

Some Samoans' perceptions, values and beliefs on the role of parents and children within the context of aiga/family and the influence of fa'asamoa and the church on Samoan parenting.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to one of the most loving and caring Samoan fathers I had the greatest pleasure and privilege of knowing. My big brother, mentor and role model;

**Jerry Ieremia Cowley.**

**June 21, 1949 – January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004**



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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study describes maternal and paternal experiences of thirty-five Samoans living in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. The study was conducted in order to establish, “What, if any changes to parenting practices have occurred since their family migrated into New Zealand?” Through interviews, respondents discussed their values, attitudes and beliefs and how they perceived that they were brought up by their own parents. They also described and discussed their own roles as parents and the roles of their children. They also discussed how the church influenced the ways in which their parents *parented* them and the way they themselves *parent* their children. Respondents were chosen via a snowball technique of referrals from four different church ministers. The four churches were selected on the recommendation of one Samoan Church Minister as being representative of the Samoan community. Four ministers were interviewed, along with four elders and five parents from each church. Seven other people from outside these churches, four not church attenders were also interviewed in order to be able to further explore the importance and effects of the churches. The theoretical approach engaged a combination of the principles of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the ‘Fa’afaletui,’ (Tamasese, 1997.) The latter is a Samoan framework which gives a multi-layered approach to data interpretation using a range of lenses and perspectives. In conducting this investigation, the combination of Western and Samoan frameworks was appropriate especially given the cultural sensitivities that were apparent around the topic matter and the ethnicity of the respondents and the researcher. Earlier findings, concerning discipline by (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2002) were affirmed, as were findings about fa’alavelave from the earlier study into parenting practices (McCallum et al, 2000). In this present study, it was found that enculturation (i.e changes in culture) over time, modified *parenting* practices and specifically that inter-generational perspectives about *parenting* practices were apparent. Evidence of conflicting approaches to values between generations was encountered and a range of rituals were adapted as a consequence of migration and time; discipline and fa’alavelave were prime examples of this. The relative paucity of a body of Pasifika literature and Pacific research by Pacific people, from which a theoretical foundation for a study of this kind could be developed, was seen to be problematic. It is concluded that enculturation following migration spawns a reconstruction of values and associated practices in parenting and that previously held core values concerning discipline, the church and the family become altered over time and generations. It is also suggested that future research should seek to corroborate the findings of this study by examining the parenting practices of the next generation.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND-HISTORICAL CONTEXT, REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **Background and Historical context: Samoans in New Zealand – Past to Present**

This chapter will describe the motivating factors, expectations and current realities for Samoan immigrants to New Zealand. In addition, I will also review the literature on parenting and associated variables by various New Zealand, Pacific and other international researchers.

Around 1874 the New Zealand Census recorded six Samoans resident in New Zealand. Most of the very early (pre-World War I) Samoan migrants were children from wealthy Afakasi (half caste ) families who were more aligned to the Papalagi, and were therefore given Papalagi privileges and status which for many involved travel to and from countries like New Zealand for education. As the following quotation reveals education is very important in Samoan culture, “Education is a prime value in Samoan life and a major motive for migration” (Pitt & MacPherson, 1974, p.99).

As New Zealand’s post-war (WWII) economy grew so did the demand for unskilled labour. Workers from Samoa were recruited to fill the factories and service industries which at that time were thriving. Employment was the catalyst to enable Samoan immigrants to improve their economic situation (Bedford & Didham, 2001). It also gave them the impetus to be able to support their families in New Zealand and Samoa. This financial assistance in the way of remittances to their families in the islands became a major export commodity for countries like New Zealand, Australia and The United States of America. These were the three main countries where the diaspora of Samoans had migrated. The act of remittances, traditional gift giving, or, as Samoans refer to it, as gifting for ‘fa’alavelave, remains a very common practice today (Cowley et al., 2004).

For many families remittances are their means of paying for their children’s education and constructing their homes. For many also it contributes to their ‘fa’alavelave’ and reciprocal familial obligations; a practice which involves deep rooted values of reciprocity, service and familial obligations.

Migration to New Zealand from Samoa has slowed since the initial post-war WWII phase. There is now a quota system placed on Samoans who wish to immigrate. The New Zealand economy is no longer experiencing the ‘manual labour driven boom’ of the post war era where migrant labour for

unskilled jobs filled a gap. Migration policy is now more focused on skilled labour and professions with a few allocations given to the Pacific and immigrants from The Middle East, Asia and other countries like Eastern Europe.

The Census 2001 figures showed 231,801 Pacific people (6.5% of total population) were living in New Zealand with Samoans making up 50% of the total Pacific population followed by Cook Island Maori (22.7%) Tongan (17.6%) Niuean (8.7%) Fijian (3%) Tokelauan (2.7%) and Tuvaluans (0.8%).

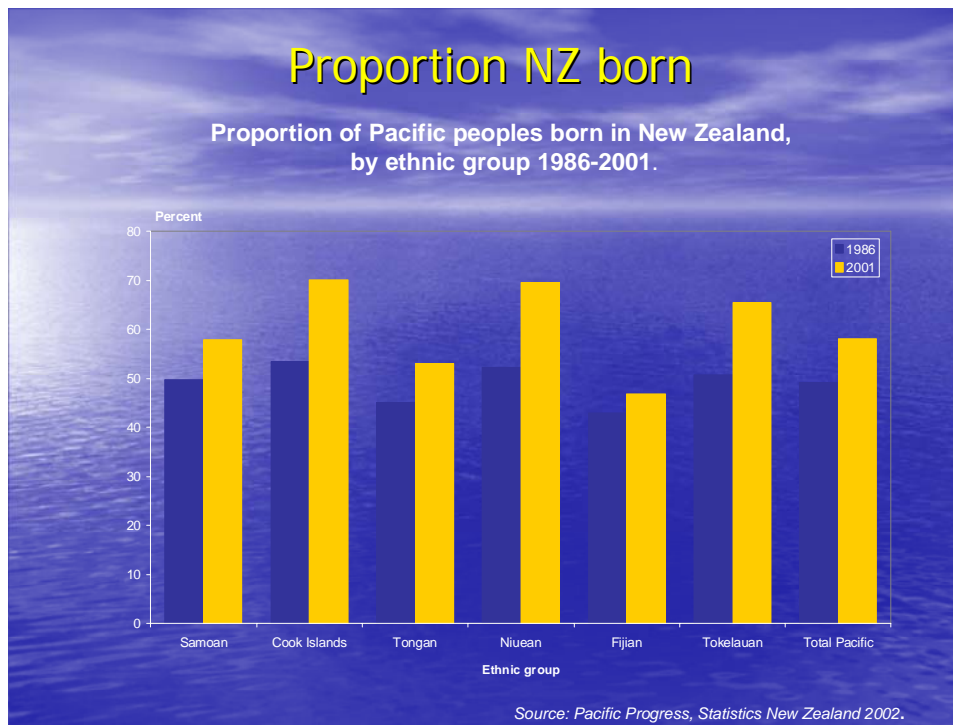
Graph (1) shows the growth rate of the Pacific ethnicities in New Zealand from 1986-2001.

Graph 1. Pacific Ethnicity



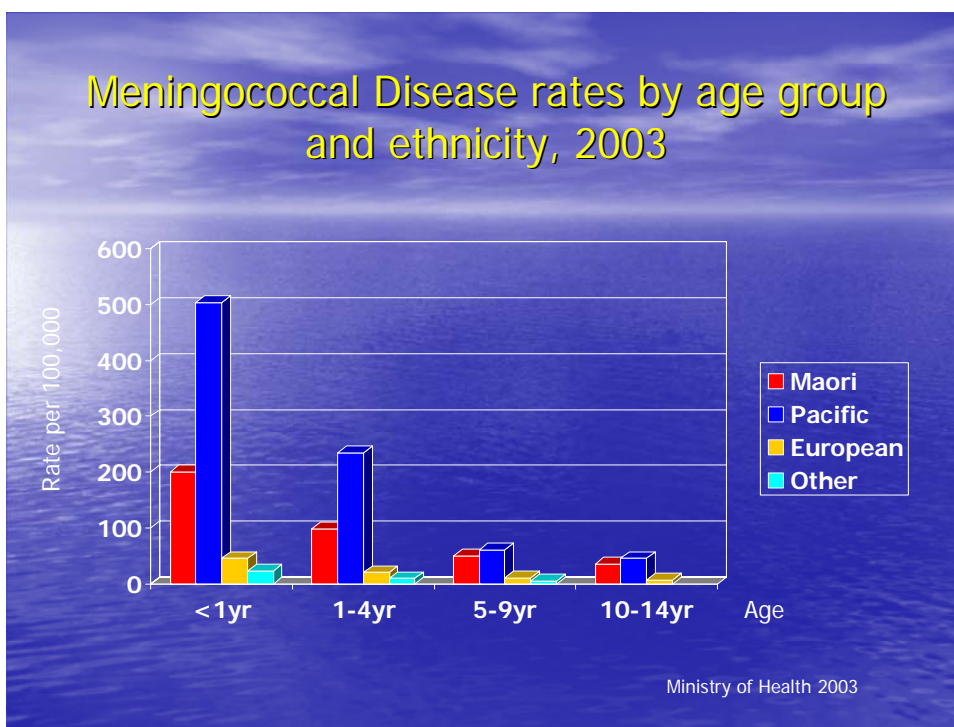
Most of the Pacific/Samoan migrants to New Zealand settled in the Auckland Region which, when combined with the Maori population, have produced a very distinct Polynesian profile for this part of New Zealand. Auckland is often referred to as the largest 'Polynesian' city in the world. As with many cities abroad inter-marriage has provided a multiplicity of ethnicities. This is highlighted by the 2001 Census data showing 58% of Pacific peoples in NZ were NZ born and 54% of the babies born in New Zealand have multiple ethnicities (see graph 2).

Graph 2. Proportion of New Zealand born Pacific ethnic groups.

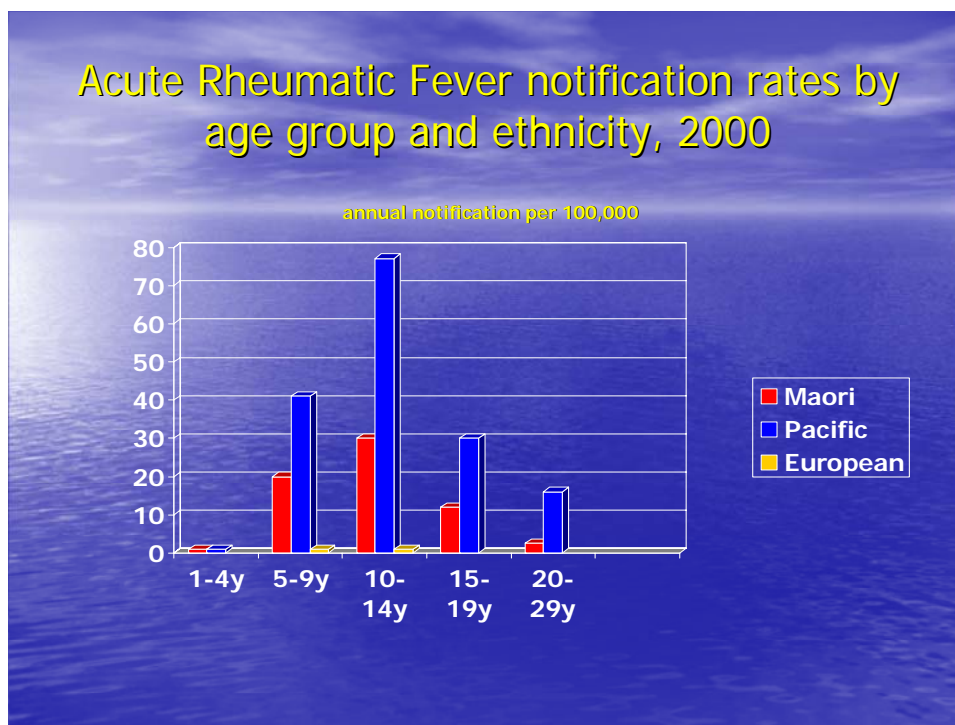


As with many immigrant populations around the world, Samoans also feature in the ‘negative’ statistics especially in the areas of health, unemployment, crime and social services. The following graphs (3 & 4) illustrate examples of two significant health concerns for Pacific peoples; namely meningococcal b and rheumatic fever.

Graph 3. Meningococcal disease rates by age group and ethnicity, 2003



Graph 4. Acute Rheumatic fever notification rates by age group and ethnicity, 2000

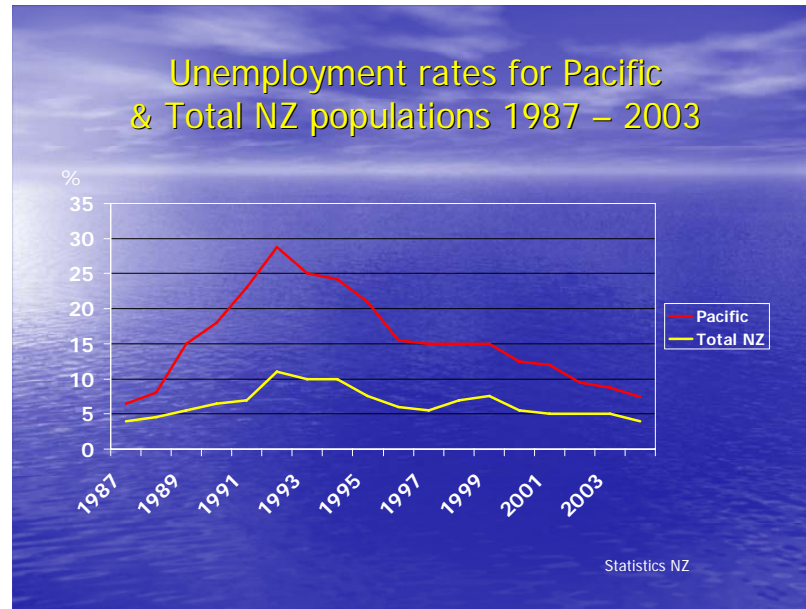


Nevertheless, there is an upward trend of success for Samoans in the areas of sport, the arts and music. Samoans are also entering into businesses in greater numbers along with graduates from universities and polytechnics (MOPIA, 2002). Educational research with Pacific tertiary students show a mismatch between home values and those of a predominantly Palagi education sector as well as a lack of appropriate support systems and equitable opportunities of access and participation (Cowley et al., 2000). As these opportunities of access become greater so too do the opportunities for growth and development and participation and success in business and academic scholarship.

In business and tertiary education Samoan achievement has steadily improved with more Samoans moving into the middle to higher income brackets. Pacific men with no qualifications earned in 2001 on average \$14,300. This rose to \$19,000 for those with school qualifications, \$25,000 for those with vocational qualifications and \$34,000 for those with a university qualification. However, compared to Pakeha and Maori and some Asians there is a lot more progress needed to be made to close the socio-economic gaps between Samoans and other ethnic groups. Pacific people remain the lowest economically of all other ethnic groups (MOPIA, 2002).

Socio-economic status is an indicator and predictor of poor health and educational outcomes (MOH, 2004). The impacts on household dynamics, family relationships and effective parenting outcomes for low socio-economic families have been well documented in government statistics (MOPIA, 2002). Socio-economic status is especially significant to these communities as it involves access to resources, information and support services. Rates of unemployment for Pacific ethnic populations continues to be problematic although since 1993 the Pacific unemployment rate has decreased (see graph 5 below).

Graph 5. Pacific & total unemployment rates 1987-2003.



Most of the Samoan population reside in Wellington and Auckland. Many are third generation New Zealanders and most are under the age of thirty (Statistics NZ, 2001).

Pacific families have a tendency to be larger and live together with other families but are increasingly becoming one parent families. According to the 2001 census twenty-eight percent of Pacific families were one-parent families. This is far higher than European and Asian families (both 15%) but lower than Maori families (35%). Also highlighted in the same census, Pacific peoples had the lowest proportion of families that were childless couples (8% compared to 30% for Europeans, 11% for Maori and 15 % for Asians) illustrating the high fertility rates of Pacific people (Statistics NZ, 2001) and that most Pacific /Samoan children are raised by their birth parents.

Migrant populations bring with them their own specific languages, customs, cultures and 'norms' and these over the years either dissipate with the high level of acculturation that takes place or they become adapted into the new environment and evolve over time (Berry, 2003). These sorts of new 'forms' of Samoan-ness or 'fa'asamoa' have definitely been moulded and shaped, changed and reconstructed to form what has become a 'sub-culture' of being Samoan in New Zealand. For many Samoan New Zealanders it has meant changes for the better, and for others like my father, it is viewed as a bastardization of their traditional values. However, culture has been defined by many as dynamic, forever changing, reshaping and reconstructing itself as it finds roots in new environments and over time. For Samoans, this is the reality of life in New Zealand. These changes and adaptations are bound to impact on their lifestyles and living conditions because of lack of support

from family members living in close proximity (village setting to city), socio-economic pressures and a completely different set of values and belief systems. They also impact on how the New Zealand Government proposes and legislates for change and implements and designs policies which in turn impact significantly on migrant families and their children. Nevertheless, with all these changes over time Samoan families have managed to cope in different ways in the past.

The most important is that the Samoan community in New Zealand has coped with the problems of adjustment chiefly through their own social resources. That they have had to do so reflects in some measure the insufficiency or inadequacy of institutions in the host society. More significantly, that they have for the most part succeeded in doing so reflects the strength of the social institutions that the migrants brought with them to New Zealand, especially the aiga and church. These two institutions have played a major part in maintaining group identity and easing the difficulties of adjustment to New Zealand society in key areas of contact such as housing, jobs and schools. Although the aiga and church have been transplanted from Samoa and links with the homeland remain strong, both institutions have developed independent local characteristics. In fact the whole Samoan migrant community is increasingly becoming a distinctive sub-culture within New Zealand society rather than a part of the wider Samoan world at the same time however the community remains distinctive.

(Pitt & McPherson, 1974, p.11)

Even so, the reality for many Samoans is the breakdown in these close family structures. For some, the ties to their aiga and church may not be a sanctuary but can sometimes create tension and difficulties (McCallum et al., 2001; Cowley et al., 2004). The pressures on some families to meet their familial obligations can prove to be a barrier to coping with and meeting their own close family's needs. Yet others experience living in New Zealand as stressful and difficult to cope with and manifest this stress in ways detrimental to their own health and that of their children and family. Immigration to a new country brings with it all sorts of changes; changes in family and social structure, changes in language and etiquette and changes in the values and belief systems of immigrants. Sometimes cultures do not readily 'merge' with others. In effect they can clash and one can become suppressed because of fear and derision when it is expressed openly and proudly. For others, culture can result in hostility and suspicion and, for yet others, culture is something which is embraced, nourished and grown. This can happen at a macro and micro level within families where acceptance of traditional and cultural 'norms' is a mechanism for unity and harmony or division and disharmony. This depends on many different factors like length of time in New Zealand, the practice of Samoan values and beliefs, how culture has been transferred to their children, the influence of the church, elders and education. For parents who are still very much entrenched in their 'fa'asamoa' ways, it can be of major concern for them to see their children identify more strongly with 'fa'apalagi and become dismissive of their 'fa'asamoa' ways (Bedford & Didham, 2001). It is easier for those parents to cope with the children who were born and raised



in Samoa because they are more likely to understand the customs, traditions and language better than those of their children who were born and raised in New Zealand who may not have any knowledge of the language and fa'asamoa and may therefore be keener to pursue the fa'apalagi lifestyle. However, this scenario is equally distressing for the children who, in some instances, become the parents' translators, interpreters and teachers. For many immigrant children the 'schizophrenic' existence of 'being one culture' at home and 'another culture' at school among peers and friends is either a strong incentive to succeed and achieve in both 'natural settings' or, for others, it can be stressful and lead to more negative experiences. In many cases the exchange of roles takes place because of this shift to a new country with new language, new behaviours, customs and ways of knowing. Unfortunately, for many immigrants, it not only becomes a generational gap, it becomes a huge ethnic /cultural divide which in turn impacts on the health, educational, social and economic well-being of immigrant families, especially the children. For some families the impacts have been seen as a recurrent pattern where the protective factors of church and 'aiga' have become subsumed by doubts about their own identity (Anae, 1997).

What some older Samoans may view as highly acceptable and appropriate in Samoa may differ considerably with the views of Samoans born and raised in New Zealand. This is not a phenomenon that is unique to Samoan immigrants. There is plenty of evidence both overseas and New Zealand which informs us of the impacts on Pacific families whose members are ambivalent in both worlds; that of their parents' homeland and of their adopted country (Borrows et al., 2003). The current situation in Otara, Auckland with Pacific youth and violence as reported in *The NZ Herald* (November, 2005) raises issues referred to by Pitt and Macpherson in the 1970s, when they alluded to problems of youth disconnection from their 'aiga' and church, considered by these two writers as two stabilising forces in contemporary Samoan society. These core stabilizers (church and aiga) act not only as protective factors but also as strong identifiers for them as Samoans. According to the two writers it gives (Samoans) a sense of purpose and a reason for living. Samoan youth who get into trouble with the law and have difficulties with these issues are in their view separated from that sense of connectedness with fa'asamoa, family and faith (church).

In the USA for example, Hispanics make up a large proportion of the immigrant population and have higher rates of inter-partner violence than other ethnic groups in the USA (Straus & Gelles, 1990). These have been attributed to socio-economic factors, age, acculturation and alcohol consumption. Kantor, Jasinski and Aldarondo (1993) suggested that partner violence is more frequent among individuals highly acculturated to American (USA) society. Caetano et al.(2000) suggested that the difficulties are associated with negotiating between two cultures and a lack of ties with the culture of the homeland and with that of the adopted country. All of these are likely factors

which may lead to increased stress, conflict and partner violence. The Pacific Islands Families longitudinal study found significant association with the New Zealand environment and post natal depression, smoking and inter-partner conflict among the Pacific cohort. These findings were similar to others conducted with migrant population groups in the USA (Paterson et al., 2001).

## **Summary**

Pacific immigrants have been in New Zealand since as early as 1874. Later migration brought Samoans to fill the factories and service industry jobs that had become plentiful during the post war era. However, during the down turn in the 1970s, the decline in Samoan numbers emigrating to New Zealand began as quotas and new criteria for migration were introduced.

As the population of Samoan immigrants increased so, too, did problems which beset new immigrants worldwide. A new country brought with it a host of new problems as Samoans grappled with new ways of doing and knowing. Many Samoan children lost their knowledge of the Samoan language and customs as their parents tried to adapt to a new life in a country considered by its indigenous peoples as monolingual and mono-cultural. Many new migrants from the Pacific did not teach their children their language and customs and as a consequence the next generation have struggled in trying to maintain their own identity, as issues around acculturation and identity started to assert themselves. The downturn in the New Zealand economy affected the ability of many Samoan families to contribute to their families here in New Zealand and in their island homelands.

The socio-economic status of Samoan immigrant families is among the lowest in New Zealand and as well as impacting on health and education it has also had an effect on the family and social dynamics of the fa'asamoa. The aiga (and more recently in the history of Samoa) the church acts as stabilizers and protective factors in the contemporary world of fa'asamoa. Currently there is a rise in concern as we see the results of these breakdowns begin to emerge in several areas in Auckland. A lack of strong identity and a breakdown in connections with the church and fa'asamoa as well as other factors are seen as reasons for this.

### **Why this topic?**

My choice of research topic finds its genesis in my passion for social justice, my love of children and my desire 'to serve'.

### **Overview of Chapters**

Chapter one will give an outline of the background and historical context and review of the literature.

Chapter two will give an outline of my approach to research as a Pacific /Samoan researcher, as well as outline the design, the analysis process and research methods I used for this research.

Chapter three will outline the findings in relation to the perceptions of respondents on the roles of parents and children.

Chapter four will outline findings on the parenting practices. This will describe the parents' perceptions of how they were parented and the way they parented their children. It will also describe their values and beliefs, and the influence of the church, fa'asamoa and fa'alavelave on their parenting.

Chapter five will outline findings in relation to 'the ups and downs' of parenting. This involves the security and stability of their children and contributing factors and also what the parents perceived as being the most enjoyable and the least enjoyable aspects of parenting.

Chapter six gives an outline of findings which I have named as the 'big four'. These are four themes of which the first are paradoxes of shame and pride, second, 'beneath the stereotypes', third, intergenerational challenges and fourth 'new horizons'. These findings highlight the hopes, dreams and challenges of respondents parents' as migrants to New Zealand and the challenges both positive and negative for their children. It also describes the respondents' experiences relating to the paradoxes of pride and shame and the way in which these two concepts featured in their parents' practices as well as their own.

Chapter seven outlines the conclusion on Samoan Parenting as perceived by the thirty five respondents in this study.

Chapter eight outlines the discussion by sewing all the threads of this thesis together and weaving it into a final discussion.

This leads me now to move specifically from the ‘macro’ to the ‘micro’ and see what the literature says about family dynamics, parenting practices, the values and beliefs and the influence of the church and fa’asamoa on Samoan parents and their role.

The literature that has been analyzed and critiqued comes mostly from the USA, New Zealand, Britain and Samoa as there is a paucity of Samoan literature on parenting. I will review related research with Samoans and immigrant groups, child development, child abuse, nurturing and resilience.

## **Review of Literature**

There is a paucity of research into Samoan parenting both here in New Zealand and overseas. Some small studies have been conducted by (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2001; Meleisea, 1998; Duituturaga, 1988; and Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979). However, these have been mostly focused on discipline practices within Pacific families. Pre-Christian or European practices have been documented by Turner (1984 [1884]) but once again these contained very little findings except to point out that Samoans as Turner observed in 1884 were very lavishing of love and tenderness towards their children.

When other literature is analysed regarding other migrant groups in the USA like West Indians and Africans there are some correlations with the Samoan experience in relation to the disciplining of children and to ethnic values around the rearing of children. I have therefore endeavoured to cover the migrant experiences around the parenting of Samoan children and also parental values and beliefs in order to draw on the similarities and differences of the migrant experiences. One area of similarity which is evident from the literature is in the areas of physical disciplining of their children. Another similarity with West Indian and Chicano migrants is the place of religion in their lives and how this influences the way they parent their children.

The following analysis of the literature not only describes what is important in relation to the rearing of children but also what the impact of ineffective parenting is on the lives of children.

### **Parenting**

Parenting is a social construct; that is, it is based on social interactions and socially constructed meanings systems. For example, my social reality included the ways I had acted towards my late mother. I helped her with the household chores, I gave her money towards fa'alavelave and in collaboration with my siblings I took care of her in her old age. I learned to do this through cultural role expectations and years of experience in a close social relationship (Neumann, 2003). This reality depends as much on subjective impressions, culture bound beliefs and context –related thresh-holds of concern as on objective qualities (Reder et al., 2003).

There is a general sense that parenting effectively involves core physical, emotional and social elements. These involve the care, safety and protection of the child and setting particular boundaries for enforcing appropriate behaviour and social development. It is also understood that apart from what the parent provides to be effective, there are also child related factors like temperament, mental illness and physical disabilities which can affect the way a parent cares for their child. For

parenting to be effective, parents need to have a multitude of strategies involving skills, knowledge, support and resources. These key facets of parenting must be achieved within the evolving relationship between parent and child. The child is not a passive recipient of parental input nor is the parent a mechanical or universal provider. For example, there are times when the child will demand care from the parent and times when they wish to become disengaged from the parent. At the same time, the child's behaviour, attitudes and impulses will be modified by the way the parents react and act (Goldstein et al., 1973). According to Goldstein et al. (1973), the child and parent will bring out feelings in each other which gives meaning to their experiences within the relationship. These responses are evoked in a reciprocal manner through interactions that are influenced by the personal qualities of the parent and child and by other relationships and events. The core of these relationships will vary during the child's development and the parent will accommodate this accordingly. All of this will take place among the myriad of changes and responses to events occurring in the parent's own life.

As in other relationships the behaviour of one participant is bound to affect the other, even if that behaviour is hostility, indifference, rejection or prolonged absence. Furthermore, like all relationships the parental one is continuous in the sense that each participant carries an image of it in their mind, even when they are apart (Goldstein et al., 1973). However, it is important to recognize that the emotional relationship does not automatically depend on the blood link between child and adult since it is primarily, a function of their interpersonal history together, not their genetic history, yet the relationship with a step-parent can be close or more distant and in many studies, a risk factor for abuse.

As Quinton and Rutter (1988: 8) noted:

Parenting is now understood not only to involve what parents do with their children and how they do it, but also to be affected by the quality of the parents relationships more generally, by their psychological functioning, by their previous parenting experiences with other children and with a particular child, and by the social context in which they are trying to parent.

According to Golombok (2000) parenting is described as a social relationship. It is therefore affected by the parents' state of mind, the way they were parented, the people involved in their broader social interactions and by their child's characteristics. The competent parent will have a multitude of skills and other factors to support them, but the most important is their own psychological state and the resources and tools available to them. Without these, the parent is in a more vulnerable state, the consequence of which can lead to maltreatment of the child. This is

considered to be the consequence of an interaction between stress (vulnerability or risk) factors and support (compensatory) factors (Golombok, 2000).

Schaffer (1998) and Golombok (2000) have reviewed relevant outcome literature and concluded that family structure or individual parental attributes matter far less to children's development than the quality of relationships within families and with the wider social world. Their research shows that being a child of a single parent is not, per se, a risk factor for the child's development and welfare. They, along with other researchers, also found that exposure to inter-partner violence is more harmful than divorce or parental separation, or the nature of custody arrangements. Also connected with inter-partner violence were the effects economic hardships had on single parents, compounding situations for them that were already problematic like accessing healthcare.

### **What the literature says about Pacific/Samoa and abuse**

In a New Zealand Ministry of Justice Survey by Sue Carswell (2001) of 100 Pasifika peoples, (69%) indicated parents should be allowed to physically discipline their child if they were naughty. Maori at 73% and Palagi 82% were the highest. In the disciplining of 0-2 year olds. Pasifika and Maori were the lowest at 12% and 13%, with Palagi (25%) being the highest. The nation-wide survey also found no discernible difference in terms of socio-economic status. This survey found the majority of Pasifika respondents surveyed did not agree to harsh disciplinary measures for their children. Although the findings did not indicate religious connections of participants, it nonetheless showed Pasifika people's attitudes about hitting their child and how old the child is when he or she is hit by the parents. Carswell's method of a phone survey to gather her responses from Pacific peoples may, some may argue, not be the best way to seek the views of Pacific people on a topic which involves a lot more discussion and interactive engagement.

Even so, with the various changes in migration over time and the increase of the Samoan population in New Zealand, there still remains very little research and data on Samoan parenting. There is however significant anecdotal evidence to show Samoan parents preferred to manage their children's behaviour by physical punishment. This is more likely to be the practice of 'first generations' that are Samoan born and raised than of those born and raised in New Zealand (McCallum et al., 2001). Fairbairn-Dunlop and Makisi (2003) see this 'cultural' concept in a process of change with cultural norms and behaviours all interconnecting in different ways; for example, the concept of sister/brother relationships regarding gender issues and the relationship of younger and older siblings. These cultural concepts, along with other cultural 'norms,' are constantly changing where distinctions in the definition of abuse may vary from one ethnic group to

another. More interesting is the current debate on what constitutes ‘abuse’ including physical abuse and when does physical punishment become physical abuse?

According to researchers Asiasiga et al. (2000) and McCallum et al. (2002) Samoan parents view physical punishment as an act of parental love. Similarly, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001) found parents in her study regarded it as neglect of their children if they did not punish them physically. Her research also showed the whole purpose of discipline was to teach the children the ‘right way of behaving’. The study "Tetee atu le sasa ma le upu malosi ‘Hold back your hands & your harsh words” (2001:18) was conducted in Samoa where Fairbairn-Dunlop and her team collected a seven day self report sheet from women of two different Samoan villages; 10 from the village of Safotu in Savaii and six from the village of Aleipata in Upolu. The age range of the participants was eighteen to seventy seven years with the majority over thirty years of age. The median number of the children per respondent was eight. The majority of the respondents were mothers and some grandmothers helping to raise the children. The findings showed the main reason given for hitting was for ‘fa’alogata’ or disobedience. The majority of the respondents believed that hitting children was an act of ‘love’ or ‘duty’. Many referred to spoiling the child if they did not hit. The National Council of Women who assisted with this project ran workshops over a three-week period to facilitate discussion on ways of dealing with respondents’ violence towards their children. Women contributed various strategies they could work on to resolve acts of physical and emotional violence towards their children. Many of the women had changed not only their behaviour in terms of hitting their children, but they also influenced other members of their family to look at other alternative ways of disciplining their children that did not involve hitting.

Duituturaga (1988) saw Pacific parenting practices being affected by factors such as motive, context and consequence. If the parent meant to injure the child then it was violent, but if it was an act of discipline, then hitting the child was perceived as non-violent. As with Fairbairn-Dunlop’s (2001) research the act was shown to be an act of ‘love’ for the child. The risk of this adult centred view with no child impact view is reflected below by Duituturaga:

minor bruises can be accepted as a reminder of the lesson to be learned whereas black bruises, cuts, burns, broken bones and serious injuries are often considered as unacceptable consequences.

(Duituturaga, 1988: 111)

Turner (1884) described Samoan infants as being over-lavished with love and attention by all members of the extended family and community. Ritchie and Ritchie (1979) found in their study a concurrence with Turners observation of Samoan children being lavished with love but only up to a



certain age (about 2 years) when the care of these children would then transfer to older siblings. From there on in, the concept of lavishing affection became somewhat redundant. But does this loss of lavishing affection and increase of physical punishment have a negative impact on the child? Does a child with high emotional and loving support who is also physically punished grow to have behavioural problems? Certainly in many cases this is indeed the case and examples of these are in the findings from my study.

## **Culture**

‘Culture’ has often been said to be a factor in defining child abuse. However, this may be because scholars and researchers have recognised the potential existence of racial disparities in the incidence and reporting of child abuse (Ards & Harrell, 1993; Gil, 1970; Hampton & Newberger, 1989). Unfortunately, poverty, cultural factors, or socio-economic background often cannot be disentangled from the related problems of racial differences in the reporting of child abuse. Indeed, faulty inferences about racial disparities in the incidence of child abuse can be drawn from data contaminated by reporters’ judgements concerning who should be reported to the authorities. According to Ards et al. (1993):

Even if no racial disparities exist in the incidence of child maltreatment, one may still find disparities in the reporting of child maltreatment cases. Reporting differentials may exist because of cultural differences in child rearing between the reporter and the perpetrator or an un-willingness to report perpetrators with socio-economic characteristics similar to the reporters. At least some of this disparity seems to be the result of over-reporting of Blacks and under-reporting of whites by medical authorities. Newberger et al.(1977) suggest that this may be because children from poor and minority families are more likely to be labelled as abused, while children from affluent and white families more readily escape this negative label. Willis and Wells (1988) found just the opposite to be true among police officers. These officials were found to under-report Blacks to the child protective system (1993, p.105).

While physical punishment is not an acceptable way of disciplining children in some ethnic cultures, in others it is. In the context of this review I am referring to ethnic culture being about language, a world view, dress, food, styles of communication and the way we see and do things as passed from one generation to another over time (Fontes, 2005). Ethnic culture is what makes us who we are and gives us an identity which can classify us as ‘us’ and ‘them’ as ‘them’. This does not necessarily mean that everything about us is ‘all’ or ‘nothing’. Sometimes, these demarcations are blurred and the similarities between cultures become more integrated with time (Fontes, 2005). Nevertheless, even when we have settled in a country for many generations there will still be ways of thinking and acting that come from our ethnic backgrounds, including the way we parent our children. People from ethnic cultures like Samoans who look distinctly different from the majority

Palagi population are usually made aware of their ethnicity frequently by 'others' even if they are third or fourth generation in the host country (Fontes, 2005). The majority may see themselves as mainstream and 'cultureless' and others as marginal (Brash, *The New Zealand Herald* in October, 2005). However, gauging people's ethnicity purely from 'looks' can be problematic as facial characteristics change with inter-ethnic marriage and their state of mind and beliefs about child behaviour cannot easily be read.

Culture is not static; rather, it is dynamic and constantly evolving over time. Within particular ethnic cultures there are many different variables. Even within families, ethnic culture can have many different forms of expression for different members. For example, a young Samoan woman may be NZ born and bred but prefers on occasions to wear a 'puletasi', a style of dress that is associated with Samoan people. Another may be quite happy to play kilikiti at school (Samoan cricket) but attends church with the family grudgingly and participates in traditional gift giving under pressure. Another example is the different interpretations one parent may have of cultural ties and links compared to the other parent.

In a study of different migrant families Tysska (2003) found parents of Iranian extraction felt maintaining cultural and family links were important. However, these differed in interpretation. Mothers were focused on the 'emotional' aspects of family connections, including the fear of increasing emotional distance from their children (some adjusting to their parents' divorce and remarriage). But the fathers's comments related to the central role of families in cultural transmission wanting their children to retain cultural values including religion.

People who are not aware of the multi-faceted nature of ethnic cultures and communities can expose minority migrant parents to the danger of stereotyping by majority groups. Much of the literature around culture and child abuse focuses on the rationalization of cultural practices that are defined as abuse by one group but not by another. This documentation is critical if we are to avoid mis-identifying culture as abuse or abuse as culture. There is also the argument that cultural practices must also be seen as dynamic, not static, and that these cultural practices bring with them their own unique behaviours and modifications which depends on the context and the acculturation of particular groups to the 'dominant' culture. Some interesting data on international studies found a significant relationship between race, culture or ethnicity, and the incidence, type or severity of child abuse (Korbin, 1980).

According to researchers (Fontes, 2005; Payne, 1989; Schaeffer, 1998) the literature on groups within other cultures and child abuse is contradictory and inadequate. Where people of similar backgrounds live as a majority within their country, e.g. Samoans in Samoa, their practices may be different from those living in New Zealand as a minority. The latter group may be viewed by the former as 'fia palagi,' because they are more aligned to the New Zealand way of life. Gender roles, religious beliefs, disciplinary practices and a host of other cultural norms together shape a person's experience. Some statistics suggest that non-white children are more likely to be abused than white children. Other researchers have not found racial or ethnic group differences (Gelles, 1974). Those differences that have been found may be due to ethnic differences in child rearing practices, biases in reporting practices (Ards et al., 1993) and the greater prevalence of lower socio-economic conditions among non-whites (Fontes, 2005).

Inappropriate clumping of ethnicity is one reason for the inadequacy of 'cultural ethnic' research on child abuse. No consideration has been given to those who are the same ethnicity but who may be 'worlds apart' in terms of reliability, behaviour and attitudes. For example, grouping all Asians together regardless of whether they are 5<sup>th</sup> generation American or a recent arrival from China. Similarly, this also happens in New Zealand. Over generalisation occurs where a category like 'Pacific' for example is used without any breakdown of specific ethnic cultures within, or whether they are of the same social class. There are many differences as well as similarities between New Zealand born and Pacific born. These differences can be seen in the way ethnic groups within the 'Pacific' category dress, act, speak, behave and socialise. Too often, these groups are spoken of as if there are no differences.

Fontes (2005) writes extensively about the difficulties different ethnic cultures experience both as workers and clients in the areas of child abuse. She describes 'false positives'; cases in which workers substantiate child abuse where none exists, and 'false negatives'; where workers fail to substantiate child abuse, in both cases because of cultural issues. Fontes (2005) found:

False positives in child welfare often result from ethnocentrism, where the professional sees his or her own beliefs and practices as superior, and misidentifies differing cultural practices as maltreatment (Korbin and Spilsbury, 1999). When ethnocentrism prevails, the beliefs and behaviours of the dominant culture are imposed on other populations, and non-mainstream childcare practices are mistakenly viewed as pathological even when there is no harm to children.

(2005, p. 64)

Too often people also use 'culture' as an excuse for child abuse:

When hearing a justification of behaviour based on culture, it is important to pay attention to who is defining what qualifies as 'cultural'. As Okin (1999) points out, cultures are not homogenous, and the person who is defining what is 'cultural' may be the one who is benefiting from the behaviour. Frequently, questionable behaviours that are explained away as cultural are behaviours that oppress or restrict women and children (e.g. the veil, genital cutting, wife beating and corporal punishment). So yes, while it may be true that beating one's children is somewhat more common in Portugal than in the USA, a Portuguese family will nevertheless be required to conform to the law. (2005, p.78).

The literature around child abuse would not be complete without looking at child development and the historical context of child abuse and factors that impact on effective parenting.

### **Child development- historical**

As referred to in previous literature on the issues of child abuse, there are many reasons why people act this way. What needs to be done is to find ways of supporting people to change their behaviour whether it is economical, mental health or issues of victimization. In order to meet the needs of people who abuse children we need to know the 'triggers' for some of these behaviours. Michael and Sheila Cole (2001) explain the causes of aggression in human beings and the development of aggressive behaviour. We have to take care we predicate all, or even most, child abuse on aggressive behaviour. Nearly all perpetrators of violence toward women and children behave in a controlled, non-aggressive way in the workplace among acquaintances. It is therefore not free-floating aggressiveness that is the problem but an inadequacy in relation to control and acting violent towards the people at home. The research foci is on three contributing factors: (1) the presence of aggression in the evolutionary precursors of our species (2) the ways societies reward aggressive behaviours and (3) the tendency of children to imitate the behaviours of older age role models. Michael and Sheila Cole's analysis of aggressive behaviour, as such, however, is not the explanation for abuse. It is important that we take cognizance of their analysis and put it into a frame in which it is posited alongside other factors. Studies conducted by social learning theorists show that in the act of punishing their children, parents may inadvertently teach them how to behave aggressively. A study conducted by Bandura et al. (1973) reported adults being aggressive and violent towards "Bobo doll". In this study children who watched this behaviour, were significantly more aggressive than those who had watched 'non-aggressive' behaviour:

Once children are old enough to understand that they can get their way by harming others they learn from adults both specific types of aggression and the general idea that acting aggressively may be acceptable. (p.403).

Douglas Fry (1988) compared levels of aggression of young children in two Zapotec Indian towns in Central Mexico. One was a very violent town and the other, non-violent. It showed the children from the violent town, performed twice as many violent acts, as those in the non-violent town. Finkelhor and Corbin (1988) like others also found corporal punishment increased aggression and was a major contributor to delinquency. They concluded that most children who are hit by parents will experience few long-term problems but for the proportion that do, problem behaviours are 1.8 times to 3.9 times greater depending on the type of problem.

Similar links were found by Macmillan (1999). She surveyed 5000 adults and found one third had been slapped or spanked 'sometimes' and 5.5% had been spanked or slapped 'often'. After allowing for other variables people in the slapped and spanked categories compared with those who had never 'been spanked' or 'slapped', were one and a half times more likely to have anxiety disorder or twice as likely to abuse or be dependent on alcohol or drugs, or exhibit anti-social behaviour. This study reinforces the association between physical punishment and increased aggressive behaviour.

Several researchers, Graziano (1994) McCord (1996) and Straus (2000) have found that trying to control a child's behaviour by using physical punishment has more likelihood of increasing the child's aggressiveness than resolving it.

Ecological factors and social stressors also contribute to individual differences in aggressive behaviour. However, Hassall (2004) reported that aggression responses are different in particular age groups. He stated "The aggression response is observed in school age children, rather than in pre-school children' (pg 2). Scholer et al. (2001) suggests however, that aggressive behaviour has been observed in pre-school children of two years and is externalized at three years. I would conclude that, if the peak is earlier at two years as Scholer states, pre-school centres have a significant role to play in supporting resolutions for aggressive children because if the behaviours continue into school age and are more persistent, then it becomes highly likely they will develop into a chronic problem as the child gets older.

### **Brain development and abuse**

Numerous studies draw a direct correlation between high nurturing and warm interpersonal interaction with healthy brain development in the first crucial years after birth. Siegel (1999) confirms this powerful effect on how early brain development occurs in very specific ways. He claims that prolonged emotional disconnection, especially if combined with hostility and humiliation can have significant negative effects on a child's developing sense of self. Researchers

De Bellis and Diamond and Rose (cited in Siegel, 2001) refer to early and severe traumatic experiences that may lead to elevated levels of stress hormones that are toxic to the developing brain. These elevated hormone levels have been found to be associated with impaired brain growth as well as impaired memory processing. Teicher (2002) explains how child abuse; physical and emotional creates high levels of stress hormones which trigger or expresses anti-social (though adaptive) behaviours. This has a ripple effect which permanently wires a child's brain to deal with a malevolent world. He also concluded that there is a greater risk for other health related problems like obesity and type 2 diabetes and rapid acceleration of aging and bone deterioration.

According to Teicher (2002) we need to be actively involved in ensuring children are not abused in the first place, because once key brain alterations occur there may be no going back. The long term effects of a childhood of child maltreatment, like any other traumatic event or series of events, can have a major impact on the brain, especially on the parts responsible for cognitive and social communication and patterns of trust and empathy.

Research has shown that young children who are maltreated have a multitude of problems; emotional difficulties, attachment issues, increased aggression to siblings and peers, less empathy for the distress of others, less pleasure and interest in free play and increased prevalence of psychiatric disorder (Cole & Cole, 2001).

### **Other ethnic findings**

McLoyd and Smith (2002) using data collected over a six year period on a sample of 1,039 European, 550 Afro-American and 401 Hispanic children from the USA national longitudinal survey of youth, assessed whether maternal and emotional support of the child moderated the relation between spanking and behaviour problems. The age of the children were 5 years of age in the first of four waves of data used. At each wave mothers reported their use of spanking and rated their children's behaviour problems. Maternal emotional support of the child was based on interviewer observation conducted as part of the home observation for measurement of the environment. The findings from the study showed there was an association with spanking and an increase in problems with behaviour over time in the context of low levels of emotional support, but not in the context of high levels of emotional support. This pattern held for all three ethnic groups.

Jane and James Ritchie (1981) found parents in NZ viewed obedience as a moral issue and expected their children to act immediately on what their parents asked them to do. Forty-eight percent saw obedience as a constant problem. According to 'The Ritchie's' thirty three of the children in the

research will never experience happiness because of angry parents whose style of parenting was negative, punitive, and harsh.

### **Physical punishment and the law**

What is child abuse? How do we define it? What are its origins? Child abuse arises out of a number of social and historical contexts, such as social attitudes to children and families, theories and knowledge about child development, family functioning, and related professional practice. The ever-changing relationship between these dimensions is punctuated and reflected at intervals by political initiatives and changes in legislation which is highlighted in the Te Rito Document (2002). This document is The New Zealand Family Violence Strategy which is a government framework for implementing the family violence prevention plan of action. One of the public actions that is currently taking place in New Zealand is a political case in point. Here public opinion is very divided with some people and lobby groups trying to sway political opinion towards repeal of 'Section 59 of the Crimes Act', which sanctions the hitting of children.

Every parent or person in place of a parent of a child is justified in using force by way of correction towards a child if that force is reasonable in the circumstances.

(S59 Crimes Act 1961)

Currently, in New Zealand, this Act states children may be hit as long as there is 'reasonable force'. This is highly contentious, as, different people will have different perceptions of reasonable force. How is that force measured and judged? Above all where do we sit as a society when we condone the hitting of children but legislate against the hitting of animals? According to Durrant & Olsen (1997) there is no clear distinction between physical punishment and physical abuse. Attempts to distinguish them in terms of degree of force have been unsuccessful. However, Sweden among other countries has drawn the line and in 1979 outlawed corporal punishment. It was the first nation to do so. A national education campaign was carried out alongside the legislation to raise public awareness around the no smacking issue. So successful was this campaign that very little support by the Swedish people for physical punishment is evident today. Consequently, Sweden's unequivocal declaration against physical punishment has led neither to an increase in long-term out-of-home care for children, nor to a higher rate of prosecution of child physical assault cases. Over recent decades serious assaults in Sweden against children have become uncommon and fatal child abuse has become extremely rare. According to Durrant & Olsen (1997) children and youth are being socialized at least as well today as they were before the physical punishment ban was passed.

However, the decline of corporal punishment in Sweden may not necessarily be due to the legislation itself but the fact that a decline has been occurring anyway since 1979 (Roberts, 2000).

Meanwhile, in other countries like the United Kingdom, Cawson et al. (2000) found that 72 percent of a sample of 18-24 year olds recalled experiences of physical forms of punishment during childhood. Britain is one of the biggest supporters of physical punishment among western nations and has only in the last few years abolished it from the public school system.

Physical abuse is defined by Monteleone (1996) as physical injury resulting from punching, kicking, and beating, biting, burning or otherwise harming a child. While these types of injuries can occur by accident, child abuse should be suspected, if the explanations do not fit the injury, or, if there is a pattern of repeated injury. In addition the existence of several injuries in different stages of healing makes it obvious they did not happen because of one accident Monteleone (1996).

While corporal punishment (hitting) is not considered child abuse, many child development and child welfare professionals believe that hitting is not an effective form of punishment and is damaging to the child's self esteem. Once this method of punishment is applied, it has the capacity to escalate into physical abuse if applied often enough and with increased severity. This method of punishment is not only ineffective in the long term but also illustrates to children that making people fearful and having power over others is acceptable behaviour (Fontes, 2005).

Gershoff (2002) analyzed over 6 decades of expert research on corporal punishment. She found links between spanking and 10 negative behaviours or experiences in child-care, including aggression, anti-social behaviour and mental health problems. However, she did not state categorically that spanking caused these behaviours. Needless to say she raises the question for the American public to re-evaluate why they believed spanking was acceptable, when it was not acceptable to hit adults? Child advocates, researchers and different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand raise the same question.

### **Poverty and socio-economic factors**

Poverty is associated with a higher rate of child abuse and neglect in several ways. It creates stress for parents, and makes it difficult for parents to provide basic amenities like shelter, clothing and



food for children. Children from poor families also have higher rates of illness and death than other children (MOH, 2004). Poverty also makes it harder for parents to arrange alternative care and holidays for their children as well as stigmatizes people to a lower social class which can lead to rejection and social isolation. According to Garmezy (1993) and Fontes (2005) if you are a child from a poor family you are more likely to become a victim of child abuse. The reported relationship between socio-economic status and abuse exists for various indices of status, including education, income, occupation, and unemployment or underemployment. Among the poorest families, each additional child increases the likelihood of abuse. In middle income families, the abuse rate increases with each child up to seven but not beyond this number. There is no relationship between the number of children and the abuse rate for wealthy families.

Researchers Zigler and Hall (1989) have also found that even temporary poverty increases the likelihood that children will behave aggressively. The longer and more pervasive the poverty the stronger the effects. Patterson (1995) claims parents living in poverty are psychologically stressed and have relatively little control over their lives. In responding to their children while under stress they are more likely to use harsh and inconsistent discipline. Researchers Hawkins (1994) and McMillan et al. (1999) found children from low-income families are at greater risk for physical abuse than children not living in poverty especially young mothers with young children. Preston (1986) also found an association between abuse and poverty as did Finkelhor and Korbin (1988):

We need to recognize that child abuse is intricately tied up with a host of larger economic and social problems that should have priority. However sometimes this connection becomes an excuse for not attending to the problem itself. (1988: 18).

The evidence it would seem is highly weighted towards poverty having a significant association with child abuse and if there is a commitment to preventing child abuse then serious consideration must be given to the social, economic and cultural conditions in which abuse occurs.

### **Children as economic providers**

Finkelhor and Korbin (1988) also discuss the values placed on children from different cultures and suggests that where children are highly valued as economic providers to their families, they are less likely to be subjected to maltreatment. Samoan children are the future providers for their parents. It is to the children that the parents from traditional families will look, to take care of them in their old age. This is an expectation that is ingrained into the children from a very young age. It is this

growing expectation right from when the children are young which has been referred to as the 'economic provider' theory. If this were the case Samoan children from traditional households would be taken care of and treated with kid gloves. However, the reality does not bear this out. Many are punished severely and swiftly yet still expected to be the 'economic providers' for parents in adulthood. The 'economic provider theory' in relation to Samoan children would not be the reality for many Samoan children from traditional households. The evidence points more to the contrary among this ethnic group as illustrated in the study conducted with Samoan parents in Samoa by Fairburn-Dunlop (2001). The research findings showed the majority of the respondents physically punished their children. The major reason for doing so was for disobeying the parents.

### **The 'Religious factor'**

Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) asserted beatings (amongst Maori) were a 'way to inculcate Christian virtue' "God doesn't like bad children" (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1981, p.105).

Numerous writers have alluded to the physical punishment of children as being divinely inspired. Anecdotal evidence suggests early missionaries and white settlers (Turner 1884) to Samoa observed children to be spoilt and over lavished with love and affection. This concept was 'alien' to 'Victorian era Palagi'. Children in Britain during this time were very much treated like slaves especially those of the lower class. Other writers like Gerven (1991) and Vernon Wiehe (1996) suggest Christian dogma and biblical text such as "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (Proverbs 13: 24) with providing a basis for physical discipline of children. This biblical verse is commonly quoted as the passage to justify the punishment of children, in fact promoted with a Wesleyan spin. Never mind that the interpretations are many and have broadly diverted from the context and era in which it was written.

### **Family violence and child abuse**

Partner violence is deeply embedded in social and cultural values and mores (Fischback & Herbert, 1997). Asiasiga & Gray (1998), Counts (1990) and McNeil et al. (1988) conducted qualitative research exploring the attitudes of some Pacific families to violence. Asiasiga found two thirds of the Samoan women in her study did not accept 'being beaten up' by their male partners. They were younger (under 40 years), New Zealand born and more aligned to the New Zealand way of life (Cribb, 1997). This suggests that one in three Samoan women victims of inter-partner violence (IPV) may accept the experience of severe physical violence, particularly those of a more traditional heritage. In a cohort (1,378 participants) longitudinal study of Pacific Islands Families, Fairbairn-

Dunlop et al. (in press) found in response to questions on maternal childhood experiences that mothers who were born in NZ were significantly more likely to report higher maternal and paternal emotional abuse, whereas those born in the islands were more likely to report higher maternal physical abuse. In the same cohort, recent research by Paterson, et al. (in press) found, in response to the questions on inter-partner violence, that the island born mothers were more likely to be the victims of violence and the NZ born more likely to be the perpetrators, especially younger mothers who drank alcohol which had implications for their children. (The Paterson, et al., and Fairbairn, et al., research papers will be formally published in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Both papers are related to violence within the Pacific cohort of the Pacific Islands families study.) The Pacific Islands Families Study, due to its longitudinal design, has the potential to evaluate the impact over time of Inter-partner violence (IPV) as a determinant of the quality of family life with potential short and long term repercussions for the well-being and development of Pacific children, including Samoan children (Paterson, et al., in press).

The negative effects on children from witnessing partner violence are well documented (Maxfield and Windom, 1996; Pagelow, 1984; Bergen, 1998). These authors concur with findings which found children who are exposed to such partner violence are at multiple risks of mental and physical illnesses and developmental delay. Such children have also been found to be at risk of physical and sexual abuse (Amermam & Hersen, 1990). According to Adinkrah (2003) children are also victims both wittingly and unwittingly of violence in patriarchal families.

In many family violence studies the environment played a significant part as either a risk factor or a resiliency factor. As a risk factor the significance was in socio-economic factors like poverty and exposure to parental conflict. As a resiliency factor it may relate to family support and strong church/spiritual values. In the Pacific Islands Families Study (PIF study) various contributing factors showed the New Zealand environment to have a significant effect on the participants. In the PIF study the environment was described as high unemployment, traditional gift giving commitments, poor housing, overcrowding, lack of childcare facilities/resources, and poverty. In one particular case of family violence a Senior New Zealand Family Court Judge commented about children coming from homes that were violent and unloving saw violence as normal and those who came from loving and nurturing homes being less likely to turn to crime.

In the Rochester Longitudinal study (Sameroff, 1987) the environmental risks were high maternal mental illness, high maternal anxiety, rigid parental beliefs, unskilled worker, low maternal education, disadvantaged minority, large family, low family support, and stressful life events. (Note the similarities with environmental descriptors and the PIF study.)

Rutter (1987) found where there was marital discord and parental hostility towards the child there were well-established links between adult mental illness and child psychopathology. In New Zealand poor maternal educational and low family social-economic status has also been associated with increased risk of partner violence in the Christchurch longitudinal study (Fergusson et al., 1986). But what are the protective factors that help some families and children cope with adversity?

## **Resilience**

Resilience has been defined as a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity. Garmezy and Rutter (1985); and Gilgun (1991) implies not only that families have been exposed to adversity but also that they have demonstrated competence in the face of this. A key component of the concept is the notion of resilience as a dynamic process, rather than a static trait. There is a dearth of empirical evidence on the subject. However, researchers Garmezy (2003) and Rutter (1987) who have studied resilience speak about it as being mainly concerned with processes, which involve family cohesion, family belief systems including religious beliefs and coping strategies including patterns of communication and problem solving. A second approach focuses on the family as a setting and it is within this setting that the ideas and strategies about how the child is raised, protected and nurtured takes place.

Even in families where violence and abuse are a constant there are studies which show how some families are able to foster a nurturing environment sufficiently to produce a secure and stable child (Luthar, 1991 and Garmezy, 1993). Some of the literature also shows how, if one partner is violent, but the others' nurturing far outweighs their partner's violence: the child is likely to be resilient to the violence and will develop sufficiently (Kalil, 2003; Rutter, 1987; Garmezy & Rutter, 1985). In many families there are protective factors that foster the development of the child and there are risk factors that hinder the development of the child.

Resiliency research aims to understand why certain persons are able to maintain patterns of competence and well being over time despite having suffered the effects of abuse, neglect and extremely disadvantaged backgrounds. We are all vulnerable and at some time in our lives we suffer setbacks, however, somehow, people who are resilient deal with it and move on even though there may be many factors that work against them. It takes courage and conviction to rise above adversity as Burger asserts:

It is their courage; their persistent struggle in the face of enormous odds that distinguishes such persons from their peers. (Burger, 1994: 7)

It appears that the academic literature on resilience is somewhat focused on the traits that promote the phenomenon rather than the processes that promote growth over time. There is much discussion (Garmezy, 1993), on what the traits are and that they could be learned and developed. The research, however, does not specify how the findings could be translated into reality for victims and those working with them. It would appear some traits such as a positive temperament and intelligence are inborn making it more difficult for those not blessed with an abundance of either, to embark on the journey to recovery (Garmezy, 1993).

The theme of finding some source of surrogate support stands out in all the literature (Garmezy & Rutter, 1985; & Rutter, 1987) and could be seen as the most significant factor in promoting resilience. A caring adult, a surrogate parent, a friend or a peer, a teacher, a neighbour or a support group who offer a non-judgemental and accepting approach were seen as extremely important to encourage a person to cope and look forwards. Social support acts as a buffer by creating a meaningful attachment. Vaillant (1993: p. 299) describes resilience as:

both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity once bent to spring back. The self righting tendencies within the human organism, resilience, reflects that which characterises a twig with a fresh, green living core: when stepped on, such a twig bends and yet springs back.

However, there are also researchers who have looked at the unhealthy resilience seen in the use of controlling, aggressive, withdrawing or self destructive behaviours:

Certainly negative resilience may have some limited use as a coping mechanism but it can destroy relationships and prevent the development of healthy resilience. There are many stories of children who have been abused who are angry and defiant and have fought their peers and family, bullying, with some children and lashing out at family members who become the target for their anger and pain. We need to look at variables that might abate the negative effects of abuse and protective factors alongside risk factors, which will give hope and optimism for these children in the future. (Burger 1994: 8.)

Garmezy (1993) reported on a review of numerous resilience studies that have searched for the presence of protective factors that may compensate for those risk elements that are present in the lives of abused and neglected children. Two studies are cited in this report that substantiate both Herrekohle et al.(1994) and Spaccareli and Kim's (1995) findings that a number of people studied,

display competent behaviour and good coping strategies, while not coping well emotionally (Luthar et al., 2000). Another example of this was reported in a study conducted on Hawaiian maltreated children in 1982 and 1992 by Werner and Smith (cited in Garmezy, 1993). It was found that when the participants were re-evaluated as adults in their 30's, they were seen to be coping well with adult responsibilities, but were also reported on as having problems with their health and difficulty in maintaining stable relationships. Zimrin (1986) conducted a study of twenty-eight abused children over a fourteen-year period who despite their adversities, still managed to cope well into their adult lives. Participants had a sense of hope and faith and determination which saw them through their difficult circumstances. The author concluded that some of the factors which may have assisted them in this process were their cognitive abilities and 'mental toughness'. However, problems of emotional connection and difficulty with inter-personal relationships did occur but they did not abuse others or have problems with aggression.

Miriam Saphira (1992) includes risk factors for behaviours such as childhood experiences of family violence, television violence, traditional male sex roles (machismo), inability to tolerate frustration, and contributing factors like alcohol and drugs. There are many factors as outlined that can be risk factors for physical child abuse, but the one most likely to be the most influential is the attitude and behaviour of parents and family members toward children.

### **Child abuse**

Too often we hide our feelings and thoughts about child abuse and ignore the signs that child abuse is evident around us, in our communities, our families, and society at large. The evidence is compelling. People who perpetrate the abuse of children are more likely to have been abused themselves, are under stress, unhappy, frustrated, living in poverty or depressed. Still we continue in many societies to disregard it, minimise it and ignore it as an issue, when really, what is needed is strong political and societal action and the commitment to eradicate it.

According to Finkelhor and Korbin (1988):

Child abuse is a problem that is hidden and ignored for important social and cultural reasons in many places. When brought to attention, its existence is widely denied. Action against child abuse often threatens entrenched political, religious and economic interests (1988, p.16).

People who are reasonably stable with no history of mental illness, or stress, or who have not been victims of child abuse themselves, substance abusers or who have not come from

dysfunctional homes may have some difficulty in understanding child abuse, or indeed what it actually entails. This is not surprising if you consider the political and societal sensitivities around child abuse cases which become even more fraught and complex if the issues are 'cultural'. Many researchers (Payne, 1989; Ferrari., 2002; Fontes, 2005) agree that 'cultural' considerations need to be adhered to if any inroads are going to be made in addressing these issues. Often professionals think about the ethnicity of the parents or clients but do not consider their own (Fontes, 2005). The danger of people acting as if what they understand and know is a given, can lead to sweeping assumptions /biases, stereotyping and ethnocentric behaviour. The perceptions of cultural conflict in defining child abuse suggest that at the level of cultural differences, definitions of child abuse have a substantial component of relativity. Researchers state, quite rightly, in my opinion, that the issues around child abuse and culture need to be understood within the cultural context of the families involved. Ferrari's (2002) research went beyond the parents' ethnic identity to study the influences of the attitudes and beliefs that may be embedded within the ethnic group's identity. Fontes (2005) suggests that future research around issues of child abuse should continue in order to discover the attitudinal and behavioural components studied. I could not agree more with Fontes, hence, this research.

## **Summary**

The review has highlighted the lack of literature around Samoan parenting. Although numerous writers have described parenting and issues of child abuse as very complex with a myriad of indicators as to risk and resiliency factors it would seem that what cannot be ascertained is whether Samoan parents have clear belief systems which would indicate a propensity for them to use physical punishment in contemporary rather than 'traditional Samoan society'. Several researchers as outlined in the review allude to changes in parenting practices among various ethnic groups when migrating from one country to another and the kinds of values and beliefs of those particular groups. They also describe the risk factors and protective factors which impact on a child's healthy development to adulthood. The writings of Samoan researchers on the topic describe Samoan parenting as being very much influenced by values of respect, obedience and harsh physical discipline.

It is important here to state the underlying aims and hypothesis outlined in this thesis, these are the following:

### ***Aims of Research***

The aims of the research were to describe the way Samoan parents (study participants) brought up their children in New Zealand and how they (the participants) were brought up by their Samoan parents. Secondly, the study aimed to describe the role of parents and children and the parents' values, beliefs and attitudes towards parenting. Lastly, the study aimed to describe the influences, if any, of religion and migration to New Zealand and fa'asamoa (Samoan way) on the parenting practices of Samoans.

### ***Hypothesis***

That Samoan values, perceptions, and beliefs have changed with migration and enculturation over time and they affect the way Samoans parent their children.

The questions which then arise are how and why?

Chapter two outlines the research methodology (approaches adopted) and also how I executed the data collection and analysis phases.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN, ANALYSIS AND METHODS**

#### **My approach to research as a Pacific/ Samoan Researcher**

My approach in addressing the research study objectives and questions is based on my own beliefs and knowledge of research involving Pasifika peoples and Pasifika theoretical frameworks and methodologies. The participants in this study comprise of Samoans born and bred in Samoa who have lived in New Zealand for seven or more years, and Samoans who were born in New Zealand and have lived in New Zealand all or most of their lives.

The largest Pasifika ethnic group by population according to the New Zealand Census (2001) are Samoans who make up fifty percent of the Pacific population. The design, therefore, of my research takes into consideration a theoretical framework called Fa'afaletui proposed by Samoan researchers Tamasese and Peteru (1997) and adapted for this particular study. This concept considers three different perspectives important to the way *some* Samoan people view certain phenomena.

Firstly, there is the perspective of those (participants) closest to the school of fish (data); secondly, the view from the top of the tree which entails another perspective (researcher); and thirdly, the perspective from the top of the mountain which draws a broader more expansive view of the school of fish/data (other analysis tools, peer groups, supervisors) in their natural settings. This encapsulates the perspectives of different peoples and the use of analytical technology, giving a multi-faceted frame of thinking and viewing of the data. This third perspective or view from the mountain also brings into the frame 'expertise' and knowledge of, in this case, my thesis supervisors, and support group.

As a Samoan researcher, I am committed to using and validating Pasifika (in this case specifically Samoan) theoretical frameworks and methodologies for research. There are three specific documents, which have assisted my thinking in this area. They are SPEAR's draft 'Pacific Research Guidelines' (Ministry of Social Development, 2004), the 'Development of Guidelines for Research in Pasifika Education' (Anae et al., 2002), and the 'Guidelines on Pacific Health Research' (Health Research Council, 2004). These documents represent a movement in New Zealand and the Pacific region about conducting research that is empowering to Pasifika communities. The approach proposed for this study takes cognisance of these Guidelines and builds on the work and experience of other Pasifika researchers Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001), Helu Thaman (1992), and Duituturaga

(1988). There is also recognition by key stakeholders and funders of Pacific research of the importance of developing Pacific frameworks which are relevant in the area of Pacific research. One example of key stakeholder commitment is the Health Research Council of New Zealand which is committed to developing the capacity of Pacific researchers. After considerable consultation with Pacific communities the HRC (2005, p.11) published their own set of Guidelines for conducting research with Pacific communities. They hold the view that:

Pacific research design, methods and approaches, will be informed, first and foremost, from within the continuum of Pacific world views, and aim to be responsive to changing Pacific contexts. Pacific research will be underpinned by Pacific cultural values, beliefs and will be conducted in accordance with Pacific ethical standards, values and aspirations.

Pacific Research Frameworks and methodologies do not dismiss the work of fellow researchers who are non-Pacific, but rather adds another dimension to the research study which is relevant to the Pacific participants and gives the research added depth and breadth in how the study is conducted from the beginning of the project to its conclusion. This is also supported by researchers familiar with and experienced in working with groups of people who are not from the dominant population group.

Minority Group Scientists confident of the value of their work and professional abilities will be better able to develop independent and culturally relevant information, to challenge well-entrenched assumptions and to offer alternative interpretations of research or policy. Non-minority scientists should be encouraged to seek out minority –group perspectives, to educate themselves about the interests and values of minority communities. By listening more diligently to what non-traditional voices can tell them, scientists may discover new ways of looking at or solving old problems. Research and practice that fail to take minority perspectives into account deprive all of us of the intellectual breadth and diversity of values that other cultures can offer.

(Frankel, 2003, p.B2)

Frankel goes on to say:

All scientific enquiry requires a perspective, for research is not only investigation but also interpretation. Scientists' perspectives condition what they perceive as important for the advancement of science, as well as the design of research and the weight given to conclusions. Ideally in science, researcher's choice of methods and rigor of analysis, as well as other scientists' scrutiny of the findings, should be dispassionate and free of cultural influences. In reality, it often does matter whose values are considered, whose voices are heard, and whose research agenda is approved. Consequently, less powerful minorities have historically found themselves subjected to the unwanted and unkind effects of the research juggernaut, endorsed by a scientific community that has not been sufficiently sensitive to their experiences, priorities and needs. Examples of such insensitivity are not difficult to find.

(Frankel, 2003, p.B2)

The principles adopted for this research takes cognisance of the values important to Samoan people of respect, collaboration, honesty and reciprocity which can be explained by the following analogy of weaving the *Ie toga* (Samoan fine mat). In this example this very fine mat is meticulously woven by skilled weavers. It is considered one of the most valuable items in Samoan culture and is ceremoniously paraded at special ceremonies because of its high ranking in ceremonial gift giving. *Ie toga* tends to be used to embellish other gifts that are presented. The making of the fine mat or *Ie toga* is painstaking work and involves skilful knowledge of materials, patterns and craft. It requires patience and bringing together of people to complete the finished product. There is a process of sorting materials, negotiating different tasks, collaboration with others to gather the resources, and an analysis of what patterns, what length, what occasion, what fineness is required, before all the processes are brought together for the final outcome. As an article of high quality it brings *mana* and honour to the occasion, the makers, givers and the receivers.

Like the *Ie toga*, the research process involves collectivity and reciprocity, of bringing together and weaving finely and skilfully an article which brings prestige and honour to both the givers of the information (respondents) the weavers of the product (researchers) and the receivers (the institution, the community, the participants).

When elders like my father spoke about the presentation of fine mats he related it to skilful oratory and values of love and reciprocity and a shared belief that giving generally in the *fa'asamoa* (Samoan way) involves, *alofa* (love). Hence, the Samoan word for gift is *mealofa* (article of love). It is this love which Samoans believe transcends all other values. Similarly, the Guiding principles used for conducting my research which underpins ethical research relationships with Pacific/Samoan peoples is respect, meaningful engagement, utility and reciprocity. These are also principles outlined in the Health Research Council's (HRC) Pacific research framework Guidelines. In my view these along with notions of respect and collaboration need to be inherent in the research process where Pacific people's ways of doing and knowing comes into play.

Other researchers draw on similar analogies like Helu Thaman's metaphor of the making of '*kakala* (garland of flowers) which she likens to the processes involved in research. Put simply, in the Tongan context *kakala* refers to a royal garland as well as the fragrant flowers sown to make the garland. This process involves three key elements. They are *Toli*: gathering of the *kakala*-where the person who does the toil (gathering of the flowers) needs to have the skills and expertise to skilfully select and gather the *kakala*. The person collecting the *kakala* also needs to think of the person that the *kakala* is being made for. The next element is *Tui*: This concerns the weaving together where, each *kakala* is woven taking into account the people that the *kakala* is being made for, e.g.

supervisors, and the research participants. The final process is the Luva: which is the giving away of the kakala. This is likened to the finished research product and the process of dissemination to the participants, university and community.

The Samoan and Tongan analogies are described to try to explain a study design which, combined with western paradigms, places the research in a cohesive and relevant framework. Firstly, the initial consultation phase where the pathway to doing the research is ‘smoothed out’ with key stakeholders, key members of the Samoan community, the Samoan research support group and the church Minister with her connections to the various churches who were recruited into the study. The second phase, recruitment and interviewing of the participants, also took into account the Samoan ways of doing and knowing, of reciprocal gift giving, of honouring those who had given their time, and of ensuring there was respect in the interactions with participants. The last phase involved the analysis and reporting of findings and dissemination. These required attributes of reflection, reciprocity and valuing the meaning and interpretations of those who gifted the data. This was done by getting participant feedback from transcriptions and checking for data accuracy which reflected their meanings behind their stories.

The approach taken in this study considers the fluidity of all four paradigms (diagram 1, p 48), hence the Hansen model with a strong focus on the interpretivist approach which was used along with the adapted ‘Fa’afaletui’ approach to explore and describe how Samoans were parented and how they are parenting their children in New Zealand. Having a Qualitative - interpretivist focus did not exclude a Quantitative positivist approach. It was included, albeit in a much less significant way.

Needless to say, in my view a theoretical framework which has the capacity to move across all four paradigms (diagram 1, p 48) with a certain degree of fluidity was more suitable for my research in this instance than something that was static, hence ‘Hansen’s model’ (see diagram 1, p 48).

There seems to be general agreement that theories are constantly tested and retested over time and as asserted by Tamasese et al. (1997) these theoretical constructions must contextualize the reality of the participants and their cultural values and meanings.

I believe there is a need for a new research agenda where the ‘outsider within’ position is developed by members of minority groups who are required to have fluency with practices of the dominant group, in order to survive in that society, but also to have knowledge of their own contexts. This makes them able to relate to two sets of practices and in two contexts.

In my case, this position provides a platform for me to critically examine the limits of predominantly non-Samoan approaches when attempting to understand the experiences of Samoan groups. Being a researcher who is located as an “outsider within,” enables me to create a new focus on the experience of the parents from a marginalized grouping (Samoan). Being an outsider within allows me to take into account the values and belief systems which I bring with me into this research but also ensuring that it is ‘the voices’ and stories of the participants, their values, their beliefs and their perspectives, that are reported. It is in using all these ‘lenses’ to frame this research which will produce the richness and rigorous analysis of data. In my view researchers, both Samoan and non-Samoan have overlooked these epistemological projects. By acknowledging the writer’s explicit viewpoint, the reader, may on reflection come to respect the Samoan/Pacific view as valid. Secondly, it will provide, hopefully some new knowledge or insights for those ‘in the centre’ to develop new understandings about their relationship with Samoan parents and families from their own perspective.

Having thus explained my approach as a Samoan researcher, I will now endeavour to explain why I have chosen to partner a Samoan research framework with the Hansen model and qualitative-interpretive methodology. According to Hansen, (2005, 8):

there were two intersecting continua of research foci. The horizontal continuum denotes the researchers concern with scale, micro versus macro elements, as opposed to the gestalt. The perpendicular continuum spans process, measuring the observable and quantifiable, in contrast to interpreting and/or reporting on what has been said, or has been seen, insofar, as non-measurable phenomena are concerned.

### **Research design and procedures**

In making my decisions around the choice of methodology it was important for me to consider the aims and hypotheses of this study. I sought to establish what, if any changes to parenting practices had occurred since these families had arrived in New Zealand. Secondly, I wanted to explore how Samoan parents and their parents practised their role as parents and also to explore their values, beliefs and attitudes about parenting. Thirdly, I wanted to find out what influences, if any, the church had on their parenting, and, to what extent, the concept of fa’asamoa was evident in their parenting.

There are two broad categories of research; qualitative (QL) and quantitative (QN) and another, which, when the two are combined, is known as ‘mixed mode research’. In this study, I chose predominantly, the qualitative approach, but placing this, within four particular ‘quadrants’.

At one end (Figure 1) was the (QN) *Positivistic*, which involved some gathering and processing of numerical or quantitative data (as depicted in some of the base data diagrams) and at the other end was the (QL) Qualitative *Interpretive*. The qualitative was about describing and interpreting the effects, thoughts, feelings, values and beliefs of Samoans within their natural settings, in its broader sense or in other words, their opinions and what were actually happening for them (critical instance).

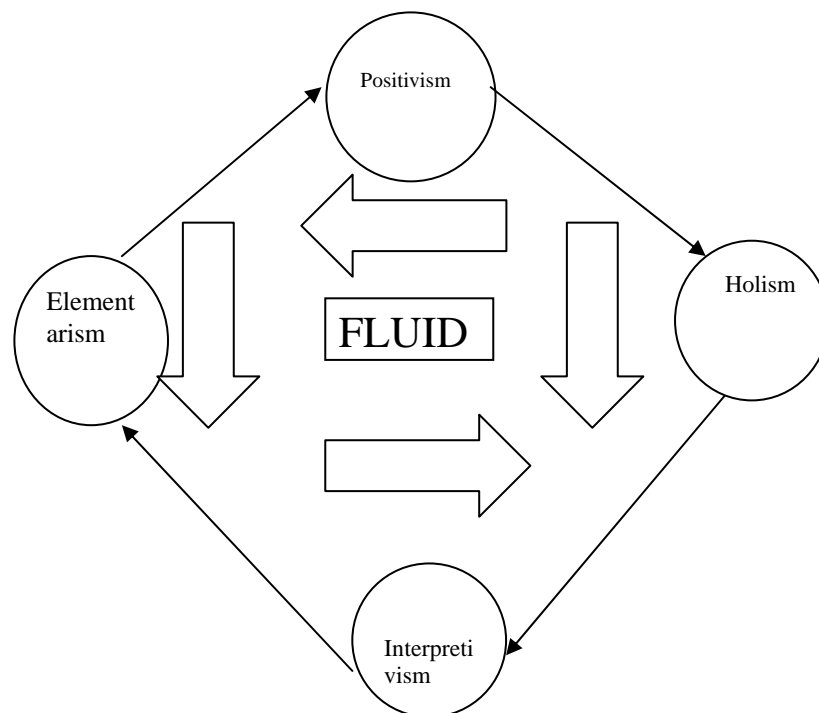


FIGURE 1. Hansen's model of four paradigms

Candy (1989: cited in Hansen, 2005) agreed that sometimes paradigmatic boundaries can be blurred and indeed staying in one can be quite difficult.

That Paradigms are “theoretical artefacts” which do not exist in nature and the boundaries between them are much messier than we might wish! At times placing a particular methodology within a paradigm proves quite difficult.

(cited Grant & Giddings, 2004)

Theorists like Weber (1947) who was responsible for the theory of ‘meaningful social action’, Marx (1957) for conflict theory and Merton for role theory, featured in the (QL) Interpretive and Elementarism quadrants because of their significance as ‘social theorists’. The positioning of Elementarism in the nine o’clock position in the diagram had a micro research focus that analyzed role theory and Holism at the three o’clock position had a macro approach to understanding organizations. The emphasis thus, from the two approaches was on ‘content’ and the positivism and interpretivism on ‘processes’. Needless to say, fluidity across all four (figure 1) occurs. This process is one of ‘dynamic dispersion’ of ideas, methodologies and method and researchers traverse these quadrants more times than not, in conducting research as they continue to test and retest theories. It is not a static formation but dynamic.

Although a whole range of different models could have been used for this research, this one stood out for me for its simple explanation and in building my own awareness and understanding of research. As well as this, was the thrust of what I was endeavouring to achieve in this research project, that is getting to ‘the crux’ of the matter in relation to what the participants were saying. It allowed me to see what I needed to see in order to gauge what was actually happening in relation to the data, and that there is a blurring, or blending or delving into the different ranges of methodologies and elements. It also required looking at all the issues separately as they came up and working in unison with all the different parts in order to get to the whole as alluded to, the crux of the matter. In this case it was not enough to know the differences between what the parents thought and what the children thought (opinion) I actually wanted to know why they thought that way, was it their parents, their education, their experiences, or their move to a new country? I wanted to ensure I had asked the relevant questions to be able to get to the participants realities. But, in doing so, there were micro (the families concerned) and macro processes (Samoans living within New Zealand society) to consider, and as Hansen (2005) alludes to, there were some aspects, where the emphasis was on processes, and in others, where the emphasis was on content, but always, the nagging question remained and was constantly asked throughout the research process ‘what is happening here?’ Hansen suggests:

Research is mainly about determining relative unambiguous investigation parameters and ensuring a mainly straight forward and clearly defined focus. In reality, social research tends to never quite be as straight forward, as we may wish it to be. But then, if that were the case, we would know it all and we would lose the disputations that are born of contestable research findings.

(Hansen, 2005, p 9)

This study does not claim to be representative of all Samoans in New Zealand because that is not possible in small studies of this kind. In this study the significance is in the theoretical generalizations, rather than population generalization. The importance of this is based more on theoretical inferences which come out from the data (Bryman, 2001). This theoretical focus makes it even more important to review the literature as we go along to ensure we are keeping abreast of latest events and changes before, during and after the research.

In this particular study I was interested in getting beneath the surface of what people were actually saying, and interpreting this using a grounded theory approach and NVIVO tool, alongside Pacific research frameworks. I was, as Guba and Lincoln (1994:115) state, a 'passionate participant', which referred to the values of reflecting, re-examining and analyzing my personal points of view and feelings as part of the process of studying the respondents in the field. Furthermore, the fluidity which Hansen refers to in his model, incorporates movement across all four paradigms which allowed me also, to re-frame, and re-shape within a Pacific/Samoan worldview to achieve the central aim of 'getting to the bottom of the data (in-depth) and finding real meaning ('telling it like it is') and hopefully also making a positive difference for the people who participated in the research.

## **Sampling**

The sampling size I chose was thirty-five. I wanted a number of people in the study from a cross-section of the Samoan community in order to have a diverse spread of people with stories related to their upbringing. It was important to have parents who were single, married, younger, older and from different professions and jobs, those with qualifications and those with none. It was also important to have elders, ministers and people who attended church and people who did not attend church because I was also interested in exploring the influence of the church on parenting. Because I wanted to get as good a spread as possible in terms of all these diversities the final sample number totalled thirty-five. The church sample was chosen to give me four different churches which had reasonable congregations of Samoan families in order to get the 'mixture' of variables.

## **Analysis Approach**

The methodology used for this research was qualitative. The theoretical frameworks were interpretative and Pacific and the method of analysis was a "grounded theory" approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and an adapted version of fa'afaletui. To add a more in-depth systematic approach NVIVO a qualitative analysis tool, was also used. The research project was about Samoan people



by a Samoan Researcher. In conducting this research the ethnicity of the participants and the ethnicity of the researcher had a major part to play as to which lens I would be looking through in my analysis of the data. All the participants were Samoan and most had lived in New Zealand for longer than seven years. As a Samoan, born in Samoa who had lived in New Zealand nearly all my life and who identified with being a New Zealander and a Samoan, it was important for me to ensure these bi-focal approaches took into cognizance the cultural and ethnic aspects of this study notwithstanding the significance also of the insider/outsider lens which was also being accounted for as a person of the same ethnicity as the participants.

The data was transcribed and original transcripts were constantly analysed line by line, paragraph by paragraph, page by page. Mind map was then used to map ideas and themes that began to emerge from the data, adding and reading and refining as my reading of the data continued, along with checking out emerging data. A thematic approach was taken to firstly identify the themes and then having identified them, manually using grounded theory as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to code. This approach involved data gathered, organized and examined systematically in an ongoing interplay between analysis and data collection. Here, constant comparative analysis, theoretical coding and sampling are all processes whereby the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data identifying emerging concepts and categories and making tentative hypotheses about what the main issue or concern is and checking and rechecking with incoming data and theoretical development. Throughout this process a systematic generation of ideas occurs and the theoretical ideas are progressed. In this case, the researcher identified categories and searched data for explanations of the 'wider' dimensions of Samoan parenting as outlined in the findings and taking in the multiple approaches as outlined in the methodology and Pacific researcher approach.

The purpose of grounded theory is to analyse the behaviour of the people not the people themselves. Therefore the emphasis was on patterns of action and interaction (Grant & Giddings, 2002: 17). It is about 'the researcher relating and interacting with participants in an effort to understand their experiences and the meanings they give to them'. The behavioural patterns of the wider group are the focus, not the actual personal patterns. In this respect, it is an ideal research method to examine the parenting of Samoan respondents because you are examining the beliefs of a collective ethnic group; Samoan parents.

For a small study of this kind, it was not possible to cover every sphere of parenting per se' but what was possible, was to develop a focused analytical explanation for a broad range of communications and practices of respondents parenting. This study had thirty-five participants and the reasons have been outlined earlier, but the aim, as such, was not to make some substantive

‘grounded theory’ but rather, to make a beginning, by using grounded theory principles. It is hoped that further post graduate work in this area on my part may result in producing some theoretical drivers for Samoan Parenting behaviours.

Following the manual analysis, I then used a qualitative analysis tool to see if there was concurrence and then further analyze and interpret the data.

The following table points out the process used.

**Table 1. NVIVO Analysis process**

1. Assembling data	1. Transcribing and saving data in rich text format
2. Manual analysis	2. Read, read and re-read
3. Search and identify themes	3. Using NVIVO and ‘Inspiration tool’
4. Mind map	4. Enter themes into mind map electronic tool (Inspiration used)
5. Browse and interpret	5. Make notes, list key words, develop concepts and charts
6. Search index	6. Use ‘Boolean’ to search raw files for text units based on key words and synonyms.
7. Review and revise indexing nodes	7. Retrieve data by nodes as needs, review and revise indexing nodes by exclusion, union or intersection of nodes as needed.
8. Interpret the data	8. Themes identified, key words identified and stored and printed into word cross-analysis of data able to be printed and analyzed and interpreted, instances of variance identified from data and critical analysis and interpretation occurs.

## METHODS

In this study twenty-eight respondents were recruited from four different churches and seven participants were from 'outside' these churches. The following chart shows the number of parents, fathers and mothers, single parents (all mothers), ministers and elders, the length of time those born in Samoa had lived in New Zealand (up to October, 2005) and those who are New Zealanders and permanent residents.

**Table 2. The number of Ministers, elders, and parents interviewed in the study**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
1. Elders (not including ministers)	7
2. Ministers	4
3. Parents (including elders and ministers)	34
4. Fathers (including elders and ministers)	11
5. Mothers (including elders and ministers)	23
6. Single (non-partnered) parents (including divorced, widowed and elders)	4
7. Samoan born parents (lived in New Zealand 7 or more years)	17
8. Parents born in New Zealand and lived for 10 or more years in Samoa	1
9. NZ residents including NZ born	35
10. Person without children	1

## INTERVIEWS

Semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with each of the four ministers from the four different churches, four elders and five parents were interviewed from each church and seven participants from outside these churches, including three elders totalling thirty-five participants. The criteria was for all participants to be of Samoan descent, the elders to be sixty years or over with children, ministers to be ministering to a congregation of ten or more Pacific families and the non-elder parents to have a child or children twelve years or younger. All but one person had children. Not all the data regarding this person has been included as it may in such a small community identify the respondent.

The aim was to try and gauge the views of elders and ministers and parishioners from different churches about their values, perceptions and attitudes about parenting, the role and influence of

fa'asamoa and the church, and the role of parents and children within the context of aiga. The largest sample was taken from the churches given that the churches are still the 'hub' or 'village' of community life for many Samoans living in New Zealand and that most Samoans are Christians according to the census (2001). I selected seven others from outside these churches as a matter of interest. The four churches were a Samoan Presbyterian church, a Palagi Presbyterian church with Samoan parishioners, a fundamentalist Christian church and a worship group (not yet a church) which was formed by people who chose to move from mainstream churches. The notion of changing cultural values and beliefs over time and generations and how these impacted on Samoan parenting was also explored in this study.

### **Recruitment Process**

The specific churches were suggested by one Minister from the study's support group and recruited via church pastors/leaders and other parents, who were recruited using the snowball technique (Neuman, 2003). The role of the Support group was to support the researcher and act as a vessel to give feedback at times requested by the researcher. The criteria for the study parents were that they had to be of Samoan descent, be able to speak English fluently and to have children twelve years or younger. The age of twelve years was chosen because it was considered a middle age for children. The respondents had to be fluent English speakers as the researcher and interviewer, who was bi-lingual, had more fluency in English than Samoan. The interviews were conducted over a period of four months May, June, July, and August 2005.

**Table 3: Groupings from each church**

<b>Church 1</b>	<b>Church 2</b>	<b>Church 3</b>	<b>Church 4</b>	<b>Others</b>
Minister	Minister	Leader	Pastor	Elder (Catholic)
Elder	Elder	Elder	Elder	Elder (Catholic)
Parent 1	Parent 1	Parent 1	Parent 1	Elder (evangelical)
Parent 2	Parent 2	Parent 2	Parent 2	Parent 1 (NC)*
Parent 3	Parent 3	Parent 3	Parent 3	Parent 2 (NC)
Parent 4	Parent 4	Parent 4	Parent 4	Parent 3 (NC)
Parent 5	Parent 5	Parent 5	Parent 5	Parent 4 (NC)

\* NC =non-attender @church

### **About the interviews**

The interviews were semi-structured. However, the questions were open-ended and allowed the respondent to elaborate on the response, or for the interviewer to ask another question to clarify. The questions were more a guideline to prompt engagement with the respondent.

- What are your views about the role of Samoan parents and children in the context of aiga?
- How were you raised by your parents and what are the similarities and differences in the way you are raising your children in New Zealand?
- What sorts of values and beliefs did your parents have in raising you and what are your values and beliefs in raising your children?
- Does fa'asamoa religion/your minister /your church influence the way you parent your children? If so in what way? If not why not?
- How did your parents manage your behaviour and how do you manage the behaviour of your children? In what way is it different from how your parents managed your behaviour?
- What do you enjoy most about parenting?
- What do you enjoy the least about parenting?
- What do you think are some of the things that make a child stable and secure, happy and healthy?

Some referred respondents were firstly approached via phone, and a small number known to the interviewer were approached face to face and spoken to about their possible participation in the study. A time was arranged to meet with them for a face to face interview where a summary sheet of the research study was explained to them, along with the consent form. The opportunity was given to all prospective respondents to either participate or decline to participate, after being fully informed about the study. Only after a full explanation and when the consent form was signed did the interview proceed. It was also explained to respondents that they did not have to answer any of the questions if they did not wish to, and could also change their minds to continue if they wished. Respondents were also informed that if they wished to have someone professional to counsel them after the interview I would be happy to give them contact details of a professional person who could see them.

All referred respondents consented to be interviewed. All the interviews, except for 5, were conducted in the respondents' homes. Four were conducted in the respondents' workplaces because

of the time convenience for the respondents. One was a phone interview which was recorded via teleconference facilities to a provincial town. The interviews in the workplace were conducted in a room, where only the interviewer and respondent/s were present. Most of the interviews took place on a one to one basis, with each interview taking approximately one hour. In the case of interviews with couples these took about two hours per interview, per couple. Four of the couples chose to be interviewed together, but each respondent answered the questions separately. One couple chose to be interviewed separately, so the other could care for their young children, whilst the other was being interviewed. Many of the respondents young children were present some of the time when I interviewed their parents. My observation notes recorded the way the parents interacted with their children. These included seeing the children cuddling up to the parents and the parents cuddling and kissing their children and stroking them, parents speaking with them about what they wanted and taking the time out from the interview to meet their children's needs, for one, a glass of water, the other, a bedtime story and a father picking up his son and taking him to bed while the mother stayed to be interviewed. When the child had settled, the father came back into the lounge and the interview continued. The father, although apologetic about having to leave, quite clearly felt it was a priority for him to tend to his son's needs.

The majority of the interviews were conducted fully in English although two of the elders spoke Samoan in some parts of their interview to highlight specific points. All the interviews were audio-taped for accuracy and later transcribed and analyzed by the researcher, and eight were transcribed by a student, who signed a confidentiality agreement. It was at this stage that the researcher needed some assistance with transcriptions as she was also trying to juggle full-time work and community commitments and it was taking its toll on her health.

### **Getting Respondent feedback**

Where appropriate, the interview transcripts were returned by mail to the respondents for comments before the data was analyzed. The word 'appropriate' is used here, as, most of the people were happy to receive the transcripts back via email or post, but there were some that the researcher felt, because of the highly sensitive nature of the information disclosed by the respondents she needed to be present when the transcripts were read. She was there to give any face to face support to the respondent and to have any points clarified from the transcript. All three made similar comments of appreciation and gratitude for the interviews and how they were conducted. They were grateful and appreciative of the support and the manner in which the transcripts were delivered personally and having the opportunity for the first time in their lives to share information that was never shared

with anyone else before. It was important to them to also know that the information was to be used in a respectful way.

I had never told anyone before about what happened in my life especially how I was treated .....so badly by my stepmother and my relatives..... I didn't realize how much it hurt me until I spoke about it and read about it now. (x)

Respondents who had their transcripts posted to them were also given an opportunity to comment on the interview process, the questions, the interviewer's approach and technique. They were also given the opportunity to state whether they wanted to change anything they had said in the interview, add or delete, or just to comment. They were given three weeks to read the transcripts and respond. The researcher followed up with a phone call to the respondents to ensure they were happy with the transcripts and had nothing further to add or to comment on. None of the transcripts were changed and no comments were added or deleted. The respondents who were reached by phone, email and face-to-face, commented on how interesting it was for them to read their transcripts. Some of the respondents also commented on how easy they found the interview when someone was just prepared to listen and not 'judge' them or their parents. Some of the comments noted were:

- funny to read about one's own experiences', I didn't realize until I read what I had said how much I was hurt by what my parents did.
- Can't believe how hard life was for me and my brothers and sisters. Big change from how I was brought up to what my kids have today, thank God.....man!
- Life is a breeze for my kids...it really sucked for me.....but then it must've sucked for my parents too.....just glad it's not like that for my kids....guess that mean's we have broken the cycle eh?
- I am grateful my parents brought me up the way they did and can now see how I have passed on the same values to their grandchildren.

### **Several significant experiences disclosed**

Three respondents wept openly during the interview when they spoke of painful aspects of their upbringing by their parents. Five of the respondents did not realize at the time how traumatized they still were from their childhood experiences. People responded with gratitude because what they were disclosing was going to remain confidential and all said how sharing the information was good for them because it was the first time they had spoken to anyone about it. The respondents were all offered the possibility of being referred to a counsellor if they wished and all declined, as the interview itself appeared to be therapeutic. Personally, I was quite shocked at the effects of their upbringing on these particular women, especially as the people most visibly affected were those in the older age group: these were three out of the seven elders, all highly educated and strong

community leaders. However, there were also four younger mothers who were also visibly affected by experiences of harsh discipline, emotional and verbal abuse by their parents. However, their sense of humour also came through in the interview and there were moments of great hilarity from most of the respondents. The respondents were all very friendly, eager to be interviewed, fully engaged and participated with confidence in the process. One phone interview was conducted, because the person lived three hours from Auckland, and was a very busy Pastor of one of the churches. We had tried for months to get a face to face interview in Auckland but due to pressing engagements, travel and a clash of timetables, was not possible.

Each person interviewed was coded by the number of the church then a letter e.g. 1a. In each church there is one minister and one elder and five parents. In the 'others' table, which is numbered five, there are three elders and 4 parents so the respondents in the 'other' are coded as five a, b, c etc. In the first table I have indicated who the respondents are with children who include ministers and elders. Thus the following table illustrates the first church, the participants interviewed from the church and some baseline data in relation to the participants. The table shows minister, elder and five parents from the church, how many children they have, the respondent's gender, their education (secondary, primary, tertiary) their age, where they were born and the age range of their children.

**Table 4: Church one: Mixed Western/Samoan, Contemporary/liberal) Church one – Profiles**

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Age/range</b>
a. Minister			Tertiary	40-50	NZ	
b. Elder	6	Female(w)*	(RN)	60-70	Samoa	33-50
c. Parent 1	3	Female(m)**	Secondary	30-40	NZ	10-13
d. Parent 2	4	Female(m)	Secondary	30-40	Samoa	10-30
e. Parent 3	4	Male(m)	Primary	40-50	Samoa	10-30
f. Parent 4	3	Female(m)	Secondary	40-50	Samoa	5-18
g. Parent 5	3	Male(m)	Secondary	40-50	Samoa	5-18

**description of church and respondents Baseline data**

\*= widow, \*\* =married

The Samoan community is very small. I have not included some details in reference to the Minister as I believe this would be a possible identifier. Church one is a relatively small congregation of about 100 members. However, there are new members of young Samoan parents who have broken away from the more traditional Samoan church. The minister comes from a traditional Samoan Presbyterian church and the respondents are mostly from working class backgrounds. Five out of the seven respondents interviewed were women. One (elder) was a registered nurse, four had secondary schooling and one parent had completed only primary school. All of these parents were



bi-lingual (English, mostly self taught) hard working, working class people. All the parents from church one had lived in New Zealand for more than twenty years. Most of the respondents had incomes of between \$20-40,000. The youngest respondent was in her thirties and the oldest in her seventies. The elder had six children and parents 1-5, each had 3 and 4 children between them. One respondent had no children.

**Table 5. (Traditional Samoan-Presbyterian) Church 2**

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Age/range</b>
a. Minister	3	Male(m) –	tertiary	60's	Samoa	20-30
b. Elder	3	Female(m)	secondary	60's	Samoa	20-30
c. parent 1	1	Female(m)	tertiary	30's	NZ	2 months
d. Parent 2	2	Female(m)	tertiary	30's	NZ	3 & 5yrs
e. Parent 3	2	Male(m)	secondary	30's	Samoa	3 & 5yrs
f. Parent 4	2	Female(m)	tertiary	30's	NZ	4 & 8
g. Parent 5	2	Male(m)	tertiary	30's	NZ	4 & 8

This church was defined as ‘traditional’ Samoan as the language and the customs were very much integrated into the church service and the church’s approach to religion. It has services in Samoan and has a strong cultural component incorporated into the churches activities. It is based in South Auckland with a Samoan Minister who trained at Knox Theological College in Dunedin. His congregation comprised predominantly of Samoan people, old, young and middle-aged from very diverse backgrounds, professional and working class occupations. Five out of seven of the respondents had post school qualifications and most of the five were undergraduates (had a bachelor degree). Except for the minister and the elder, most of the respondents were in their thirties (early, middle and late). All except for the Minister and elder, had children 1-2 children under twelve years of age. The income range was \$35-150,000 p.a. Most couples were both working except for one couple, where one of those parents chose to be a stay at home, full-time dad, while his wife chose to work full-time. The household of this family was receiving significant income. All the respondents from this church lived in South Auckland. Four out of the seven respondents from this church were born in New Zealand; however, five of the respondents were fluent in English, two had a very good command of English and most were bi-lingual in Samoan and English.

**Table 6. Bible based: Church 3**

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Age/range</b>
a. Pastor	4	male (m)	secondary	40-50	NZ	10-17
b. Elder	3	Female(w)	secondary	40-50	Samoa	20- 40
c. Parent 1	4	Female(m)	secondary	40-50	NZ	10-17
d. Parent 2	3	Female(m)	secondary	40-50	NZ	8-14
e. Parent 3	3	Male(m)	secondary	40-50	NZ	8-14
f. Parent 4	2	Male(m)	tertiary	40-50	NZ	3 & 5
g. Parent 5	2	Female(m)	tertiary	40-50	Samoa	3 & 5

This church group was different in that it was considered not yet a church, as there was no actual church building. However, the parishioners gathered together regularly on a Sunday in a community hall and services were led by a Pastor and an assistant pastor. As the Pastor was Palagi, I opted to interview the trainee pastor who was Samoan and had a considerable leadership role in the church. Many of the church members had originally come from mainstream churches; they formed this group because there was some dissatisfaction with main stream churches. Two out of five parents had tertiary qualifications- one at post graduate level. The parent born in Samoa was fluent in English and Samoan and had lived in New Zealand since she was married (7 years). Since the birth of her two children she has been a full-time mother whilst her husband who is on a salary range of \$70-100,000 p.a works full-time. The decision to have one parent at home with the children was a conscious choice but made easier for the parents because of their household income.

**Table 7. Church 4 Evangelical & Bible based**

	<b>Children</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Age/range</b>
a. Pastor	3	male –(m)	Diploma	Early 40's	NZ	10-14
b. Elder	3	Female(d)	Dip ECE	62	Samoa	36-40
c. Parent 1	1	Female (s)	B Soc Sci	late 30's	NZ	10
d. Parent 2	3	Female(m)	Dip ECE	Late 30's	NZ	6, 9 &13
e. Parent 3	2	Female(m)	5 <sup>th</sup> fm	30's	NZ	3 & 4yrs
f. Parent 4	5	Male (m)	5 <sup>th</sup> fm	Mid 40's	NZ	1-20
g. Parent 5	7	Male (m)	5 <sup>th</sup> fm	Late 40's	NZ	2 -24

d = divorced, s= single

Four out of the five parents worked full-time with one mother who chose to stay home with her children who were both pre-schoolers. Four out of the five respondents had tertiary qualifications and one elder at the time of the interview was studying for her Dip. Early Childhood Education. At the time of writing the respondent had completed her Diploma. Four out of the five respondents were bi-lingual and all the respondents, except for the elder, were born in New Zealand. The income level range for this group was \$30-50,000 p.a.

**Table 8. Others (5)**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Age range</b>	<b>Born</b>	<b>Age/range</b>
a. Elder (m)	3	Female	tertiary	75	Samoa	Adults
b. Elder (m)	4	Female	tertiary	Mid 60's	Samoa	Adults
cedar (m)	4	Female	tertiary	Mid 60's	Samoa	Adult
d. Parent 1 (m)	6	Female	secondary	40's	NZ	2-18
e. Parent 2 (m)	6	Male	tertiary	40's	NZ	2-18
f. Parent 3 (s)	4	F	secondary	40's	Samoa	4-18
g. Parent 4 (m)	1	F	secondary	30's	Samoa	5

These parents belonged to a mixed group of Catholic, Mormon and church non-attenders. However, all had been brought up in a church by their parents and all of the respondents in this group 'believed' in God and wanted their children to have some form of church life. One elder in this group claimed she had more 'luck' getting her grandchildren to church rather than her own children who are now adults. All three elders were very devout, religious women and one (elder 5c) was married to a Minister in a non-mainstream church i.e. the church was a 'break-away' group of parishioners, who formed their own church. Like church three, they do not have a physical 'church' building, but worship in a public building. Respondent 5a is a grandmother with three children who are all tertiary educated and are professionals. Elder 5b is also a grandmother and was sent to New Zealand as a scholarship student. She is a very active leader in the Samoan community

### **Validity and reliability of data**

In measuring the validity of the data consideration has been given to emotional congruency, internal consistency and extrapolation from independent sources. Would people working from one construct of their past say something different to the researcher than to others? Stories may vary sometimes according to who we are speaking to. We may have the same content but approach the telling of it in a different way. The consistent themes taken from the data from thirty five independent interviews bear close consistency within and similarity between each interview. There is, throughout the data, a consistency of views as to how the past experiences were for all the participants. A summary or overview of the findings have been shared with two groups of five Samoans from a diverse range of ages, relationships and birth places (New Zealand and Samoa) and all had a sense of emotional congruency, what some researchers referred to as 'the postulate of adequacy' as Smart (1976: 100, cited in Neumann, 2003) asserts. This 'is when a scientific account of human action were to be presented to an individual actor, that actor would know how it was to be

relayed in action and his fellow actors would also know as the description would be so close to the common sense interpretation of everyday life'. If it were relayed to another person it would be played back as if that person were from the same place, grown up in the same environment and experienced the same kind of upbringing or from the same profession or culture. It would be played back so closely to the original source's account.

Respondents who had email addresses received a power point summary of the findings and, as with the transcriptions earlier, a summary of findings were delivered personally. Respondents were invited to comment regarding the findings after three weeks with an understanding that no response for change was concurrence. Those without email addresses were contacted by phone and five received face to face feedback. The validity of the method, analysis of the data and interpretations of the findings were confirmed. The findings were also shared with ten parents from the Samoan community who also found the findings were consistent with their own experiences.

Having outlined the methods, the next chapter of this thesis begins to present the first of the data/findings chapters.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **FINDINGS: THE ROLES**

I have described and taken a thematic approach to the responses of the parents in this study, to the semi-structured questions asked. This chapter highlights respondents' views on the roles of parents and children, their perceptions of how they were parented and the way they parent their children. The findings also record the influence of the church and fa'asamoa on their parenting, the good times and bad times of respondents parenting experiences and the last chapter describes the paradoxes of shame and pride, intergenerational challenges, impacts of migration and a description of what is beneath society's stereotypes of Samoan parents and the ways in which these stereotypes are dispelled.

#### **The role of parents**

In relation to the question, what are your views about the role of Samoan parents and children in the context of family? several general themes emerged from the data around the role of parents. These were to *provide, teach and protect their children*.

#### **To provide**

Providing for their children was firstly ensuring their children had the basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. Respondents also felt it was about giving their children opportunities to succeed, providing them with good role models and direction and, most important for the respondents, was that their children received love and care. Most of the younger parents were very comfortable in providing this love and care by openly displaying affection towards their children with hugs and kisses. This, combined with giving praise and positive affirmations to their children, was a very important role. These respondents were also more comfortable than their parents in encouraging open and honest communication with their children and having their children engage with them in questions and talking, reading and playing with them. Even though the majority of them could not recall their parents showing them affection in this manner when they were young, they did, however, acknowledge how upset their parents were if they, the respondents, in anyway raised their voice or disciplined their own children in front of them (the respondents).

One father commented:

When I disciplined my girls my dad would get really upset and he would walk out of the room and I would say but that's how you did it to us and he would say, I know but if I could take it back I would. (Respondent 3d)

The older respondents were more likely to express their love for their children by supporting their children in caring for their grandchildren, rather than expressing it through 'hugs' and 'kisses'. As one said:

My parents were never there for us the way we are for our girls. I think it was just the way they were brought up. Even my mother's sister's children their relationship with their mother's, it was close, but it was never expressed in terms of affection. (Respondent 5f)

For the older respondents, including three out of four of the ministers, giving praise to one's children was not seen to be part of the 'fa'asamoa,' according to their childhood experiences. In their view, praise was not an attribute they related to their childhood. From their perspective, praise was not synonymous with teaching a child to be humble, a quality highly valued in the fa'asamoa. For many of the respondents, 'children were seen and not heard'.

When I was brought up I didn't have the time with my mother that I have now with my children. With my mother it was always shut-up I don't have time and I felt rejected and not valued and that is why I looked elsewhere and found someone who loved me....It was a real battle with me and my mum. (Respondent 3e)

The respondents who were parenting young children were more encouraging of their children's achievements and many were constantly supporting their children with their sports and academic events. One of the respondents, a father of three young children, commented that he was brought up in Samoa with parents who did not agree with playing sports on a Sunday. This, however, changed when he had his own children. One of his sons was selected for a representative rugby league team and sometimes his games would be on a Sunday. Rather than adhere to a practice he was brought up with, he allowed his son to play league. For this respondent, seeing his son enjoy playing his sport was more important to him, than his parents' practices. He did not see this as being disrespectful to his parents. He felt he was fulfilling his role as a parent, prioritizing his children's needs and stating what was done in Samoa is different to what you do in New Zealand. He also stated his mother accepted his decision knowing how important it was to her grandson. It did not mean that his son did not go to church on Sundays. His son still participated in Sunday school activities and attended church with his mother and siblings when he was not playing his rugby league. Other respondents also supported their children's sports and would always make an effort to ensure they were there for

their games. However, sometimes, for one reason or another they missed a game. As one respondent recounted:

I think my parents' priority was church and what goes on with the church and nothing to do with sports or children...they were just lower in the order of things...fundraising and getting involved in the church was their priority and everything else was not important.....Yes, with me, my parents were never there at our games, but I notice it when the girls are playing and we are there to support them .It gives them confidence and when D.....didn't make it to one of the games they were really let down. (Respondent 3e)

The view of themselves as positive reinforcers in assisting their children to be confident and assertive was, for the majority of the respondents, very important in relation to living and succeeding in New Zealand.

Every day I am telling my children about God, and how they have a great future, and they have a great calling. I make sure I tell them how special they are, you know, I hug them and kiss them, and I am not ashamed to tell them how much they mean to us, and just doing things like that, and not because my parents didn't do it, but because I love them.(Respondent 5d)

Providing educational opportunities for their children was very important to the parents. Many spoke of sacrificing their limited time with their children through working long hours and saving to ensure their children got the opportunities they themselves never had. One single parent had a child who was offered the opportunity to go on a school trip to Europe. The mother, although single with other children to bring up, felt this was an opportunity of a lifetime for her daughter and worked hard to ensure her daughter was able to go on the school trip by raising the necessary funds.

Well, in my case I need to provide them with all the necessities, so when they grow up they will get a good job. That has been the main thing I have been doing with my children, giving them the opportunities that I never had and I have sort of expanded their world a bit. My eldest has been to Europe as a 14year old. I never had that chance. I felt when she mentioned it, that this was a good chance for her to go. This is not even taking into account how much it cost. I just felt we do whatever it takes. ..and she did go...and I thought, yeah that's my role as a parent, that I can provide the best possible with the means I have, so they know, there is a world out there ...that the sky is the limit...that has always been the way I have parented so..... anyway, we fundraised and she went..... (Respondent 5f)

Although respondents felt it was important to provide their children with the opportunities to succeed in life, they also felt it was important to give them a sense of perspective. As one father said:

I want to ensure that while they are growing that they are getting the best of what we can afford and give them lots of love and provision and a lifestyle I suppose that ensures they can be the best they can possibly be...that they want for nothing, but at the same time, I don't want them to be spoiled but that they do know they are loved and I will provide for them. (Respondent 3f)

Providing support for their children was crucial to their role as parents. This support came in many ways, from transporting their children to their activities, to being their cheerleaders at their school events, encouraging them and supporting them when they were in difficulty or needing a parent to talk to. The respondents all shared many examples of how they did this with their children and how their parents did it with them. One elder described how her parents in Samoa provided for her and her siblings:

My parents were very hard working. My dad used to work in Apia for a company store and when he got sick he had to give up his job because there were so many of us and he needed to feed us all...and to do that he went to work in the plantation to feed us his family.. He grew cocoa, coconuts, taro and grew his veges, tomatoes and even peanuts which he grew to feed his family and he took everything to market to sell. When we grew up we all went to the plantation to help.. like sometimes he would make lots of cocoa beans and take it to the market to sell it for money...we were never short of anything eh never went hungry and they wanted us to go to school and in those days you had to pay to go to school and as soon as the sun was up my parents would cook our meal and the food would be ready and then after school we would go straight to the plantations and in the evening we would have our lotu (prayer) and after that we would all have a meal and then we would do our school work...(Respondent 4b)

This older respondent had supported her three children on the single parent benefit with two out of three of her children graduating from university. She herself did tertiary studies once her children were grown-up and working. According to the respondent all three of her children are close to her and participate fully in the life of their extended family. Like her parents, the respondent felt education was important to her and giving her children time to study was a critical part of their education. Rather than make them do a lot of chores around the house which took time she preferred they came home from school and did their homework. The respondent felt having a routine for her children at a young age was very important.

When they were young I used to mow the lawn because I was on my own. I preferred to do the lawn myself rather than give it to them to do because they might break it and I would have to pay for it....so I preferred to do a lot of things myself not like in Samoa where our parents gave us so much to do and we really had to work hard and finish our work on the plantation before we went home so it was different in that respect..... (Respondent 4b)



## **To Teach**

The role of parents as teachers was critical to all the respondents. They agreed upon what they valued as the most important topics to teach their children. The parents spoke about how important it was to teach spiritual, family, social, cultural values and societal expectations of how their children should behave in the family and wider community context. There was the expectation by nearly all of the participants to teach their children about the importance of attending church, to worship God daily and to put him first, to have good relationships with one's siblings, to be kind to others, to obey and respect elders, parents, the law and people in authority. It was important to teach them to be honest, to have good manners, to be polite, to work hard, to be generous, to serve your family, the church, the community, to fulfil your familial obligations and to give to fa'alavelave. Most parents valued that they were their children's first teachers and they valued the importance of this role in setting a solid foundation for them as young people and adults.

One mother of two pre-schoolers had very strong views on what she wanted to teach her youngsters and was of the opinion that they would do better by having her teach them at home, rather than attend pre-school. Her children were kept at home because she was not comfortable with the education her children would receive at pre-school. She had very strong religious views and wanted to ensure her children were taught according to the beliefs of her church, without being influenced negatively by other children and teachers. The choice she made was to home school her children.

I stopped my children from going to pre-school because my children were being influenced by bad behaviour from other children. Children copy what other children do and say and they see what other children have and want it too.....children also speak their mind , they just say what they think, you.... know big ears, big eyes, cos they are innocent but those words hurt another child...then they start comparing themselves. I want my children to be proud of who they are...they are unique; there is no other person like them...so I stopped my child from going to pre-school. She was getting hurt from what other children were saying and doing..... We mind how our children are and this is what the church teaches. (Respondent 4 e)

Most of the mothers of children born in New Zealand sent their children to pre-school. Some attended kindergarten, some went to aoga fasamoa (Samoan language school) and others to day-care centre.

All of the parents claimed it was important to teach their children about the values of fa'asamoa and Christianity. For many of the respondents the Christian way was also the Samoan way. The only difference was the extent (how far you took it) and the way it was practised. For some of the respondents an example of this was the best food going to your guests and the hosts and the children being left to eat whatever is left over. For others, it was in terms of the traditional gift giving where the concept was more ceremonial and involved in protocol. The practice would vary according to the authority and mana of the hosts and the guests and the place in which it was being conducted (New Zealand or Samoa).

Teaching was also seen as a tool to direct and manage their children's behaviour. Parents were seen as the first teachers and teaching pedagogy varied from respondents who were grandparents to respondents who were younger and New Zealand born, and due to the level of the respondents' own education. Those more influenced by western constructs applied a more engaging interactive model whereas those who were elders in the study were taught in their childhood to be more passive and instruction by their parents was more directive. For the younger parents born both in Samoa and in New Zealand teaching their children to make good choices and bad choices was also important. They saw it as giving their children tools and a framework. There was also the realization by parents that some of those choices in their children's cases would be limited, because of their own limited financial means. For many of the respondents this was a lot easier to do for them than it was for their parents.

The difference for me is that I am able to articulate things better with my son .. my mum did not have the knowledge and understanding with New Zealand ways whereas for me I am in the education system. I am a secondary school teacher so for me language and culture and knowledge the ability to access and get resources to assist my child is totally different from how it was with my mother...socio-economic differences make a difference....I am far better off economically than my mother was. It was a lot harder for her...because she did not have the means....I grew up here (in NZ) and the language was a lot easier for me and the issues for her were different...she didn't have the language, there were barriers of access to things all that stuff she had to cope with and no family except us around bringing up three kids on her own...and she still coped with everything...incredible really. I am still in awe of what she has done with so little means. (Respondent 5c)

Teaching by the grandparents was also important for the younger parents, especially where there was a lack of cultural knowledge on the parents' part. The grandparents were the source and inspiration for many of the younger parents in ensuring their children received these teachings. However, the parents monitored other aspects of their parents' teachings, as some of the respondents' parents' ideas may have been outdated. For example, one mother felt her mother's

suggestion of wrapping her baby up tightly was no longer acceptable practice today, although it may have been thirty years ago, when the respondent was a child.

The values are all going to be the same but it is how we practice them that is going to be different like when the children were born and how we coped through that period everything was read about how babies grow etc so there were lots of tools and mum was helpful but some of the idea's she had were about thirty years old like you can't do that, like wrap them up (babies) so tightly they can't move. (Respondent 2f)

Several of the respondents also sent their children to Aoga Fa'aSamoa to receive tuition in the Samoan language and culture. The parents wanted to give their children a good grounding in their Samoan heritage as most of them lacked the fluency and knowledge base their parents had. The four parents in this study who sent their children to Aoga Samoa (costing approximately \$120 per week) were also the highest income earners and had the highest educational qualifications. Two of the parents spent much of their childhood and early teenage years living in Samoa and had a very good grasp of the Samoan language and culture. The parents of these children were very clear about giving their children a strong sense of identity in the Samoan language and culture. One parent spoke about making conscious choices for his daughters as to where they went to learn, and what they learned:

Samoan language and culture is quite important to us, so therefore it takes its place in the process of our decision making. So where do kids go so that they can best develop the things that we would like them to learn and I think that's a conscious process in our situation as it was with our parents. (Respondent 2g)

Having made a conscious decision about where best their daughters will learn Samoan language and culture, they enrolled their daughters in an aoga, which had a solid and credible record in total immersion education, plus it also had the modern resources, like computers, to ensure the children were getting the best of both worlds. These respondents were all active in their children's education as members of the school committee and also active fund raisers for the school. One of the parents commented on the importance of being able to have their children at a learning centre where they were able to access technology (use of computers) and where the teachers were comfortable about hugging children and not being afraid to give their children a hug if they needed it.

Teaching their children about God and Christian values was important for all the parents, even those who did not consider themselves 'regular church goers'. All of the parents took this role very seriously.

I think the moral learnings are good .. context is important especially in the cultural and spiritual settings. I don't see the church taking away the moral responsibility of the parent. I am very mistrusting of organized religion. In raising my children, I am looking for opportunities for my daughters to have a higher awareness of the role of church in their lives. I want them to know, and enjoy and, partake in the church life. I don't go to church every week; they mainly go with their mother. It is good for them to see other people and to have a spiritual life and the values do coincide with Samoan life. (Respondent 2g)

All agreed education of their children was very important to them not only in the formal (school) way but also home teaching those values.

I am quite clear about what sorts of values I'm passing on. Things like fa'asamoa you know, respecting people and it is probably what the kids get told off the most about, speaking back to people, or being cheeky, especially you know fa'aloalo (respect). But you have to tell them otherwise they'll never know, and the obligations doing things for other people, learning to give back to people who have given a lot to her, and as they grow up they need to know that that the things around them don't come automatically, that these things are earned by hard work, you know they are very privileged children, they have a good home, they are not wanting for anything and it is just to teach them that those things should never be taken for granted. (Respondent 2f)

### **To protect**

Here the parents responded overwhelmingly with the need to protect their children from harmful influences. They hoped their children would make good choices about whom they became friends with (male and female) about partaking in alcohol, sex, drugs, associating with people who would be a bad influence on them, and what kinds of places they frequented. The issues of *shame and pride* were strong factors for parents in protecting their children when making these choices to prevent them from getting into trouble. However, for some of the younger respondents, the shame factor was not such an issue for them, as it was for their parents. But their children, especially their daughters when older, would be deprived of the educational and career opportunities in the event of early and unplanned pregnancies before they were actually ready. The teaching of their children when they were young to be able to make critical decisions and 'good choices' for themselves would in their minds act also as a protective barrier against these sorts of events along with strong family and parental support.

Respondents with very young children were very conscious of people who may harm their children. Most, if not all, of the parents felt that giving their children the ability to make right decisions as to who they chose as friends, where they went, and what they did was part of their protective role, as it also equipped their children with tools to keep themselves safe. The parents were aware they could not protect their children twenty four hours a day, seven days a week and that the best protection

was arming their children with sound values and principles which would assist them in making the right decisions. A young mother spoke of having the same values as her parents, but also a lot more tools to work with than her parents. Her ability and knowledge about being a good parent was assisted by her being able to access opportunities through technology and further education. She passed these onto her children, in the hope that it would help them perform well at school, and create strategies for them to combat negative influences from peers.

Basically my parents have always made sure we are healthy and happy but they approached it in a different way to say the way I do it.....Basically it is the same values but we have more tools, knowledge, access to different health organizations, Plunket, well-care child, the internet....a lot more access to different things to be able to protect our children better against a lot of different things that can harm them.....We have the upper hand in that we have more choices than our parents did. (Respondent 2c)

### **The Role of Children**

The majority of the parents saw the role of children, especially their own, as being followers and learners, and as they got older to be providers and contributors to their parents. In some ways the children's role was similar to the parents' roles in childhood the parent was the main provider/contributor with the child learning that role. The parents often said they were preparing their children to take on the roles that they were providing for their children, now youngsters, They hoped that when their children grew up they would then take over what they were doing, being good carers and providers. There appeared to be some reciprocal arrangements in relation to the parents' role and the children's role; for example, the parents provided for the children, giving them the basic necessities, along with opportunities for education and support for future careers and in return the children would provide for the parents in times of need, economically, emotionally and physically.

I have always seen the role of the child in the Samoan family to be as supportive to the parents, right up to the age even when the parents get to an age where they can't continue in employment and the children take over, as care givers, so it is very much like a cycle, where you start off being the dependent, and then you become independent and then the parents actually become dependent on the children. (Respondent 4f)

### **Provider and Contributor**

The parents also saw their children's role as contributing to the close and extended family in terms of fa'alavelave and other familial obligations. The scope in which this would occur varied. The

majority of respondents in the study did not want their children to be 'burdened' by the familial obligations. In teaching and role modelling for their children there was an expectation that their children would take on the role of supporting and caring for their parents as they got older. This was considered the "Samoan way". However, the majority of parents did not want their children's obedience and support at all costs. They encouraged their children to ask questions and think about decisions. There was a desire by most of the parents that their role modelling would hopefully produce children who would reflect the parents' teachings. The change in thinking was due to their own learned experiences of parenting and the learning resources available to them in New Zealand, as well as their own personal development and learning 'from their own mistakes.'

The elders related how they 'had changed' as they got older, compared to when they were younger. In their early parenting days, they were more likely to view the role of children as being one of 'seen and not heard', 'obedient without question' and 'server and supporter of parents'. The younger respondents however, had more flexibility and leeway in relation to how these roles were expressed and acted on. For these younger respondents, regardless of income and education or religious beliefs, there was an attitude of positive role modelling, giving their children choices, and allowing them the freedom to express themselves. This freedom was described by most, as not being made available to them, when they were younger, especially amongst the respondents who were elders and ministers who grew up in Samoa. The roles they played in Samoa as children were much more rigid and conforming. One elder described her childhood in Samoa and her role in the family.

There was a time to behave and a time for play...it was a disciplined life and the real 'fa'asamoa'..... the rest of the time was to help with the family chores, everyone had a set job to do and if you fell by the wayside you were disciplined...they demanded perfection from you....everything was ordered, controlled and you had to perform accordingly.  
(Respondent 5a)

Children were also expected to know about their family relationships, who was who, and how they were related and more especially how to express gratitude to them for whatever they were given. Their role was also to know how to make wise decisions and to listen to wise counsel from their elders. A mother of two young daughters aged five and seven years old re-counts:

There is uncle so and so and he gave you this and you should go and say thank you...if this is what they do without me having to tell them then that will show to me that she is learning about showing gratitude, that sense of reciprocity...so that is their role too.....financial independence....yeah we want to raise children that are capable of making wise choices that are based on good information, gone through a process to find and discover and make decisions for themselves, maximizing opportunities, that they have a good sense of

belonging....a strong identity....and we do spend a lot of time on decision making, giving them options and action and consequence scenario's...so there is a big learning role for them there and giving them bad choices and good choices and what their decision could be...hopefully taking the good choices and us working on ourselves that we are good role models and not being hypocrites....so we have to work on ourselves as much as them. (Respondent 2f)

Some saw the role of children as being their parents' keepers and being mindful of their duties of service to their parents.

For me as a New Zealand born. They are the ears, eyes and feet of their parents, reciprocal, mutual sharing of love and respect across the generations. Be nice to think your children are a reflection of you. (Respondent 1a)

The service role to one's parents and aiga was a common theme among the respondents. An elder described the role of children as 'to love their parents and their extended family'. The other role for children was that they were learners at school, home, church and Sunday school. Many of the respondents saw the role of children as being a team player within their aiga. They fulfilled their role of service to their parents by being a good sibling, child and grandchild, cousin, niece or nephew. The relationship roles were very important to the respondents in this study. The role of service involved doing whatever work was needed around the house, listening to their elders, and picking up whatever skills and knowledge their parents and elders passed onto them, that would help them as they got older. One of the common themes in their role as 'learners' was to pick up on the values that their parents taught them by observing and doing, e.g. the value of service.

The role of my daughters is for them to have similar values to mine...to treat people and value people that are consistent with their parents' beliefs and values. (2g)

The children's role is to serve their parents...by doing this they learn to serve others. The reason we are here is to serve. (4e)

The service ethos to Samoans was not one of servility, but one of service to humankind. Service is a philanthropic quality which to Samoans is the way to leadership. In order to be a good leader you have to have given service to others and in the Samoan context it is to God, your matai and to family; both close and extended. A respondent speaks of her daughter "serving us" and how she herself was brought up 'to serve the church'. She goes on to say 'we are here to serve; everything is about service; to the church, to your parents, to serve your community'. As with any 'service ethos' people can go over the boundary of servitude and service, as many of the respondents experienced when they were children and young adolescents.

## **Summary**

The roles of children have changed over time. In the past when older respondents were children it was obedience and respect without question, being seen and not heard and the obligatory role of caring for your parents came even before one's own spouse. Younger respondents maintained although there were still expectations from their children of fulfilling these roles, their approach was different from their parents' generation. The roles, as they saw it, were that their children were still to obey, but not without question, and respect was more of a mutual sharing and had a two flow effect. Although they had the same service ethos as their children, this was far less rigid than when they themselves were children. Their children were placed more on an equal footing and had more say in the way they fulfilled their roles. The roles of parents as teachers and providers and maintaining the safety and security of their children most respondents agreed with and that the children's role was to listen and obey their parents, although younger parents had adapted these to a more lenient approach with their own children. Questions were encouraged and the role of children taking care of their parents was also no longer strictly the case as parents also assessed their obligations to their spouses and to their own children.

This chapter has presented information on the multiple roles of parents, whereas the next one presents the findings from another theme of this thesis: the parenting practices, values and beliefs and the influence of the church on parenting.



## CHAPTER 4

### PARENTING PRACTICES, CHURCH, CULTURE, VALUES AND BELIEFS

#### **Parenting: Respondents' perceptions of how they were parented, and how they (Respondents) parented their children**

Out of thirty-five respondents, twenty-five described their upbringing as being very hard with very authoritarian parents who expected their children to behave in an obedient and respectful way and to help their parents by long hours of work in the home. However, the majority also described their childhood as being happy most of the time. All except one of the respondents at some stage in their childhood recalled being physically punished as children. Some were more severely punished than others. Those who were punished severely and felt neglected as children still felt the emotional impact on them today. Many still bore the physical and emotional scars from their hidings. One Samoan born parent had her nose broken by a punch from her father, a sibling who was hospitalized, and another respondent (male) was beaten by his father after breaking his leg in an accident. Some also spoke of siblings who were harshly beaten when they were young and who have now repeated this pattern with their own children. One respondent spoke about her brother who felt neglected by her parents during their childhood. His perception as expressed by respondent was that the parents spent more time and resources in ensuring she had a good education and supported her to achieve. In so doing her brother grew up feeling that his parents had in effect spent so much time supporting her, that they neglected him. As a consequence of this he has suffered from alcohol and drug addiction. The family give him a lot of support.

Although some of the respondents did suffer harsh disciplining from their parents, they were all adamant, that they did not do this with their children. Discipline was the biggest point of difference between them and their parents.

According to most of the respondents, a hiding from one's parents was considered a 'normal' part of being Samoan, when they were young. One respondent thought this happened in every Samoan family until a friend of hers, who was part Palagi, told her that getting severe hidings like she was getting was child abuse and was not 'normal'. This occurred when she came home from school with her friend when she was in the 7<sup>th</sup> form.

It's funny I had a half-caste friend and when I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> form it was the first time I had heard the word abuse. She kept saying to me.. that's abuse and I am going what's that? I got a hiding but it just didn't register that it was abuse. It was just when we moved here (NZ)

that's when I realized my goodness we were abused we weren't just getting a hiding, we went from the salu, to the belt, the hose, but I got the extension cord and chair too and I got thumped on the nose one time and it all swelled up, cos I didn't come home straight after school. (5f)

The respondent is in her late thirties now. The respondent described her parents' parenting style in the following way:

Their parenting style was called abuse....very harsh....very harsh. As a child when I was brought up it was normal, normal to get a hiding with a hose, with an extension cord, with a hockey stick. I got it all and the boys....my brothers got the same treatment ...except harder I think. (5f)

Her sister remarked:

Although pretty much the same in terms of hidings. I got pretty good hidings too....you know with the pool cue and hockey stick we ended up with bruises and you just go numb and you know you have done something wrong and you just learn to get up and keep going. (5g)

Some of the reasons respondents gave for their hidings were not closing your eyes during prayer time, talking during worship, being fifteen minutes late home from school, playing volleyball instead of being home to do chores, climbing trees, ripping ones dress from playing, mumbling under your breath, smoking (as a 19 year old girl), having a boyfriend, answering back to your parents, lying, and disobedience which, according to the respondents, was doing something your parents told you not to do, or not doing what your parents told you to do. Respondents recounted experiences of being slapped across the face, punched in the face and head, getting a beating with a stick, shoe, salu (broom) hockey stick or as one respondent said 'anything close to my mother was used or thrown at me), jandals, shoes, whatever was near her.

We were hit with everything and anything....the broom, the vacuum, the washing machine hose, anything that was near her she used. (4f)

Another male respondent described the way he was disciplined.....

there is a fine line between discipline and abuse...like I used to get the shoe, the stick, whatever was in arm's reach, you know, the jug chord, stuff like that you know.....(4f)

Age is not a limit for some Samoans when it came to giving their children a hiding. An elder respondent spoke of a hiding she received when she was 19 years old.

That was the only way they knew how, not until you look back do you wish they could have done things differently. I think it was just the way things were done at that time, for my parents it was the Samoan way, that was the way for them and so on.....I grew up to be a teenager and then I left home and started work and all that, my life was like a bit like ....I did a lot of things Samoan girls were not meant to do, but because I was in Apia I hung out with a lot of European afakasi friends and I learned from them how to smoke .. and that was one thing I remember my father and my brothers were so upset about, so I got a good hiding for that. I was 19 years old. (5c)

All but one of the respondents were hit by their mothers. Four were hit but according to their description were not given a 'hiding'. This was described as continued hitting, not just one hit to the body. Two respondents recalled only ever getting one hiding- one from their father when she was five for waking him up by fighting with her sister and the other respondent for losing a \$10 note. Two of the respondents were only ever smacked on the legs and only by their mother. All of the respondents were punished physically, or by other methods like time out, by their mothers, and nine by their fathers. One respondent could not recall being smacked by either parent. Four respondents claimed they were never hit by their fathers.

It would seem from the data that most (25) of the respondents had experienced getting a 'good hiding' at one stage in their lives. Two respondents had no recollection of their parents ever giving them a 'hiding' but one recalled being hit on the leg. The most severely abusive case was an elder who described the treatment by her stepmother and father.

She described her childhood of being like 'Cinderella's story'. She was beaten by her stepmother, made to work long hours before and after school doing chores, was physically and verbally abused by her relatives and suffered humiliation and shame by being beaten in front of the village when she challenged her father after the death of her brother. To eliminate any possible identifiers for this participant I have identified her as x.

My stepmother kept me at home to do all the work. She beat me all the time. My dad re-married you see.....I was like Cinderella. I was brought up by my stepmother and father.

It was hard. I was physically and emotionally abused when I was a little girl. My dad was busy looking after the extended family and my stepmother abused me, beating me and making me work all the time....I was angry and bitter and I was difficult in school because I was so angry .. lots of bitterness my head was spinning.....I was angry all the time ....My life was full of hardship....my life was horrible.

One time I was so angry because my stepmother had beaten me up after the burial of my brother...he died because he suffered I think so much....so my brother died and I was angry and spoke out in front of the chief of the village and my dad came up to me and beat me for speaking out and my aunties came to beat me too and my stepmother came and beat me too and I was getting beaten by all these people and I spoke out .....and said to my father you think more of your wife than you do of your own children.(x)

The respondent was eventually sent away to live with relatives on another island and then to New Zealand. She continued to be abused by her relatives and made to work from early morning to late at night doing all the chores.

Today this remarkable Samoan elder takes a very philosophical approach to her life:

I was a Cinderella story ...I don't blame anyone for my life.....having faith has given me peace. (x)

A male respondent commented he preferred a 'hiding' over emotional abuse because the hiding was swift and over with whereas emotional abuse was ongoing. He preferred to use positive reinforcement with his daughters and used smacking as a last resort. However, his wife, who is a regular church goer and attends a traditional Presbyterian church, believes in the concept of 'Spare the rod spoil the child' even though she is aware that hitting her daughter does not necessarily change her behaviour. She thinks her eldest daughter may also be getting 'too old' to hit and is very open to 'other' alternatives to smacking like time out and withholding of privileges. Her daughter is seven years old.

Actually as they have gotten older we have rarely smacked ...one defining moment when I smacked her on the bottom she turned around and said it doesn't hurt anyway. I want something that works, like the older one is such a social butterfly she gets her energy ...being around people so the worst thing you can do is isolate her from people. (2f)

These two respondents are trying to give their children choices in making good decisions about what they should and should not do. Sometimes there are breakthroughs, other times they know they have to work at it harder. Physical discipline is a last resort for these parents.

One respondent spoke of her mother rubbing Vicks on her after the hidings received from her father to try to alleviate the pain. However, her mother never intervened when she was hit but after the hidings would say to the respondent (her daughter) you should have obeyed your father.

My mother never intervened. When he was in that mood nobody could do anything. She would always come later and get the Vicks and massage it into us and say 'oh you should have been a good girl and then you wouldn't have got a hiding' (respondent laughs). Amazingly, I did not feel angry towards my mum. I suppose I shouldn't have done what I did and this is what happens. You get a hiding and knowing the consequences...don't do this...don't do that.. but it just registers in my head to do the opposite.... (5f)

Her mother was the person who consoled her after the hidings from her father. The effects of her father's beatings of all his children has been far reaching as the respondent spoke of her older sibling doing the same thing with her own children. She wonders whether her sister's anger with her father is being transferred onto her children. The spectre of repeating the cycle of abuse is something they also wonder about. It is a relief for the respondent that her sister's husband is a patient and caring man towards his wife and their children. The two sisters who were interviewed described the relationship with their father as being very distant. They have difficulty in feeling any affection for him although they do feel a sense of compassion for him as he is dying from a terminal illness. Her sister commented:

My dad has just recently been diagnosed with cancer. I'm hoping, I mean I really want to talk to him about things. It is really hard especially how we were brought up.. what was right...what was wrong and some of the things that they did that were definitely wrong and no questioning...I have a lot of issues with my parents. I hope to resolve it one day. I think that is why I am a person who always thinks that there is a purpose for everything. I kinda think that if everything was resolved with my parents everything would fall into place...so I hope...yes I hope (respondent weeps) I think it has made us more conscious ...like our dad has never talked about it..the hitting when we were growing up. There was no affection. Every chance we get we tell our kids we love them. We hug them because we never had that as children...even now within myself, how things have turned out in my life. I am still dealing with that...I have another sister too who has a lot of inner conflict especially with my dad. I think all of us because we were never, we could never....open up as a family. We know they both love us but it is all bottled up. Someday I hope we can have it all out because even now you sort of like...I am thinking I would really love to go and hug them you know genuinely, a genuine hug. (5f)

Even though their relationship with their father is distant, they encourage their children to show affection towards their grandfather. As is common with many families, the respondents' parents appear to have a far more affectionate and loving relationship with their grandchildren than with their own children (the respondents). Three of the respondents describe how their parents respond to the respondents disciplining their children:

Now my father is like (pause)... you can't raise your voice to your child without him having a go at you...they treat their grandchildren very differently and he is prepared to give us a hiding if we growl our kids, like if we growl our kids they run to their grandfather and we have actually had some real conflicts with my older sister. Like one day when she hit her child, my father actually got up and told her, why are you hitting the child?, and my sister turned to him and said...you of all people telling me off for hitting my child and my brother, he is thinking the same, and telling him...he's thinking.... you are now telling me, about disciplining? And yet the hidings he got from our father were shocking...actually that was real abuse...he was beaten so bad, he was purple....he couldn't sit, couldn't lie down, it was bad... (5f).

I tell you it has changed, my dad says, don't yell at the kids, my kids, and don't hit them and I say, excuse me, let's just rewind that tape of our life history like when you used to give me a hiding...(laughs). (2e)

When I say to my dad just smack them, just smack them like I do and he says 'oh no they might not want me to come over to us again...and I go 'oh p .....lease, oh my gosh...don't tell me that (laughs)...(2d.).

I think they just mellow as they get older. Now they can do the spoiling and it's our job to discipline. And as long as you don't discipline like this in front of them it's o.k. (2d)

All of the above respondents were given hidings by their parents, yet their parents did not want them to smack their grandchildren. There was a general consensus with the respondents including the elders, that their grandchildren were 'different' in that they had greater difficulty disciplining their grandchildren than they did their own children. The data showed that respondents who were parents of young children concurred with these sentiments as it was their experience also with their parents.

The respondents who were born and grew up in Samoa reported that it was acceptable and expected that your 'aiga', of uncles, aunts, older cousins, and older siblings would physically discipline you, as well as your parents. Also acceptable to many of the older respondents in terms of discipline were teachers and church ministers being allowed by the parents to hit you. The concept of 'it takes a whole village to bring up a child'. Most of the older respondents described getting a swift reprimand from the church ministers for disobedience and some of the elders were hit by their teachers in Samoa. This respondent was part of the privileged elite in Samoa at the time being an 'afakasi'. She was sent to New Zealand when she was older to be schooled in New Zealand but when she was fifteen was schooled in the 'European' school where children of 'European' descent were allowed to attend.

I went to the European school. I was about 15, 18 in a class and they used to use a whip some teachers. You had to put out your hand for them and they gave you the strap, the stick the salu and they used to give you slaps if you were late too often without an excuse or letter. It was tough. (5a)

In New Zealand the same sort of corporal punishment was inflicted on students. In this case a respondent's father came to New Zealand as a twelve year old to attend boarding school; in New Zealand. A Samoan born respondent also came to New Zealand as a young twelve year old scholarship student. The respondent's father who attended a prestigious private boarding School in New Zealand recalled her father's experience:

My father was spoilt because he was adopted to another family. He went to ..... College here in New Zealand and one time he spoke to us about his experiences at Boarding school and how he was caned all the time and he was very young about 12 years old when he was sent to boarding school . He was a scholarship student and he was very harshly disciplined. He used to say he got the cane. He was only twelve years old. He was very unhappy here. (5f)

Another respondent spoke about his experiences:

We took a lot of instruction from our aunties and uncles. We accepted that it was their role too, to smack us when we needed it and to teach us, and that was acceptable....your parents were the harshest and your aunties and uncles were nicer but when your cousins were punished it was hard...so depending on where you were and who was looking after you depended on how harsh your punishment was, but we did get physically punished and it was fine...it was acceptable in the context of where we were and what was going down at the time.(2g)

Respondents in both the older and younger age group described enormous pressure from their parents to conform to their way of doing things. The respondents described their parents as the voice of authority, one that commanded respect and an expectation of total obedience. There was no room for dialogue, but rather a quick response to carrying out the parent's request. Respondents reported verbal abuse, name calling, being compared to others, being humiliated, grounded, rejected, shamed and sent to live with relatives. One mother described the verbal abuse as:

discipline with the mouth you know it is like this continual thing like you can't breathe. It was very negative words....like constant nagging. (5d)

Another mother who was brought up in Samoa recalled her stepmother sending her out to the pig barn to look for a lost teaspoon at night. She was not allowed back inside the house until she found it. She was twelve years old. Another mother reported being beaten in front of a group of friends by her father for playing volleyball instead of being at home doing chores. She was sixteen years old at the time.

Another respondent described the hidings from his father:

I remember I broke my leg playing softball once, one of the neighbours had to take me to hospital. I was in standard four so I came back home and my dad had just finished overtime. He was pretty tired and my mum was explaining what was happening and he just grabbed the crutches and gave me a series of whacks with the crutches. That was his way. That was the only way he could manage I suppose. He didn't send me to bed or time out. He just gave me

a quick response on the spot. One other time we used to get the belt you know.....and you had to kneel down in the corner for an hour and then you had this real massive bruise, great big lump back then .. butter was the way and now we know it is not (laughs) so after getting a hiding you would stay in the corner sulking, you know, with the hand not the fist...but smacking on the lower bottom, my mum was more the pinching or the salu or the wooden spoon. I used to fantasise after my hidings that I was adopted out and my parents were rich and they would come and take me away (laughs). (2e)

Respondents who were physically punished as children and who are now parents themselves are making every effort to parent differently especially in the management of their children's behaviour, as one father said:

We are trying to learn from what our parents did ...sometimes you feel like I am doing what my mum did and there are times when I say gosh.. that is just what mum used to do especially when we are angry ...we are trying to move away from the traditional Samoan way ...of you will do it and you will do it now.....so there is some tension there...when we revert to that authoritarian style...look out ...and at times I will go with that teacher role and say well if you don't do it this is what will happen to you...which I guess is more like the Palagi way.... (3a).

The respondents who were raising young children now were unanimous in their desire to not manage their children's behaviour the way their parents managed theirs. Although they admitted to 'smacking' their children at some point, they were very conscious of the boundaries and the legal aspects involved in 'abusing' children. Several of the parents had physically punished their children, especially their first born, in the way they had been punished by their parents, but realized later, when the children were getting older, that this was having a negative impact on their children and themselves and their relationships with other members of the household, including their spouse. Two of the mothers commented on how their son and daughter, both the eldest in the families, became withdrawn, sad and fearful of them. Another mother spoke of seeing her son flinching from her when she yelled at him and another mother told of seeing her daughter gradually become more and more uncommunicative with her. These parents became very conscious of their children's feelings. One respondent who yelled at her child and physically disciplined her came to realize when her daughter was getting sadder that she had to change her behaviour. Another had a husband who disagreed with the way she was punishing their son and voiced his disapproval of her actions. The mother had been brought up by parents in Samoa who demanded obedience and respect .She herself was physically punished and yelled at by her mother and was made to do all the work in their household. She did not feel close to her parents and came to New Zealand to stay with relatives when she was a teenager. Her time with them was also very unhappy and she left them and made a life for herself, meeting her husband, getting married and then having her children. Her husband had a different upbringing to her in Samoa. He lived in the village and they lived off the



land. He described his life as happy and his parents very loving. He experienced a lot of affection from his parents and had a mother who encouraged them to talk and participate in discussion. He was a placid man who worked hard for his family and was very supportive of his children's sporting, musical and academic activities. He did not believe in physical punishment and did not yell at his children. He and his wife differed on their parenting styles but over the years were able to discuss the needs of their children. They developed strategies together to improve their parenting practices (especially the mother). They committed themselves to ensuring their children did not suffer from harsh discipline and yelling. The mother changed her parenting style and they became more in tune with each other in managing their children's behaviour. The father's mother also influenced the change as, being the matriarch of the family, she commanded a lot of respect from her daughter-in-law. According to the respondent, she had more respect for her mother-in-law than her own mother. This mother, and others who physically punished their children, reflected on how they felt when they were physically punished and nagged at by their mothers. One decided, with the advice from her spouse and the grandmother of her child, to take stock of her own negative parenting and to look at other alternatives of reprimanding her child, talking rather than yelling, softening the tone, listening, engaging, encouraging him to speak with her, spending time with him taking him to his sport.

One elder mother related a story about her son when he was young and at boarding school. He was informed he could play sports but not on a Sunday. She later found out that he had played rugby. The following is her response when she found out he had played on a Sunday:

One of my children went to .....College and one day when I went to pick him up he was playing rugby on a Sunday and he was very upset when he saw me because he knew that I did not want them to play rugby on a Sunday but I explained to him why I was feeling so upset. My parents would not have done that. If that was me, my parents would have given me a big whack. I was more flexible and understanding. I talked to him about it. (2b)

Managing their children's behaviour was far more straightforward among the respondents who grew up in Samoa. Physical punishment was the option that the respondents' parents used. This was generally accepted because they saw others in their environment getting the same treatment. However, because it was the only method they knew did not necessarily mean the respondents liked it. All the respondents who got severe hidings (not just smacks on the hand or leg) did not like what happened to them. However, they were powerless to stop it and internalized it as something they deserved. The value of total obedience to their parents meant, for many of them, that what they had done must have been deserving of their parents' anger and hence their severe punishment. For most of the respondents' physical punishment was meted out mostly by one parent.

my dad was the quiet one and he would just let it happen cos she was the stronger person and she called the shots. (5d)

Sometimes the other members of the family would also mete it out:

My mother was the disciplinarian and my aunties would also take up the subject and reprimand me...for really minor things when you see it now, like chewing gum. (2g)

My uncles and my aunties were like my parents .big smack you know and that gives me the impression that they care for me and when my parents go away they have no problem trying to care for me and my other brothers and sisters. (elder 2b)

Most of the younger respondents were more conscious of the development of children and what their needs were. Many of the younger parents with resources and knowledge had read books about parenting and were also learning from their friends and families about what parenting techniques they could use. They were conscious of the stereotypes about Samoan parents being harsh disciplinarians and were very aware of the issues around abuse.

The majority of the respondents had a very strong faith in God and a healthy respect for their roles as parents and all that involved. Their parenting styles differed from their parents, not so much in the values and belief systems of their parents, but in the way they managed their children's behaviour. Beating their children was not an option for these parents. Their children's welfare, security and stability was their responsibility and ensuring their children had confidence and a healthy sense of who they were and how much they were loved was very important to all the respondents, although there was some variation among the respondents who were elders, in their approach. The younger respondents took a more negotiable, interactive and consultative stance. This meant they wanted to give their children the ability to be able to negotiate, interact, engage and communicate openly with them. Younger respondents were more in tune with allowing their children to express themselves, but maintaining the values of their parents about respect and obedience, but also refraining from punishing their children by severe physical punishment or belittling them. All the respondents, older and younger, were very conscious of having good communication with their children. They believed that this would help their children develop to be healthier adults emotionally. Younger respondents used other alternatives to manage their children's behaviour like time out, sending children to their room, and withholding privileges. The respondents themselves were very intuitive and responsive to the individual needs of their children as this mother's comments indicate:

They are still both very young, so with my son sometimes he gets a little bit unreasonable and sometimes I have found I have had to take privileges away from him, but he seems to get

it, that if he does that, he is not going to be able to do something that he is really looking forward to today, and it actually works. But I have to be firm. That if I say you aren't going to be able to watch TV for the rest of the day and tomorrow he realizes it is serious so withholding privileges is one way. Sometimes when he is having a little bit of a fit and I am finding it is draining me I just have to put him in his room and shut the door and get a breather myself and say you are not coming out until you have calmed down a bit. Cos I have tried to hug him through it and that doesn't necessarily work and then I say I'll get the wooden spoon out just to put it up to his face and it doesn't stop, so I try time out and sometimes he will kick and throw a bit of a tantrum and then he stops, and he will try and come out and I will send him right in...and he just get's sick of crying and his whole personality changes and he has had enough and just comes out...and he will have enough and he calms down, and I think he realizes the effects of his throwing a tantrum is going to fall on deaf ears. So you know my daughter is a whole lot different. You don't ever...cos she is so words oriented...she will crack just break down with words...you can make her and break her with words...so I have to be very careful with the words I use with her, She can go either way. She is extremely sensitive. Sometimes too sensitive. It drives me crazy. Something like I didn't even think but she reads it in a different way. I have had to be very wise in the things I say to her. (3g)

Some of the respondents were clear that they wanted to raise their child the way they were raised but without the harsh discipline.

Everything they have taught me, I would teach my child except for the hidings. I think I would communicate more with my child but everything else I would like to pass on. I mean we haven't turned out too bad (laughs) nothing I would change or leave out except the discipline part. (2c)

Unlike the parents of some of the elder respondents who sent their children to live with other people or who had informal adoption arrangements, none of the respondents sent their own children to live with relatives. They raised all their children themselves. Out of the seven respondents who were elders, three were sent to live with relatives and one of the younger respondents was sent by her parents to live with her grandparents. Informal adoptions occurred among six of the respondents. Most were adopted by relatives and most of the relatives were either the respondent's parents siblings, or the respondent's grandparents. All of the respondents grew up in households which had members of the extended families living with them. Several of the parents commented on how having these relatives living with them were of major help to the respondents and their parents. They contributed financially and assisted the respondents' parents in raising the children. They acted as baby sitters, cooks, chauffeurs, and errand persons.

I think we were lucky we had two uncles who had lived with us since I was born, so having those extra incomes helped my parents and as we got older we gave money too...when I first started I gave my parents all my pay .. it was a joy for me, I felt like I was giving something back... good feeling... giving... (2e)

Fifty percent of the elders came to New Zealand as young people, two as children to stay with relatives and attend school in New Zealand. Several spoke of the hard life they had with some of their relatives. One mother ran away from her relatives and another sought escape in marriage.

Some of the New Zealand born respondents described their homes as always being full of relatives an uncle, cousin or aunt or grandparent. They learned to behave in a certain way when their relatives arrived from Samoa especially when their grandparents were in the house. There was less noise, more adherences to the 'fa'asamoa,' and lotu in the evenings became more stringently adhered to. One also learned to speak more Samoan as communication with grandparents was done only in Samoan. Some of the respondents also acted as 'baby sitters' for their grandparents if their parents had to go out. The multiple roles the respondents played within their families was very common. The relationships of daughter, grand-daughter, cousin, niece, minister's wife all impacted on the family dynamics and on their parenting. The familial obligations were always a consideration in everything they did. Some of the respondents commented on the effect of one event on the interactions of family members and how quickly one had to learn the art of having a high work ethic and a 'service' ethos towards one's family.

We learned at a very young age not to take anything for granted. Whatever we got we cherished...whatever was on the table we ate....holidays we were doing chain gangs onion picking with other kids. We would pick from 7am to 9pm. (2e)

Parents were keen to give their children boundaries and to discipline them with love which in their view did not mean hitting them harshly or giving them a hiding but gentle smacks. Most of the parents were not against smacking but were against severe smacking. However, they did not enjoy hitting their children and used it more as a last resort.

The following chart shows the methods of discipline with older and younger respondents and the differences between how the respondents managed their children's behaviour compared to the way their parents managed their (respondents) behaviour.

**Table 9. Older and Younger parents methods of punishment**

<b>Respondents parents</b>	<b>Respondents (with young children)</b>	<b>Differences</b>
Severe punishment hitting arms and legs and all over. Slap on the face	time out hit on the legs and bottom and hands	Seems to be in the severity and choices. Parents are more likely to choose more flexible ways of punishing their children, whereas the grandparents were more likely to have chosen severe physical punishment.
Pinching/smacking on the bottom	look of disapproval	A common story from the participants with children was that the grandparents did not approve of hitting their grandchildren.
A look of disapproval	withholding privileges	The parents spoke of them being reprimanded when they smacked or growled their children. Their parents were never happy with this and would speak up about it.
Severe verbal reprimand	growling-talking to.	Difference is more talking, negotiating, giving children a say
		Use I love you often before and after hitting not during
Shaming		Communication is a better way than hitting
		Disciplined with words

A New Zealand born dad describes his style of parenting:

Reaffirmation of our love for them ...just to make sure they feel loved and they have those boundaries even though they try and push them eh? We need to explain to them why you smack them and I think it is that moment that I feel that very strong bond and it is really lovely to have him snuggle up to you and I know that it is working...I hope it gets to the stage when a threat is enough...or just to talk to them and you no longer have to smack them. I haven't smacked him for a while now but just to let your children know you love them constantly that is really what our children need ...just to know that we love them and really mean it. (3f)

### **Values and Beliefs**

For all of the respondents obedience, respect, service and alofa were the key values their parents passed onto them. Obedience for many of the respondents' parents was total. If your parents asked you to do something, you were expected to do exactly as they asked. After all, they would not have asked you to do it if it was open to question. There was therefore no reason to ask questions. Most of the respondents agreed their parents were not tolerant of any behaviour that deviated from being a 'Good Samoan boy or girl' and the interpretation of being good was being respectful and obedient towards your parents to doing well at school and attending church. For many of the respondents there was a 'schizophrenic' sort of existence for them in their younger lives. On the one hand, there was the pressure to conform to their parents' wishes and expectations but, on the other hand, there was the desire to go out with your young friends and to socialize. For many of the respondents this created a lot of tension and conflict within the aiga. As one respondent commented:

You try to please both like you go through bursary and university on one hand and then you have aufaipesese (choir) and your parents are saying to do this and this and you can't say no so you try and do both things and then you have a boyfriend and you are not supposed to but as long as you turn up for church and your autalavou (youth group) you are good Samoan girl. But in your daily life you are actually doing other things. It was a constant struggle trying to please one, but knowing you had to hold onto your parents expectations but also wanting what Palagi had ... Palagi don't have this struggle. (2d)

The respondents described their parents instilling in them the value of loving God, their family, their parents and fa'asamoa. The ways of expressing and putting these values into action were attending church, reading the bible every day, attending Sunday School and following Christ's teachings. There was an expectation that you did whatever the parents bid you to do, putting the needs of the family first above your own, respecting the fa'asamoa culture and giving to fa'alavelave. The respondents' values, although similar to their parents, had more emphasis on their children being happy and healthy, rather than an emphasis on the extended families' needs. Many of the respondents spoke of this as being a major difference to the way their parents brought them up. The older respondents were more in accord with their parents, but for the younger respondents, although the values of loving God, family, parents, and 'fa'asamoa were very significant to them the way these values were expressed varied. The respondents who were younger also wanted their children to value life and to enjoy their childhood, which to them meant play, as well as chores, activities, hobbies and clubs.

Other significant values the respondents parents passed onto their children were a 'high work ethic', service ethos, honesty, obedience and respect for elders and authority. Respondents commented on their parents working hard to support their families and both of their parents working to ensure their children were able to have opportunities they did not have. For some of the older respondents (elders) it was not just working to support their immediate families, but also to support their families back in Samoa. Some had supported extended family that came over from Samoa to be educated in New Zealand including members of their spouse's family, both in Samoa and New Zealand. Many commented on their parents working long hard hours in factories back in the 60s and 70s. A few of the respondents were fortunate to have parents who were professionals and business people who were able to give their children both valuable time and resources and a good start in life with education and support for their personal growth and development.

The service ethos was a strong value for respondents, meaning service to family both close and extended and more especially service to God and church. Many Samoans believed that the way to leadership was through service. Service was doing your parents' bidding and supporting your

family in times of need and hardship. This was an ongoing struggle for some when it came to the issue of 'fa'alavelave'. One respondent (a young father) recalls his mother (the matriarch of the family) sending him to collect the money for the family fa'alavelave from his relatives. It was a job he hated doing, but nevertheless the values of obedience and alofa for one's parents overrode his feelings of dislike for the job of collecting the money from relatives for the fa'alavelave.

sometimes you couldn't get through to them on the phone so you had to drive around...and I actually hated having to go and get the money cos you knew you were the bearer of bad news coming to get the money and you knew it was a burden for them but such was their loyalty and yeah it was one of the uglier chores I had to do as a kid. (3f)

Respondents also recalled their parents instilling in them to be honest in their dealings with people, especially their families and people in authority - teachers, ministers, matai, elders. All the respondents viewed learning and education as an important value for their children. There was an emphasis on not just having a high work ethic but in applying it to how they worked, studied and interacted with others in different environments.

So whilst the respondents reported that these were the kinds of values and beliefs their parents instilled in them – the love for God, Family, and Fa'asamoa (which appeared to be the Christian and fasamoa values), the respondents themselves described the values they were passing onto their children as being the same, but different, in some ways, to how their parents practiced these values. For these parents it was a more demonstrative show of affection towards their children, less authoritarian and a more interactive style of communication with their children. There was also less rigidity to conforming to 'obedience' at all costs, and more freedom of expression and access to opportunity.

Reaffirmation of our love for them...just to make sure they feel loved and they have these boundaries even though they try and push them eh...explain to them why you smack them and explain to them and I think it is that moment that I feel this very strong bond with my son and it is really lovely to have him snuggle up to you and I know that it is working...just tell your children that you love them constantly that is really what our children need just to know that we love them and really mean it.(3f)

Two of the respondents commented their upbringing was 'very Palagi'. Their parents did not have the same love for 'fa'asamoa' as other families. In fact for the parents of one respondent, there was a very negative view of 'fa'asamoa' hence his family drifting away from it. However, for these two respondents, one a father who now has a desire to know more about his Samoan culture, to pass onto his children there is a sense of regret that he does not know much about fa'asamoa. There was

a sense from respondents that in not knowing about their culture they were ‘missing’ something important, something they did not want their children to miss out on as they did.

The following table highlights some of the themes from the data on values and beliefs.

**Table 10. Values Table**

<b>Respondents’ Parents</b>		<b>Respondents as Parents</b>	
<b>Values</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Love God Love parents Love family Love fa’asamoa	Attend church, pray every night, read the bible, attend Sunday school, follow the teachings of the bible. Do whatever the parents tell you to do without question. Always put the needs of the family first Respect the fa’asamoa culture especially the values and the giving for fa’alavelave.	Love God, Family and life and to enjoy their childhood.	Desire for children to attend church and value the Christian teachings.
High work ethic	Work hard and whatever you do, do it well. Be committed to doing a good job	High work ethic	Work hard especially in their studies and always strive to do their best
Honesty, obedience, respect	Be honest in your dealings with people especially parents and family and the law. Obey authority and respect your elders and people in authority.- The minister, the teacher etc.	A strong sense of identity	Take pride in who they are and where they come from and have a healthy, happy attitude to people.

### **Influence of church/religion/Minister on your parenting**

For the respondents who were regular churchgoers, God was first and foremost in their lives. He took precedence over everything and everyone. Although church was also significant six of the younger parents thought loving God did not necessarily mean they had to attend church every Sunday or take their children to Sunday School, every Sunday. They also did not think that praying every night and following the teachings in the bible proved a love of God. They preferred, instead, to attend church and to read the bible when they could. All of the younger respondents from churches three and four were in accord with the older respondents and stronger in their views about total commitment to God. They did this by following his teachings in the Bible, attending church every Sunday and praying every day. Three males out of the thirty-five respondents did not attend church on a regular basis although their wives did. Most of the women respondents attended church



regularly. Three did not and they were younger respondents. Out of the seven respondents who were not recruited through a church three were older, religious and attended church on a regular basis. The other four (three female and one male) believed in God and they thought it was important for their children to know and love God, but were less likely to attend church every Sunday. They attended when they could. They did not feel 'obligated' to attend as they did when they were children. They equated loving God more to being kind and caring to others. The respondents in this study all believed in the Christian concept of God and all were keen to ensure their children had exposure to spiritual values. All, except for two respondents recruited through the churches, did not think church was necessary. The two exceptions believed organized religion was something they did not believe in. However, both fathers did not have any problem with their wives taking their children to church and Sunday school. They had both been put off by seeing hypocritical religious people in their families and communities.

The church can be very judgemental which I didn't really like... I kind of outgrew them...I grew up with a lot of guys and I saw how they treated people and that's what put me off really ..that's what stopped me going it was that sort of hypocrisy. (3e)

Some of the respondents were put off religion by their parents spending too much time at church. It was not just the church service on Sundays but activities like fundraising, choir, aulavou (youth group), and teaching Sunday school. However, as most of the respondents got older themselves and became parents they wanted their children to be brought up in the church too.

I have just started taking the children back to church. I want them to have the memories of Sunday School trips, growing up with people from church because those friendships are precious .We get them to say their lotu/prayer before they eat....I take them to Sunday school and they learn their memory verses and I take them to aufaipese if I can and that's because I love music and also it kind of brings me back to the simplicity...it is kind of like my meditation time. (2d)

Most of the parents from churches one and two said they gave their children a choice to be involved in church. Others, especially from churches three and four said it was not a choice to attend church. Some alluded to the fact that when they got older and were no longer under their parent's jurisdiction they could make up their own minds as to whether they attended church or not. Many of the respondents had been brought up with evening prayers, Sunday school, church youth activities all their lives. They had some very happy memories of church life which they were keen to see their children also experience. Some alluded to how much power and influence the ministers had in their community, and on their parents, in relation to the amount of giving in terms of time and money to the church.

According to one respondent who was a church minister the church she grew up in was not a good example of Christian principles. There were physical fights among parishioners and people were pitted against each other by the minister. Conflict in the church spread and people eventually left the church for other churches. The respondent described the role of the church as being critical and important, that they should be the best example to parents for the care and protection and the health of their children. In her view it was important to ensure that the parishioners felt the church cared for their physical as well as their spiritual welfare and that they took a holistic view to their role.

This same minister also felt violence to children could not be blamed solely on the church. However, the church could be of great help in helping parents parent their children positively by the sermons they give and the programmes their church provides. According to this church minister it was ultimately the task of the parents to take responsibility for their own violence.

According to some respondents violence was in Samoa long before the church and Christian missionaries set foot on Samoan soil. They asserted that Samoa was far from being a passive people as war among villages had occurred long before the white man (Palagi) set foot in Samoa. However, opinions varied, and others did see the church as having introduced physical punishment of children to Samoa.

One minister said:

I believe that was the way British people lived and I believe that they brought these traditions to the islands with the belief that they wanted to change the life of Samoans and their environment to what they thought was suitable, to correct the life of parents and children. I think that was the minds of the missionaries. If you read the history of Samoa the Samoans taught their children to become warriors and to be obedient in a different way in those days. But not now. I think Samoans are far advanced in their learning and their capacity in valuing things and I think our Samoan cultural values are basically about love and care and I think that ideas that come in to influence our lives is taking us away from what we are supposed to be doing as parents. I don't think we need to be doing hard discipline. I think in the old times maybe, but not these times. We need to direct our lifestyle to look after our children. (2a)

Respondents from churches three and four asserted God was first and foremost in their lives and the teachings of their pastors and the word of God was crucial to their lives as parents. For the respondents from these churches the concept of family was mother, father and children and the extended family. For most others there was agreement with this definition, rather than a different view e.g. two from these two churches accepted single parent families as a reality. Nevertheless, most respondents from other churches and non-church recruited parents also asserted that God and

Christian beliefs had a big influence on their lives in terms of the way they conducted themselves and the way they brought up their children.

The church is like an extended family, lots of social activities and lots of good role models. It is part of the Christian lifestyle. It is a lifestyle. We have to give them our children hope, to love them. (3a)

It has a big influence on the way that I parent...The church shapes my thinking. It also has a calming effect. Having my faith has taught me a lot. Life is more peaceful and calm. It has made me try harder to practice what I preach. (2c)

I think people get the wrong interpretation of things like spare the rod and spoil the child. It is not really what God or the church is telling you to do ....it is not something that our church teaches the parents. It is not something that we encourage...people give it their own interpretation. (2b)

The church influences everything we do...how we carry out our parental duties. It teaches unconditional love and that is what we have to practice with our children. It is about grace and mercy. I believe in a God that teaches about love and that children are a gift from God and the whole thing about stewardship. It is about the core...the unconditional love. (3f)

I believe one of the greatest things I have from my Samoan side is the spiritual side because my father being a minister they have so much love for the lord. That's what my father put in my heart and I know that is where my direction is. I knew that through all the good times and the bad times I always go back to the word of God, and that has worked for me here. (5c)

Religion plays a big part in my life as a parent. The ministers are key people in the lives of the people and the respect that is given to them. it gives them a lot of power. (5d)

Family has always been a big part of our church and that means everything... We have lots of activities around family. Without my religion. I do not feel whole. (5e)

### **Fa'alavelave and fa'asamoa**

Fa'asamoa (put very simply the Samoan way of life) meant various things to different people, but when respondents referred to it the concept of fa'alavelave (traditional gift giving) had a direct association with it. One respondent claimed it was a very touchy subject for New Zealand borns as what they embraced for themselves was sometimes in direct contrast to what their parents expected.

There were aspects of it that they totally agreed with, but there were other aspects with which they did not agree. One respondent loved getting together with their extended family at family functions, the sharing of food, laughter, sad times and happy times. These were his associations with fa'asamoa. It was always related to gatherings of family, but when it came to giving time and money to family functions (fa'alavelave) that they could not really afford to do, they felt resentment

and pressure. Some felt the familial kinship ties were just too far apart to feel any sense of familial obligation towards the recipients, especially when the relative was not known to them personally.

I love the unity, the family sharing eh, but when it comes to fa'alavelaves it feels like pressure. I don't see why I should have to give monetary assistance to somebody I don't even know, just to save face for family. I do know I don't agree with that but if I have some money to give that is a different story. I'll do it, but if I haven't got the money to give and I have got bills up to my ears and then mum and dad is coming to say give 100 dollars to this second cousins brother, nephews sister but I didn't even know the person....so why should I? But then when you have this sort of attitude and then there is the emotional blackmail...ooh man...you are Samoan, you should, this is all part of being Samoan and oh yeah....No if I have the money I will give it but I guess that's the whole cultural contradiction you know we say nah but still give....because we love to give, we give, give, give, but it can be taken advantage of too and there are institutions you know that know that is what we are like and they take advantage of that, but I am not ashamed to say that that is one of the things I love about being Samoan. I will give, not because I want anything from anybody but it is that unconditional love for family that I just want to give to help. I don't expect anything in return.....but you do have to temper it! (4f)

Most of the respondents agreed fa'alavelave was a critical aspect of being Samoan and had personally experienced it in their lives, some more often than they would like to remember. Only one respondent claimed not to have participated having being brought up in a more Palagi than Samoan household. His Samoan father and Palagi mother split up when he was very young, so his experiences of it were very slight. Most of the younger respondents with young children did not participate significantly in fa'alavelave as their parents did, or considered their lives to be very fa'asamoa in the same way that their parent's lives were. They did not speak Samoan in the home, participate in Samoan events or have a lot to do with Samoan people other than their immediate family. Nevertheless, all of the older respondents spoke Samoan in their homes, participated in many familial obligatory practices, attended Samoan functions and events and continued to hold close Samoan values and beliefs. The degree of 'fa'asamoa' practiced by the younger respondents varied considerably depending on how close their connections and exposure within their close kin relationships were, especially with their parents. Although Samoan was not spoken in the home as the first language of communication with their young children there was a commitment to four of the young parents to send their children to Aoga Fa'asamoa to learn the language and protocols. Three other young respondents were fluent in their Samoan language and chose to speak Samoan and English to their children. There was a general feeling among the younger respondents that, though they valued the Samoan language, the predominant language of communication in their home was English. For the majority of respondents who were younger there was a sense of regret in not knowing the language and customs. Even though most of the participants did not contribute significantly to giving for fa'alavelave in the same way that their parents did, most gave at some time in their lives either before they were married to help their parents out, or after they were

married, but not as much in terms of frequency of giving. All the elders were significantly involved in fa'alavelave, as were four three out of four of the ministers, with the exception of one who was brought up in a more palagi tradition and his church was more palagi in outlook.

The three who were not active (frequent givers to fa'alavelave financially) had also not been to Samoa though one was anticipating a trip to Samoa in the future and taking his children. Some felt there was too much of a shift away from the original intention of giving support to the family to 'ease' the financial load. Some felt there was too much of an emphasis on 'forceful' giving not physically but psychologically, where some members of the family were made to feel guilty if they did not give enough. Others spoke of a great sense of family unity and relief when families came together to help out. Some used their own parents' funerals and their own (respondents) weddings as examples of feeling supported.

Fa'alavelave was considered a positive aspect of most of the respondents' lives but needed adaptations to people's economic and social realities. In larger families there was less money to go around with having to support children and their educational needs. Many did not feel they should sacrifice the needs of their children for people they hardly knew, yet wanted to support their parents and the extended family. Many had parents who were very understanding and told their children to give only what they could afford. Many also prioritized their giving so they did not have to resort to less food on the table, or, not paying children's school fees.

Fa'alavelave can be seen to be negative...living beyond your means...with our Samoan people more money to a fa'alavelave brings prestige...but we should really be happy with what we give.

Another said:

Fa'alavelave I guess people can get greedy like anyone else... people live in poverty but scratch and scrape to give one thousand (dollars) and then they suffer for the rest of the month. (2e)

There was a general consensus on fa'alavelave being a positive traditional concept but there was a need to adapt it to the New Zealand environment. Many people within the family should come together to each give a little, rather than many people each giving too much and then having to face the consequences (of bills not being paid and children's educational needs having to suffer.)

Some parents felt fa'alavelave had become more of a competition where families were competing to show off what they could produce and have it known that they gave more or gave the most. They felt this was drifting further and further away from the traditional concept of fa'alavelave and

therefore needed to go back to the original concept of simplicity rather than extravagance. There was a general sense from respondents that the giving needed to be prioritised so that it did not put undue pressure on families. There was a general consensus that people should give what they can afford (in time, money and support) and not sacrifice their children's well-being. People should not get into debt through gifting to fa'alavelave. The church had an important duty to ensure families did not get into difficulty as a result of giving excess money and time to church activities.

Fa'alavelave is always a part of my life of me being Samoan. I am proud of being Samoan...Fa'alavelave is part of our Samoan culture being a part of you ...you should give what you can afford, give from your heart that is love...that is real fa'asamoa rather than giving heaps when you can't afford it that is really wrong. Fa'alavelave is part of our culture. It is people who have twisted it from their own means but the concept is not meant to be like that. It is about love and kindness and caring that is the real fa'asamoa...fa'alavelave I give what I can afford... I am happy when I do that...it is from my heart but when they moan about what you give and put pressure on you to give more that is bad...fa'asamoa is good but there are people who twist the fa'asamoa to make it look different...and I think that is more fa'apalagi...you know competing against each other and keeping up with the Joneses that's not fa'asamoa...well not in the way fa'alavelave are.... (4d).

Respondents who participated in fa'alavelave felt the concept of giving to support their families was something they wanted to continue as it was an important value they had been raised with by their parents. Some of the respondents claimed their parents' attitudes had changed towards fa'alavelave over the years. One respondent spoke of his father at his wedding saying 'just invite a few members of the family and only give what you can afford'. This differed considerably from when he was younger when each family member was told they had to contribute a specific amount of money each. Respondents in this study did not feel their children should miss out by giving to fa'alavelave especially if it is to people that they are not familiar with. Some felt there should be some boundaries. For many respondents giving to fa'alavelave was an important aspect of their lives and they wanted to pass this onto their children.

I personally as far as the fa'asamoa is concerned I believe it is a beautiful thing if it is done with sincerity and it is like everything else if you abuse it ....well...it just turns to custard...but gift giving I have always been aware that people can draw their own interpretations of it in terms of bribery, corruption, but if giving from one to the other you will feel sincerity in the way you conduct this transaction...people will feel it and draw from it....We want our kids to feel that these are important values and for them to understand that doing this for others will be the same for them. People will also give in return when their time comes. (3g).

Some saw fa'asamoa as being hierarchical with children at the bottom. However, the perception among many of the younger respondents was that their children came first. They ensured their children's' needs were met as more important than the needs of extended families. For example

rather than eat after the adults their children would eat together with the family and the visitors. The majority of the younger respondents did not place their children at the 'bottom' rung of the hierarchical ladder. Rather, they placed them in a valuable position within the context of aiga alongside adults. For some families there was a sense of having to explain this position to relatives who visited them from Samoa, especially elders, who still retained the 'old' ways. However, meeting their children's needs was of paramount importance to respondents. There was a clear understanding among respondents that this was a difference between them and some of their more traditional relatives. However, their children were also taught to know how to behave in different contexts, so they learned very quickly to adapt their behaviour from their own homes, to others', or for different events like funerals or when their grandparents or elder relatives were visiting their homes. It was important for them not to have their children 'shame' their grandparents by not knowing how to behave in different cultural settings. So their children were taught these protocols at a young age.

Fa'asamoa was also about food and how respondents welcomed visitors and offered hospitality. The social aspects of fa'asamoa took on a spiritual element as respondents described the sharing of food.

With us it is different we don't really have that much to do with fa'asamoa our children would come first and if we have family gatherings and that our children adapt accordingly. They know what the order is and the children would know their place within that situation... What we have included is the respect for one's elders and like doing (feau) jobs.....like when we go to other peoples homes the girls get up and do the dishes, they help out and serve the visitors and certain things like saying tulou (excuse me)when you walk in front of people etc.....and with my mother there is always food on the table and my mum would make sure we always had food on the table....for her food was more than just food it was more about the spiritual side of people coming together to partake of food.....(3e)

The majority of the elders in this study also felt the same way. Fa'asamoa was also about respect for one's elders. Respondents continued to teach their children about this as they saw it as an important part of fa'asamoa.

We are trying to teach them that age is important in fa'asamoa...we are trying to teach them that he is older than you and you are older than him and so on and so on...slowly trying to teach them that there is a hierarchy and we try and explain that process....they haven't quite got to grips with it yet but it is there and the seeds are being sown and the respect for adults is already there because if they can get it right they can get it right with their peers...that is what fa'asamoa has taught me and that is what I am teaching my children. (5e)

Many of the New Zealand born respondents who were brought up in New Zealand had a limited understanding of fa'asamoa, until they were older and began to ask questions at fa'alavelave events

and had people, namely relatives, explain to them what was happening, especially during the gifting exchanges. As one respondent remarked:

I am proud to be Samoan and I know my girls are as well. I just wished they could speak the language....when we go to funerals and weddings I appreciate it more because someone explained what it was all about...now I can sit through it all without getting bored because I understand what they are doing. We are open to fa'asamoa because I think I understand it more now...we are more interested because it has meaning for us now and we are proud of being Samoan that's what it is all about. And if they taught Samoan in the girl's school we would encourage them to learn it. (3e).

Even within some families there are some members who will disagree on fa'alavelave even when the father is a church minister. For one family of New Zealand born children it was the respondent (the oldest in the family) who was very supportive of fa'alavelave as she herself had been on the receiving end and saw the benefits to family of giving. She was confident this would be something she would like to pass onto her children.

Mum and dad are very traditional ...my brother doesn't deny his heritage or culture but I think it is because he has always been away a lot and when we have got fa'alavelave he jumps up and questions but I don't mind myself. I think I will carry it on with my children....with our wedding he saw how families pulled together to do things so it was a real lesson for him and a refresher for us and knowing you just can't do everything on your own and it is about pulling people together...our grandparents had done it and mum and dad have passed it on...I believe if we are good to others they will be good back. It is important for us that we remain strong in our cultural values whether it is language or culture or our identity and being New Zealand born we need it even more because that is what makes us unique...that is who we are.(2c)

However, as with others, she thinks fa'alavelave needs to be refined so that families do not suffer as a consequence of their giving.

You have to think of the well-being of your family....mum tells us just give what you can...it is ridiculous to give like blow-out your whole wages, lose your house, or your child do without their formula or something so just think about what you are giving and prioritise your giving...and that is what is happening within our communities with the loan sharks.. who (they borrow from to pay fa'alavelave) we give all our money to and know they (we) can't afford to pay it back and then they (we) get into serious problems... (2c).

Some respondents felt the church needed to take responsibility for the large amounts of money gifted to the church for church activities. The announcements of how much people had given and the reading out of names in church along with the amount was seen as reinforcing negative competition among church members and merely added pressure to those families who had not donated as much as others. There was pride for those who had donated a lot but shame for those



who had not. Most of the respondents alluded to this church competition as a part of the fa'asamoa they would not be supportive of, even though their parents still participated in it.

There were too many money orientated things that they would do that didn't agree with me and we felt the church took enough money from the families. And having socials and fundraising events were so unnecessary. You just didn't want to be part of it. That was a part of the culture we didn't really appreciate. (1c)

The death of a family member would sometimes mean that parents had to leave the family home for days, maybe go to Samoa or go to another part of New Zealand. Sometimes the children would go, other times they would stay with relatives. If the children were older teenagers, they would be helping during the fa'alavelave with cooking/cleaning/fetching/and other tasks. The closer the relationship, the more work was involved, and as children were at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder they were ultimately the ones to give up their beds for visitors and to help with serving and cooking and cleaning. One respondent spoke of his mother's life being dominated by her service to her family and the wider extended family. Another respondent's mother made sure that her daughter (respondent) and grandchildren played a significant part in family life which ensured that they, too, remained loyal and connected to their aiga and contributed to their well-being. The key aspects of respondents thinking around fa'alavelave were that it was a critical part of fa'asamoa where Samoans supported each other both in kind and financially and there was a need, especially by the younger respondents that it needs to be re-adapted to the New Zealand environment and the giving prioritized. The respondents agreed that one shouldn't sacrifice the needs of children to participate and that the church has an important part to play in ensuring the gift giving does not place families into financial debt or obligations of reciprocity that cannot be met.

## **Summary**

This chapter described the values and beliefs, fa'alavelave, influence of the church and fa'asamoa on their parenting practices. It was evident from the data that the values and beliefs of Samoan parents maintain a focus on respect, obedience, devotion to God and service to family. There was also a concurrence on the necessities of punishing a child by hitting or giving a hiding, however, it was also evident that the hitting and hidings were not frequent and were not administered on a daily basis and not as severe as when they were hit by their parents. All the parents had hit their children at least once. Hidings by respondents on their children were much less than the respondents parents' who had given them a hiding (25 as opposed to 15) respondents. The values and beliefs of parents, although the same as their parents, were adapted to suit the respondents and their way of life in New

Zealand. This was influenced by their own educational standards and their exposure to ‘a different way’ of living here in New Zealand. For instance this included taking time out with their children, encouraging their children to ask questions rather than ‘obey without question’ and placing their children in a more elevated or equal position as opposed to when they (respondents) were young. For example allowing their children to eat with them rather than after the adults had eaten.

The influence of the church was significant in the lives of many of the respondents, especially those who belonged to organized religion. The minister was seen to have influence and the church responsible for large donations offered by their Samoan congregations. Respondents agreed the church had a part to play in changing parents belief systems in regards to their role as parents and the valuing of children

Having presented the findings in this section and addressing the profound influence of religion/the church, the following chapters outlines a different aspect of the findings. This chapter is presented in a somewhat unconventional way, here I outline the influences on parenting by describing participants’ experiences of both positive, or alternatively the more negative aspects associated with parenting and its manifestation in ‘cultural’ practices.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE 'UPS AND DOWNS' OF PARENTING

#### Security and stability

The parents all agreed that ensuring they all had the basic necessities of life and seeing their parents happy together made their children happy. They also felt telling their children they loved them and 'showing' this in action was also important; e.g. giving them treats, lots of affection, and doing things for them. Making them happy and secure was also about ensuring that their emotional needs were being met and that they were reassured that their parents were there for them unconditionally. For all of the parents spending time with their children, taking a genuine interest in them and making the children feel their parents were active participants in their lives made their children happy and secure. Respondents also spoke about ensuring their children had boundaries and disciplined them in a loving and caring way also made them feel happy and secure.

Parents took their responsibility of parenthood very seriously. Nurturing their children in love was very important to the respondents. One mother recalled the birth of her child:

I recall the first time my daughter was born, and I will never forget the feeling I had when I held her in my arms, and I had to think, you know, pretty much like the life of another human being and raising that child the way she will become is dependent on how she was raised.(2c)

A respondent (father) described the way he parents his children with love as:

If you haven't had strong parenting not like with an iron fist, but done in the right spirit and love they will turn out well rounded and have very good morals and principles which they can then pass onto their children and become good functioning members of society

The same respondent sets boundaries for his children and monitors their behaviour in the hope that they will self monitor. The following is his example of 'self monitoring':

We have three boys and one girl and the youngest ...we could be watching television and you know how liberal some of the programs are these days... and ah...certain topics will appear without warning on t.v. There was a time a while back when they were younger and I used to be quite worried about it, but they now understand why we might think like that and they understand from their perspective why they should change the channel on their own accord bringing this respect thing into play, because as family and any Samoan can understand that you don't want to be seeing something on T.V with your sister next to you. Now my boys will see things on TV with their mum and dad sitting with them and they will

watch our reaction, and if I feel the content is such that I need to make a definite move or point and if I don't it gives them a measure of what they can watch. Now when they watch TV they will self monitor and take over like I can hear them now saying change the channel without having to tell them and it is about good communication with your kids. It is crucial. It just makes it easier later on as they get older. (5e)

The time factor was an important aspect of having happy healthy secure children. One mother commented:

Being the best parent I think what I have learned is that time I spend with my girls. It means a lot to them'. (3e)

Having a home life that was secure and stable and happy was a key point respondents made in having happy children. One mother commented:

We have some really cool memories of mum as children. Our house was an open house for everybody. All the youth group used to hang out at our house. It was the cool house to be at. She used to make home made ice-cream and lollies. She was also a fantastic seamstress, made all our clothes. There's great memories of my mother. (1c)

There was general consensus around the following key points which were: to have happy, healthy secure children give them lots of cuddles and affection, tell them you love them, give them boundaries, teach them who they are, where they come from (identity), talk openly with them, treat them fairly and give them lots of opportunities to grow - in education, sport and leisure activities. What is most important is to see the parents are happy together and giving them a happy home life and environment.

### **The most enjoyable times of being a Samoan parent.**

In response to what they enjoyed most about being parents, the respondents enjoyed seeing their children succeed academically in school in their sports. For their young children, it was seeing them reaching their milestones, the first smile, the first step. Many of the parents who were religious enjoyed seeing their children praising God and attending church and Sunday school and church youth activities. Seeing the presence of God in the lives of their children and their family, raising their children in God's principles, being a strong family unit, seeing their children make progress and develop into strong healthy young people were also key factors in their enjoyment of being parents. If their children were happy, laughing and felt safe and sound the parents were also happy. If they also showed love and affection towards their grandparents and listened to their parents they

were also happy and seeing them speak Samoan to their grandparents was also a joy for respondents. As one parent said:

I want to ensure that while they are growing that they are getting the best of what we can afford and give them lots of love and provision and a lifestyle. I suppose that ensures that they can be the best they can possibly be...that they want for nothing but at the same time I don't want them to be spoiled but that they do know that they are loved and to take care of them and that responsibility of bringing them up in a Christian way that our values are being instilled in them.(3f)

### **The least enjoyable times of being a Samoan parent**

What respondents enjoyed the least about being a parent was seeing their children sick, in pain and being unhappy. While their children were young there were school activities and sporting events and music lessons to take their children to and inevitably the respondents were responsible for chauffeuring their children to all their school, sporting and music activities. As well as this, they had days and nights when their children were sick and when they (their children) were babies they got less sleep as they had to care for them constantly throughout the night. Respondents realized, nevertheless, that whilst their children were young this was an important role for them. Having to punish their children and seeing their children misbehave, if the child was unhappy or not trying were least enjoyable aspects of being a parent. Respondents valued the opportunities their parents gave them by migrating to New Zealand and they felt their children needed to also value the opportunities they were given. For the respondents seeing their children and grandchildren achieve was a way for them to 'give back' to their parents.

They learn very young that Samoan parents in particular that our parents coming from Samoa have a deep sense of values around respect and honour. Like these were important things like we don't answer back when our parents speak to us even if we don't agree. But you know that honouring them and loving them back that is something we choose to do, like too, if the parents give them opportunities with sports etc that they do their best like the piano and the kids need to make use of the opportunities, and do their best (4f).

**Table 11: Key points**

<b>What respondents enjoyed most? about being a parent</b>	<b>What parents enjoyed least about being a parent</b>
1. Being respectful	1. When they are young having less sleep, always running around, full-on.
2. When they listen to their parents	2. When they are sick that's the worst time.
3. Seeing them make progress/develop/healthy	Seeing the children sad or unhappy.
4. Doing things that make me proud	
5. Watching the children grow and seeing them smile	3. When children misbehave.
6. Seeing them learning and seeing them safe and secure	4. Being chauffeur to their kids (mostly mothers).
7. Seeing them serve God	
8. Raising my children in God's principles and being a strong family unit	5. Punishing their children.
9. Having time with them	6. Seeing their children not try
10. Having them know about their culture, about their family close and extended.	7. Seeing their children not take up opportunities
11. Responsiveness to parents	
12. Love and affection for grandparents/family members.	
13. Seeing the light in their eyes when they wake up in the morning	
14. Disciplining them with love and having lots of different options not belting them	
15. Seeing them speak Samoan to their grandparents	

## Summary

The most enjoyable times of being a parent was when their children felt safe and secure, respectful towards them and their grandparents, when they listened to their parents, were developing healthily and seeing them serve God. Parents also enjoyed it when their children were responsive to their parents. Speaking Samoan to some of the parents was also an aspect of their parenting that they enjoyed as well as the children knowing about their culture and seeing them learn. The least enjoyable times were when their children were very young and the parents were constantly running around after them. Other times were when their children were sick, sad or unhappy and when they misbehaved. Punishing their children, being chauffeur to their children and seeing their children not try were other least enjoyable aspects of parenting. Another aspect they least enjoyed was punishing their children.

The next chapter is the final findings chapter. Here I present the data as four distinct – yet inter-related - themes, these are headed as paradoxes, beneath stereotypes, and new horizons. These very simply describe the dilemmas of staying proud but also creating shame, unearthing the resiliency factors beneath layers of stereotypes about Samoan peoples and having migrated to New Zealand what they have unearthed in their new environment which has sustained them, given them new tools to use and new hope for the future.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE BIG FOUR FINDINGS

The following are the main themes I have extrapolated from all the responses to the questions and what finally emerged from the data, which are:

- *paradoxes –pride and shame*
- *beneath the stereotypes*
- *intergenerational challenges*
- *new horizons.*

#### **Paradoxes -Shame and Pride**

Often the respondents highlighted the strong sense of pride within their families of being Samoan and identifying strongly with their Samoan-ness. This pride was something their parents often spoke to them about. Unfortunately, for many of them it came up when they were being reprimanded or berated for doing something that brought shame to their parents. Nevertheless, the lessons came in many ways to take pride in who they were and where they come from, and not to bring shame to the family.

Respondents spoke of enormous pride in their family when they succeeded in something, especially if they came first in an exam, but, equally, felt very shamed if they did not succeed. In addition, shame and pride was seen as a collective concept, not an individual one. Furthermore, if a person did something to bring shame to the family the impact of that was felt by everyone including the community and village.

Some respondents spoke about churches who read out the names of donors and the amounts they had donated to the church. When people's names were read out as the biggest donor there was a great sense of pride, but when their name was read out as the least of the givers, respondents spoke of a sense of shame. Along with this was a certain competitiveness fostered by some churches which made some people want to hear their names being read out as the biggest donor. This was good for the church as it motivated people to give more, but not so good for those with very limited resources.

For many Samoans the factors of pride and shame were stronger than their lack of economic resources. This can be a problem for parents and children who do not have the means to contribute



to family fa'alavelave. For many there was a sense of frustration and hopelessness when they could not raise the funds. One respondent commented she helped her parents with fa'alavelave, because she knew her mother would resort to putting it on her credit card if she was not able to raise their contribution through the family.

If I saw that my parents could come up with that sort of money I would not give but I think it is more to help my mum out my mum has to work and put heaps into the church so she is left to do it and I do it ..give because...to ease the load for her. I give it even if I am strongly against it but she my mum will do it anyway she will get the money somehow by charging her credit card up or getting a loan so I do it really to help her.(5f)

Relying on one's family is common and expected. Koloto (2005) claims the most frequently used strategy for dealing with financial difficulties was seeking help from family members. Anecdotal evidence informs us the consequences of not having the money meant some families losing their house and their children missing out on school activities.

The Samoan pride can be a catalyst for great joy not just for the individual, but for the whole family. There was a sense that whatever was being done or achieved was for everyone in the family, as one elder commented:

I knew that I was here (in New Zealand) for a purpose. I felt proud very proud....It was a proud moment for our family for me to be here. ...to come over on a scholarship .. I knew that I had to work really hard. (5b)

This respondent also referred to the shame factor interacting with pride:

The pride of the Samoans .....The fabric of the Samoan character they don't want to give in.... to do so would be a sign of weakness and bring shame not just on you but it falls to everyone in the family...so yeah there is that pride and shame factor...They are so closely connected.(5b)

The notion of shame has also been connected with depression, suicide and violence. It can trigger huge emotional implications for families with very severe consequences. Suicide rates in Samoa and New Zealand among Pacific peoples are one of the highest in the world (Tiatia, 2001).

In speaking about her mother and the hidings she used to get a respondent said:

I still think Gosh you were really mean to me when I was young you know there were times when I was...I felt I wasn't loved .. I know a lot of my friends felt that way too and there were some who wanted to take their lives because of the way their parents were just so strict and there were children who felt that way and I was one of them that felt that way. I just felt really shamed, like I wanted to die, to runaway and thinking how can you do this to me and

my dad was the quiet one and he would just let it happen cos she was the stronger one and called the shots.(5d)

Losing face or doing something which brought shame to the parents was perceived by some respondents' parents as being stupid, inadequate or in some way deficient. It was this thought of people seeing them in a negative light that would trigger anger and frustration which would have them lash out at their children. Some of the respondents spoke about their sense of helplessness and later their own sense of anger, which manifested itself in rebellion and misbehaviour at school. Parents would hit their children because they did not want them to shame the parents. One respondent who spoke about one of her hidings from her dad:

It was their anger and everything ...yeah it was more out of anger...and probably because it was my dad who gave most of the hidings and he would always say he did not want us to shame him.....and he would just say this is how it is and we just did what he said...(5f)

The shame of their children's behaviour being witnessed by others resulted in respondents being punished as children. Some respondents commented that it was the shame of other people seeing them misbehave rather than their own misbehaviour which made their parents hit them. But also they felt shamed by their parents when they were verbally, emotionally and physically abused in front of other people when they were children.

Some of the respondents commented that they felt their parents cared more about what other people thought, than how their own children felt. Their children's behaviour was perceived by the parents to show them up in a bad light to others and whether others might think they not had taught their children the values of respect, obedience. There is a Samoan saying that Samoans use when people see children who behave in a manner that would bring dis-pleasure, The saying goes, 'e le lava le a'oa'o. In other words, this person has not been taught well and the persons' responsible for this are his/her parents. Samoans see children who are well behaved, courteous and respectful as having been well taught by their parents. They are a reflection of their parents.

I guess also in our case it was more that if you were actually being really rude, being a really bad person, like they would ask...who are the parents of this person? Sort of implying that they have not been well brought up...like the shame factor and the pride thing...so if they do something good they stand out and the family are proud but if they do something bad the whole family suffers. (5f)

One respondent spoke of her coming second in her exam and her mother admonished her for coming second. Rather than praising her and encouraging her to come first next time she was shamed for coming second. Another respondent (elder) came home from school in Samoa to inform

her mother she had passed three papers in her exam. Her mother was so angry; she gave her a hiding, because she had expected her to get 5 papers.

I came home and said I only passed three papers and she was so angry because she expected me to get five papers. I got a good hiding...they were very strict with us. (4a)

She, nevertheless, did not do the same thing with her own children, who all grew up to be very successful academically. She encouraged them, gave them time to work and play but still maintained her strong fa'asamoa and Christian values of respect, obedience and love of God. The difference was in her approach.

The role of the children is that they listen, that I give one word and they do it, no matter what. The other thing is that they respect and listen to me...and they say my friend wants me to go and stay at her house and I say no...after the birthday party you come home....your friend can come here but you don't go and stay there .. and they say... how come other children can go? And I say 'that's other children but you need to obey me and follow the routine I have told you...When my children were at home I used to work as a volunteer and I had to make sure I am home for my children and that is another important thing that the children have a routine and the parents are there because if your aren't then the children can get into trouble, so it is making sure you build a strong foundation for their future and I would look forward to that future and how can I make them good now for the future ...you know that long term plan.(4a)

The respondents in this study were more accepting of their children's weaknesses and strengths and more flexible in their giving for family fa'alavelave. They accepted the fact that if they did not have the means to produce large donations to the church and fa'alavelave that it was acceptable. Although many had experienced the 'pride and 'shame' factors in fa'asamoa, they took a different approach to the practices, which influenced the concept, as opposed to their parents who were far more rigid. One respondent whose father was very staunch in ensuring his children gave to fa'alavelave when he was young has mellowed in his approach as he has gotten older, even to cutting down significantly on relatives attending his son's wedding, much to his son's surprise.

Now basically he just says give what you can afford. He has sort of gone 360 on it. He just says give what you can but when we were young.... it was like we'd say 'where is all the money going?' And now he just says to just give what you can afford and who you are close to. Even when we got married, he just said I am just going to bring two or three people to your wedding....I think he saw a lot of money being used to how it should not have been. (3e)

Although many still had parents who were alive and expecting their children to help out with fa'alavelave, the sense of shame among respondents for not giving at these events was not so much an issue for them as it was for some of their parents. However, the data also showed that the respondents' parents had mellowed over time and their expectations for giving to fa'alavelave had

also changed. Not giving did not necessarily trigger the same response as it may have done for their parents or grandparents. This change and flexibility among the respondents' parents and elders was evident in the data. They did not expect their children to give above their means and see their grandchildren suffer.

Now my children are older their role is to pay for things I can't afford what we need and for fa'alavelaves...now they just ask "what do you want to do mum?" But I also respect my children and I know they have things to do and buy so I say really it is what they can afford and they have their own lives ...see I don't have to tell them now .. they know what to do ...so everything I taught hem when they were young it is for this time now that they are older...and they can now think for themselves....and know this is what should be done...This is what our parents were teaching us and this is what I have taught my children...so when I grew up I knew what to do....this is their role to listen and to obey their parents teachings for when they get older and have to make decisions for their lives and their children.(4b)

The shame factor for some of the respondents was also seen as a collective response to incidents involving Samoans, if they got into crime, the whole community felt the shame. The sense of shame was more measured and less personal than if it had occurred to a member of their close or extended family. However, older respondents and the majority of the younger respondents commented on the impact of these factors on their upbringing and how it influenced their relationship with their parents. If they did something that brought shame to their family, they were punished and the punishment was more likely to be a severe hiding.

I felt they valued more what people saw and thought. It was like more about public opinion...like they cared more about how people perceived them than how their own children perceived them. (5f)

Speaking out or objecting to what your parents wanted was not the kind of behaviour that was tolerated in the traditional fa'asamoa. Obedience was a value that was strictly enforced. One respondent commented that even though she tried to speak out and object she was severely reprimanded not just by her parents but by her aunts and uncles as well. Kin responsibility for discipline was acceptable.

The values of being a Christian girl meant being a 'good' girl in the way you behaved towards your parents and elders and people in authority and you were disciplined accordingly if you did not behave in the way your parents expected of you. For some respondents there was a clear gender difference as to how she was treated in the family and how her brothers were treated. One spoke about her brothers having more freedom to pursue more activities, whereas for the girls (her and her

sisters) there was an expectation that you did not have boyfriends until your parents gave consent, and you did not indulge in behaviour that would be 'unchristian'. As one elder pointed out:

My mother used to say, I want you to grow up and be a good girl and value your life, especially when it comes to boys. When you really come to think about it, it is true in that respect. I wish that my mum would have taken me aside and explained those things to me and say this is a part of life, that there might be someone you will fall in love with ...you see they think you automatically know these things but you don't... they should tell us. Everywhere I went my cousins or my brothers came too. I was chaperoned just in case. (5c)

Good behaviour that brought pride to the family, according to another respondent raised the mana and honour of the family in the eyes of other people. For these families it was not just about the way you behaved but about upholding the dignity and mana of your family. The more mana and dignity, the more resources the family was able to access and the more influence they were able to wield. Shame diminished the mana and dignity of the family. Hence the enormous pressure to conform to the wishes of the family.

A respondent who was an elder in this study related a traumatic experience which happened to her in New Zealand, when she was living with her uncle and his family. She was befriended by a young Samoan man who, once having gained her trust, invited her to his family's home and while the family was at church sexually assaulted her. When her family found out about what had happened she was instructed by her father and uncle to marry this man. They insisted that if she didn't it would bring shame and disgrace to her family. Furthermore, she was told that she had lost her virginity to this man, so she would have to marry him. This elderly respondent had been brought up in Samoa with strong Samoan values of obedience, respecting your parents and elders, and being 'a good Samoan girl' which in Samoa at that time meant you remained a virgin until marriage. Her obedience to her uncle and father and the spectre of shame it would bring to her family at the time far outweighed her own individual pain and suffering and she obeyed her father and uncle's wishes.

I was forced ...raped by a man who became my husband...I didn't want to marry him...but I was a virgin....you know what it is like as a Samoan girl back then...you are a girl .. you are a virgin....you get married that's what I was brought up to think and do...I was very obedient to that and I was a virgin I had never ever gone out with anyone....and my uncle and family said I had to marry him....my mind was lost...I feared my dad and my uncle...the traditional Samoan thing you know when you are broken by a man you end up having to marry him otherwise it is a big shame for the family.....my dad and my uncle and everyone...said I had to marry him. (x)

This respondent was also physically and emotionally abused as a child by her stepmother. She is now an elder in her current church. She holds no malice towards those who hurt her and has found solace and peace as a devout Christian. She said:

My Christian values and faith has allowed me to forgive... it is my reality. My God is everything. I would be lost without my faith. (x)

The above case highlights the fact that cultural pride and shame had a significant impact on the way this family responded to a young girl's suffering. Whilst this incident occurred many years ago incidents of this kind where the family honour is at stake continue to happen not only in Samoa and New Zealand but in other parts of the world. The fact that a respondent in this study referred to the incident involving herself as an example to explain what she understood as a Samoan about pride and shame indicates the two are still very strong factors in the lives of Samoans. Samoan children are often mocked by the word 'shame' when they do something wrong or incorrect and the stigma remains for some, for many years. It affects their learning and it affects their health in extreme cases. These two examples, education and health, were two prime examples of how the 'shame' factor impacted on their lives – the hidings, the forced marriages, the fa'alavelave giving, the church donations and the exam failures.

Pride and shame influenced how they saw themselves acting and behaving in their roles as parents and in the roles their children played. It influenced their activities within the church and within their communities. It manifested itself in the disciplining of their children and in praising their children. Both factors were sometimes seen to be opposing forces but in many instances the two were inexorably linked and one was not present without the other.

## **Summary**

Respondents in this study commented extensively about Samoan pride and equally emphasized the harshness of 'shame,' especially in relation to an action or deed which their parents would interpret as having a direct impact on the mana and honour of the family. Shame was seen as a collective stigma which affected not just an individual but the whole family, village, community - albeit in different ways and at different levels. Shame was seen as a way to punish as well as a reason for punishing. It was held up by parents as a reason for hitting their children 'because they have brought shame to the family name'. The actions that invited shame into the family also brought with it huge consequences, e.g. forced marriage, ill-health, and huge debts.

Alongside the shame was also this “Samoan pride” that influenced many to strive hard to please their parents and to succeed in school, church and community. The Samoan pride manifested itself in many forms: when the respondents’ children did well at school, when they spoke about their parents positively in their school work, when they performed well at school activities and when the respondents themselves, especially the elders, compared where they had come from (Samoa) to where they are now, and seeing how much they had endured and are now leading a happy life with their children and grandchildren. Samoan pride is also about competition, and striving to do the best, not for the individual themselves only but for one’s family/aiga and community. As one proud respondent said:

Sometimes I think some of the most beautiful traits we have when they are lined up and in order it is very beautiful you know ...they talk about the Samoan heart you know so much compassion...I have seen it everywhere in every context...just from beginning to end .. the way we bury our dead just special I love all that eh? Sometimes I have to check myself you know that Samoan pride... I feel very pleased to have been born a Samoan and I feel a part of that too is how we impart that to our children, our families our community you know... who we interact with. (3f )

Another respondent commented:

But the pride in our families is something else it influences a lot of the parenting, pride, because some parents think, oh the other families think we are not parenting our children the way it should be, and they believe the only parenting they can do is give them a hiding...is that they are the big boss, thinking oh we got to do it this way, because so and so’s family are doing it that way or some of the families from the church. They should really look into themselves and try and think what is best for our children...are we good role models ...are we good parents are we leading our children in the right direction? We have to make the changes, break the cycle, and help other families break the cycle of abuse. (5e)

### **Beneath the stereotypes**

I have defined stereotyping in this context as negative, pre-judging of Samoan people based on unsubstantiated evidence. Samoans are often stereotyped as violent, uneducated, neglectful, lazy, poor, have lots of children and do not look after them too well. These ‘generalisations’ can be made by the people of the groupings concerned as well as others from outside these groupings. Where do these sweeping assumptions come from? Samoan populations in New Zealand, alongside Maori, feature significantly in unemployment, low educational achievement, poor health and other health and socio-economic determinants. This tends to foster a view that ‘all’ Samoans are in this grouping therefore they must all be un-healthy and un-educated because low socio-economic standing also involves other variables which are equally related to crime statistics, referrals to Child Youth and

Family and other negative incidences. An example of this stereotyping is taken from a public health report which stated the following:

Psychiatric nurses in hospitals are more likely to “lock up” a Pacific Islands person than a Palagi patient because of a common held view that Pacific Islands people are violent (Public Health Commission, 1994, p.149).

However, this study shows that there are, ‘beneath these stereotypes’, families who do not fit this stereotype. In contrast to these stereotypes, the findings show changes in the lives of these particular respondents. The evidence suggests their children will not have to contend with stereotypical notions of Samoans in the future.

Respondents in this study are grappling with old ways and new ways of doing things, of their cultural values being turned upside down, re-shaped and re-constructed to fit their environment, of coming to terms with the emotional and physical violence of the past and, for those adopted out to other families and not being told by their parents, the sadness and loss of connection with their siblings and birth parents. During the interviews it became obvious that traumas that had happened twenty or more years ago still affected them emotionally. This manifested itself in respondents crying during their interview.

She found the vacuum cleaner hose and we got it, and I will never forget it because my aunties and my sisters were all pleading with her to stop that was the worse. That was when I think that mum really took to her Samoan side. (3f)

This respondent went on to say that even though his mother did this to him, he feels she did it out of love. This is difficult for some to understand, but for Samoans ‘I am hitting you, because I love you’ was a common declaration that was accepted.

Numerous Pacific writers like (Duituturaga, 1998, Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2002, Asiasiga, 2000) wrote about the disciplining by Samoan parents of their children as being an ‘act of love’. This was reinforced by the respondents, in this study, who were raised in Samoa. Some of them disciplined their children when they were young on a few occasions ‘like their parents,’ but all of the parents that said they did became aware of what they were doing. They changed the way they spoke and acted towards their children as they saw themselves going down the same path as their parents. Many of the respondents believed the fa’asamoa and the Christian values, which most of them claimed they practised, were in unison. The data suggests their goal was to bring the best of fa’asamoa and fa’apalagi into their parenting practices. This concurs with McCallum et al’s (2001) findings where Samoan parents claimed they brought to their parenting what was good from both



worlds. They were more inclined to practise methods which were nurturing, rather than damaging, to their children's health and development. For example, they show their children more affection and allow their children to express their feelings without anger or negativity on their part.

The following table indicates the number of respondents who were hit by their parents and those who encountered one or more hidings (a number of hits to a part/s of their body).

**Table 12. Respondents who were hit and received one or more hidings from their parents**

	<b>No. of respondents hit</b>	<b>No. of respondents who received one or more hidings</b>
Elders	7	6
Ministers	3	2
Parents not including elders and ministers.	25	25

Parents who reported having hit their children and given them one or more hidings reported they did not give their children severe hidings. In their words 'not like the ones our parents gave us'. The tables indicate that respondents who were hit as children had repeated the same with their own children and had hit their children on at least one occasion. The frequency and severity in which their children were hit was however, much less than what they had received as children and with most of them found other ways of punishing their children. There were fifteen respondents who gave their children hidings at least once, but more respondents got hidings from their parents when they were children.

**Table 13. Respondents who had hit and given their children one or more hidings**

	<b>Hit</b>	<b>Hidings</b>
Elders	7	6
Ministers	3	3
Parents not including ministers and elders	25	15

The respondents in this study were very conscious of their parenting. Their own self-awareness of their behaviour and their responses to their children's behaviour was expressed in many of their comments. For example, 'I could see what I was doing', 'I noticed my daughter was looking more and more sad', 'I needed to change the way I was speaking to him', 'I knew it was me that was

making him like that'. These respondents were very conscious of how they were making their children feel and the effect their yelling and harsh disciplining was having on them. Most of these respondents were mothers whose partners were more passive. It was clear from these respondents that their partners were moderating their behaviour. Kalil (2003) found where one partner is violent and the other is nurturing that the child will likely be resilient to that violence and will develop sufficiently into a secure and stable adult. In this study the respondents who were beaten very harshly by their parents managed, as adults, not to repeat the cycle of abuse with similar intensity or duration. However, some did have problems with their anger when they had their first child, but became aware that what they were doing was causing their child to suffer. They could see their children 'withdrawing from them, looking sad, acting scared in front of them, flinching when they raised their hand.' They also had partners and other family members who were moderators of their behaviour who made it known to them that what they were doing was not good for their child. One respondent spoke of giving her oldest hidings and yelling at him when he was young. She realized she was going down the same path as her parents as she saw her son flinching every time she raised her voice at him, so she sought help from the school and went along to some parenting classes. This, along with support from her sister, moderated her behaviour and she was able to look at other alternatives, and to keep check on her own anger. This mother was also very intelligent and 'tough'. She endured numerous hidings from her own father that were very harsh and she suffered numerous injuries as a result, e.g. a broken nose when he punched her on her face, but her mother was always trying to make things better for her, by talking to her after her hidings and massaging her injuries with 'Vicks'. She also had grandparents who were very loving and siblings she felt very close to, as all of them were subjected to their father's anger. This respondent went on to marry a violent husband who, she feared more than her father who beat her. According to the respondent she did not fear for her life when her dad beat her but with her husband she did. She was also a very determined mother who left her violent husband after many years to come to New Zealand with her children. Although she separated from her husband they maintained a good relationship, because of their children. Zimrin (1986) believes that two important factors involved in resilience are intellectual capacity and certain toughness. He also goes on to say that there are also other problems which people encounter later and one of those is difficulty with inter-personal relationships. Needless to say, single parents can be just as good at parenting as two parent families if they have the support systems in place, especially where they have left a violent relationship.

The socio-economic status of many of the respondents were not considered to be at the poverty level. Most had combined household incomes of over \$40,000 (much higher than average NZ Samoan incomes, but lower than Palagi). Many of the parents both worked to keep the family fed and clothed and housed but there were also some households who chose to have one working

partner so the other could be home with their young children. These two couples were the highest earners (over \$80,000 per annum) so they had the choice to do so. I would suggest that other couples could not make this choice because they did not have the income level that these two couples had, which would have given them that option. Even so, the living environments of respondents did not indicate poverty stricken families. Some were obviously lower in income, but they were not on the poverty line, which in New Zealand is an income of below \$20,000 per annum. I do not think in this study the poverty issue was a factor in the disciplining of the children. According to the data the issue of poverty did not come into play. Nevertheless, it was also obvious from the homes that some families had more resources than others, but it did not, according to the data, detract from the parents giving their children what they needed in terms of time and support. As one mother pointed out, they did not have Sky Television, but this did not concern her as the children had less distractions and spent more time doing other things like homework and playing outside.

The issues which emerged from the data were more about cultural values and beliefs and the changes due to migration and enculturation, rather than about poverty. Nevertheless, for those respondents who grew up in Samoa and whose parents were not 'professionals or business people' (as some of the Samoa born respondents' parents were) the data did show how parents struggled and worked hard to ensure their children had food, shelter and education. I would be inclined to suggest that the respondents who grew up in Samoa were more likely to have experienced 'poverty' (lack of economic means) than those in New Zealand. This would concur with findings around child abuse and poverty. It was also apparent from the data that the respondents who grew up in Samoa experienced harsh physical discipline more severely than the respondents who grew up in New Zealand. In this respect, the evidence would suggest links with child abuse and poverty. Some of the wealthier respondents were brought up in Samoa in a very 'privileged' environment. They were the children of 'Afakasi' parents and also children whose parents were business people, professionals and church ministers. These children, according to the data, were not the ones who suffered extreme physical beatings. Those children's parents were not in the 'wealthy' category and not 'afakasi' or in the 'elite' (financially resourced) Samoan families.

In New Zealand there were respondents' parents who were better off and consequently had more access to opportunities which were beneficial to their children. With determination, those respondents in New Zealand without the high incomes, raised the funds through other means to ensure their children were able to access the educational and sporting opportunities offered to them. Their (low-middle) economic status was not a deterrent to them taking advantage of the opportunities which came their way. The work ethic of most of the respondents was of a quality

which allowed these families to work together. Parents mobilized their children to get involved in activities that were healthy and which made them participate and contribute to making things happen. Respondents spoke about getting their children to do chores after school, to deliver pamphlets and to help around the house. One elder mother commented, that when her children were young and she gave them chores to do, they would ask why they did not get paid like their Palagi friends and the mother responded 'Samoan children do it for love'. Younger Samoan parents are more likely now to pay their children 'pocket money' for doing chores. Although there was a commitment to ensuring their children were developing a healthy work ethic, the elder mother did not want to turn her children into little 'slaves' as she described her life as a child in Samoa but she had also trained her children to have routines of doing their homework and having some time to play, something she did not have as a child.

She recounted her experience as being:

You know when we were kids eh... we used to say we were slaves as kids because we just worked and worked we used to say oh that they were bad parents because they made us work so hard...so hard...every day and not allowed to play cricket and play games with the other kids and when people were playing and we were not allowed to go and my parents would say no you stay home and sasa the vao (cut the lawn). not mow it, we would have to cut it by hand. (Respondent 4b)

However, she adds:

but my parents were very hard working. My dad used to work in Apia for a company store and when he was sick he told us stories how he had to give up his job because there were so many of us 14...and he needed to feed us all .. he went to the plantation and he grew vegetables to feed his family. We all helped and we never went hungry. (Respondent 4b)

As hard as this mother's life had been, she had a great deal of love and respect for her parents. She brought her children up with the same values as her parents, but adapted them. Her children had routines, consistent and firm discipline and were also regular church goers. As adults, her children became high achievers; one is a lawyer and working as a Government employee, one a teacher and another an office administrator. They like her, have remained very strong in their church. She herself was divorced when the children were primary school age and has never remarried or partnered. She is sixty two years old and just recently has completed a tertiary qualification. Her work with pre-schoolers is combined with her church activities; she works in a church pre-school.

The stories of respondents being harshly disciplined by their parents and being forgiving and compassionate was a consistent theme throughout this study. This is not to say that none of the

respondents were not angry or bitter towards their parents. Three of the younger respondents clearly were, as they spoke about the harsh beatings by their mothers and father. One of the most severely abused (because she suffered physical, emotional and sexual abuse), an elder, seemed to have the greatest sense of understanding and acceptance. She was very self assured, friendly and kindly, even though it was the first time she had disclosed her story to anyone. Her faith in God was very strong and she spoke often during the interview of forgiveness and her love for her children and grandchildren. She was a very inspirational and remarkable woman.

Many of the respondents spoke about one of their parents being the disciplinarian and the other being the passive 'never interfered parent'. However, there was no sense of animosity or bitterness towards either parent. There was, for most of the respondents a sense of acceptance that this was the only thing their parents knew, that it was not their parents fault because they did not know any better. In practice their parents had done it, everyone they knew in the village was doing it, and so there was a sense of normalization to the behaviour.

There is an assertion that children who have grown up with harsh physical discipline find it difficult to forge strong emotional relationships when they are adults. Two of the respondents who were single parents were also physically abused as children and young people. One was an elder respondent who was physically and emotionally abused as a child and then sexually assaulted as an adult. She was single at the time of the interview. The other single respondent, who was physically abused as a child by her father, also divorced her violent husband. Another single mother said she was hit also as a child but did not get a hiding (more than one hit continuously). This study did not probe or 'test' the theory of these mothers' abilities to forge 'strong emotional attachments'. The data clearly showed they cared and loved their children and tried to do the best they could possibly do to be effective parents but whether the harsh physical discipline affected their emotional relationships with other adults, cannot be commented on as there is insufficient evidence from the data to indicate that.

What this theme has highlighted is that beneath the stereotypes of violence and poverty we see a great deal of resilience in a group of Samoan parents. There was a high level of compassion and forgiveness by all the respondents who suffered different levels of abuse, whether it was emotional, mental or physical. Respondents were keen to ensure their children were well cared for and well educated, doing well within their community, and contributing towards their family in fa'alavelave and family functions and events. Insightful Samoan parents in this study gave away the negative behaviours of some of their parents' parenting and held firm to the positive aspects of their fa'asamoa so that their own children got the best of both worlds. Stereotypes abound in many

cultures, just as they have done in New Zealand in relation to Samoans and other ethnic groups. What has emerged as a theme in this study are families who are, in effect, not fitting society's stereotypical categories.

### **Intergenerational Challenges**

This was a theme which was constantly emerging out from the data. There were clear differences in the ways many of the respondents were parenting their children as opposed to how their parents parented them.

One of the major differences in their parenting practice was in the area of discipline.

There was a clear shift from 'harsh physical discipline' as the only alternative to that of a more flexible, reflective and interactive approach by the respondents. Respondents were checking out their own responses to their children's behaviour, as one young mother reflected:

I mean it is finding how to discipline, especially if smacking is so frowned upon. What I am trying to do is find out what works and it is really challenging, and there is a lot of learning yourself to distinguish anger from necessity. Is this of absolute benefit to them or is it for the parents? And you catch yourself you know...Sometimes I am so angry I have got to leave the room. I think I have picked up a few books and magazines and it is just that you realize how much of an effect that what you do now has on them for the future and so you can see in that way you might try to do things a little bit different, but I don't think we are ever going to get things perfect. (3g)

Although there were some instances where the respondents had definitely given their children smacks and 'hidings' it was far less than what the respondents themselves had received as children. The data clearly highlighted that the respondent's parenting practices were more geared towards managing their children's behaviour by other means and only using smacking as a last resort. Respondents also were less sympathetic to their parents who smacked them, when they reacted to them (the respondents) smacking their own children. There appeared to be an intergenerational difference around the disciplining of their grandchildren. One mother who received 'big hidings' from her own mother had made the decision before having her children that she would not resort to the way her mother disciplined her. The descriptions of her mother's hidings were of very severe hidings,

We were hit with anything and everything...the broom, the vacuum, the washing machine hose, anything that was near her. For my mum if she did not draw blood or see a bruise she would keep hitting. My dad was really quiet. My mum was very strict....other kids used to

say oh gosh your mum is really hard...and I thought all Samoan mothers were like that...but I thought I am not going to be like that and I am glad the relationship with my children is different. The relationship I have with my children we can talk about anything. When my kids draw pictures it is of us together. We go for walks together and I treat my kids all the time and I spend a lot of time with my children. We want our children to be happy and to feel loved. (5d)

As I alluded in the responses to the questions, respondents who were younger were more likely to have changed attitudes and responses to the concepts of fa'alavelave and fa'asamoa. Although the majority were very supportive of these notions there was a degree of difference and at certain stages of respondents' lives to their approach. For example giving more time and money when they were single adults and less time and money when they became parents. Fa'alavelave, as practiced by their parents, was moulded and shaped to fit the younger respondents's circumstances and abilities to give. Emphasis of giving was more directed at affordability and priorities and the closeness of family relationships. The sense of shame at not being able to meet a certain figure or sum was no longer so evident. Rather it was based more on 'can I afford it?' and 'will my children miss out if I give?'. There was a clear consensus by respondents that the concept of giving was something of value and they wished to impart this to their children. However, there was a re-adaptation to fit their own environment and personal circumstances. Respondents were mostly willing to assist their parents when it came to fa'alavelave and, as mentioned by one of the elder respondents, the concept was now well understood by her children to the point where she no longer had to ask her children. Rather, when a fa'alavelave occurred they asked her 'what do you want to do, mum?' and were ready to help out.

The church and religion was another area of intergenerational difference. For many respondents the rigidity of attendance to church every Sunday, bible class during the week, choir practice and other activities, was not only a point of difference for respondents' parents and themselves but it was seen as something that respondents now had more choice around, especially once you married. Church was the focal point, the 'hub' of Samoan life and still is in many communities, but younger respondents in this study were more likely to 'choose' not to attend if they did not wish. For many of the respondents in this study church and God remained strong in their lives. However, there was no force by younger respondents of their children having to go to church. Children were given a choice and respondents encouraged rather than coerced the children to attend. Most parents said their children enjoyed going to church and Sunday school and church activities. Five respondents who were male were more inclined to let their wives take responsibility for church and children on Sundays. In this study it was the mothers who were more committed to church. There was also a difference, with some parents allowing their children to take part in activities on Sundays not

associated with the church. This was the case also for many of the respondents. Sunday was no longer considered the only 'day of rest', however, for those respondents whose parents were still very religious it was still 'God's day' and a day of rest. It was, therefore, not used for sports and other activities.

Whereas teaching Samoan language and the culture was not done by many of the respondent's parents, for some of the younger respondents this was something of great importance to them and they made every effort to ensure their children were being taught their Samoan language and culture.

The teaching of their children at home was also very different for the younger respondents. In Samoa teaching was very much about church and the bible and Samoan etiquette and protocol which were mostly taught by observation and direction. Children were not encouraged to speak out, to communicate with their parents, to question and to engage in discussion with their parents. Respondents brought up in Samoa were mostly 'seen and not heard', and 'obeyed without question' and were told 'I hit you because I love you' because this was the same pattern for their parents. Many alluded to it being the only way their parents, and their parents' parents, knew. Respondents in the study who were brought up in New Zealand read to their children, played with their children, engaged with their children and allowed their children to interrupt, question, debate, and participate more in discussion with their parents. Explanations for doing things and why parents did things were a lot more forthcoming from respondents' bringing up younger children in New Zealand. Being open with their communication with their children and taking an active interest in what their children were doing was different from what respondents' parents' did when they were young. There was a more 'hands on' approach to parenting. These younger parents were keen to know more about how their children developed and what they could do to assist their children to achieve and do better. Younger parents appeared more tolerant and more at ease with their children if they made mistakes. There was evidence of a willingness to change their own behaviour and to talk about this openly with their sons and their daughters. There was a valuing of feedback and comments from them and other members of the family which led to change.

Difference over generations in managing children's behaviour was evident with respondents' parents being a lot stricter, harsher, more demanding of conformity to parents' wishes. Elder parents were made to work hard for long hours serving their parents and families. Very little encouragement was given for play time or leisure and more emphasis placed on work and service. There were very few options outside smacking and hidings for older respondents. Hitting and hidings were considered 'normal' by many when they were young and an acceptable mode of managing Samoan



children's behaviour. The factors of shame and pride were more paramount for respondent's parents and some respondents suggested shame, anger and disobedience were triggers for their parents giving them a hiding. Interestingly, but not uncommonly, many respondents' parents were not happy when they saw their grandchildren being growled at or hit.

The final intergenerational difference was in the relationships with their children. Respondents with young children spoke of a closeness they felt with their children that they did not feel with their parents. Affection and telling their children that they love them constantly was something they did that their parents did not do. The emotional support they gave to their children by talking with them and encouraging and supporting their children with their sports and other school activities and praising them when they achieved was something they did with their children that their parents did not do with them. Although their parents supported them by buying them what they needed for their sports and church activities, it was the emotional and open affection for them that they did not have, when they were young. Although many of the respondents claimed they loved the parent who hit them, even those who were very harshly disciplined, they also spoke of a 'lack' of closeness with this parent and a sense of sadness that this 'closeness' was not there. A few of the respondents were quite tearful when they spoke about this and one felt she had a lot of issues that still needed to be resolved with her father who gave her many severe beatings: "The reason I am hitting you is because I love you!" This was common throughout. Some respondents commented they wished their parents had told them they loved them before and after they hit them rather than during and only when they got a hiding. However, when it came to showing affection to the grandchildren the grandparents had no difficulty. An elder who was a grandmother said:

New Zealand has been great but Samoa is still my home, my heart what makes me the person I am....the order the disciplined order.... and I rebelled against this when I was young but it has come the full circle .. I know now what my parents were trying to do... I want to retire there but I have left it to late....the passion is still in me...my grandchildren have been told by my children that their grandmother is someone special because she comes from Samoa....no-one has ever said they are ashamed of me, my colour, my background, my language and that is great. (5a)

### **New Horizons**

This final theme highlights the changes which occur with migration and acculturation.

The processes of acculturation are an ongoing process. It is also about what the respondents in this study viewed as 'we are in New Zealand and we do things differently here, it is not the same as Samoa'. Has migration to another country changed the values, beliefs and attitudes of Samoan parents towards their children? Respondents often commented on the differences between living in

Samoa and living in New Zealand. What was done in Samoa is not necessarily what should be done in New Zealand. These were sentiments expressed by many of the respondents, not just the younger ones but also by the elders and ministers. Another common expression especially by the ministers and elders was 'that was the old way' here, in New Zealand it is 'the new way'. What did they mean by this? The following is what emerged.

New horizons for many of the respondents was a way of survival, of learning a new language, new culture, new work and new ways of parenting. For many of the older respondents who had migrated to New Zealand, it was a lonely existence leaving their families and going to a new land where they had no knowledge of the language or the customs and the people.

Some of the respondents had come to New Zealand as children, one as a twelve year old and for her life in a New Zealand boarding school was lonely and harsh. She survived through the support and care of others who were empathetic to her situation. She said:

It was dreadful, terrible. We were away from the main school .We were juniors. I was in the primary sector. All the juniors were in the cottage, and in there was a matron and the sub matron. They called them sub matron then. The sub matron was a wonderful woman from Austria and she had two daughters, they were all refugees, and they hadn't long been in New Zealand, they had very little English. Much more broken, but much better than mine but they related to me...I remember her every night just cuddling me to sleep because I would be in tears, and she could not understand what I was saying, I couldn't understand what she was saying, but the body language comforted me sufficiently enough to go to sleep...so yeah that side of boarding school here, being away from home and everything being strange for me was very awful. It took me a long time to understand enough English. In those days we were not allowed to go home for three years unless we paid for it and we just couldn't afford it. I got through by the grace of God, I guess because I knew I was here for a purpose. (5b)

The shift from Samoa to New Zealand also brought work opportunities for many Samoan emigrants. It allowed them to bring other relatives from Samoa and to assist their families back home. Respondents in this study commented on several occasions about their parents' sacrifices in leaving families in Samoa to immigrate to New Zealand. There was a sense that the respondents bringing up their own children were aware of these events and that they did not take what they had for granted. When relatives came from the islands the children learned to adapt their behaviour to the presence of elders who were different in some of the ways they did things, compared to their parents: for example the place of children in the hierarchy of fa'asamoa.

I think with fa'asamoa, in the hierarchy children are at the bottom. Yeah but it differs from family to family. With fa'asamoa there is a hierarchy and you do see that children are at the bottom. (3e)

Opportunities in a 'new horizon' also meant for many respondents new opportunities to parent better as these brought with it access to resources. Some respondents spoke of educational opportunities, parenting programs at the school, books and computers.

I must admit I did hit my children quite a lot in the beginning... not massive hidings but just hit them and as they were growing older I just sort of was thinking I am lashing out of anger and am thinking that is not right so then I tried .. I went to some parenting seminars at the primary school and that was like ...I had to talk to them you know...take away privileges and different options and use other means of punishment and I must admit I haven't hit any of them for quite a while now...I basically use grounding and taking away privileges and have been very good really...they have their moments (laughs). (5f)

Respondents commented on the values and beliefs of fa'asamoa and the Christian faith and how these have been in their view 'entwined'. Some describe these as being the same. However, being in New Zealand has meant for many of them a change in the approach with which these values are enacted. The landscape of the New Zealand environment is different with its access to more economic means than their parents. Some respondents have already commented on the barriers their parents faced with language and customs and lack of knowledge about the systems in New Zealand, especially the education and the health systems. The knowledge base for the respondents who were born and grew up here has made it easier for them to parent their children, compared with their parents. For example, giving their children opportunities to travel on school trips and attend very expensive boarding schools that the parents have paid for indicated the difference in economic resources. These resources of money and knowledge about New Zealand also allowed parents who did not have the Samoan language and culture to access early childhood centres which taught these topics to their children. Some respondents in this study also had the economic means to allow one parent to stay home to be the full-time care giver to their young children.

The ability for children to speak out and question and discuss matters of concern with their parents was accepted as part of the ways of the 'new horizons' and it was encouraged and seen to be a positive attribute by respondents.

The role of the church and fa'asamoa became moulded into one for many of the respondents but, as with the values and beliefs, respondents added their own ways of doing - according to their priorities and the needs of their children and immediate families. Fa'alavelave, as with culture, was more dynamic and less restrictive, less marked with shame and more with pride in being able to participate, but done so with clear boundaries.

The purpose for seeking out 'new horizons' remained the same for those respondents born and bred in New Zealand, but the emphasis for many of the respondents was also about learning their own language and culture, as well as about what the schools had to offer. Most of the respondents who were elders did not teach their children the language, and like their children regretted it.

They love their Samoan side and they reprimand me for not teaching the Samoan language. I was learning so much to be a New Zealander and do all those kiwi things that everything else was too hard and yes, they regret me not teaching them Samoan and I would have nephews come and stay with me and they would know the foods and the language and my children didn't.(5a)

## **Summary**

Migration to New Zealand has brought many changes and adaptations for Samoan parents in this study. Exposure to better educational opportunities, more resources, and new knowledge has allowed them to take the best from both worlds and adapt it to their own parenting styles. These include more interaction, more affection and more frequency in speaking words of encouragement praise and love to their children and using other alternatives to punish their children. Although hitting their children was something they all did at some stage with their children, the frequency in which this was carried out was according to respondents much less than what they had experienced as children. The relationships with their children are much closer and more interactive than it was with their own parents. Their children were encouraged to speak with them and to ask questions.

The concepts of pride and shame remained evident in the lives of respondents. For some, the sense of shame they suffered as youngsters still impacts on their lives today. The paradoxes of pride and shame are maintained in many families. However, pride in their children was also evident from the findings and praise as a positive reinforcing factor among parents especially with young children.

The final two chapters are the conclusion and discussion.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

Migration to New Zealand has had an impact on the way Samoan parents parent their children. I would conclude that the values and beliefs of Samoans who have migrated to New Zealand change over time, but the core values remain. These core values and beliefs are: love of God, family (close and extended), respect of parents and elders and authority, and obedience to parents and elders.

Exposure to new knowledge about parenting techniques and managing their children's behaviour combined with reflective self analysis has meant a considerable change for many parents. The change has been from the way their parents parented them, to a more interactive, affectionate and less authoritarian approach. The values and beliefs of Samoan parents are constantly changing to cater to new horizons with the challenges of socio-economic, cultural and global impacts. It shows that culture is dynamic and not static. Many internal and external influences have a bearing on just how rapidly or how slowly societies change. Some generalizations can be derived from these study findings and they can be compared with what has already been theorized about the impacts on population groups and culture when cultures collide.

Resiliency has been described as uplifting: a time before during and after the impact and protecting from a downward spiral wave. For a few, it is about climbing to a calm and serene state, a peace of mind. This is captured in many of the stories, especially by the older respondents in describing how hard life was for them in Samoa.

I would also conclude that there are generational changes that have occurred with time which, when education, socio-economic factors and access to opportunities and technology and religion come into play, can also have an effect on people's values, beliefs and cultural norms.

Parents who had lived in New Zealand for more than seven years and parents who were born in New Zealand approached these values differently than those who had lived most of their youth in Samoa. The major difference was in managing their children's behaviour. Parents in this study were conscious of being good parents by ensuring they did their best to meet their children's needs and gave them access to as many opportunities as possible. Most of the parents in this study were more lenient, flexible and strategic in managing their children's behaviour by having more than one option up their sleeve. There was a strong willingness by parents to look at new options of parenting when they felt a change was needed or a member of the family noticed negative parenting behaviour. Others had seen the changes in their children's behaviour and they reflected on some of

the reasons they were behaving so negatively towards their children. Their insights and conscious approach to parenting brought out their own strategies to cope with their children's behaviour.

Many of the parents were influenced in their parenting practices by their exposures to a new way of life, different cultures, new technologies, access to new opportunities, educative tools, new wealth, and their own personal assessments of what worked for my parents may not necessarily work for me or my children. It was evident from the way the parents approached the subject of punishment that they did not endorse severe physical punishment or yelling and verbally abusing their children. However, they were also not completely exempt from ever responding this way on one or more occasions when they were angry or frustrated. However, there was plenty of evidence in the data to show respondents were committed to their children's well being overall and the concept of beating their children was not the way they themselves parented. The table 13 shows a decrease in the number of respondents who gave their children hidings compared to respondents who were hit by their parents. Although the numbers of respondents who had hit their children were the same as the number of respondents parents' who had hit them the narratives showed less frequency (not a daily occurrence) and intensity (a smack to the bottom) of hitting by the respondents. They had used other methods like time out to discipline their children.

The Samoan parents in this study (35) were unanimous in their love for their children and the very significant role they played in ensuring their children had what was necessary to give them a happy, healthy and secure life. This was evident in the activities they shared with their children the way they interacted with them the values and beliefs in their children's welfare and development. Numerous examples of nurturing their children were given.

Many of the participants' children were present some of the time when I interviewed their parents. My observation notes were recorded immediately on leaving the interview. While reflecting and sitting in the car, I recorded the way the parents interacted with their children. These included, as I indicated in the findings, seeing the children cuddling up to the parents and the parents cuddling and kissing their children and stroking them, parents speaking with them about what they wanted and taking the time out from the interview to meet their children's needs for one, a glass of water, the other, a bedtime story and a father picking up his son and taking him to bed while the mother stayed to be interviewed. When the child had settled, the father came back into the lounge and the interview continued. The father, although apologetic about having to leave, quite clearly felt it was a priority for him to tend to his son's needs.

In my view, these were genuine moments of parental nurturing and showed tender moments between a respondent who was the father and his son who was of preschool age and also of the mother and her daughter who was a new entrant at school. I also observed a young child taking her mother's hand and the mother willingly being led by her daughter to show her mother something she had drawn. The mother took a genuine interest in her child's picture by asking the child questions about it. Another child came in half way through the interview and asked the mother a question and the mother answered the child and then apologized to me for the interruption. She did not reprimand her child for interrupting, but rather, quite happily, answered her child's questions, to his satisfaction, and then when he ran off, she returned to the interview. What I witnessed from these encounters were parents who were clearly doting on their children. They were not adhering to their parents' approach of children seen and not heard or of total obedience or of respect in relation to visitors and ignoring their children's needs. Rather, they chose to accommodate both without compromising their values. As the data showed, this would not have been tolerated when they were children or when their parents were children. It was evident to me that the parents of these young children had a very strong *child* focus to their parenting. This is not to say that they did not abide by the values their parents had passed onto them. What it meant was their approach was far less rigid in its application compared to how it would have been for their parents, according to the descriptions and themes which emerged from their interviews.

These parents had other strategies in place to manage their child's behaviour; where smacking was not seen as the only way. The parents in this study were very conscious of their children's emotional needs and their personalities, so they targeted their punishment or consequences to these two factors. According to one mother who had a child who was very sociable and loved being with people, putting him into a room on his own when he misbehaved saw great results whenever she mentioned it to him, as he did not like being away from other people. For another child, who was a loner, and loved his own company, she chose withdrawing an activity that he enjoyed, rather than putting him in a room on his own, because spending time reading alone was something he enjoyed. Parents were insightful, reflective, and consciously aware. Respondents with young children constantly adapted according to their learning and experiences.

Respondents who experienced severe hardship in their childhood and youth (the elders) remembered and recounted the events with sadness and tears, but the majority of the younger parents did so with laughter, which is very common among Samoans, where something which may be sad, bad or hurtful is treated as a joke. This may be highly offensive to other groups, but to Samoans it is seen as a coping mechanism, as a way of dealing with it, because it is so sad, bad or painful. Some of the respondents spoke of their hiding stories as being something the siblings did

when they all sat round the table together, or when they got together with their mates. One father said he and his friends used to compare their hidings by seeing whose was the worst. Like, 'I got the hose what did you get?' or 'You got the jandal too?' However, I am convinced that the respondents' experiences of their childhood have been used more as a lesson to be better parents to their children rather than an experience which has made them in anyway unable to cope with life. I have seen and visited and spoken to some of the participants on the phone since the interviews. Some of them are known to me through the community. Many are productive and busy members of the Samoan community in different ways serving their communities, families and churches.

Parents adapted their cultural and religious beliefs. There was considerable flexibility and variation in how they acted on them. They chose to hold onto what was valuable and worthwhile for their parenting and selecting and excluding those practices that were not suitable to themselves. For some, their socio-economic situations did not allow them the amount of choices as others had; however, the values, the support and their faith in God were strong factors which contributed to their 'baskets of knowledge' for parenting their children.

Samoans of the future will, like the study respondents, constantly re-adapt, re-construct and re-shape for themselves what constitutes a Samoan parent in Aotearoa–New Zealand. Cultural concepts which are not conducive to keeping children safe and secure and do not enable children to reach their fullest potential have no room in our society or in our culture. Religion which condones actions of violence towards children is not the will of God but the will of misguided and ill-informed people. Parents who, through poverty and lack of education, cannot access the resources to increase their parenting skills and alleviate their stress need help from families, their communities, church, non-government and government organizations. The socio-economic factors must be taken into account if the abuse of our children is to be prevented. What are the images that our children see that we (society) value? What expectations do we put on our children?

As a society, we need to dig beneath the stereotypes to unearth the enormous reserve of resilience which exists, to allow the strategies and insights of people who have experienced the trauma of child abuse and survived to show us the way.

Culture defines who we are as people, the way we act, feel, and think. It is dynamic and evolving but remains an important part of the lives of Samoans. The values and beliefs remain constant but how they are enacted varies depending on the 'natural settings'. They are, however, the foundation to the way Samoans live their lives.

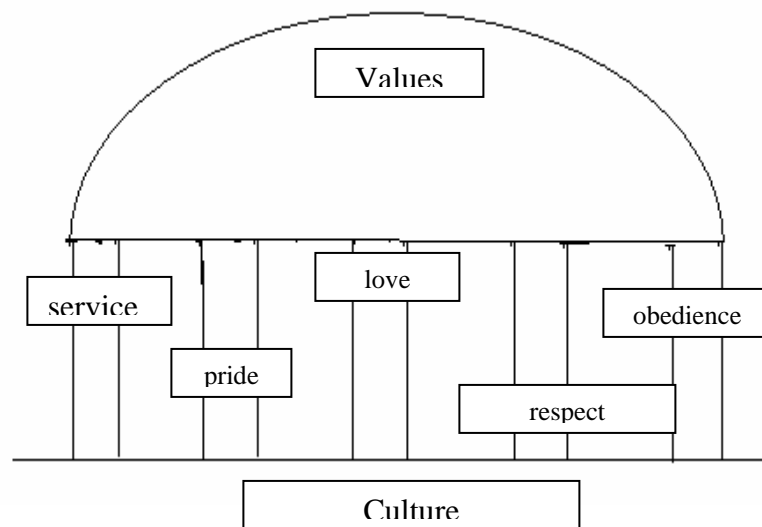


Needless to say, the findings also indicate that respondents did not blindly follow these values. They were open to “new horizons’ new insights and new challenges of understanding the paradoxes of shame and pride as well as what it means to be Samoan, in the global dispersing diasporas and what it feels like to be challenged by inter-generational differences.

The Samoan respondents in this study who have experienced child abuse have, through their stories, contributed strategies of strength and a resistance which has prevented child abuse from ruining their lives and the lives of their children.

This study concurs with Finkelhor and Korbin (1988) that serious consideration needs to be given to the social, economic and cultural conditions in which abuse occurs. There also needs to be collective action and commitment at all levels on a political and community front to making a change in preventing child abuse.

The poles of the Samoan fale illustrate the values as respondents have illustrated in this study. The centre whole evolves around aiga (family), with the paradoxes of ‘pride and shame’, the ‘love and the giving’, the ‘respect and the service’ ethos, and the ‘obedience to God, to elders and those in authority’. These were found to be important values to the Samoan study participants.



**Figure 2. Fale (House) of values.**

Samoans in this study were a proud group of people with strong values both in the fa’asamoa and Christian traditions. Several had experienced severe physical and emotional punishment in the past, but had an open-ness and willingness to not revert to the same practices with their children. All

appeared caring and positive and some were very insightful parents, having learned from their parents' mistakes and taken on board the strengths of their fa'asamoa and Christian values.

This study, in my view, has identified a combination of fa'asamoa and Christian values with the resiliency factors of an open-ness of parents to learning from their own experiences, a high level of support, high work ethic, and commitment to ensuring their children's needs were being met. On the other hand, the risk factors identified were harsh physical discipline and negative aspects of fa'asamoa and religion, lack of resources to access opportunities, and lack of emotional connection.

To conclude, there are those in this study who have been badly scarred through the abuse they received as children and young people. To survive it is nothing less than a miracle. Resiliency for them has been a reframing of their abuse to transform their thinking and their actions to overcome what has been for many of them a journey into hell. They are truly remarkable. Their legacy for their children is all the more precious because of their experience, their compassion, their humour and their amazing will to overcome and forgive.

## **Summary**

Migration has changed the values and beliefs of Samoan parents only in terms of the ways they approach them and on the emphasis of how they practiced these values. Respondents in this study have also dismantled some of the preconceived notions and attitudes about Samoan parents who, through acquisition of economic and social resources, higher levels of educational opportunities, new knowledge and their own self reflection and monitoring processes, have reinforced the positive rather than the negative stereotype of Samoan parents. There is among this group of parents a number of resiliency factors which have made them strong and nurturing towards their children in the face of their own childhood adversities and, for one or two, adversities which had continued into adulthood. The respondents in this study were adaptable, showed insight and courage and were positive role models for their children.

The threads of this thesis are gathered together and woven into the final chapter of the discussion.

## CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION

Samoans, have been immigrating to New Zealand pre and post WW1 and WW2. The reasons were numerous but two of the main reasons were educational and job opportunities. The elder respondents in this study along with their children exemplify this as many of them are children of parents who came out in the nineteen-fifties and -sixties. Some of the older respondents were members of the first wave of Samoan government scholarship students to New Zealand in the early 1950's. Many of the respondents' stories about the difficulties their parents faced as new immigrants to New Zealand concur with the literature. The issues concerned with acculturation, enculturation, alienation and marginalization can be found in much of the literature related to emigrants throughout the world. Meleisea and Schoeffel (1998) refer specifically to Samoan migrants to New Zealand. Other writers like Tyskka (2003) relate the same sort of experiences as Samoans, but with the Iranian populations in Canada. West (1998) collected the stories of six immigrant women in New Zealand, including one from Samoa. All the stories of new migrants to another country are similar as they encounter similar experiences of leaving ones country of origin and entering into a foreign country. West describes her experience as an immigrant:

We who move countries as adults are forever exiles; homesick for our old haunts and yet seeing them with a tourist's eye on our rare revisitings. We become bridges, across which our parents of one land and our children of another occasionally connect. (1998, 25)

Harwood et al.(1995) researched perceptions of attachment behaviour for Anglo and Puerto Rican children. The findings from this study on Puerto Rican and Anglo parents and their children are very relatable to the values of the Samoan mothers in this Samoan research. In this study the Puerto Rican parents commented that the children who displayed aggression, greed and egotism, ran the risk of rejection by the community for their lack of respect and obedience. Puerto Rican mothers reported the children in this study who behaved badly, were noisy, wilful and angry, were lacking in 'respect' and 'spoilt'. This was similar to the present study where Samoan parents, like the Puerto Rican parents, had the same value placed on obedience and respect.

The children of the Samoan migrants in this study have reaped the rewards that their emigrant parents came to New Zealand for a generation before. They made sacrifices in leaving Samoa. Those that have followed have reaped the fruits of their labour with their high work ethic, their faith in God, their love of their close and extended family both in Samoa, New Zealand and the wider

diaspora, and caring for them, through their remittances to fa'alavelave. Despite giving away resources of time and money and other intangibles and sometimes receiving the same kinds of resources these practices have all contributed to their wellbeing and quality of life in NZ. Their commitment to education for their children and giving up their language and their customs postponing transmission of some culture with attendant risks in terms of optimal age for language acquisition when they were young and at school until adulthood, has, for these respondents, paid dividends with some associated costs. The respondents in this study could be described as proud Samoans, who loved their children and wanted to do the best they could possibly do to ensure their children had access to opportunities which would stand them in good stead for the future.

But what was the loss to the parents, the early emigrants? Has the cost been greater or less? How do we evaluate these gains and losses at a micro and macro level? Is there a balance in terms of social versus economic gains and losses? Have we yet to see the full impact of these changes and approaches to parenting in the new horizons? If the values and beliefs have changed, what is the impact on Samoan parents and their children? Some answers to these questions have emerged from the voices of the respondents and concur with some of the literature. Research of any kind poses more questions after completion as it does prior to, and throughout. This study is no different.

It is fair to say that, having described the findings, that Samoans in this study have been exposed to adversity in many different ways. They have also adapted well in the face of these adversities and have demonstrated enormous competence. Researchers (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983, 1985) who have written about resilience speak of it as being mainly concerned with processes which involve family cohesion, belief systems, coping strategies and patterns of communication and problem-solving. Another significant determinant they identify is how the family forms a protective environment that fosters the development of children.

Kalil (2003) found that if one partner is nurturing and the other is violent that there will be sufficient protective factors to ensure the child's development will not to be hindered. Several examples have emerged from the data which illustrates that most of the respondents were physically disciplined or scolded by their mothers, but several examples have also found that fathers were also harsh disciplinarians.

In Fairbairn-Dunlop's (2002) research study among Samoans on the discipline of their children, she highlights the main reason for smacking as disobedience. Her study findings showed parents hit their children out of love. What emerged from the data in this study was most Samoan parents were seen by their children (now adults) as having smacked out of anger, tiredness and shame and often

when getting a hiding would tell their children they felt shamed by their children's behaviour. Many of the same respondents in this study also gave numerous examples of their parents' disciplining them with love. These apparently contradictory emotions were reported by the respondents in their recollections of their parents' affect, seen in their body language and their explanations at the time, when using words of love. This study also concurred with Fairbairn-Dunlop's findings where the respondent's parents and some of the respondents themselves felt if they did not hit their children, then the children would turn out "spoilt."

Those that were smacked by their parents did not say they felt their parents hated them. The evidence suggests they were told their parents loved them. A common saying among respondents who got hidings was that their parents 'didn't know any better' implying that hitting was the only strategy their parents knew to 'fa'atonu tamaiti' (teach children). The majority of respondents alluded to getting hidings as being normal. From their perspective 'everyone Samoan got hit'. It was the Samoan way and therefore what their parents were doing was 'just normal'.

My parents gave us a hiding. Mostly mum. It wasn't severe. Not compared to how I have learned how some of the Samoans raised their kids, not as bad as my cousins used to get... that was bad. But for my parents their hitting wasn't abusive. I felt loved. I was happy in general, my childhood was happy. Even if I got hidings. I felt loved. (4g)

Hertzberger, Potts and Dillon (1981) found similar responses in their study of children who, even though their parents abused them, felt loved and cared for.

Duituturaga (1988) saw parenting practices being affected by motive, context and consequence. If the parent meant to injure the child, then it was violent. But if it was an act of discipline then hitting the child was perceived by the parents as non-violent. Similarly, the respondents in this study also viewed the concept of hitting by their parents as an act of love for their child. The parents hit their child for mostly disobeying the parents and for answering back. None of the respondents claimed to hit their child because they had intentionally wanted to hurt the child. Most of the respondents in this study used hitting or smacking their child as a last resort, but a few admitted to striking out when very tired and under stress.

McLoyd and Smith (2002) in their research found that spanking was associated with an increase in behaviour problems over time in the context of low levels of emotional support, but not in the context of high levels of emotional support. While these views give the parents a rationale, a child might suffer similar injuries, consequences, through anger or love. This view of adult motive rather

than child impact defining abuse could justify injuries of a severity unacceptable from a wider community perspective.

In this study, two Samoan respondents, who were severely smacked by a parent, told how they were rebellious and angry especially at school and as teenagers. Later both women used to hit their children when they were little, but as their children got older they stopped for different reasons. I would speculate that the protective factor for both these respondents as children was the high level of emotional support from the other parent, their 'toughness' and their intelligence. This concurs with a study of young Israeli children where toughness and intellect helped survival but with sequelae of attachment issues for some (Zimrin, 1986 cited in Gramezy 1993).

The families the Richies studied in New Zealand in 1981 focussed on obedience and viewed it as a moral issue and expected their children to "do as they were told" and to "do it now". Forty eight percent saw dis-obedience as a constant problem. According to the Ritchies, 33% of the children will never experience what it is like to be happy. Their parents who resorted to a negative style of parenting involving harsh punishment and negative sanctions were mostly doing so because they were angry. Although all the respondents who were hit gave various reasons for being hit most claimed their parents "got angry with them because"... and then gave the reason.

Vaillant (1993) comments that a significant factor which is significant in all the research around resilience is support, whether from a parent, teacher, colleague, friend or pastor. If there is support from these people then people are more likely to recover. The respondents in this study spoke of supportive family members including parents and friends and later in their lives, their own children and partners.

Religion and the influence of the church was a factor which the respondents all agreed had an impact on their lives. Firstly, each of the respondents, whether regular church goer or not, believed in the concept of a God, namely a Christian God and all believed in the value of Christianity and fa'asamoa pertaining to and promoting behaviours of love, respect, being kind to others and honouring parents. Secondly, their religion gave them hope. However, in saying that, it was also clear from the findings that the younger generation had a far more flexible approach to religion and far less rigidity in conforming to religious practice than their parents, for example, church service attendance every Sunday, bible class, choir practice and autalavou. The majority of the respondents in this study saw church and their faith as a very important part of their lives as a family but there were also others who viewed the church and some of its modelling of these values as hypocritical. The giving and naming of the amounts people had given to the church was seen as an issue for

younger respondents. They equated it to unnecessary competition where parishioners who were poor were made to feel ashamed and those who gave more were made to feel proud but ultimately those that did not give as much were made to feel they had to give more. Respondents also saw the church as having the power for positive change and had a role to play in helping people give less to churches in terms of fa'alavelave. There was a sense that disciplining of children was also something that the church had an influence to change, as people were interpreting the scriptures in a way that they thought was not what God had intended.

It is because of the churches' influence on the Samoan communities that it would be remiss of the Government or other agencies not to include the church and Ministers as key stakeholders in addressing issues regarding families. The evidence, both anecdotal and through other surveys, shows Samoans are in the majority, affiliated to a church (Statistics NZ, 2001) and Ministers have immense influence, both positive and negative with Samoan families. The positive aspects are that people see their faith and their Christian beliefs as being of help to them in times of adversity whether it is during death or stress. In my opinion it would therefore more acceptable if organisations and service providers worked with the Ministers and churches to mobilise collective action for change with Samoan families which may be more cost-effective.

What this study has shown is the enormous capacity for Samoans to endure. The protective factors which emerged from each occasion of adversity maintained the respondent until the next time. However, in the ensuing years with some of the people in this study, harsh physical discipline, emotional and verbal abuse had ceased, but the damage to the relationship and the person remained - albeit beneath the surface. According to the respondents who suffered 'they were O.K', but in effect, the full potential of their 'whole being' in my view, was still to be fully realised. Some were dynamic people within the community but I wonder how much more dynamic, energised and sustained in their adult years they would have become if their relationship issues with their parents were resolved and if their childhoods were more focused on their emotional and developmental needs. There is obviously a balance that needs to be shown here of those things highly valued by the Christian faith and those by the fa'asamoa. Whilst the respondents could understand where their parents were coming from in terms of their behaviour, they, nevertheless, did not accept it as a method they wished to use for their own children.

This study needs to be expanded. There are some clear policy areas around health and education for parents. The Pacific population of New Zealand is now about 60% New Zealand born. Many will not have had the support structures that their parents had of family living close by, either with them or in close proximity. The assistance from aunts, cousins, siblings and parents may be more of an

issue in New Zealand than in Samoa. New parents will not be getting the same level of assistance here that their mothers and grandmothers may have had. Parenting programmes for young Samoan mothers need to take cognisance of their cultural background and build in support structures which will assist them in increasing their parenting skills. Introducing programmes for young parents in schools and or church youth groups which look at the management of children's behaviour, conflict resolution skills and child development in my view would be helpful. Mothers in this study allude to having access to resources at their childrens' schools which helped them with strategies when dealing with their childrens' behaviour and their own anger. It helped the respondents to cope as parents. For mothers from the islands, language-specific programmes tailored to their specific learning needs are recommended. Resources in their own language and resource people who understand the way they think, feel and act in my view would go a long way. Whatever programmes are enacted need to be ethnic specific and in the case of younger New Zealand born mothers conducted in English as that would be their language of fluency. However, this study has also illustrated the influence of the churches and the Ministers and a programme without their support would not be as successful in reaching the masses. Schools can assist parents by including parenting programmes in their schools or partner with the churches to teach these programmes.

This study concurs with Finkelhor and Korbin (1988) that serious considerations need to be given to the social, economic, and cultural conditions in which abuse occurs. There also needs to be collective action and commitment at all levels on a political and community front as well as support and commitment to making a change in preventing child abuse at all levels.



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## **Glossary:**

Aiga - *family*

Afakasi - *half caste*

Alofa - *love*

Aoga Fa'asamoa - *Samoan pre-school*

Aufaipese - *choir*

Autalavou - *youth group*

Fa'alogata - *disobedience*

Fa'alavelave – *trouble/event requiring assistance*

fa'atonu tamaiti - *teach the children*

Fa'asamoa - *Samoan way of life*

Fale - *traditional Samoan house*

Feau - *jobs, chores*

E le lava le a'oa'o - *lacking in good teaching*

Ie Toga - *Samoan Fine mat*

Kilikiti - *Samoan cricket*

Lotu - *prayer or church*

Mana - *reputation, prestige*

Matai - *Head of extended family*

Mealofa - *gift*

Papalagi - *white person*

Puletasi - *Samoan style dress*

Salu - *broom*

Tete'e atu le sasa ma le upu malosi - *Stop the hitting and the strong words*

tulou - *excuse me*

Referred to: 'A Simplified Dictionary of Modern Samoa'. R. Allardice (1985)

Tongan words (in reference to research approach)

Toli, *gathering*

Luva, *give away*

kakala, *garland*

