

Figure 3.1: The four-way harmony
This image is my encapsulation of the four elements of the harmony described in Tui Atua (2005b), Betham (2008), Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop (2009) and Niuatoa (2009). Effectively, it is a three-way harmony centralised through the 'individual'.
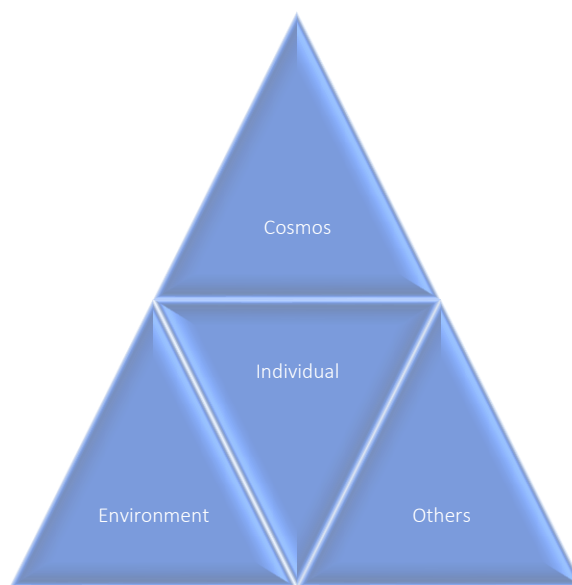
Betham asserts that, traditionally, Sāmoans saw the derivation of their culture as reflective of their interaction with God[9] over time. The body of customs and traditions that make up the *fa'asāmoa* is a 'record' of the interaction of God with people; it is a testament of communication with God, about how to commune with the Creator, with the spirits, with the environment, and also with one another. Betham adds that Sāmoans believed in the symbiotic relationship between the four elements, noting that the spirit world "pervaded their physical world", where the spirits could manifest in various ways and influence nature as well as people (p. 5). Thus, Sāmoan spirituality is the logic that sustains reality, that moves and drives all things (Betham, 2008; Niuatoa,

[9] "God" in this context refers to the Creator, the Supreme Being.

2007; Tui Atua, 2005b, 2009; Wildermuth, 2012). Niuatoa opens his doctoral thesis thus:

> Fa'a-Samoa (cultural values) and spirituality (religious values) are inseparable. Samoan spirituality is non-existent without Fa'a-Samoa. The charisma of Fa'a-Samoa validates the reality of Samoan spirituality. The origin of this relationship is in the Samoan ideology, in which they find it more fitting to establish relationships with the transcendent through a visible metaphor called 'Fa'a-Samoa' . . . [which] is the epistemology of Samoan spirituality (p. i)

In this regard, Sāmoan spirituality has direct implications on "the physical, psychological, and spiritual well-being of Samoans" (ibid, p. i). From a Western philosophical viewpoint, this would equate to an ontological position, and as Niuatoa noted above, it is from this ontological position that an epistemological and ideological framework could be derived – these frameworks will be described later in this chapter.

Furthermore, Niuatoa explains that the centrality of spirituality is through a commitment to family, employment or dutiful work in the plantations and land use, as well as capitalistic industry, education, social values, religious values, mythology and folklore, customs and traditions. Betham (2008) includes notions of *tapu* (taboo) and *sā* (sacredness), *feagaiga* (covenant) and *tuā'oi* (boundaries) that "speak of their way of thinking (mentality), hopes, beliefs, values and aspirations" (pp. 3-4). Toso (2011) adds that spirituality "is not a solitary endeavour. One alone cannot construct personal values" (p. 130) explaining that *fefa'asoa'ai* (collaboration), *fetausia'i* (reciprocity), *vā fealoa'i/ tapu'ia* (respect), *tautua* (service), *tōfā 'autasi* (consensus), and *'ava fatafata* (protocol) are values that exemplify Sāmoan spirituality, which shapes Sāmoan identity.

The hierarchical and stratified structure of Sāmoan society, the *fa'asāmoa*, operates this logic of spirituality and is seen as "a traditional governance system, the language, customs and social structure ... a system that still oversees all aspects of modern Samoan life" (Gough, 2006, p. 36). Aligned with this is "the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p. 12). As explained in the previous chapter, reciprocity is the social and economic 'glue' that holds *'āīga* and *nu'u* together, particularly in times of need (P.S. Meleisea, 2004). It should be noted that reciprocity and respect, in the *fa'asāmoa*, are interchangeable (Va'a, 2001; Vakauta, 2013); such is the significance of reciprocity and respect, they are institutionalised into the language and culture (Tunufa'i, 2013) and many if not all of Sāmoa's customs and traditions have

the notions of reciprocity and respect embedded in them. For example, in Sāmoan custom, there is a 'respectful' way of talking which is associated with the *matai*[10] (ibid).

It is for this reason that the *fa'asāmoa* is described to be socio-centric; the *fa'asāmoa* elevates the communal construction of social and personal identity predicated on the foundation of the harmony of the network of relationships, which is monitored by the *'āīga* (Schmidt, 2013; Tcherkézoff, 2013; Suaalii-Sauni et al, 2009; Niuatoa, 2007)*.* Schmidt adds that "membership of and service to *'āīga* and community are central components of Sāmoan" identity (p. 419). Customary practices and the traditions of that community are observed in order to affirm this belonging (Asi-Pakieto, 2009; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni, & O'Regan, 2009; Niuatoa, 2007; Thaman, 1996). In doing so, the social order, and family and village affiliation is maintained and perpetuated. This 'belonging' is a relationship that is evidenced through observation and obeisance of the Sāmoan customs and traditions and is one of the key aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*, and is often regulated with the phrase *tausi le vā.* The notion of *teu le vā*[11] is also used; when *le vā* has not been respected, *ua solia le vā* (*le vā* has been trampled on), then corrective action must be taken to right the indiscretion. The corrective action is done to *teu le vā* (restore the relationships). There are also enduring customary practices for this purpose. Returning to the notion of 'harmony', the overarching objective of Sāmoan spirituality compels Sāmoans to connect and find harmony with the cosmos, the environment and with one another. Niuatoa explains that spiritual harmony driven by the ethic to *tausi le vā* is the "'textbook' for ethical or moral guidance . . . a manual of principles for faithful living with one another in peace and harmony . . . a lifeway of reverence" (p. 15).

Tausi le vā

The concept of *le vā* is well documented in Sāmoan research; the most cited references are Wendt (1999) and Le Tagaloa (2003), and more recently, Tui Atua (2005b), Tuagalu (2008), and Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009). I also note Refiti (2002) and the application of *le vā* to architecture; Anae (2007, 2010) and its utility in research; Mila-Schaaf (2006) and its efficacy in informing social work practice; and Tunufa'i (2013) and the usefulness of *le vā* in understanding criminality. In other words, *le vā* is

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[10] *Matai* – Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.

[11] *Teu le vā* – Correct, or put back to order, the *vā*

not only a philosophical concept, but it is a philosophy that, when understood well, can lead to action, or informs a practice or vocational undertaking. These works of literature provide comprehensive descriptions, boundaries and applications of *le vā*, and much can be learned from them. I will briefly define it here and add another aspect of it for this research as the overarching ethic that underpins the *fa'asāmoa*.

In the first instance, definitional framing is necessary. *Tausi* means 'to nurture', or 'to care'; *le vā* directly translates as 'the space'. Many commentaries on *le vā* cite Wendt (1999): "not space that separates, but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together" which connects and gives "meaning to things" (p. 402). Tunufa'i adds:

> *Vā* simply means space between. As such it denotes distance. The length and width of that distance are contingent upon the strength and status of the relationship(s). However, *vā* as distance is not just an empty space or a meaningless vacuum but relational space (p. 70).

Mila-Schaaf (2006) offers a metaphoric description:

> If we imagine you and I are positioned on a map, *vā* is used to describe the nature of the terrain that lies between us. It is the 'imagined' space that we 'feel' as opposed to 'see'. (p. 10)

Tausi le vā, therefore, refers to the ways in which people make efforts to nurture the space that connects them to other people, to nature, and to God and other entities in the spirit realm. That 'space' is not empty; it is theoretical, philosophical and spiritual; it is alive, ubiquitous, and fluid. In that regard, Tuagalu (2008) asserts that "the *va* is space that provides context and meaning to things. These meanings change as the context/relationships change" (p. 110) which essentially lends to the idea that the concept of *le vā* is descriptive of a worldview. It is a "special ordering concept" that connects all things, and "administers a code of good (ideal) behaviour, an invisible language that enables space and things to be configured in a positive manner" (Refiti, 2002, p. 209). That 'invisible language' is embedded into the body of customs and traditions of the *fa'asāmoa*, often manifesting as a guiding ethic, or "moral imperative" (Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009, p. 21).

Extracting further from Lilomaiava-Doktor, *tausi le vā* instructs proper conduct and behavior (p. 21), including practical matters such as "food division and distribution, sleeping and sitting arrangements, and language usage in private and public spaces

are all conceived through *vā"* (p. 14). The moral imperative also shapes the way people relate to one another in accordance with their *nu'u*, *'āīga*, age, cultural status, gender and also includes the knowledge people possess (M. Meleisea, 1987; Refiti, 2002), and even whether they can get a *tatau* (Maliko, 2012; Tavale, 1999; Va'a, 2006). Furthermore, if a relationship should break down, the ethic to *tausi le vā* guides the requisite action that can repair the breakdown and restore the relationship. To explicate this aspect of *tausi le vā*, the network of relationships that individuals are connected to – described earlier in this chapter – signifies that the consequences of a breakdown in relationship between people is seldom borne alone; the offender and the aggrieved belong to wider networks of relationships who will also be affected by the breakdown. Customary reconciliatory action guided by the ethic to *tausi le vā*, therefore, reflects the need to placate the network of relationships and restore "social honour" (Macpherson and Macpherson, 2005, p. 109). Macpherson and Macpherson explain that "Samoan society has a comprehensive set of procedures aimed at managing routine inter-group tensions", adding that disputes "are typically resolved in mediations between representatives of various sides . . . and directed by the *matai*" (p. 110). Ameliorative actions are set out to *teu le vā*, which means to restore or 'put back to order' the relationship, and might include customs and traditions such as a *fa'asalaga*[12], *fa'aleleiga*[13], or *talanoaga*[14], among a host of other reconciliatory customs, and for the more serious offences, *'ifoga*[15] and *fa'ate'a*[16]. To *teu le vā* therefore, is to ensure the maintenance of relationships between people, and connections to the network of relationships. Drawing from Refiti's earlier quote, these reconciliatory ceremonies, customs and traditions are replete with cultural protocol and etiquette intended to restore the harmony of the relationships at every level – that is, familial, communal, spiritual, and personal – and mend the ties that connect. In that way, the 'special ordering' of the relationships are 'reconfigured' in a positive manner.

The notion of *tausi le vā* is often used with similar phrases: *teu le vā* ('correct' or 'put in order' *le vā*) and *iloa le vā* ('to know' and honour *le vā*) (Tunufa'i, 2013; Toso, 2011;

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[12] *Fa'asalaga* – Retributive punishment, for example, a monetary or food fine.

[13] *Fa'aleleiga* – Restorative punishment, for example, a formal meeting to discuss reconciliation.

[14] *Talanoaga* – Discussion.

[15] *'Ifoga* – The reconciliatory ceremony of ritual submission of the offending party to the aggrieved party to seek forgiveness and restore the social honour of all concerned (Macpherson & Macpherson, 2005).

[16] *Fa'ate'a* – Banishment, ostracisation; exile.

Tuafuti, 2011; Wendt, 1999). Tuagalu notes 37 such spatial relationships, of which *vā fealoa'i* (protocols of meeting), *vā fetausia'i* (mutuality and reciprocity), *vā fealofani* (camaraderie and unity), and *vā tapuia* (sacredness and reverence) are the most commonly referred to in the literature (Anae, 2007, 2010; Le Tagaloa, 2003; Lilomaiava-Doktor, 2009; Mila-Schaaf, 2006; Refiti, 2002; Toso, 2011; Tuafuti, 2011; Tuagalu, 2008; Tui Atua, 2005b; Tunufa'i, 2013; Wendt, 1999). Each of these phrases is a specific instruction mandating appropriate and corrective conduct to protect and nurture the 'space that connects'.

The reference of *tausi le vā* for this research pertains to the overarching ethic of nurturing the relationships that connect. After all, "the experience of the Sāmoan self" is "really the experience of social relations" (Maliko, 2012, p. 40). Hence, the notion of 'the Sāmoan identity' is not a statement about the individual, but a statement about the individual in relation to the family and community, or their *place* in the family. That 'placement' is an ongoing relationship that can move a person from being a part of the body of untitled members of the *'āīga*, to becoming a part of the body of leaders of the *'āīga* as well as other expressions of positionality in the *'āīga*. The body of customs, traditions and protocols of the *fa'asāmoa* therefore is a reflection of the actions that *tausi le vā;* they are a framework that informs conduct, and more importantly, a framework to facilitate remembrance. That is, the body of customs and traditions that is the *fa'asāmoa*, is in effect, the Sāmoan identity. Therefore, enacting these customs and traditions not only *tausi le vā*, but the enactment of the customs and traditions reproduces the embedded ancient knowledge and invokes remembrance. In this light, the *fa'asāmoa* is an epistemological site, and function as performativity, which are cultural enactments for the purpose of identity-laden narratives and statements. In this respect, performative enactments of Sāmoan customs and traditions recognise, dignify and nurture the diverse connections to the cosmos, the environment, and to others. Thus, *tausi le vā* is evidenced in the Sāmoan belief system, the *fa'asāmoa*, through the "articulated cultural practices" (Tuagalu, 2008, p. 108) and can serve as insights to Sāmoan knowledge.

Sāmoan epistemology

Discussed in the previous chapter, the notion of 'epistemology' is about the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. The oral traditions are the 'library' from which

Sāmoan knowledge can be gleaned, or as Vakauta (2013) states, epistemological sites apposite for research enquiries.

Thus, knowledge of customs, traditions, protocols and rituals are in fact 'knowledges': historical knowledge, cultural knowledge, spiritual knowledge, genealogical knowledge, environmental knowledge and every other knowledge. This body of knowledge is contained within the body of oral traditions where narratives of genealogy and history are intertwined, stored and revealed through metaphors, proverbs, dance, song and other oral traditions, customs and rituals, as well as material goods[17] (Buck, 1930, Kramer, 1995; Liua'ana, 2001; Tavale, 1999; Tui Atua, 2005a, 2009; Tuimaleali'ifano, 2006). Embedded within the body of knowledge and oral traditions, are knowledge-keeping customs for protecting and maintaining the knowledge, and knowledge-seeking customs for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge; traditional knowledge was highly valued and specific, and traditionally remained within *'āīga* and *nu'u* (Liua'ana, 2001; M. Meleisea, 1987; Tui Atua, 2005a; Tavale, 1999; Wendt, 1987). It is for this reason that knowledge is considered sacred, and was never held to be universally available (Tui Atua, 2005a; Tavale, 1999; M. Meleisea, 1987; Wendt, 1987); customs and traditions relating to knowledge-seekers often required that they undergo a process declaring them *tapu*, and therefore restricted from everyday activities. Many of these customs are not recorded in the literature but often seen. As a teenager, I recall a group of five men in the church I grew up in getting their *tatau* together, and being declared *tapu*[18]; not only were there restrictions on the general public for visiting them but the five were also forbidden to do many things around the premises and relieved of their roles in the church during that period. I also recall the *tapu* placed on those studying to gain entry to the theological colleges where they were restricted from doing mundane activities, and their community – the church and their *'āīga* – worked together to accommodate their status as a knowledge-seeker of specific knowledges.

'Āīga

The *'āīga* is "the basic unit of the social organisation" (Gough, 2006, p. 37). It is analogous to the Western concept of the 'extended family'. But whereas 'extended' family delineates the 'nuclear' family from the 'extended' family, that is, cousins, uncles and aunts, there is no degree of separation in the *fa'asāmoa*: cousins are brothers and

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[17] For example, *fale* (housing), *tānoa* (*'ava* bowl), *va'a* (voyaging and fishing canoes), *tatau* instruments, *'ietoga* (fine mats).

[18] *Tapu* – Taboo

sisters, aunts and uncles are mothers and fathers. Thus, the *'āīga* can be well over 200 members strong (ibid).

> 'Aiga encapsulates ... identity, facilitates a wide range of overt functions, such as raising money, providing houses and employment, coping with the crises of life, and it gives its members the security of living and a traditional, secure, well-loved group. (ibid, p. 37)

As a reference to the extended family, this extension is not only to the living, but also the historical, or genealogical family, referred to as *gafa*. The significance of the notion of *'āīga* and *gafa* is evident in the Sāmoan language where, as Maliko (2012) asserts, "language not only describes, but also constructs and maintains the social structure that it describes", evident "through the construction of *fa'alupega*, which is the ceremonial address or set of honorific terms or salutations specific to each *matai* title, family, village or district" (p. 135). In this way, through the institution of *gafa* and *fa'alupega*, individuals are not only located in the present, but also in the past, as well as to land, sea and even the spirit realm. Furthermore, this demonstrates the fact that the *'āīga* is the source of all learning, as noted earlier – learning not only of your place in the *'āīga*, but in relationship to the community, to society at large, and in how knowledge is pursued and kept.

The *'āīga* operationalises the *fa'asāmoa*: the *'āīga* monitors, enforces and maintains the *fa'asāmoa* (Ledoux-Taua'aletoa, 2013; Tui Atua, 2011; Gough, 2006; Schuster, 2001; Va'a, 2001). Accordingly, the *'āīga* is a "transnational corporation of kin" (Gough, 2006, p. 35), and more so in the migrant communities abroad, the *'āīga* is relied upon for cultural continuities (Va'a, 2001), which means that they provide the teaching of the language, customs and traditions for the continuation and perpetuation of the *fa'asāmoa* in the new country. Moreover, in the new diasporic setting, the strength of the *'āīga* can determine the survival of the *fa'asāmoa* abroad. More specifically, as Va'a found, 'reciprocity' and 'respect' are the two most critical values of the *fa'asāmoa*; as long as the new diasporic generations operated out of those two values, it was enough to mitigate the absence of many other values and priorities that characterise the *fa'asāmoa*. Thus, the *'āīga* is able to provide support, and reinforce cultural strengths, which can moderate many of the adversities, struggles and inequalities that they may encounter. The point I want to highlight is that the *fa'asāmoa*, not only as a body of customs and traditions, but more so as a record of Sāmoan knowledge, is maintained by the institution of the *'āīga*.

> The teaching of traditional Samoan dance was by way of rote learning.

> The full significance of meaning associated with dance forms, styles, movements, etc., was rarely known to the performer. This knowledge was only available to family knowledge custodians. Transferring that knowledge to a wider audience, including those responsible for performing the ritual, chant or dance, was deemed unnecessary in traditional times. The social structure of Samoa at the time negated the need for such knowledge transfers. In fact, to do so would have seriously undermined the role and status of these custodians. (Tui Atua, 2005a, p. 63)

Knowledges, particularly knowledges regarding certain skills and crafts – for example, "boat-building, tattooing" and "the fabrication of building and space" as noted by Refiti (2002) – are kept in familial lines. It is for this reason that M. Meleisea (1987) asserts that knowledge is not freely available nor is it easily accessible, and Tui Atua (2005a) adds that these familial-based knowledges are *tapu*, and therefore the duty of the 'custodians' to ensure the safe-guarding of those knowledges. However, with the influence of the missionaries, and with colonisation and capitalism, and in more recent times of globalisation and modernisation, not only has Sāmoa's cultural and political structure changed – in that they have become more Westernised – but much of Sāmoa's traditional knowledges had been demonised and erased (see Gunson, 1993; Liua'ana, 2001; Salesa, 2004; Tangwa, 1999; Thong, 2012; J. Williams, 1984), or, as many are now finding out, became hidden. The changing of the cultural and political structures means that the custodians of knowledge have shifted away from a familial and communal tradition to a national and structural tradition via the prevailing Western education system in Sāmoa. Ultimately, this means that the knowledge considered of worth, shifted away from traditional and cultural knowledges to Western knowledges, resulting in the redundancy and obscurity of traditional knowledges. Accordingly, as Tui Atua (2005a) insists, "the need to lift the *tapu* over certain knowledges emerges as our indigenous knowledges and histories become lost with the passing away of traditional custodians" (p. 63), or as I will refer to them in this thesis, 'knowledge-keepers'.

Knowledge-keepers

There is a leadership structure that governs the *'āīga. Matai* are generally known as the leaders of the *'āīga*, the 'chiefs'. There are two common types of *matai*: *ali'i*[19] and *tulāfale*[20]. Anae, Tominiko, Fetui & Lima (2017), Maliko (2012), Tcherkézoff (2000),

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[19] *'Ali'i* = High chief; chief decision-maker

[20] *Tulāfale* – Orator; oratory chief (for the *ali'i*)

Tuimaleali'ifano (2006), and Tunufa'i (2013) have much to say about the *matai* structure and system, and indeed, there is much to say, but authorities and classes of *matai* – for example, *pule*[21], *tumua*[22], *sa'o*[23], and other types – are beyond the scope of this thesis, and the reader can gain a great deal more from those listed authorities above. Their exposition of the *matai* system, however, is relevant for this excursus on Sāmoan leadership structures.

In formal Sāmoan forums, the *ali'i* does not speak; they instruct the *tulāfale* on what message to convey on their behalf. The *tulāfale* will then invoke all manner of oratory devices to deliver the message; these oratory devices include *alagā'upu*[24], *talatu'u*[25], *fāgogo*[26], and other performative enactments to facilitate eloquence. The language of the *tulāfale* is also known as the 'dignified language', or the 'language of respect' and is considered by many Sāmoans as Sāmoa's 'other' language (Duranti, 1992; Hunkin, 2009; Ochs, 1988). This knowledge is of even greater value in mediatory and reconciliatory deliberations. Performing oratory duties with competence requires significant knowledge – genealogical, historical, cultural, spiritual and functional (Odden, 2007, 2012; Peteru, 2012; Tavale, 1999; Tui Atua, 2005a; Va'a, 2001). Moreover, Tcherkézoff (2000) suggests that an ancient, pre-contact meaning of *matai* is not 'chief' as in 'leader', but 'chief' as in 'chief knowledge-keeper', or 'expert'. As such, as Odden (2007) asserted, that "a central attribute of the prototypical matai is wisdom, knowledge of the matai system and village, and cultural competence" (p. 75). Additional to being the custodians of traditional knowledge, *matai* are also the custodians of the customs surrounding the safeguarding of those knowledges, and this includes the expectations upon knowledge-seekers in pursuit of sacred and difficult-to-find knowledge. To this, Odden adds:

> Matai ought to be skillful with regard to oratory, knowledgeable of genealogical relationships both of the descent group and related groups, the management of ritual occasions and ceremonial exchange, and well-

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[21] *Pule* – Reference to specific *matai* titles from Savai'i.

[22] *Tumua* – Reference to specific *matai* titles from Upolu

[23] *Sa'o* – Paramount chief

[24] *Alagā'upu* – Proverbial expressions

[25] *Talatu'u* – Folklore; stories of people of note; literally means 'stories left behind'.

[26] *Fāgogo* – Stories of fiction; made-up stories.

versed in the traditions and practices associated with the fono and its local manifestations. Such knowledge has very practical applications as they permit the bearer to properly pursue and defend the descent group's interests in land boundary disputes, violations of village social norms, and maintaining its honor and dignity in ritual events. Certainly, skill in leadership and the management of resources and persons is also an element of this category as well. Frequently, a lack of cultural competence can be the basis of a considerable critique of the viability of candidates with extensive overseas experience for work, education or both. While their resources and skills are seen as very attractive, there can be questions about their basic abilities to be able to perform as a matai in the context of the village and fono. Finally, as the representative of the 'aiga, the matai is expected to demonstrate considerable behavioral restraint and dignity in virtually all contexts in which their social status is invoked. (p. 75)

There are two other types of *matai* relevant to this discussion that are seldom mentioned in the literature but which many Sāmoans are aware of: the *tufuga* and the *tu'ua*. The *tufuga* are the artisans, or master craftsman who have specialised knowledge.

The . . . term '*tufuga*' is a reserved designation for a limited number of people who have mastered a particular skill or craft . . . It denotes specialty and achievement in the highest level within the Samoan occupational structure. (Tunufa'i, 2013, pp. 239-240)

Krämer (1995) lists 31 different *tufuga* crafts or skills, and Tunufa'i acknowledges that Krämer's list is more "general and inclusive" (p. 239); Krämer's list includes crafts and skills – for example, mat weaving – not traditionally rendered to a *tufuga* status, which usually refers to *Tufuga Fau Va'a* (Master Shipwright), *Tufuga Fau Fale* (Master Builder), *Tufuga Tā Tatau* (Master Tattooist) and *Tautai* (Master Navigator) (Refiti, 2002; Tavale, 1999; Tunufa'i, 2013). Of particular interest in this research is the *Tufuga Tā Tatau*. In every case of *tufuga* status, there is a lengthy apprenticeship-type training where the 'apprentice' learns to behold, and embody, the knowledge (Krämer, 1995; Simanu, 2002; Tavale, 1999; Tunufa'i, 2013).

The other type of *matai* is the *tu'ua*.

My father was the Tuua of Moataa. In Samoan culture, he was the elder matai of the village who was responsible for nurturing proper cultural

practices in the young, to prepare them for the village life and responsibilities of a matai . . . He was the guardian of village policies passed by the village fono and his job was to ensure that all villagers adhered to these policies (Fuatai & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998, p. 115)

The *tu'ua* is primarily responsible for etiquette and cultural protocol, and whose function is in an advisory capacity, and is primarily served in the *malaefono*[27] rather than the *tūpaepae*[28]. Their responsibility is to be constantly aware of the customary and cultural exchanges and correct any contrarieties to customary practice. Any discussions about a customary practice, particularly one that needs to be updated to a more contemporary expression, is usually done through the lead of the *tu'ua*.

Additional to the *matai* roles mentioned, there are two bodies of knowledge that can serve as a part of the system of accountability for *matai*. The function of these bodies of knowledge is less overt, but their purpose is recognised in village affairs and leadership. One of the bodies of knowledge is *faiā* and the other is the elderly. *Faiā* is the body of knowledge of the relationships between people; in effect, it is the knowledge of genealogies and lineages of *'āīga* in the *nu'u*. In many cases, a *matai*, or more specifically, the *tu'ua,* may commit to memory this body of knowledge as their chiefly duty, but often, it is a role undertaken by the wife of a *matai*, the *tausi*[29] and *faletua*[30]. This is usually because the knowledge is so extensive that to retain such knowledge, as well as the historical, cultural, and other knowledges required for oratorical tasks is too voluminous for one person to carry. If a *matai's* chiefly entitlement, or *tulāfale's* right to speak, is challenged, it is often challenged from the genealogical angle. To that end, *matai* often confer with the knowledge-keeper of *faiā* before any cultural exchange or undertaking. Among those who know the value of this knowledge, *faiā* can be considered more important than any of the orator's speech-making devices.

Finally, the elderly, even those who are not *matai,* have a special place in the structure of the *'āīga* and *nu'u*. Their value is in the knowledge accumulated over their many years of service and many years of life. Accordingly, the elderly have the unspoken

[27] *Malaefono* – The place where the village council of *matai* meet.

[28] *Tūpaepae* – A reference to the place, or forum, where the cultural oratory exchange between parties takes place.

[29] *Tausi* – The title given to the wife of a *tulāfale*.

[30] *Faletua* – The title given to the wife of an *ali'i*.

authority to call to attention any matter deemed appropriate for correction. I have heard the story of a *nu'u* where a *fono*[31] was in session discussing land and *matai* title entitlements, and an elderly woman from the village walked into the *malaefono* and halted the proceedings – the elderly woman was the last of her generation in that village. She proceeded to reprimand the council of chiefs for their neglect of a certain historical protocol, and upon receiving her censure, they invited her to correct their proceeding and retell the history of the division of land and entitlements of each *'āīga*. The *fono* acknowledged her recollection and appropriately administered the re-acquired knowledge.

The key point to be extricated from this discourse on Sāmoan leadership is the embedded customs of knowledge-keeping, the due care exercised to ensure security and maintenance of knowledge, and therefore, the due diligence required of any knowledge-seeker wanting to acquire knowledge. That is, even the known structures of leadership, the *matai*, have a system of accountability and correction. A knowledge-seeker, therefore, must traverse this system and before any exchange of knowledge takes place, show themselves worthy, and trustworthy to possess and embody knowledge that is sacred, mystical, rare and hidden. This is usually evidenced in a *tautua*, or 'rendered service', also equated with a type of 'apprenticeship' (Tavale, 1999; Tui Atua, 2005a, 2009; Tuisuga-le-taua, 2009; Tunufa'i, 2013).

Knowledge-seekers

Tui Atua (2009) states that the notion of *tōfā sā'ili*[32] is "a Samoan concept denoting humans reaching out for wisdom, knowledge, prudence, insight and judgement" (p. 121) alluding to the task of knowledge-seekers, which is to learn "to understand the human condition, our strengths and our weaknesses", and to do it "within the ethical imperatives of humility and love" (p. 121). The notion of *tausi le vā* and *tautua*, noted earlier, relates to this explanation from Tui Atua. Further to that, the task of knowledge-seeking has customs and traditions.

One of the first criteria for access to knowledge is ancestry, often connected to *matai* titles. *Matai* entitlement is ancestry-bound (Tui Atua, 2005a, 2009; Va'a, 2001; Tavale, 1999). This means that entitlement to particular *matai* titles is through *gafa*, passed down from generation to generation. This also means that access to particular

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[31] *Fono* – meeting; caucus

[32] *Tōfā sā'ili* – The search for knowledge and wisdom; the mission of looking for knowledge.

knowledges is also ancestry-bound, passed down from generation to generation. Another criterion of access to knowledge, as noted earlier, is *tautua* where aspiring *matai* traditionally undergo an apprenticeship-type training to learn their craft (Liua'ana, 2001; Tui Atua, 2005; Tavale, 1999). In 2009, a *Tufuga Tā Tatau*, Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a Sulu'ape, took up one of the Pacific Heritage Artist in Residence programmes hosted by the University of Auckland. While putting on a demonstration for the general public to spectate, he proffered an explanation for the origin of the word *tatau*. Sulu'ape explained that in pre-contact Sāmoa, the elders and those in leadership would often observe the villagers in action, performing their duties, rendering their *tautua*. If a villager showed propensity for leadership and continued responsible service to their *'āīga*, the elders would say *ua tatau*, which means 'it is time', or 'they are ready'. Ultimately, this meant that the elders would approach the villager and upon indicating a promotion to leadership – usually an upcoming *matai* title – would also suggest that the villager had 'earned' the *tatau*. With the recognition of effort, and the elevation of status, the elders and those in leadership would then make a more concerted and deliberate effort to 'train up' the villager for the duties that lay ahead. In effect, this reveals the way knowledge-seekers acquire knowledge: a *tautua*, which means a service rendered, or performative enactments, to the *'āīga* and *nu'u*, and in that regard, *tautua* and *tatau* become metonymous.

I noted in Chapter Two the proverbial expression *tā muamua le gutu*, which translates as 'first, *tatau* your mouth'. This is a common reference from many Sāmoans to any who seek to get the *tatau*. It is used as a reminder, a challenge and an entreaty that there are expectations and responsibilities that they must embody as one who wants to bare the sacred marks of the *tatau*. However, Tavale (1999) explains that, in ancient times, the converse also applied. That is, there was an acceptance that a person could get their *tatau* done first, before they were able to articulate or embody the knowledge requisite of a *soga'imiti*. Tavale explains that originally, certain *ali'i* could only be served by a *soga'imiti* – the general custom is that either the *'āīga* perform this duty, or the *tulāfale*, but for some *ali'i*, only the *soga'imiti* was allowed to be in his proximity. Thus, the *soga'imiti*, while rendering his service, was able to sit with the *ali'i* and learn. In this regard, the *soga'imiti* gained access to knowledge by getting his *pe'a* first. Furthermore, in this way, the fortitude of the *soga'imiti* was tested by undergoing the rite of passage, and then knowledge would be available to him as a result of 'passing the test', evidenced by his *pe'a*. Moreover, in either case, there is a pre-requisite for any who seeks knowledge, that they undergo a *tautua*, or a test of will and motivation, before they are allowed access to sacred and rare knowledge.

The tradition of the *tatau*

The modern-day practice of tattoo has its roots in the ancient Sāmoan[33] practice of *tatau* (Gilbert, 2000; Mallon et al., 2010). The word 'tattoo' entered the English vocabulary in the 18th century after Captain Cook's encounters in the Pacific and is said to be a mispronounciation of *'tatau'* (Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; Mallon et al., 2010; Sims, 2011). For the sake of this research, I will make a distinction between Sāmoan tattooing, *tatau*, and Western tattooing, tattoo, to distinguish between the two traditions.

> Polynesian tattooing, as it existed before the arrival of Europeans in the South Pacific, was the most intricate and skilful tattooing in the ancient world. It had evolved over thousands of years throughout the islands of the Pacific and, in its most highly developed forms, was characterized by elaborate geometrical designs which were often added to, renewed, and embellished throughout the life of the individual until they covered the entire body. In beauty and complexity, ancient Polynesian tattooing rivals the best work of modern masters of the art. (Gilbert, 2000, p. 7)

As noted earlier, the male *tatau* is called the *pe'a*; the female *tatau* is called the *malu* (refer Figure 1.1 in Chapter One). The *pe'a* covers a third of the male's body, from the knees to mid-torso; the *malu* covers the female body from the knees to the upper thigh. The *tatau* is the traditional practice of etching ink into the skin, and uses a technique not practiced nor seen anywhere else in the world. The motifs that are etched are iconographic in nature, and carry symbolic meaning (Belford-Lelaulu, 2015; Galliot, 2015; Mallon et al., 2010; Va'a, 2006; Wendt, 1999). To do this, *lama*[34] and two types of 'tattooing sticks' (refer Figure 3.2, overleaf) are used: the *au* (the tattooing 'comb') and the *sausau* (the 'tapping stick'). The *tatau* technique requires the ink to be embedded past the epidermis (outer skin) layer and lodged into place at the depth of the dermis layer, below the outer skin surface. The lodgement of the ink requires the use of two 'tattooing sticks', the *sausau* and the *au*. The *au* is comprised of two parts: the handle, and the tattooing 'comb'. The comb part of the *au* is dipped into the ink by the *tufuga* and then held above the skin of the prospective *soga'imiti*. The *sausau* is then used to tap the handle of the *au* with enough force so that the comb of the *au*

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[33] Although Captain Cook referenced Tahitian *tatau*, all Pacific nations have stories of *tatau*, and many have noted its origins traced back to Sāmoa. (Ellis, 2006; Gell, 1993; Gilbert, 2000; Mallon et al., 2010)

[34] *Lama* – Ink; traditionally it was the soot of burnt candlenut mixed with water; contemporaneously, it is tattoo ink used in Western tattoo parlours.

punctures the skin of the prospective *soga'imiti* to embed the ink. This 'hand-tapping' technique is executed in quick succession, all the while, the *au* moves along the skin of the prospective *soga'imiti* to construct a motif. The hand-tapping continues until there is no more ink on the comb of the *au*. The *tufuga* will then pause the hand-tapping to dip the comb of the *au* in the ink, and then the tapping resumes. In effect, the *au* is piercing the skin a mere one to three millimetres. However, the perforation of the skin past the epidermis layers to get beneath the skin is what causes the pain. The ongoing perforation of the skin for the duration of the session – usually three to four hours long, and for some, up to eight hours – is what causes the 'searing' pain. The continued process over the ensuing days, usually for two to three weeks, is the challenge of pain endurance that all *pe'a* must undergo. Gilbert adds that Polynesian tattooing "was a natural part of their life and art; they had the time, the temperament, and the skill to pursue it and bring it to a high degree of perfection" (p. 2).

Figure 3.2
The *tatau* instruments

Note.
Retrieved from http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collections-research/collections/topics/the-art-of-samoa%E2%80%8Bn-tatau%E2%80%8B-tattoo

The practitioners of this centuries-old tradition are known as *tufuga* or as noted earlier, *Tufuga Tā Tatau,* from the *'Āīga a Tufuga,* or the 'Family of Master Tattooists'. In the origin story of the *tatau*, select families were gifted the *tatau* instruments. Thus, only those families are to practice the *tatau*, the gift being passed down from father to son through the centuries. There is contention regarding these lineages: the Su'a family and the Tulou'ena family are the two most widely recognised, with the Sulu'ape family, arguably the most 'popular' and thought to be another family, and some contending that the Pāūli family and the Lavea family are also part of the guild of *Tufuga Tā Tatau*.

There is also some debate about the origin of the *tatau*. There is what is considered 'popular knowledge' among Sāmoans, which is commonly referenced back to a Sāmoan song titled *Pese o le tatau*[35], translated as 'The *Tatau* Song'. This song posits that the legendary twins, Taemā and Tilafaigā, swam from Fiji singing a song that stated that women get the *tatau*, and not men. When the twins reached the western-most village of Sāmoa, Falealupo, they saw a giant clam and dived for it. When they surfaced, they had switched the words of their song, and were now singing that men get the *tatau* and not women. For many Sāmoans, this is the version of the story that they are familiar with.

Another version that is being (re)told, which contradicts key elements of the song, comes from the families of *Tufuga Tā Tatau*. Sulu'ape (2009) categorically stated that, contrary to popular belief, the *Pese o le Tatau* is not a historical or cultural song; it was written in the early 1900's for the entertainment of the German administration that governed Sāmoa at the time. Thus, Sulu'ape asserts, there are many inaccuracies in the song regarding the history of the *tatau*. Sulu'ape explains that the twins did not *swim* from Fiji, they *sailed*. The first pattern tattooed is the *va'a taumualua*[36] in recognition of the twins and their journey to Falealupo; if they had swum, there would be a swimming motif in place of the *va'a*. Sulu'ape adds that the twins did not come from Fiji; they came from Fitiuta, a village in Ta'ū, one of the islands that make up modern-day American Sāmoa. Notably, in Sāmoa's folklore, Fitiuta is considered a place of significant spiritual activity – many of Sāmoa's myths and legends, as well as people of legend, have origins there. Thus, the *tatau* did not come from Fiji, but from the spiritual realm, the realm of the twins. Additionally, Sulu'ape asserts, the twins did

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[35] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ml4aDhsvD64

[36] *Va'a taumualua* – The double-bowsprit sea vessel: *va'a* – sea vessel, *taumua* - bowsprit, *lua* – two; catamaran; a reference to either any type of double-bowsprit sea vessel – for example, *va'atele*, *'alia* – or specifically the *va'a taumualua* which has the peculiarity of both ends of the *va'a* having a *taumua*, and uses the shunting technique for sailing upwind (Lewis, 1972, 1978).

not arrive in Falealupo singing a song and did not dive for clams; Sulu'ape contends that those parts of the song have no historical or cultural validity among the *'Āīga a Tufuga*. Moreover, Sulu'ape states, stories of origin, connection and practice are a matter that should be left to the practitioners and keepers of the knowledge – the discourse on knowledge being *tapu* noted earlier is relevant here. He adds that those who wear the *tatau* know the story behind the *tatau*, and if people want to know the story, speak to those who have it, rather than quote a song that is not anchored historically, traditionally or culturally.

For the completion of the *tatau*, it is typically done over twelve sessions, each session lasting 2-3 hours; a session a day means that tattooing can be complete in 12 days. The sessions can be shorter or longer depending on the pain threshold and body size of the prospective *soga'imiti*. I have heard of some *tatau* being done in five days, and one I heard was completed in three days, with sessions being up to 12 hours long.

There is a perplexity about the *tatau* that requires explanation: the appearance of the *tatau* has remained constant since its origin (Caplan, 2000; Galliot, 2015; Gilbert, 2000; Mallon et al., 2010), yet, reportedly, each *tatau* is unique. How, then, can the *tatau* be the same, yet different? The answer lies in the difference between a motif, a pattern, and a section. Although no such distinctions have been proffered in the literature, I have cross-referenced Belford-Lelaulu (2015); Buck (1930), Galliot (2015), Gemori (2018) and Wendt (1999) – who display the most information pictorially and textually about the motifs, patterns, areas and parts of the *tatau* – with several informal discussions with many *soga'imiti* over the years, and personal discussions with the *Tufuga Tā Tatau* when I had my *tatau* done, and I have drawn some conclusions regarding the necessary distinction of terms that will be used in this thesis. A 'motif'[37] is an individual marking, a shape (refer to Figure 3.3, overleaf). A 'pattern' is a repetition, or series of motifs in an area of the body (refer to Figure 3.4, overleaf).

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[37] In Sāmoan, *mamanu*

Figure 3.3
Images of motifs.

Note.
Retrieved from http://hawaii.edu/calendar/manoa-libraries/2012/03/22/17768.html
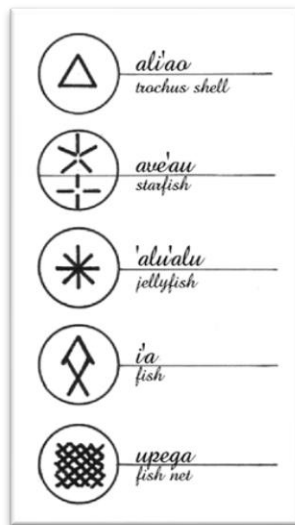
Figure 3.4
Images of patterns

Note.
Retrieved from https://society6.com/cdn/box_005/post_15/662542_6277587_b.jpg

A 'section[38] refers to an area of the *tatau* that comprises motifs and patterns, and also contains a narrative, or metaphoric reference to an aspect of Sāmoan life. Although I use the term 'section', Galliot uses the term 'zones' (refer Figure 3.5, below). Galliot's conversations with different *Tufuga Tā Tatau* led him "to identify 18 zones" (p. 117).

Figure 3.5
Galliot's **(2015)** *18 zones of the* tatau.
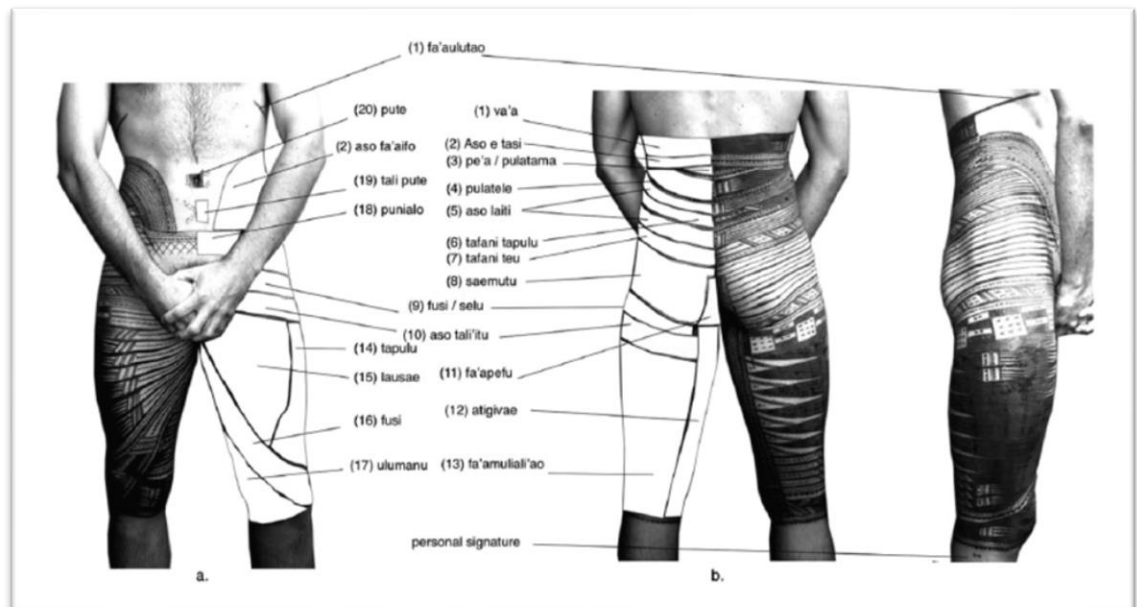
Note.
From Galliot (2015, p. 118)

I understand the 'zones', or 'divisions' differently from Galliot. I have identified ten sections that constitutes the *pe'a*; each section has its own narrative and refers to specific duties and responsibilities of the *soga'imiti*. Within each section are motifs and patterns that give more meaning to the *tatau*, most of which are personal to the *soga'imiti*. It is in this regard that the *pe'a*, structurally, remains constant – that is, every *pe'a* has the same ten sections – and within the structure, there are motifs and patterns that renders each *pe'a*, unique. In *Appendix 4: Tatau sessions*, there is a series of photos documenting each session I had undertaken for the completion of my *tatau*, and

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[38] In Sāmoan, *vāega*

a brief description of which section had been completed. These are the ten sections of the *pe'a* as I have summarised them and makes up the 'structure' of the *pe'a*.

1. *Va'a taumualua* – the double-bowsprit canoe[39] on the dorsum region of the *soga'imiti*; this references the twins, and the primacy of navigation, and journeying, always moving forward.
2. *Pulatama* – this includes the *pulatama*, *pulatele*, *tafani tapulu*, *tafani teu* and *pe'a lāitiiti* as described by Belford-Lelaulu (2015); Buck (1930), Galliot (2015), Gemori (2018), Va'a (2008) and Wendt (1999) – the set of lines below the *va'a*; this references *gafa*, or genealogy.
3. *Saemutu* – this includes the *saemutu*, *fa'apefu* and *'aso tali'itū* as described by Belford-Lelaulu (2015), Buck (1930), Galliot (2015), Gemori (2018) and Wendt (1999) – the sets of lines across the buttocks including the darkened patch on the buttocks; these reference the personal achievements of the *soga'imiti*.
4. *'Aso Fa'aifo* – the arced lines on the flank area (between hips and ribs); these are specific narratives about the duties of the *soga'imiti* in providing for their family.
5. *Tapulu* – this includes the *tapulu* and *lausae* as described by Belford-Lelaulu (2015); Buck (1930), Galliot (2015) and Wendt (1999) – the dark patch on the outside part of the thigh and the 'fan' shape pattern on the upper inner thigh; this references relationships with the land and the terrestrial realm.
6. *Ulumanu* – the triangular section on the inside thigh; this references relationships with the faunal realm, referring to their aid in navigation and onset of the seasons.
7. *Fa'amuli'ali'ao* – this includes the *fa'amuli'ali'ao* and *atigivae* as described by Belford-Lelaulu (2015); Buck (1930), Galliot (2015) and Gemori (2018) – the conical patterns on the hamstring and the tall rectangular pattern that covers the height of the hamstring; this references relationships with the sea and the elemental and natural realm.
8. *Fusi* – the 'strip' or 'band' that 'ties together' the *Ulumanu* and the *Tapulu* and includes the knees; this references the relationship with God and the spiritual realm, those that bridge, or tie together, the terrestrial realm (*Tapulu*), the faunal realm (*Ulumanu*) and the elemental realm (*Fa'amuli'ali'ao*).
9. *'Upega* – also described as *'umaga* by Belford-Lelaulu (2015) and Va'a (2008) – the netting pattern on the abdomen area; this references the procreation mandate – may the *soga'imiti* be prosperous in his 'fishing' (for partners).

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[39] The bowsprit, *taumua*, of the *va'a* motif/pattern/section, is often (mistakenly) labelled the *fa'aulutao* (spearhead).

10. *Pute* – this includes the *pute*, *tali pute* and *punialo* as described by Belford-Lelaulu (2015); Buck (1930), Galliot (2015), Gemori (2018) and Wendt (1999) – the belly-button; this commissions the *soga'imiti* to pass on all that has been learnt to the next generation.

In listening to the stories of people's *tatau*, the most noted feature of conversation is the searing pain of getting the *tatau*, their ability to cope, and to cope for the duration of the journey. While the literature acknowledges this, none go into this aspect of the *tatau*; this feature of the 'journey of the *tatau'* will be something that I will investigate in greater detail through this research. The men that do not complete the *pe'a*, are known as *pe'a mutu*[40]; those that do complete are known as *soga'imiti*. The ritual to mark completion, *sāmaga o le pe'a*[41], is performed to signal the end of the tattooing, and to present a new body and a new beginning for the new *soga'imiti* (Galliot, 2015; Mallon et al., 2010).

The point I want to highlight in this section is the value of the *tatau* as a 'library', a record of Sāmoan knowledge, and equally important, a demonstration of Sāmoan ontology and epistemology. This is a critical position because, as Gilbert (2000) stated, "we know little of the significance of tattooing as it was perceived by the Polynesians themselves; we know it only as it was seen through European eyes" (p. 2). It is necessary, therefore, that the *tatau* is made known through the 'eyes' of indigenous peoples. Of recent years Belford-Lelaulu (2015), Maliko, (2012), Mallon & Galliot (2018), and Va'a (2006) are among the few Sāmoans that have taken to writing about the *tatau.* It is this gap in the literature that this research contributes.

Summary

The *fa'asāmoa* proffers a unique view of the world of the Sāmoan. In this chapter, I have described two aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*. Firstly, I have described select aspects of customary practice, as well as provide a cultural and historical background, and knowledge, surrounding the customary practices relevant to the research – for

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[40] *Pe'a mutu* – An incomplete *tatau;* the person who has an incomplete *pe'a.*

[41] *Sāmaga o le pe'a* – The ceremony that acknowledges the completion of the *tatau*. Along with speeches and exchange of gifts, *sama*, also known as *lega*, (turmeric) is mixed with coconut oil, and massaged on the new *pe'a* and *malu*. Along with the cracking of the egg on the head of the *pe'a and malu*, all of these elements have specific meanings, and marks a new beginning.

example, the *'āīga*, the *matai* and the leadership structure, and the *tatau*. Secondly, and of equal importance, I described the ontological and epistemological frameworks that give rise to the methodological approach that I used for this research. For that purpose, I explained the ubiquity of Sāmoan spirituality, the ethic of *tausi le vā*, the value of Sāmoan epistemology, and how that is expressed in the oral traditions, and in particular, the tradition of the *tatau*. Moreover, considering that knowledge is not given over easily, but is tested over time, and through a performative *tautua*, it is necessary that an appropriate interpretive framework premised on knowledge-keeping and knowledge-seeking traditions be observed.

In the next chapter, a review of the literature on resilience and coping with adversity is given and this will be critiqued through the lens of the *fa'asāmoa* with the intention to syncretise an indigenous methodological approach for this research.

CHAPTER 4

COPING WITH ADVERSITY:

A review of the literature

Proverbial expression:
O le tautai matapalapala

Translation:
The *Tautai*[1] (navigator/fisherman) can see past the murk in the water (to see the fish).

Meaning:
Often, after a storm, the coastal waters can appear dirty as a result of the debris from inland. The fisherman must still gather food for the family and the village in spite of the dirty appearance of the waters. The competent fisherman is able to see past the surface dirt knowing that fish are still there, even more so given that the storm that has passed has washed land nutrients into the sea for the fish to feed on. Thus, this proverb is used to encourage a person to look past a wrong; it is also used to compliment a person for being able to see past the 'clutter' and focus on what is important.

Reference:
In this chapter, I reference this proverbial expression to signal the need to see past the clutter of discourses and find the discourses that position my research enquiry.

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[1] *Tautai* – In ancient Sāmoan references, the *Tautai* is a Master Navigator. More recent references refer to the *Tautai* as a skilled fisherman, one who knows how to read the winds, waves, stars and seasons, particularly relating to the seasonality of fish migration habits.

Introduction

This chapter will review the literature on psychological resilience initially because the literature on coping with adversity comes from resilience research. Additionally, there will also be a review of the literature pertaining specifically to coping with adversity. In the final section of this chapter, the literature relevant to a cultural approach to coping with adversity will be reviewed, resulting in the gap in the hermeneutical resource to which this research will contribute.

A significant body of research inextricably links coping with adversity with the concepts of psychological resilience, hardiness, resistance to risk experiences, stress management, positive adaptation and its sequelae (for example, depression, mental illness, suicide, physical illness) among other concepts (Ballenger-Browning & Johnson, 2010; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Ong, Bergeman, Bisconti & Wallace, 2006; Rutter, 2007; Ungar, 2004, 2013). In a simple definition, resilience is "the phenomenon of overcoming stress or adversity" (Rutter, 1999, p. 119); resilience is readily defined as overcoming stress and adversity, and the body of research on coping with adversity is synonymous with resilience research (Garmezy, 1991; Miller, 2003; Richman & Fraser, 2001; Rutter, 1985, 1987, 2007; Ungar, 2004, 2013). Despite the simplicity of the interconnection between resilience, coping with adversity, and stress management, the literature is also quite specific about other aspects and elements of the construct of resilience as will be discussed throughout this chapter. With these two sections of this chapter, the literature advocating for a cultural approach will be used to offer a critique and highlight the gap in the existing body of resilience and coping research. By 'cultural approach', I am referring to the expressions of being 'indigenous' which can be seen in the body of customs and traditions that characterise an ethnic or cultural group and the ways in which that group approach research or searching for knowledge. The final section of this chapter will then foreground the cultural approach and the necessary methodological issues that must be traversed, culminating in a rationale that reinforces a departure from the positivist paradigm that prevails in resilience and adversity research, in favour of a constructionist paradigm which this research adopted accordingly.

Conceptualising resilience

Hollnagel, Woods & Leveson (2006) and McAslan (2010) explain that the first use of the term *resilience* in the literature was in Tredgold (1818) as a description of a characteristic of timber that could withstand "sudden and severe loads without breaking" (McAslan, 2010, p. 2). Forty years after this introduction of the notion of resilience, Mallet (1856, 1862) used the concept as a calculable consideration for the necessary strength and support of the wood and iron frames of warships to accommodate the weight and impact of iron-clad cannons, particularly when the cannons were fired and the sudden impact the force would inflict on the wooden parts of the frames, possibly compromising the integrity of the frame of the warship and its performance in battle. The calculation Mallet derived – the "*modulus of resilience* [emphasis in original]" (McAslan, p.2) – was the measurement of a structure's ability to manage stress, or handle pressure; this measurement became standard practice for civil engineers of the time (Merriman, 1885) and continued to be used for the design of bridges and multi-level buildings (Holling, 1973; McAslan, 2010).

Waves of research

Over a century later, Holling (1973) rendered the concept of resilience to ecological systems and their capacity to withstand severe conditions and continue to function afterwards.

> There is agreement in the literature that Crawford (Buzz) Holling first introduced the concept of resilience to ecology and the environment. He promoted the use of systems theory and modelling, and is credited with the introduction of ecological economics, the adaptive cycle, panarchy (understanding transformations in human and natural systems) and resilience to ecology and evolution. (McAslan, p. 2)

Holling's (1973, 1996) research became the foundation upon which current research on psychological resilience is predicated (McAslan, 2010; Adger, 2000; Hollnagel et. al, 2006). In the decade that followed, child psychiatry and developmental psychology applied this concept of 'resilience' to the human experience in trying to understand the negative aspects of adversity (Dahlberg, 2015; Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010; Hollnagel et. al, 2006; Luthar, 2003). The transference of the concept of resilience to the human experience initiated a wave of research in this area, of which some have come to categorise as three distinct waves (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Clauss-Ehlers, 2008;

Kaplan, 2002, 2013; Luthar et al., 2000; McAslan, 2010; Prince-Embury, 2014; Ungar, 2013). Rutter (1985) noted that during the 1970's, research focused on "invulnerable children" (p. 599): a search to identify the qualities that made a child "constitutionally tough that they could not give way under the pressure of stress and adversity" (ibid, p. 599). Cognitive science and developmental psychology, with its positivist outlook, became the dominant approach to research, not just in general, but particularly in measuring and quantifying resilience, and its utility as a psychological construct (Adger, 2000; Gunderson, 2010; Ungar, 2004). The focus on invulnerable children and resilient individuals was the first wave in resilience research (Kaplan, 2002, 2005, 2013; Luthar et al., 2000; Prince-Embury, 2014).

The second wave focused on understanding the process through which individuals were able to successfully adapt or bounce back from the stress of difficult life circumstances and adversity. Agaibi & Wilson (2005) explain: "with the advent of PTSD as a diagnostic entity in 1980, the study of resilience began to move away from traditional social-psychological and developmental studies to more in-depth studies of trauma survivors" (p. 203). Consequently, research on 'resilience' included a vast range of experiences, from poverty, poor housing, social class, nutrition access and other demographic indices, to childhood development, mental health, death and other personal adversities to displaced refugees, torture victims, war survivors and other traumatology experiences to racism, sexism, marginalisation, colonisation, cultural displacement, and other practices of exclusivity (Luthar et. al, 2000; McAslan, 2010; Wexler, Gubrium & Griffin 2013). To further enhance the positivist approach to research on 'resilience', a range of resiliency measurement scales were also developed in an attempt to quantify stress and resilience (see Benishek, Feldman, Shipon, Mecham & Lopez, 2005; Bernstein et al, 2003; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Derogatis, 2001; Endler & Parker, 1999; Kobasa, Maddi & Kahn, 1982; Pollock & Duffy, 1990)

In addition to shifting away from looking at the qualities of invulnerable children and moving towards the human experience of adversity, the notion of 'bouncing back' from adversity and hardship gave utility to the notion of 'resilience' to newer applications: in disaster management, business capacity, and organisational structure, among other areas. To this, Kaplan (2005) pointed out that "the literature finds the concept applied to a bewildering array of categories of individuals and systems" (p. 39).

> In less than a decade the term *resilience* has evolved from the disciplines
> of materials science and environmental studies to become a concept used

> liberally and enthusiastically by policy makers, practitioners and academics. The UK Government has rewritten its civil contingencies law, doctrine and plans around the concept of resilience. Universities have established resilience centres, institutes, research programmes and offer resilience degrees. Business schools have embraced the concept to explain why and how organisations must adapt their strategies to meet the requirements of an ever-changing competitive business environment. (McAslan, 2010, p. 1)

The third wave of resilience research was in response to the felt limitations of the positivist approach – that is, that 'resilience' research was perhaps focused too much on the *individual's* capacity to cope with stress and adversity – and brought about a focus on a cultural or social approach (Clauss-Ehlers, 2008; Clauss-Ehlers, Yang & Chen, 2006; Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Ungar, 2013). Louw's (1999) summary of this shift, noted in Chapter Two, is pertinent here: for a broader understanding of 'resilience' and 'coping', research (and a suitable methodological approach) needs to embrace "an epistemology of ecologic, rather than mechanistic, thinking", that also "embraces complexity" that aims to understand the phenomenon, rather than reductionistic explanations. Such an approach to research would be significant in informing therapeutic practice. This will be discussed in greater detail in the latter sections of this chapter.

The resilience construct

This shift towards the cultural explorations of 'resilience' arose from the perceived ontological, epistemological and methodological limitations of the positivist approach (Dahlberg, 2015; Gunderson, 2000; Ungar, 2004; Windle, Bennett & Noyes, 2011). This can be evidenced from the multitude of resiliency measurement scales of the second wave. Ahern, Kiehl, Sole and Byers (2006), assessing eight of the 'resilience' measurement scales, found that not only did the measurement scales confirm and contradict various aspects of each other's conception of 'resilience', but there was no consensus as to what the *process* of 'resilience' was. Similarly, Windle et al. (2011) evaluated 15 'resiliency' measurement scales and likewise found no consistency of definition, understanding or approach towards 'resilience'. Notwithstanding this, each 'resilience' measurement scale had its strengths and weaknesses; what it indeed measured, as well as what it missed or failed to account for. Thus, Windle et al. concluded that there was no "gold standard" among them (p. 17); there was none that proved to be 'the best' or 'most accurate' measure of 'resilience'. Moreover, chief among the contestations with the 'resilience' measurement scales is that even among

users of these scales, there were different and contending understandings and uses (Ahern et. al, 2006; Prince-Embury, 2013; Windle et al. 2011). To this point, Agaibi & Wilson (2005) concluded that "the task of predicting resiliency is further complicated because there was no universally defined concept of what constituted resilient behaviour" (p. 211). Of the many reviews of resilience research (for example, Ballenger-Browning, 2010; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Glantz & Sloboda, 2002; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990; Van Breda, 2018), the most common and definitive statement about the state of resilience research is best summed up by Prince-Embury (2013) thus:

> Over the past 50+ years, definitions of resiliency have been numerous and research has operated at different levels of analysis, each with its own language and caveats. This complexity has made standardized use and application of the construct more difficult. (p. 9)

Prince-Embury's summation was that there is too much "definitional diversity, research complexity and evolution of the resilience construct" (p. 12) further complicated "because there is no universally defined concept of what constitutes resilient behaviour" (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005, p. 211). Additionally, the literature on resilience revealed that it is synonymous with a miscellany of associated concepts as noted earlier. Moreover, Berkes (2007) noted that the literature on 'resilience' lists 28 different definitions, and Tierney (2014) noted 46 varying definitions. There is so much research, and so many elements to understanding what 'resilience' is, it is difficult to ascertain whether all of the research on resilience are actually dealing with the same phenomenon.

Among these contentions in the literature is how 'resilience' was constructed. Is it a *theory* that explains how and why people who experience adversity *do not* react adversely? Is it a *set of behaviours* that is evident in people who do not fall apart under the weight of adverse life events? Or is it descriptive of a *process* that people experience as they respond constructively to tragedy and trauma? Moreover, Luthar et al. (2000) raised the question: is 'resilience' a personal trait or dynamic process? Others question the construction of 'resilience' as a complex phenomenon that is then deconstructed to single metric observations and calculations premised on value-laden psychometric and scientific frameworks of particularisation and validation (Agrawal, 2002; Embretson, 2010; Lafrance, Bodor & Bastien, 2008; McCubbin et al, 1998; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988). And others still questioned the value of 'resilience' as a

construct, and whether it is even a matter worth researching (see Adelson, 1986; Kaplan, 2002, 2005; Lemay, 2004; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988).

> The theoretical and research literature on resilience reflects little consensus about definitions, with substantial variations in operationalization and measurement of key constructs …. This diversity in measurement has led some scholars to question whether resilience researchers are dealing with the same entity or with fundamentally different phenomena. (Luthar et al., 2000, pp. 544-545)

Noting the conclusion reached by Prince-Embury and Saklofske (2013) and Connor and Zhang (2006), among a host of others, there appears to be no 'one', 'right' or 'best' way to undertake research on 'resilience'.

Overcoming challenges

Despite the lack of clarity, the specific aspect of resilience that pertains to coping with adversities, traumas and difficult life circumstances is still worthy of attention, and further research to gain a greater and more broad understanding is still required. In accordance with the third wave of resilience research, Ungar (2013) explained that "the individual's capacity to overcome life challenges" is less about the individual and more about the capacity of the child's "social ecological" environment to "facilitate psychological well-being" particularly in relation to "positive development in contexts of adversity" (p. 255). Further to that, Clauss-Ehlers et al. (2006) remarked:

> Despite the greater focus on the child in context, it is interesting to note that few studies have looked at cross-cultural aspects of resilience. Many of the samples in resilience research use predominantly White subjects … Due to the lack of research on cultural aspects of resilience, it is difficult to empirically state how resilience processes generalize to different racial/ethnic groups. (p. 126)

This is a key position for this research. Clauss-Ehlers (2008) argued that "resilience must include culture in a study of diverse populations" and that "a review of measures of resilience indicates that the major measures currently in use do not attend to cultural resilience" (p. 199). Furthermore, there is significant benefit for clinicians and therapeutic workers in exploring the support people have in terms of their ethnic identity development. This was further advocated for by Ungar (2010):

> Despite a myth of the hardy or rugged individual overcoming adversity, a careful read of the research suggests that a facilitative environment potentiates positive development. Most children are likely to do well when resources are made available and stressors removed. Individual capacity is far less important than the quality of the child's social ecology. (p 425)

Clauss-Ehlers et al. (2006) suggested that "incorporating culture and diversity into resilience research is a relatively new undertaking" and that such endeavours should explore how resilience processes "play out for diverse racial/ethnic people … Two such areas are cultural values and social support. These areas of inquiry will exponentially add to our ability to incorporate culture and diversity into the resilience equation" (p. 135-136).

Furthermore, Lafrance et al. (2008) asserted that there was significant compatibility between indigenous worldviews and current theories of resilience and coping with adversity, and that there was a need for a "culturally and contextually sensitive appreciation for heterogeneity in how resilience is understood" (p. 310). Hence the position of this research regarding syncretizing an indigenous Sāmoan approach. Literature on a Sāmoan notion of coping with adversity and psychological resilience is scant. There is much that can be drawn from the few pieces of research on Sāmoan approaches in relevant areas, but none examine resilience and coping with adversities specifically. Seiuli (2012, 2015), Alefaio (2015), Tunufa'i (2013), Tamasese (2002) and Baker et al. (2010) produced insightful research on therapeutic practice imperatives that facilitate inner healing, but none spoke directly to the concept of coping with adversity. This will be given greater attention later in this chapter.

In summary, a complication with resilience research is its definitional diversity. Another complication pertains to research that has focused on children and young adults. A further complication is that its origins in psychology is a long and illustrious history with empirical research on schizophrenia and severely mentally disordered patients, and more recently in the phenomenon of post traumatic stress disorder.

Conceptualising 'coping' and 'adversity'

Noted earlier in this chapter, resilience is the phenomenon of managing and overcoming stress or adversity. Resilience research has its roots in the study of coping with adversity "and an interest in how adverse life experiences impact harmfully on

people" (Van Breda, 2018, p. 2) where "the early studies of resilience focused upon factors or characteristics that assist individuals to thrive from adversity" (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004, p. 5). In this section, there will be a review of the literature on 'coping' and on the notion of 'adversity'. This will be the background upon which a gap in the research will be brought to light that this research undertaking will contribute.

The literature on 'coping' is characterised by two key observations: "(1) they involve purposeful, effortful, and conscious actions; and (2) they occur in response to 'big' events, that is, events that shake the customary senses of stability or threaten to undermine the usual activities of people" (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001, p. 4). Snyder and Pulvers developed these two observations further by refining the definitions of 'effortful' and 'big events', and arrived at the conclusion that "each person has built a particular 'coping machine' . . . each person brings his or her set of characteristics to form a 'vehicle' for dealing with whatever stressors may be encountered" (p. 5).

Adversities: causes of pain

The literature on coping asserts that 'coping' has the intention of reducing the stress, or the pain and suffering, brought on by adverse circumstances. In reducing the negative effects, the intention is to overcome the circumstances, and return to a normal state of functioning, and living. Cross-referencing Bartol (2002), Berk (2001, 2006), Bernard (2006), Collins (1995), Read, Goodman, Morrison, Ross & Aderhold (2004), Riddell (1999), Rutter (1999) and Snyder (2001), the following is a short list of examples of circumstances and life events that can cause stress:

- Death, injury, sickness, illness (unprepared, accidental or unplanned)
- Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- Neglect, abandonment, rejection
- Failures, disappointments, unmet expectations – regret, mistakes of the past
- Poor parenting
- Discouragement, criticism
- Divorce, relationship break-up
- Social injustices and inequalities, for example, racism, sexism and other prejudices
- Victim of crime
- Punishment for crime (imprisonment, deportation, rejection)
- Poverty
- Unemployment

These are examples of adversities, traumas and hardships, also known as 'stressors'. Fleming and Ledogar (2008), Luthar (2006), Masten (2001) and Rutter (1999) also indicate that the concept of 'risk' is synonymous with adversity, explaining that the notion of 'risk' relates to the ways in which situations and circumstances places a person 'at risk' of maladjustment, or breaking down. Additional to the description of stress, pain and adversity, and akin to resilience research, there are also ways of *measuring* stress, and the degree of strain, or suffering, being experienced. The two most cited 'stress-measurement tools' are Stressful Life Events Scale[2] (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) and Social Stress Measure (Tolan, Miller & Thomas, 1988). Bastian, Jetten, Hornsey & Leknes (2014), Loeser and Melzack (1999) and Melzack and Katz (2001) add that 'pain' – from painful situations and circumstances – has become synonymous with discomfort, stress and suffering and therefore, something to be avoided. Bastian et al. state:

> "One of the most apparent qualities of pain is its aversiveness. For this reason, people focus primarily on reducing or eradicating pain as reflected in the size of the global analgesics market, which is predicted to reach $US34.6 billion by the year 2015 (Global Industry Analysts, 2010). Overcoming pain is also a central research agenda. Over 20 scholarly journals are dedicated specifically to the study of pain. These journals are dominated by research highlighting the biological and psychological parameters of pain, often with a view to finding novel ways to ameliorate suffering." (p. 256)

Coping: surviving the threat

A description of negative reactions and emotions taken from Bartol (2002), Berk (2001, 2006), Bernard (2006), Collins (1995), Read et al. (2004), Riddell (1999), Rutter (1999) and Snyder (2001), includes:

- Sadness
- Despair
- Despondence
- Defeat
- Disappointment
- Hopelessness
- Uselessness

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[2] Also known as the Social Readjustment Rating Scale.

- Powerlessness
- Discouragement
- Dejection
- Fear of inadequacy
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of failure

Loeser and Melzack (1999), and Melzack and Katz (2001, 2013), add that the pain brought on by stressful life events and adverse circumstances cause emotional and psychological 'suffering'; it is the negative response induced by painful and adverse circumstances. Coping with stressors, and more so, the negative emotions they evoke, require a gamut of coping strategies, all of which are intended to tolerate the stress or pain, and survive the negative feelings brought on by the adversity, until the adversity, hardship and trauma subsides. These coping strategies are also known as psychological or emotional defence mechanisms (Bartol, 2002; Berk, 2001, 2006; Collins, 1995; Riddell, 1999; Snyder, 2001); they are personal strategies that facilitate the alleviation of the stress and suffering and are considered to be 'coping strategies' which are the strategies that allow a person to simply 'get by' and survive the perceived threat. In many cases, defence mechanisms are a type of automatic emotional and behavioural response, the result of personal history and memories (Collins, 1995; Riddell, 1999; Snyder, 2001). Some of the coping strategies that are considered to produce negative sequelae, or 'maladjustments', are:

- Blow up – verbal abuse, physical violence, destructive behaviour
- Being critical and cynical
- Superiority complex (intellectual superiority, bullying)
- Inferiority complex (victim mentality) – 'woe is me' attitude
- Manipulation, controlling, overbearing – the 'power' game
- Perfectionism
- Anxiety, worry
- Withdrawal, depression
- Suicide
- Addictions (for example, drugs, alcohol, work, pornography)
- Attention seek (for example, flirty behaviour, dress sense, feign poor health)
- Escape, run away, avoidance (for example, work late, leave town, adrenaline buzz)
- Dogmatism

Some of the positive coping mechanisms include:

- Professional or organised support
- Sport, physical activity
- Achievements of specific milestones
- Diet
- Humour
- Optimism
- Music and the arts
- Faith, hope, prayer, meditation
- Forgiveness, mediation
- Community, culture affiliation

(Bartol, 2002; Berk, 2001, 2006; Bernard, 2006; Collins, 1995; Read et al., 2004; Riddell, 1999; Rutter, 1999; Snyder, 2001)

Much of the literature on resilience and adversity state that the effectiveness of a coping strategy is the extent to which the negative consequences are reduced to the point of alleviation, and a return to normal or improved functioning. Positivist research provide primarily quantitative evidence to identify the qualities, traits, skills and processes that drive individuals towards the goal of being free from the adversity, and 'bouncing back'. It is at this juncture that social and cultural perspectives of 'resilience', 'stress' and 'adversity' assert that the limits of positivistic research approaches become evident. Leipold and Greve (2009), Rutter (1995), Snyder (2001) and Tusaie and Dyer (2004), among many others, contend that individuals respond differently to stress and stressors, and cope in different ways and in varying degrees.

> We strongly believe that the most productive approach to understanding a stressor is to understand *how it is construed by the individual.*[emphasis in original] . . . Any given stressor will not be interpreted by two persons in the same manner. As such, a stressor is a unique and phenomenological personal matter that is driven by the individual differences . . . Because of this extremely person-specific meaning of any given stressor . . . a stressor does need to be large to elicit a coping response. Rather it only need to be of sufficient 'weight' that the person responds to it . . ." (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001, p. 9)

Accordingly, as Bastian et al. (2014), Leipold and Greve (2009), Rutter (1995), Snyder (2001), Tusaie and Dyer (2004), and Ungar (2004) maintained, research should not be investigating the identification of the qualities, traits, skills and processes at work, but on exploring individual variations in (1) exposure, or predisposition, to adverse life events; (2) effortful actions to alleviate the pain and the suffering; (3) the extent to which the environment improves or diminishes individual agency; and (4) capacity for meaningful action. The key point here is the focus on individual variations, rather than a one-size-fits-all list of 'resilient characteristics'.

The puzzle of pain

Regarding exposure or predisposition to adverse life situations, Rutter asserts that "stresses and adversities are not randomly distributed in the population" (, p. 79). In other words, individual agency does much to shape – that is, to avoid or bring on – the environment, the community and the culture they experience, and with that, the trigger for certain adversities, or the absence of the circumstances that might bring on adversities. Closely aligned to the notion of exposure, or predisposition, to adverse life situations, is the observation by Bastian et al. and Rutter that the experience of difficult life circumstances can be an extension of an individual's psychosocial functioning. In other words, individuals bring on the circumstances and experiences as a reflection of the chaos, or unresolved matters of the heart, which exacerbates the stress and negative outcomes. In this light, effortful action from the individual to alleviate the pain is the 'variable' because on the one hand, the individual has brought on the difficulties they are encountering, and on the other hand, they have yet to perform the requisite action to lessen the internal pain and suffering. Furthermore, while a particular action may induce the amelioration of the adversity, the same action by someone else is unlikely to produce the same result, nor have the same effect. The third point – the environment's influence – relates to the community, cultural or otherwise, that can lend support through customs and traditions and through social support. An example of this is the way Sāmoan families can be the cause of the stress and adversity – through unrealistic expectations of observance of cultural and customary conduct and behaviour – but also provide the relief to cope with the stress – through the practice of cultural and customary conduct and behaviour. The fourth point – regarding the capacity to act – pertains, in part, to societal factors that inhibit or encourage action. Examples of this are the social inequalities that persist in society, for example racism and sexism, and other prejudices and biases. A male's capacity to alleviate unemployment is greater than a female's; a Caucasian's opportunities in higher education are greater than a Pacific Islander. The section on epistemic injustices,

hermeneutical marginalisation, othering, and misrecognition in Chapter Two are relevant here. Again, the point to highlight is that there are significant individual differences that determine the extent which certain coping mechanisms and to certain adversities and hardships are effective.

For these reasons, Leipold and Greve (2009), Rutter (1995), Snyder (2001), Tusaie and Dyer (2004), and Ungar (2004) asserted that the notion of stress, adversity, pain, suffering and resilience are incredibly personal, and incredibly subjective. Accordingly, they argued, a research approach that delves into the personal and subjective world of individuals is requisite of a research enquiry into the notion of stress, adversity, pain, suffering and resilience. To that end, these same authors urged research enquiries to adopt a constructionist research approach for such an undertaking. Lafrance et al. (2008), Theron et al. (2013), and Ungar (2004, 2013) added that this was even more so for research enquiries intent on exploring indigenous notions and on indigenous populations.

It is worth mentioning the body of work of Joel Katz and Ronald Melzack on pain[3], and in particular, their research on the phenomenon of phantom limbs and the notion of 'proportionality of pain' – that is, the amount of pain experienced proportional to anatomical damage. Their scholarly tomes employed a quantitative positivist approach to the body's pain response to an array of stimuli, and in spite of the extensive research they conducted, conceded that "the complexity of the pain transmission circuitry" cannot be fully grasped through a clinical, positivist approach, and that by recognising the impact of stress on human biological, physiological and psychological systems, "we discover that the scope of the puzzle of pain is vastly expanded" (Melzack & Katz, 2013, p. 9). The conclusion from their body of research was that pain and its intensity – and therefore, its impact on our bodies, emotions, and humanity – was extremely subjective and personal. Therefore, they insisted, further research on resilience and coping with adversity need to consider other approaches, including constructionist, qualitative and exploratory.

Predicated on the constructionist paradigm, the synthesis of the methodological framework described in Chapter Two is the resulting approach, an approach that relies on indigenous ways of engaging with participants and exploring for knowledge. In this way, it allows me to get as close to difficult-to-find knowledge as possible, as

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[3] Among other literary sources, Katz & Melzack, 1990; Coderre, Katz, Vaccarino & Melzack, 1996; Katz & Melzack, 1999; Melzack & Katz, 2001; Turk & Melzack, 2001; Melzack & Katz, 2013.

embedded in the ways of life of the participants as possible, and as up-close-and-personal with the participants as possible. Moreover, the constructionist approach is able to provide more comprehensive accounts of the complexity of lives lived under stress and adverse circumstances (Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Ungar, 2004; Young & Collin, 2004).

A cultural approach

Much of the mechanistic, predictive models used to conceptualise 'resilience' is based on the "presumed predictability of complex ecological systems" (Gunderson, 2000, p. 433), but, as shown in the previous section, the literature shows that there is growing discontent with the scientific, positivist approach in this area of research. This has brought about the move away from the "mode of science" that "focuses on parts of the system" which leads to "incomplete and fragmentary" findings and conclusions, and a move toward an "integrative and holistic" mode of science that searches for "simple structures and relationships that explain much of nature's complexity" (ibid, p. 433). The 'integrative and holistic' approach that refers to networks of connection and relationships, are congruent with a cultural approach to understanding 'resilience', and indeed, many aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*.

Nurture trumps nature

With the plethora of research on resilience and coping with adversity, Michael Ungar has arguably produced the most comprehensive body of research on resilience and coping, as is evidenced in his work through the Resilience Research Centre in Canada, and particularly with his international research collaboration *International Resilience Project*[4] (Ungar, 2005, 2008, 2010; Theron, Liebenberg & Ungar, 2015) which explored resilience in 14 communities in 11 countries on five continents, which included New Zealand (Sanders & Munford, 2015) and South Africa (Theron et al., 2013). Ungar (2013) argues that the value of investigating 'culture' and its impact on 'resilience' is that "nurture trumps nature when coping with trauma" (p. 258), adding that "embedded in culture are expectations regarding appropriate ways to cope with adversity" (p. 260). Ungar (2010) explains that this means that 'resilience' is not the outcome of individual capacity to cope, nor the outcome of intervention support mechanisms (like a skilled

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[4] http://resilienceresearch.org/research/projects/international-resilience

social worker or mentor) but the result of "cultural and contextual factors (including the family)" (p. 423). Ungar (2013) advances that notion further:

> Though personal motivation to adapt is still an important factor in positive development after exposure to traumatic events, the social ecology is responsible for constraining or liberating people's choices with regard to coping strategies that result in prosocial behavior or pathological adaptation. (ibid, p 256)

A cultural construction of resilience and coping strategies and models would, therefore, better equip intervention strategies, focusing on connecting to culture and identity ahead of psychological introspection (Belgrave, Chase-Vaughan, Gray, Addison & Cherry, 2000; Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Cheah & Chirkov, 2008). It is worth noting the research on other indigenous populations that attest to this: Wexler et. al. (2013) and MacDonald, Ford, Willcox and Ross (2013) and their work with Inuit communities; LaBoucane-Benson (2005) and Lafrance et al. (2008) and their work with Indigenous Canadians. Additionally, research on how migrant and diasporic populations use cultural capital to help cope with adversity and stress, particularly those associated with social inequalities and injustices (like racism and elitism) also validate this: Cabrera & Padilla (2004), Gonzalez & Padilla (1997), De La Rosa (1988) on Latino Americans, and Cheah & Chirkov, (2008) and Wingo, Fani, Bradley & Ressler (2010) on African American communities.

I want to draw particular attention to Wexler et al. (2013), Newman and Black (2002) and Tengan (2003, 2008) whose research on indigenous communities showed that keeping cultural and traditional practices alive is necessary simply for the fact of meaning-making relationships that structure how to respond to life and overcome difficulties. The literature noted above maintained that young people from indigenous communities that still practice, or seek to enact their cultural traditions are more grounded; that the cultural enactments and performative participation act as 'anchors' and that the kinship networks helps the young people navigate and mediate the stress, confusion and adversity that befall them. More precisely, as Wexler et al. (2013) and Newman and Blackburn (2002) express: the connection to traditional ontology profoundly shaped how the young people felt about themselves, their relationship to others, and the world around them. This was the key to the ability of the young people to respond to adversity, particularly colonisation, globalisation, cultural displacement, racism, poverty and other adverse life events.

Pacific-specific

I was particularly moved by Tengan's (2003, 2008) discourse on an Hawai'ian project called *Hale Mua*, Hawai'ian for "Men's House" (2008, p. 3). What moved me about Tengan's discourse were the stories of indigenous Hawai'ian men going through the process of re-discovery and re-connection with their culture, identity, language and customs through the *Hale Mua*. Tengan posits that the restoration came through a narrated remembered culture, using the cultural oratory practice of *mo'olelo,* or 'talk-story' about legends, histories, and personal narratives (p. 14). Tengan insists that "communities can and must reconfigure themselves, drawing on selectively remembered pasts" (p. 14). Tengan's discourse is an account about the "transformations of self and society as they occur in practice through narrative and performative enactments" (p. 3). These pasts were retraced using oral traditions that included rituals, songs and constant reminders of their ties to the family, clan, affiliation, tribe and communities. This is the strength of using indigenous concepts and oral traditions: they are more meaningful and thus, more transformational. To this, Bowden (2013) stated:

> Traditional counselling theory helps us explore our internal psychological world in order to find causes and solutions. It provides many valuable insights … The Pacific ethos is aligned to individuals finding nurture within communities as well as intimate family settings. We are capable of generating our own approaches to counselling that will make the process more accessible … Culture in the Pacific, including Aotearoa, calls for a strong emphasis on the complexities of each group. While each person has special value, we do not exist as isolated individuals in a cocoon of emotional turmoil. (p. 160)

In the New Zealand context, there are examples of applying Pacific and Sāmoan cultural and traditional practices into psychological and counseling theory, therapeutic practice imperatives and key considerations when working with Pacific people as a therapeutic practitioner. For example, Manuela (2010)[5] developed the Pacific Identity and Well Being Scale that factors significant and culturally appropriate items and constructs (for example: perceived familial wellbeing, Pacific connectedness and belonging, religious centrality and embeddedness) into a health and wellbeing assessment tool that is for Pacific people from a Pacific perspective. It is also worth

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[5] And also Manuela & Sibley (2013)

noting Seiuli (2004, 2010, 2012, 2013) and Alefaio[6] (2007, 2009, 2011[7], 2014) who proffer a Sāmoan/Pacific approach to practice imperatives – that is, key competencies, skills and thinking required for meaningful engagement in the therapeutic setting – and key considerations to psychology theory and models of practice when working with Pacific people. I noted the relevance of Seiuli's research to this study in Chapter One, and his conceptualisation of the *fa'asāmoa* in Chapter Three. His outlook on indigenous research interpretive frameworks is from the desire for authentic representation of customary practice. Furthermore, the Uputaua Approach to research and the Mea Alofa Approach to the therapeutic setting that Seiuli advances provides constructive guidance for any Pacific researcher and therapeutic practitioner. Indeed, Seiuli's approach has been very useful in guiding some of the research design elements of this research. In the same vein as Seiuli, Alefaio focuses more on practice imperatives, cultural sensitivities for modern psychologists and an evolving critique of Western psychological paradigms (2009, 2011, 2014[8], 2015[9]). Alefaio was also instrumental in forming Pasifikology in 2005, which is a network of New Zealand-based Pacific psychologists, graduates and students of psychology[10]. Additionally, Alefaio has been at the forefront of the development of Pacific-specific programmes and strategies using Pacific thought, cultural practices and ways of thinking as the conceptual and theoretical framework for the development of the therapeutic programmes and strategies (Alefaio et al., 2010; Alefaio-Tugia & Havea, 2016). Alefaio (2011) makes the point that Western psychology is relatively new; it is "still evolving and largely framed around the individual, the self … Cultures within the nations of the Pacific have ancient histories and ways of knowing, being and doing that outdate the evolution of this young science" (p. 12).

Syncretising cultural applications of indigenous knowledge are noted primarily in the health sector and social service sector. The Fonofale Model (Pulotu-Endemann, 2001, 2009) appears to be the favoured model in the health sector (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009). The Fonofale model uses a description of a

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[6] In the literature, Alefaio is also known as Alefaio-Tugia

[7] Referenced as Little & Alefaio, 2011.

[8] Referenced as Alefaio-Tugia, 2014.

[9] Referenced as Alefaio-Tugia, Carr, Hodgetts, Mattson & van Ommen, 2015.

[10] www.pasifikology.co.nz

fale[11] as a metaphor for personal health. As a knowledge representation system, this model ascribes parts of the *fale* a particular value to be considered: the foundation represents 'family', the floor represents 'genealogy', the roof represents 'culture', the four posts that hold up the *fale* represent four areas of wellbeing: 'spiritual', 'physical', 'mental' and 'other' (for example, sexuality, age, economic status) (ibid). These are the considerations to make when working with Pacific people in the health setting, particularly in the diagnosis and recovery stages (Pulotu-Endemann, Annandale, & Instone, 2004). It is a model describing the major determinants of health from a Pacific worldview. In this light, the Fonofale Model is a useful model of the Pacific worldview informing culturally competent practice (Du Plessis & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2009; Suaalii-Sauni et al., 2009).

There are other Pacific healthcare models: Te Vaka (Kupa, 2009), Soifua Maloloina (Lui, 2007) and Popao Model (Fotu & Tafa, 2009) are acknowledged in the literature. These models are specifically healthcare frontline service delivery models; they were designed by frontline Pacific healthcare practitioners using an indigenous worldview specifically for their industry. It is worth noting that Te Vaka is a Tokelau approach using the traditional *va'a*[12], Soifua Maloloina, the Sāmoan phrase for wellbeing, draws from the Sāmoan concept of health and wellbeing, and the Popao Model is a Tongan approach using their traditional outrigger canoe; all use cultural symbols metaphorically to represent a knowledge system (for example, navigation, health and wellbeing) and ascribe various elements of their metaphor to encapsulate that knowledge and its application in a specific Western setting.

Additionally, there are social work and counselling therapeutic intervention models in the social work sector, for example, Lalaga Model (Mulitalo-Lauta, 2000), Tafesilafa'i Model (Menon & Mulitalo, 2006), Faufautua Model (Schuster, 2001), Talatalaga a Aiga (Southwick, Kenealy, & Ryan, 2012), and The Tānoa (Natanielu, 2010, 2011). Like the healthcare intervention models, frontline Pacific social work practitioners also designed these models specifically for their industry. They are intervention approaches derived from practice.

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[11] *Fale* – Traditional Sāmoan house.

[12] *Va'a* – Sea vessel

Summary

The concept of psychological resilience has been shown to be a difficult concept to define and disentangle. It sits primarily within the subject area of cognitive and developmental psychology but there is growing criticism among resilience researchers that this is likely the cause of the difficulties of encapsulating a definition: it is less about cognitive and mechanistic neural systems and more to do with the human repertoire for coping with the challenges that confront us (Davis, 2013). As noted in the earlier sections of this chapter, the notion of resilience was transferred uncritically from the ecological sciences to social systems and human psychology, and the transferral seems to have 'muddied the waters' as researchers have concentrated on specific aspects of the general definition, to derive their own approach. Notwithstanding the evident contentions, there is universal agreement in the literature that one of the central elements of understanding resilience is a description of recuperative abilities amid adverse circumstances. To that end, the newest wave of research on resilience encourage a cultural approach, and in particular, approaches that come from a different ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective. Ungar (2004, 2010, 2013) and Clauss-Ehlers (2008) in particular support this premise, contending that "findings indicate that examining cultural factors that promote resilience is critically important to our understanding of resilience processes" (p. 210), noting that "nurture trumps nature when coping with trauma" (Ungar, 2013, p. 258). Ungar adds:

> Very few studies exist of people with disabilities, aboriginal children, rural populations, children in nonwestern democracies, or adolescents who do not attend school (and were therefore not in class when sampling was carried out). These exclusions are an artifact of research design and the exclusionary practices that silence vulnerable populations. (ibid, p. 260)

This juncture serves as the entry point for this research. This research seeks to explore a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity that may have utility in the area of psychological resilience. Accordingly, it is predicated on the efficacy of using indigenous concepts and oral traditions in research and therapeutic practice, as they are more meaningful and thus, more transformational for the Sāmoan (and by extension, Pacific) community. Marsella, Austin & Grant (2006) state:

> Research that focuses on developing culturally appropriate interventions and prevention models are needed urgently in the Pacific Islands and Oceania areas. The research would benefit from utilizing a systems

approach that considers the individual within the larger familial, social and cultural contexts. This approach is not only more relevant for Pacific Island and Oceanic people, but more accurately reflects the actual ecology of life activity for virtually all cultures. (p. 297)

CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY:

Undertaking the research

Proverbial expression:
Ia matagi taumuliina le folauga.

Translation:
May you have favourable winds on your voyage.

Meaning:
Whenever a journey begins, this phrase is usually said to those departing as a blessing and as a prayer. As a blessing, it signifies support; as a prayer, it is to placate God and the spirits for their mercy and guidance. In oratory, this phrase is used by one *tulāfale* to another *tulāfale* who is about to deliver his speech, to give blessing and support.

Reference:
In this chapter, I apply the proverb to refer to my undertaking; as I set out on this research 'voyage', I invoke this proverb to beseech divine guidance and favourable winds.

Introduction

One of the central elements of this research, as explained in Chapter One, was a research framework appropriate for uncovering difficult-to-find knowledge. Nabobo-Baba (2008) explained that using indigenous approaches, their "world views, cultural knowledges and epistemologies" was necessary because it "grounds the research and provides it with methodological integrity" (p. 143). Moreover, doing indigenous research this way "allows indigenous peoples, in particular, to re-establish their own engagement with scholarly authority over their own knowledge systems, experiences, representations, imaginations and identities" (p. 143).

Summarising the indigenous Sāmoan methodological framework – described in Chapter Two and Chapter Three – there were three key elements. Firstly, the element of native narratives compels the research to look for cultural knowledge in cultural forums using cultural approaches. Essentially, I would be looking at oral traditions, and other ways that Sāmoans store and display knowledge. This constitutes three imperatives: the imperative to *tausi le vā*[1] – to observe the necessary protocols and to honour the customary practices; the imperative of the perspective of the *soga'imiti*[2] – to get as close to the data as possible; and the imperative of autochthony – which means undertaking the research in Sāmoa, and speaking with those who have a *tatau*[3]. Essentially, this also includes honouring the customs and traditions associated with knowledge-seeking. The second element of the methodological framework was to apply the *talanoaga*[4] as a methodological approach as well as method. The participation in *talanoaga* also observes the protocols of the spoken language, and to participate in *talanoaga* as a method, is to also appreciate its value as a concurrent data collection and data analysis strategy. Moreover, this element requires that the *talanoaga* is conducted with knowledge-keepers, and not the general public. Essentially, this means that I am looking for a specific part of the populace, and

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[1] *Tausi le vā* – Literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.

[2] *Soga'imiti* – The male that has the *tatau*

[3] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

[4] *Talanoaga* – Colloquially, means to converse, talk, discuss; As a research methodology, it refers to a conversive method of gathering and analysing data.

therefore, employ research methods specific to this community, and their identification. The third and final element was reciprocity, which, in this research, is a two-fold 'return gift'. Firstly, it was explained in Chapter Two and Three that an indigenous epistemology is a co-construction of knowledge; I wanted to dignify the statements of knowledge from the participants by acknowledging them as the contributors of the knowledge. Therefore, participant identity was necessary, and anonymity was waived. On this, Lavelleé (2009) stated that many of his participants "expressed the importance of the research allowing them to tell their story; hence, another aspect of reciprocity was giving voice to the participants" (p. 35) by waiving anonymity. Secondly, in Chapter One, I alluded to conversations I had undertaken with many *soga'imiti* prior to getting my *tatau*, and prior to commencing this research. It was felt by many of those *soga'imiti* that a documentary on the *tatau* addressing some of the misinformation – alluded to in Chapter Three – could also serve as an appropriate reciprocal gift from this research to Sāmoans worldwide; the documentary would primarily be about the *tatau* (as opposed to coping with adversity and the *tatau*). This also meant that *talanoaga* conducted through this research were video-recorded. Accordingly, participants for the research were also invited to be a part of a documentary to be produced as a result of this research.

Setting

As part of the methodology, and in honouring oral traditions, there was a necessary preparatory stage that preceded the undertaking of this research. In keeping with doctoral research protocols, there was an ethics process to complete; and in keeping with the *fa'asāmoa*[5], there was also a cultural process that was observed.

To develop the research design, I had had many conversations – face to face as well e-mail correspondence – over many months with family members who were well-versed with Sāmoan customs regarding knowledge-seeking and oratory. My parents, my aunt, Folau Epati, and two of her sons, Luatua Semi Epati and Rev. Denny Epati played significant roles in shaping my ideas around indigenous knowledge-seeking customs that I needed to observe in the undertaking of this research. Additionally, while acquiring approval to commence the research, I developed a schedule of indicative

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[5] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

questions as a guide to facilitate the *talanoaga* – refer *Appendix 2: Talanoa Indicative Questions*. The original version of this guide was tested with my father, and I learned from him that the context of therapeutic practice is a highly particularised language – for example, the notion of psychology, social work practice, therapeutic models – and many aspects of the therapeutic context did not translate well to the Sāmoan language. He noted that the way I phrased the questions were difficult for him to translate and he insisted that I sought the help of his friend, Vavao Fetui, who taught the Sāmoan language at university. After some discussion with Vavao about the nature of my research and the qualitative, conversational and cultural knowledge I sought, he translated the questions in accordance with proper Sāmoan language context. He expressed that it was difficult to translate English directly into the Sāmoan language because of the language and cultural structures that give meaning to the words. Thus, upon hearing the *heart* of what I wanted to ask, and the type of responses I was looking for, Vavao rephrased the Talanoa Indicative Questions in a way that made better sense for a *talanoaga* in the Sāmoan language.

Upon seeing the rephrased indicative questions, my father, now happy with it, explained that he was better able to advise me on my research approach. Firstly, he said, my original questions were the way a *Pālagi*[6] would process the questions: rigid, formulaic, without cultural context and did not invite an open exchange. Moreover, the questions did not seem to be exploratory of a journey and 'story-talk'. My father explained that my style of questioning lacked an inherent humility and inquisitiveness; my questions were too direct and forthright, tending to display a superiority complex, as one displaying considerable knowledge and seeking more knowledge, rather than as someone with limited knowledge inquiring of the expert knowledge of an elder. This, he explained, was the perspective of a knowledge-seeker. My father advised that I should act as someone who wanted to know something he knows little about, rather than 'a knowledgeable academic talking to natives'. He expressed that the *talanoaga* process would bode better for me if I adopted this approach. He then insisted that I visit them again prior to my departure for Sāmoa to undertake the research; there were particular cultural protocols to be observed if I was going to do this 'the Sāmoan way' and I needed to spend some time with him to learn some of the language, the protocols and some of the cultural exchanges I was going to need to know to be ready for the *talanoaga*.

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[6] *Pālagi* – Caucasian; of European descent.

The Talanoa Indicative Questions guide was submitted as part of the ethics proposal, which was also a part of the thesis research proposal. When the proposals were approved, I moved to Sāmoa to fulfil the imperative of an autochthonous approach.

Before moving to Sāmoa, I returned to Sydney to my parents for further cultural preparations. Essentially, the preparations were to remind and rehearse how to *tausi le vā* by observing certain cultural and language protocols – this was detailed in Chapter Three – for example, some of the oral exchanges that characterise Sāmoan greetings, *feiloa'iga*[7]*,* and farewelling, *upu fa'amāvae*[8]. I was already familiar with some of these oratory exchanges, but my father insisted that I learn more about honorifics and proverbial expressions so that the *talanoaga* would flow better, and that I express due respect to those that would be present. Additionally, in the Sāmoan hierarchical structure, it is improper for an untitled person to invite himself to speak to an *ali'i*[9] or *tulāfale*[10]. Thus, my father insisted that I use my *tulāfale* status in the introductory exchanges before the formal commencement of the *talanoaga*.

Once the preparation (for my research) had taken place, my parents laid their hands on my head, prayed for me, and committed my endeavour to God, beseeching his guidance, favour and protection. This was a very solemn moment for me – the last time I did this with my parents was when they gave me their blessing to get my *tatau* in 2012. In many respects, I considered this a Sāmoan ethics approval process. The proverbial expression referenced at the heading of this chapter was the one my parents used to bless my research journey.

When I arrived in Sāmoa, I had originally planned on staying in the village of my closest *'āīga*[11] affiliation, Sāle'imoa (which is my mother's village). However, due to the limitations of transport and access to resources, staying in Sāle'imoa became untenable. Thus, I stayed with my brother, Malaefatu Junior, and his family – Lagi, his wife, and their four children Israelanna (17), Jahaziel (15), Jedidiah (13), and Josiah

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[7] *Feiloa'iga* – To meet, greet; the introductory exchanges of addressing each other formally and with honorifics.

[8] *Upu fa'amāvae* – Literally translates as words of farewell; the customary oratory practice of expressing appreciation, exchanging a reciprocating gift, bidding farewell, and imparting a blessing.

[9] *Ali'i* – High chief; chief decision-maker.

[10] *Tulāfale* – Orator; oratory chief (for the *ali'i*).

[11] *'Āīga* – Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'.

(10) – in the village of Vaivase Uta, on the periphery of 'Āpia. Although I was unable to 'do village life', which was my original intention, I was able to stay with family and participated in other key aspects of Sāmoan life, like teaching my niece and nephews various customs and traditions including the preparation of certain foods – for example, *pe'epe'e*[12], *luau*[13], *koko laisa*[14], and the preparation of *koko Sāmoa*[15] – and explaining various *talatu'u*[16] relating to various parts of Sāmoa relevant to them.

Once I settled in, I set about participating in the life of Sāmoa. I got involved with the Sāmoan Voyaging Society and joined up to crew on board *Gaualofa* to learn some of the traditional knowledge associated with oceanic voyaging and navigation. Through my association with *Gaualofa*, I was able to continue my learning of Sāmoan pre-contact history and get access to the then-Head of State, Tui Atua, as well as to the Ministry of Education, Sport and Education to further my learning of cultural etiquette. Additionally, I gained employment as a Lecturer/Tutor at the National University of Sāmoa (NUS), Vaivase Tai campus, and also at University of South Pacific (USP), Alafua campus. I attended the church that my brother and his family attended. Additionally, through various friends and connections, I played in a music band in the Sāmoa Jazz Festival and I participated in the national Touch Rugby competition, where I also trialled for the national master's team for an international competition but an injury halted that pursuit. I did however become one of the nationally-recognised referees and earned the privilege of refereeing the national finals. All of these activities facilitated the making of connections and networks, and it was through these connections and networks that I began to acquire participants for this research.

Participants

Recalling the research questions posed in Chapter One, there were two groups of participants that I sought for this research. The first condition of participation was that the participants needed to be those that had the experience of the *tatau*. Thus, the first

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[12] *Pe'epe'e* – Coconut cream

[13] *Luau* – Sāmoan food made of taro leaves and coconut cream

[14] *Koko laisa* – Sāmoan transliteration for 'cocoa rice'; also called *koko alaisa*

[15] *Koko Sāmoa* – Sāmoan cocoa, a drink made from the preparation of raw cocoa beans

[16] *Talatu'u* – Folklore; stories of people of note; literally means 'stories left behind'

group were men and women who wear the traditional *tatau*. The second group were the *'Āīga a Tufuga*[17], the families who have the historical, cultural and familial knowledge of the *tatau* and are the traditional practitioners of the craft. The first group – those that have a *tatau* – were divided into two further groups, that of men with the *pe'a*[18], and that of women with the *malu*[19]. This separation was critical for the discussion on pain, which, described in Chapter Six, was primarily extracted from the men's experience of getting the *pe'a* because of the *process*, and the *duration* of the process.

The second condition for participant selection was status as a *matai*[20]. The rationale for this was two-fold. Firstly, as described in detail in Chapter Three, *matai* are the traditional custodians of knowledge. Accordingly, having a *talanoaga* with *matai* about hidden and sacred knowledge was appropriate. That is, it was not only about those who have the *tatau*, but more specifically, those who would *possess knowledge* of the customs and traditions associated with the *tatau*. In this, engaging *matai* was to *tausi le vā* in the practice of customary knowledge exchange. Secondly, given the invisbility of the community I was interested in, I needed to target the small community of people who were likely to possess the knowledge, as well as their knowledge of others in this small community (of those who wear the *pe'a* and the *malu*). This aspect refers back to the *matai* as leaders of the *'āīga* and *nu'u*[21], and therefore, will know who has a *tatau* and who is knowledgeable. The value of this aspect was made more prominent when I used the snowball sampling method, which for all intents and purposes, was a relational way of acquiring participants, a further embrace of the ethic *to tausi le vā* in research. This is explained in greater detail in the following section of this chapter.

Of interest to this research were the stories of what led the participants to the *tatau*, their experiences of while they were getting their *tatau*, and how things changed for them – if at all – after the experience. With their story, I was looking for associations of their experience before, during and after getting their *tatau* with the motifs and patterns that were gifted to them on their *tatau*. With the second group, as well as the same set of questions as the first group, this research was also interested in cultural, historical

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[17] *'Āīga a Tufuga* – The family historically gifted with the *tatau* instruments; loosely translates as the 'family of master tattooists'

[18] *Pe'a* – The male *tatau*

[19] *Malu* – The female *tatau*

[20] *Matai* – Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.

[21] *Nu'u* – Village

and familial knowledge regarding the *tatau*, including asking the *tufuga* about the motifs and patterns – their meanings, and how they decide which to use for the person they are giving the *tatau* to. Table 5.1 (overleaf) lists those with whom I had a *talanoaga* for this research, as well as for the documentary on the *tatau* as part of the reciprocal gift.

Pe'a and malu

Considering the knowledge-keeper status explained in the opening three chapters, it was necessary that the participants were Sāmoan *matai* who have a *tatau*. It should be noted that many villages observed a custom of *matai* being a gendered role, a status given to males only. However, in more recent times, many of those villages have removed that barrier where, for many, *matai* is no longer a gendered role. It should also be noted that *tatau* is a generic name for traditional tattoos that include the male *pe'a* and female *malu*. Thus, gender and age will not be used to discriminate participants.

'Āīga a Tufuga

The second group of participants, the *Tufuga Tā Tatau*[22], are the traditional practitioners who have the historical and cultural knowledge. As noted in Chapter Three, there are three families known as the *'Āīga a Tufuga* – the Su'a family, the Tulou'ena family, and the Sulu'ape family – with a possible one or two more – the Lavea family and the Pāūli family. I had hoped to *talanoa* with at least one from each of the families.

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[22] *Tufuga Tā Tatau* – Master tattooist

Table 5.1: Table of participants, 2015-2016
This table shows the participants and the order the talanoaga *was conducted in.*

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	TITLE	NAME
Malu1	Female	Captain of *Gaualofa*[23]	Fealofani (Fani) Bruun
Mālōfie1	Male	Tiatia	Alex Tiatia
Malu2	Female	Muli'agatele	Memoree Imo
Mālōfie2	Male	Tuiloma	Walterlee Imo
Malu3	Female		Leilani Curry
Mālōfie3	Male	Mulitalo	Amosa Tupa'i
Mālōfie4	Male	Vaifale	Francis Ah Him
Malu4	Female	Muli'agatele	Safua Leota
Mālōfie5	Male	Tuala	Pat Leota
Malu5	Female	Su'a	Frieda Paul
Mālōfie6	Male	Lavea	Fosi Lavea
Mālōfie7	Male	Doctor	Richard Twycross-Lewis[24]
Tufuga1	Male	Li'aifaiva	Imo Lavea
Mālōfie8	Male	Taitu'uga	Fa'avae Jr Elu
Tufuga2	Male	Vaofusi	Pogisa Su'a
Tufuga3	Male	Su'a	Faumuina Tupou Su'a
Mālōfie9	Male	Su'a	Peter Su'a
Malu6	Female		Karla Leota
Malu7	Female		Gabrielle Apelu
Mālōfie10	Male	Tuatagaloa	Joe Anandale

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[23] Although this is not a *matai* title, I note this as her status as a leader in the community.

[24] Dr Richard Twycross-Lewis is an Englishman who was holidaying in Sāmoa at the time. He also has a *pe'a*. I had a *talanoaga* with Dr Richard Twycross-Lewis out of curiosity regarding why a non-Sāmoan would be interested in the *tatau*. For the sake of the conditions of participant selection, explained earlier, I did not use his *talanoaga* for this thesis, but will use it for other academic writing and for the documentary.

In Chapter One, there was a discussion about research positionality, and the part that I as the researcher played. Part of that positionality was not only my perspective as a Sāmoan, but also as a *soga'imiti*. Essentially, this meant that I would draw from my own *tatau* experience as part of the engagement and *talanoaga* process. Table 5.2 below is a list of those with whom I had a *talanoaga*.

Table 5.2: Table of participants, 2012
In 2012, while getting my tatau*, these were those with whom I had spoken with:*

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	TITLE	NAME
Tufuga	Male	Su'a Sulu'ape	Alaiva'a Sulu'ape
Soga'imiti	Male	Sami	Navy Epati
Soga'imiti	Male	Tuimaleali'ifano	Tile Tuimaleali'ifano
Malu	Female	Sefuiva	Maureen Tuimaleali'ifano
Soga'imiti	Male	Luatua	Semi Epati
Soga'imiti[25]	Male		Imo Lavea

Video recording

I noted in the first two chapters the necessity of video recording the *talanoaga* with the participants: firstly, as a record of the data collection and analysis; and secondly, to produce a documentary about the *tatau*, as a reciprocal gift from this research to the people of Sāmoa. Essentially, this necessity of the research required the participants to agree to the use of the video camera. Additionally, it meant that the use of the *talanoaga* was not only for the purpose of this research, but also the documentary.

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[25] In 2012, Imo was a *tufuga* aide, serving an apprenticeship under Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a. The following year, his family, the Sā Laveā, would perform the bestowal custom and confer the Li'aifaiva title on Imo and restore the *Tufuga Tā Tatau* tradition back to the family – this is described in Chapter Three.

Additional to those benefits of video recording the *talanoaga*, this also allowed me to focus on the *talanoaga*, and not be distracted by asking the participants to slow down for the sake of note-taking. In this regard, the *talanoaga* was allowed to flow and we were able to focus on the exchange of knowledge without having to worry about ensuring information-capture. Further to that point, reviewing the exchange of knowledge was not confined to searching for a written transcription, but was achieved by watching the *talanoaga* again. More importantly, I noted in the previous chapters Duranti's (1994) observation that he was unable to participate in certain cultural conversations where body proximity and seating arrangements meant more than he could comprehend. The notion of native narratives also included other types of cultural conversations where silences, body language, proverbial references, genealogies and other types of knowledge exchange could be captured, that could not be captured on a voice recorder or written notes. In this way, it resolved a limitation of oral traditions explained in Chapter Two, where it was difficult to 'rewind and playback by word-of-mouth' (Biggs, 1976); video-recording the knowledge exchange indeed allowed 'playback by word-of-mouth'.

Research sample selection and size

It was noted in Chapter One and Chapter Three that the tradition of the *tatau* had undergone significant loss of practice, performance and knowledge. Notwithstanding the loss, the *tatau* had made a resurgence since the 1990's. To explore 'hidden' and 'hard-to-find' knowledge, and where those knowledgeable are difficult to find, the 'snowball sampling' method was ideal (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Noy, 2008). Snowball sampling starts with one participant, and upon completion of that *talanoaga*, the participant will be asked to recommend a potential participant. I would then contact that prospective participant and arrange to meet them for an introductory conversation, and then arranging to have a more formal *talanoaga* which would be with recording instruments for the purposes of the research.

In terms of 'sample size', it is generally accepted in research that this is predetermined so that the researcher would know when the research process had come to an end (Bowen, 2008). Although I originally set out to conduct *talanoaga* with ten participants, three points of interest regarding sample size need to be explained. Firstly, I learned during the research process that seven percent of all *matai* were female and many of them lived overseas (Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, 2015);

of the female *matai* that lived in Sāmoa, few had a *malu*. Thus, I removed the criteria of *matai* status for *malu* participants. Secondly, I struggled to find willing participants in the early part of my move to Sāmoa. As noted in Chapter Three, it was not until I had participated in the life of Sāmoa that it seemed like I had become 'a local' – this became important regarding positioning myself, developing a trust amongst the Sāmoans and the community of those that have a *tatau*. As I established friendships and networks, these were the connections that linked me to willing participants. Thirdly, I became aware that there was a feeling of 'research-fatigue' among some participants and circles of knowledge-keepers (for example, among some *matai*, and among the '*Āīga a Tufuga*). At the time, noted tattoo researcher Sébastien Galliot had just completed his research (2015, 2017), and an American film crew working on a documentary about the *tatau* in Sāmoa were also just completing their research. To avoid research-fatigue, finding participants that had not been previously interviewed, except for the '*Āīga a Tufuga*, became important. This also confirmed the need to use the snowball sampling method. Thus, guided by those considerations – that of *malu* participants, that of establishing social and familial networks, and that of research-fatigue – I felt it was necessary not to set a sample size number limit, but I would instead continue to find participants until I believed I was able to answer the principal research questions. Ultimately, twenty participants were obtained for a *talanoaga*. Participant acquisition began immediately, but I explain in the next section, it wasn't until nine months later that I carried out my first *talanoaga*, and it was about a year later, that I completed the last.

To illustrate the course of the sampling process, Noy (2008) suggested the use of "snowball stemma" (p. 332). Accordingly, Table 5.3 (overleaf) demonstrates how the social and familial connections I described earlier linked me to the various participants.

Table 5.3: Snowball stemma

This snowball stemma traces the connections and the dynamic process of how the participants became involved in this research[26].

Source[27]	Referral[28]	On-referral1[29]	On-referral2	On-referral3
Gaualofa	Fani	Tui Atua		
	Tiatia Alex	Tuatagaloa Joe		
	Leilani			
Landlord	Tuiloma Walterlee		Li'aifaiva Imo	Lavea Fosi
	Muli'agatele Memoree	Mulitalo Amosa		Dr Richard
		Vaifale Francis		Manu
		Tuala Pat		
		Muli'agatele Safua	Su'a Frieda	
Family[30]	Taitu'uga Fa'avae			
Friends[31]	Su'a Peter	Su'a Faumuina		
		Vaofusi Pogisa		
Friend[32]	Karla			
Friend[33]	Gabrielle			
Friend[34]	Galumalemana Alfred			

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[26] The addition of Tui Atua, Dr Richard Twycross-Lewis, Manu Percival and Galumalemana Alfred Hunkin (compared with Table 5.1) is to indicate that I had undertaken other *talanoaga* for the video documentary.

[27] 'Source' refers to the origin of my introduction to the participants

[28] 'Referral' refers to the first participant from the 'source'

[29] 'On-referral' refers to the next tier of referrals

[30] Taitu'uga Fa'avae is the husband of my sister, Fa'atamāli'i Elu (nee Natanielu)

[31] Jason & Roberta Chang, friends from my high school years who shifted to Sāmoa

[32] Tailani Salanoa, an ex-student from AUT (when I worked there), now living in Sāmoa, introduced me to Karla a year earlier.

[33] A friend introduced me to Gabrielle (a national representative in several sports) a year earlier.

[34] A friend informed me of an archaeological site visit being undertaken by a well-known documentary-maker, Galumalemana Steven Percival, to a star mound. Galumalemana Steven invited me to join the expedition. On this expedition, I also met Galumalemana Alfred Hunkin, known for his advocacy of the Sāmoan language (in New Zealand) and publications on the Sāmoan language (see Hunkin 1988, 2009, 2012)

Guided by the Talanoa Indicative Questions, I had a *talanoaga* with twenty participants. As shown in Table 5.2, participants were identified from various connections. When I arrived in Sāmoa, I set about trying to make connections with participants, and as mentioned earlier, struggled. Essentially, it was nine months before I conducted my first *talanoaga*, which was the culmination of a series of serendipitous encounters. Within that nine months, I had briefly met Li'iafaiva Imo at the airport, and while we made a connection[35], he was on his way for a tour of Europe to make guest appearances at several tattooing conferences. I met up with Li'iafaiva Imo about six months later, after his return from overseas. I had also tried to organise a *talanoaga* with Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a, who had indicated research-fatigue, and asked for a formal *talanoaga* in the new year, about six months away. Every attempt thereafter became more and more difficult as he got busier and busier with *tatau* appointments. However, it was during one attempt to organise a *talanaoga* that he indicated that everything on the *tatau* was to do with traditional navigation. That short exchange of knowledge brought about the consideration of traditional navigation to this research, hence the Prologue chapter.

Approximately two weeks later, while 'hanging out' in 'Āpia after school with my brother's family, we saw that *Gaualofa* had beached on 'Āpia Beach, having just returned from a nine-month voyage abroad, alluded to in the Prologue chapter. I took the family to *Gaualofa* and made a connection with Tiatia Alex, who was also a *soga'imiti*. He contacted the *Tapena*[36], Fani, and three days later, I received a *Facebook Messenger* message from her inviting me to join them for the short voyage around Sāmoa, where I met Fani face to face. I saw that she was also a *malu*. Thus, began my association with *Gaualofa* and the learning of traditional navigation. Two months after returning from the voyage, I began my *talanoaga* with Fani at first, and then Tiatia Alex. However, after the two initial *talanoaga*, there was another lengthy pause in finding participants. As a personal reflection on this period, I thought of it as the need for me to continue to participate in the life of Sāmoa, a *tautua* to *tausi le vā* at a spiritual, cultural and communal level; I felt certain that participants would be forthcoming, and that I needed to enjoy the process of being where I was.

While lecturing at NUS, the end of semester exams required that I mark exams and grade the students. Given that one of my classes was a third stage Sociology paper,

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[35] Li'iafaiva Imo was one of the *'au toso* (*tufuga* aides) for my *tatau* in 2012, and was serving an 'apprenticeship' under Su'a Sulu'ape at that time.

[36] *Tapena* – a generic Pacific word used among the voyaging community to refer to the captain of a traditional sea vessel.

and many of these students were likely to graduate, I did not feel comfortable marking exam scripts at my brother's family home – I felt the home was restricted in space, so to have crucial and confidential student exam scripts where I could not guarantee security, troubled me. Accordingly, I acquired short-term accommodation in 'Āpia Central. The landlady, Nia Ah Him, upon finding out about my research, mentioned that her daughter, Muli'agatele Memoree and husband Tuiloma Walterlee, received their *tatau* together. I decided to explore this angle of a couple getting their *tatau* together to see if there was any dynamic there that stood out. Through Nia, I was introduced to Muli'agatele Memoree and Tuiloma Walterlee. At the completion of their *talanoaga*, they indicated that they had a family member and best friend that received their *tatau* together, one had received it twice, while the other was getting his *tatau* a third time. This was the referral of Vaifale Francis (the brother of Muli'agatele Memoree) and his best friend Mulitalo Amosa. Muli'agatele Memoree also connected me to her first cousins, Muli'agatele Safua and her brother Tuala Pat. Additionally, Muli'agatele Memoree connected me to her sister-in-law Natalya, who is the wife of Vaifale Francis. While trying to organise a *talanoaga* with Natalya, she introduced me to her grandmother, Su'a Frieda. The story I wanted to capture with Natalya, her mother, Tiumalu Carol, and grandmother, Su'a Frieda was three generations of *malu*. For various reasons, that *talanoaga* did not transpire, but I managed to have a brief *talanoaga* with Su'a Frieda. I did not get the chance to conduct a *talanoaga* with Natalya. In the same timeframe, Tuiloma Walterlee and Mulitalo Amosa linked me to Li'aifaiva Imo, who was just returning from overseas. Li'aifaiva Imo was the *tufuga* for Tuiloma Walterlee and Muli'agatele Memoree, the third *tufuga* for Vaifale Francis, and the second *tufuga* for Mulitalo Amosa.

Knowledge exchange

Once a prospective participant had been identified, I contacted them by phone to arrange an introductory meeting to discuss the research, its intentions, and the sorts of knowledge I was in search of. In all but three instances, an introductory meeting was arranged, which took place at either a public café in 'Āpia or the workplace of the prospective participant. At the introductory meeting, the usual cultural introductory exchanges took place, and then I explained the research. The prospective participant was then given the opportunity to determine whether they could contribute to the research or not. At first, all participants expressed uncertainty about being able to contribute meaningfully, but after having some of their questions pertaining to the value

of their experience (as knowledge) answered by me, they agreed to participate. In every situation, the prospective participant accepted my invitation to participate in the research. A date, time and venue was then organised for the *talanoaga* to take place formally with the recording instruments. Given also the co-constructive nature of knowledge in the *fa'asāmoa* – explained in the first three chapters of this thesis – I also invited the participants to feel free to have anyone with them during the *talanoaga*. This also served as a participant safety measure. The Su'a family of the *'Āīga a Tufuga* chose to have their *talanoaga* as a family; all other participants chose to conduct their *talanoaga* alone.

Three of the participants did not have an introductory meeting. In one instance, the prospective participant accepted my first contact phone call as the introductory conversation, and the arrangement of a time to 'sit and talk' was to arrange for the *talanoaga* to proceed.

For two prospective participants, brothers Vaofusi Pogisa and Su'a Faunuina Tupou, the connection to them was through Su'a Peter, their first cousin. I had met Su'a Peter at the farewell dinner of long-time friends, Jason and Roberta Chang, who were moving back to Australia. After initial introductions, Su'a Peter indicated to me that he was of the original Su'a family, one of the *'Āīga a Tufuga*, and although his side of the family tree no longer practiced the art of *tatau* – this was because his father chose the ministry ahead of the *Tufuga Tā Tatau* – his first cousins still practiced the tradition – Vaofusi Pogisa no longer practiced due to his health, but Su'a Faumuina Tupou still practiced as the *tufuga* of the Su'a family. Su'a Peter explained that contact with the two *tufuga* was difficult, but that he would represent me to them, and gauge their interest in participating in this research. Later that week, Su'a Peter contacted me by phone stating that Vaofusi Pogisa and Su'a Faumuina Tupou had agreed to participate in the research. The following day, Su'a Peter drove me to the residence of the *tufuga* to observe their practice – Sua' Faumuina Tupou was in the process of tattooing three teenagers, and teaching his son, also a teenager, the craft – and conduct the *talanoaga*. My *talanoaga* with Su'a Peter took place a week later – he felt that my connection to the original practitioners was of greater urgency and higher priority.

Each *talanoaga* took place at a setting of the participant's choosing – some were at workplace settings, some were in local cafés, and some were in family home settings. The customary protocols of a *talanoaga* were followed with the addition of the request for consent added for the sake of the research. The typical structure of the *talanoaga* followed the format of the next five parts of this section.

Upu fa'afeiloa'i[37]

For the participant's whose *talanoaga* took place at a café or public space, I arrived early to set up the camera and microphone. When the participant arrived, I sought their permission to switch on the camera before any of the introductory exchanges took place – they were already familiar with my reason for recording from the introductory meeting. I then took the host role and welcomed the participant with the customary greetings and salutations that a host would customarily perform. The participant would then reply with customary greetings and salutations of a guest.

Where the *talanoaga* took place at a workplace or family home, then the participant hosted, and I would reply as a guest. On those occasions, the opening exchanges took place before I could set up the recording devices – this was because I had already entered the space of the participant. In those situations, after the opening exchanges had taken place, I then asked the participant if I could set up the camera and microphone. This was primarily so that I could capture the participant consent on camera – as opposed to signing a consent form, which I addressed in the ethics proposal.

The video camera was set up on a tripod, facing the participant; I was always out of shot. Most times, the camera was to my side where I could check the recording device every now and then by peering over to ensure it was still recording. This was usually done discreetly so as not to disrupt the flow of the *talanoaga*. The participant was encouraged to talk with me, facing my direction, and not the camera. The portable microphone was either placed on the ground between the participant and I or hand-held by the participant. I ascertained, prior to the commencement of the *talanoaga,* that the participants who held the portable microphone were comfortable with this.

Consent

After the opening exchanges, I reiterated the objectives of the research, and thanked the participants for offering to gift their knowledge to this research. This led to my request of the participant for consent to use the *talanoaga* for research purposes, and the documentary. In every case, the participant consented. These were all recorded on digital video camera and microphone.

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[37] *Upu fa'afeiloa'i* – Literally translates as 'words of greetings'; the Sāmoan custom of greeting exchanges.

Talanoaga

After obtaining participant consent, I began the *talanoaga* with light conversation, usually referring to the source of association between the participants and myself as a middle ground that we could discuss and ease into conversation. Participants were welcomed to use the language they were most comfortable with, and most chose to move between the English language and the Sāmoan language. In most instances, I used the language that the participant used, also often fluctuating between the two languages. Five *talanoaga* were conducted entirely in the Sāmoan language by the participants and me.

The light conversation led to talking about the *tatau* experience. From this point, I was mainly guided by the Talanoa Indicative Questions. As is typical of *talanoaga*, I often found points in the *talanoaga* for further exploration, and often strayed from the Talanoa Indicative Questions. Once the line of thought I was pursuing had been answered, I returned to the Talanoa Indicative Questions. During the *talanoaga*, if the participants struggled to articulate thoughts, I would proffer my own anecdotal stories and experience of the *tatau* to help with expression and understanding.

Noted in the earlier chapters of this thesis, the use of *talanoaga* as a method served the dual purpose of data collection and data analysis. This was also reflected in the way the *talanoaga* 'strayed' from the Talanoa Indicative Questions schedule in order to pursue a line of thought. Thus, the exchange of knowledge not only gathered the narratives and discourses, but also allowed the analysis of the knowledge to occur concurrent with the accumulation of it. This also allowed the co-construction of knowledge to take place. Accordingly, given that each *talanoaga* took a different path that followed the responses of each participant, structuring the findings according to responses was difficult to achieve. To that end, I observed the protocol of unanimity, which meant that the themes that were common in *all* of the participant stories were extracted as 'themes'. These are presented in the next chapter.

When I reached the last question of the Talanoa Indicative Questions, this was the cue for me to begin to bring the *talanoaga* to a close. After the last question was answered by the participant, I asked the participant if they had any questions to ask me. I explained to them that as a reciprocal gesture of exchange, they were welcome to ask me anything. Most took the opportunity to ask questions about my experience of the *tatau*, and also asked a few questions about the motifs and patterns of other *tatau*. I reciprocated by answering their questions. In most of the *talanoaga*, the final question from the participants related to wanting to see the final version of the thesis, to which I

agreed. I explained that when the thesis was complete, and before submission, I would discuss with them the specific part of their *talanoaga* that was used for this thesis, and they would have the final say as to how they were represented in the thesis. Everyone declined the opportunity saying that they trusted me and did not need to sight or 'authorise' the final product. I insisted that it would be my undertaking to do so anyway.

Upu fa'afetai[38]

When the exchange of knowledge had come to an end – most *talanoaga* took just over an hour – I thanked the participants for making their time and wisdom available to me for the research (and documentary). After the expression of gratitude in words and proverbs, I presented a monetary gift as a reciprocal gift in recognition of their knowledge-gift to the research. In every *talanoaga*, the gift was returned to me immediately, and this was performed using traditional chiefly etiquette. When the gift of money was returned to me, I offered the gift back to them in a way to remind them of the traditional practice of reciprocity – explained in Chapter Three – and its ethical value in traditional Sāmoan practice. The monetary gift was then gratefully received by the participants.

Upu fa'amāvae[39]

When the reciprocal exchange of gratitude was complete, I used the chiefly phrases to placate God's blessing on the participant and their endeavours. In return, they entreated God's favour in the completion of the thesis. On those parting words, the *talanoaga* was brought to a close.

Where the *talanoaga* took place at a home or workplace, the participants invited me to remain while food was brought for us to share. Where the *talanoaga* took place in a café or workplace, the participant invited me to remain and join them for some food – in most cases, the gift of money I gave was used to purchase the food. In most cases, I gratefully accepted their invitation to remain and join them. The few cases where I did not remain and join the participant for a meal were due to practical reasons such as time schedules.

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[38] *Upu fa'afetai* – Literally translates as 'words of gratitude'; the traditional custom of offering and reciprocating gratitude.

[39] *Upu fa'amāvae* – Literally translates as words of farewell; the customary oratory practice of expressing appreciation, exchanging a reciprocating gift, bidding farewell, and imparting a blessing.

Translations

Noted in Chapter One, for the research findings, language was a critical element for the sake of accuracy of articulation of ideas and knowledge. In the *talanoaga*, the participants were invited to speak freely in any language they chose. In most cases, there was a mixture of both Sāmoan and English languages. With the choice of language, it became necessary to establish an appropriate protocol to cite from the *talanoaga* with translations.

The use of direct quotes from the *talanoaga* was to be the exact wording in both Sāmoan and English. I deleted stammering and stuttering and cited whole words. In using whole words, I also edited shortened words, for example, instead of "gotta" and "wana", I wrote "got to" and "want to" respectively. This was for the purpose of word recognition in accordance with formal written etiquette. I also applied this to the Sāmoan language. Additionally, although all participants who spoke Sāmoan used the informal vernacular, I wrote it with the protocols of Sāmoan written vernacular for clarity of articulation. For example, the spoken words in the informal vernacular "kakau" [tattoo] and "magakua" [remember], I wrote as "tatau" and "manatua" respectively. Formal Sāmoan is written in this manner, and the words are more likely to be recognised this way.

In addition, the English translation was done in-vivo. To demonstrate the 'translation in-vivo', I will show an excerpt from one of the *talanoaga* as it was *spoken*, *Version A: Original Language*.

> You know, *e ese'ese fo'i tagata*. I can't say that this is the case for everyone, but, *e manatua fo'i oe, e iai a le uiga o lātou a tagata Sāmoa, e tāofi mau i isi mea, a.*

This same excerpt literally translated in the English language would be written with the translation in squared brackets, *Version B: Fully Translated*.

> You know, [everyone is different]. I can't say that this is the case for everyone, but, [keep in mind, there is that 'thing' with Sāmoan people, in some things, they hold fast, and keep it to themselves].

Version C: Translation In-Vivo is the same excerpt above translated where appropriate,

> You know, *e ese'ese fo'i tagata* [everyone is different]. I can't say that this is the case for everyone, but, *e manatua fo'i oe, e iai a le uiga o latou a tagata Sāmoa, e tāofi mau i isi mea, a* [keep in mind, there is that 'thing' with Sāmoan people, in some things, they hold fast, and keep it to themselves].

As is evident, it is easier for bi-lingual speakers if I use *Version A* throughout the thesis. However, non-Sāmoan readers will not be able to follow the *talanoaga* if I maintain this protocol. It is easier for non-Sāmoan readers if I use *Version B* throughout this thesis. Despite this, and as noted throughout the early chapters, authenticity and integrity is important, and I want to make visible the actual words used in the *talanoaga*. Although *Version C* is a reasonable compromise between the other two versions, I am aware that the use of quotations using this format may appear messy for the reader. However, considering these issues, I have settled on the use of *Version C* throughout the thesis for two reasons. Firstly, it is about the visibility and accuracy of the words used. Secondly, in keeping the Sāmoan words visible, it is also about the accuracy of translation; some Sāmoan words do not translate easily into English. For example, the Sāmoan phrase used in the above excerpt, *tāofi mau,* is difficult to translate accurately and fully into English, so I have simplified the translation to mean 'hold fast'; this notion of 'hold fast' is sufficient for the point being made in the *talanoaga*, but the notion of *tāofi mau* is much deeper. Accordingly, for the sake of the translation and its utility in this research, I will employ general and contextually approximate translations, but keep the original Sāmoan words visible for the purpose noted above, that of 'recognition' for the Sāmoan readers.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS:

An exploration of the *tatau*[1]

Proverbial expression:
E mitamita le tavae i ona fulu.

Translation:
The *tavae* (tropicbird) is proud of its feathers.

Meaning:
The *tavae* is distinct for its long-feathered tail; every time it takes to flight, this distinct feature is made visible. In oratory, this proverbial expression is used to refer to pride in where one comes from, pride in what makes you distinct and set apart from others.

Reference:
This peculiarity of the *tavae* is a metaphoric allusion to a person's identity; a person is known, or identified, by that identity, or their metaphoric feathers. In this chapter, I also use it as a reference to someone who wears the *tatau*, one who has distinct features.

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[1] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

Introduction

The primary objective of this research was to explore the traditional practice of the *tatau* in search of discourses and narratives to derive a Sāmoan approach to the concepts of adversity, pain, and psychological resilience. Described in the earlier chapters, the foundational position of this research is to conduct this exploratory research from the perspective of a *soga'imiti*[2] now living in Sāmoa, using indigenous knowledge-seeking protocols, in search of Sāmoan knowledge as embodied in the *tatau* – the *tatau* is an iconographic representation of Sāmoan history, knowledge, custom and tradition. I have contended in Chapter One and Three that learning the meanings of the motifs, structures and stories of the *tatau* will give access to knowledges and beliefs of the *fa'asāmoa*[3] that could elucidate on a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. Accordingly, reiterating Chapter One, the two key questions in this research are:

1. What are the beliefs and values that inform and reinforce Sāmoan identity and behaviours as evidenced and practiced in the tradition of the *tatau* and oral traditions relating to the *tatau*?
2. How do these values and beliefs facilitate or inform stress-coping mechanisms?

Using the snowball sampling method, twenty participants were selected – male and female participants who wear the *pe'a*[4] and the *malu*[5]*,* and who live in Sāmoa – to share their knowledge of the customs and traditions of the *tatau*, and their reasons for and experiences of undertaking a *tatau*. The *Talanoaga* methodology – akin to in-depth, semi-structured 'conversations' – was used to elicit knowledges, experiences and stories from the participants and to discuss the findings to co-construct what a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity might look like.

From the body of *talanoaga*[6], there were two key findings. The first key finding was that there was a significant adversity that all participants had faced in their own life journey

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[2] *Soga'imiti* – The male who has a *tatau*.

[3] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

[4] *Pe'a* – The male *tatau*

[5] *Malu* – The female *tatau*

[6] *Talanoaga* – Colloquially, means to converse, talk, discuss; As a research methodology, it refers to a conversive method of gathering and analysing data.

prior to undertaking the *tatau*. That significant adversity resulted in a discovery of self, and essentially, their identity, or 'Sāmoan-ness'. After navigating their adversity, the participants felt that the *tatau* was the ideal way to 'mark' that journey of identity discovery. The second theme that emerged were the descriptions of what they had 'become': characteristics that the participants embraced as they emerged from their adversity. Those characteristics became inscribed on them as their new *lā'ei*[7]. To fully unpack these two key findings, six broad themes were identified in the body of *talanoaga*. These six broad themes make up the six sections of this chapter:

- Pain
- Coping with pain
- Rock bottom
- A transformation
- The *tufuga*[8]
- Expressions of Samoan-ness

It should be noted that the tradition of the *tatau* is significantly larger than what is presented in this chapter. For example, customs and practices such as to *a'ami le tufuga*[9], the *fusitā*[10], the *soa*[11], the *tausi pe'a*[12], the *'au tāpua'i*[13], the necessity to *fofō le vavale*[14], and the customary value of the *fala*[15], the *'ietoga*[16] and other cultural material

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[7] *Lā'ei* – Literally translates as 'clothing'; an idiom for the *tatau* – a reference to an ancient Sāmoan phrase for the *tatau*, *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'clothing of Sāmoan men'

[8] *Tufuga* – Master craftsman, artisan.

[9] *A'ami le tufuga* – Seek out a *tufuga*.

[10] *Fusitā* – The payment to a *tufuga* that commissions them for the undertaking of the *tatau*; the 'deposit' to signal a commitment from the *'āīga* to the *tufuga* for the undertaking of the *tatau*.

[11] *Soa* – In *tatau* lore, the *soa* is your *tatau* partner, companion for the journey.

[12] *Tausi pe'a* – The person that nurses and cares for the prospective *soga'imiti*. Duties include massaging the tattooed area, accompanying the prospective *soga'imiti* everywhere, and cooking for them.

[13] *'Au tāpua'i* – The supporters; friends and family who come to keep the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* company by singing, conversing and other ways of distraction from the pain.

[14] *Fofō le vavale* – Massage the *vavale*; the utilisation of a pressing massage technique to express the *vavale* – a highly viscous substance that is the body's natural defense against foreign particles – out of the tattooed area.

[15] *Fala* – Mat; the mat that the prospective *soga'imiti* lies on while they are being tattooed.

goods all have import in the traditional practice of the *tatau*. However, it was felt that this research was primarily about the *value* of this knowledge in relation to Sāmoan notions of coping with adversity. Thus, the parts of the *tatau* tradition mentioned above will not be discussed in this research but given greater attention in another forum outside of this research. In this chapter, I mention only those aspects of the *tatau* tradition pertinent to answering the research questions noted earlier.

The pain

All participants stated that the most prominent aspect of the tradition of the *tatau* was the pain. The pain of getting the *tatau* derives from the unique technique practiced in the Pacific, that of the hand-tapping technique. In other casual conversations with many Sāmoans, I learned that many are deterred from getting a *tatau* because of the reputed associated pain. Coping with the pain and the pain endurance required to complete the *tatau* will be discussed in this section.

A surprising and unanticipated finding to me that emerged from the body of *talanoaga* was that there was a significant adversity that each participant had overcome, prior to the undertaking of their *tatau*. For one participant, it was the death of his father years earlier; for some participants, it was the weight of expectations from family, culture and significant others; for other participants it was the convergence of significant circumstances resulting in a search for purpose in their lives; and for some still, it was the ubiquitous sense of 'lost-ness'. For all, the trauma, the adverse circumstances were associated with hardship and struggle which precipitated great pain and suffering – emotional, mental and spiritual. The grief, anguish, heartache and brokenness that they felt wreaked havoc for many months, and in some cases, years. The stories shared by participants showed that as they emerged from their adversity, they emerged changed, transformed by the adverse circumstances and struggle.

Years and months later, when the participants undertook to getting their *tatau*, the pain they had experienced in getting the *tatau* was reminiscent of the journey they had been through with the significant life-changing adversity. Their ability to cope with the physical pain of getting the *tatau*, as extreme as it was, was within their capability because of the significant life-changing adversity. The discourse on that adversity will

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[16] *'Ietoga* – Fine mats, used for customary exchanges.

be articulated later in this chapter. To provide a context for that discourse, in this section, I will describe the pain of getting the *tatau* and its impact on the prospective *pe'a* and *malu*.

The pain experience

The pain of getting the *tatau* derives from the piercing of the skin. The technique is difficult to explain fully using text. Although I provide a rudimentary explanation in Chapter Three, and while the explanations proffered by Galliot (2015), Gell (1993), and Gilbert (2000) are descriptive and useful, it is a matter that is best understood by multi-sensory experience, and this can be garnered by the three documentaries footnoted below[17].

It was explained to me by the three *tufuga* with whom I had a *talanoaga* that if the ink is not lodged deep enough, and is lodged in the epidermis layers, the ink will come out as the skin layers grow out; if the ink is lodged too deep, into the hypodermis layer, the ink will 'run' beneath the skin and the dark of the ink can be seen underneath the untattooed areas of skin. When the ink is lodged at just the right depth, the dermis layer, the ink remains and becomes a permanent skin layer; the *tatau* becomes the new skin for the wearer. The extraordinary skill and knowledge of the *tufuga* is in striking the *au*[18] at just the right strength with the *sausau*[19] to embed the ink at the precise layer of skin. It needs to be borne in mind that different parts of the body have differing amounts of layers of skin. For example, the more sensitive parts of the body – the inner thigh and the back of the knee – have fewer layers of skin than the more 'tougher' parts of the body such as the back and the quadricep. At all times, however, the prospective *soga'imiti* must endure the pain of the perforation of skin regardless of the number of layers of skin that are being penetrated, and regardless of the strength the *tufuga* uses to strike the *au*.

Overwhelmingly, the most common response from all participants when asked about how the pain felt, was a shaking of the head and a facial expression that I interpreted

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[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzKJjxK8Ya4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nV7zlgZ6ghY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWIq8I_lgMA&t=122

[18] *Au* – tattooing comb

[19] *Sausau* – The 'tapping stick'; in the practice of the *tatau*, the *sausau* is used to tap the *au* in order to lodge the ink into the skin layers.

as 'a loss of words', and 'there are no words to describe it'. Taitu'uga Fa'avae's and Tuatagaloa Joe's statements about their experience of the pain echoed by many *soga'imiti* I had a *talanoaga* with. Taitu'uga Fa'avae stated:

> All I could hear was [sound effects of the tapping], the thump and I could feel it as well, and I was like, whoa, whoa, whoa, this is pretty, this hurts! And then I realised: oh my gosh, this has just started, you know, there's no turning back . . . . there's no other pain like the *tatau*.

Tuatagaloa Joe explained:

> A number of times while I was getting tattooed, that I asked myself: what the heck am I doing here? Why am I doing this? But, that's why I keep advising anybody aspiring to getting the, their tattoo done, that they've got to believe that you want it, and you've got to be absolutely resolute . . . that you want to get it done, because you're going to ask yourself the question throughout: why am I doing this? What the heck am I doing? You know? The pain, the discomfort [shakes his head], you know the [taps his temple with pointing finger] the challenges of the mind, you know . . . it's not easy.

In fact, the extremity of the pain was such that many *soga'imiti* reported of a time in their *tatau* journey where they almost walked away and tempted to not complete their *tatau*. In other words, there was a point in the '*tatau* journey' that many *soga'imiti* arrive at where the pain is so unbearable that they questioned their motives, desire and strength to complete the journey. One of the *tufuga*, Li'aifaiva Imo Lavea, described this as reaching "rock bottom". At this place of 'rock bottom', you reach the end of yourself; you cannot handle any more pain and suffering; you are spent, exhausted, and exasperated. This notion of rock bottom is greater attention later in this chapter.

As an aside, the fear of an incomplete *pe'a* was very real – the *pe'a mutu*[20]*,* which is described in Chapter Three. All of the participants noted the negative stigma ascribed to those who do not complete the *pe'a* as being prominent in their thoughts. While many *soga'imiti* – and many who do not have the *tatau* – viewed the *pe'a mutu* harshly, there is a salient point to be made about the *pe'a mutu* and their journey. This research did not explore the *pe'a mutu* – in that I did not conduct a *talanoaga*, nor had casual conversations, with a *pe'a mutu* – but the significance of the *tatau* in Sāmoan lore requires a discussion about the negative stigmatisation of the *pe'a mutu*. Noted earlier in this section, the participants of this research experienced a life-changing adversity that preceded the *tatau*. In every story from the participants, that adversity was

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[20] *Pe'a mutu* – An incomplete *tatau;* the person who has an incomplete *pe'a*

transformational for the clarities it brought to them about who they were, and the changes they had undergone; it was the process of becoming a person with a renewed sense of identity. That process, or journey, was filled with pain. In many respects, that pain was revisited in the process of getting the *tatau*. The *pe'a mutu*, therefore, may be someone who has not yet completed an identity-transforming adversity, or were unable to complete *this* aspect of their life journey. In other words, if the *tatau* is reflective of a person's journey to a particular stage in their life, then the *pe'a mutu* is someone who may be still journeying to that stage. It needs to be borne in mind that human life stages are not linear, and are not a successive progression of stages; they are spiritual, cyclical, and personal; everyone is at different stages of becoming, and at different stages of growth. The *soga'imiti*, although they have been through a life-transforming adversity, still continue to journey, to grow and to become the next version of themselves. Their *tatau* marks a *particular* stage in the journey of growth of 'personhood', and does not indicate the *degree* of growth nor the *level* of attainment in their growth. Therefore, it behoves the community of *soga'imiti* and *malu* to support the *pe'a mutu* to complete their journey if the *pe'a mutu* so wishes, as they may no longer find it necessary to complete the *tatau* journey. In this regard, grace and kindness need to be extended to the *pe'a mutu*, rather than the current practice of shame and castigation; such a disparaging response is unbefitting of a community of people who embody the virtues of the *fa'asāmoa* described in Chapter Three, and expanded further later in this chapter. This comment about the *pe'a mutu* is made within the context of pain and its management; an extended commentary about the *pe'a mutu* within the full context of the findings of this research will be furnished in the next chapter.

Tapu[21] *ma sā*[22] – *taboos and prohibitions*

Explained in greater detail in Chapter Three, the modern practice of getting the *pe'a* is typically done over twelve sessions. Each session is two to three hours in duration, a total of 32-36 hours. The *tufuga's*, Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Li'aifaiva Imo add that there is great variance in the duration of each session and the total amount of sessions; it is dependent on the prospective *soga'imiti*, their body size and pain tolerance levels. For those that have a high pain threshold, 'double-sessions' are possible – this is when a *tatau* session that would normally take two sessions to complete, is done in one 'double-session', usually lasting five, and up to eight hours for some. The decision on the duration of a session is usually made by the *tufuga*, and

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[21] *Tapu* – Taboo; restricted

[22] *Sā* – Sacred; forbidden

their observation of the prospective *soga'imiti's* ability to cope with the pain.

From all *soga'imiti* participants, there is agreement that the first session is the most nerve-racking but is made manageable by the *tufuga's* treatment of that session with reverence. The first session is usually marked by a short introductory ceremony. One *tufuga*, Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a begins the first session by sharing a small meal with the prospective *soga'imiti* and the *'au tāpua'i*. While engaged in the sharing of the meal, conversations take place where the *tufuga* gets to understand the character of the prospective *soga'imiti*. For Li'aifaiva Imo, his first session usually begins with an *'ava* ceremony for those in attendance. As part of that process, conversations take place where he too gets to understand the prospective *soga'imiti*. For Su'a Faumuina Tupou, he found that the prospective *soga'imiti* is usually too nervous to eat or drink on the first session, and so the first session begins with customary formalities that the prospective *soga'imiti* will already be familiar with, and then usually informal and light conversation to try and alleviate the anxiety as much as possible. These opening exchanges, and before the first session, include a ritual that declares the prospective *soga'imiti* as *tapu*, and placed under a *sā* – this will be explained in the next part of this section.

The *soga'imiti* participants explain that after the introductory parts, they are cued by the *tufuga* to take their shirt off and sit in front of him, back exposed to the *tufuga*. The *tufuga* begins to outline the *pe'a* on the back of the prospective *soga'imiti* using the *au* to mark where he is going to tattoo. While this is happening, the *tufuga's* aides are preparing the *lama*[23], the cushions and pillows, and the material cloth which will be used to wipe away the excess ink and blood during the tattooing. Once the *tufuga* is satisfied with the guiding marks he has made, the prospective *soga'imiti* lies face down on the mat, his abdominal section placed on a cushion. The cushion is intended to raise the midsection of the prospective *soga'imiti* to 'flatten' the curves of the dorsum region (the middle of the back) to make it easier to tattoo. The aides stretch the area about to be tattooed and other helpers press down on the prospective *soga'imiti* to keep them down – the first strike is the first experience of the *au* and it is sure to shock! And so the process begins.

After the completion of the first session, the tattooed area is washed. Once the first wash is completed, the prospective *soga'imiti* will go back to the *tufuga* for a debrief of their first experience of the *au*. This is followed by a discussion about the *sā*:

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[23] *Lama* – Ink; tattooing ink.

- They are forbidden to expose the tattooed area to the sun
- They are forbidden to shave
- They are forbidden to carry out any household duties or chores
- They are forbidden to engage in sexual intercourse
- They are forbidden to sleep on a mattress; they must sleep on a mat
- They must bathe in clean running water only

Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a and Li'aifaiva Imo explained that these restrictions are primarily for health and safety reasons, but because of the *sā*, there are spiritual repercussions. The reason for the restrictions around sunning the *tatau* is to do with the healing of the tattooed area. Too much heat, particularly the sun's ultraviolet ray's capacity to penetrate the epidermis layers of skin and reach the dermis layer, adversely affects the setting of the *lama* into the dermis layer. The explanation for the forbidding of shaving is to reduce the risk of small, shaven hair follicles inadvertently falling into the tattooed region – keeping in mind that the tattooed region is an open wound – which will adversely affect the 'healing over' of the skin, and most likely cause infection later in the healing process. The forbidding of carrying out household duties and chores is to reduce the risk of damaging the tattooed area, and more so, to preserve the strength and vitality of the prospective *soga'imiti* for the endurance of pain, and for the healing process. The preservation of strength and vitality is also the rationale for the forbidding of sexual activity. In explanation for the use of running clean water to bathe the *pe'a*, it was explained that whereas previously, washing the *pe'a* was to be done in sea water for its healing properties, Su'a Sulu'ape explained that the sea water (at the current time) was unclean from the many deaths resulting from the tsunami of 2009; since the tsunami, *tufuga* had refrained from instructing prospective *soga'imiti* to bathe the *pe'a* in the sea, and to bathe it under clean running water. At the time of this research, Sāmoa's Ministry of Health had made it mandatory for all traditional *tatau* practitioners to include showering facilities as part of their *apisā*[24].

All participant stories of their experiences of the first session – the treatment of the first session with reverence, and the utility of *tapu* and *sā* – are demonstrations of the spiritual aspects of the tradition of the *tatau*. The significance of spirituality in the *fa'asāmoa* has been discussed in Chapter Three, and in the latter parts of this chapter, there will be further elucidation.

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[24] *Apisā* – The home/facilities of a traditional *tatau* practitioner

The pain journey

To further explore the pain that must be endured by the prospective *soga'imiti*, I asked each *soga'imiti* participant: which part of the *tatau* process hurt the most? The participants indicated three parts of the tattooing of the body as being the most painful: the very first session, the tattooing of the dorsum region; the popliteal region (behind the knee); and the adductor region (the inner thigh). Alluded to earlier, there are fewer layers of skin in those regions which makes those regions more sensitive. Regarding the pain of the dorsum region, the late Sami Navy Epati explained that this pain was to do with the "initial shock":

> The initial shock of getting the pain, it's going to be that; you have to feel it first before you can manage it . . . the first [session] *o le va'a, a? I le tua* [is the *va'a*, that goes on your back], that's the first line that goes across; that's the one that really shocks. And then there's two roads you can go down: accept it or fight it. If you fight it, you're in trouble.

After the initial shock of the first session, it was not only the extreme pain of the moment that they had to negotiate, but also for the duration of the session, and until completion of the *pe'a*. Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a stated:

> *O le mea e muamua ona tapena ai tagata e sāuni e tā, a, e tapena lona māfaufau, a? 'Auā, e ona lava le tāpenaga lona māfaufau, ia mālosi lona māfaufau e tali ai le tīgā, a? E tusa o le tīgā, o le galuega e,* it's like a mental, it's like a [shakes his head]; *a mālosi a le māfaufau, e lē lagona tele fo'i le tīgā. A o mea ia, e mautinoa e tīgā.*

> [The most important part of a person's preparation is to prepare their state of mind. It is critical that they have the fortitude to cope with the amount of pain they are about to encounter. The purpose of the pain is to challenge their mental fortitude, and if they are prepared for it, they should cope well. But for sure, it will be extremely painful.]

Knowing the level of pain in getting the *pe'a*, the prospective *soga'imiti* must then turn up the next day and to continue to do so for a further number of sessions, or two weeks, is illustrative of the fortitude required. The prospective *soga'imiti* must present themselves to the *tufuga,* subject themselves to the pain willingly and voluntarily, and continue to do so until the *pe'a* is complete. This is the 'pain journey' that all *soga'imiti* described; this is the pain that had to be endured in order to complete the *pe'a*.

Additional to the pain endurance described above, there is an added element of pain for those that *solisā*[25] – the breaking of a restriction. One of the participants of this

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[25] *Solisā* – Literally translates as 'trampling something that is sacred'; refers to the breaking of something that is forbidden.

research admitted that he had experienced an added element of pain as a result of his breaking of a *sā*. All *soga'imiti* explained that these were the reasons why, when the *tatau* process began, the prospective *soga'imiti* was considered *tapu* and not allowed to participate in everyday, common activities. These activities included cultural activities. One of the participants[26] explained that there was a time during his *tatau* process that he *solisā*. He explained that in the village, there was a cultural exchange between other *'āīga* going on. His desire to participate in the cultural exchange was overwhelming, brought on by the excitement of his almost-complete *pe'a*. He thought that if he wore his cultural attire in a certain way, he could hide the incomplete parts of the *pe'a*, and participate as he had long desired to: a *soga'imiti* carrying out his cultural duty. Thus, in his impatience, and as an incomplete *pe'a*, in some respects, a *pe'a mutu*, he performed the *tulāfale* duty at the cultural exchange – the people of the village did not realise he had not completed his *tatau*. Later that day, however, he noticed an extraordinary amount of swelling and pain of the tattooed area. Ultimately, this resulted in him postponing the *tatau* session the next day, and he required hospitalisation. Western medicine, he reported, had little effect on his condition. After a three-day absence from the tattooing, he went to see the *tufuga* to explain what had happened.

O a'u na 'ou sōlia le sā i le matou tāaga. I le mātou tāaga tatau, na 'ou sōlia le sā. Ioe. E le isi lenā mea sa 'ou tīgāina ai. Na matua'i o'u, na 'ou ta'oto i le falema'i a e tui o'u ivi . . . ua fulafula lota vae, ua fa'alogo atu, e leai se vai fofō mo a'u. . . . Sa toe fa'amaopoopo mai mātou ma fai le tala. Na 'uma loa ona fai le mātou tala ma le tufuga, fo'i ma 'ou talanoa iai i le tūlaga o lo'u solisā na māfua ai ona 'ou tīgāina, ia, ona fai loa lea le tala o le tufuga, i le fa'amāgalo ai le, a, lo'u solisā . . . ia, o le taimi a lea ona 'uma, mā ō ma le tufuga fofō loa a'u. Na 'uma loa ona fofō a'u a le tufuga, na matua'i ō ese 'atoa, atu le, a, na fa'alogoina le taimi lea ua matuā ō ese 'atoa a.

[In the group that I got my *tatau* with, I broke one of the restrictions. This is why I experienced a lot more pain than the others. I required hospitalisation but their medicine didn't alleviate the pain and swelling . . . When the *tufuga* called us all together, I spoke to him about the *sā* that I broke and the extra pain I was experiencing. He then forgave me of breaking the *sā*, and performed a ritual (*fofō*) to 'cleanse' me. As soon as he completed the ritual, I felt the pain and swelling leave me immediately.]

What this *soga'imiti* was inferring, and in fact was a recurring theme in many of the other *talanoaga*, was "*le mamalu o le lagimālōfie*" – the sacredness of the traditional practice of the *tatau*, and its associated customs, traditions and the people involved – cannot be made light of as it is more than physical and emotional, but cultural,

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[26] Although this participant has allowed me to use his name, I have refrained from naming him. He was forthcoming in relating the story, and related it with great hilarity, but the notion of *solisā* is sacrosanct and while I will relate the story to illustrate the point being made, withholding his name allows me to still hold the matter sacred.

historical and spiritual. On this matter, one of the participants, Mulitalo Amosa Tupa'i, explained:

> *Manatua fo'i oe Sonny, o Sāmoa anamua, e iai ona āga i mea fa'apea. E lē mafai ona e alu e tā sau lā'ei a e leai se tāpua'iga a lau 'āīga. . . . e iai talitonuga fo'i lea, ma o mau a Sāmoa, e te tīgāina pe a e alu e te tā, a e lē iloa e lau 'āīga.*

> [Keep in mind, in ancient Sāmoa, there are sacred customs that must be observed. You cannot go to get your *tatau* if you're *'āīga* are not sharing the journey with you . . . there is a belief that your pain will be greater if you get your *tatau* done without the support of you're *'āīga*.]

The point to be highlighted is the recognition among the participants that pain permeates the whole being; it is felt physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The pain is pervasive. Essentially, as the pain journey progresses, the prospective *soga'imiti* reaches a point where they struggle to cope with the pain endurance and give significant thought to walking away from the *tatau*, albeit incomplete. This is that moment of 'rock bottom' earlier alluded to in this section. This notion of 'rock bottom' is a critical discourse to this research's exploration of a Sāmoan approach to coping with pain and suffering, and to the notion of psychological resilience. Having said that, though, the context for its significance must be fully unpacked, and the context of being 'broken down' (through pain) and emerging from it is necessary for that discourse.

Taliau[27]: coping with pain

In one sense, *taliau* means to 'respond to the *au*'. In another sense, and more pertinent to the *tatau*, *taliau* means to *accept* or *receive* the *au*. *Taliau* refers to the notion of the necessity to cope with the pain by receiving or accepting the pain. In other words, in the same way that the pain of the *tatau* process is pervasive, so too the amelioration of that pain requires an all-encompassing effort; the body of *talanoaga* showed that the prospective *soga'imiti* must give all of their focus, attention and energy to manage the pain, and this was done by finding ways to *accept* the pain. The participants of this research described a small number of coping techniques that they had learnt while getting their *tatau.* Those coping techniques detailed physical ways of coping, emotional and mental approaches to accept the pain, and spiritual encounters that helped them to emerge from 'rock bottom'. A central finding that came from the

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[27] *Taliau* – The way a person responds to the *au*; literally translated, means 'react to the *au*', metaphorically, means to embrace, or accept the *au*.

experiences of the participants was that the practical ways of coping were predicated on a fundamental belief in a holistic and interconnected natural existence that co-exists with – or perhaps originates from – a supernatural (viz. spiritual) realm. That discourse on the supernatural realm will be described in the latter parts of this section.

Localisation of the pain

To describe how to *taliau* well physically, Sami Navy, using gestures and body language, laid out his hands imitating lying down on the floor, prostrate, and instructed that the prospective *soga'imiti* needs to look at their hands: if their hands start to claw at the floor, then they are trying to fight the pain. However, they will lose; the pain always wins. Sami Navy explained that the prospective *soga'imiti* cannot *will* the pain away; they must change their attitude towards the pain. He continued to explain that the key to coping with the pain was to 'let it go'. Moreover, the prospective *soga'imiti* must 'embrace the pain'. In other words, they must let the pain exist in their body. This attitudinal shift towards 'pain' was a common explanation among the participants; the phrase "embrace the pain" was a type of mantra that all participants expressed and served as a reminder for them on how to progress through the pain journey.

Sami Navy said that the mindset of 'embracing the pain' is accompanied by the attitude that the prospective *soga'imiti* is allowing the *tufuga* to hurt them, to inflict unimaginable pain on them, and the prospective *soga'imiti* must welcome it. This, too, was a common phase among the participants: to submit your body to the *tufuga*. Sami Navy stated:

> So what goes through your head is, basically is saying to yourself: I'm going to allow the tattooist to do what he needs to do, and go ahead, do it. But then you need to localise that thought to whichever part of your body he is tattooing.

Sami Navy continued that, at a physical level, the prospective *soga'imiti* cannot let themselves get overwhelmed by the pain; they must *focus* on it and *locate* it. By focusing attention on where *exactly* the pain is, the prospective *soga'imiti* will realise that although their *whole body* feels the pain, it is not actually the whole body that is *in* pain; it is merely *that* part of their body that is being tattooed that is in pain. However, the whole body will *feel* it to try and redistribute, or disperse, the pain as a way of diluting the pain. If the prospective *soga'imiti* is able to focus and localise the pain, they will see that it is only that part of the body that is being tattooed that is in pain, and then they will be able to restrict it to only *that* part of their body. Then, the rest of the body can relax, which will manifest in a relaxation of the 'clawed' hands. Sami Navy concluded that as the prospective *soga'imiti* gets better and better at doing this,

through each session, they will begin to realise that the part of their body that was in extreme pain no longer feels the pain; the pain has moved to another part of their body. Within a matter of seconds, he said, *that* part of the body will no longer feel the pain but another part will, and then another and then another. In other words, the pain moves. More to the point, pain is not permanent, and will indeed subside. For all *soga'imiti*, after the first session, later in the day, they acknowledged that the pain of getting the *tatau* had subsided to a large degree. What remained, however, was the beauty of the tattooed *va'a*[28]; the *va'a* became a remnant of the pain journey that was experienced earlier.

Passive endurance

Hand in hand with the act of localising the pain, and perhaps more difficult to do, was the act of passive endurance. All of the participating *soga'imiti* described enduring the pain passively. In other words, the act of pain localisation was to help cope with the pain of the moment, but there was an act of sheer will to persevere, endure and continue to struggle voluntarily and unwaveringly. Li'aifaiva Imo explained that when he was struggling with the pain journey, he was encouraged by his mother to find the necessary strength of character to endure the pain; the *'au tāpua'i*[29] can and will do all they can to support and cheer on the prospective *soga'imiti*, but ultimately, the prospective *soga'imiti* must traverse the pain journey alone, willingly and resolutely. Moreover, it is in this act of passive endurance that the act of submission, of submitting to the pain, and submitting their bodies to the *tufuga* is carried out. Ultimately, as noted earlier, the *soga'imiti* exhausts all resources and 'hits' rock bottom – there is only so much pain and anguish that a person can take.

At rock bottom, all of the participants described spiritual encounters. The spiritual encounters pertained to talking with ancestors, talking with God, and for some, feeling comforted by spiritual presences. In every situation, the spiritual encounters and conversations with those of the spirit realm, were benevolent, kind and comforting. Many of the participants experienced a type of dissociation from their bodies – an out-of-body experience. To explain this, Tiatia Alex Taulelei said that the extent of the pain puts a person into "a liminal state; you're neither alive nor dead"; in that state of

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[28] *Va'a* – Sea vessel; in this context, it is a reference to the first motif/pattern/section of the first session of the *tatau* – refer Chapter Three.

[29] *'Au tāpua'i* – The supporters; friends and family who come to keep the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* company by singing, conversing and other ways of distraction from the pain.

'between-ness', the prospective *soga'imiti* is vulnerable, and in that state of vulnerability are less inhibited, and become more open to the spirit realm.

> Tiatia Alex
>> . . . and to see your brother in pain, and to be there and you're there holding him and *lomilomi'*ing [massaging] his feet and his hands and you're his link; you're what's holding him.

> Sonny
>> To this realm.

> Tiatia Alex
>> To this realm, as he floats off, or if he's in pain, I say: bro, go and visit; don't be here because you're hurting; go. You know? And so through that, you know like, Mick [brother] and I were taken to our spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical what we thought were our boundaries, and beyond that, you know. So it was like, you got stretched big, big time. And that in itself is what you learn: to face your fears, to go into, you know, you learn that you can handle this physical pain so you can handle the emotional pain; it's the same thing. It's a really really big learning curve.

As a further description of the 'learning curve', Tiatia Alex stated:

> And in that liminal state, it's like part of your journey as a young boy to manhood. So, you're on the threshold and you're crossing over. And for a male, it's a very, very important thing, you know . . . one of those sayings that I found was like, women go through childbirth, but men go through the fire of the *tatau*, and in that, we are equal, you know. So we learn our compassion and our empathy and all those values.

I will return to Tiatia Alex's above description of the *tatau* process later in this chapter. Here, I want to delve a little further into the notion of the spiritual realm that Alex referenced.

Tuiloma Walterlee Imo and his wife Muli'agatele Memoree described their approach to coping with the pain, and their unique approach described an interesting aspect of the spiritual realm:

> Muli'agatele Memoree
>> You know I was very calm during my *malu*. Like, it was painful but you kind of just lie there and

> Sonny
>> So what do you mean "it was painful" but "really calm"?

> Muli'agatele Memoree
>> Like, you, you accept pain and you kind of give your, your pain to that higher power, like you kind of sacrifice it and so you're able to just there and just endure it.

Sonny
    And you said "a high power"; is this, would you like to describe this 'higher power' that you were able to connect to?

Muli'agatele Memoree
    Yes, I guess to God, to a family member that's going through a, going through a much harder pain or a time than my *malu*. It was almost like during it, I guess you, you sacrifice that pain for somebody else who's, who's in more pain.

Tuiloma Walterlee
    Yeah, for our preparation, actually, so the day before I got my *pe'a*, I sat down with my *Pātele*[30] Spa; I'm not sure if you know who he is?

Muli'agatele Memoree
    Father Spa Silva [a clarification for my sake].

Tuiloma Walterlee
    Yeah, Father Spa Silva. And he told me, he told me . . . what I got from what he said, was: you're going to go through the pain, you're going to feel the pain anyway, so why don't you sacrifice your pain, so you're taking that pain and making a family member at peace for however long you're going through that pain. You know, so when I was, so when I, during, especially during my side [referring to the tattooing of the *'aso fa'aifo* section of the *tatau*], I just thought of my auntie and that, you know, she had cancer. So I thought: if I can take her pain, make her feel happy, or not as painful for the 8 hours that I'm lying down, then that, that, my mindframe was that if I take that, she'll be alright. And when I thought about that, it didn't hurt as much, you know, I don't know why, but, you know, so yeah, you just, that's what she's [Memoree] saying: you . . . take their pain, so they take your peace of mind that you always have every day of your life, and you just take their 8 hours of pain.

This approach to pain management, of 'sacrificing pain', was unique to Tuiloma Walterlee and Muli'agatele Memoree. I was awestruck by their explanation. Among other things, it depicted the way the spiritual realm operates according to the Sāmoan worldview. In reference to this research, it was evidence of a core belief in the Sāmoan worldview of the interconnectedness of all things. The spiritual realm is a place where the interconnectedness of all things is unmistakable, and although intangible in some respects, is discernible and therefore 'real' in many respects. This, according to the participants, was one of the keys to coping with the pain, and emerging from the place of 'rock bottom': that the *tatau* is more than a physical and cultural experience, but more so, a personal and spiritual experience that connects the prospective *soga'imiti* to a 'space' where they feel connected, or *become* connected to a space where they can "float off" and "visit", where they connect with ancestors long since passed on, and to a "higher power" that is able to receive 'sacrifices of pain'. This spiritual 'space' has all

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[30] *Pātele* – Priest'; a transliteration of the Latin word 'padre' as a reference to the Catholic religious order of priests.

the hallmarks of the *vā* – the relational space that connects all things – described in Chapter Three. This discourse on the *vā* and its relevance to coping with adversity will be expounded further in the next chapter.

Rock bottom

In relation to coping with the extreme pain of receiving the *tatau*, Li'aifaiva Imo explained that the prospective *soga'imiti* was "going through something so traumatic … it really does bring you, knocks some sense into you". He explained that people in general take many things for granted, including their mortality, and it was not until they get to a place of 'rock bottom' that they re-evaluated their lives to determine that which is of greater worth. This will be explicated further in the next two sections of this chapter.

At this place of 'rock bottom', the prospective *soga'imiti* is in a place of vulnerability from which they must fully submit themselves to the *tufuga,* or, as all participants came to acknowledge, they *learned* to submit, to make themselves vulnerable; it was where they learned to be humble. Moreover, it was from this place of vulnerability, of submission, and humility, that something extraordinary happened: the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* were reminded of a personal tragedy or adversity that they had recently overcome.

Brokenness

Each participant described to me an array of adverse circumstances, tragedies and hardships that occurred at certain stages of their lives. It is likely that there are themes and categories of themes that pertain to adversities and their impact, and this would merit further exploration, but beyond the parameters of this research. Notwithstanding that observation, the diversity of adversities that the participants experienced were notable for their varied impact on the participants, and in taking them to the place of 'rock bottom'. Participants stories indicated that the notion of 'rock bottom' designated a place of exhaustion, of being "beaten down", as one of the participants described it, and for want of a better word, *brokenness*. Of particular note, the personal tragedies and adversities that had been traversed were particularly notable for the way these challenged the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* about who they were. The tragedy and adversity that had befallen them caused them to question their identity. In other words, the circumstances were 'confronting' in that their sense of personhood, even their

existence and purpose was made uncertain – the concept of 'personhood' refers to the status of being a person, as one who has an identity. In that uncertainty of identity, the circumstances became unpleasant and stress-filled. Reaching the point of 'rock bottom' was the degree of discomfort they felt about themselves, and the level of brokenness they had reached.

From that place of vulnerability, they said a transformation started to take place as they began to resolve the question pertaining to their identity and a new sense of personhood. I use the word 'transformation' rather than 'change' because 'change' is suggestive of any type of alteration, good or bad, whereas 'transformation' has the sense of a 'change forward'; a type of adaptation, or evolution[31]. It is in this sense, that the *tatau* stories from the participants of this research described their change. For the participants, choosing the *tatau* later, was in fact, for the purpose of reflecting that transformation, and their renewed sense of identity.

One of the participants, Gabrielle Apelu, was born, raised and educated in Sāmoa, and was known for her athletic ability. She gained a scholarship to study at the New Zealand Institute of Sport. Upon completion of her studies and her return to Sāmoa in 2003, she got into rugby, rugby league and touch rugby. As she climbed the proverbial ladder into Sāmoa's elite sports, her life became significantly complicated when her *Pālagi*[32] partner (whom she met while playing for Manusina[33], he was training the Manu Sāmoa[34], and would later become her husband), family expectations – the family had a small family business that they were looking to grow – and thoughts towards a future she became unsure about weighed heavily on her. The uncertainty about how to navigate the difficulties reflected the uncertainties she felt about who she was; she felt that if she knew who she was, she would know how to deal with the uncertainties. Amid her uncertainties, she said she found strength in thinking about the legendary war goddess, Nafanua[35]. Gabrielle explained that in order to emerge from her 'rock bottom', she had to make the necessary difficult decisions to reverse the effects of the

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[31] https://www.cioinsight.com/it-management/expert-voices/the-difference-between-change-and-transformation

[32] *Pālagi* – Caucasian; of European descent.

[33] Manusina is the name of the Sāmoan national women's rugby team

[34] Manu Sāmoa is the name of the Sāmoan national men's rugby team

[35] There are several versions of the story of Nafanua. The most popular version notes her as a 'war goddess' and others as a mighty warrior. Her stories can be found in Kramer (1904), Tuimalealiifano (2006), Turner (2006) and in the *Samoa Ne'i Galo* series (Faatonu et al.).

circumstances that got her in the 'slump'; she found the strength to do this by continually invoking inspiration from Nafanua: that a strong Sāmoan woman (like Nafanua) would do the necessary things to remediate the situation, no matter the difficulty. As Gabrielle emerged from the place of 'rock bottom', she saw in herself a strength of heart and change of character that resulted in a greater commitment to her *'āīga* and the family business as well as her partner, and a greater desire to make them a greater part of who she had become. Accordingly, she felt that the *malu* was the ideal way to mark her journey, and reinforce who she had become.

Gabrielle
And there was a time, as everyone goes through ups and downs . . . and one of the lowest downs, was, the one thing that actually brought me out of it was: well, it was like, I'm a Sāmoan girl*; e leai ma se teneiitiiti Sāmoa e to'ilalo fa'apea* [no Sāmoan woman capitulates like this]. So, and the picture I had in mind was Nafanua and the *malu*. So to pull myself out, that's actually what brought me out of my [slump]. I didn't want to be that person; the thing that drew me out of being that sad, lonely, you know, depressed, piece, state of mind, I was like: well, hold up, if I were to, and then, you know, *o le malu ā ia* [the *malu* is], in my mind, I fixated: that's the strength of a woman, *o nā mea e sau ai lau mālosi* [those things are where you get your strength from], it's who you are, *o oe o le teine* Sāmoa [you are a Sāmoan woman] . . .

Sonny
So . . . can I ask what that 'slump' was?

Gabrielle
Yeah, well, just probably, you know, family, relationships obviously, so you get a little bit emotionally depressed or a little beaten down, and you find yourself on a low, and as someone who's quite, I'm quite strong in my beliefs as a strong woman …. It was very odd; I couldn't quite shake it. It just came upon [me]; it wasn't something that I liked myself. And I thought: oh, dude, I got to get, how I do get out of feeling so [sound effect that indicates: yuck], and . . . one day I lay there thinking for a bit: I really don't want to get up, I'm tired and at the same time I'm tired of feeling like this too. And then I was like, what, why are you, *o oe o le teine* Sāmoa [you are a Sāmoa woman]; what's meaningful to me? And I was like: let's go back to … Nafanua, you know, she's a warrior princess. And I was like: ok, stuff this; who am I? The one thing I wanted to really identify, was that my identity as a Sāmoan woman is completely inclusive of le *malu*. Well, that's who I am and that's what I want to become, and I clung to that, and that's what really pulled me out of my lethargic thinking. I was like: I'm a Sāmoan woman, I'm strong; stuff this, I'm going to get my *malu* now. So I was up and at it.

Sonny
. . . what . . . did the *malu* represent that made you, that gave you such strength?

Gabrielle
Strength . . . I can't articulate it any better than that. But, the *malu* to me epitomises your identity as a Sāmoan; it's a beautiful thing. And I see the

> beauty and the strength and the strength of a woman, to use another cliché, but it's what it represented to me. Everything to do with being strong, and being Sāmoan.

Sonny

> And so how did it empower you? What did it do? What did it, what was the thinking switch in the thinking process?

Gabrielle

> When I thought about getting the *malu*, it took me four years to get it. Because for the first two years, I had to get over, I had to, I was reluctant to get it because I didn't think I had earned it. So it took me two years of: ooohhh, I haven't earned it yet. And then finally I did decide: well, actually, I do deserve it, and this is me, I should go get it. And then it took me another two years just to plan on getting it, and again, it was in that planning stage, there was still that doubt that I still wasn't in a place that I had achieved to get the *malu* … And I always thought when I get the *malu*, because, you know, the *malu* has obviously evolved from woman to woman, generation to generation in terms of how it's presented and I always thought I'd be one of the modern ones where, you know, it's something beautiful to show off; not show-off in the sense like: look, I got it. But it's for people to look, to admire, just like I admire the beauty of it, I too would like other people to admire the beauty that is the *malu*. But no, as soon as I got that done, yeah no, something changed in me. I was like: well, hold up; I can't really walk around, you know, with the normal shorts, and for the first time in my life, because I'm quite active and play a lot of sports, I was buying my ¾ skirts, my ¾ pants, and that made me feel even better. … But when you go out to the village or *mea fa'ale'āīga, mea fa'alelotu,* [family matters and church matters] obviously*, e leai se, o a'u a ia,* [there are no, this is me] I like to keep it to the old ways.

Gabrielle's explanation of brokenness and "beaten down" refers to the 'rock bottom' Li'aifaiva Imo alludes to. It was from this place of humility and vulnerability that the desire for change came.

A journey

Fani Bruun's journey to the *malu* was a similar statement of identity challenge that originated from an adversity that began when she was living abroad. Fani was born and raised in Sāmoa, but for higher education, she moved to Europe. Over time, she began to feel displaced, as uncertainties about her place and her identity started to take greater significance, resulting in returning to Sāmoa ten years later. Upon her return to Sāmoa, Fani got involved with traditional voyaging, ultimately becoming the current, and only captain of Sāmoa's traditional voyaging canoe, *Gaualofa* (refer to the Prologue chapter for images), a traditionally designed, double-masted, twin-hulled *va'a*. In 2009, seven such traditional voyaging canoes were made, and in 2011, these seven traditional voyaging canoes set sail from Auckland to undertake a two-year voyage

around the Pacific for the *Te Mana o te Moana* voyage[36]. Fani was a part of that voyage, crewing primarily on *Gaualofa* and also spending part of the voyage on an all-female crew aboard *Hinemoana*, one of the other voyaging canoes. The *Mana o te Moana* voyage was an important milestone for Fani; learning traditional navigation and wayfinding was also the path to the *malu*. After completing the voyage, Fani went on to complete the maritime qualifications to achieve 'skipper' status, and become captain of *Gaualofa*. She is the second captain of Sāmoan descent in the fleet, and the first Sāmoan and Pacific woman to hold the position of yachtmaster[37]. Fani said:

> Along the voyage, because the voyage just became a, the whole thing just became a 'how did our ancestors do it'? . . . How could they keep strong? In prevailing and keep going, right? What made them think to keep going? You know, instead of just giving up, you know? Strong winds, give up man. First island? … But they prevailed, they stayed at it; they went from island to island to find the perfect place, or the place where they thought there, was right for them. So … when I came back, I felt that I was ready because when I was in, in Europe for school for over 10 years . . . the last 5 years I was thinking of getting a *malu*. I was, because I felt very distant from my homeland, I felt very, it was something to be a little bit near, right, because I grew up in Sāmoa, I was born in Sāmoa and . . . I was thinking about it for 5 years so when I came back I was just thinking about it . . . and after the voyage, I just, I became, I realised I was ready; I was ready, I hoped that I was ready. Or at least I, what I had learnt, and what I had came back with the voyage, I hoped that pre-text I was ready for it.

For Fani, wanting to rediscover the 'lost' knowledge of traditional navigation symbolised her rediscovering her own, seemingly 'lost', identity; the *malu* served as the record of the physical as well as emotional, psychological, cultural and spiritual journey. This desire was made more pronounced by the fact that the captain of *Gaualofa* for the inaugural voyage was of French descent, not associated with Sāmoa nor traditional navigation. Fani explained that she got on well with the captain, but while he served a crucial function in getting the mission of traditional Sāmoan navigation restoration started, Fani knew that the task of restoration had to be local. In fact, she came to accept that it had to be her to lead the task of restoring this ancient knowledge. After some time grappling with this realisation, primarily while she was at sea on a traditional voyaging canoe, she saw the path that she needed to follow and that path led to the *malu*. Moreover, Fani explained that the original *malu* that women wore was the

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[36] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6bRg_vmaqQ,
https://www.facebook.com/greatbigstory/videos/1620450948257332/

[37] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46225037

original image of the star charts used in traditional navigation and wayfinding in pre-contact Sāmoa. This will be elucidated in the next chapter.

Tiatia Alex related a stunning series of events that led to his *tatau* journey. Tiatia Alex alluded to the fact that he was born in New Zealand, spent most of his years in Australia, and in helping young Aboriginal males to connect with their identities, he realised it was a journey that he too needed to make. As he made that journey of discovery, he moved to Sāmoa to live in the village of his father and to serve his family by working the land; the fruit of the land he would transport to the markets to sell, and give the proceeds to the *ali'i* of the *'āīga* for redistribution among the *'āīga*. This, he would explain, was a way of life that was originally foreign to him, but fulfilling nonetheless: "here's a whole aspect of being that I have never even engaged"; something that was beyond the cognitive, beyond the physical and something that "was moving to another realm … and it was like very very strong so it's like right in the core of me". This journey of discovery and recovery made indelible marks in his heart that getting the *pe'a* not only marked the journey, but a mere formality: a physical manifestation of what was already in his heart.

> Tiatia Alex
>> And then, around that same period of time, I was going through like a big change, big change in life direction. I'd never really followed a spiritual path or any, so it was really cognitive in a *Pālagi* world, mainly house, car, money, education for the kids, job, you know investment portfolios, all the bits and pieces, so ticking all the boxes, and I sort of got to this point, you know, I had been together for 27 years, and you're supposed to, you know, and I thought, I'm not happy; this isn't, you know, there's something missing. And then I met a few Aboriginal people, Aboriginal healers, Kurdaitcha[38] and worked a lot with Aboriginals and I could see where, especially where I was working with the youth, they were disconnected to their culture, and then I was talking to an elder, and I was thinking and sort of saying: these boys, they don't fit in the … white man's ways, they don't fit into their Aboriginal culture and they just bounce angry in the middle. And I suddenly realised: well, so I understood a lot of the Aboriginal culture, and well, I don't know anything about my own.
>>
>> So, you know, we'd grown up completely in the *fa'apapālagi*, so it was all a European lifestyle. And so it was only my dad and my auntie were two, the two contacts or teachers of Samoan culture for me. And that's when I went back to university. So I thought ok.
>>
>> I met a few people, and they, like a Kurdaitcha, and he actually, he just said: there's someone here, he looks like a Māori and he's standing there with a big stick. And I recognised [it] and I just said: is it a club?

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[38] Kurdaitcha = in the custom of several Aboriginal tribes, a Kurdaitcha is a type of shaman, one who has the ability to perceive and interact with the spirit world.

You know, is he angry? Is it a club? He reckons: no no, it was a *to'oto'o* [Orators' staff], so he's standing there and he's pointing. And I thought: ok.

And then, another, there's a big Cherokee Indian, he told me some stuff, and he says: your old grandfather is there, and he's waiting and he gave me a big greeting. And I thought, I started to think: oh yeah, what planet have you dropped off mate? [Laughs]

And then, it was all really quickly, and then I saw this African spirit guide/doctor, and he told me the same thing. And I thought, ok, there's three, ok.

Sonny
From three different nations.

Tiatia Alex
Three different, yeah, three different aspects. And I thought: ok, time for me to go and check this … as it was all unfolding, I thought: well, here's a whole aspect of being that I have never even engaged. So it had been really cognitive, army planning, you know, prior planning, preparation, mission you know, do this, do that, and I had everything nailed. So then it was moving into another realm. And so, when they told me I'd get the *tatau*, I thought: ok, let's bring it.

. . . There was no one in our family who had a *tatau*; there hadn't been a *tatau* for two generations. There had been a *malu*; I found one auntie who had a *malu*. And when I was talking to my uncles, and I was asking my uncles because dad wasn't there, and I was quite, what to do? And dad was like: ask uncle. And then they, they know, you need to, you know, we haven't got one. And I was thinking, no, but for me, I think it was very important. And it's something you got to know that I felt, and it was like vey very strong so it's like right in the core of me.

The recurring theme to be highlighted is as noted earlier in this section: the *pe'a* and the *malu* were a physical manifestation of a journey, or adversity that the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* had already undergone.

A pe'a of the heart

In a *talanoaga* with Tuala Pat Leota, we had been discussing hardships and difficult times that happen to people (like a death in the family, preparation for a wedding, financial hardships, church obligations). Tuala Pat remembered the most difficult time for him:

Pau a le mea sa telē i ia a'u, o le taimi sa maliu la'u toea'ina [the biggest ordeal for me was when my father passed away] . . . *o i'inā sa fa'amatua ai la'u māfaufau* [that's what caused me to grow up] . . . I guess *o la'u pe'a muamua a lenā* [that was my first *pe'a*].

There were two significant statements from Tuala Pat's excerpt. First, a statement that was evident in every *talanoaga*: *e fa'amatua ai la'u māfaufau*, which literally translates as 'a growing up of the mind', but refers to a maturation; not a maturity brought on by natural biology (for example, puberty and menopause) but by personal, emotional, spiritual growth induced by an adversity or ordeal. The second significant statement was that the ordeal (of Tuala Pat's father passing away) left permanent scars in his heart, that *that* was his "first *pe'a*". Tuala Pat's description of his "first *pe'a*" as a *pe'a* of the 'heart' was more a description of the *emotional* heart, or the perhaps, the soul – in Sāmoan, *loto* – rather than the *physical* heart – in Sāmoan, *fatu*.

Tuala Pat explained that the passing of his father was a significant time in his life. In 2011, his father was diagnosed with cancer. Two years later, his father passed away. Tuala Pat noted that in that two-year period, he had learnt an incredible amount from his father regarding the family duties in the village, the chiefly protocols, and his responsibilities to the family. He then reiterated: *o i'inā sa fa'amatua ai la'u māfaufau* [that is when my thinking grew up]. Tuala Pat got his *tatau* done in 2015. Indeed, he felt that he was well prepared by his father for his chiefly duties, and getting his *pe'a* seemed to be a mere formality.

> Sonny
> Did your dad come to mind while you were getting your *pe'a* done?

> Tuala Pat
> [Laughs], yeah, yeah. *'Ae maise a le taimi lea e, 'auā e iai isi taimi ia e toto ai le mea; a o le toea'ina, e va'ai loa i le mea o le toto, matapōgia* [especially, when the *pe'a* bled; my father, when he sees blood, he faints] *… ia e iai isi taimi, e iai taimi e fai ai tapulu, e iai fo'i le mea lea e ūmi a, le* session *lenā, ou te māfaufau ai, po'o o a fo'i ni ana tala e fai e ni isi, e fai ni ana* jokes *fo'i na* [and also, during the session of the *tapulu*, it's a really long session, that's when I would think of him, and wonder what he might say to pass the time with the others, him and his jokes].

Exemplified in this section, the two key findings that emerged from the body of *talanoaga* was that the ordeal of coping with a previous adversity or tragedy were so impactful that it left scars, or *marks*, in the hearts, souls, and psyches. The physical *pe'a*, thus, served as a reminder of the transformation that had taken place as a result of that time of difficulty. In this regard, the physical *pe'a* became a manifestation of the 'heart' *pe'a*; it was not only the story that the *pe'a* and *malu* now told, but also the memories they evoked. The second key finding was that, in every *talanoaga*, the adversities or tragedies were particularly notable for the challenge on the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* about their identity: it was not only in who they were, but more so in who they needed to become to emerge from rock bottom. Thus, as they discovered the

values and qualities that needed to become more prominent in their lives, the decisions they made thereafter helped them to arise from the place of brokenness, and resolve the adversity. This transformation, as stated by every participant, was the *fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau* [a maturation of the person].

A transformation

As noted, the journey that a prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* go through was a journey of transformation, changing from one sense of identity to another, from one sense of personhood to another and from one set of responsibilities and duties to another. Pain, it appeared, brought a clarity and a perspective shift that instigated the transformation. That transformation was in *the way they saw themselves*. There were elements of this process in all of the participant stories, and it was also very pronounced in Leilani's story. In the following excerpt, Leilani described getting her *malu.* She and three others had committed to getting their *malu* done together many years earlier. As the years passed, the friends, who now lived overseas but had recently met in Sāmoa, had contacted Leilani and asked her to pray for them as they got ready to get their *malu* – they assumed that by now, Leilani had already gotten her *malu*. When they learnt that Leilani had not, they invited her to join them. Thus, although seemingly Leilani went to get her *malu* done at the last minute, she said it was a matter she had long been ready for. I cite at length an excerpt from our *talanoaga*:

> Leilani
> On the day we finished, I did come back briefly just to see the family. . . . there ended up being six of us ladies that got our *malu* done together so we all stayed that night together. We slept on a mat, Samoan mat, which helped massage our *malu*. And that sense of fellowship, in fact, we stayed together for about three days and just looked after each other. Mum stayed with us as well, just helped look after each other and it's like, I guess it is like a rebirth, to have a new baby, you have lots of supporters to help look after the mother and the new baby and so we had many supporters that helped us look after each other.

> Sonny
> So tell me about this 'rebirth' . . .

> Leilani
> Well . . . I certainly didn't have any thoughts in my mind at the time that I needed a rebirth but when we undertook the journey of the *malu*, from the moment they put in the first taps, you realise that you cannot finish this journey until it is fully completed and so after I had mine done, washed down and we actually had the ceremony to bless it, then I went and spoke with the *tufuga* to find out the meaning of everything and he

also spoke of the fact that it's a rebirth because you've been on a journey that very few women go on and you're not the same now, you'll never be the same as you were before . . . . from the time we got the first tap, the journey started and you realise how personal this journey is, and it's quite an intimate journey with you and the *tufuga* and the supporters. I guess because it is such a personal part of the body as well, the physical body, it's almost like everything is laid to bare; you lose all sense of dignity . . . I don't mean that in a bad way, I mean it's like, I guess you kind of you lose yourself, and you just become a part of the whole process, and it's everyone, it's not just you with your *malu*; it's the *tufuga*, it's the people that help support the *tufuga*, it's your own support crew that are there to support you and then it becomes a family thing like when we had the ceremony afterwards all your family are around to help you celebrate and make that celebration happen and so they're honouring this *malu* and all of us who got our *malu* that day. You realise that you're just one facet of the whole journey.

Sonny
A couple of people, well, quite a few people talked about when you make yourself vulnerable like that, it just takes you to a whole new level of, not so much introspection, but a depth of your heart that you would otherwise not have explored; would you have experienced something similar?

Leilani
Most definitely . . . because you are going through this, and it is pain, I mean, there are all different types of pain, you know, I had already given birth to two children so that's a different type of pain where there's joy on the other end of it as well and you become a mother. This is actually a journey into your true Sāmoan self. It's really exploring your Sāmoan-ness. You know, are you really Sāmoan? Are you really going to complete this journey? Are you really going to come out of this at the end wearing your Sāmoan *lā'ei*? And if you do, are you going to honour it? Are you going to continue to honour your Sāmoan-ness? Are you going to commit to it? I guess being a *'afakasi* [half-caste], I have the, I can swing either way when I want to; it took me a long time before I realised I'm actually both; I'm neither one or the other, I'm actually both, so it's about honouring both sides of myself and this journey helped me to really discover the Sāmoan in me.

New 'clothes'

All of the participants spoke of the transformation as a 'completion', a 'whole-ness', a confirmation of identity. In every respect, that 'complete-ness' was an affirmation of Sāmoan-ness, or, phrased another way, becoming 'more' Sāmoan, as identified and subjectively described by each participant. This was prominent in the story of Muli'agatele Safua Ah Him:

Muli'agatele Safua
Lagona le a fo'i [I feel kind of], proud, proud to be a Sāmoa, it's like *pei ua la ta* [it is like I am now] complete, like you know, a 'real' *tama'ita'i*

Sāmoa now I have the *lā'ei*; I feel complete. Especially *pe a ou alu lea e fai mo, a fo'i, faia mo ta'i sua ma mea fa'apenā, a* [especially when I perform some of the cultural duties]*,* so *ua lagona a le mitamita fo'i ua mafaia e ta'ita ona* [unintelligible] *pei e seāseā fo'i teine Sāmoa ona mafaia ona tausia ia tūaga* [I feel really proud that I am able to perform these duties, and do them with my *malu*, because not many Samoan women can do these duties, and even fewer with a *malu*]. . . .

Sonny
So you mentioned, because you do a lot of *tautua* . . .

Muliagatele Safua
… *fa'asāmoa* stuff, *aganu'u*, yeah, yeah …

Sonny
… that this [point to the *malu*] fitted that [narrative of *tautua*]. Why would you want to fit that more if you're already serving? Or, let me ask it this way: was it necessary for you to get the *malu*, because you're still going to *tautua* anyway?

Muliagatele Safua
Well, yes. Well, I thought that once I get my *malu* done, it will, *pei ua* [it is like I am] complete *. . .* that I will feel complete, I'm a real, true *tama'ita'i* Sāmoa, because *e mo'i a, ou te alu solo fai fe'au ma mea fa'apenā* [it is true, I perform these cultural duties], but *a lē faia se malu* [if you do not have a malu], you're not complete.

Sonny
So did you feel incomplete?

Muliagatele Safua
Yes, before I had my *malu* done.

When I pressed her as to why she felt incomplete, she said that it was something that has always been in her heart:

Muliagatele Safua
Se'i iloga e tā la ta malu, ia, e pei ua na fa'ato'ā atoa uma mea i'inā [until I got my *malu* done, only then did everything feel complete].

It is interesting to note that the Sāmoan word *lā'ei* was used often, and in every *talanoaga*, *lā'ei* was used interchangeably with *tatau*.

Lā'ei translated in the chiefly language means 'clothing'. To acknowledge the beautiful attire of someone, in the common Sāmoan language, it could be said: *mānaia ou lavalalava*; in the chiefly language, it could be said: *mānaia ou lā'ei.* Both ways of expression translate as 'your clothing is very attractive', but the former is uttered in common situations, and the latter is uttered to a *matai.* In reference to the *tatau*, the word *lā'ei* also refers to *tatau* lore in which a popular and ancient description of the *tatau* is an axiom: *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'the clothing of

Sāmoan men'. Explicit in this axiom is the acceptance that a male who 'wears' the *pe'a* could walk around naked, but would be considered 'clothed' because of his *pe'a*. *Lā'ei* in the context of the *tatau*, therefore, is the connotation of being clothed; saying *mānaia ou lā'ei* to someone with a *tatau* is a reference to their *tatau*, not their attire.

Muliagatele Safua's description of *lā'ei* not only referenced this notion of 'clothing', but also a metaphoric reference to 'identity': that a Sāmoan woman is 'clothed' by her garments, her *malu* and her identity.

Tuatagaloa Joe described his journey with the opening statement in our *talanoaga*: "I've always had a desire to identify myself as a Sāmoan". He explained that he had the lightest skin tone in his family, and he was often made to feel awkward because of it. He added that when he was young, his parents were not happy with his inability to speak English – he was the only one in the family that could not speak English at the time. Thus, he was sent to New Zealand to complete his formal education, and to learn to speak English. In New Zealand, he found that he also did not belong there because he spoke a different language and was also too tanned to be 'white' – too 'white' to be Sāmoan, and too 'brown to be *Pālagi*. Tuatagaloa Joe eventually became fluent in both languages and saw the value of needing to negotiate both worlds. Moreover, he found that in order to negotiate both worlds, he had to become certain about who he was, or, more pertinently, who he had become.

> Tuatagaloa Joe
> It fulfilled something I've always had an issue with, and that is my identity. As I've mentioned, I was the fair one in the family and I wanted something to identify with, with my culture … the artistry behind the tattoo is fascinating to me, the symbolic aspects of it, what it represents, all the different motifs, the *mamanu* [pattern] and that. So, it embraces all of that, some very important parts of our culture.

Tuatagaloa Joe explained that he made various attempts over the years to get his *tatau* done, but each attempt was met with an obstacle and so a member of his family went in his place to fulfil the arrangement with the *tufuga.* Later, he found himself in the awkward position where he, the one that introduced the idea to his family, was the only one that did not have it. His wife and two adult children were all 'clothed', while he was 'naked'. Once he completed the *tatau*, though, it changed him.

> Sonny
> What changed in you during or after your *pe'a*, once it was done?

> Tuatagaloa Joe
> Probably the biggest change is my confidence. Self-confidence. In myself, in my ability to endure.

Sonny
So how did the *pe'a* affect that?

Tuatagaloa Joe
Well, I've become a lot more confident as a person. All, every human being has, we all have our insecurities, and as we grow up, we're not sure about our, if we can do certain things. Sure we learn, but you can trial and see if it works. For me, my insecurities, you have your physical insecurities … [but] then in finishing my *pe'a* gave me that confidence … while I still have difficulty with my oratory, I have my *pe'a*, so self-confidence. *O lea ua* complete *la'u* identity, *a* [and now, my identity is complete]. Not only there, I'm now a *matai*, I live the village life, I do all the things that are expected of a village *matai* … I've been able to do so many things.

The embodiment of identity

Like Tuatagaloa Joe, each participant emphasised that the transformation that takes place is an affirmation of their personhood, and as Sāmoans. It is an affirmation of their Sāmoan-ness, evidenced by an enhanced commitment to the *fa'asāmoa* that nurtures a sense of connectedness and a *sense of belonging*.

Su'a Frieda described why she was compelled to get her *malu*. As a context for the excerpt, Su'a Frieda explained that many years ago, she was tasked to provide landscaping to 'Āpia Park for the upcoming South Pacific Games. In taking up the role, she got several friends involved, who in turn, invited other small groups to add further support. During that time, this incident took place:

Su'a Frieda
Yeah. And so I was asked if I could help landscape the whole park. So I did. Ok, I will, I'll do it and I'll get all my friends to do it. And then, why I'm telling you this is because the word *'afakas*i [half-caste] was flung at me. I had all these women, Sāmoan women, because now everyone wants to come and help. So, we had different sections of the community: the children, the school children, the Member of Parliament's wives wanted to help and all sorts of people wanted to help. Anyway, and I was the one that was sort of like the clerk of [Ministry of] Works and doing all this and I had to tell them: ok, this is what *you* do and this is what *you* do and you have to excuse me if I'm a bit bossy, you know. So anyway, after I done that and I left to do something else, and the word that was flung at me, I wonder if I should do it on there?

Sonny
Yeah, that's alright.

Su'a Frieda
'Afakasi, 'afakasi kaea [shitty half-caste], you know? And I heard about it afterwards and it really really hurt me.

Sonny
> Yeah? *A o tagata Sāmoa a ia o la e ona fa'aaogā upu ia* [and these are Sāmoan people saying these things]?

Su'a Frieda
> *Tagata Sāmoa moni a, ioe* [indeed, Sāmoan people saying this, yes]. And people of very high standing too. . . . And all these things, and I thought: what do, why do they think they're better Sāmoans than I am? Ok, I'm going to make a statement on this. And I've always admired the *malu* because I had an old lady that used to be a sort of like a nanny to all of my children. So I thought and I really, always admired her *malu* and of course she had her *malu*, she was well well beyond my age and I thought I'd really like a *malu* like this old lady. So I said: I'm going to make a statement so I, then we got together with a friend of mine, *and fai le ma soa a* [we decided to do it together]. And *ia, fai loa ma, tā loa le ma malu* [and then we got our *malu* done]. And it was, it was quite, it was a very emotional experience. Yeah, emotional.

Interestingly, the *soa* that Su'a Frieda alluded to was (the late) Tui Anandale, who is the late wife of Tuatagaloa Joe. Not only are there symmetries in their journeys, but the notion of community and belonging-ness will be explored in greater detail in the latter section of this chapter. As I continued to explore this further, this exchange took place:

Su'a Frieda
> Why I did get the *malu*, you ask? It's because I wanted to make a statement that I am a Sāmoan and that I am *proud* of it, that I could put the *malu* on my body, and although I live *fa'apālagi*, I am very much a Sāmoan at heart, very much at heart.

Sonny
> And now that you've got the *malu*, how has that changed the way you present yourself or the things that you do? Or, has it changed?

Su'a Frieda
> Well, it really, it hasn't changed, of me being so proud, of what I had done to make that statement, but always when we are in gatherings and when there is festivities going, everybody wants to come and lift my skirt up, or lift my *lavalava* up, and show my *malu*. And I said: oh no, you don't do that, and they said: oh yes you do; this is the only time that you show your *malu*. And everyone else was proud that I had a *malu*, my family especially, yeah. And to me, it was a, it was a big thing about being a Sāmoan. And, yeah that was the statement that I was trying to, for myself, and to my friends, and everybody else, and wherever I go. If anyone sees my *malu*, well they say: where did you get that? And because, I'm a Sāmoan and I'm proud to say it, you know. But, and I think, what did I feel afterwards? I felt very emotional really, yeah. And very proud, yeah.

Summarising this key finding, the 'heart' or 'soul' transformation that took place in the adversity prior to getting the *tatau*, is mirrored in the skin transformation of the *tatau* process. Moreover, the *soga'imiti* and the *malu* are not only clothed with the *tatau*, but symbolically, clothed with the characteristics they embraced, and became. The

transformation emanated from the acts of submission, or embracing vulnerability, that, as Tiatia Alex earlier stated, "we learn our compassion and our empathy and all those values", core values of the *fa'asāmoa*, or, as I will describe in the latter part of this chapter, the essence of being Sāmoan. Thus, the tatau became a metaphor for identity, which became marked on the skin as a manifestation of that transformation.

After lengthy *talanoaga* with Lia'ifaiva Imo and Su'a Faumuina Tupou Su'a about their craft as *tufuga*, they described the *tatau* as 'inhabiting the skin' or inhabiting the 'skin-space' of a person. The prospective *soga'imiti* comes to the *tufuga* as a 'canvas' upon which lines, motifs and patterns will inscribe a meaning. The assemblage of those motifs tells the story of transformation that the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* have to tell; the skin-story is told on the skin-space. Li'aifaiva Imo described it thus: "as a *tufuga . . . e fafāūa se mea* [we create things]. *Tusa la o le Tufuga Tā Tatau,* [so, the Master Tattooist] we are constructing the structure on the human body".

The *tufuga*

In the tradition of the *tatau*, the *tufuga* is paramount. While much about the *tufuga* can be learnt from the literature, it is worth explaining particular aspects of their role for its demonstration of how the *fa'asāmoa* conceptualises the spiritual realm, and the way in which spirituality is perceived in the *fa'asāmoa*. Regarding the *tufuga*, in a *talanoaga* with the then-Head of State, Tui Atua explained:

> The *tufuga* of old are a type of 'priest'; they are not just the master craftsman and the key knowledge-keepers, but they also know the right prayers and chants to invoke, much like a modern-day priest would.

The focus here is the notion of '*tufuga*-as-priest'. Referring to the four-way harmony discussed in Chapter Three, the notion of the *tufuga*-as-priest reveals a great deal about the Sāmoan conceptualisation of spirituality and the interconnectedness of all things.

Spiritual connections

The Su'ā family are widely recognised as one of the original families – of which there are three – that were bequeathed the *'atoau*[39] from the fabled twins, the practice being

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[39] *'Atoau* – The kit that contains the *tatau* instruments; literally translates as 'bag/kit of au; *'ato* – bag or kit, *au* – tattoo comb.

handed down father to son through the generations. As an aside, it was explained to me that the original Su'a family gifted the *'atoau* to the Sulu'ape family a generation ago – to the father of Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a – in recognition of his *tautua* to the then-practicing *tufuga*, Su'a Popo. This may explain the reason why the Sulu'ape family are now master practitioners of the *tatau*. However, as explained by the current practitioner of the Su'a family, Su'a Faumuina Tupou Su'a and his brother Vaofusi Pogisa Su'a, the Su'a title is only used when the *tufuga* takes hold of the *'atoau*; until that time, the Su'a title is not used; it is not a title for conventional chiefly duties but only for the designated duty of the *tufuga*. Thus, when they are not using the instruments, the Su'a name is not used[40]. This is why Vaofusi Pogisa does not currently carry the Su'a title – he has health maladies that make it difficult for him to *tā tatau*. When his health clears up and returns to *tā tatau*, he will also resume with the use of the Su'a title. Additionally, Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a trained his sons to be master practitioners, and now they too are *tufuga* that carry the Su'a title with practices based in Sāmoa, New Zealand and Australia.

In a *talanoaga* with Su'a Faumuina Tupou, he explained how he began his practice as a *tufuga*:

> Su'a Faumuina Tupou
> *Ia, e talitonu lava le māfaufau, o lenei galuega, leai, e lē o se galuega na ou filifilia. 'Ae iai a le talitonuga, o le galuega tūfa'asolo o le 'āiga lenei, o le galuega fo'i e pei e fōliga mai e tofi a Le Atua le tagata i lona taimi, ma lona, i lea taimi ma lea taimi. O le galuega fo'i e le'i fa'apea na iai se umi na, pe na taumafai lo'u tamā e a'o mai le galuega ia a'u, e pei a na otometi a na o'o mai le galuega ia a'u, na ona fai mai lo'u tamā e tā, tā loa. E le'i fa'apea na iai sona taimi tele e tau a'oa'o mai fo'i na le, e fa'asinosino mai. Na ona fai mai lo'u tamā ia a'u e fa'atino le galuega; e pei ua fai atu a le galuega, se mea fo'i na le, ua uma ona tofi mai Le Atua ma mai lana filifiliga ia a'u. Pei o le, o la'u tali atu lea la'u vaega lea.*
>
> [I believe with all my heart, this work is not a work that I chose. It is my belief, and a core belief of this *'āiga*, you are chosen by God for this work, at the right time. It is also not something that I had training for, nor something that my father prepared me for; it was something that came to me automatically, that when my father said that it was time to tattoo, I tattooed straight away. He hadn't really taught me much directly, like an apprenticeship, but everything came to me when God chose me for this work.]
>
> Sonny
> *O le a lou matua i le taimi na vala'au ai oe lou tamā?*

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[40] For the sake of distinction, in this thesis, I continue to use the Su'a name for these master practitioners.

[How old were you when your father said that it was time?]

Su'a Faumuina Tupou
O le taimi na, 16 o'u tausaga. E tusa e 16 o'u tausaga, ua ou iloa fa'aaogā le, e fai le galuega lea.

[At that time, I was 16 years old. At 16, I knew how to do the work].

Su'a Faumuina Tupou's description referenced moments of 'knowing', where moments serendipitously came together to lead him on a path that he was already expecting. In similar fashion, Li'aifaiva Imo also described the 'calling' to become a *tufuga* as principally a spiritual moment. Li'aifaiva Imo and his father Lavea Fosi storied their family's visitation from the fabled twins many generations ago. Furthermore, the cessation of the practice of *tatau* in their family line was attributed to the influence of the missionaries; the Li'aifaiva lineage had not practiced the *tatau* in almost 100 years because of the demonisation of the *tatau* during the time of early missionaries and colonisation. In 2014, after a three-year period of apprenticeship under Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a, Li'aifaiva Imo was given the family blessing to restore the *tufuga* status to their lineage through the traditional bestowal ceremony. Li'aifaiva Imo revealed a serendipitous turn of events that confirmed and affirmed his calling prior to the bestowal ceremony:

Li'aifaiva Imo
I knew I was ready right after we, I worked on the church, after we painted the whole interior of the Mulivai Cathedral and the mural inside. It wasn't until after that project, you know, I was, I needed a break; it was very exhausting . . . I took a break; I went to New Zealand. And then all of a sudden, I didn't have anything to do, *a*? You know, I just, you know, what was next? And I had put tattooing on the side, for a while, and all of that, and, yeah, I don't know where, you know, I think it was just timing. I think I, it was something that I always had the passion and urge to do, but it wasn't until I, that I was doing absolutely nothing; when I just sat down and faced my demons, almost, *a*. To face myself too, start actually making an effort. So yeah, made my first tools, and I took off.

Sonny
Was there any lightbulb moment? Was there any, did a particular incident trigger something? Or was there an insight?

Li'aifaiva Imo
Yeah, I guess it was, you know the whole satisfaction of accomplishing something great, like something that was challenging, I should say. And then at the end of it, you know, you're burnt out, you know, you're just so exhausted you just want to recuperate. But it wasn't until when, *e na uma a*, [when it was completed], and I still felt like I wasn't complete – just like how I felt when I, after my *pe'a*, a. It's like one of those moments, it's not until when you really hit rock bottom. Then you you step up, and you you make a difference, and, you know. Yeah, I think that was more it. And you know, it, it, we did a big job with the church

and it still wasn't as fulfilling as I had hoped or expected, *a*. And I think it was the tattooing side, you know. I was doing, I got into a phase where I was doing everything else but tattooing. I was drawing, I was painting, I was carving, but everything I was drawing, painting and carving, was tattooing. *A*? So I did, I was doing machine-work, and a lot of things that was kind of, they were all circulated around the *pe'a*. So all fingers were pointing to the *pe'a*. Until, yeah, I just couldn't, I think I was running away from myself . . . doing everything else. But everything came full circle.

Here, again, is the concept of hitting 'rock bottom' before emerging transformed into a new calling, replete with a new identity, one as a *tufuga*, master practitioner of the *tatau*. When Li'aifaiva Imo returned to Sāmoa with the decision that he was ready to assume the role of *tufuga* and revive a duty that had been dormant in his lineage, he informed his parents, who replied to him that it was about time he arrived at that decision – they had been waiting for him to accept it, and felt he had been ready for some time, but lacked the confidence to step up.

As they began their respective practices, Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Li'aifaiva Imo described a feeling of 'familiarity' when they hand-tapped their first *tatau*; although they had undergone an apprenticeship and training, they explained that giving their first *pe'a* felt like they had been practicing the craft for a long time. Indeed, the 'familiarity' was like a kindred spirit, that their ancestors were with them. The interconnectedness evident in the stories of Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Li'aifaiva Imo was also evident in their explanations of how they know the skin-story to etch on each skin-canvas. Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Li'aifaiva Imo described being led by God as to how they know what to tattoo on the skin-space. Li'aifaiva Imo added that there is an "energy" that surrounds each prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu*. As he leans on God to discern the energy, he is able to translate that discernment into motifs and patterns. Li'aifaiva Imo further added that through his apprenticeship and research, he has a "library of motifs" that he is able to access so that he may tell the skin-story of the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* that he discerns. To this aspect of knowing the patterns to use for each prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu*, Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a explained:

> *Ia, e ese'ese a ia, i mamanu ta'itasi a, a, e tofu a le mamanu lātou ma lona uiga, a. E iai mamanu e* refer to like *o tiute o le tagata, a; o tiute e tatau ona fai, o mea e* remind *mai ai le tagata i le olaga, o le atoaga i le olaga tautua, a. Ia, e pei o le faiga o le tautua tātou,* what you give is what you get, *a. A e paiē, a, e leai sau mea e maua, a. O le tele o lau foa'i, ia, o le tele fo'i lenā e selesele, a. O mea uma fa'apenā, nai tama'i mamanu lāiti a, e tofu a ma le uiga. O le tu'u fa'atasiga, a, a e tago e aumai lea tama'i mea, mai ma lea tama'i mea, a tu'u fa'atasi, ia, ona maua loa le uiga o la e gālulue fa'atasi ai uma elemegi na i le mea e tasi, a. Pe, e fa'apenā le fa'aaogāaga mamanu ia i le tatau. A e tatau fo'i le tagata la e ueaina le tatau, a, ona na ia e iloa, ia o mea la e fealoa'i ma ia. A tilotilo iai, ia ona manatua, o le mea lea e tatau ona fa'apea ona fai, a.*

[Each pattern is different and has its own meaning. There are patterns that refer to the duties of a person, their responsibilities, to act as a reminder of their lifestyle, one of service and apprenticeship. For example, in our custom regarding the rendering of service, what you give is what you get; if you are lazy, you will not reap any benefits; the more you give, the more you reap. All of these things [your actions and deeds] are represented in the patterns. Putting them together, getting this pattern and that pattern, and threading them together, then you get the meaning of the whole narrative that the elements are telling. That's how the patterns are used in the *tatau*. Furthermore, the person wearing the *tatau* should be aware of the *tatau* they wear, so that when they look at it, they will be reminded of their responsibilities and conduct.]

The key idea conveyed in this section on the *tufuga* is that while the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* are undergoing their transformation, they reach that place of brokenness through the pain journey. In a *talanoaga* with Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a, he explained that how the prospective *soga'imiti* responds to the *au* tells him everything about this person. In other words, while the prospective *soga'imiti* learns to manage the pain through active refocusing and passive endurance, they are concurrently learning to submit and make themselves vulnerable to the *tufuga*. It was in those moments of vulnerability that the *tufuga* is learning about the prospective *soga'imiti*, and 'reading their energy'. Accordingly, the marks made on the body reflect what both prospective *soga'imiti* and *tufuga* 'see', 'hear', feel and experience in that state of vulnerability: the prospect making themselves vulnerable to the *tufuga*, and the *tufuga* making themselves vulnerable to God. This is a further description of the interconnectedness of Sāmoan cosmology.

Inhabiting the vā

Lavea Fosi, Li'aifaiva Imo, Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Vaofusi Pogisa stated that the ethic to *tausi le vā* is very prominent in the *tatau.* The ethic to *tausi le vā* refers to the ways in which people make efforts to nurture the space that connects them to other people, to nature, and to God and the spirit realm. That 'space' is not empty; it is a relational space. The motifs and patterns that are then hand-tapped into the skin not only become a new skin layer for the *soga'imiti* and the *malu*, but also become their 'skin-story', and a record of the journey successfully traversed. Li'aifaiva Imo describes it thus:

> As a *tufuga*, *a*, *manatua oe o le tufuga, o Tufuga Fau Fale, Tufuga Fau Va'a, a. Ma o le mea o le tufuga, o le tagata e*, [keep in mind, the Master House--builder, the Master Va'a-builder, they are people that] creates, *a; e fafāūa se mea* [they create things]. *Tusa la o le Tufuga Tā Tatau,* [so, the Master Tattooist] we are constructing the structure on the human body. . . . to be a good *tufuga*, maybe I'm given away secrets here, but it all has to do

with *vā*, meaning the space between, or the balance between dark and the light, *a*; the heavy-bold *tapulu*, and the spacing between *'aso, a*.

To describe the ethic to *tausi le vā,* there is a 'canvas', a 'space' between people, animals, elements, objects and God; how that 'space' is occupied, or given meaning, is determined by the action a person 'inscribes' on that space. A person can act, behave or conduct themselves in a way that can either *tausi le vā* and promote *fa'aaloalo*[41], or they can *soli le vā* and incur discord. A person's conduct fills the relational space with meaning; they inscribe on that space a meaning, a narrative, a value. Li'aifaiva Imo adds: "in the essence of it, it is almost like explaining life"; there is a balance between "the dark and the light; the negative and the positive", the good and the bad; both parts fill the *vā*, fill the space, and give it meaning. Moreover, both parts "*fa'afeso'ota'i*", or connects everything. That is, the light and dark, the motif and between motif, the lines and gaps in the *tatau* connect each part of the *tatau* to each other and give each part of the *tatau* its meaning.

> I think that's the essence of why, or the beauty of *tatau*, or tattooing in this method is because that's what determines the motifs or the patterns we place on the body because, just because of that concept of the *vā* and the canvass space, or how big it is, or even what tone the skin; it determines for my eye of what patterns suits you. There's a whole play on that.

Thus, the 'skin-space' is embedded with the knowledge of the *fa'asāmoa*; the Sāmoan body is representative of the Sāmoan world, and on that 'canvas', the *tatau* must represent every aspect of the *fa'asāmoa*; not only the deep history of Sāmoa and its inhabitants, but also the customs, beliefs and practices of those people. Li'aifaiva Imo adds that the history of the *tatau* is rich and deep, and therefore, that depth and richness must be embedded on the body. He explains that he has tried to manoeuvre the various patterns and sections of the *tatau* differently and found that he could not 're-write' the *tatau*; the way it already inhabits the skin-space is a proven formula. Metaphorically alluding this notion to the *fa'asāmoa*, Sāmoan custom and tradition is already 'placed' and 'structured in such a way as to maximise *fa'aaloalo* and show how to *tausi le vā* with dignity. In other words, the Sāmoan body of customs, traditions, beliefs and practices are already aligned to the ethic to *tausi le vā*. It is then a matter of learning them, practicing them, and embodying them.

Recalling Fani's journey described earlier in this chapter, after she had crewed on the traditional voyaging canoes for the two-year *Te Mana o te Moana* voyage, and experiencing the life-changing challenges she faced, she realised that the restoration of

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[41] *Fa'aaloalo* – Respect.

traditional Sāmoan navigation was a task to be done by a Sāmoan, and upon arriving at the revelation that it is her to do this task, she felt that she was ready to get her *malu*:

> … I am wanting a traditional style of, of a, of a *malu* design. I would appreciate if you [the *tufuga*] had a certain pattern for me, and he said: ok, *aua le popole, aumai ia te a'u* [don't worry, entrust this to me]. . . . Because the story that was given to him was about, was, was my journey on the *va'a*, my first time on open ocean, 29 days away not seeing land was just a beautiful sight, seeing smiling faces was a beautiful sight, and then on our last month at the voyage we started learning traditional navigation using the stars and the waves. So he started off, the first thing he did was actually, do my knees and that was where he started off with doing the stars. With during, he first sussed out how to get to land, and then he started going up to my thighs and starting doing land, like actual formations of land. . . . a lot of it was mostly, mostly that, was the mountains that he said [points to motif] that I described; he said a lot of it were the waves, the mountains and the wind with the stars, but the first things he did was actually the stars, yeah. . . . It's given me more of a, just another mountain to climb, man; just another challenge to go through . . . to take on that position on actually navigating traditionally.

The physical transformation of the skin that results from the *tatau* is symbolic of the spiritual and emotional transformation that resulted from the adversity that was overcome. The 'structure' that is constructed on the 'skin-space' is an iconographic depiction of that transformation; in effect, the *soga'imiti* becomes the embodiment of the characteristics they endured in their adversity. To be bedecked in a *lā'ei*, therefore, is to be bestowed an *identity,* girded with the qualities of what it means to be Sāmoan, or what it means to be yourself. The explanations and descriptions of Sāmoan-ness, inevitably, are discourses about being yourself, being *you*.

Sonny
> And how did that help you become 'more' Sāmoan or a better person, or more rounded person?

Leilani
> It just completed everything for me because people look at me and even now, even though I've been living here all these years, they still think I'm a *Pālagi* which is understandable. So this was really putting on my Sāmoan *lā'ei* and this is one *lā'ei* that everyone respects! When people see you with this on, they really respect that you're Sāmoan and that you've gone thru that journey and that was, that's a big thing for me. I guess I got that Sāmoan acceptance.

Sonny
> And why was that so important for you?

Leilani
> Because that's a part of who I am. That's a very important part of who I am. I think even though I've lived overseas, I've always, my heart's

always been here, I've always longed to come back here, always longed to come and serve, and so now I'm here in Sāmoa; I've been here for over eight years now and have no intentions of going anywhere else, although we do need our little trips off the rock every now and then to reconnect with the rest of the world [laughs]. It's a very profound journey.

Sonny

Are you able to articulate what has changed in you and how that change is manifested since then?

Leilani

The change is like . . . the change is that I've accepted my Sāmoan-ness. Maybe it was just my own perception too that other people don't see you as Sāmoan but now for me, without a doubt, I know I am! While I have these markings that I can show to the world, I remember even saying to the *tufuga*, before I had it, the day before, even while I was getting ready to go have it, I had already decided that I would never show it to anyone, that I would, because it was personally for me, it wasn't for anyone else, it wasn't for my husband or my kids, or even for my parents. It wasn't for anyone; it was just for me. But when I spoke with the *tufuga* afterwards, and I told him that, I told him 'this is it everyone, take a last look, you're not going to see it again', [laughs]. But he said to me: you've gone through this journey, not many women have gone through it, so be proud; be proud of the fact you've walked the journey of the *malu*, but wear it with dignity and that is kind of what changed things a little bit for me.

Expressions of Sāmoan-ness

Earlier in this chapter, the notion of *lā'ei* was explained as an indication of identity; *lā'ei* is literal for clothing, is also symbolic for the *tatau*, and metaphoric for identity. In this part of the chapter, I will draw from the participant voices to elucidate the key themes that constitute the Sāmoan identity as inscribed on the *pe'a*. Five expressions of what is constitutive of a Sāmoan identity stand out, two of which have already been described earlier in this chapter: the ubiquity of spirituality, and the centrality of the ethic to *tausi le vā*. The other three expressions of identity are the centrality of the *'āīga*, a commitment to the *aganu'u*, and the desire to *tautua*. In this chapter, I will describe these expressions of being Sāmoan, as extracted from the body of *talanoaga*, and in the next chapter, I will cross-reference these expressions with other sources to derive a discourse about how the notion of a Sāmoan identity informs an indigenous approach to coping with adversity. To prelude the discourse on these expressions, there was a very telling statement made by Lavea Fosi Lavea, the father of Li'aifaiva Imo and a Judge in the *Lands & Titles Court of Sāmoa*, in describing his thoughts about the *tatau*:

Lavea Fosi

'Auā o le mea alofa a Le Atua ia tātou tagata. Tātou tagata Sāmoa, i le iloa ai tātou e 'ese mai fo'i a tātou ma tātou tū ma aga mai nisi tagata. O le mea la lenā e mitamita ai o lo'u tagata, ia mau te iloa e fa'apenā fo'i le to'atele o alo ma fānau o le atunu'u, ua lātou iloa, o le mea lea e iloa ai le tātou tagata. 'Ae pau o lea, talosia ia mālamalama, e lē fa'apea o le tagata, a fai lau pe'a ona e mālosi ai lea ma, leai, e fai le pe'a o se mea e ta'u atu ai o oe o se tagata ua lava lau tōmai i lau aganu'u, ua e mālamalama lelei lau fa'aaloalo, lau tū ma lau aga, 'ae maise o lau tautua.

[This is a gift from God to the Sāmoan people. Sāmoans are already distinct from others through their customs and traditions. This is why I am proud: the people of Sāmoa know their uniqueness. The main thing is to remember that having the *pe'a*, while it sets you apart, it does not make you special or stronger than others; it is to affirm that you are a person that exhibits a special connection or fondness to the *fa'asāmoa*, and a commitment to its customs and traditions.]

Emphasising Lavea Fosi's statement, it is necessary to reiterate that having the *tatau* did not imbue any of the participants with anything 'super'. While the participants elucidated on their transformation – of heart as well as of skin – and had supernatural experiences, it was a sense of identity that was enhanced; the participants were reluctant to describe themselves as having become a *better* person, but did describe themselves as having become *different*. The transformations and declarations of identity were to do with familial, cultural and spiritual affinity and belonging. Furthermore, the descriptions in this chapter relating to expression of Sāmoan-ness are learnings gleaned from the participants about being Sāmoan, not statements about the superiority of having the *tatau*. Moreover, the descriptions here are not expressions that pertain only to those who have the *tatau* but are expressions that the participants had learned about *being Sāmoan*. From all accounts, the conclusion to be reached is that the *tatau* 'completes' a person's journey towards their identity, particularly where there have been questions in their past about their identity.

The centrality of the *'āīga*

In Chapter Three, the value of the *'āīga* is laid out. Additional to that chapter, earlier in this chapter, there are excerpts of *talanoaga* from various participants that have been used to illustrate specific points and findings. Returning to those excerpts reveals the centrality of the *'āīga* as a foundational expression of Sāmoan identity, reiterating a previous statement by Mulitalo Amosa: *o Sāmoa anamua, e iai ona tāpua'iga i mea fa'apea. E lē mafai ona e alu e tā sau lā'ei 'ae leai se tāpua'iga a lau 'āīga* [in ancient Sāmoa, there are sacred customs that must be observed. You cannot go to get your *tatau* if you're *'āīga* are not sharing the journey with you]. Interestingly, for all

participants, the *'āīga* were the cause of the adversity and tragedy – for example, in Tuala Pat's situation, it was the passing of his father; in Gabrielle's situation, it was the conflicting expectations of her *'āīga* and partner with her own. Paradoxically, the *'āīga* were also the remedy for the adversity and hardship. As the adversity and struggle subsided, the participants became even more committed to their *'āīga.* Further to that, the connection to *'āīga* was not only a greater connection to the present and living family, but there was the expressed desire to connect to the genealogical *'āīga*, *gafa*. In the *talanoaga* with Su'a Faumuina Tupou and Vaofusi Pogisa, they explained that the genealogical and historical connection is so significant that in the traditions of the *Tufuga Tā Tatau*, even the *tatau* instruments have a *gafa* and a *fa'alupega* – refer to Chapter Three for a discourse on these two concepts. Essentially, *gafa* translates as lineage, or genealogy, and *fa'alupega* is the honorific address that is accorded to lineages and genealogies. The *tufuga's* explain that when an apprentice of a *tufuga* has reached the level of a *tufuga*, the apprentice undergoes a conferral ceremony where the apprentice not only receives a new chiefly title, that of a *tufuga*, but they are also gifted with the *'atoau* – one which had been handmade by the *tufuga*. Over time, the new *tufuga* will become a seasoned *tufuga* and in due time will get an apprentice. That new apprentice will in due time become the new *tufuga*, and the seasoned *tufuga* will make the *'atoau* for the new *tufuga*. In this way, the *'atoau*, and each specific *au*, also have a *gafa*, as well as a *fa'alupega*. The centrality of the *'āīga* is evidenced in the primacy of *gafa* and *fa'alupega*.

These genealogical connections are the anchors upon which Sāmoan culture is built. These are the meaningful connections that Taitu'uga Fa'avae referred to when he stated that the *tatau* "anchored" him to his family. Further to that, the degree of commitment and connection to the *'āīga* led Leilani to a re-prioritisation of cultural enactments.

> Our Sāmoan culture really is a social culture. We all rely on each other, we all look to each other, we all gain strength from each other to help cope with any situation that comes in life. Someone dies in the family, all the extended family, friends come together, they bring support, either financial support or physical support in the form of tins of *eleni* [canned mackerel] or *povi* [cows, beef] or *pua'a* [pigs] or taro to help with the event or fine mats to help with the formalities so you never really carry it alone. And even if you don't have the means to assist your family, you just show up; they're just happy to have you there to share in the journey with them. So that has really solidified that in me. Being born in New Zealand, sometimes it can be so hard to understand that concept, like [sigh] the phone rings and the family want money for this or that and you think it's just nothing but a nuisance; you're going out to work every day and they don't understand but when you come to live here and you actually the see the way they handle things and the

way they look after things, I would much rather put my money in a *fa'alavelave* [a time of adversity that brings the family together] than pay the water bill or pay [laughs] the rates or whatever that we seem to get stuck with over in Western countries. Because there's always something, you always get something back, and I'm not talking about money or fine mats, but you get the love and the respect of your family and you get to actually share with them and bond with them and going through the funeral or whatever you're all going through together!

The practice of *fa'alavelave* can be contentious, but for Leilani, it was very clear; there was no ambiguity about it, such was the impact of the *malu*. The desire to learn more about the customs and traditions became a priority for all those with a *tatau*.

The value of aganu'u

Here, the notion of *aganu'u* is used in reference to the earlier explanation of local practices of custom and tradition, as an expression of 'culture'. To add to that discourse, one of the findings of this research was that, in every *talanoaga,* it was made clear that as the participants emerged from their personal tragedy and adversity with a renewed sense of identity and purpose, they felt moved to have that expressed through cultural displays that demonstrated their renewed appreciation and commitment to the customs, traditions and rituals of Sāmoa. It is for this reason that the *tatau* became the chosen course of action to mark that journey and to make that statement of affiliation. Taitu'uga Fa'avae described it thus:

> If anything, I picked up a lot of respect, like it's an honour to have this; it's a privilege to have this, and if anything changed in my life, I was more, what's the word, I was more 'foundationed' into what, how I lived you know . . . . grounded, I was grounded. And you just have that more respect of doing things *fa'amāoni*, [diligently, faithfully] you know, not half-assing things but, *fai ma le fa'amāoni* [done diligently and faithfully], just like the Word says, you know: *a e fa'amāoni i mea iti, e te pūlea i mea tele* [if you are faithful with the little things, you will be given greater responsibilities]. You just have that, I don't know, you just, you grow this respect. And it's not something that everybody has; that's why I said it's a privilege and an honour to have this because you just like, you have this *mālamalama* [understanding, insight] . . . . to live it, you've got it stuck to you, you feel that the *aganu'u* is a part of you . . . *o le tātou pe'a* [the Samoan *pe'a*], it's not something that you can, *pei o le peni* [it's like a pen], like you write something you can draw it on your leg, but it'll come off, you know; and it's almost like a, not a scar, but battle scars, *ua e iloa* [you know] you've gone through this. *E, mo se fa'amanatu* [to serve a reminder] as well; you've gone through this. So, every time you see it, which is everyday; *fa'amanatu atu* your *tiute* [to remind you of your duties and responsibilities], you know.

To add to Taitu'uga Fa'avae's description, Mulitalo Amosa, who carries the principal orator title for his *'āīga,* explained that this role requires skilful speechmaking which

means that he must attain and possess a large range of knowledge in his speech-making repertoire.

> *O a'u, e iai lo'u tiute e fai i totonu o lo'u lava 'āīga, i le tūlaga lea o le osi'āīga, i le tūlaga fo'i la lea o le vā i fafo ma le tausiga o 'āīga, e tau pea la o le tūto'oto'o o le, i le vāto'oto'o o 'āīga, 'ae maise fo'i tū totonu o māota ma tū totonu o laoa. O le mea la lea, ua fo'i, 'auā ua 'ese le lagona ia te a'u, e tā so'u lā'ei Sāmoa, e pei a o le upu o le atunu'u fo'i lea: e lē atoa la'u lāuga pe a leai so'u pe'a. O le mea pito sili la lea ona tāūa i la'u lea olaga … ina ia ātoa ai la'u lāuga.*

> [I have responsibilities in my *'āīga*, in my care and provision for them, as well as in my representation of them when I speak on their behalf in various forums. I am mindful that there is an old Sāmoan adage: the Orator's speech is incomplete if he is not wearing a *pe'a*. So, it was critical for me to get my *pe'a* . . . that my speechcraft may be complete].

Having this knowledge of speechcraft inevitably required him to be performing oratory roles so that he could use it and know the meanings behind such rich proverbs and stories. The purpose for this depth of knowledge is that as the principal orator, he is required to be articulate and knowledgeable. As he shows himself to be articulate and knowledgeable, he is then required to teach the members of the *'āīga* about the customs and traditions of his *'āīga* and *nu'u*. Knowing these customs and traditions informs of proper conduct and behaviour, that which is befitting of a Sāmoan. Su'a Peter Su'a added this:

> *O mea o tū ma aga o le tātou atunu'u[42], o le tātou tū[43], o le tātou nofo[44], o le tātou savali[45], o le tātou tautala[46]. [O] mea fo'i na e tātou ona fa'atāūa o le tātou tupulaga fai mai; o i'inā e iloa ai mo le mea mo le Sāmoa, o le tū, o le nofo, o le savali, o le tautala. O le mea fo'i la lenā e mātou fo'i ia o la e fai so'o, 'auā ou te alu atu fo'i e otegia le au ali'i ia la e i tua, fānau fo'i o le mātou tausoga,* you know, *e 'aua le tātou mamao 'ese mai mea ia, 'auā mo mea fa'atauva'a,* simple stuff, but *o le* key players *ia mo le mea mo le olaga fa'asāmoa, a. A tātou, 'auā, e leai se aogā tau te ō ta'uta'u o tātou Sāmoa, a e tātou te lē iloa le savali, a. E iloa uma le gaioiina o le Sāmoa i vaega ia, e* simple keys *ia e fā.* So, *a lē maua loa lenā, ua lē iloa le fa'aaloalo, ua lē iloa se tagata e matua atu ia naīa, ua lē iloa le vā nonofo ai.*

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[42] These next four words are Sāmoan concepts that are difficult to grasp in this thesis space, but I will signal here its direct translation, and a very brief explanation of its reference.

[43] *Tū* – Stand; a metaphoric reference to knowledge of performative duties

[44] *Nofo* – Sit; a metaphoric reference to positioning yourself in relation to others

[45] *Savali* – Walk; a metaphoric reference to the way you conduct yourself

[46] *Tautala* – Talk; a metaphoric reference to one familiar with the relationships between people and self

[The customs, traditions and protocols of our culture, it is how we stand, how we sit, how we walk, how we talk. This is what we need to emphasise to the young generation; it is how we know you are Sāmoan, by the way you conduct yourself through your standing, your sitting, your walk and your talk. It is also why we say often, and I have to correct the boys at the back, and all the cousins, you know, we should not stray far from these core values, because although they are small things, simple stuff, but they are the 'key players' in Sāmoan living. It is pointless telling everyone we are Sāmoan, but we don't conduct ourselves like one should. You know a Sāmoan by the way they conduct themselves through those four simple keys. If you don't have those things, then you don't know how to show respect, how to honour the elders, how to *tausi le vā*]

Su'a Peter's explication of appropriate conduct, through *tū*, *nofo*, *savali* and *tautala*, is a common reference point for many Sāmoans: you know who you are not just by a range of cultural enactments, but by your performative conduct. In other words, if you know your cultural practices, you will know how to conduct yourself. Conversely, if you know how to conduct yourself, you will know the customs and traditions that engender that conduct.

I was very fortunate to have been informed through a friend – refer to snowball stemma in Chapter Five – that a mutual friend, Karla Leota, was about to get her *malu* done. I was able to conduct a 'before and after' *talanoaga* with Karla and while much of the contents of our *talanoaga* has already been presented throughout this chapter, she explained that being raised in Sāmoa, she "grew up with a decent knowledge of [the *fa'asāmoa*] and was exposed to it from an infant". Moreover, she added that her father's chiefly title, which became more and more important to him since the bestowal, also became more and more important to her as the daughter of a high chief. This was especially significant for Karla given that her father is her only Sāmoan parent. Getting her *malu*, therefore, gave her an empowerment to learn more about the deeper and more complex aspects of the customs and traditions as an added expression of support to her father. In this regard, there are elements of Karla's desire for learning these deeper and more complex customs and traditions that points to Muli'agatele Safua's earlier statements about the *malu* empowering her to learn and participate in some of the traditional rituals. Reiterating Lavea Fosi's statement cited at the beginning of this section, the *tatau* affirms that you are a person that exhibits a special connection or fondness to the *fa'asāmoa*, and a commitment to its customs and traditions.

The desire to tautua

The desire to *tautua* was also very prominent in every *talanoaga* and has been mentioned throughout this chapter through various excerpts cited earlier. In other words, as often stated by the participants, a Sāmoan is characterised by their

commitment to serving their family and participating in cultural enactments. The desire to 'serve' is analogous with the Sāmoan concept of *tautua*. Various aspects of *tautua* have been explained earlier in this chapter.

The desire to *tautua* intersects with, and is perhaps entirely encompassed by, the centrality of the *'āīga* and the value of culture. The earlier discourses about the centrality of the *'āīga* and the value of culture also apply to the desire to *tautua*.

> Lavea Fosi
> *O le isi fo'i mea sa iai, ia o toa o le atunu'u. E tula'i mai a le toa o le atunu'u e fai lana pe'a, a. O lona uiga, e ta'u atu ai, e toa ai i le loto i tau, toe toa le māfaufau i le mea fai, auā ua sau mai le tautua, mālamalama lelei i le aganu'u.*
>
> [Others that had the *tatau* were the warriors of Sāmoa. It was also the warriors of Sāmoa that wore the *pe'a*. It meant that they were not only warriors in their heart, through battle, but also in their maturity and the things they did through their *tautua*, they understood well their role in the customs and traditions].

> Sonny
> *O ā la tiute mo le soga'imiti?*
>
> [What are the duties/responsibilities of the *soga'imiti*?]

> Lavea Fosi
> *Tiute a o le soga'imiti, o le tautua.*
>
> [The duties/responsibilities of the *soga'imiti* is to *tautua*]

> Sonny
> *Tautua i le nu'u po'o le ali'i?*
>
> [*Tautua* to the village, or to the *ali'i*?]

> Lavea Fosi
> *Tautua i so'o se mea a. O le tautua muamua a, e tautua i lona ali'i.* It's marks of service*, pe a tu'u i le fa'apālagi, a. O lona uiga, e ta'u atu ai, mea fo'i lea, a va'ai le tagata Sāmoa i le soga'imiti a e fetāmo'ea'i i le faiga o fe'au, e lote toga – 'auā e manatua o toga i le fa'asāmoa, e lē lōtea ni tama; e pau a le tama e mafai ona lote toga nei, o le tagata e fai le tatau, a. Ia, o le isi lenā tautua. Ia, o le tautuaina o le fale o matai, na o le tagata fai le tatau, e tautuaina; e tū i le to'oto'o e fai le upu. O aso lā, po'o le ā lau laitiiti, a fai lau tatau, a o le saofa'iga taulele'a nei e tagata matutua e iai, e te'i ā ua otometi na fa'aaloalo ma fa'apea e leai la, e fa'aaloalo i le sōga'imiti, a.*
>
> [*Tautua* everything. Their first duty is to their *ali'i*. If you translate it in to English, it's the marks of service. It means that when they are seen running around performing cultural duties, like handling the fine mats – remember, in the *fa'asāmoa*, men do not handle the fine mats, except the one that has the *tatau*. So that is another *tautua*. Additionally, *tautua*

> in the house of the chiefs, where only a *soga'imiti* is allowed to *tautua*;
> they speak on behalf of the *ali'i*. In those days, no matter how young you
> were, if you sat among the untitled men, even those older than you, their
> favourable treatment of you it is automatic; it is their way of showing you
> respect.]

Lavea Fosi's words are remarkable for the explication of *tautua*. Recalling his earlier statement about the *pe'a* not giving a person special powers, but is a demonstration of the *soga'imiti's* love for the *fa'asāmoa*, and as noted above, that love is made evident through a *tautua*. Adding to the different types of *tautua*, Taitu'uga Fa'avae stated:

> To me, at the end of the day, *o lau pe'a* [your *pe'a*], that's your *tautua*, *e fa'aali ai* [it shows], not so much to show, but so you can live *le olaga tautua; tautua 'āiga, tautua lotu, tautua galuega* [life of servitude; serve the family, serve the church, serve your work], whatever it is, *ia tautua ma le fa'amāoni* [serve with diligence].
>
> … I've always believed that I was the one that, to look after the family for the rest of my life and *tautua*, you know, just to look after my parents, just to look after the whole family; to be the one, the go-to guy if anybody needed help with anything. And I knew that that was me, at that time, but even though I was still *ulavale* [disobedient], and everything, you know. It was never so much about the fashion, how cool, you look with one of these things, but it was more; I knew that you had to *tā* [tattoo] your *gutu* [mouth] with one of these things, but I knew that you had to *tā* [tattoo] your *gutu* [mouth] before you get one of these.

Taitu'uga Fa'avae's colloquial expression – the 'go-to' guy – is perhaps the best description of *tautua*. In other words, the *soga'imiti* and the *malu* are the ones to raise their hands first, to give their time and efforts first, and as also described by Leilani, the ones to commit the *'āīga* to *fa'alavelave* first.

Summary

The literature reviewed in the earlier parts of this thesis showed that for people of indigenous cultures, there is a link between the ability to cope with adversity and cultural identity. In the earlier parts of this chapter, the notion of identity was connected to ideations of coping with adversity, and with being able to emerge from 'rock bottom'.

Furthermore, the body of *talanoaga* revealed that those who endured the pain of getting their *tatau* had also previously endured an adversity personal tragedy or hardship that confronted them about who they were. Getting the *tatau*, therefore, became the definitive statement of identity for that person. Ultimately, as articulated by

Mulitalo Amosa, it is an expression of being Sāmoan that is unique to Sāmoans, and accordingly, a statement that should have no barriers to its access:

> *Ai, o la'u a ia, a ou nofo ma va'ava'ai i lā'ei o le atunu'u, o le tāua tele. E lē tatau ona e iai se laina e vase ai po o ai e o e tatā, a o ai e nonofo, a. E iai māfua'aga e ala ai ona tatā tagata, e pei o māfua'aga e la e ona ou fai atu e ala ai ona ou tā a'u ia. E iai fo'i lātou sa tatā o lātou tua'ā, e manana'o e solosoloumivae ai i le mea lea, a. Ia e feolaa'i fānau, e pei o lātou tua'ā ua tatā o lātou lā'ei … o se mea e sili ona tāua i le Sāmoa, 'auā e lē iloa o oe o se Sāmoa pe a e fealualua'i i atunu'u o la e o. Ioe. A o le autilo mai o le isi Sāmoa o la e uliuli ou tuli, e tasi a le mamanu e fa'apenā: nā o le Sāmoa. Ioe … o se mea e pito sili la ona tāua i aganu'u, e fa'alauiloa o tātou lā'ei i so'o se mea e tātou te āga'i ai.*

> [To me, when I sit and look at the *lā'ei* of Sāmoa, it is very important. There should not be a line to be drawn to determine who should get it and who shouldn't. There are reasons why people get their *tatau*, as I explained mine earlier. There are others whose forebears had this, who also desire to pass this on to their children, that they may also enjoy this tradition … it is also important for Sāmoans because it identifies them, sets them apart; when you travel overseas, and another Sāmoan sees that your knees are darkened by the *tatau*, they will immediately recognise that you are Sāmoan; we are the only nation in the world that have these marks. It is what sets us apart and identifies us.]

In the next chapter, these findings will be cross-referenced with other source material – that is, literature, other oral traditions, and other *talanoaga* conducted as part of this research – to articulate as much as possible a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. Many aspects of that articulation have already been made known in this chapter but will be explained in greater detail in the next.

Chapter 7

Discussion:

Life journeys

Proverbial expression:
O le 'upega e fili i le pō, 'ae tatala i le ao.

Translation:
The fishing net is braided at night, but untangled in the morning.

Meaning:
Often, when braiding fishing nets, and the workers are close to completion, they will work through the night to complete it. Upon completion, however, they will not check their work, or untangle it, until the light of the morning. This proverbial expression has several applications, the most common being about the settlement of disputes: let a matter settle, for in the morning, in the light of day, it is better able to be disentangled and resolved.

Reference:
I reference this proverbial expression to allude to the notion of disentangling a matter that has been constructed throughout 'the night', and now that the entwining of the net has been completed, the 'morning', or this chapter, looks to disentangle the discourses and narratives, and resolve the research question canvassed in the Chapter One.

Introduction

I set out to explore a Sāmoan approach to coping with tragedies, adversities and difficult life events. For that undertaking, I chose the traditional practice of the *tatau*[1] – the traditions behind it, the practice of it, the meanings associated with it, and the experience of it – in search of philosophical, theoretical and cultural knowledges that could reveal how Sāmoans view this phenomena and how that view could syncretise a therapeutic practice. Using a constructionist, interpretivist approach contended for in Chapter Two and Chapter Four, the key findings were presented in the previous chapter. In light of those findings, this chapter is a discussion of the research objectives stated in Chapter One.

Reviewing the previous chapter, three key findings prevail that lead to one central theory of a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. The first of the three key findings refer to the significance of a previous identity-transforming adversity and its import in preparing a person to receive the marks of the *tatau*. The second of the key findings relates to the three ways of coping with pain that was extracted from the *talanoaga*[2] about the *tatau*, and further evidenced in the stories of how the participants coped with a previous life-transforming adversity. The three ways of coping with pain and adversity were:

1. Localisation of the pain
2. Passive endurance
3. A spiritual connectivity

And finally, the third key finding was the five expressions of Sāmoan-ness as constitutive of the Sāmoan identity:

1. The ubiquity of spirituality
2. The pre-eminence of the ethic to *tausi le vā*[3]
3. The centrality of the *'āīga*[4]

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[1] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

[2] *Talanoaga* – Colloquially, means to converse, talk, discuss; As a research methodology, it refers to a conversive method of gathering and analysing data.

[3] *Tausi le vā* – Literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.

[4] *'Āīga* – Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'

4. The value of *aganu'u*[5]
5. The desire to *tautua*[6]

Adding these key findings together, the one central thought that stands out is the concept of 'life journeys'. This chapter will untangle the proverbial 'net' noted in the proverbial expression at the opening of this chapter.

This chapter, then, is comprised of three central discourses. The first discourse summarises the first two key findings and discusses them towards the central concept of 'life journeys'. The second discourse is a discourse on the paradox of 'pain' and 'adversity': while pain and the negative sequelae that arise from its experience are to be avoided, antithetically, pain is also to be embraced for there is a transformation to be had. The exposition of this paradox provides valuable insight to the answer of this research to the research questions posed in Chapter One. The third discourse relates to one of the objectives stated in Chapter One, that of deriving a therapeutic practice model, theory or approach extracted from this research. As I came to the end of the research process, the themes that were emerging bore very close resemblance to The Tānoa approach introduced in the first chapter, with some slight variations. I discussed with a couple of the research participants the central themes of the findings, cross-refenced with The Tānoa, and the contribution from those participants resulted in a re-writing of The Tānoa which is explicated in the third section.

Key findings

Summarising the findings chapter, the conclusion that all participant stories revealed was that adversities and struggles bring a person to the place of 'rock bottom', a place of brokenness, emptiness and vulnerability. At this place of vulnerability, they have exhausted all that they know in order to alleviate the brokenness, and from this position they are faced with an existential question: who am I? Essentially, to answer the question, a decision needs to be made regarding a value, a life principle or an ethic that must be embraced. The enactment of that value, principle or ethic begins the journey out of rock bottom. As they continue to make key decisions from that value, principle or ethic, they inevitably *become* an identity, one that resembles a connectivity

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[5] *Aganu'u* – Refers to the body of customs and traditions.

[6] *Tautua* – To serve, or service rendered.

and affinity to a community of those of like mind, and like identity. In a sense, they are *becoming* Sāmoan, or becoming *more* Sāmoan. From the pit of rock bottom, then, they become transformed into an identity. The significance of that identity becomes a journey to making that statement permanent, or public. Hence, the *tatau*.

Transformations

The first key finding, noted above, was that there was a significant adversity that all participants faced in their personal lives prior to getting their *tatau*. The adversities varied: the death of a parent, familial and relationship expectations and uncertainties, an oceanic voyage, the disrespectful treatment from members of society, and an aimlessness or general unsettled discontentment are among some of the adversities the participants experienced. The *type* of adversity, it appears, is not the key factor; the key factor is the life journey of a person.

Amid the stories of adversity, suffering, endurance and overcoming, participant stories revealed a type of process, or *journey*, described as "*fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau*", translated as 'a growing up of the mind'. More accurately, it is a reference to the maturing of the personhood. Extracted from the body of *talanoaga*, there is the emergence of the notion of 'personhood' as having three 'persons', or 'minds': the *spiritual* mind, the *emotional* mind, and the *cognitive* mind. Descriptions from the participants suggest that the *fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau* is the maturation and establishment of these three minds into an *interconnected* 'mind', as reflective of the new 'person', or 'personhood'. Referring back to the previous chapter, the excerpts of Tiatia Alex, Fani, Leilani and Tuatagaloa Joe in particular, reveal this line of thought. The point I want to bring forward is the life journey aspect, or 'stage of life' quality, about the notion of 'personhood'. That is, of reaching that point where the internal conflict of having three dis-unified minds becoming one interconnected mind, a "*fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau*".

Developmental psychology, often synonymous with cognitive psychology, clinical psychology and mainstream psychology, posit that human development occurs in specific ages and stages. Although there is significant diversity as to what those stages are and when they occur in the human life cycle (see Bartol, 2002; Miller, Duncan, & Hubble, 1997; Preston-Shoot & Agass, 1990; Skinner, 1988; Wertheimer, 2012; Wiser, Goldfried, Raue & Vakoch, 1996), the fact of ages and stages is indisputable. Further to that observation, the research that these conclusions come from are primarily investigations using children and young people (Rutter, 1999); the transition into adulthood, or perhaps, the transition *of* adulthood, is less researched (Ungar, 2005).

Interestingly, the same observation can also be made about resilience research, and research on coping and adversities; most of those bodies of research relies on responses from young people and children. In other words, the adulthood transitions are arguably the least understood in the literature. And while there is significant diversity pertaining to the age range for this transition, comparatively speaking, adult transition is still under-researched (Bartol, 2002; Berk, 2001, 2006).

Taking account of this observation in the literature, I argue that the transition into an adult identity is a stage in life, and in light of this research, a journey through the ocean of adversity and pain *is* the journey of identity-transformation into 'adulthood', or more precisely, a *stage of* adulthood. Recalling Leipold and Greve (2009), Rutter (1995), Snyder (2001), Tusaie and Dyer (2004), and Ungar (2004) from Chapter Four, adversities and hardships are not equal, are also not equally distributed, and furthermore, do not have equal impact on individuals. There are, however, adversities that bring about a specific type of change; adversities that challenges a person's sense of self, sense of belonging, and sense of identity. It is worth reiterating, it is not in the *type* of adversity nor in a specific set of circumstances, nor even a specific age range; it is in an adversity or hardship that breaks a person down, that they reach rock bottom. Emerging from rock bottom, there is the realisation of what is important, and who that is to be lived out with, for example, *'āīga*, *nu'u*[7], or the choice of a person as spouse. In that regard, this research suggests that it is not about the adversity per se, but about an individual's life journey. The settling of that identity is the journey of discovery, and it is this that is the *fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau*. Moreover, there are emotional scars that result from the adversity. While the adversity eventually subsides, the emotional scars remain and are carried, borne by the journeyor as they continue their journey. Those emotional scars become translated into iconographic marks of identity as they prepare to get their *tatau*.

Pain management

The journey to the transformation has, for the participants, been by way of pain. The scholarship of Rutter (1985, 1999), Snyder (2001), Bastian et al. (2014) and Seery, Leo, Lupien, Kondrak and Almonte (2013) on the value of adversity and pain and its transformational qualities are relevant here – this is described in Chapter Four. Adding to that discourse the body of knowledge and experience from the *talanoaga*, three types of pain management strategies stand out as representative of the participant's

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[7] *Nu'u* – Village

explanations. The first is 'localisation of the pain' to lessen the pain of the moment. Recalling from the previous chapter, Sami Navy's explanation of relaxing the clawed hands describes this strategy. That is, by focusing attention on where *exactly* the pain is, the prospective *soga'imiti*[8] will find that although their *whole body* feels the pain, it is not actually the whole body that is *in* pain; it is merely *that* part of their body that is being tattooed that is in pain. Thus, if the prospective *soga'imiti* can focus their attention to localise the pain, they can restrict the pain to only *that* part of their body, and then the rest of the body can relax, and let go of the 'clawed' hands. This attitude of facing and fighting the pain by embracing it, and then to localise it is the same attitude to apply towards the stressors. That is, to find the areas of your life that causing the pain and stress – for example, specific relationships (parents, spouse, children, friends), education, employment, course of life – and the 'letting go' of the clawed hands is the 'letting go' of those specific aspects of your life.

The second pain management strategy is 'passive endurance'. That is, despite the extreme pain they are experiencing, the prospective *soga'imiti* is expected to persevere, and present themselves to the *tufuga* the next day to continue the process. To travail passively for the duration of the session, and to successfully accomplish this for the ensuing two to three weeks to completion, requires an attitudinal, or philosophical shift: the prospective *soga'imiti* must embrace the pain, and submit themselves to the *tufuga*[9]; they must welcome the pain and *allow* the *tufuga* to inflict extreme pain upon their bodies. There is a particular quality about being able to passively endure, to travail: it *ennobles* a person; there is a stigma of *mana* attached to those who have endured a significant adversity, and those who bare scars for the hardship they overcame. Indeed, this observation is affirmed in the literature noted earlier regarding pain. Many discussions with the general public reveal that indeed, there is a mana ascribed to those who wear the *tatau*.

Returning to the discourse of the *pe'a mutu*[10], the *pe'a mutu* is considered the one that is not able to endure the pain and therefore does not return to the *tufuga* to complete the *tatau*. Discussed in the previous chapter, the *pe'a mutu*, although having significant negative stigma attached to them, is likely the result of an incomplete journey of an identity transformation through a significant and particular adversity. Moreover, it is

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[8] *Soga'imiti* – the male that wears the *tatau*

[9] *Tufuga* – Master tattooist

[10] *Pe'a mutu* – an incomplete *pe'a*; the male who was unable to complete the *pe'a*

worth recognising that there can be other ways of marking that journey of identity transformation. The *pe'a mutu* therefore, may be someone that has found an alternative and more meaningful way to mark that journey – more meaningful to them, that is. Regarding the *pe'a mutu* who was unable to complete the *tatau* journey due to difficulties with pain management, grace and kindness needs to be extended to them rather than the current practice of shame and castigation; such a disparaging response is unbefitting of a people whose primary ethic is to *tausi le vā*. Furthermore, the community of *soga'imiti* and *malu* should support the *pe'a mutu's* completion of the identity-transformation journey first, which could then lead to the completion of the *tatau* journey. Most surely, a person that wears the ideals of the *fa'asāmoa*[11] as their skin should be gracious to the *pe'a mutu*, and indeed, encourage the spiritual preparation required of the *tatau* journey. This could perhaps be performed as part of their *tautua*.

The third strategy, spiritual connectivity, relates to the personal journey of acknowledging the interconnectedness of the individual to the cosmos. In accepting and embracing that connection, they find the inner strength to endure the pain and the motivation to persevere with the *tatau* journey, to care for their *pe'a* that they may return to the *tufuga* the next day for the next session.

Beauty that remains

To add to this discourse, Schmidt's (2013) elucidation of Sāmoan identities has relevance: "Samoan identities are predominantly sociocentric and relational" and are "a series of contextual, situational and collectivist arrangements", which are different to "the more internal, egocentric and individualistic self of the west" (p. 57). This is evidenced "in the manner in which an individual must be one gender or the other in order to be recognised as a 'person' within western understandings", but in the *fa'asāmoa*, "the 'aiga (and to a lesser extent village) membership is more fundamental to one's personhood than gender" (ibid, p. 57). In other words, the Sāmoan identity prioritises relational and sociocentric connections as identity markers; the Sāmoan individual is identified by a belonging-ness and connectedness to these markers. Moreover, the sense of 'connectedness' is to a system that comprises "not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above

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[11] *Fa'asāmoa* – In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.

with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations" (Hau'ofa, 1993, p. 65). This is the 'world of the Sāmoan' that the notions of identity and belonging connect to, and indeed, this can be seen in the various *talanoaga* excerpts in the previous chapter.

After navigating their identity-transformational adversity, the participants felt that the *tatau* was the ideal way to acknowledge that journey. Thus, the *tatau* served four purposes:

(1) commemorate the journey of discovery;
(2) celebrate the clarity of what they had become;
(3) locate themselves within the spiritual, genealogical and cosmological community;
(4) and demonstrate their commitment to the *fa'asāmoa* through a *tautua* and prioritising *'āīga*, *nu'u*,and God.

In this, the *tatau* was a declaration of who they had become. The *tatau*, therefore, became the teller of that tale – the journey of becoming and feeling more Sāmoan. This was the second theme that emerged from the findings. In other words, while the *tatau* indeed points to specific aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*, more pertinently, the *tatau* tells the personal journey of the new *pe'a* and *malu* about becoming Sāmoan. In this light, the characteristics and qualities that demonstrate affiliation with being Sāmoan are inscribed on the new *soga'imiti* and *malu* as their new *lā'ei*[12]. Those characteristics are described in greater detail in the third section of this chapter, titled *Journeying forward*. In every respect, the confidence and certainty about themselves is captured in the beauty of the *tatau*; the *tatau* is not only an iconographic record of the journey, but also an outward metaphoric expression of the inward transformation. It was the beauty that remained, after the pain had subsided; the suffering of the adversity is reflected in the pain of the *tatau*, and the beauty of identity (from the adversity) is reflected in the beauty of the complete *tatau*.

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[12] *Lā'ei* – Literally translates as 'clothing'; an idiom for the *tatau* – a reference to an ancient Sāmoan phrase for the *tatau*, *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'clothing of Sāmoan men'.

The paradox of 'pain'

Assembling the body of knowledge uncovered from the body of *talanoaga*, it became evident that the *tatau* process gave incredible insight into the life journey of those who undertake and successfully complete the process. Moreover, there are also valuable insights into the existential world of Sāmoans, where the *tatau* not only provides those insights, and embodies them, but also serve as metaphoric descriptions and ascriptions of Sāmoan ontological, epistemological, methodological, ideological and axiological positions. To answer the research question posed at the beginning of this research, a Sāmoan proverbial expression provides a useful filter through which to interpret the findings and analyses.

There is a Sāmoan proverbial expression: e *fofō e le alamea le alamea*. The proverbial expression directly translated, says: the remedy for the sting of the *alamea* is the *alamea*. The *alamea* in Sāmoan maritime biodiversity index is a poisonous starfish also known as the 'crown-of-thorns' starfish (*Acanthaster planci*[13]). The 'back' of the *alamea*, that which faces the water's surface, is covered with poisonous thorns, while the 'front' is that which faces the ocean's floor – the 'mouth' of the *alamea* has a sucking mechanism that allows it to 'stick' to the ocean's rocky floor. Unsuspecting human feet that stand on the *alamea* will not only feel the prick of the thorn, but the *alamea* will also release a poison into the unsuspecting foot through the thorns. The poison usually causes swelling, severe fever, and can also cause localised numbness on the unsuspecting foot, but not known to cause death. As the proverbial expression posits, if you are poisoned by the *alamea*, the remedy is the *alamea* itself: turn the *alamea* on its back, that is, to 'flip it', so that its mouth is exposed; you then place the *alamea's* mouth on the part of your foot that was perforated by its thorns and the natural sucking mechanism of the *alamea's* mouth will suck its own poison out of the foot. Hence the proverbial expression: the remedy for the *alamea*, is the *alamea*.

This expression is used in oratory to infer that the *cause* of a distress, is also likely to be that which can *resolve* the distress. The proverbial expression is often a reference to the *'āīga;* a death in the family, the source of the distress, is usually met with the gathering of the family, which will work to remediate the distress. It is also often used in mediatory forums where the parties involved are encouraged to deliberate the matter – or 'flip it around' – to find a solution that will bring about reconciliation and restoration of the relationships. In this section, I also refer to this proverbial expression as suggestive

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[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown-of-thorns_starfish

of a central discourse on a Sāmoan approach to coping with adversity. This discourse is a philosophical contemplation derived from the findings chapter, originating from the assertion from Su'a Sulu'ape Alaiva'a, that 'pain has a purpose'. It was one of the most remarkable revelations extracted from the body of *talanoaga*; it is remarkable for its contradictory premise in that pain is to be avoided because of its hurtful impact, but in the context of this research, pain is to be embraced because it has a purpose.

Admittedly, the notion that 'pain has a purpose', is a disruptive postulation. It suggests, among other things, that there is a 'good', or *necessity* to pain, adversity, struggle, and hardship. One question that arises from this postulation is: *whose* purpose does pain and adversity serve? Indeed, this is a reference to the four-way harmony described in Chapter Three: that of the cosmos, or God and the spiritual realm; the environment, or the earth and the natural realm; the people, or humans and the communal realm; and myself, or the personal realm. There is a more textured discourse to be had on this, but it is perhaps more suited to a philosophical or theological excursus, beyond the intentions of this research.

Returning then to the idea that 'pain has a purpose', another question to arise from this assertion is: *what* is that purpose? Drawing from the knowledge exchange in the body of *talanoaga*, the purpose of pain is *transformation*; to bring a person to rock bottom so that a transformation may take place. And as shown in the *tatau* stories, the 'transformation' is manifestly about 'identity'. In exploring the matter of 'identity', the *tatau* stories from the participants allude to the notion of 'anchoring' to values and beliefs that reinforce a belonging and sense of connection and attachment. Tuatagaloa Joe's comment cited in the previous chapter is perhaps the most pertinent encapsulation of this thought: it is a 'becoming'; a process of maturation; a *fa'amatuaina o le māfaufau*. Moreover, the sense of 'identity' and connected-ness to a larger cosmology described earlier in this chapter through Hau'ofa (1993) is the reference to 'anchoring' and 'becoming'. Furthermore, that process of anchoring, and becoming the personification of those core values and beliefs are embodied on the wearer of the *tatau*. That is, wearers of the *tatau* become more aware of who they are, who they have become and the embracing of their new *lā'ei* is emblematic of the embrace and embodiment of the new identity. In every sense, this is the beautification.

Notwithstanding this transformation, there is still disquietude about the pronounced virtue of pain and suffering that is evident from the body of *talanoaga*.

Recalling the discussion on pain and adversity furnished in Chapter Four, Bastian et al. (2014), stated that "one of the most apparent qualities of pain is its aversiveness" (p.

256), noting the large sums of money spent on the avoidance and amelioration of pain. Bastian et al. added: "overcoming pain is also a central research agenda. Over 20 scholarly journals are dedicated specifically to the study of pain. These journals are dominated by research highlighting the biological and psychological parameters of pain, often with a view to finding novel ways to ameliorate suffering" (p. 256). Pain has become a metonym for discomfort and therefore, something to be avoided, literally, at all costs.

Through the lens of the proverbial expression about the *alamea*, what appears as a contradiction at first glance, emerges as a paradox: the remediation of pain is not to *resist* it, or *relieve* it, as is demonstrated in clinical, cognitive approaches to pain, but to *embrace* it, and let it hurt you, as highlighted in the *tatau* stories of pain management. It is a postulation that evokes consternation because it is an unusual, even counter-intuitive, way to think about pain, suffering and adversity. However, the findings of this research reveals that pain is not a by-product of adversity and hardship; it is the *chief character* in the journey of discovery and connectivity. The conclusion reached is that pain is the silent teacher, waiting to take you to the place of rock bottom, for in that journey, there is a transformation to be set in motion. 'Pain' and 'adversity' will teach you about yourself, to bring you to a place where the current version of you will be exposed, so that you may shed your 'old clothes' and embrace those core values and beliefs as your new *lā'ei* as you transform into a new you – one who has endured the process of *fa'amatuaina le māfaufau*. This becomes your identity, one that has been shaped by 'pain' and 'adversity'. In this, that which poisoned you and brought about the discomfort – viz. pain and adversity – is that which transforms and brings the beauty of knowing who you can become.

Journeying forward

Applying 'the paradox of pain' to the objectives of this research, one of the objectives stated in Chapter One was to explore how the findings and conclusions of this research could be of value in the therapeutic setting. By 'therapeutic setting', I am referring to those whose work centres on bringing inner healing to a person by way of various types of curative and performative discourse – for example, the work of psychologists, counsellors, social workers, and others in associated vocations – as described in the opening section of Chapter One and also in Chapter Four. Recalling one of the conclusions emerging from the discourse in Chapter Four, the value of focusing on

connecting to culture and identity in therapeutic intervention is that a cultural understanding of coping with adversity and pain would better equip intervention strategies for those from indigenous cultures. Moreover, by 'intervention strategies', I am referring primarily to a notion of *holistic* health (and healing) where 'health' is not only the absence of disease or infirmity, and not only includes the World Health Organisation's (1948) advocacy to include mental and social wellbeing, but as Seiuli (2012) stated, go beyond those health benchmarks – beyond the body, mind and soul dimensions of a person – and to also "address the totality of the person, especially taking care to address their spiritualty and sacredness of their customs and traditions" (p. 24). Seiuli emphasised that in the Sāmoan context, "these connections are embedded in associated cultural imperatives traceable to the practices and functions of fa'asamoa or the Samoan way of life" (p. 24).

A therapeutic purpose

In Chapter Four, there is a detailed explanation of the harmful impact of adversity, struggle and pain on people, which impacts on intervention strategies to remediate the harm; for indigenous peoples, there is a necessity for more meaningful intervention stategies – viz. therapeutic practice – that does not silence their experience, but reflects the different-ness of the adversities they encounter, and its impact. Drawing from the plethora of research noted in Chapter Four, the conclusion that was reached was that the strength of using indigenous concepts and oral traditions in a therapeutic setting is that they are more meaningful and thus, more transformational. In a follow-up research project to his 2012 article cited above, Seiuli (2015) added that "these cultural processes have significant and worthwhile therapeutic value" (p. 304). He explains that there are significant practice imperatives – that is, key competencies, skills and thinking required for meaningful engagement – and key considerations to psychology theory and models of practice when working with indigenous populations. More importantly, therapeutic practice and cultural practice imperatives predicated on indigenous ontological and epistemological foundations not only validates and supports indigenous worldviews, but they also validate the need for culturally powered therapeutic intervention and allows indigenous peoples to 'talk their story'.

Assembling the body of knowledge from the *talanoaga*, then, in this section I proffer an approach to culturally powered therapeutic practice that, in part, came from this research. As I summarised the findings of this research – described in the last part of the previous chapter – there was a familiarity with the findings. A summary of those findings is noted in the introduction of this chapter to which one of the conclusions

reached was that knowing yourself, and knowing the way to express this 'self', helps an individual to not only cope with adversity and hardships, but in doing so, 'bounce back' from them. This aspect of the findings will be used to extrapolate a connection between this research and cultural imperatives in the therapeutic setting.

To set the context for this discourse, I noted in the outset in Chapter One the origins of this research project. I explained that the predominating cognitive approaches in Social Work and Counselling practice were based on a Western worldview and a conceptualisation of 'the self' that did not transfer well to Pacific people. After rethinking my approach to therapeutic practice, I had many conversations with many on my caseload, and from their stories, I derived a framework of social support practice imperatives. For this framework, I took the name of a Sāmoan cultural artefact, a *tānoa*[14] (refer Figure 1.1 in Chapter one), and used it as an image, or model, to encapsulate an indigenous approach to holistic health, or, practice imperatives for a therapeutic approach to working with indigenous populations. I named this approach The Tānoa (Natanielu, 2011), and I provide an account of this in *Appendix 5: The Tānoa*. In cross-referencing The Tānoa with this research, there was startling congruity. There were also some differences, and Table 8.2 shows the compatibility between the 'legs' of The Tānoa and key elements of the *tatau* stories.

Table 8.1: Comparing The Tānoa (in blue shade) with the tatau stories (in white shade)

Institution	Indigenous concept	Reason	Contemporary reference	*Tatau* stories
Family	Remembrance, reflection	Security, stability	Emotionality	The value of *'āīga:* continuity
Culture	Social order	Belonging, acceptance	Community	The value of *aganu'u:* community
Education	Designation, investiture	Purpose, affirmation	Personality	The value of knowledge: positionality
Church	The spiritual realm	Guidance, direction	Spirituality	The value of spirituality: dimensionality
				The value of *tautua:* performativity
				To *tausi le vā:* connectivity

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[14] *Tānoa* – A large wooden, curve-bottomed bowl that stands upright on legs – refer Figure 1.1, page 15. Also known as *'ava* bowl, or *kava* bowl.

One of my final *talanoaga* was with Galumalemana Alfred Hunkin, a prominent academic, widely-respected and knowledgeable *matai*, whom many consider a 'cultural expert'[15]. By this stage, I had completed the 20 *talanoaga*, and after arriving at the summary noted earlier, I wanted to discuss the summary with a cultural expert to develop the cultural discourse further, and from a more autochthonous perspective.

Galumalemana Alfred
One of the things I learnt is: you never accept what you're given without questioning. *I le fa'asāmoa*, we don't say it that way, but we say: *fa'alogo* [listen]. Right? Which means all of the questions you're about to ask, you will learn if you look and listen intently, and observe all the doing that is going on, because that is learning. The teacher tells us, ok, we write, go from left to right, when we, literacy . . . but in China, they go the other way, not this way, right? So, the process that you learn are those governed by the social etiquette of the people . . . going back to the *fale*, because of the nature of the *vā fealoa'i, fealoa'i* means *nofo fa'atasi* [live in harmony]*, fa'afesāga'i* [encounter each other face to face]*, fa'afesāga'i, a, fealoaloa'I* [walk in unity]. We . . . negotiate, . . . share our thoughts, . . . share our spirituality, we don't show our anger or tell each other off, whatever it is that we need to do socially, until the *matai* sit down face to face and everybody sees everybody else. That's where the circle comes in [referencing the style of Sāmoan *fale* is circular, as opposed to linear with angular joints]. So, so important. *Maua mai*? *Fale fono, fale tele lenā* Did you catch that? The meeting house, the big house have that 'circle']. So that's the essence of the *fale*. And sometimes there is a key post in the middle, *a, poutele*. That's the *poutū*, sometimes it's called, *a*. And that's got its own power . . . . You know, this centre post is like the *faife'au* [minister if religion], he, spiritually, is the relationship between all . . . the 'roundhouse' if you like, and they all function to support his power, this centre post for the *fale* because he's the connection to them . . . and the people that sitting around that structure, they all practice the *vā fealoa'i,* the *vā, fealoa'i ma le vā tapuia.* [the relational space and the sacred space]. Because of that sitting position. Right? *O mai tatou talanoa, o mai tatou soalaupule, o mai tataou fa'asoa le tatou manatu* [come, let us talk, let us deliberate and confer]. All the key words where you practice that culture . . . I believe, are part of that structure, that circle. The *tānoa* is a circle.

Sonny
Yes. Yes.

Galumalemana Alfred
The legs are only subsets of that circle. Alright?

Sonny
Yes, that's right. And the legs add a third dimension to that circle.

Galumalemana Alfred
The circle is such a very powerful image in itself . . . the circle is the universe, the cosmos.

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[15] https://led.education.auckland.ac.nz/galumalemana-alfred-hunkin/

Sonny
That's the *vā* that's missing.

Galumalemana Alfred
That's the *vā*, captured. *Maua*?

Sonny
And the legs, as the *vā*, ground you on earth

Galumalemana Alfred
The legs help to define those key elements of the culture.

Noting the prominence of *tausi le vā* in the findings of this research, Galumalemana Alfred allowed me to use this narrative to expand The Tānoa approach accordingly.

In a follow-up *talanoaga* with Tuiloma Walterlee and Muli'agatele Memoree, and the very last *talanoaga* I conducted for this research, I had the opportunity to discuss The Tānoa with them. After an explanation of The Tānoa, and adding Galumelemana's contribution noted above, Muli'agatele Memoree made the statement that the 'legs' of The Tānoa are reflective of a *tautua*; "*so'o se isi a, a lē tautua mai lea i le 'āīga, i le ekālesia*, what's life?" The translation meaning: anybody, if they do not render service to their family, to their church, what is life? She added: "*a fail loa le tautua, palasi loa le tānoa . . . le tautua a, o le mālosi ai lea o le tānoa*", which, translated, means: if the *tautua* fails, then The Tānoa falls; it is the *tautua* that sustains The Tānoa". In effect, she is describing performative enactments that give meaning to cultural displays, and a rendered service. Following, I have merged The Tānoa, with the findings from Chapter Six and reconstituted The Tānoa.

The Tānoa revisited

A *tānoa*, is a large wooden bowl that stands upright on four legs – contemporary *tānoa* are multi-legged, a Sāmoan version of capitalism where they were made for tourists who were charged by the leg (extra wood required), but the four-legged *tānoa* is the original version (Buck, 1930; Krämer, 1995). It is hand-carved from the *ifilele* tree, a local hardwood. The *tānoa* is also known as a *kava* bowl and is primarily used for ceremonial purposes in the *'ava* (also known as *kava*) ceremony.

There are old stories of a possible origin of the *tānoa*. In ancient times, there existed a Sāmoan custom of welcoming guests by 'sharing' a drink out of the same cup, or *ipu*. The *ipu* is a halved coconut shell, smoothened out. However, when a large group visited, the *ipu* was enlarged so that all could participate in the ceremony. Accordingly, an enlarged *ipu* was carved out of local hardwood and legs were affixed to the cup to

stand the cup upright so that may all see. Specifically, four legs were used to refer to significant aspects of Sāmoan cosmology. One explanation alludes to the notion of the four principle winds (*gau e fā*), and the four principle directions (*sisifo*[16]*, sasa'e*[17]*, toga*[18]*, to'elau*[19]), referring to the universality of the occasion[20].

For the welcoming ceremony that is currently practised, the bulbous root of the *'ava*[21] (piper methysticum) is crushed and mixed with water inside the bowl of the *tānoa* in a specified ceremonial manner. This mixture is then distributed in a specified ceremonial manner to the guests. A certain oral tradition explains that the drinking of the *'ava* is also symbolic of communion with heaven. Many years ago, I was told of the legend of two brothers, sons of *Tagaloa*[22], who lived on earth. When one of the brothers died, and was duly interred, a tree grew from his burial mound. The dead brother appeared to the living brother and instructed him to crush the bulbous root of that tree and mix it with water and to drink from it; the effect of the elixir would allow the living brother to communicate with the deceased brother. In this, 'heaven' and 'earth' were united. It is noted from the literature that the *'ava* has a tranquilising effect, as well containing healing properties (David & Brown, 1999; Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990; Martin, 2004, Simanu, 2002).

The *tānoa*, therefore, was a symbol of unity, both communal and personal, and of universality (of heaven and earth). It brings people and communities together. In that coming together, differences are welcomed and accepted, harmony and wholeness prevails. The *tānoa* is constituted of three main parts:

- *Ipu* – the *bowl* of the *tānoa;*
- *Vae* – the *legs* that hold up the *tānoa;*
- *'Ava* – the *mixture* inside the *tānoa.*

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[16] *Sisifo* – Sāmoan for 'west'.

[17] *Sasa'e* – Sāmoan for 'east'

[18] *Toga* – Sāmoan for 'south'

[19] *To'elau* – Sāmoan for 'north'

[20] It is often rendered in oratory: *o Sāmoa lea ua potopoto*; meaning: all of Sāmoa has gathered here.

[21] Some island nations refer to it as *kava*, some refer to it as *'ava*, some as *kawa.*

[22] In many Sāmoan oral traditions, Tagaloa is referred to as a god. He has also been referred to as a mighty warrior.

As a metaphoric allusion, the *tānoa* represents an individual's personhood:

- The *ipu* of the *tānoa* represents the physical aspect of a person; their physical being;
- The four legs are symbolic of the four institutions needed for a person to stand strong, upright and balanced;
- The *'ava,* is the substance that connects us to heaven, and is shared with others as they encounter and experience us. Here, it is metaphoric for the 'image of God' in us, or the 'heart' or 'soul' of a person[23]. It is the part of us that is shared with others, as they experience and encounter us.

As a metaphoric allusion to a person, in the same way that the *tānoa* requires all four legs to stand strong, a person also requires four – for want of a better word – 'institutions' to stand strong. Originally conceptualised, the four legs were:

- Family
- Culture
- Education
- Church

Cross-referencing this with this research's findings, the four re-constituted legs are:

- *'Āīga*
- *Aganu'u*
- Knowledge
- Spirituality

Rendered as a model of social practice and support, The Tānoa (with capital 'T', and upright script) is about holism and harmony, or *balance*. Imbalance of the *tānoa* by way of broken legs is symbolic of the absence or weakness of those institutions in a person, and therefore requires the work of support and restoration. This is the key task of the practitioner. The overarching ethic that govern these expressions of identity is the ethic to *tausi le vā*, and the ethic to action those beliefs and values through a *tautua* that should be evident in each leg, or institution of the person.

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[23] It should be noted that, for this paper, I am going to treat Sāmoan folklore and Christianity without prejudice, acknowledging both traditions.

- The 'circle' that encompasses the *ipu* represents the ethic to *tausi le vā*, which touches every aspect of the *tānoa*, and therefore, must be enacted in every aspect of our personhood.

- For the legs to be of value, there must be performative enactments, viz. *tautua*, which emanate from the ethic to *tausi le vā.* In other words, the performative enactments allow a person to carry the *'ava*, or the 'image of God' in them, their identity, their uniqueness, and share with other people.

Figure 8.2: The Tānoa approach revisited
The image is a revised version of The Tānoa and shows the original premise merged with select elements from this research.
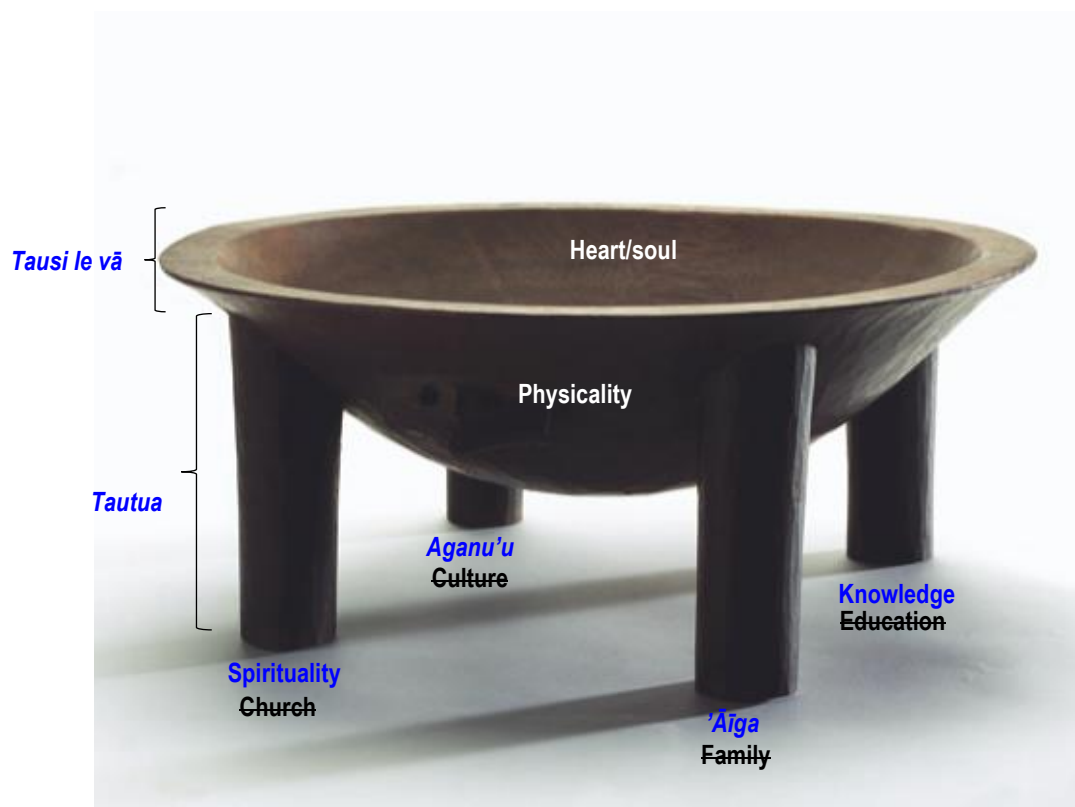
There are eight elements of The Tānoa as an approach in therapeutic practice. The 'bowl' part of the *tānoa* is comprised of two of the elements:

- the 'rim' of the bowl, which refers to the ethic to *tausi le vā*
- the 'body' of the bowl, which refers to the physical aspects of a person.

The third element is the *'ava* mix inside the 'bowl', which refers to the 'heart', or 'soul' of a person. Each of the four legs comprises an element, which are spirituality, a*ganu'u,* knowledge and *'āīga.* The final element is the performative function of the legs, which is to stand the *tānoa* upright. The eight elements are explained thus:

Tausi le vā. This ethic refers to the ways in which people make efforts to nurture the space that connects them to other people, to nature and to God and the spirit realm. This is explained in greater detail in Chapter Three. This usually results in performative enactments.

Physicality. This element refers to the physical condition of a person. Inherent in this concept of physical condition is a belief that the physical condition of the body is a manifestation of the inner condition of the body, which not only includes the inner faculties and its biochemistry, but also includes its effects on thoughts and emotions (Macpherson & Macpherson 1990; Lui 2007).

Heart, soul. The heart, or soul can be described as a part of the divine that is imprinted on our hearts, which is unique to each person, and that sets us apart from everyone else (Lupe, 2007; Natanielu, 2011). As a metaphoric description to the *'ava* mix, the heart and soul of a person is that part of us that we share with other people in our encounters and experiences with one another.

Spirituality – a network of relationships. Sāmoan spirituality is premised on the harmony of the relationships between the cosmos, the environment, people, and the individual – refer to Chapter Three for clarity on this notion of 'self'. This network of relationships is interconnected, co-existing realm with the natural realm; the spirit realm influences the physical, corporeal realm in which we live.

Our spirituality is that which we do to connect with the network of relationships. For example, prayers, chants, fasting, purifying rituals and acts of worship, which, as noted in Chapter Seven, includes performative enactments of cultural and traditional customs.

Aganu'u **– Those with whom you have a common unity.** There is a proverbial expression, *o Sāmoa e māioio ona tōfiga*, which translates: Sāmoa is an ordered and structured society; everything and everyone has their designated role and duty. Those

who subscribe to the same set of values and beliefs, not only nationally, but also regionally and locally, become the community to which you belong. The set of customs and traditions that derive from belonging prescribes conduct and behaviour at every given moment, event and occasion. This includes *lau tū, lau nofo, lau savali, lau tautala*[24] as referenced in Chapter Six through Su'a Peter. This evidenced in the body of customs and traditions, and also includes the oral traditions.

Knowledge – positionality. A proverbial expression posits*: e fafaga manu o le vao i fuga o lā'au, a e fafaga le tama a tagata i upu ma tala*. This translates as: the beasts of the field are fed the fruit of the land, but the young of humans are fed on stories from oral traditions. The allusion of this proverbial expression is on the importance of knowledge, of learning and of teaching. Implicit in this is the belief that when we are born, our lives have just begun, but we do not arrive as 'empty vessels'; we arrive as someone with a *gafa,* and that *gafa* informs us as to who we are, the access we our lives with an identity, a heritage, a tradition, and a culture. This is stored in the oral traditions: stories, myths, legends, songs, chants, proverbial expressions, honorific titles, and other oral traditions. Therefore, having this knowledge, or pursuing it, informs you of your position, or positionality, at any given time, occasion or situation. It becomes 'positionality' when the way you position yourself in any given situation is a statement of your identity. Duranti's observation discussed earlier – about not being able to comprehend the ways in which *matai* positioned themselves in relation to one another – is a reference to this notion.

'Āīga **– anchor.** The *'āīga* operationalises the *fa'asāmoa*: the *'āīga* monitors, enforces and maintains it. Connection to *'āīga* is not only a connection to the present and living family, but in an even greater capacity through the overarching ethics of *tausi le vā* and *tautua*, there is an expressed desire to connect to the genealogical and historical family. Thus, knowledge-keeping and knowledge-seeking traditions are primarily familial, through the *'āīga.* As such, the cultural continuities, of passing on a heritage and an identity, are possible through the *'āīga*.

Tautua **– performative enactments of each leg.** The notion of *tautua* is explicated in Chapter Three and Chapter Six. Referring to The Tānoa, each leg/institution requires a practical outworking. Each leg has performative enactments specific to its constitution and has specific ways that *tausi le vā*.

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[24] Translated as 'your standing, your sitting, your walk and your talk', it is an allusion to conduct and behaviour.

The key to the *tānoa* is the strength and balance of the 'legs'; it is what prevents the *'ava* from spilling. If the legs are weak, the *tānoa* cannot stand and will fall onto the bowl part, which is unsteady; the rolling around of the *tānoa* results in the spilling of the *'ava*. Metaphorically, the spilling of the *'ava* refers to the ways in which people 'act out' their 'imbalance', hurt, or stress; this is when it becomes criminal behaviour, abuse, suicide, mental health manifestations.

Analogously applying this to The Tānoa as a therapeutic approach, the key to therapeutic practice is the strength and balance of the 'legs', or the institutions of the *'āīga*, *aganu'u*, knowledge and spirituality. As long as the legs are strong and balanced, the person can share their *'ava* with others. But if the legs become weak, imbalance ensues. Keeping in mind the symbiotic nature of these legs, the weakening of one leg can usually weaken the others. Moreover, it puts pressure on the other legs to hold up the *'ava*. The key task of the Social Worker, Community Support Worker, and Education Liaison Workers therefore, is to focus on supporting and strengthening the 'legs' of a *tānoa*; to focus on establishing, supporting and strengthening the institutions of a person's identity. In other words, therapeutic practice that focuses on changing behaviours (for example, criminal actions, suicidal tendencies) is not the modus operandi of this approach; it is not about changing specific behaviours, but about supporting the key institutions in a person's identity, who will inevitably make 'better' decisions about their circumstances from a place of strength and balance.

An emancipatory purpose

The notion of *tausi le vā*, *tautua* and performativity in a cultural approach to inner healing and holistic health (viz. therapeutic practice) brings to mind Tengan's (2003, 2008) tome on a Hawai'ian project called *Hale Mua*, mentioned in Chapter Four. The key position that was being discussed in Chapter Four, as alluded to earlier in this chapter, was that *cultural* concepts and models of resilience and coping strategies that focused on connecting people to culture and identity ahead of psychological introspection would better equip intervention strategies, and lead to better therapeutic outcomes. Summarising the Hale Mua project, in pre-colonised Hawai'ian traditions, the *hale mua* – literally translated, means 'the first house' – is the house where Hawai'ian men learned their roles and responsibilities – for example, learner, provider, servant, warrior, husband, father, leader – and included learning bodies of knowledge like fishing, farming, animal care, theology and philosophy. Learning these bodies of knowledge were laden with custom, tradition, protocol and etiquette, and learning these customs and traditions were also part of the traditional education system (viz. *hale*

mua). More recently, after a century of colonisation, indigenous Hawai'ians became profoundly disconnected and disempowered where, like every other indigenous people the world over, they became alienated from their land, customs, traditions and knowledges, and experienced all manner of inequalities and injustices, treated as second-class citizens. In response to these inequities, inequalities and injustices the *hale mua* as a cultural institution of the past became the Hale Mua initiative of today. In this initiative, indigenous Hawai'ian men go through the process of re-discovery and re-connection with their culture, identity, language and customs by being taught ancient knowledge through 'story-talk', chant, ritual, as well as through performatively practicing ancient customs and traditions such as ceremonies, wood carving, martial arts and the sciences such as fishing, farming, architecture and construction. Quoting a participant's description of a connection to his past through the craft of wood carving, Tengan cited:

> My tūtū (Līhau) used to say, "Kālai, kālai, nāna ka maka, hana e ka lima (carve, carve, the eyes watch, the hand works). Your hand coordination, your eye coordination was you, but the sharpening of the adze before you started was the foundation, and the binding, the making of the handle …. And then you have to allow for this little extra. It's for you the blisters, cause as you concentrate on your carving and you shaping the wood, the adze on the other hand is shaping the hand, shaping the tolerance, shaping the judgement, shaping the 'uhane [spirit]." … So by doing all of dese tings increases our familiarity, and then you can feel the same pain of the people before you and have some kinship that its not measured by this time and that time, but time in work (p.176).

In a similar way to the findings of this research, the affinity to lost knowledge and genealogical connections was deeply felt, extending beyond the individual, weaving them into a cultural, communal and generational fabric. The deep feelings of connection and sense of healing, Tengan explained, inevitably led to "transformations of self and society as they occur in practice through narrative and performative enactments" (p. 3). In other words, 'healing' was not only the transformation of the individual, but also healing of their place (or interaction) in time and in society – that is, their place in time and society *in the present* became anchored to a restored sense of place in time and society *genealogically*. In the Hale Mua, this was evidenced in men restarting their (re)education process, participating in community events, and organising passive resistance movements, among a host of other emancipatory

initiatives to advocate for their disadvantaged community and restore their *mana*, or social honour.

Indeed, this was also evident in this research. Recalling one of the key themes from the findings in the previous chapter, all of the research participants outrightly stated that receiving their *tatau* not only resolved feelings of disconnection and disempowerment, but more importantly, as a result of completing their *pe'a* and *malu*, they had an intensified desire to *tautua*, to serve the family and the community. For some, the rendering of their service prompted thoughts towards a political career for the purpose of confronting the current government about legislation pertaining to the guardianship of lands and *matai* titles entitlement. For some, their *tatau* reinforced their *matai* status and their *tautua* by way of a deepened commitment to leadership in the *'āīga* and *nu'u*. For all, particularly the *malu* participants who did not have a *matai* title, their desire to *tautua* was for the betterment of their *'āīga* and *nu'u*. That is, reconnecting to culture and affirming your identity is not only curative for the individual, but just as important, restorative to the community, and reformative of society.

In this light, the value of culturally powered therapeutic practice is not only a *holistic* approach to therapy, but given the holistic nature of the individual – as someone entirely connected to one another, to nature, and to the spirit realm – the *expression* of health becomes correspondingly holistic. In other words, a holistically healthy individual is someone that *shows* their health through performative enactments that connect them to others (through families and communities, including organisations and societies), to nature (for example, through organisations and societies involved in land care and traditional voyaging), and to the spirit realm (through their families – genealogical – and communities – like church and other spiritual gatherings). In this, healing for the individual gave them the impetus for emancipatory action. In every situation, both with Hale Mua and in this research, emancipatory action was to be able to reconfigure themselves, not as someone expected to behave in ways shaped by non-indigenous, but as indigenous peoples intent on making their worlds known and on their terms.

In the opening section of this thesis, I described the genesis of this research: collecting life-stories from those I had been working with in a mandated therapeutic setting (through the justice system) for the purpose of better and more meaningful therapeutic support. Gleaning from the collection of life-stories, three themes prevailed. The first theme was that of 'lost-ness', or an absence of a sense of identity and belonging; all of those I had spoken with had experiences of abandonment, primarily associated with the absence, or an inadequate model, of family and culture that had left them feeling

empty, lonely, uncertain and un-belonging. The second theme was to do with their struggle with decision-making particularly during times of stress and crisis; for most, criminal behaviour was the result of poor decision-making, where one bad decision followed another, until they found themselves in a situation where they chose a criminal action (such as violence, abusive behavior, the use and abuse of addictive substances, theft) to resolve the crisis, adversity, and stress. The third theme was to do with the larger forces of society that impacted them indirectly; their feelings of 'lost-ness' and 'un-belonging' was compounded by a society that treated Pacific people with all manner of prejudices, consigning them to marginalisation, and unequal treatment.

The common theme in the three contexts – the Hale Mua, this research, and my social work practice twenty-five years ago – is to do with individuals from indigenous backgrounds coping with feelings of lost-ness, disconnection and disempowerment. In other words, it is likely that another strength of using culturally powered therapeutic intervention is that it is also transferable across indigenous cultures. In the latter section of Chapter Four, I highlighted research on other indigenous populations that contended for this position: research on indigenous populations (for example, Inuit and Indigenous Canadian communities) and research on diasporic indigenous populations (for example, Latino American and African American communities). It is within this context that the utility of the revised model of The Tānoa explained earlier in this chapter could be useful to Sāmoans and other indigenous populations not only in their homeland but also in the diaspora.

Summary

The *tatau* is the story of Sāmoans as a people, as well as the story of a person and the transformative journey they have survived. The pain journey required in completing the *tatau* is a mirror of the pain journey the aspirants of the *tatau* have endured in a prior adversity that called to question their identity. The symbolism of a new identity is reflected in their new skin; the new skin also serves as 'clothing', viz. *lā'ei*. Lavea Fosi asserted:

> *O so'u mālamalama'aga . . . o le va'a le mea lea . . . ia o fa'aulumanu mea ia. Ia, e lo'u a'u la tilotilo iai, ma lo'u mālamalama'aga o lea ua iai, e pei o la e ta'uta'u mai ai, e ta'u mai ai i le mea lenei, o tātou o ni tagata fōlau. E iai galu o le sami; e iai fo'i isi vāega e iai fāgota, fa'amuli'ali'ao. O le ā le mea o la e ona tā mai ai mea nei i o tātou tino? O'u māfaufau lea, ia o lona uiga, o mea nei o se tātou fa'amatalaga o le tātou fōlauga . . . O le tau*

mālamalama lenā le tu'u fa'atasiga o mea nei, ia e mafai ai ona fa'amatala mai se tala, pei o se tala e fa'amatala mai se tatou tupu'aga mai, ia, ma se mea na tātou fōlau mai ai.

What I understand . . . this is the *va'a* . . . these are the *fa'aulumanu*. When I look at these patterns, and with what I know now, these patterns tell the story that we are voyagers/navigators. There are patterns to do with the waves; there are sections to do with fishing, and the *fa'amuli'ali'ao*. Why are these things tattooed on our body? I realised that these patterns tell our stories of our voyages . . . when you thread together these patterns, that is how you know these stories and knowledges, the knowledge of our voyages and histories.

The *tatau* therefore clothes the *soga'imiti* and *malu* with the qualities they embraced as a metaphor for the new person that now stands before the family and the community, ready to serve, ready to lead, and ready to be representatives of what it means to be Sāmoan.

Essentially, what started as a research into a Sāmoan approach to psychological resilience, resulted in a thesis about a Sāmoan approach to personhood and life journeys in 'becoming' a 'person with an identity', or purpose. In this light, this research started out being about the *tatau*, and became a research about becoming Sāmoan. In becoming Sāmoan, it is not about being *ethnically* Sāmoan, but about the *humanity* of being Sāmoan. That is, the way we experience the world is about the way in which we as *humans* experience the world; it is not about being *ethnically different* to any other ethnic group but about our experience and explanation of the way the world works. The development of customs, traditions and rituals was in light of the way we encountered specific elements of this wold. This is evident in the statement excerpted in the previous chapter by Lavea Fosi, where he asserted that having the *tatau* does not make you 'super', or empower the wearer with special qualities; it should make the wearer realise, grasp, accept and present their (renewed) personhood, their identity! Further to that, the *soga'imiti* and *malu* have become the embodiment of the ideals that have transformed them, ideals that are core beliefs and values not so much in the *fa'asāmoa*, but in the way the interconnected cosmological order operates.

Chapter 8

Conclusion:

Beauty that remains

Proverbial expression:
E pala ma'a, 'ae lē pala 'upu.

Translation:
Rocks will deteriorate, but words never will.

Meaning:
This proverbial expression references Sāmoan's belief about the longevity and reliability of the word, or oral traditions.

Allusion:
In this chapter, I reference this proverbial expression to allude to the final chapter; now that I have navigated this research, now that I have completed the research, the findings, and displaying it through this thesis, I find rest, and can conclude it with this chapter.

Introduction

This research set out to accomplish a number of objectives. The primary objective was to answer the two research questions posed in Chapter One. First, to explore the tradition of the *tatau*[25] in search of traditional knowledge that reveal core beliefs and values of the *fa'asāmoa*[26] from which the Sāmoan cultural identity comes. The second research question related to how these core beliefs and values might inform a way of thinking about and approaching the concept of coping with adversity. This in particular was in response to current resilience and adversity research that implicated cultural and indigenous identity as significant in the ways people cope with adversities and bounced back to normal or heightened functioning. The findings in Chapter Six revealed the link, and this was unpacked further and summarised in Chapter Seven.

Summing up the previous two chapters, two key findings emerged. The first key finding was the significance of an adversity that all participants had faced in their own life journey prior to undertaking the *tatau*. That significant adversity resulted in a discovery of self, and essentially, their 'Sāmoan-ness'. After navigating their adversity, the participants believed that the *tatau* was the ideal way to 'mark' the journey, hence the *pe'a*[27] and the *malu*[28]. The second key finding that emerged were the descriptions of characteristics that the participants came to value and adopt as they came out of their adversity and overcame the struggle. Those characteristics were then inscribed on them as their new *lā'ei*[29] and represented a greater love for family, culture, knowledge and spirituality, resulting in a desire to *tautua*[30] and to *tausi le vā*[31]. The conclusion reached in this research was that adversity, hardship, and unexpected and stressful life events are journeys of transformation. While the adversity and difficulties must be

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[25] *Tatau* – Traditional Sāmoan tattooing

[26] *Fa'asāmoa* – the Sāmoan way

[27] *Pe'a* – the male *tatau*

[28] *Malu* – the female *tatau*

[29] *Lā'ei* – Literally translates as 'clothing'; an idiom for the *tatau* – a reference to an ancient Sāmoan phrase for the *tatau*, *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'clothing of Sāmoan men'.

[30] *Tautua* – To serve, or service rendered.

[31] *Tausi le vā* – Literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.

traversed by the individual, their integration and connectedness to a network of relationships (with family, culture, knowledge and spirituality) help the journey, as it is in those network of relationships that the individual returns as a new person on the inside, marked with new 'skin' on the outside, and with a greater sense of belonging, purpose, and intention.

There was a secondary set of objectives of this research that were described in the latter part of Chapter One. These were noted as a therapeutic purpose, an emancipatory purpose and a methodological purpose. A summary of the findings is furnished in the previous chapter, and the conclusion reached is that select aspects of Sāmoan notions, philosophies and approaches to adversity can be embedded in therapeutic practice. In the previous chapter, The Tānoa was explained as an already-existing approach to working with Pacific people in a therapeutic setting and reconfigured with the findings that emerged from this research. This revision of The Tānoa will be used in a specific therapeutic setting which will be explained in the next section. Noting also the emancipatory value of the research findings in the latter part of the previous chapter, the first two secondary set of purposes – the therapeutic, and the emancipatory – have been fulfilled. The third of the secondary set of objectives, the methodological one, has been contended for and used in this thesis. As explained in Chapter One regarding a Sāmoan methodological approach, positioning myself as a Sāmoan *soga'imiti*[32] undertaking this research in Sāmoa using cultural knowledge-seeking customs was crucial and was significant in the way that it allowed me to search for difficult-to-find cultural knowledge. Moreover, the methodological approach allowed me to complete this research, and to make an original contribution.

Original contribution

Noted in Chapter One, the current state of literature on the *tatau* was primarily through Western research which focused primarily on the act of tattooing. Although the voice of indigenous peoples in the literature of *tatau* is sparse, more so, the voice of those who have the *tatau* is absent in the literature. Noted in the opening chapter of this thesis, research on the *tatau* has looked at its artistry and practice, and while the literature has been useful in exhibiting the *tatau*, none have recognised the ontological and epistemological value of the *tatau*. While there are creative and experiential accounts

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[32] *Soga'imiti* – the male that has the *pe'a*.

of the *tatau* in various forums – for example, in blogs, social commentaries, and social media – academic research from the perspective of the *soga'imiti* is unaccounted for. This research is an original contribution to the body of knowledge of *tatau*, particularly with some of the personal experiences, deeper thoughts, and inner meanings.

Additionally, as noted in the earlier chapters, the value of cultural institutions and traditional rituals in adversity and resilience research has been advocated for. Using the *tatau* to better understand notions of coping with adversity and psychological resilience reinforces this advocation. To that end, using the *tatau* in adversity and resilience is also an original contribution from this research.

Moreover, as evident in the final two sections of the previous chapter, revisiting The Tānoa approach and re-writing it through the findings of this research is also an original contribution to the body of literature on indigenous approaches in therapeutic settings. I noted in the latter part of the previous chapter the value of culture and oral traditions in therapeutic and emancipatory discourse, and asserted that the common factor between Hale Mua and this research, and therefore, its transferability across settings, was likely due to feelings of lost-ness, disconnection, abandonment, un-belonging and disempowerment. The Tānoa approach explained in Chapter Seven, along with the theoretical framework described in the first parts of that chapter are intended to be the theoretical premises upon which I plan to establish a series of community organisations to support and encourage Pacific people in the Auckland diaspora to navigate their life journeys, particularly through education, justice and mental health. Thus, the value of the original contribution of The Tānoa to therapeutic practice will be in the unique approach to social service provision that the community organisations will have.

Research limitations

The parameters of this research were specific to the Sāmoan context in Sāmoa. The rationale for this parameter was provided in Chapter One. Notwithstanding that rationale, the fact of limiting the research setting to Sāmoa signifies that one of the limitations of this research is its applicability to the Sāmoan communities abroad, and particularly to the body of *soga'imiti* and *malu* abroad. Additionally, the differences between Sāmoans and their expressions of Sāmoan-ness in different countries also signals the changing clarities around the notion of the 'Sāmoan self' and a 'Sāmoan identity'. In this light, this research should be seen as a 'snapshot' of 'being Sāmoan'

and 'expressions of Sāmoan-ness' at this current time, and therefore, perhaps not transferrable across time and distance[33].

Another limitation of this research pertains to the aspects of 'insider-ness' that I used for research positionality. Although I have contended for this perspective throughout this thesis, there is also a methodological limitation to such a position. Noted in Chapter Two, and applicable here, there is a likelihood that I was 'too close' to the subject matter, as well as the participants. Such close proximity to the participants and the data collection and analysis runs the risk of collusion, or the researcher 'hijacking' the research (see Brannick & Coghlan, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kanuha, 2000; Smith, 1999). Notwithstanding this, I accepted it as a necessary risk for the sake of an exploratory research approach intent on searching for difficult-to-find knowledges and understandings to make more sense of coping with adversity and hardship.

Future directions

Upon reflecting on this research, and thinking of possible future directions, two thoughts come to mind. Firstly, the *pe'a mutu*[34] was briefly addressed in this thesis. I know of no research on this phenomenon, but I believe that it needs to begin to be a part of the narrative of the *tatau*. I am mindful of the negative stigma and shame currently attached to the *pe'a mutu*, and the fact of their invisibility would make such an investigation difficult to instigate. However, I believe they have valuable insights on certain aspects of the experience and journey of the *tatau*, which has not yet been made known. Certainly, I have become interested in this aspect of the *tatau* journey since doing this research. Further to that, there are many aspects of that undertaking that mirror this research – for example, hard-to-find knowledge that is worthy of knowing – and therefore, perhaps there is utility for the reuse of the methodological approach used in this research.

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[33] While this limitation may appear to contradict the point of transferability made earlier in this chapter, the point being made here is to do with the clarities and articulation around the Sāmoan identity (perhaps) being different, whereas the point of key themes being transferable is to do with the commonality of feelings of lost-ness, disconnection and disempowerment being assuaged by the beauty of identity, culture and oral traditions.

[34] *Pe'a mutu* – the incomplete *pe'a*; the male that has not completed their *pe'a*.

A second area of interest for possible further exploration in greater detail is the nature of the identity-transformational adversities, for example, the circumstances, the thinking process, the emotional states, and the different ways the transformation takes place. The value of this investigation would not only be in the therapeutic setting, but also in the research of human development and life cycles, and more so, in the life journey of those who desire a *tatau*.

Concluding reflections

Sāmoans go through stressful times; many 'bounce back', and many struggle to 'bounce back'. Sāmoan ways of recovering from stressful and adverse circumstances may not be unique to them, but there are ways that leaning on their cultural identity helps them to navigate the adversities they face. In this light, this research affirms many others before this, that culture is central to the wellbeing of indigenous peoples and their sense of belonging. Moreover, if psychology, counselling, social work and other areas of therapeutic practice are to make a meaningful impact in the lives of Sāmoans, and those from indigenous and diverse backgrounds, then these industries need to integrate or take greater consideration of the value of cultural identity and the ways of life of those peoples.

As a result of this research, the significance of cultural identity and finding ways of connecting to cultural identity was highlighted. This becomes even more important for Sāmoans living abroad, in the diaspora. Thus, I have formed the view that Sāmoans in the diaspora need to find ways to connect to their culture. To that end, I believe they would find incredible connectivity if they were to perform a type of 'cultural pilgrimage', where they would 'journey' back to Sāmoa at some stage in their lives. A 'cultural pilgrimage' – as different to a 'holiday' – is for the purpose of (re)establishing those meaningful connections. Thus, the cultural pilgrimage would be for a significant period where those connections would become embedded in their hearts, minds, and spirits. In that significant period, the objective would be to connect to as much of Sāmoa as you can, and as you are entitled to. As you go, participate in the culture, life and times of Sāmoa, for example, work, tend the land, build a home, develop a business; learn the language, learn the customs and traditions, learn the genealogy; visit significant places, fun places, sacred places; give your love, time and energy to Sāmoa. At the end of the cultural pilgrimage, find meaningful ways to mark the journey. There are contemporary ways of remembering: photos and memoirs; mini-documentaries and

social media; blogs and other ways of creative and experiential writing. There are also other more traditional ways of marking the journey: for some, it may mean the *tatau*; for some, a voyage on a traditional voyaging canoe; for others, a *matai* title; and others still building a *fale* or structure for the *'āīga.* Whatever way you find, journey well.

Ia matagi taumuliina lau folauga [may you have favourable winds on your journey; journey well].

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GLOSSARY

A'ami le tufuga	Seek out a *tufuga*.
'Āīga	Family; it is analogous with the Western concept of 'extended family'
'Āīga a Tufuga	The family historically gifted with the *tatau* instruments; loosely translates as the 'family of master tattooists'
Aganu'u	Refers to the body of customs and traditions. Literally translated, means the conduct of the *nu'u* (village); a local expression of a custom or tradition.
Alagā'upu	Proverbial expressions
Ali'i	High chief; chief decision-maker
Apisā	The home/facilities of a traditional *tatau* practitioner
'Atoau	The kit that contains the *tatau* instruments; literally translates as 'bag/kit of au; *'ato* – bag or kit, *au* – tattoo comb.
Au	The tattooing 'stick'; the tattooing comb.
'Au tāpua'i	The supporters; friends and family who come to keep the prospective *soga'imiti* and *malu* company by singing, conversing and other ways of distraction from the pain.
'Au toso	*Tufuga* aides; the group of men that help the *tufuga* by stretching the skin of prospective *soga'imiti*.
'Ava	In Sāmoan botany, *'ava* (L. *piper methysticum*) is a plant; its roots are used for the *'ava* ceremony where (after being dried) it is crushed into a powder and mixed with water.
'Ietoga	Fine mats.
'Ifoga	The reconciliatory ceremony of ritual submission of the offending party to the aggrieved party to seek forgiveness and restore the social honour of all concerned.
Ipu	Receptacle, container of food or drink; bowl, cup.
Fa'aaloalo	Respect
Fa'aleleiga	Restorative punishment, for example, a formal *fono* to discuss reconciliation.
Fa'asalaga	Retributive punishment, for example, a monetary or food fine.
Fa'asāmoa	In the manner of a Sāmoan; the Sāmoan way; the Sāmoan ethos.
Fa'ate'a	Banishment, ostracisation; exile.

Fāgogo	Stories of fiction; made-up stories
Fala	Mat, the mat that the prospective *soga'imiti* lies on while they are being tattooed
Fale	Traditional Sāmoan house
Faletua	The title given to the wife of an *ali'i*.
Fatu	Heart; the physical heart
Fe'e	Octopus.
Feiloa'iga	To meet, greet; meeting up, gathering together.
Fofō	Massage.
Fono	Caucus; a council, meeting; gathering for the purpose of discussions.
Fofō le vavale	Massage the *vavale*; the utilisation of a pressing massage technique to express the *vavale* – a highly viscous substance that is the body's natural defense against foreign particles – out of the tattooed area.
Fusitā	The payment to a *tufuga* that commissions them for the undertaking of the *tatau*; the 'deposit' to signal a commitment from the *'āīga* to the *tufuga* for the undertaking of the *tatau*.
Gafa	Genealogy, lineage.
Koko laisa	Transliterated as 'cocoa rice', also known as *koko alaisa.*
Koko Sāmoa	Transliterated as 'Sāmoan cocoa', a drink made from the preparation of raw cocoa beans.
Lā'ei	Literally translates as 'clothing'; an idiom for the *tatau* – a reference to an ancient Sāmoan phrase for the *tatau*, *lā'ei o tamatane o Sāmoa*, which translates as 'clothing of Sāmoan men'.
Lama	Ink; traditionally it was the soot of burnt candlenut mixed with water; contemporaneously, it is tattoo ink used in Western tattoo parlours.
Loto	Heart, soul; emotional heart c.f. *fatu*.
Lotu	Church; ecclesiastical denomination.
Luau	Sāmoan food made of taro leaves and coconut cream
Malaefono	The place where the village council of *matai* meet.

Mālōfie	Another Sāmoan term for the *pe'a*; this term is usually used for the *pe'a* of a high chief.
Malu	The female *tatau*
Mamanu	Tatau motif; pattern
Matai	Chief; a chief decision-maker in Sāmoan leadership and politics.
Noa	No longer sacred; common
Nofo	Sit; a metaphoric reference to positioning yourself in relation to others
Nu'u	Village; commune.
Pālagi	Caucasian; of European descent.
Pātele	Priest'; a transliteration of the Latin word 'padre' as a reference to the Catholic religious order of priests.
Pe'a	The male *tatau*
Pe'a mutu	An incomplete *tatau;* the person who has an incomplete *pe'a*
Pe'epe'e	Coconut cream
Pula'ū	A male without a *tatau*.
Pule	Reference to specific *matai* titles from Savai'i.
Sā	Sacred; forbidden.
Sa'o	Paramount chief title
Sāmaga o le pe'a	The ceremony that acknowledges the completion of the *tatau*. The ceremony requires that *sama*, also known as *lega*, (turmeric) is mixed with coconut oil, and massaged on the new *pe'a* and *malu*. the cracking of the egg on the head of the *pe'a and malu*, with speeches and exchange of gifts. All of these elements have specific meanings, and marks a new beginning for the new *soga'imiti* and *malu*.
Sasa'e	East
Sausau	The 'tapping stick'; in the practice of the *tatau*, the *sausau* is used to tap the *au* in order to lodge the ink into the skin layers.
Savali	Walk; a metaphoric reference to the way you conduct yourself
Sisifo	West

Soa	In *tatau* lore, the *soa* is your *tatau* partner, companion for the journey.
Soga'imiti	The male who has a *tatau*.
Solisā	Literally translates as 'trampling something that is sacred'; refers to the breaking of something that is forbidden.
Tā	Literally, to 'tap'; a reference to the hand-tapping technique of the *tatau*.
Tāaga	Tattooing; tattooing session.
Talanoaga	Colloquially, means to converse, talk, discuss; As a research methodology, it refers to a conversive method of gathering and analysing data.
Talatu'u	Folklore; stories of people of note; literally means 'stories left behind'.
Taliau	The way a person responds to the *au*; literally translated, means 'react to the *au*', metaphorically, means to embrace, or accept the *au*.
Tānoa	A large wooden, curve-bottomed bowl that stands upright on legs – refer Figure 1.1, page 15. Also known as *'ava* bowl, or *kava* bowl.
Tapu	Taboo; restricted
Tapulima	The traditional tattoo of the hand; traditionally, given to the daughter of a *malu*, as a signal of her commitment to one day get the *malu*.
Tātā	Tapping; a reference to the hand-tapping in the *tatau* technique.
Tautua	To serve, or service rendered.
Tausi	The title given to the wife of a *tulāfale*.
Tausi le vā	Literally translates as 'nurturing the relational space'; refers to exercising due care to protect and respect the relationships that connect one to another, ourselves with nature and the elements, and particularly with God and the spirit realm.
Tausi pe'a	The person that nurses and cares for the prospective *soga'imiti*. Duties include massaging the tattooed area, accompanying the prospective *soga'imiti* everywhere, and cooking and caring for them.
Tautai	In ancient Samoan references, the *Tautai* is a Master Navigator. More recent references refer to the *Tautai* as a skilled fisherman, one who knows how to read the winds, waves, stars

and seasons, particularly relating to the seasonality of fish migration habits.

Tautala	Talk; a metaphoric reference to one familiar with the relationships between people and self
Tatau	Traditional Sāmoan tattooing
Teu le vā	Correct, or put back to order, the *vā*
Toga	South
To'elau	North
Tōfā sa'ili	The search for knowledge and wisdom; the mission of looking for knowledge.
Toloa	In common Sāmoan vernacular, the *toloa* is believed to be the 'Pacific black duck' (*Anas superciliosa*). However, in traditional navigation, and in the language of every Pacific nation, the *toloa, toroa* refers to the albatross. Moreover, there is a constellation of stars known as *toloa* with the reference to the wingspan of the albatross – a duck is not known for such a feature.
Tū	Stand; a metaphoric reference to knowledge of performative duties
Tufuga	Specialist, artisan; keeper/practitioner of specialist knowledge.
Tufuga Tā Tatau	Master tattooist
Tulāfale	Orator; oratory chief (for the *ali'i*)
Tumua	Reference to specific *matai* titles from Upolu
Tūpaepae	A reference to the place, or forum, where the cultural oratory exchange between parties takes place.
Upu fa'afeiloa'i	Literally translates as 'words of greetings'; the Sāmoan custom of greeting exchanges.
Upu fa'afetai	Literally translates as 'words of gratitude'; the traditional custom of offering and reciprocating gratitude.
Upu fa'amāvae	Literally translates as words of farewell; the customary oratory practice of expressing appreciation, exchanging a reciprocating gift, bidding farewell, and imparting a blessing.
Va'a	Sea vessel
Va'a taumualua	The double-bowsprit sea vessel: *va'a* – sea vessel, *taumua* - bowsprit, *lua* – two; catamaran; a reference to either any type of double-bowsprit sea vessel – for example, *va'atele*, *'alia* – or

specifically the *va'a taumualua* which has the peculiarity of both ends of the *va'a* having a *taumua*, and uses the shunting technique for sailing upwind.

Vae	Leg(s)
Vāega	Section; division
Vavale	The body's defense mechanism against foreign particles being embedded beneath the skin's surface layers; the body releases a highly viscous substance – *vavale* – that surrounds the ink in preparation for ejection.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1:

Ethics Approval Letter

(overleaf)

A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T

4 September 2014

Peggy Fairbarin-Dunlop
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Peggy

Re Ethics Application: **14/241 Samoa's next top model: Finding a model of psychology using the fa'asamoa.**

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 4 September 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 4 September 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 4 September 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.

All the very best with your research,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Sonny Natanielu

APPENDIX 2:

Talanoa Indicative Questions

O le ā se tāua o le tatau i le tagata Sāmoa?	What is the importance of the *tatau* to the Samoan people?
O le ā se ese'esega i aso anamua ma aso nei i le tāaga o le tatau?	What are the differences in the *tatau* between now and the days of old?
O ai le tagata e tatau ona tā latou pe'a po'o le malu?	Who should get the pe'a or *malu*?
A tā, 'ae lē uma, o le ā se mea e tupu?	If you don't complete the tatau, what happens?
O ā ese'esega o tiute ma fa'amoemoe mo soga'imiti ma pula'ū?	What are the duties/expectations of those who have a *tatau*, and those who don't?
O lea ua uma ona tā lau pe'a, o ā ni ou fa'amoemoe i ou fanau ma to'alua?	Now that you have a *tatau*, what are your expectations of your family?
O lea ua uma ona tā lau pe'a, o ā ni fa'amoemoe o lou 'āīga mo oe?	Now that you have a *tatau*, what are your family's expectations of you?
O ā uiga o mamanu e māsani ona fa'aaogā i le tāaga o le tatau?	What are some of the patterns used on the *tatau*, and what do they mean?

As noted earlier, Sāmoans do not conceptualise psychological constructs the way Western science has conceptualised them. These indicative questions are points of entry for the *talanoaga*. The first four questions are to open the *talanoaga* about customs, traditions, protocols and rituals associated with the preparation, the process and upon completion; the second set of four questions are to open *talanoaga* about duties, expectations, meanings and discourses that inform and influence conduct, behaviour and change. In particular, I am looking not only at the personal level, but the cultural, familial, local and spiritual levels of impact, influence and change.

APPENDIX 3:

Philosophical paradigms in research

The table below is a cross-summary reference of Al-Saadi (2014), Scotland (2012) and Willig & Stainton-Rogers (2008), that demonstrates the differences between the paradigm of 'natural science' and the paradigm of 'social science'. The table shows how ontology informs epistemology, and how that informs methodology and the way logic, and knowledge is discovered, and uncovered.

Paradigm	Natural science	Social science
Ontology	Objectivism, realism	Constructivism, relativism
Epistemology	Positivism	Interpretivism
Methodology	Quantitative	Qualitative
Methods	Statistics, experiments, survey questionnaires	Ethnography, focus groups, case studies
How knowledge is derived	Deductive reasoning	Inductive reasoning

APPENDIX 4:

Tatau sessions

The first session is the tattooing of the dorsum region, which is the *va'a taumualua* – the top part – and the *pulatama and pulatele*.

The second session is the tattooing of the lower back and upper buttock, *'aso lāiti* and the *saemutu* and *fa'apefu*.

The third session is the tattooing of the *'aso fa'aifo* – left flank.

The fourth session is the tattooing of the right flank.

The fifth and sixth session is the tattooing of the left side of the lower buttock and hamstring, which includes the *fa'amuli'ali'ao, ulumanu* and *atigivae.*

The seventh and eighth session of the tattooing of the right side of the lower buttock and hamstring.

The ninth session is the left inner thigh and quadricep, which is the *lausae*, *fusi* and *tapulu*.

The tenth session is the right inner thigh and quadricep.

The final two sessions are left knee, and then the right knee, the lower pelvic area and the belly button, which are the *tuli*, the *punialo* and the *pute*.

APPENDIX 5:

The Tānoa: an indigenous approach to holistic health[1]

A paper presented at the 5th Measina Conference,

at National University of Sāmoa, Apia, Sāmoa
30th August 2010 – 1stSeptember 2010.

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[1] Reproduction of Natanielu (2011).

ABSTRACT

As an aspect of protecting health knowledges and practice, this paper will present an indigenous approach to social work practice, health intervention services and student support strategies, as a model of restoration. It is a model of support that I have developed from 20 years experience in various roles in the fields of crime, youth at risk, mental health and schools, called The Tānoa.

Customarily, a *tānoa* is the ceremonial bowl used for the Sāmoan *'Ava*[2] Ceremony. Traditionally, the *tānoa* comprised of a bowl, which stood on four legs, where the *'ava* is for all to share in. Thus, The Tānoa approach symbolically alludes to the person as the bowl part of the *tānoa*; the *'ava*, according to a particular legend, is the substance that connects us to heaven, symbolic of the 'image of God' in us; the four legs representative of the four institutions we need in our lives to be stable and stand strong:

1. **Church**
2. **Culture**
3. **Education**
4. **Family**

Mental illness, suicide, crime, and an underperforming studentship, are symptomatic of an unstable *tānoa*, caused by broken 'legs'. The work of social practice, health intervention services, and student support strategies, therefore, is to repair the broken 'legs' to restore (holistic) health.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I'm going to outline a model of social practice that finds its roots in the oral traditions of the Sāmoan culture, its expression in modern living in Auckland, New Zealand, and encapsulated within a traditional Sāmoan symbol. I present it as an example of indigenising models of social practice aimed at holistic health and wellbeing. This is a necessary task for those who feel displaced from their homeland (Dodson, Montgomery & Brown, 2009; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni & O'Regan 2009; Jehangir, 2009; Amituana'i-Toloa, 2005; Tamasese, Peteru, Waldegrave & Bush, 2005; Tui Atua, 2005; Coxon, Anae, Mara, Wendt-Samu & Finau 2002). Of particular note is that the crime[3], mental health[4] and education[5] statistics that belittle

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[2] Some island nations refer to it as *kava*, some refer to it as *'ava*, some as *kawa*.

[3] Statistics New Zealand, 2009

[4] Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010

[5] Ministry of Education, 2010

the Sāmoan community are *symptoms* of their displacement, as opposed to *descriptors* of their academic ability, level of health, and contribution to society, or lack thereof (Natanielu, 2010; Macpherson 2001). Therefore, one of the principle tasks for this community is an identifying process (Nakhid, 2003) with their own identity markers and touch points that considers the many and varied hybrid identities and influences. This will give rise to an indigeneity as a way towards creating syncretic models of practice that is reflective of their experience of the world. Thus, the indigenisation of practice models is a necessary addition to modern Western social and therapeutic practice, so that the negotiation and reconciliation that the Sāmoan must undertake, of the various and often conflicting worldviews and expectations, because of their hybridity, can be sensitively and competently considered by the therapeutic practitioner (Tamasese et al, 2005; Anae, Anderson, Benseman & Coxon, 2002; Bourke, 2001; McCallin, Paterson, Butler & Cowley, 2001; Schuster, 2001). In this regard, I am bringing elements of oral traditions (symbology and cosmology) to formal Western academic discursive traditions.

The Pasifika audiences I have shared this with have shown an appreciation of this approach. But I am mindful that to the Sāmoan and Pasifika audiences, this makes sense because there are common assumptions about a Sāmoan worldview that this approach affirms. Although I will primarily discuss it from the viewpoint of the Sāmoan, by extension, there are enough commonalities between Pasifika nations that can articulate a Pasifika worldview (Culbertson, Agee & Makasiale, 2007; Tamasese et al, 2005; Bedford & Didham, 2001; Crocombe, 1992; Crocombe, 1975). The Sāmoan worldview has a distinct and unique way of perceiving the world, the way it works, and the way we are able to operate in it. They are worldviews that we are raised up with, without actually having it necessarily articulated. They are beliefs that we hold to be true. Thus, our actions, interactions and relationships are profoundly affected by these beliefs. Understanding these beliefs, and their instrumentality, is foundational for working with Sāmoans successfully (Tamasese et al, 2005; Tui Atua, 2005;). The model I present here, The Tanoa, will illustrate this using the Sāmoan worldview (viz. *fa'asāmoa*[6]).

TULOU[7]

I will attempt to make the beliefs and worldviews known for the sake of this paper and the non-Sāmoan reader. However, there is a danger in doing so. In the first instance, I will make explicit various statements about the *fa'asāmoa* and some of the inherent indigenous beliefs. *Tulou*. Ever mindful of the vituperation I may receive if I misrepresent the Sāmoan worldview, I accept

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[6] "Fa'asāmoa" means 'the Sāmoan way'; a Sāmoan outlook, or worldview; the Sāmoan ethos.

[7] ""Tulou" is the Sāmoan n word for "excuse me". In an oration, it is necessary to say *tulou* if a convention is not adhered to.

that I will be held accountable for the words I set in black and white as representative of our culture. I am also wary that making it explicit can deceive the reader into thinking that this is the one true and universally accepted version of these aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*. But as Meleisea (1987) notes:

For Samoans, knowledge is power, and the most powerful knowledge is historical knowledge …. Even 'common' historical knowledge such as well-known legends, are controversial. Each has many versions (p.vii).

My aim is *not* to set my version of the *fa'asāmoa* presented here as the only version; far from it. My desire here is to present a picture of certain aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*, knowing that other understandings exist. Moreover, I am also cognisant of the fact that *talking* about oral traditions and indigenous cultures helps brings various aspects of history to life; *writing* it loses some of the 'flavour' associated with oral traditions and the art of native narratives (Lekoko, 2007; Tui Atua, 2005; King, 2005; Meleisea, 1987; Biggs 1976). Be that as it may, it is necessary for the sake of making explicit these worldviews and beliefs. Thus, many of the explanations presented about the *tānoa* (as an object) and various aspects of the *fa'asāmoa* are difficult to reference because, as mentioned earlier, they are worldviews and beliefs that we are raised up with. Referencing a single source and a single date is difficult to do, as it is the product of a cultural upbringing and lifestyle, rather than a learnt piece of information from a literary source. This is one of the limitations of oral traditions, *tulou*! Accordingly, in the Reference List section, I list the sources I have received information and explanations from over the years as a way of acknowledging the sources.

The other difficulty is that holistic worldviews such as that to which the *fa'asāmoa* subscribes, asserts that because of the symbiotic interconnectedness of all things, is a 'thing' hardly ever, if at all, about one 'thing'. In other words, I am going to discuss four institutions (the church, the culture, the family and education) as if they are four distinct 'things'. In an actual fact, they are four interconnected 'things' bound in a holistic symbiotic ensemble, that is difficult to differentiate. Separating them like I do here is problematic. *Tulou*. My attempt to do so is primarily for the non-Sāmoan, non-Pasifika reader who will not necessarily have the cultural building blocks that will help make this make sense. It should be borne in mind that the four institutions are not as indistinct as shown here and that they need to be understood with fluid boundaries.

Thus, the indigenous approach that this model employs refers to the Sāmoan worldview as the foundation. I have applied this knowledge base to inform a social and therapeutic practice, and metaphorically connected it to the indigenous object of the *tānoa* to illustrate the model. I have found that in applying this approach, I have been able to bring a lot of success, and restoration, to those I have applied this to, including myself.

Finally, it is with great trepidation that I write about inherent beliefs endogenous to the *fa'asāmoa* that inform a Sāmoan worldview. *Tulou!* I ask Sāmoa to please excuse my undertaking; I do not presume to be an expert of the *fa'asāmoa*. But in presenting these approaches as a practice model, and being mindful of a possible non-Sāmoa and non-Pasifika audience, understanding the practice model needs these inherent beliefs to be made explicit. It is indeed about identity, and I have found that for those here in New Zealand, a rediscovery of indigenous knowledge bases has brought a lot of healing, wholeness and restoration.

BACKGROUND

The *tānoa* is a large wooden, curve-bottomed bowl that stands upright on four legs, hand carved from the *ifilele* tree (Buck, 1930; Krämer, 1995). The *tānoa* is primarily used for ceremonial purposes, the *'ava* ceremony. Contemporaneously, it is referred to as a *kava bowl.* I was raised up with the belief that traditional *tānoa* were four-legged; Krämer (1995) loosely suggests this and Buck (1930) goes as far as to say that contemporary *tānoa* are multi-legged as a reflection of Sāmoan capitalism – they were made for tourists who were charged by the leg for the extra wood required.

Many years ago I was told of a possible origin of the *tānoa*. There existed a Sāmoan ritual of sharing a drink by drinking out of the same cup, or *ipu,* as a way of welcoming guests. The *ipu* is a smoothened halved coconut shell. When a large group visited from afar, the *ipu* needed to be enlarged to cater for the extended numbers so that all could participate in the welcoming ceremony. The enlarged *ipu* was carved out of local hardwood, thus forming the bowl of the *tānoa*. The addition of the legs was to stand the 'bowl' upright; specifically four legs were chosen to symbolise the significance of various aspects of Sāmoan cosmology. One particular oral tradition alludes to the notion of the four principle winds (*gau e fā*) and/or principle directions (*sisfo[8], sasa'e[9], toga[10], to'elau[11]*), referring to the universality of the occasion[12]. Thus, the *tānoa*.

For the welcoming ceremony, the *'ava* (piper methysticum) is crushed and mixed with water inside the bowl of the *tānoa* in a specified ceremonial manner; this mixture is imbibed by all dignitaries present as a symbol of unity, hence the *'ava* ceremony. A certain oral tradition posits

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[8] west

[9] east

[10] south

[11] north

[12] *o Sāmoa lea ua potopoto* (Sāmoa has gathered to honour this occasion)

that the drinking of the *'ava* is also symbolic of communion with heaven. Growing up, I was told of the legend of two brothers, sons of *Tagaloa*[13], who lived on earth. When one died, and duly buried, a tree sprouted from the site of his burial mound. In an appearance to the living brother, the dead brother instructed him to crush the bulbous root of that tree and mix it with water whereupon its effect would allow the deceased brother to communicate with the living brother; 'heaven' and 'earth' united. It is noted that the *'ava* has a tranquilizing effect and has healing properties (Martin, 2004; Simanu, 2002; Davis & Brown, 1999; Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990). Hence, the symbolic reference to heaven. The *tānoa*, thus, is symbolic of unity, both communal and personal; it brings people and communities together. In that coming together, differences are welcomed and accepted, harmony and wholeness prevails.

The Tānoa as a model of social practice, uses this cultural and historical aspect as the starting point: it is about holism and harmony, or in a word, *balance*. Imbalance requires the work of restoration. This is the key task of the practitioner, and should be borne in mind throughout this discourse.

As a theoretical ascription to a practice model, there are three elements to a *tānoa*:
- �ख *Vae* – the *legs* that hold up the bowl
- ✕ *Ipu* – the *bowl* part of the *tānoa*
- ✕ *'Ava* – the *mixture* inside the bowl

As a metaphorical allusion to understanding people, The Tānoa (illustrated in *Figure 1: The Tānoa*) is thus:
- ✕ The *bowl* part of the *tānoa* is the person; the physical aspect of a person; their physicality. This includes the organs thereof and the body chemistry within.
- ✕ The *'ava,* according to the legend of Tagaloa's sons, is the substance that connects us to heaven, and is here symbolic of the 'image of God' in us; the 'heart' or 'soul' of a person[14].
- ✕ The four legs are representative of the four institutions we need, in order to stand strong, upright and balanced: church, culture, education and family. The key to a strong *tānoa*, is the strength and balance of the legs. Thus, the strength and (holistic) health of a person, is in the balance of these four institutions in a person's life.

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[13] In many Sāmoan oral traditions, *Tagaloa* is referred to as a god. He has also been referred to as God, as well as a mighty warrior.

[14] It should be noted that, for this paper, I am going to treat Sāmoan folklore and Christianity without prejudice, acknowledging both traditions.

Figure 1: The Tānoa

Figure 2 illustrates the syncretism derived when theorising Western psychological paradigms with autochthonous Sāmoan ideology. This will be discussed in detail further on, but what is laid out in the tabular summary are the four institutions with analogous elements in Western psychological thought. They are:

- associated *indigenous concepts* from which the institutions are sourced;
- the *behavioural expressions* that explain the manifestation of the concept;
- the underlying *reasons* why such behaviours are displayed;
- a *contemporary reference*, or psychosocial equivalent.

Institution	Sāmoan concept	Behavioural Expression	Reason	Contemporary reference
Church	The spiritual realm	Prayers, rituals, morals, ethics	Guidance, direction	Spirituality
Culture	Social order	Customs, traditions, rites of passage	Belonging, acceptance	Community
Education	Designation, investiture	Skills, talents, training, knowledge	Purpose, affirmation	Personality
Family	Remembrance, reflection	Emotions, thoughts, beliefs	Security, stability	Emotionality

Figure 2: Tabular summary of Sāmoan concepts and equivalent Western psychological concepts

Thus, it is one way of understanding why people behave the way they do; having that as a base allows the practitioner to categorise a person's behaviour, identify its pathology and provide the practitioner a model from which to formulate therapeutic intervention.

� Church

In the *fa'asāmoa*, there is an inherent belief that there is an alternative co-existing realm that influences the physical, corporeal realm in which we live (Lui, 2007; Gorinksi & Fraser, 2006; Tamasese et al, 2005; Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990; Macpherson, 2001; Freeman, 1984). This is the spiritual realm, from which the supernatural is an expression. The spiritual realm is the realm of God, and other spiritual beings. The belief is that the spiritual realm is as real as the physical realm, in fact, *controls* the physical realm. There is an underlying belief that those of the supernatural realm are able to conceive and perceive purpose and a reason for everything, given their assumed knowledge of the future. Thus, for the most part, our entreaty of the spiritual realm is to seek guidance and direction (Lui, 2007; Tui Atua, 2005; Taule'ale'ausumai, 2001;). We are able to placate the spiritual realm through various means, like praying, meditating, and various other rituals of invocation (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990).

Thus, our *spirituality* is that which we do to connect with the supernatural, for example, prayer, fasting and purifying rituals. As with all fundamental elements of spirituality, in order to participate in, and remember, these rituals, we must behave or act in a certain way, or imitate certain characteristics, usually considered a 'higher' standard or ethical behaviour. *The acquisition of morals, values and standards* characterize this. The more ethical and moral we are, the closer we are considered to be to the spiritual realm, the better and clearer our lives, the easier it is to seek direction and guidance, and the more meaningful our existence.

Contemporaneously, that spiritual outlet is through the church (Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010: Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000; Tiatia, 1998). The church serves to be the connection to the spiritual realm by advancing a life of prayer, remembrance and by promoting moral conduct. As such, for Sāmoans, it is the institution that reinforces spiritual activity in the quest for guidance and direction (Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010; Alefaio, 2007; Tiatia, 2007; Taule'ale'ausumai, 2001; Tiatia, 1998; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974).

� Culture

There is a Sāmoan proverbial expression, *o Sāmoa e māioio ona tōfiga*, which means: Sāmoa is an ordered and structured society; everything and everyone has a designated role and duty. This is a direct reference to the Sāmoan culture, and the customs and traditions that signify that culture.

The culture (of customs and traditions) prescribes how to behave and conduct yourself at any given moment or event; it prescribes the milestones to celebrate, how to celebrate them, food preparation, division of labour, speaking rights and every aspect of life (Tui Atua, 2005; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000). At a wedding, for example, the culture determines the role each person undertakes: the older men do this, the younger men do that, the older women do this, the younger women do that, the food is to be prepared a certain way by the men, and presented a certain way by the women, and the honouring of guests is to be performed a certain way.

Those of the same mind, same heart, same will, seek out their own. In this regard, it is like the proverbial expression, *e fua le niu i le niu*, which means, the coconut tree will give fruit to a coconut, referring to those of like mind coming together, akin to the expression: birds of a feather flock together. Therefore, for the most part, a person's predilection for community and participation in the customary practices thereof, is born out of our need for belonging and inclusion. Customary practices and the traditions of that community are honoured in order to find a belonging (Asi-Pakieto, 2009; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afoi, Taleni & O'Regan, 2009; Gorinski & Fraser, 2006; Tui Atua, 2005; Pulotu-Endemann, 2001; Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000). In doing so, the social order of that community is maintained and perpetuated. Failure to abide by the behaviour code may result in exclusion. Reconciliatory measures can be negotiated, usually via customary protocols of restoration.

Community, therefore, is those with whom we have that 'common unity'; those with whom we belong to as a result of this common unity. This is usually an ethnic community; it can also be a local or regional community. There are also communities, or clubs, for sports, work, social, private and others. To belong to such communities and to be 'in' it, there are customs, traditions, rituals, norms and other ways of behaving that characterise being 'in' that group; this way of behaving becomes the 'culture' of that community. For example, to belong to a rugby club, 'customary' practice would dictate that you attend practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays, stay around for a few beer afterwards, be at the game early on Saturday, undergo certain preparatory rituals for the game, have a few beers afterwards at the clubrooms, watch the rugby test there with 'the boys', and other such activities. This might be followed up with a 'boy's night out', or a 'barbeque with the families'. Failure to comply with this behaviour pattern would call to question your membership in this community and further invitations to other events may be withheld. Thus, *culture provides a code of conduct for us* – it tells us how to behave, what to do, how to do it and when to do it.

Contemporaneously, that communal point of unity is through an ethnic culture. In New Zealand, the Sāmoan community is widely dispersed. Yet, all are connected through this cultural knowledge and understanding. Even though some may not participate in it, knowing that it exists in spite of their inability to participate indicates a particular attachment or connection to it (Anae, 2002; Pasikale, 1999).

✂ Education

There is a Sāmoan proverbial expression: *e fafaga manu ole vao i fūgā o lā'au, a e fafaga le tama a tagata i upu ma tala*. This translates: the beasts of the field feed on the fruit of the land, but our young are fed on narratives and oral traditions; its meaning sheds light on the importance of knowledge, of learning and of teaching. When we are born, our lives have just begun, but we do not arrive as 'empty vessels'; we arrive as someone with a heritage where that heritage, both maternal and paternal, informs us as to who we are, the access to certain information we have, the rights, responsibilities and duties. Thus, we begin our lives with an identity, a heritage, a tradition, a culture. This is stored in the oral traditions: stories, myths, legends, songs, chants, proverbial expressions, honorific titles, and other oral traditions (Amituanai'i-Toloa, 2005; Tui Atua, 2005; Meleisea, 1987). Therefore, the most important thing a person can do is to discover that heritage, uncover the oral traditions that 'make them up' (King, 2005; Tamasese et al, 2005).

That particular journey of discovery is not only life long, as there are generations and generations of narratives to uncover, but it is the journey of knowledge acquisition: learning, training, application and mastery. And as we put to practice this knowledge, it shapes who we are, how we act, and how others experience us, viz. our personality.

Our *personality* is the expression of our 'individuality'; not 'individuality' as in 'independence', but 'individuality' as in 'how we are experienced by others' and that which makes us different to others. It is the sum of our skills, abilities, talents and knowledge, or, in a word, 'education'.

Traditionally, the *āiga* managed this process; they determined the learning required, the specialist (*tufuga*) involved and an appropriate remuneration for the specialist. Such processes are also governed by custom, culture and tradition (Tui Atua, 2005; Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000).

Concomitantly, this function is the education system. *The expression of our individuality is reflected in our how we relate to others*, and those with whom we associate, and how we associate with them. Moreover, as a result of 'upskilling' and 'further education', or the improvement of our 'self', it is possible to improve the way we relate to others. Our improved capacity to relate to others is a sign of maturity and growth. As others experience us, our education, abilities, skills, and maturity is reflected back to us through those interactions; we are able to 'see' our progress in the reflection of those interactions with others.

✂ Family

In Western societies, the law has traditionally been used for social control; it determines appropriate social behaviour and etiquette. In traditional Sāmoan society, social control is

through the culture of customs, traditions and rituals. This culture (of customs, traditions and rituals) is based on 'heritage'. Contained in your heritage, is not only your lineage, but in that lineage is your identity; it contains the *talatu'u* (tales and legends) and *aganu'u* (customs and traditions) that places your *āiga* (extended and historical family) in an historical, sociological, anthropological and cultural context. Thus, you are defined by your *āiga*.

Remembering your *āiga*, and the heritage of others, merits *fa'aaloalo* (respect). If due respect is shown to people of certain and particular *āiga*, then that promotes and strengthens your *āiga*, and *fa'aaloalo* is bestowed. Thus, everything is done (deaths, weddings, celebrations, food preparation, oral traditions) to promote, elevate and cherish *fa'aaloalo*, particularly between *āiga*. Accordingly, due diligence is required to facilitate remembrance so as to promote *fa'aaloalo*; these are the customs associated with recording genealogies, chiefly titles, *talatu'u*, and other traditions associated with remembrance. To that end, the culture of customs, traditions and rituals is to facilitate remembrance; it is weaved into the social fabric of Sāmoan living: education, religion, sport, child-rearing, law and order, duties among others, are used to promote and reproduce this culture, lest we forget.

Thus, the worldview and the lifestyle that is used to promote and remember it, becomes the entirety of 'being Sāmoan'. And the culture becomes an agent of social control. It is then *monitored by* the *āiga*, *enforced through* the *āiga*, and *maintained in* the *āiga*. In this context, the primacy of the family in teaching and reinforcing a Sāmoan worldview highlights the role of the family in developing the belief system, and the inner life of children; what we believe is constructed by our experiences, which is shaped by our cultural upbringing (Asi-Pakieto 2009; Alefaio 2007; Wendt 1987). Thus, the institution of the family is the key to an emotional sense of security and stability (Asi-Pakieto, 2009; Alefaio, 2007; Tui Atua, 2009; Tui Atua, 2005; Tamasese et al, 2005; Pitt & Macpherson, 1974).

Our *emotionality*, therefore, is a manifestation of the 'inner life'; *our deep-seated thoughts, beliefs, priorities*; it is what 'moves' us. It includes our hurts, pains and memories, and their effect on, and how they impact on, our thoughts, beliefs and priorities. Our emotionality allows us to receive information from the world (people and places) through all of our senses, make judgements through our memories, thoughts and beliefs, and the actions, reactions and interactions that ensue, is a result of this. Contemporaneously, this would be analogous with the realm of psychology, but a *social* psychology, not an *individual* psychology; not a focus on the 'individual', but a focus on how family have shaped the individual through the beliefs, priorities and memories. And that is the importance of the *āiga*, and why the heritage or legacy of an *āiga* is considered as treasure.

�Ⓕ Heart, soul, image of God

Upon reading various renditions of creation stories in Sāmoa's myths and legends (Macpherson 2001; Stuebel & Krämer, 1995; Macpherson & Macpherson 1990; Meleisea, 1987), the notion of an 'image of God' is not new to Sāmoa; it existed in Sāmoan oral traditions before the arrival of the missionaries with the message of The Bible and God. Although there are varying and conflicting versions of the creation story, there are myths and legends in Sāmoan oral traditions that tell of a lone divine figure. This lone, divine figure not only gave animation to inanimate objects (rock, mud, dirt), but in doing so, left a 'divine imprint' on the created beings. The divine imprint not only gave 'intelligence' to the created beings, but also shaped it to have the likeness of the lone divine figure. This 'stripped back' Sāmoan rendition of the creation story equates to the creation stories from the missionaries. This leads to the explanation, in part, as to why Sāmoans embraced Christianity so easily (Pitt & Macpherson, 1974) and were able to easily incorporate Christianity into the *fa'asāmoa* (Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990; Freeman, 1984).

The 'image of God' can be described as a part of the divine that is imprinted on our hearts, that is unique to each one, and that sets us apart from everyone else. That divine imprint, in accordance with His wisdom, is what 'causes' us, for example, to be born Sāmoan, to a particular family, in a particular village, with a particular heritage, for a particular purpose. Thus, the 'heart and soul' of a person relies on this divine imprint to mediate when there's a dilemma; we must decide, in line with 'who we were created to be', what we must do. Notwithstanding this, it is worth noting that in Sāmoan society, it is accepted, given the primacy of the *āiga,* that we do not act, nor decide, alone in these matters. Decisions are usually with and for the *āiga* to which we belong (Kingi-Uluave & Olo-Whanga, 2010; Te Pou, 2010; Tamasese et al, 2005; Mulitalo-Lautā, 2000). In this light, the 'heart and soul' can be considered the decision-making faculty (Lupe 2007); this is the part that unites heaven and earth; the 'heaven' aspect being the 'divine imprint', the 'earth' aspect being the four institutions that we stand on.

With the decision-making faculty, we are able to prioritise in the event of internal conflicts. An internal conflict, analogous with "cognitive dissonance" (Festinger, 1957), is when a person's spirituality, for example, may conflict with their emotionality. For instance, in the event of a sexual temptation, a person's 'spirituality' may cause them to want to resist the temptation, but their 'emotionality' may cause them to want to *carry out* the temptation. Similarly, a person's 'education' may cause them to spend many hours studying at university, and conflict with their 'cultural' commitments to the family and church. It is in these times of 'internal conflict' that the 'heart and soul' of a person will be the decision-maker and determine the response; good decisions are often made when the spiritual, communal, personal and emotional, are carefully considered and reflectively measured; as long as the 'legs' are strong, the 'heart and soul' of a person is able to make good decisions. Conversely, if there are broken 'legs', and the *tānoa* is unsteady and unstable, the ability to make a good decision is hindered; bad decisions ensue.

Finally, this exemplifies the holistic aspect of Sāmoans. The 'legs' that tie us to 'earth' need the 'image of God' to determine priorities; the 'image of God' that ties us to heaven, needs stable

and strong 'legs' to be able to decide wisely. Both in need of the other, neither of them independent; a symbiotic process of interdependence: holism.

✂ **Physicality**

As I reflect on the importance of the spiritual aspect f our nature as mentioned earlier, it would appear to me that in the *fa'asāmoa*, there is an inherent belief that we are not a body that has a soul and spirit; we are a soul and spirit that has a body. The subtle difference insists that our spirituality is more important than our physicality, and placating the spiritual is more efficacious to living and being well. Thus, the health of our physical condition, although may be facilitated by physical activity (eg exercise and sport), it is through tending to the spiritual and soul (Lui, 2007; Tui Atua, 2005; Macpherson & Macpherson, 1990), as well as the four institutions, that we can attain physical health, wellbeing and balance. Much like the actual *tānoa*, the stability of the bowl part, is determined by the strength and balance of the 'legs'. And the balance of the *tānoa*, and how well kept the *'ava* is, is determined by the 'heart and soul' and its ability to mediate between the often competing priorities of the institutions.

Mental illness, suicide, crime, and an underperforming studentship, among others, are symptomatic of an unstable *tānoa*, caused by broken 'legs', or broken 'connections' with the spiritual, communal, personal and emotional realms in which we live. The work of social practice, health intervention services, and student support strategies, therefore, is to repair the broken legs (connections, or relationships) to restore their (holistic) health.

Practice

The strength and balance of the 'legs' is the key to our holistic health; what prevents the *'ava* from spilling, is the state of the 'bowl' of the *tānoa*, summed up thus:

- **Church** = a relationship with the spiritual realm >>> rituals, morals and values for guidance and direction;
- **Culture** = a relationship with a community >>> a code of conduct replete with customs, traditions, milestones and mentors;
- **Education** = an understanding of who we are >>> knowledge, ability, skills
- **Family** = an understanding of the primacy of the family >>> a 'home base' where we are always accepted and loved

Thus, repairing the broken 'leg's is the task of all in the pastoral support and help industry!

If the *ipu* is unsteady, it has no balance. It is symbolic of the 'self'; if the *ipu* does not stand on the four legs, it will roll around, causing the *'ava* to spill out, and the 'emptying out' of the person is symptomatic of this. The feeling of 'being lost' characterises the loss of the 'divine imprint'. This 'lost-ness' can manifest as suicide, attention-seeking behaviour alcoholism and other

addictions; the supernatural and the natural no longer united. A lack of direction and focus (spirituality) is evidence of this. And people's experience of you (in your community) will reflect back (your personality) the evident uncertainty and insecurity (in your emotionality). This is often summed up as issues of "identity", often the result of prolonged stress and traumatic life experiences that 'shakes up' a person's life, leaving them uncertain, insecure and anxious. This is what happens to the bowl and the *'ava* when the 'legs' are unstable.

Thus, the *tānoa* with a broken 'leg' is an unsteady *tānoa*; it can still stand, but is unstable. Restoring that 'leg' stabilises the *tānoa*. If the *tānoa* has two broken 'legs', it cannot stand. If the *tānoa* has three broken legs, that is a person in serious need!

The work of the Social Worker, the Health Intervention Worker and the Student Support Worker, therefore, is to focus on supporting and strengthening the 'legs' of a *tānoa*; to focus on establishing, supporting and strengthening the institutions of a person's identity to create balance in their lives.

Every discussion between the helper and the person will be about identity. These discussions are what would be considered 'therapeutic discussions' (Makasiale, 2007; Menon & Mulitalo, 2005; McCallin, Paterson, Butler & Cowley, 2001; Schuster, 2001). There will be discussions about what constitutes the four institutions in that person's life:

- o **Church** – what does it mean to be spiritual for me? How is that spirituality expressed in my life? Is there an indication of guidance and direction? Where is the evidence of the growing awareness of my standards and values that characterise my uniqueness?
- o **Culture** – what community (or communities) do I belong to? How is that community characterised? What do they do to set themselves apart? What customs, traditions and behaviours characterise a belonging to that community?
- o **Education** – what processes of knowledge acquisition am I engaged in? Am I involved in learning/teaching? Is there a growing affirmation of my purpose and destiny in those things that I am engaged in?
- o **Family** – what is the evidence of a loving and secure family in my life? What are the lasting memories that I carry that tell me about who I am? How is that made apparent in my life? What does that tell me about what my beliefs are about the world?

�֎ Milestones and Mentors

For each institution, there needs to be evidence of it in their lives, so that references of identity can be confirmed. For example, I can affirm my belonging to the Sāmoan community through my ability to speak the language, and that I can engage in many of the customary practices of Sāmoans. That I can understand these customs, and view the world through a Sāmoan worldview confirms this cultural affinity. I am also learning the craft of the chiefly oratory traditions, so my Sāmoan-ness is also evident in my education process through my

conversations with chiefs, elders, teachers, books, and also by my research. This affirms the community I belong to.

Thus, for each 'leg', there needs to be evidence of actions and behaviours that identifies these relationships and connections. These evidences are *milestones* that bare witness and testify to a growth and maturation process. For example, as a teenager, my father taught me one of the most basic oratory traditions for aspiring orators, the *vala'auga*: the invitational address to guests to proceed to eat. A couple of years later, as I improved, I was given the task of the *folafolaga*: an official address at a gathering to make various declarations about the occasion, the dignitaries present and the food that has been made available for the occasion. And as my oratorical skill improved, I participated in an *'ava* ceremony, the speaking role being that of the *sufi 'ava*. My 'learning' process culminated in the Best Man's speech at my brother's wedding, where I orated a full *lāuga* (speech). Each milestone showed my progress and affirmed my growth as an aspiring orator in the Sāmoan language. I still have lots to learn and have a long way to go, but I can see my progress over the years, which affirms my maturation and growth.

Finally, for each 'leg', there need to be *mentors* who model behaviours that you identify with. For the Church 'leg', there are ministers, elders, youth group leaders, choirmasters, musicians. For the Community 'leg', there are chiefs, elders, fellow students, work colleagues, employers. For the Education 'leg', there are teachers, deans, principles, liaison staff, support staff. And for the Family 'leg', they are the parents, siblings, uncles, aunts. Such mentors facilitate growth, and help set the markers that show growth.

The presence of milestones and mentors is simply the evidence of these institutions in your life. A person's inability to name such milestones and mentors would indicate that such a 'leg' is absent from that person, thus, an unsteady *tānoa*.

❖ Process

In outlining a practice model, the process to applying this model is thus:
1. Define how each 'leg' is identified, and how it is evident;
2. Uncover the milestones and mentors – it should become evident what is 'missing' and what is 'working';
3. Map out, accordingly, how to restore each part (as identified in step 1) of each 'leg';
4. Determine priority (which 'leg' needs the most urgent attention) and personnel (who can help with that restoration) – include follow-up and monitoring;
5. Make it happen!

To execute this competently, the following therapeutic skills for the skilled practitioner are:
- Micro-skills to facilitate a discursive practice for 'talk therapy';
- Macro-skills to assess, direct and guide the process;

- Facilitation and referral skills to refer and acquire expert help;
- Love, care and patience!!!
    - Love for the work
    - Care for the person in need
    - Patience for the process

It should be noted that this is not for short-term behavioural remedies akin to behaviourism; it is long-term lifestyle changes that will be reflected in life-long behaviour changes.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of this practice model is a model of restoration; the restoration of relationships between a person and their spirituality, their community, the education, and their family. I have applied this model in crime prevention, youth at risk intervention, health intervention and student support strategies. It is definitely one way of ameliorating the negative statistics that belittle the Sāmoan and Pasifika communities in New Zealand. It is not a one size fits all, but it affirms a Sāmoan worldview and brings it away from the margins and into centre-stage where various strategies and initiatives can be informed by such an approach.

The derivation of indigenous solutions, tailor-made for this incipient and burgeoning community, is the challenge for the Sāmoan community. And as shown here, such solutions must first consult autochthonous knowledge bases; enquiries seeking syncretic and indigenous solutions must confront the oral traditions given that they are native ways of storing bodies of knowledge.

The Sāmoan worldview has a distinct and unique way of perceiving the world, the way it works, and the way we are able to operate in it. The Tānoa, as a practice model, encapsulates various and selected aspects of that worldview and brings them together to formulate a social practice model that elementally considers a Sāmoan's cultural context. Understanding it, for the Sāmoan, facilitates the identifying process, and can inform a robust discourse on identity. For the therapeutic practitioner, having these insights can advance best practice strategies that engenders affirmative and restorative solutions.

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The following is a list of those who have taught me various aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*, throughout the course of my life. In this paper, where I have indicated that I have learnt certain aspects of the *fa'asāmoa*, for example, certain myths and legends and certain oral traditions and stories, it is from this list of people that I have learnt this from. It is not from one particular conversation, or a particular interview, but a life-learning experience of being raised up by a particular *āiga*, from a particular village in Sāmoa, attending a particular church from a particular place in Auckland, New Zealand. Where I have given credit, in this list of source references, to those who I have learnt from in the written tradition, I would like to honour those that have taught me those various aspects of the *fa'asāmoa* that I allude to in this paper, irrespective of an inability to name a place, date and time of those conversations. To that end, this is that list of people:

- Lofipo Malaefatu Natanielu (father, *tulāfale*, pastor)
- Kavo Fa'atamali'i Natanielu (mother, *ali'i*, *tausi*)
- Patea Satini Epati (uncle, *ali'i*, judge Lands & Titles court)
- Folau Epati (aunt, *faletua*)
- Luatua Semi Epati (cousin, *tulāfale*)
- Various Sunday School teachers from Fetuao Methodist Church, Grey Lynn, Auckland.