

FOFOLA E FALA KAE ALEA E KĀINGA:

Exploring the issues of communication regarding
Tongan Youth Suicide in South Auckland, New
Zealand

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There is a growing amount of literatures and researches examining key factors that contribute to the vulnerability of Pacific youth, especially suicide. In 2011, there was a spike in the number of young Tongans in New Zealand who lost their lives to this epidemic and this number continued to increase significantly. One of the main concerns that came out during the public meetings and initiatives to remedy the aforementioned issue was communication. The discussions touched on lack of communication, miscommunication, failure to initiate communication in relation to culture and intergenerational differences. If communication is a major contributing factor to the cause of the problem, can directly addressing communication issues help forge a solution to youth vulnerability to suicide? As a result of these discussions, it became evident that there was a lack of understanding in terms of what communication really mean to Tongan youth. This thesis aims to explore Tongan youths' understandings of communication, their preferred ways of communicating, what hindered, encouraged and/or influenced this and whether their perceptions were influenced by Tongan cultural values, beliefs and practices. These can be explored through the use of individual interviews (*talanoa*). To capture youth's views, a qualitative research methodology namely phenomenology was used along with *talanoa* as the cultural research method as well as the *Kakala* research framework to carry out the research. Sessions of *talanoa* were carried out with 12 participants aged between 16 to 24 years. The participants were recruited from South Auckland using a snowball approach. The participants consist of seven females, four males and one *fakaleiti* (transsexual male). *Talanoa* sessions were audio recorded and transcribed. An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the transcribed data so as to remain as faithful as possible to the participants' voices. Findings highlighted the importance of a strong preference for face to face communication to this group especially during vulnerable times. Participants defined communication as more than just words. There was strong recognition of the power of non-verbal cues and also the intangible elements within communication such as *fatongia* (roles and responsibilities). Even though participants comprised of Tongan-born and New Zealand-born, only one of them speaks fluent Tongan. However, they all identified very clearly with being Tongan and very much aware of the culturally defined communication behaviours such as the *fevahevahe'aki* (sharing), *fakafekau'aki* (connecting with) and *tauhi vā* (nurturing relationships). Although it was not the intention of the study to directly find out if they attempted suicide, eleven of the twelve participants emotionally shared that they had attempted suicide largely as a result of their inability to communicate during times

of stress. It is hoped that findings from this exploratory study would add to the body of knowledge that can become the basis for planning intervention strategies for vulnerable Pacific and Tongan youth. Furthermore, findings from this study would be a great starting point for further research and discussion about communication behaviours within families (parenting), youth, and community levels. It also informs the practice of those working with vulnerable youth, such as health professionals, mental health services and policy makers.

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List of Abbreviations

CMDHB	Counties Manukau District Health Board
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Appendix 3a: Participant Information Sheet – English

Appendix 3b: Participant Information Sheet – Tongan

Appendix 4a: Participant Consent Form – English and Tongan

Anga faka-Tonga	<i>Tongan culture; Tongan way of life</i>
‘Api	<i>Allotment of ground; home; area of land or enclosure, devoted to a particular purpose</i>
‘Ātakai	<i>To surround or encircle or enclose with a fence or wall</i>
‘Atamai	<i>Mind, understanding, intelligence, reason</i>
Ako	<i>To learn, to study, to receive an education</i>
Anga	<i>to habit, custom, nature, quality, character, characteristic, way, form, style, manner, method, behaviour, conduct, demeanour, way(s) of acting</i>
‘Eiki	<i>Chief; man or woman of chiefly rank</i>
Fa’itoka	<i>Cemetery, graveyard</i>
Fahu	<i>(Man’s) sisters son or grandson</i>
Faka’apa’apa	<i>To do homage or obeisance; to show deference or respect or courtesy</i>
Fakamā	<i>Causing shame, shameful, disgraceful, ignominious</i>
Fakatōkilalo	<i>To be humble; self-abasing, self-derogatory</i>
Fala	<i>Mat, floor mat, mat worn as a loin-cloth</i>
Fāmili	<i>Family</i>
Fatongia	<i>Duty, obligation</i>
Feohi	<i>Fellowship or communion or moral and spiritual comradeship with one another also material of things</i>
Fevahevahe’aki	<i>To consider carefully, to give careful consideration to</i>
Fono	<i>Town or village meeting</i>
Fonua	<i>Land, country, people of the land</i>
Hou’eiki	<i>Chiefs, people of high rank</i>
Kāinga	<i>Relation, relative, brother or sister in the sense of comrade or compatriot</i>
Laumālie	<i>Soul, Spirit</i>
Lotofiemālie	<i>to be easy in mind, contented, satisfied; to be free from pain or discomfort or sorrow or malice</i>
Mamahi’i me’a	<i>To be zealous for, to stand up for, willing heart</i>
Mo’oni	<i>True, genuine, real, actual,</i>
‘Ofa	<i>To love; be fond of, be kind of; highly emotional</i>
‘Osikiavelenga	<i>To spend or devote all one’s ability, to do one’s utmost</i>
‘Otua	<i>Object of worship, deity, God</i>
Pālangi	<i>Referred to a white coloured individual</i>
Pōtalatalanoa	<i>Talking constantly throughout the evening</i>
Sino	<i>Body</i>
Talanoa	<i>To talk in an informal way, to tell stories or relate experiences</i>
Tapu	<i>Forbidden, prohibited, unlawful, scared</i>
Tauhi	<i>To tend to, to look after, to take care of, to keep safe, to preserve</i>

<i>Tauhi vā</i>	<i>Maintaining relationships</i>
<i>Taungutu</i>	<i>To answer back to</i>
<i>Tofi’a</i>	<i>Inheritance, heritage, patrimony</i>
<i>Totonu</i>	<i>Straight, right, correct, befitting</i>
<i>Tu’a</i>	<i>Back, space or place or time behind; commoners</i>
<i>Tu’i</i>	<i>King</i>
<i>‘Ulu</i>	<i>Head</i>
<i>Vā</i>	<i>Space, distance between</i>

Dedication

'Alā si'eku kui Sela Fuavea Fuka, mahalo he'ikai malava 'e ha lea pe ko ha ngāue ke fakae'a atu 'eku 'ofa kiate koe' grandma. 'Oku ou laulotoa ho'o ngaahi akonaki' 'aho mo e pō ka e taumaiā 'oku lava ke ho'ata meiate au ha vaeua 'o e laulōtaha si'o anga' mo si'o tō'onga'. Foki 'eku manatu ki he ngaahi 'aho 'o 'etau fuofua fakahemata mai ki he fonua ni. Fēfē 'emau fiefia he ki'i kasa ne mau taufetongi hono hulu ki 'olunga mo tākoto ho nima ka ke fanafana me'a kiate kimautilu'?, seuke tā koā ko e amokofe ia 'o e 'olunga he Kaliloa 'a e Tonga'. Fēfē 'etau fa'a pō fananga'? Fēfē 'etau fa'a hivehiva?. Fēfē 'etau fa'a 'alu ki he lotu' ka e toe mālie ange 'etau fa'a pōtalanoa' mo e talanoa hua'. Fuavea, 'oku te'eki taumatala mei hoku loto 'a e fakatoka loto ne ke feia'. 'Oku te'eki 'aupito ke ngatuvai 'i he'eku manatu 'a ho'o faifatongia' he 'oku tu'u ia ko ha pā kuo fa'u pea hiliō ko ha kakala tauleva 'oku fungani hake 'i he tautakele hoku mafu tefua'.

Grandma

***Ko e mo'unga koe 'o 'emau feinga'
Ko e lepa touaki koe 'o 'emau fakama'unga'
Ko e maama kamo koe he'emau kainikavea'
Ko e vaikau'aki koe 'i he'emau līfusia'
Ko homau 'aitoli koe 'i he 'ulungaanga'
Ko e tuliki tau'olunga koe he 'emau ikuna'
ko e helo koe 'i he tou'anga 'ofa'
Ko e tesitemeniti koe 'o e pununga 'ofa'***

To the professor of my heart, thank you is not enough to reciprocate your teachings. This study is a reflection of the sacrifices you made and your selfless giving.



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*‘Eiki teu hiva pe ho’o ‘ofa ‘i he ‘aho pea mo e pō kotoa
Te u fai ho fakahikihiki ‘i taimi mo ‘itāniti.*

*‘Oku ou tomu’a tuku ha fakafeta’i ki he ‘Otua’ ‘i he ‘ene ‘ofa ta’e filifili mānako ma’a e
ki’i finemotu’a tu’a ni kae’uma’a hoku ki’i fāmili. ‘Oku ou kole ke u fakamalumu atu ‘i
he talamalu ‘o e fonua’ pea fakatulou atu kihe Tangata Whenua o Aotearoa, kia hou’eiki
pehē ki ha’a matāpule, ha’a taula’eiki pea mo e taki lotu ‘oku nau le’o e ‘ā vahevahe ‘o
Saione. Fakatapu ki ha’a poto, ki he Tonga kotoa, ki he To’utupu Tonga ‘i loto Aotearoa
pea ki ha sola mo ha vūlangi ‘o a’usia ‘etau fānau. Kole pē ke u ma’u ‘a e faingamālie
ko ‘eni ke fakahoko atu ‘eku ki’i fakamālō tu’a ni.*

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In Memory of Reverend Siale Sitiveni Saili

'I he tōfaki 'a e fakakaukau' mo e mou'i ni ke matua'i 'a e mala'e 'o e 'ilo', na'e lahi hono ngaahi faingata'a 'i he vaa'i hala' mo e feinga'i 'a e mā'opo'opo 'o e 'uhinga'i me'a', pehē ki hono fakamo'oni'i 'o ha 'ata'i fakakaukau ke hoa tatau mo e faka'amu'.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a University or other institution of higher learning except where due acknowledgment is made in the Acknowledgments

Signed
.....

Date
.....

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
(Helen Keller)

Background of the study

In 2011 the Tongan community met due to their great concern at the recent number of Tongan youth suicides within the Auckland area. A *fono* (meeting) was organised to bring together the Tongan community and leaders to collaborate and collectively *talanoa*¹ about how this issue can be addressed (Tongan Youth Trust, 2011). As a Tongan social work practitioner, I had a keen awareness of the vulnerability that many of our Pacific and Tongan youth face in New Zealand today. During my time serving in frontline and grassroots within Mental Health Services I witnessed this vulnerability on a daily basis and in many forms which lead to at-risk behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, as well as self-harming. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) (2013) report describes New Zealand as being among the top fifteen global countries for suicide rates. Although the suicide rate for Pacific youth is lower than that of Maori and European, suicidal ideation – that is people's thoughts of engaging in suicide and related behaviour - is rated to be highest among Pacific youth (Ministry of Health, 2012a). In addition, the Ministry of Health claims Pacific youth are twice as likely to be at risk to depression or anxiety issues or to attempt suicide, in comparison with the rest of New Zealand's population (Statistics New Zealand, 2011).

The data showing an escalation of death by suicide by Pacific people in 2010 and 2011 was particularly distressing, as was the report by Youthline (2013) showing that there had been 30 deaths by suicide of Pacific people during this period. Approximately 20 of these deaths were from the Counties Manukau District Health Board (CMDHB) area, where I was working: it was worrying to see the high proportion of suicide victims were from the Mangere area and the youthful nature of this group aged 15 – 24 years (Counties Manukau District Health Board, 2012).

The rising concerns around Tongan youth suicide and especially the alarming figures of those who self-harm became the focus of this study. More so, the motivation for this study emerged from research demonstrating that suicide attempts are also likely to contribute significantly to morbidity (Beautrias, Joyce & Mulder, 1996). Data for 2013, shows a decrease in suicide numbers but the annual total has remained consistent over the last six years, continuing to sit in the mid five hundred mark.

¹ *Talanoa* is a well-known Tongan concept, it means to talk, to tell stories or relate experiences (Churchward, 1959, p. 447).

There has been a decrease in pre-teen and teen suicide, however, the disturbing issue is that there has been an increase in the number of females (153). Prior to the year 2012 - 2013, the average male to female suicide ratio was about 3:1, while in 2013 it was estimated at 2.5:1 (Chief Coroner of New Zealand, 2013). There have been positive trends, for example Maori suicide has dropped for the first time in the last eight years (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b).

Suicide is often described as the 'ultimate' expression of vulnerability. In the media and literature, Pacific youth, and within that Tongan youth are often portrayed through the use of deficit statistics, for example, the Pacific youth are increasingly exposed to "social influences and pressures" such as indulging in underage binge drinking, youth gang affiliation, drug abuse, smoking, truancy, youth suicide and self-harming behaviours (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a; Fehoko, 2013; Adolescent Health Research Group, 2003, 2001). Other reports propose that the social pressures that Pacific youth experience today are associated with a loss of identity security (Ministry of Social Development, 2004). A UNESCO report, for example, notes the importance of culture within identity security:

(that) from the depth of understanding and value of traditional forms, students will gain a strong sense of cultural identity and understanding of who they are ... this will provide a foundation for the development of further skills and knowledge bases, contexts, and understandings for life in the twenty-first century. (UNESCO, 2002, p. 3)

I pondered on the question of whether this loss of identity was happening in New Zealand and was this a factor triggering youth suicide?

As a Tongan raised in New Zealand, I was familiar with the challenges that Tongan youth may encounter in making their lives in New Zealand. There is consensus in the literature about the types of challenges young Pacific people born in their homelands face when they move to western, modern and cosmopolitan societies such as New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America (see Morton, 1996, 1998, Morton-Lee, 2003; Anae, 1998; Hansen, 2004). These include tensions between the expectations of adhering to cultural norms within the home and the experience of applying these behaviours outside the home. For example, Tupuola (1996) suggests that crossing between borders (home and school) often entail feeling tormented, confused, frustrated and alone. I too, have experienced similar struggles and tensions between what was taught and expected of me as a Tongan migrant living within a Tongan home and being a Tongan migrant in a mainstream school and community. Confusion about how I was expected to act and behave impacted on my perceptions of how to relate to people, and furthermore on my ability to communicate. Without possessing what I know

now to be the skill of regulating emotions, I can remember starting to resent those around me – not only my parents for the Tongan norms they stressed but also my *Pālangi* (New Zealand European people) friends, teachers and others for the differences I noted between their worlds and mine.

As reported, living between two worlds is a reality that many Pacific youth face, as they struggle to merge and make meaning of the values, beliefs and practices that they learn at home and at the same time connect with the new learning's in the new social, educational and environments they find themselves in (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003). Tiatia (2003) coined the phrase 'being caught between two worlds' to describe youth experiences entailing being unable to share views, feelings and talk.

As I pondered the issue of youth suicide, I thought back to my years as a youth. Who did I have to talk to about my feelings? Who would I talk to? And who do Pacific youth today talk to and how do they talk? Would having someone to talk to have made a difference in my life and choices?

At the Tongan community *fono* in 2011, the discussion focused widely on what could be done to address youth suicide and what services were available to support youth and their families. As noted, the term 'communication' was bandied about, with words such as 'we must communicate' (Tongan Youth Trust, 2011). The idea that communication issue(s) and/or barrier(s) was a key factor in suicide and vulnerability amongst Tongan youth led me to explore the issue of communication by Tongan youth more deeply. I found that many reports point to communication as the issue. For example, a *Tangata Pasifika* documentary highlighted viewpoints from Pacific health professionals and research academics that communication was an issue in relation to at-risk youth (Tangata Pasifika, 2010; 2013). In a newspaper article, Dr Foliaki, a Tongan Consultant Psychiatrist has also stated that 'the two cardinal signs parents need to look out for in their young children are consistent aggression and inattention often caused by parents' lack of communication or spending time with their children'. Foliaki added that gone unchecked, these influences often led to dire consequences. Furthermore, that youth were most at risk when they felt unsupported, pressured and isolated and as a result they became vulnerable to a life of crime, violence, alcohol, and drugs and even bullying (Rees, 2003).

Research Gap

As communication became the key focus to addressing youth vulnerability during this time I began to review whether there was any research on this matter. What did this mean? These issues represented an identifiable research gap. There are several epidemiological investigations on youth suicide in

Aotearoa (Beautrias, Collings, Ehrhardt & Henare, 2005) as well as anecdotal evidence. However, there is a huge gap in the literature that specifically focuses on vulnerable Pacific youth and communication and what this meant to Pacific Youth. Three studies within Aotearoa New Zealand have closely explored Pacific youth at risk of suicide. First, research shows a lack of communication due to the inability to speak English contributes to suicide attempts of New Zealand-born Samoan youth (Tiatia, 2003). Second, although the recent study by Puna (2013) does not specifically isolate communication, her study recognises that remaining connected is important to the positive mental wellbeing for New Zealand-born Cook Islanders as it contributes to having a balanced life. A third study focusing on the perceptions of parents and caregivers of Tongan youth suicide victims revealed that the breakdown in parent-child relationships and communication increases the vulnerability of Tongan youth living in New Zealand to suicide (Sinisa, 2013). This and other reports indicated the sparse amount of literature about Pacific youth suicide in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tiatia & Coggan, 2001). It also demonstrated the lack of any current study which specifically examines suicidal behaviours of Tongan youth, and especially of their perceptions and experiences of communication during times of vulnerability.

I started also to look at strategies in place within local and national agencies. What was evident is that suicidal behaviour contributes to on-going poor health outcomes for Pacific youth and there is correlation between youth suicide and mental illness (Ministry of Health, 2011; Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). A report produced by the Ministry of Social Development (2008) emphasised that good communication enhances opportunities for social connectedness as indicators of wellbeing in the lives of children and young people in New Zealand. Statistics from 0800whatsup and Youthline telephone counselling service in 2006 indicated that a high proportion of youth make contact with these two services in search of talking with a counsellor about relationship issues. These included but were not limited to 'on-going problems in peer relationships and difficulties in maintaining relationships through family conflict or family breakdown'. Finally, relationship with partners (girlfriends/ boyfriends) was the main concern for teenage callers (Ministry of Health, 2008a).

When searching within my own workforce, I found that the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards within the Auckland region worked in collaboration with Suicide Prevention Intervention New Zealand to orchestrate a Pacific rapid 'on the ground' response. This involved partnering up with community organisations to identify why there was such an increase, and ensure support systems were being put in place to address family and community needs.

Regardless of great efforts being made by the government to provide resources to resolve such issues, the complex challenge to find out why Tongan youth continue to take their own lives remains. The urge and call is for our community to come together and ask why our young people are dying. What are the signs to look out for? What can we do to help? If these questions are not being asked, the statistics will continue to rise. As noted, New Zealand sits on the second highest youth suicide rate in the world amongst males and third highest youth suicide rate amongst OECD countries.

The statement from the 2011 *fono* regarding communication supports the Ministry of Youth Development (2002) which emphasises that 'youth development needs good information'. Therefore, effective research, evaluation, information gathering and sharing is crucial to set the basis for further plans, as it provides a sense of contributing something of value to society; feeling connectedness to others and society; belief that they have choices about their future; feeling positive and comfortable with their own identity.

Despite identifying communication as an issue to at risk youth, there has not been a study specific to Pacific or Tongan youth communication issues which locates the experience of youth and their voice in relation to communication. I saw it as critical to address the concerns based on this gap. Questions such as whom and how does youth communicate during times of vulnerability? Acceptance by others from their cultural groups was another factor noted by Mila-Schaaf (2010), this was critical for Pacific youth and it became a protective factor for them. Such research is also necessary for youth voice to be heard.

Research Questions

The research question addressed in this study was whether there is a connection between the way Tongan youth communicate and suicide attempt and/or ideation. In light of the gaps presented within the literature, the following questions were formulated to frame this study:

- 1) What does communication mean for Tongan youth?
- 2) What are their preferred ways of communication?
- 3) What factors impact on their communication?
- 4) How can communication be improved?

I saw these questions could only be answered by having *talanoa* with Tongan youth.

Significance of Study

My decision to carry out this study came about from a deep personal and professional concern influenced by the on-going dialogue about whether communication has a connection to migrant youth vulnerability and more importantly to their risk to suicide. Coming from a family that gravitates towards the pursuit of wellbeing, I was curious about what could be done about this? What is the answer to this? What were the questions that were not being asked and/or addressed? Is this the same as *pālangi* communication and/or expectations or is it different?

The aims of this study were to gain a better understanding of Tongan youth views of communication especially during vulnerable times. Secondly, to help address and improve communication issues for Tongan youth who may in turn help to improve their health and wellbeing and reduce at-risk behaviours. Researchers claim that youth health and wellbeing are central in determining the health and wellbeing of society in general. Considerable preventable morbidity and mortality in adulthood is attached to behaviours that occur during adolescence (Ministry of Health, 2012a; Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). Hence, research aims are to generate concepts and notions that will build better relationships for Tongan youth and their families for better communities.

Research findings will identify Tongan youths' preferred ways of communicating, which in turn has the potential to provide better ways to working with youth. It will provide recommendations to the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders to assist staff in making policies which may improve the health outcomes for Tongan (and possibly other Pacific) families. Finally it is anticipated that the outcomes of this study will support the Tongan community to increase awareness about youth communication issues that in turn may help reduce youth at risk of suicidal behaviour (Ministry of Health, 2012b). It is hoped that this research will provoke dialogue at national and international level in regards to counselling at risk and/or vulnerable youth.

My Stance, locating the researcher

In my professional and personal experience, communication is a process that allows tensions to be discussed and acknowledged. I firmly believe that if youth are given the opportunity to voice and share their experiences and concerns it would help regulate any negative emotions. However, it was unknown what the nature of the communication would be for Tongan youth.

Mālō e lelei is the way I usually greet someone; the sound and vibration of these words transmits power which captures and connects me to who I am. It is a centre piece unifying part of my being, a story that provides a glimpse into my world (a world that is innate) - a Tongan world that often struggles to find existence alongside a world that is foreign, a world that encapsulates my truth, my order and how I place myself in relation to others. Just like everyone else, I too have a creation story, a narrative that links me back to where my *fonua*² is buried. My journey started from the Kingdom of Tonga, born to a mother from the village of *Haveluloto* and to a father in the village of *Kolomotu'a*. I am the second eldest of seven children, four who were Tongan-born and three who were New Zealand-born. At the age of seven, our family migrated to Aotearoa, New Zealand with my father's sole goal being to invest in our future, just like many other Tongan/Pacific migrant families. The crossing entailed tensions and struggles, yet these struggles contributed to building of resiliency and strength that later became my coping mechanisms. Residing in a two bedroom Housing New Zealand home in Mt Roskill which sheltered three families, we were pressed to create space for accommodation. My grandmother was a skilful woman who transformed a shed to a sleep-out and made this more comfortable than having one's own bedroom. Despite anxieties with the living conditions, the two worlds that I was living in – the Tongan world and the new world which I become slowly immersed in (*pālangi*³ world) started to conflict with each other. Within the home I was taught the *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way) to always be respectful but at school I was imparted with knowledge and the right to question things. I continued to live and travel between these two worlds for quite some time. During my youth years I became very skilful at navigating between spaces where I did not form a new identity but shifting in-between borders which was reflective of the context I belonged in. I was very fortunate to have been raised by my paternal grandmother who became a very instrumental figure in making sense of my struggle to navigate between these borders.

It was not until I started my social work training that I started to reflect back on my childhood years and question why my reality (values and beliefs and practices) were different from those with whom I schooled and grew up. How did I survive? What was significant about my voyage that enabled me to see land? It dawned on me that the many (various) *pōtalatalanoa* (conversations) that occurred in our family home upon the *fala* (mat) every evening with my siblings and grandmother were

²*Fonua* in this context refers to the placenta.

³ *Pālangi* refers to New Zealand European people

instrumental and had become the protective factor which warmed my heart, my feelings of security and knowledge of who I am, and thereby assisted in my journey as a youth. Although I did not realise this at the time, it was during these times on the *fala* that I learned how to respectfully enter into a conversation where I was able to learn about my *fatongia* (responsibilities) as a mother, wife, daughter, granddaughter, sister, cousin and a friend. I learned that I am my *fāmili* (family) and my *fāmili* is me, I discovered that I am my *kāinga* (extended family) and my *kāinga* is me, I realised that I am *Tonga* and *Tonga* is me.

Therefore, I see the process of building and maintaining respectful relationships is fundamental to connections in activities, actions and ways of knowing. When I reflect about what a 'respectful relationship' means, as a Tongan I believe that a relationship signifies a sacred association that has an intent, purpose and obligation which elucidates how practice, behaviours and attitudes should be shaped. I believe this is a huge component that is very much centred on the ability of relating to and communicating with one another.

As noted in my story, communication was at the heart of my upbringing and instrumental in how I viewed the environment and the world around me, and how I make meaning and connection to my place in the world. Working in a people industry meant that I have been fortunate in having encounters with youth in a professional and personal capacity and I knew some of the females' story in relation to their inability to communicate due to various factors but especially cultural conflicts and its impact on their relationships. Also my story is set against the rapidly growing and changing times, especially with the distractions that youth are facing today.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is presented in seven chapters including the present chapter which has outlined the thesis aims. The contents of the remaining six chapters are as follows:

Chapter 2: This chapter sets the context for this study, with particular emphasis on the place of Tongan youth in Tonga the homeland and Tongans in New Zealand. It also outlines and explores *anga faka-Tonga* within a traditional structure and its relationship to communication within a Tongan worldview.

Chapter 3: Literature Review presents the literature examining relevant research relating to communication. Research is sourced from a range of key themes identified. This provides a platform and direction that is the foundation of the research.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Method. This chapter outlines the qualitative research method used and draws on the phenomenological framework which will discuss and explain with its relevance to the research method. A rationale for using the *talanoa* method and the *kakala* framework is presented. The participant recruitment criteria and reflection of the journey are also highlighted.

Chapter 5: Findings, the results from the individual *talanoa* with the 12 Tongan youth participants is presented. The key themes are highlighted with participants' voices including their perception and experiences to support the themes.

Chapter 6: Discussion of the Findings This chapter compares and contrasts these voices with findings from the literature.

Chapter 7: Conclusion Chapter seven summarises the main findings of the research. It provides a critical review of the strengths and limitations of this study together with suggestions that warrant further research.

“Fatu fala ‘i fale lalava” (Mat designing in the house of lashing)

Introduction

As this study centres on Tongan youth experiences of communication it is important to discuss the cultural context - the *anga*⁴ *faka-Tonga* (Tongan customary ways) and *mo’ui faka-Tonga* (Tongan way of life) – within which communication takes place generally and which sets the patterns of communication behaviours. This chapter is presented in two sections. Part one presents the *anga faka-Tonga* as practised in the homeland and, which locates Tongans in relation to who they are, who they are connected with and the expected behaviours and practices of their place and role. The *anga faka-Tonga* sets the social structure and organization including the division of roles within the family, community and nation. The focus of Part Two is on the Tongan community in New Zealand today including questions of whether and how the endurance of customary ways may be influencing the lives of Tongan youth in New Zealand today and more particularly the ways they communicate and with whom.

Part One: Tonga the homeland

The Kingdom of Tonga lies in the South Pacific, approximately 2000 kilometres north east of New Zealand. Tonga is the only constitutional monarchy in the South Pacific region. It is home to nearly 103,252 people, constituting a relatively young population (Tonga Department of Statistics, 2011). Outward migration is significant, data shows there are more Tongan people living outside the country today than in the homeland. The main destinations are New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America.

Tala ‘o e fonua – Tongan worldview

Tongan communication practices are influenced by the Tongan worldview, which locates the values, beliefs and behaviours that underpin the Tongan social system which has been described as hierarchical, ranking based and ascribed by birth. *‘Tala ‘o e fonua*⁵, though literally translated to ‘story

⁴ *Anga* refers to habit, custom, nature, quality, character, characteristic, way, form, style, manner, method, behaviour, conduct, demeanor, way(s) of acting (Churchward, 1959, p. 7).

⁵ The term *‘tala ‘o e fonua*’ can be broken down into three words. *Tala* is defined as to tell (Churchward, 1959, p.446), *‘o* is a preposition in this context meaning ‘of’, *‘e* is an article which represents ‘the’ and *fonua* means “land, country or territory” (p. 186). The term translates to “tell the story of the land”.

of the land', Vaivaifolau Kailahi (Kato'i e tala 'o Tonga) in his speech at the Tongan language week August 2014 at The Mangere Probation Service claims that '*tala 'o e fonua*' encapsulates the way of becoming and way of being. This accounts for a Tongan worldview that centres on three notions: the sacredness within all things; priority is people, family and community, and relationships as fundamental to how people live and relate to one another. While there is a relationship between these three, each is discussed separately.

Firstly, as in many cultures, there are Tongan narratives connecting people to their creation story through lineage to ancestors. There are different versions of why, where and how Tongan culture came about before the advent of Christianity. While the church plays a pivotal role today in facilitating social order of what is expected to be *mo'oni* (truth) and *totonu* (right), long time held religious rituals associated with key life events are central to the *anga faka-Tonga*. As noted, within a Tongan worldview there is sacredness in how things are related to each other. For example, the sacredness of peoples relationships with the Gods, transfers to the sacredness of the relationship between people and with the monarchy, nobles and commoners. Tuitahi describes this sacred relationship with these words:

Maintaining a sustainable, harmonious and balanced relationship with nature and one's fellow human beings, both at the individual and collective levels, illustrates the spiritual dimension of *fonua*. Since the introduction of monotheistic religion, Tongans re-conceptualized the spiritual dimension of *fonua* to include God, the creator of the universe. (Tu'itahi, 2009, p.14)

Secondly, the Tongan world is community and people focussed, where the motivation is for the good of all with lesser attention on the individual. It functions on a belief in the relationship between the parts of mind, body and soul as represented in the *fonua* concept which will be discussed.

The chronicle of knowledge which is embedded in the Tongan worldview does not pertain or focus on an individual but centres on sharing and mutual exchange for the benefit of the whole. Therefore, a Tongan worldview is based on knowledge that is transmitted through lineages and from ancestors to the next generation. It has strong connections within the *nofo 'a e kāinga Tonga* (the dwelling together of Tongan families) and how the Tongan society is socially constructed as in the *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way of life). In my view, *Anga faka-Tonga* highlights and gives meaning to the place of communication.

Thirdly, relationships are essential to the Tongan worldview and social organization, including ideals of what is sacred and not sacred. For example, there is sacredness in the relationship between a brother and sister, and this sets how they behave and communicate with one another and within the

family. Mafile'o (2005) proposes "Tongans are entwined within a matrix of multiple and complex inter-relationships, which govern the operation of inter-relationships and which in turn constitute well-being within a Tongan worldview perspective" (p.135).

The Fonua

The concept *fonua* represents *tala 'o e fonua* or elements that are significant to the Tongan culture – spiritual, communal, relationship, balance and harmony (Tu'itahi, 2007, 2009). There are three different interpretations of *fonua* and each is unique and distinct. In the first, *fonua* refers to land, country, territory and people of the land. *Fonua* can also be known as *fa'itoka* or grave. In the second definition *fonua* is also identified as the placenta or the afterbirth of a new born (Churchward, 1959). *Fonua*, a common word within the Tongan language, can mean the land and its people and their on-going relationships (Tu'itahi, 2005; Ka'ili, 2005; Manu'atu, 2005).

In the *fonua* model, which has been used to define health and wellbeing of the Tongan people, Tu'itahi proposes that the experiences and perceptions of Tongans are comprised of five significant dimensions of: *sino* (body), *'atamai* (mental), *laumālie* (spiritual), *kāinga* (collective/community) and *'ataakai* (built and natural environment). In this model wellbeing signifies a collective set or communal wellbeing rather than individual. This is summed up by Tu'itahi (2005) when he suggests that wellbeing "is the interdependent relationship among peoples and between people and the environment. The ultimate purpose of this relationship and exchange between the environment and humanity is to maintain harmony in sustainable ways (p.12).

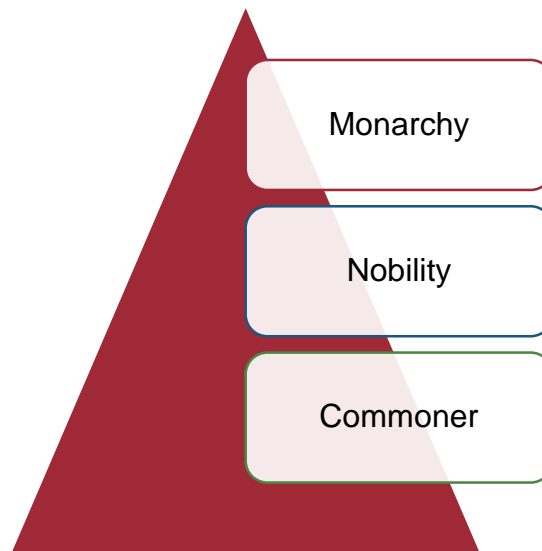
In sum, the Tongan world is based on Tongan ontological values and beliefs which impact on behaviour and influence social organisation. The creation story emphasises the importance of a holistic perspective and every decision made considers the interplay mind, body and soul and good of all rather than the individual.

Social Structure

The social structure is grounded in the family and community, and reinforces behaviour and how interactions are carried out. Traditionally the Tongan social system is based on a hierarchical structure, as ascribed by birth. This social system consists of three layers, the first being the *Tu'i mo hono fale* (King and his house or Monarchy). The second layer represents the *hou'eiki* (nobles) and the third, the

tu'a (commoners) (See Figure 1). This social stratification is distinctive and prescribes every action in regard to the way people relate and communicate with one another (Kalavite, 2010). For example, interactions and languages for communication used for the king differ from those used for a noble or for commoners. In addition, these systems prescribe things to be said and things not to be said.

Fig 1: Tongan Traditional Social Structure



Source: Adapted from Kalavite (2010)

Social Organisation – *Nofo 'a Kāinga*

The *kāinga*⁶, or the family, is at the heart of Tongan social organization. Family signifies *nofo 'a kāinga* (living within the family) which is important to the social organisations within the *mo'ui faka-Tonga*. Individuals are born into their place and socialised into these roles from birth within the *nofo faka-Tonga* (traditional way Tongans live). The social system is instrumental in the clarity of *fatongia*⁷ that is ascribed by gender, age and status to each member of the *kāinga*.

Within *the nofo 'a kāinga*, the core element is the *fāмили* (family). People's roles and responsibilities with the family are set according to rank; gender and age. The 'family' encompasses complex sets of rights and obligations of Tongan kinship as well as the deep emotional connections between kin (Morton, 1996). For example, women have defined roles and tasks within the family as do the males. The father is usually the dominant figure and, provides leadership, control and authority. This division of role by gender is also reflected at national level where males, royalty and nobles remain to be of higher rank and status (Campbell, 1992).

⁶ *Kāinga* is a concept that refers to the extended family which can also include in-laws.

⁷ *Fatongia* refers to one's duty or obligation (Churchward, 1959, p. 143).

Division of Roles and Expectations

Traditionally these roles also influence decision making within *nofo 'a kāinga*. For example, the father is *'ulu* (head) of the family and his responsibility for the making of decisions and overseeing things that are important for the maintenance and function of the family. The role of the mother is to ensure day to day management of the home, and mainly relates to children and the preparation of meals.

Usually children had less communication with their father. As reported this typically was done through the mother. For example, the children would approach the mother who in turn would talk to the father. While this pattern has changed it is still currently practised within some households. At the same time in the Tongan social structure females are considered to be of higher rank than males, or have more *'eiki*, (chiefly) status. The *fahu* system delineates the sacredness of the brother and sister relationship. For example, a *fahu* is entitled to claim through the children of her brother. A *fahu* has authority over her brother's children, such as giving of names and is gifted cultural wealth in the form of mats and *tapa* in social occasions such as birthdays, weddings and funerals. The *fahu* is very influential in the family decision making processes and can be instrumental in improving social positions for the children and/or youth. For example, within our family today if we were unable to get permission to do things we would talk to our *fahu* who would then talk to our father to reason with him regarding his decision.

Traditionally within a Tongan home, the expectation of girls was different to boys and in line with this the parenting of girls and boys was also different. For example, for girls the parents are very protective and do their utmost to shield them from any influences that will cause them harm such as only allowing them to go to church functions and family events. As reported it is better to protect them from the unknown rather than allowing them to fall into harm (Foliaki, 1994; Taumoevalau, 2013).

Anga Faka-Tonga and Communication

The values and beliefs underpinning the *anga faka-Tonga* set the way Tongans interact with one another (Morton, 1996). The core values of the *anga faka-Tonga* form the foundation of moral standards for Tongans (McIntyre, 2008, p.21).

In 1964, Queen Salote in her address at the opening of the Tongan Cultural and Heritage Society proposed four values that underpin Tongan culture: *Faka'apa'apa* (respect), *anga fakatōkilalo* (humility), *tauhi vā* (maintaining and looking after relationships) and *mamahi'i me'a* (Loyalty).

Furthermore, *‘ofa* (love) binds all these values together. The values of *Faka’apa’apa*, *tauhi vā* and *‘ofa* will be explored to give context to characteristics of Tongans.

Faka’apa’apa

Faka’apa’apa defines interactions, in particular within *nofo ‘a kāinga*. It means ‘to do homage or obeisance, to show deference or respect or courtesy’ (Churchward, 1959, p.128). However, *faka’apa’apa* means more than just being courteous, it characterises a way of navigation in the social structure and/or within the social organisation of *nofo ‘a kāinga*. As much as it is a value, *faka’apa’apa* is not only demonstrated but reinforced through the verbal and non-verbal in meeting cultural obligations (Johansson-Fua, Manu, Takapautolo & Taufe’ulungaki, 2007, p.677).

There are various *faka’apa’apa* necessary for day to day activities in the Tongan way of living, many of which have been redefined by the church. First, is the connection of Christian morality as seen in the notion of children obey your parents and honour your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise) (Cowling, 2005). Within the *‘api* (home), *faka’apa’apa* is associated with *talangofua* (obedience) which is taught at a very young age. *Faka’apa’apa* teaches children to be respectful in ways of relating to people and, with an eye to maintaining harmony in the relationships. *Faka’apa’apa* is seen to be the driving force of Tongan traditions and hierarchical systems, and it very much shapes communication. For example, youth may feel reluctant to communicate with those of higher status because the focus is on maintaining harmony and respecting the relationship between each other.

Secondly, *faka’apa’apa* is about the sacred elements that are contained within the roles which again can place restrictions and hindrances in the communication relationship. For example, it is *‘ulungaanga ta’e faka’apa’apa* (disrespectful behaviour) for youth to answer back when being told to do something, even if they are not happy with that. The act of answering back is a form of *taungutu*⁸ or disobedience and not honouring the relationship. Similarly it is impolite for youth to *kau’italanoa* (uninvited joining of conversation). The position of roles also dictates who can be talked to. For example, the males may feel comfortable talking with males while females feel safe sharing with females. In some instances, it may be difficult for conversations to occur due to the *tapu* (sacred) nature of the subject.

⁸*Taungutu* means to answer back, disobedient and defiant (Churchward, 1959, p. 467). As children and leading onto youth, they are being taught that to answer back is a form of back chatting and being disrespectful.

For example, any conversation around sex may be *fakamā* (shame) to share. These are some of the things that need to be considered for youth and community so they feel able to freely express their opinion and openly share with each other, and other members of the family or colleagues.

Tauhi Vā

Tauhi vā is central to who Tongan people maintain ties and relationships with. The practice of *tauhi vā* is seen in the *anga e nofo 'a e Tonga* (way and/or how Tongans live their lives) within their *fatongia* (obligations). *Tauhi* means 'to tend, look after, take care of or to minister to, keep safe, preserve, observe, to carry out one's duties' (Churchward, 1959, p. 463). *Vā* refers to 'distance between, distance apart, attitude, feeling, relationship toward each other' (p. 528). Studies of Tongan culture claim that *vā* refers to the social or relational space that connects people. It implies a view that space is social relationships that links people together (Ka'ili, 2005).

For Tongans, *tauhi vā* means to maintain relationships that connect the spaces between people who have an association with one another (Thaman, 2003; Vaioleti, 2011). In general *tauhi vā* means giving and receiving, for example, ensuring that connections to friends and families are sustained by attending occasions such as birthdays and funerals. Furthermore, there is no gift to present, one's physical presence is enough to preserve that relationship. For example, this means that behaviour needs to be appropriate in each variation of the context. The wellbeing or health of the community is measured by contextualised and acceptable behaviour and actions that are meaningful, worthwhile and beneficial to others (Taufe'ulungaki, 2004, p.6).

'Ofa

*'Ofa*⁹ or love, is nurtured from early days in the relationship between a mother and child spreading out to other family members. The meaning of *'ofa* literally translates as 'to love, be fond of, be kind to' (Churchward 1959, p. 562). Kavaliku's (1961) analysis of *'ofa* within Tongan society confirms that the underlying philosophy of *'ofa* reinforces Tongan behaviours, customs and ceremonies. Mafile'o (2006) refers to *'ofa* as exceeding 'more than feelings and emotion, and implying self-sacrifice for the benefit of another'(p.153). She situates compassion within *'ofa* again centring on a collective rather than an individualistic gain. (*'Ofa*) It brings to the fore the notion that individual, family and community wellbeing

⁹ *'Ofa* means 'to love be fond of, be kind to' (Churchward, 1959, p. 562).

is best met in selflessness and service. 'Ofa sets a standard for the conduct of humanity, and ideal (Mafale'o, 2006, p. 118).

'Ofa is central in *fatongia* (responsibilities, obligations, duties) which is significant to *nofo 'a kāinga*, the *tofi'a* (village people) and the *fonua* / land (Pau'uvale-Teisina, 2011). *Fatongia* is often perceived by non-Tongans as a source of oppression and as creating a sense of inequality for women and others in the Tongan culture (Taufe'ulungaki, 2004). Anecdotally, the action of 'ofa demonstrates the act of *fevahevahe'aki* (sharing). For example, forms of 'ofa include about sending money back home (remittances) and supporting families to migrate to Aotearoa.

'Ofa entails 'osikiavelenga (doing the utmost). One can love something and do it in relation to duty, obligation or a legal requirement but when you love something wholeheartedly you give it your all. One of my grandmother's favourite sayings is: *Ka 'ikai kau 'a 'ofa ha me'a te te fai, koe koto kula noa* (If love is not weaved into what you are doing, it has no purpose or life). *Tonga mo'unga ki he loto* encapsulates the true meaning of 'ofa. This renowned proverb means 'Tongan's mountain is in their heart' which can be best understood as in everything we do, we do this from the heart. 'Ofa also encompasses many elements: 'ofa 'Otua (the love for God who is the Creator who supplies wealth and treasures), 'ofa fāmili (love for parents and family who offers protection) and 'ofa fonua (the love one has for the land that continues to provide nourishment). From a young age, children and youth learn this value system of guiding principles that help teach them their place, and where and with whom they can communicate. It is these values and beliefs that Tongans take with them when they migrate overseas. These values connect them back to the homeland of Tonga.

Fofola e fala kae alea e kāinga – As a safe communication

Fofola e fala kae alea e kāinga is a well-known Tongan conceptual framework which depicts a safe way for communication to take place. *Talanoa* (see Chapter 4) is a way of reciprocal and equal communication between people and is often used within Tongan households (Latu, 2009). Various methods of *talanoa* and stipulated *talatalaifale* are mediums that are often used to communicate with children, youth and families. *Talanoa* embody a holistic Tongan worldview which encompasses the values that are centred on *anga faka-Tonga* (Tu'itahi-Tahaafe, 2003). Traditionally, the communication process was often a one way stream in which parents do the talking and the children do the listening.

Each member's roles, responsibilities and obligations are paramount, as these set how communication is carried out (Koloto, 2000).

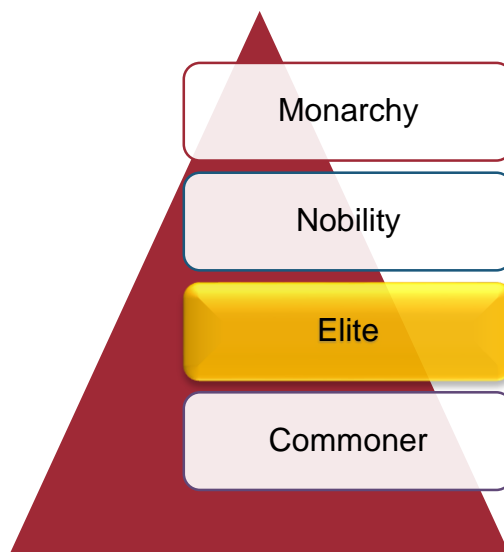
Nurturing relationships is a feature of how Tongans relate to each other. *Tauhi vā* represents honouring that responsibility and this may either be positive (good) or negative (strained). *Tauhi vā* requires constant protection of relationships (Helu-Thaman, 2008). Within *fofola e fala e fala*, *tauhi vā* has been described as a 'negotiated space' or a spatial site for relationships. It is a terrain of intersection where both commonalities and differences can be explored, discussed and understood. *Tauhi vā* is an authorized space that provides room for engagement and knowledge exchange (Mila-Schaaf, 2010). *Tauhi vā* is about the value of 'maintaining and looking after relationships' that are central to Tongan wellbeing (Mafile'o, 2005, p.135). Tongan youth learn to suppress their own feelings in order to maintain the *vā*, which is the 'face' of expectations to maintain social harmony and peace with each other.

Changes within the homeland

The impact of education, travel, rapid technological changes and the effects of globalisation means that one cannot separate the homeland experiences from external influences today. A UNICEF report (2006) highlighted several issues that Tongan youth face such as teenage pregnancy, early school dropout, drug and alcohol abuse, and youth suicide. In addition, a recent documentary 'Tonga the last place on earth trailer' showed that while Tonga may not be threatened by internal strife a handful of young people who have been deported back to the homeland, bring with them skills from the 'university of crimes' they have been involved in abroad. (Tonga the last place of earth trailer, 2013).

Another change has been noted by Kalavite (2010). She proposes the emergence of an "elite" class in the Tongan social structure by which commoners such as government ministers, church ministers, wealthy and educated people are able to claim a space through their academic achievements (see Figure 2).

Fig 2: Tongan Social Structure with adapted and modern social structure



Source: Adapted from Kalavite (2010)

Part Two: Tangata Tonga in New Zealand

As is well documented, thousands of Tongan people have journeyed to Aotearoa in search of education and employment opportunities to improve their life and circumstances (Mallon, Mahina-Tuai & Salesa, 2012; McKenzie, Gibson & Stillman, 2013). In line with the *anga faka-Tonga* patterns of reciprocity and sharing, migration stories outline how families in New Zealand have opened their homes to the new migrants until they find suitable accommodation. Migrant remittances are another example of support for family.

The Tongan population in New Zealand today is diverse and marked by a number of factors. First the Tongan population has increased by 19.5 percent (60, 366) since the 2006 census. Tongans are the third largest Pacific group, following Samoans and the Cook Islanders. Second, the Tongan population is youthful (a median age of 19.4 years) and characterised by an increase in New Zealand-born (59.8 percent) and also increased multi-ethnicity through intermarriage. Third, the proportion of Tongans living in extended families was reported to be higher than the corresponding proportion for the New Zealand population, which was taken at 11.7 percent (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a). Fourth, over three quarters (77.8 percent) or 46,971 people live in Auckland, which is the focus of this study. Finally and directly related to communication, 78.2 percent (43, 029) lived in a household with access

to a telephone and 85.6 percent (47, 133) lived in a household with access to a mobile phone. Furthermore, 64.9 percent had access to internet. (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a).

While educational achievements indicate a high number of Tongan people are getting through tertiary education, the majority are in lower income jobs which impacts on family quality of life. In the latest New Zealand census 56.5 percent of Tongans receive an annual income of \$20, 000 or less and those aged 15-29 years are most likely to be in that category. The medial income for Tongans was \$15,300 down from \$17,000 in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a).

Receiving less income has resulted in many parents having to work two or three jobs to make a living. This increases factors that may expose Tongan youth to become more vulnerable. For example, income may result in families moving into a cheaper living arrangement that houses three or four families, hence overcrowding (Ministry of Health, 2008b). Low income may also lead to Tongan youth facing more challenges to health consequences such as poor diet, obesity which is increasing within the Pacific population.

The Endurance of Customs

Three factors that point to the endurance of customs for Tongans living in New Zealand are the place of the church (Statistics New Zealand, 2013c): importance of family and third, the continuing importance of the Tongan language (Taumoefolau, 2006)

The Significance of the Church

As is well reported, the church/religion has remained significant to the *anga faka-Tonga*. The church is the new *kāinga* where Tongans practise their *koloa* (cultural treasures). It is the central point for connecting back to the homelands and also with one another in New Zealand. The church is a space not only for the parents and adults to hold onto and practice the Tongan culture but, where youth learn the characteristics and behaviour intrinsic to Tongan values and beliefs. As seen in the 2013 New Zealand census, 88.1 percent (50,121) claimed affiliation with at least one religion. Those born in New Zealand were less likely (82.1 percent) to be affiliated than those who were born overseas (96.7 percent) (Statistics, 2013c).

Family - Role, Responsibilities and Obligations

As with many Pacific migrants, the family plays a fundamental role in the wellbeing of Tongan families in Aotearoa (Fa'alau, 2011). In addition, Pacific peoples continue to maintain strong kinship ties that assist to uphold the establishment of families transnationally (Macpherson, 2002). An indication of the endurance of the customary ways is seen in the place of the family and extended family units.

The role of parents is to provide and to ensure that children are getting a good education because in good faith based on *fatongia*, the children will reciprocate by looking after the parents later in life.

While this is a strength, economic pressures can impact on kinship ties and the collective support of the family system, fragmenting roles and responsibilities within *kāinga* and creating new expectations (Asiasiga & Gray, 1998). In many cases as time progressed those living away from the homeland start to question their duty to self in the light of spending on the needs of others. In the New Zealand context this 'duty' is often viewed by non-Tongans as neglect of their immediate family. Anecdotal evidence shows that youth often migrate to New Zealand for the purpose of sending money back to the homeland and they stay with extended families with the intention of saving, so they can do so. However, this can become problematic for these youth in adjusting to a new family system.

These and other concerns may influence the place of *anga faka-Tonga* and the endurance of cultural ways of parenting may have the opposite than desired effect. In this process the dynamics and expectations of the Tongan culture may become diluted and these pressures can create conflict and impact on the relationship between parents and child.

The place of lea faka-Tonga / Tongan language

For the majority of Tongans, maintaining strong ties and connection to Tonga the homeland is sustained through the Tongan language. As illustrated, the Tongan language was the second most common language spoken at 53.2 percent (30, 807), Tongans take pride in their culture, especially their Tongan language as it claims status and place in the Tongan community (Taumoefolau, 2006; Taufe'ulungaki, 1992). Statistics suggest persistence associated with the retention of *lea faka-Tonga* and its association with *anga faka-Tonga* for Tongan people in Aotearoa New Zealand. Equally notable, is the establishment over the last ten years of a number of bilingual Tongan pre-schools in the Auckland area (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a).

The Tongan language as a means of communication is fundamental in the *nofo 'a kāinga*. The different levels of words and vocabulary signify Tonga's social structure (Taumoefolau, 2006, p. 6). Some families from the early migration era chose not to teach their children Tongan because they were under the impression that their children needed to be fluent in English to do better in school (Tagata Pasifika, 2011). For example, in 1996, 63 percent of the Tongan population spoke Tongan (Statistics, 1996). Not being able to speak Tongan has created some tensions and resentment in some Tongan youth today especially because they cannot communicate with other family members (Morton-Lee, 2003). Thus they felt they were unable to engage in Tongan customs and traditions (Taumoefolau, 2006). Reports are that the establishment of Pacific Language week in the last three years has strengthened the relationship between the language and the *anga faka-Tonga* for the non-Tongan speakers.

Youth

A finding from the Ala Fou – New Pathways: Strategic Directions for Pacific Youth in New Zealand report (Ala Fou National Pacific Youth Report, 2005) was that the majority of Tongan youth were proud of 'being Tongan' despite the fact a significant number were New Zealand-born. The report also noted some of the tensions Pacific youth face today:

For some second-generation Pacific peoples, the bonds of Pacific culture are not as strong or dominant and have resulted in a loss or weakening of Pacific identity, particularly for those mixed marriages, who increasingly do not identify as Pacific. This has implications in terms of cultural and language preservation, Pacific identity and traditional Pacific values. (p.10)

It is said that immigrant youth and young people from minority populations often encounter the experience of 'walking between two worlds' and feel 'poised in transition' moments where they may find themselves belonging to one home but at the same time belonging to other homes and maybe to no particular home at all (Hall, 1992, p.310 cited in Beals, 2014). Identical to this idea is what Tupuola (1996) described as young Samoan women who were edge-walkers. For example, instead of forming new identities, they were shifting in between open identities reflecting the contexts they were situated in.

An example of this issue is that Tongan youth and children encounter difficulties in their learning between what is being taught at home versus the information they are given when going to school. As referred to earlier, the organisation within a Tongan home defines roles and responsibilities.

Furthermore it classifies place. There is an expectation that knowing of one's place encourages Tongan youth to respect their elders and recognize the place for them to speak or ask questions. On the other hand the mainstream educates youth so that they can have a voice and promotes questioning (Morton, 1998; Hansen, 2004). This often leads Tongan youth to make comparisons between the two places, the teaching of the home versus teaching at school. A lot of the time this creates friction and pressure within the relationship between the youth and parents which influences Tongan youth to be at risk. Although Tongan youth may be experiencing at risk behaviour, they continue to believe that place, family and *anga faka-Tonga* are of great importance (Schoone, 2010).

Intergenerational Conflict

As documented, one of the common issues Pacific youth face is conflict with their parents and elders. This can lead to a lack of understanding and miscommunication between parents and children; this often relates back to traditional values and expectations that Pacific parents hold for their children. At a consultation *fono* in 2011, Pacific Youth spoke of their pride in their cultural identity but at the same time they shared negative thoughts about different aspects of their culture (Ministry of Health, 2008b). Hard work – having to work twice as hard, sometimes living two lives, satisfying the cultural requirement of family and Pacific community life as well as living in a Palagi world (p.4).

The negative issues that Pacific youth experience in their relationship with their parents is known as 'generational gap' (Afeaki, 2004). Cultural obligations and responsibilities are amongst the various struggles New Zealand-born Tongan women experience, often described as a battle between two worlds (Hanifan, 2010). This shapes how they view their world and manoeuvre within it. More importantly, this status moulds their ability to imagine how their situation might be changed and whether such changes are feasible and desirable.

The increased struggles of New Zealand-born Tongan youth also have their roots in cultural fragmentation that can arise from a desire not to disappoint their parents. In this situation many engage in at-risk behaviours as coping mechanisms. At-risk behaviours include excessive alcohol consumption, truancy, teenage pregnancy, criminal activity, and attempted suicide (Schoone, 2010). In a Tangata Pasifika (2010) documentary youth claimed that communication was a risk factor for Pacific youth due to their sense of disconnection and their inability to connect with others.

As noted, in the past five years, there has been the increase in suicide and suicidal ideations in Pacific youth and especially Tongan Youth (Ministry of Health, 2011). This situation impacts on friends, families, schools, communities and churches.

The underlying philosophy of the Ministry of Youth Development (2002) Report is based on 'positive youth development' which is described as a 'reciprocal' relationship between youth and society. Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA) emphasises that sustaining and maintaining 'supportive relationships' contributes to the wellbeing and better outcomes for youth. Questions are: how do we build warmth, closeness, connectedness, caring and support to guide our youth and secure attachment so that they become responsive? How do we communicate with our Tongan youth in promoting equality as mentioned in the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa?

Summary

Highlighted throughout this chapter are the challenges that have become both struggling and enabling influences for Tongan migrant youth and their families as they try to make sense of the difference between culture and the new environment. Furthermore, for many the expected behaviours do not correlate with their way of living and knowing within the New Zealand society (Hansen, 2004). Tongan academics have outlined the tensions between New Zealand and Tongan cultures and the consequent impact of this on educational success for Tongan youth and children (Pau'uvala, 2012; Kalavite, 2010; Latu, 2009). The questions raised in this chapter go back to parenting practices: who do our children and youth mainly communicate with inside the family? Are they told to listen to elders? Is Tonga a 'peer group' society where most of the communication is with peers or older brothers and sisters, rather than between parent and child as in the *pālāngi* model as in Ritchie and Ritchie (1981). This chapter highlighted the importance of exploring types of communication within families, what youth perceptions of communication are and who they talk to, especially in times of vulnerability.

"If we cannot control the definition, we cannot control the meanings and the theories which lie behind these meanings"
(Smith, 1999)

Introduction

The intent of this chapter is to examine current research and literature relating to suicide as an epidemic amongst youth, in particular Tongan youth, as well as risk factors. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part will commence with an investigation and snapshot of the current literature about suicide – risk factors. The second part will undertake an analysis of literature based on communication - its components and models. The third part will look at suicide preventions strategies and programs that is currently in place. Due to the scarcity of literature in this field, the term Pacific, Tongan and New Zealand-born will be used interchangeably. It's not always able to make distinction between New Zealand-born and Tongan-born.

Part One - Suicide

Suicide is an on-going global concern (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2012) that robs lives from any community, culture, country, race, gender, age and even economically secure people. Approximately one million people die from suicide each year which translates to a rate of one death per 40 seconds. Figures indicate that suicide rates have increased by 60 percent worldwide (WHO, 2012). New Zealand is ranked in the top 15 countries within the OECD suicide scale. By comparison Australia is ranked in the top 25 countries (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b). Research illustrates suicide rates are increasing amongst native and indigenous population such as Native Americans in the United States and Alaska, and the Aborigines in Australia and New Zealand (King, Smith & Gracey, 2009). Interestingly in the OECD countries Greece, Turkey, Mexico and Italy experience six or fewer deaths per 100,000 (WHO, 2012). On the other hand Hungary, Korea, Japan and Russia had suicide incidence of 20 deaths per 100,000 (WHO, 2012). Australia has 10.1 deaths per 100,000 in comparison to 12.4 deaths per 100,000 for New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Male deaths from suicide are four times more than female deaths from suicide across OECD countries (Ministry of Health, 2012a). Suicide is related to age with the elderly and the youth being most at risk.

Questions can be raised about the accuracy and/or inconsistency. For example, there are questions about the way ethnicity is defined and applied in New Zealand (See New Zealand Statistics, 2013b). This adds further complexity to the guiding of data for example regarding suicide by Tongan youths.

Suicide and Youth

Global reports by various NGOs and donor organisations indicate that the suicide rate for young people is alarming and continues to escalate in many developed countries such as United States, Canada, Japan, several European countries, Australia and New Zealand (WHO, 2012). Statistical evidence shows youth suicide is amongst the three primary causes of deaths for those aged 15 – 34 years, the other two are unintentional injuries with motor vehicle and homicide (Fleischmann, Bertole, Belfer & Beautrias, 2005). Furthermore, youth death by suicide often occurs during people's most productive years of life. The loss of life due to suicide is a serious factor affecting New Zealand youth today (Ministry of Health, 2012a).

Youth Suicide in New Zealand

On an average, since 2006 approximately 500 people die every year from suicide (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Statistics provided by the Ministry of Health (2012a) illustrate that deaths by suicide reached their peak in 2006 resulting in 526 deaths. However, there was a slight fall in the suicide rate in 2010 to a rate of 17.7 deaths per 100,000 people with the number of male victims (1420) triple that of the female victims (380) (Ministry of Health, 2012a). Figures confirm that Maori are more at risk in comparison to other ethnic groups. Although, the Ministry of Health (2012a) draws attention to the increasing rates, there has been an increase of suicide amongst Asians in New Zealand. The number of Pacific youth lost to suicide has increased from 24-31 suicides per year. However, statistics show the number of Pacific youth lost to suicide has increased from 24 – 31 suicides per year since 2007 (SPINZ, 2005).

Risk Factors

Global comparisons show Pacific rates to be amongst the highest reported. Research indicates several risk factors of suicidal behaviour amongst adolescents (Beautrias, 2003). Booth (1999) proposes societal transitions as a risk factor amongst youth in Western Samoa and within the Fijian Indian

community. For Micronesia, the suicide trend was connected to social and cultural factors. These studies indicate that suicide is a very culturally patterned response of youth to conflicts associated with changing family structure (Rubinstein, 1992). Finau (1994) and Bourke (2003) suggest that the decline in resilience amongst young Tongan males, brought about by exposure to foreign media influences has diminished the traditional support systems. Foliaki (1997) argues the disintegration of traditional family structures as a contributing factor for the increase of suicide within the Pacific community in New Zealand. The increase of parents' expectations for their children's behaviour and achievement is another factor said to influence suicide by NZ-Born Samoans (Tiatia, 2003). Bourke (2001) has suggested that the suppression of the youth voice is also a contributing factor, especially the voices of those who are living in an environment where they are not allowed to speak out and be heard.

Relationship and Family Support

Resnick (2000) proposed that young people who have healthy relationships with their families are less likely to engage in risky health behaviours such as suicide. Evidence from the fields of psychology, counseling, social work and education show that communication is essential within families, homes, workplaces, communities and at government levels. A shared understanding highlights its importance to all human relationships, which interaction could not occur without it (Culbertson, Agee & Makasiale, 2007).

As noted in Chapter Two, family is centered in the Tongan world. The *fonua* model by Tu'itahi (2005) underlines the significance of emotional links within families and their environments as the way security is nurtured and maintained. Identity is also located through their family role, expectations and obligations. As noted by Foliaki (1997, 1999) health and wellbeing for Tongans are closely linked to the collective rather than the individual. Tiatia (2003) acknowledges the importance of family within the Pacific but states that this very structure and order is a factor influencing Pacific youth suicide.

Alluding to Finau, Stanhope and Prior (1982) and the Ministry of Health (1997), family structure is the focal point despite weakening due to socio-economic factors and acculturation to New Zealand society. Social organisations of family and church provide significant and meaningful relationships as protective factors against suicide supported the importance of this study looking at reasons (Finau, 1994). The need for Pacific families to understand that the youth are facing multiple challenges and

identities also requires Pacific parents to be understanding and conscious of these realities, more specifically for Tongan youth (see Chapter Two).

Intergenerational conflict has been identified as another major contributing factor to Pacific youth vulnerability (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003) and the risk of suicide (Tiatia, 2003; Puna, 2013). Tiatia (2003) argues that the challenges of being torn between two cultures, traditional and western, may create tensions and confusion for some Pacific young people. In addition, that the increase in intermarriage by ethnic groups has added to the complexity, pressure and conflict for Tongan youth who now 'co-exist' as there are increased numbers of New Zealand-born Tongans as well as mixed ethnicities due to intermarriages (Statistics New Zealand, 2013a).

Mental Illness

One major contributing risk factor of suicide is the impact of mental illness. The Te Rau Hinengaro survey found individuals who suffered from a mental disorder had a higher risk of suicide than those who did not (Ministry of Health, 2006; Foliaki, Kokaua, Schaaf & Tukitonga, 2006). Disorders such as mood, anxiety, substance use and eating were all linked with suicidal ideation, plan and attempt. The survey results also indicated that within the 12 month prevalence of suicidal attempt and plan, Māori and Pacific peoples in particular youth were amongst the highest (Oakley-Browne, Wells & Scott, 2006). Drawing on this, the Ministry of Health (2008a) concluded suicidal behaviours is a leading issue amongst Pacific young people and acknowledged that this is an area where work needs to be carried out. Additionally, the Ministry of Health (2008a) confirms that Pacific peoples have higher rates of mental disorder than the general population but are less likely to access mental health services in comparison to all other New Zealanders (25% compared to 58% of New Zealand overall).

Data from a study by Oakely-Browne et al., (2006) has drawn the attention to the increasing number of Pacific peoples accessing mental health services. Skegg (2011) notes, that most youth suicide in New Zealand is attached to psychiatric disorders such as depression, substance abuse or behavioral disorders. The Ministry of Health (2005) lists depression is one of the leading causes of suicide especially between the ages of 15 to 18 years (Beautrias, 2003). The Rau Hinengaro Survey point out that about 20-24 percent of Pacific youth is affected by mental health disorders and is most prevalent among those that are New Zealand-born (Oakely-Browne et al., 2006). The increased number of Pacific peoples accessing mental health services is an indication that unemployment, low income,

poor housing, extended family breakdowns, cultural fragmentation and increased social problems are having an increasing impact on the mental health and therefore the suicidal tendencies of Pacific peoples (Tiatia & Coggan, 2001; Tiatia, 2003).

Substance Abuse

Global studies have found a close link with alcohol and drug use among those who have attempted to take their own lives. For example, Chatterji, Dave, Kaestner and Markowitz (2004) identified causal relationships between clinically defined alcohol disorder and suicide attempts. Becker and Kerig (2011) found a correlation of delinquent behaviour and substance use among adolescents with psychiatric concerns. A study in Canada found an association between mental health and the use of illicit drugs amongst adolescents. This study illustrated that family disruption was linked to depressive symptoms, marijuana use and cigarette use (Low, Dugas, O'Loughlin, Rodreiguez, Contreras, Chaiton & O'Loughlin, 2012).

There is a large number of published studies describing the role of alcohol consumption and the associated risk factors for deliberate self-harm and its link to the increased risk of suicidal thoughts and attempts after consumption (Alcohol Advisory Group Council of New Zealand, 2010; Helu, Robinson, Grant, Herd & Denny, 2009). Recent evidence confirms that males are more prone to a higher rate of substance abuse disorders than females (Alcohol Advisory Group Council of New Zealand, 2010). A report by Fergusson, Boden and Hayne (2011) identified a close relationship between alcohol consumption as a risk factor for deliberate self-harm and its influence on suicidal thoughts and attempts after alcohol consumption.

Emotional Regulation

Studies report interpersonal themes relating to suicide. For example, a study by Sanger and Veach (2008) suggested that although suicide individuals opt for the easiest way out, there is an attempt to maintain and reconcile relationships even in the face of death. Whereas, Perez (2012) proposes there is a relationship between emotion regulation and adolescents who are at risk of suicide. However, results indicated a lack of comprehensive instruments to assess difficulties in emotion regulation. Nevertheless, their study uncovered the association between relationship violence and suicidal behaviour controlling for variables such as sexual assault and drug use.

Belshaw, Siddique, Tanner and Osho (2012) showed that victimized adolescents are also at high risk of planning and/or attempting suicide compared to non-victimized adolescents. Psycho-social factors such as hopelessness, hostility, negative self-concept and isolation have important connections with suicide risk. It is suggested that focusing on these would enhance suicide assessment and prevention efforts in adolescents (Rutter & Beherent, 2004).

According to Horeshi, Zalsman and Apter (2004) there is a relationship between mental pain and communication difficulties. This study revealed that suicidal individuals with depression and hopelessness are unable to signal their pain to others and so are at risk of committing medically serious suicide attempts.

Past research also talks about poor communication as being a well-established factor in suicide attempts (Kreitman, 1977; Farberow & Shneidman, 1961; Sullivan, 1953). However, Morgan (2005) explains that higher suicide rates occur in males, who have fewer communication skills than females. Furthermore, Wall and Whitebeck (2012) states studies have shown that 'cries for help' comprise a language of suicide. Moreover, Bourke (2003) talks about young people's struggle to deal with conflict in social relationships. Of particular interest to this study is the influence of acculturation within minority groups. Addressing historical losses is important, reconnecting generations, linking lives in a good way to support the healthy growth of the next generation (Wall & Whitebeck, 2012).

Part Two - Communication

Most of the counseling and psychological packages established to address and work with vulnerable people have a heavy communication element, which promotes shared narratives, experiences and the opportunity to connect with the root of the issue. According to Altman (1973); Jourard (1971) and Sullivan (1953) help-seeking behaviour and the ability to communicate distress are included in the concept of self-disclosure.

Definitions

A considerable amount of literature focuses and assumes a universal understanding of communication. DeVito (2003) proposed communication is used to mean the arousal of common meanings with their resulting actions between communicator and interpreter through the use of language or other signs and symbols. Similarly, Chandler and Munday (2011) suggest it is the process

used to send and interpret messages so they can be understood. Within a social work perspective, communication refers to 'the capacity of an individual or group to pass on his feelings and ideas to another individual or group' (Day, 1972, p. 121). DeVito (2003) claims communication is about sharing of information, ideas, hopes, attitudes, values, beliefs, dreams, fears, frustration and the meaning of life. In contrast, Knapp, Hall and Horgan (2013) illustrates that communication is transmitted through behavior and elements of speech as opposed to the words themselves. They refer to non-verbal communication as being just as important if not more important than the words. For example, non verbal elements include pitch, speed, tone and volume of voice, gestures and facial expressions, body posture, stance and proximity to the listener, eye movements and contact and dress appearance.

Tongan literal translation of communication is captured in three terms: *fetu'utaki*, *fetohi'aki* and *fehokotaki* (Churchward, 1959, p. 609). *Fetu'utaki* refers "to be joined together, to be connected or related to one another and to communicate..." (Churchward, 1959, p. 181). *Fetohi'aki* is "to write to or correspond with each other" (Churchward, 1959, p. 178). *Fehokotaki* means "to be in contact with, or connected with, or in communication with, each other, to make mental contact with one another..." (Churchward, 1959, p.156). The differences between the universal understandings of communication and Tongan forms of communication is that the Tongan places greater emphasis on the importance of the connecting with rather than a process, and a one way process, as it is implied within the social work definition.

As noted in Chapter Two, *talanoa* is a process of communication that provides safe and familiar environment when people engage in a conversation. It is based on an understanding of sharing knowledge rather than extracting knowledge (Violeti, 2006). The process of *talanoa* ignites stages of dialogue where he argues that communications of *talanoa* are not devoid of important information (p.24). With this understanding Havea (2010) points out that *talanoa* may often be mistaken as an act of just simple storytelling. However, this process includes more than just simple retelling of stories; it involves effective engagement and meaningful conversations about sharing (Havea, 2010).

Models of Communication

Resilience as a positive theoretical framework suggests that youth who are exposed to a life, circumstances and experiences consisting of struggles will build effectiveness of enhancing protective factors. Blum (1998) and Resnick (2000) believe that family relationships are fundamental to the positive health and development of young people. Similar to the '*E tipu e rea*' framework, the resiliency paradigm seeks to identify protective and nurturing factors in the lives of those who would otherwise be expected to be characterized by a variety of adverse outcomes (Resnick, 2000). Because communication is a vital part of family relationship which nurtures positive health, it would be interesting to find out how significant communication is in contributing to the increase in Pacific people's suicide.

In contrast, the strengths based approach focuses on the strengths and potentials of the person and not on the negative and deficits. Furthermore, strengths-based communication amongst individuals, families and communities are effective in fostering resiliency, improved health and generally positive outcomes (Saleebey, 2002). "*Ko e fuofua 'apiako' ko 'api'*" (The first school is within the home) is a common Tongan saying my grandmother taught me. She explained, "In the home is where '*ulungaanga*' (behaviour) is learnt". It refers to the communication process in which interconnectedness of teachings and knowledge is being transferred from the time one is born into this world and the relationship of that journey.

Research suggest and that only five percent effect is produced by spoken word, 45 percent by the tone, inflexion and other elements of voice and 50 percent body language movements and eye contact (Knapp et al., 2013).

Pacific ways of Communication

Scholars from the Pacific write about some traditional concepts that pertain to the way Pacific peoples communicate. The *vā* or *tauhi vā* (maintaining and/or sustaining relationships) is fundamental within how Pacific peoples relate to one another. Pereira (2011) refers to the *vā* in the form of a 'relational space' within the communication process. Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009) attribute *vā* as a 'negotiated space' and a space that connects. She likens the space to the *marae atea*¹⁰ setting where it holds *tapu* (sacredness). Whereas Seiuli (2013) claims *vā* as being an important component that plays a key role in communication. Being ignorant of the value and worth of *vā* leads to dishonoring

¹⁰ *Marae ātea* is the 'open area in front of the wharehau where formal welcomes to visitors' takes place and issues are debated. The *marae ātea* is the domain of Tūmataunga, the atua of war and people, and is thus the appropriate place to raise contentious issue (Moorfield, 2015).

the relational space which contributes to the breakdown of the relationship. Therefore, Seiuli (2013) argues reconciliation and restoring of the *vā* is imperative and needs to be taken seriously in order for engagement to occur. Within a Tongan perspective, Helu-Thaman (2004) stresses the importance of *tauhi vā* for the promotion of peace and understanding within relationships. Moreover, she talks about *tauhi vā* as honoring *fatongia* (responsibilities) which may either be positive (good) or negative (strained) as there are behavioral expectations in the way Tongans relate to one another, whether it is kin, work or friendship related (Helu-Thaman, 2008). This is also supported by Koloto (2000) who states that each member's *fatongia* are paramount and influence who the communication is carried out within the family structure. Furthermore, Helu-Thaman (2008) points out that the persons involved in this relationship understand their roles, which are generally contextual in an appropriate manner which requires constant protection of that relationship.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1979) discusses how communication across all ages and an emphasis on peer group socialization comprise an effective tool for communication within Polynesia. Further, that although the norm is for children to ask questions, those who are shy and/or lack socialization have not been taught and encouraged to so. Therefore they lack the skills to communicate in a social setting. In addition, within adolescence the language of status and respect is required and needs prior learning with exposure to modern influences. Hence, if a young person is going to deal with such aspects, then possessing adequate language becomes very important.

Metge and Kinloch (1973) emphasized Maori and Samoans communicate more non-verbally than with words. Further, they highlighted that if these non-verbal communications are mis-interpreted it is likely to create misunderstanding. For example, pakeha children are usually encouraged to make eye contact and look at anyone they are speaking to, this signals interest. On the other hand, Maori and Samoans consider it impolite to look directly at others when talking to them because it can be confrontational. Whereas, Nabobo-baba (2006) also highlights the importance of non-verbalised communication in silence from a Fijian perspective. The silence reinforces cultural heritage that is significant to the way Fijian people communicate. The idea of a Pacific way of communication is very much connected to intangible cultural heritage as is seen by UNESCO who highlights the importance of building greater awareness amongst the younger generations in regard to the intangible cultural heritages which are practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills and cultural spaces

associated with their culture. Therefore, understanding intangible cultural concepts plays an important role in the recognition of Pacific ways of communication (UNESCO, 2002).

Communication and Well-being

Fa'alau's (2011) study of 45 Samoan teenagers and their experiences of the positive and negative effects on teenagers of family structures and parenting styles revealed it was important for parents to acknowledge, encourage and listen to teenagers by coming to agreement with traditions that best support their wellbeing. Furthermore, her findings are associated with having a stable family with regular routines, well-organized structure and excellent communication, which contribute immensely to the wellbeing of these Samoan youth.

As mentioned, although there were not specific studies within the Pacific communities that focused on communication, yet studies based on at risk youth highlight the need for communication and maintaining stable wellbeing for youth.

Part Three: Suicide Prevention Programs

When someone makes a choice or decision to take their own life or self-harm they are under psychological distress. Social networking and texting are powerful issues that also affect our youth today. Often youth who are emotionally unwell use drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism and mixing the two together can be a problem for youth (Tangata Pasifika, 2010). Another coping mechanism for youth is to talk to someone that they trust. In a documentary by Tangata Pasifika (2012), talking to someone that you trust is recommended for youth.

On the 7th of November 2011, a community *fono* was established by the *To'utupu Tonga* Trust for the purpose of addressing the suicide issues which were increasingly becoming a problem within the Tongan community. Focus groups were arranged looking at causes and possible strategies needed to accommodate to the needs of the youth and their families. One of the prevalent factors highlighted amongst the feedback from the five focus groups was to do with communication. It was identified that young people found it difficult to share information with their parents; poor engagement between youth and their parents, and the struggle to strive for open communication bearing in mind taboo roles within the family. Therefore, what are the current programs, strategies and/or initiatives that are in place to support vulnerable Tongan youth especially those who are at risk of suicide.

As a result the, *Lotumo'ui*¹¹, a local NGO began to work collaboratively together with the Tongan Youth Trust¹² to host a community *fono* (meeting) for the Tongan community in South Auckland. The aim of the *fono* was to address recent Pacific youth suicides, especially those by Tongan youth. The *fono* invited specific Pasifika ethnic groups to identify areas of necessity through a needs assessment focused discussion. The purpose of the *fono* was to provide some up to date information about Pacific suicides in the CMDHB area, across the Auckland region and across New Zealand; to have small group discussions about how *Lotumo'ui* can work with the community to identify support the community may need to reduce the risk of suicide over the Christmas period by providing some key messages for the community.

Strategies

A New Zealand Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2013-2016 was established to highlight and identify good-quality information and resources on suicide prevention and centres its focus on supporting families and communities (Ministry of Health, 2013). Furthermore, various suicide prevention initiatives have been established by Non-government groups and communities establishing ways of combating suicide amongst Pacific youth. SPINZ¹³ is an established organisation that offers support for both families and communities and has constantly and consistently provided safe and effective suicide prevention activities for people by connecting them to appropriate services. This is highlighted in the philosophy of the organisation where they state that “the main aim of this organisation is to improve suicide prevention literacy and also the capacity of the public to assist those around them”

The Ministry of Health (2008a) provided statistics from 0800whatsup and Youthline telephone Counselling service in 2006 which indicated that a high proportion of youth make contact with these two services in search of talking to a counsellor about relationship issues. These included but were not limited to on-going problems in peer relationships through family conflict or family breakdown. Finally relationship with partners (girlfriends/ boyfriends) was the main concern for teenage callers.

The Ministry of Youth Development (2002) acknowledges this point in their strategic plan which regards family as a fundamental social system for nurturing youth development and socializing adolescents to become healthy adults. This point is also emphasized in The Ministry of Youth Affairs

¹¹ *Lotumo'ui* is the Pacific Health Programme operating under Counties Manukau District Health Board.

¹³ SPINZ – Suicide Prevention Intervention New Zealand

framework for *Taiohi* (Maori Youth) in their '*E Tipu e Rea*' framework which states very firmly that in order for youth to thrive and develop, they need to be in the right environment (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002).

Interventions

An international study by King, Nurcombe, Bickman, Hides and Reid (2003) evaluated the effectiveness of telephone counseling for young people seeking help in the context of suicidal ideation or intent in an investigation of calls made by suicidal young people to a telephone counseling service. Significant decreases in suicidality and significant improvement in mental state were found to occur during the course of counseling sessions, suggesting positive immediate impact. Elements of active listening, empathy, rapport and influence are significant when working with those who are suicidal (Veechi, 2009). A study by Puterbaugh (2006) supports the communication-skills-centered approach to alleviating the symptoms of depression and recommends that professional counselors assert their ability to provide their clients with effective and healthy treatment for depression.

Research by Youthline highlighted the value of telephone helplines and their success in contributing to suicide prevention. It is indicated that the process of using Youth line enables the caller to feel supported and this reduces the frequency of attempts to kill themselves (Coveney, Pollock, Armstrong & Moore, 2012). An evaluation of crisis hotlines promotes the view that helplines assist in the reduction of suicide risk, psychological pain and feeling of powerlessness (Kalafat, Gould, Munfakh & Kellinman, 2007). Moreover, the evaluation indicated that approximately 8% of young people who contact the text counselling service talk about suicide. The study highlighted that young people prefer to text in comparison to having face to face contact. Their motivation is because they remain unidentified yet they continue to have control over their level of involvement. Kalafat et al (2007) advocates that this is an effective prevention strategy. The same evaluation provided negative feedback of callers' experiences accessing counsellors as being unhelpful.

Le Va, which is a non-government organisation, focuses on supporting Pacific communities and services providing resources, tools, information and support for health, wellbeing and social outcomes. They have established the national FLO¹⁴ suicide prevention ambassadors network to

¹⁴ Flo is a national programme that aims to build strong, resilient Pacific families and communities, address at risk groups within Pacific communities and assist those Pacific families who have been part of the impact of

champion Pasifika suicide prevention, and assist with national coordination and locally led solutions.

One of the key aims for this group is:

‘...To advice on Le Va work plan activity, support the project team, disseminate knowledge and information locally, and lead change in their respective communities. The group will have a particular focus on ethnic-specific, youth-appropriate and Rainbow Pasifika approaches”. (Le Va, 2015)

However, one of the challenges for these suicide preventive programs is the lack of indigenous research by indigenous researchers. However, emerging research shows the importance of an ethnic-specific approach so it caters specifically for the needs of that grouping. Tiatia (2003) highlights this in her research with NZ-born Samoans and also with Puna (2013) in her study with NZ-born Cook Island young people.

Summary

This chapter has examined literature on Suicide and suicide ideations with comparisons to global studies as well as other Pacific groups and the general New Zealand population, more specifically Tongan youth. This chapter has also outlined investigations and studies that focus on common risk factors that contribute to suicide but pertaining to Pacific youth who are at high risk not only of suicide but of suicide attempt and ideation. A particular focus has been within the area of communication and lack of causes associated to youth suicide and wellbeing. This chapter highlights the fact that although there are several suicide prevention initiatives currently happening in New Zealand, yet there are gaps in qualitative research to do with informing and assisting in developing prevention programs. It has argued that an ethnic-specific approach is essential in working with Tongan youth who are at risk to suicide. The literature has assisted to inform the selected methodology that is culturally appropriate to capture the voices of the Tongan youth. As well as the sample that is to pertain to Mangere, South Auckland and is to include all youth that was born in or out of New Zealand using snowball technique.

suicide. It is also part of a national suicide prevention programme for Maori and pacific communities’ delievered by LeVa (Le Va, 2015).

Chapter 4: Research Method and Methodology

If you speak to a man in a language he understands that goes to his head, but if you speak to him in his own language – that goes to his heart (Nelson Mandela)

Introduction

This study required a rigorous process-based methodology which fitted the worldview of the participants (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2007) so as to ensure youth engagement in sharing their experiences. It was also essential that the research framework was seen to be a safe space where the participants felt they were valued and protected. This is not limited to the confidentiality agreements as prescribed in western frameworks but included also the need to ensure these youths' *'ngeia* (dignity) remained intact when the research was completed. Tamasese, Peteru and Waldergrave (1997) and Helu-Thaman (2008) note that research should position itself within Pacific worldview, beliefs, and values and, Pacific etiquette and cultural principles. Aims were that this study empower Tongan youth by giving them the space to voice their views, and that their views, in turn, would contribute to more effective policy and programme making for vulnerable youth.

The qualitative design was selected and the phenomenological approach because this would capture insights relating to values, wants and preferences, in the participants' language (Berg, 2001). Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston (2004) discuss the crucial role of qualitative research in providing 'enlightenment' or 'knowledge; for understanding which is required for social policy concerns (p.29). The study was guided by the *Kakala* Research Framework Helu-Thaman (1999) as adapted by Taufe'ulungaki and Johanasson-Fua (2005) and the Tongan communication style of *talanoa*. This chapter is in three sections: the research design and method, the research process that was carried out, and third my reflections on the learnings and challenges faced while carrying out the study.

Part One – Research Design

Qualitative

I decided on a qualitative approach for my study because I wanted to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of vulnerable Tongan youth and their experiences of communication. As Salkind (2013) proposes, a qualitative approach ensured validity and authenticity to the research:

Qualitative research methods have been around for thousands of years, as long as people have shared ideas and traditions orally, interviewed others, and so on. Only in

the past 25 years have these methods received any attention as a legitimate tool for understanding behaviour and answering important social and behavioral science research questions. (Salkind, 2012, p.213)

Qualitative research proposes that peoples' reality is socially constructed and social experience is created through real life experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Quality research methods are especially valuable in drawing out views and knowledge that is culturally embedded in the lives of people and the relationships they engage in (Myers, 2010). Qualitative research designs have been used with good results in similar studies exploring the experiences of vulnerable youth (Tiatia, 2003; Fa'alau, 2011; Puna, 2013). My approach is a combination of Phenomenology, Pacific world view, the Talanoa and the Kakala. Each is discussed.

Phenomenology

To capture the lived experiences of vulnerable Tongan youth, I decided to use phenomenology. The strength of a phenomenological approach is its focus on the lived experience (Smith, 2007). Edmund Husserl, founder of phenomenology argues that by focusing on the person's ways of being-in-the-world, this uncovers experiences and reflection which may have not been intended, or realised. In sum, a phenomenological approach provides opportunities for deeper investigation (Zahavi, 2003). This is supported by Grbich (2007):

Phenomenology is an approach that attempts to understand the hidden meanings and the essence of an experience together with how participants make sense of these. Essences are objects that do not necessarily exist in time and space like facts do, but can be known through essential or imaginative intuition involving interaction between researcher and respondents or between researcher and text. (p.92)

Denscombe (2003) proposes that phenomenology is about gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussion and participant observation. The specific phenomenon, which is explored in my study is 'communication'. I saw a phenomenological approach as enabling Tongan youth share the uniqueness and diversity of their experiences. These unique experiences may have relevance and resonate with those of other Pacific or Tongan youth. Patton (2002) states:

Initially all our understanding comes from sensory experience of phenomena, but that experience must be described, explicated and interpreted. Yet, descriptions of experiences and interpretations are so intertwined that they often become one. Interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience

includes interpretation. Thus, phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in doing so, develop a worldview. (p.106)

Finally, phenomenology reinforces a locating of self – a revealing of the beliefs, values and practices that shape people's lives including what is of value. Kovach writes: (2009):

Self-location anchors knowledge within experience and these experiences greatly influence interpretations. Sharing stories and finding commonalities assists in making sense of a particular phenomenon, though it is never possible (nor wise) to generalise to another experience. (p.111)

Pacific Worldview

Overlaying the phenomenological approach is the Pacific worldview, which provides the lens by which to explore, explain, and document Tongan youth experiences and positions Pacific knowledge in the research design for this study. As was outlined in Chapter 2, a Pacific worldview centres on a set of values and beliefs that encapsulates the way Pacific people view the world (Sanga, 2004; Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). As noted, the Pacific Worldview gives priority to the sacred, to people and social systems and to the natural resources and to maintaining a balance or harmony between these three elements.

In sum, Tongans do not focus only on economic values but on ensuring spiritual good and ensuring the basic needs of all people are met, and for the preservation of the environment for the use of future generations.

Talanoa

In my experience of working with vulnerable people, I have come to appreciate that true engagement takes place when people feel safe, connected and have a sense of belonging and as much as possible are meeting on equal terms. I saw the *talanoa* as the method that would stay true to the purpose of the research and give justice to the youth voices. As outlined in Chapter Two and Three, the *talanoa* centres on relationships based on a communal idea of working together and sharing (Havea, 2010). *Talanoa* are increasingly used in Pacific research (see Wilson, 2011; Otsuka, 2005, 'Ahio, 2011; Pau'uvala-Teisina, 2011; Pau'uvala, 2011; Latu, 2009; Prescott, 2008; Vaiioleti, 2006; Tu'itahi, 2005). *Talanoa* serves as a historical platform for communication that is exercised within the *nofo 'a kāinga*: "It is used across a number of social settings, from the informal talanoa that can take place between friends to the formal setting of a kava reception" (Prescott, 2008, p.63).

The *talanoa* composes both a formal and informal exchanges of ideas. As documented *talanoa* simply refers to “talk (in an informal way) to tell stories or relate experiences” (Churchward, 1959, p. 447). Vaioleti (2011) explains the word *talanoa*. He states that *tala* literally translates as to ‘tell, explain, inform, expose, talk or command’ (p. 116). The word *noa* means ‘ordinary’, nothing in particular, purely imaginary (p.116).

Havea (2010) has raised concerns that the literal translation of the word has served to minimise its effectiveness and credibility in western perspective. Additionally that, the integrity of *talanoa* as a storytelling concept necessitates active engagement in exchanges of information. In my view, the use of narrative will bring Tongan youth stories alive, and give meaning and authenticity to their words. Manu’atu (2000) claims *talanoa* is the art of acting and thinking in communication with oneself and with other people. The heart of *talanoa* is based on a mutual engagement which leads to the ‘co-construction of knowledge’ (Gegeo & Gegeo, 2001). Taufe’ulungaki writes: “...in addition to cultural values, each culture has its own beliefs about knowledge, which are linked to the key values of the culture and these, in turn influence the way knowledge is created, validated transmitted and used...” (Taufe’ulungaki 2004, p. 23).

In my view, the activity of *talanoa* echoes a spirit that harbours and crafts relationships. Firstly, as described by Vaioleti (2006) there is a synergy within *talanoa* which helps to activate a state of interconnectedness. This synergy fuels energy which ignites a bond and/or union, so allows for relationships to be built. Secondly, the initiation of this synergy instigates a balance so helping to remove power differences in the dialogue. For example, when a youth enters the research relationship with me, there will already exist a power differential, for example, that of the professional and that of the participant. It is important to be aware of that power difference. In my view use of *talanoa* will help reduce this power imbalance. Thirdly, *talanoa* has proven to be a reliable method in researching the experiences of vulnerable youth (Puna, 2013; Fehoko, 2014). Aims are that the study *talanoa* will be a collaborative approach founded upon shared ownership of the materials shared. For example, Wilson (2011) sourced experiences and perceptions about the place of Samoan language within New Zealand using a *talanoa* approach with Wellington youth.

The ontological roots of *talanoa* are linked to the constructivist paradigm and to a lesser extent to post-positivism (Prescott, 2008). Trust is essential to the *talanoa* relationship. The obstruction and protection of the *vā* relationship will enable Tongan youth to bring who they are (language, experiences,

identity) just as I will bring myself to the sharing experience. As noted by Rubin and Rubin (2012) the give and take between the interviewer and interviewee in the conversation is paramount.

Kakala Research Framework

The Kakala is the name given to the garland used on ceremonial occasions. Helu-Thaman (1999) developed a three step research process which focussed on the making of a Kakala. She named this the Kalala Framework. For this study I decided to employ the adapted version further developed by Taufe'ulungaki and Johansson-Fua (2005) which comprises four steps: 1. *Teu* – Preparation Stage; 2. *Toli* – Data Collection Stage; 3. *Tui* – Data Analysis Stage and Luva - Presentation of Findings Stage. I outline these four stages here and apply these to describe my data collection in part two of this chapter.

Teu – Preparation Stage

The *teu* phase requires the *kakala* maker to know the *taumu'a* (goal, intention or purpose) of the *katoanga* (occasion) for which the *kakala* will be made. This allows for groundwork of preparation and planning to occur. Within a research framework, this is parallel to the identification of the issue(s) or problem(s) relating to the study and how this is conceptualised. This step involves reviewing the literature to identify and clarify the gap(s) and the selection of the research design, the participants to be targeted and the research questions. This stage is about considering the ethical appropriateness of the research including its cultural relevance and application.

Toli – Data Collection Stage

The focus of '*toli kakala*' phase is on the pursuit of searching and knowing where to locate the most exquisite fauna and flowers, which will honour the purpose of the event. A competent *kakala* maker can distinguish the precise qualities such as texture, maturity, colour, fragrance and locations to *toli kakala* to be used in the garland. This stage parallels use of appropriate data collection techniques employed to collect information from participants.

Tui – Data Analysis

The phase '*tui kakala*' is to weave the garland. The *tui kakala* role or the weaving together of data can either be carried out by one person or by a small group. Once the flowers and fauna are gathered, the

most perfumed, aromatic and suitable ones for the design are selected. The creation of the design starts with the designer's own artistic flare. The *kau tui kakala* hold knowledge of traditional methods and designs and comment on the correctness, presentation and symbolic meanings portrayed. They understand the intrinsic meanings of the *kakala* and the garland. In Helu-Thaman (1999) likens this step to the data input, analysis and write up periods of research.

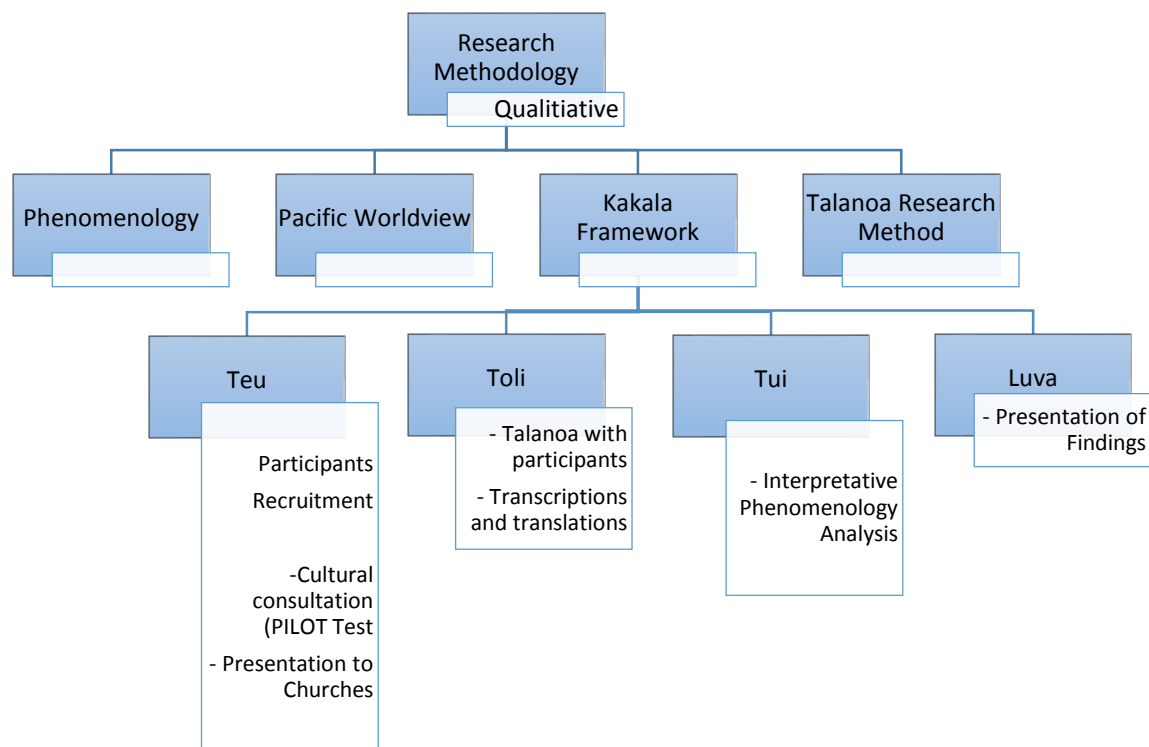
Luva – Presentation of Findings

The final phase is to '*luva*' (presentation of the *kakala*) to the occasion or event for which it was intended. It is about presenting this to someone special for whom it was made, whether this be occasion or a festival, dance, birthdays, weddings or other event. This phase corresponds with the dissemination of results. *Luva* the *kakala* means returning the knowledge created to the people it was gifted from to ensure it serves its purpose.

Part Two – Research

As stated, I used the *Kakala* Framework as a guidance process for my data collection. Part a) refers to the research design, in this section I outline the major research steps I carried out and align these steps to the *Kakala* Framework. This is outlined schematically in Figure 3. Part B. illustrates more about how the *Kakala* Framework has been outlined within my research. First, the preparatory stage focused on how the participants were selected, sample size, recruitment and how the participants were informed and consented to participate in the study. This included presentations to the Tongan churches. Secondly, the data collection stage comprised attention on the *talanoa* as the data collection tool, the transcriptions and translations of the data. Thirdly, interpretive phenomenology was used for the data analysis stage. At the completion of the research, findings will be shared with the youth, their families and their communities.

Fig 3: Research Process aligned to the Kakala Research Framework



Step 1 – Teu (Preparation Stages)

Step one was to identify the sample size and the recruitment process.

Sample

I had decided that up to twelve participants would provide valuable data that would inform and address the research question, after Patton (2002) that small sample sizes are selected purposively for in-depth and information-rich *talanoa*.

The criteria for participants was that they must self-define as Tongan and reside within the Mangere area and be aged 16-24 years. This is the age group of youth as defined within the Ministry of Youth Development (2002). It is also an age group noted for vulnerability (see Chapter 3). It is important to note that the participants were not recruited on the basis that they had attempted or had suicide ideation. They were youth who expressed vulnerability.

Recruitment

Recruitment was to be through youth groups at Tongan churches. This involved presentations that were given at Church meetings where the aim and focus of this study was discussed. At the end of each presentation an invitation was offered for interested participants to make contact. My contact details were left so that I could be contacted privately.

With this in mind, I approached a number of Tongan churches in Mangere and two gave an instant yes to the study being carried out through their church networks. I chose the church community as my starting point within Mangere because I wanted to take the study into the community and gain their involvement. Two factors influenced this decision. The first was that I wanted to move away from a clinical focus which characterises many studies about youth vulnerability and second, I had been told that the majority of deaths from suicide within the Tongan community were among those who were not known to mental health services (Personal Communication, Natalie Leger, 2011).

I decided that after the presentations if few participants showed interest in the study, then the snowball technique would be used. I took note of Kurant, Markpoulou and Thiran (2011), that there can be a community bias in relation to the snowballing technique where the first participant may have a strong impact on the sample. Therefore, I knew it would require me to be skilful in networking and finding an appropriate sample.

Participant Information/ Consent Forms

Ensuring correct information is provided to the participants is crucial to facilitate informed consent and participation (Ritchie et al., 2004). Participant Information Sheets (See Appendix 3a and 3b) and Consent forms (Appendix 4a) were prepared in both English and Tongan (See appendix 3a, 3b,). During the consultation process with church leaders and cultural advisors research was piloted and reviewed for cultural appropriateness. (See Appendix 2 Indicative Questions). Participants decided whether *talanoa* would be carried out in the Tongan language or English.

Step 2 –Toli (Data Collection)

At the presentation to the Tongan churches the invitation was extended to youth to participate in the study. My contact information was left for participants. Participants contacted me via text message, email and phone call. A mutual agreement was reached with participants with respect to

appropriate dates, times and venue. All *talanoa* took place at AUT South Campus as this was central, easily accessed and provided a private space for participants.

Each *talanoa* session began with a discussion of the study purpose, and an explanation of ethics such as confidentiality and privacy. It had been expected the *talanoa* be up to one hour in length but two *talanoa* were much longer. Considerable care and time was taken at the beginning of each *talanoa* to ensure participants felt safe and comfortable. One *talanoa* was delayed for two days due to the participant having to go to another engagement. The audio data and consent forms were stored in a locked and secure place to ensure the privacy of participants was maintained.

Transcriptions of each *talanoa* were written in the language used during the *talanoa*. These were transcribed within 24 hours of the *talanoa* so as to maintain the ideas and understandings obtained.

Step 3 – Tui (Data Analysis)

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis¹⁵ was selected for my data analysis with the aim of remaining as true as possible to the voices of the participants. Initially, it was proposed that the NVIVO software program would be used. However, in my trial run with the first interview, I found myself more preoccupied in finding recurrent words rather than hearing the themes which emanated from the data. In order to fully capture the voices of the Tongan youth, I applied the following steps:

- i) I read through the transcripts many times and made notes of first impressions.
- ii) I started to label themes, words, sentences, sections and phrases which stood out. These labels related to actions, activities, concepts, differences, opinions, processes, for example. Using the overarching questions within the research, I started to colour code quotes made either because these were repeated across transcripts and/or because they pointed to new understandings emerging.
- iii) I labelled some categories and made decisions as to which appeared to have most relevance, I then looked for a connection between them. The categories and connections found formed the main results of my study.

¹⁵ Interpretive phenomenological analysis is important for this study as it captures the voices of the Tongan youth and illuminates how they make sense of their experience, while also interpreting their accounts with reference to established psychological concepts (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p.271).

Step 4 – Luva (Presentation of Findings)

The *luva* is the voices of participants as presented in the findings in the next chapter.

Ethics

Ethical approval for this study was gained on 15th of May 2013 – Application 13/47 (See Appendix 1).

It is also important to take note that every culture has its own ways of doing things or their ethical processes that should be considered (Smith 1999). Even though ethical approval was obtained from the AUT ethics committee, I needed also to obtain cultural ethical approval from the Tongan community and/or churches where I would base my study.

Protocols with Church Ministers and communities

As noted, I saw the church as a natural starting point for this study, it was imperative to seek cultural consent so as to enable the Tongan community to be informed of the purpose of the study and to determine whether the study would be of value. In preparation for the study *talanoa* took place with elders from each of the two Tongan churches so as to ensure appropriate Tongan protocols were met. Church Ministers may often be gatekeepers. Instead, I saw value in these comments by Ritchie et al., (2004): ...there is real value in working with gatekeepers, particularly in studies involving vulnerable groups, where their closer relationship with and knowledge of the participant can ensure that appropriate approaches are made (p.90). A cultural advisor was used to ensure that the right protocols and processes were followed when approaching the Tongan churches.

Confidentiality

In seeking ethics approval I knew that confidentiality would be a challenge given the small size of the Tongan community and the sensitivity of this topic. The possibility of participants knowing each other was high. As a result pseudonyms were used. For example, F1 – Female 1; M1 – Male 1, FM – transgender (See Table 1, Chapter Five). However, I believed that I must be honest with the participants and explain to them that I could not guarantee their complete confidentiality. This generated a level of realness and genuineness which, I believe promoted participation.

Discussions and transparency around consent required that this was not just limited to *talanoa*, but began from the beginning of receiving text message responses. This reaffirmed that

consent “is not a single event but a process” and that informed consent and voluntary participation is critical in research (Ritchie et al., 2004, p.88). All participants were also given a copy of a consent form to show their *lotofiemālie*¹⁶.

Part Three - Reflections

My fieldwork both stimulated and reconciled some tensions in my thinking around the delicacy of the research process and the place of western frameworks versus Tongan cultural processes. My initial assumption was that this research was going to contribute to empowering the lives of Tongan youth and the Tongan community really started with self. It was such an empowering journey for me as a researcher.

Talanoa - empowering process

The familial grounds of *talanoa* motivated me as a researcher to apply this in my study. The customary method is well known within my ‘*api* (home) because of its practices, the natural way to do things. In the first two interviews I struggled to keep the *talanoa* as natural as possible when incorporating the indicative questions in guiding the *talanoa* process. My anxiety was to ensure that all the indicative questions were answered rather than letting the *talanoa* flow freely and using it to navigate and direct my way in the conversation. Perhaps this inhibited the cultural parameters around the sharing that *talanoa* promotes.

When the *talanoa* was not prescribed by my fear that it had to be in an exact way, I found myself becoming intimate and passionate within the *talanoa*. This fostered confidence and generated the ‘synergy’ which Vaioleti (2006) refers to, connecting me as a researcher to the participant that enabled a natural and free flow of conversation for Tongan youth to feel free, safe and inspired to share their experiences. This became a validating experience for me as someone who has never carried out research before, as well as being affirmed as to the *mo’oni* (truthfulness) of the process. A self-discovery process occurred during the *talanoa* which affirmed my assumption that this experience empowered Tongan youth and community, but the greatest fulfilment was the growth and development transpired for me.

¹⁶*Lotofiemālie* means to be easy in mind, contented, satisfied; to be free from pain or discomfort or sorrow or malice (Churchward, 1959, p.187)

While my experiences with *talanoa* may have been slightly different to that of the Tongan youth who participated, the *talanoa* method gave us a point of connection, bridging differences that likely exist within two worlds and with its cultural demands attached (See Chapter Two). Our association with similar narratives and realities gave power to Tongan youth to celebrate their uniqueness about ‘*ko hai au*’ (who am I). Being fluent in the Tongan language and English was an advantage. I was convinced that the *talanoa* with gate keepers within the Tongan community contributed to building a platform which provided a space that was safe for Tongan youth to share their narratives. I believe that using another method for this research would not have produced the richness of knowledge that was gifted by these youth.

Locating cultural values

Engaging Tongan youth in research required sound cultural knowledge of protocols and processes essential to the *anga faka-Tonga* (Tongan way of life). Weaving principles that are fundamental to the *anga faka-Tonga* activated the potential engagement process to occur (See Chapter Two). The act of being respectful and courteous activated the potential engagement process. An awareness of the stratified Tongan social system and its place in accordance to the church community also resolved any tensions that would have been present. The sensitivity of *fatongia* (roles and responsibilities – see Chapter Two) and its significance within the church were important to be aware of. Involving an authority within the Tongan culture helped build a bridge and formalised a *fehokotaki* (bond) between myself as a researcher and them as a community. *Fakafōtunga*¹⁷ entailed verbal and non-verbal actions. The power of the spoken words such as selection of words and tone reinforced the genuineness about the intent of my study. Unspoken acts such as the emotion that came with the way I looked, how I physically presented myself were also used to measure in whose interest I was there to serve?

Fakafōtunga is characterised by the establishment of *fakafeangai* which means “to be with, for the purpose of waiting’ (serving) (Churchward, 1959, p. 30). Therefore, *fakafeangai* embodies a force which illustrates the genuineness and authenticity of serving. As a researcher, I learned that in order to fully establish the *vā* (relationship), the spirit of serving needed to be present in return of their support. For example, the church needed to feel and be convinced that the study was there to benefit them and not the researcher. I experienced *fakafōtunga* helped to eliminate tensions and restrictions which did

¹⁷ *Fakafōtunga* means how you present yourself.

pre-exist within the churches and which were influenced by the sensitivity of the participants. From observation, the relationship would have not been as strong if my *fakafōtunga* was not *mālie* (pleasant) and *māfana* (warm).

A learning that was reinforced was that the notions of *mālie* and *māfana* as denoted by Manu'atu (2000) were not merely additional steps in the *kakala* framework in my study but amounted to something intangible that needed to be present in all the steps of research. My research experience likened *mālie* and *māfana* to positive energies. For example, my *fakafōtunga* had to be *mālie* and *māfana* in order for the ministers to give me space and time to speak to the congregation. It was expected that if my *talanoa* and *fakafōtunga* were not *mālie* and *māfana* they would have not given me an opportunity and a platform to stand on. The *mālie* and *māfana* counteracted and balanced cultural pressures that were present. I was given an opportunity to speak in a forum where woman does not have a place. This was an enormous shift within the church protocols. As the topic was *mālie* and the *fakafōtunga* I had displayed was *mālie*, the energy that it provided meant it was *māfana* for the congregation to accept. The *mālie* and *māfana* expressed by the congregation only reinforced that they were ready to start having difficult conversations around delicate issues that their Tongan youth experienced. The formulation of *mālie* and *māfana* allowed me as a researcher to have a unique experience.

Ethics and Reciprocity

At a very early stage of my fieldwork and within the various *talanoa* with the Tongan community, it became clear that this research was not mine. I may have been the one who drove the ideas and completed the ground work but according to the Tongan churches I engaged with, the research belonged to them and those who have participated. To them, this piece of work was founded upon the idea and notion of giving back to the community. The dichotomy between what is ethically right and wrong was contested at its early stages. The contradiction I encountered was that in my ethics application, my role and responsibility as a researcher was clearly defined. However, the approval based in my Tongan community ethics suggests that this is collective responsibility. Initially, I struggled with the idea of how the community could be ethically responsible when I was accountable to the research. Towards the end of my fieldwork I was able to see that by the church consenting and giving approval for the study to take place meant that they were ready and prepared as a community

to start having difficult and challenging conversations. The value of giving back validated the teachings my grandmother instilled. This process led me to understand that giving back is not only about producing the finishing product but capitalises on the ongoing relationship that moves beyond the research process. The ongoing relationship as mentioned, was a challenge because how could you cement and/or discontinue a relationship(s)? When in the Tongan worldview, relationships never end.

I believe the methodology and method I have selected have been empowering and less oppressive for Tongan youth and their community. It provided a space for language, knowledge and stories to be shared. It situates their voice, one that may have been silenced for some time.

Summary

This chapter presented firstly, the appropriate methods for achieving the objective of the study and secondly, the experiences of Tongan youth in relation to communication especially during times of vulnerability. As noted the best approach to exploring the views and experiences of Tongan youth living in South Auckland was a qualitative investigation using Phenomenology and *Kakala* as a research framework adopting *talanoa* as a method. This chapter also described cultural prescriptors' undertaken to ethically meet the recruitment process. Furthermore, it detailed the data analysis process. Lastly, it provided a critical reflection on the challenges that were experienced in the data collection process.

"The greatest good that you can do for another is not just to show them your riches but to reveal to them their own"
(Benjamin Disraeli)

Introduction

This chapter presents the views of the 12 Tongan youth (16 – 23 years) as expressed in the *talanoa* to the research questions and other matters of concern to them:

- 1) What does communication mean for Tongan youth?
- 2) What are their preferred ways of communication including who did they communicate with?
- 3) What factors impact on their communication?
- 4) How can communication be improved?

All participants spoke quite confidently about what communication meant to them. Their views embraced diversity due to factors such as experiences, values and beliefs, environmental influences, age and gender difference. The *talanoa* highlighted prominence of terms such as 'sharing' and 'connecting with' and relationships. To them the *talanoa* was an empowering experience and my aims are to uphold the *mana* and the integrity of their voices in this retelling. The chapter begins with a profile of the 12 participants. This profile has considerable importance highlighting as it does some of youth experiences which have relevance to this study of youth vulnerability.

Background of Participants

These general profiles offer information about the participants including heritage, gender, preferred language and links with the culture of Tonga. The profile shows that these youth do not come to the study alone; they are a part of a family and community. Given the nature of this study it is vital to protect the identity of the 12 participants who shared their stories. Such protection is crucial to ensure the information shared is not detrimental to them or to those who are close to them such as their family and friends. As seen in Table 1, pseudonyms are used to represent each participant by gender, age, self-defined ethnicity. For example, F1 is a 23 year old who self-defined as a New Zealand-born Tongan, has been living in New Zealand all her life and is actively involved in the church. The final column of 'residence' was added because it was found that a significant number of youth within this group said they did not live in one place at the time of the study.

Table 1: *Participants Profiles*

Participant	Age	Self-defined Ethnicity	Place of Birth	Time in NZ (Years)	Church Active	Tongan Language	Place(s) of residence
F1	23	NZ-Born Tongan	NZ	23	√	Minimum	1
F2	18	Tongan	Tonga	12	√	Minimum	1
F3	18	NZ-Born Tongan	NZ	18	√	Moderate	2
F4	22	Tongan	NZ	12	√	Moderate	2
F5	18	Tongan	Tonga	12	√	None	2
F6	17	Tongan/Samoan	NZ	17	√	None	2
F7	16	Tongan/Pakeha	NZ	16	√	None	1
M1	22	Tongan	Tonga	4	√	Fluent	1
M2	21	NZ-Born Tongan	NZ	21	√	None	1
M3	18	Tongan	Tonga	14	√	None	2
M4	16	Tongan	Tonga	16	√	Minimum	1
FM1	17	NZ-Born Tongan	NZ	17	√	None	1

While all participants lived within the Mangere area, a number said that during school terms and University semesters they lived with grandparents and/or family members who lived outside the Mangere area. Main reasons given were that their homes were closer to school and/or that their parents were working fulltime. It was felt that better stability and support would be available under such arrangements. Where the participants lived influenced their perceptions and experiences of communication, as will be seen.

As seen in Table 1, participants comprised seven females, four males and one participant coded FM1 did not want to select one gender identity to sex. Throughout this research, this person is referred to by the Tongan concept as *fakaleiti*¹⁸. While seven were born in New Zealand, four of this group identified as New Zealand-born Tongans. Five were Tongan-born but four had lived in New Zealand for more than ten years so had an extensive experience of life in New Zealand. Four were over the age of 18 and eight were under 18 years. In terms of language, three said they spoke very little Tongan, two a moderate amount, six spoke no Tongan at all and one only reported that he spoke fluently in the Tongan language.

¹⁸ *Fakaleiti* refers to a transsexual individual. In the Tongan context *fakaleiti* is usually stigmatised as *fakamā* (shame) due to the strong patriarchal society practice as well as the Christian values and beliefs (Personal Communication, Vaivaifolau Kailahi).

All participants said they were members of a Tongan church within the Auckland area and that church was an important place for them to connect with other Tongan people. Although the church seemed to be a 'place of judgement' for them, they indicated that church made them feel like they were loved by someone bigger than their family, unconditionally, and church served to connect them spiritually. As shown in the table, two participants were of mixed ethnicity, one Tongan Samoan (F6) and one Tongan Pakeha (F7). These two are referred to by the Tongan term '*hafekasi*' (belonging to more than one ethnic group).

This group of youth were highly interested (if a little apprehensive) to be part of the *talanoa*. They said this was the first time they had an opportunity to share their views and aspirations through story. The *talanoa* revealed some differences and similarities between their understandings, styles and preferred ways of communicating. In doing so, the *talanoa* also uncovered some approaches which could valuably be used to improve Tongan youth communication.

What does communication mean?

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the four research questions: what does communication mean for Tongan youth; what are their preferred ways of communicating? What factors impact on their communication? Ways of improving communication based on the primary results. It concludes with some comments for future research around communication for youth. As youth described the importance of communication to them, they also spoke of the significance of communication to youth in general. In their view communication was not just the words or for sharing of information, it was also the way they established mutual bonds and relationships with the persons they were communicating with.

Sharing of information

All youth said communication was about sharing information, as powerfully expressed by F2 and F4:

"Communication to me is about sharing ideas. I like to share my ideas and what I think when I can..."F2

"Communication...that is how I know things about my family, friends, things at school and church...if no-one talks to me and tells me things, I don't know much. It connects to the outside...to places outside my home..." F4

However, as *talanoa* progressed, it became very clear that to this group communication was not limited to talking; it also conveyed feelings and emotions which were embedded in their interpretation of the 'intangible' which is a powerful concept that merits exploration:

"...I just call it talking...its more than words. Talking is about feelings [pause, thinking]...a feeling is also involved..."FM1

"It's not about the communication because I can talk to my parents or friends, it's about getting them to see it from my where I stand...trying to get them to feel what I am going through..."M1

"It's important for me to know that someone is in the present with me whether I talk or not." F5

Communication was about trust and being able to create a bond with the person they spoke with:

"...communication is about two people...or more, you can't talk on your own. When I talk to someone else, it's like being on the same page as the other one who is listening..."M1

"I think for me, if I can't bond with the person then I can't talk...ummm...I can't share cos I only share with people I know and trust...so communication is getting to know someone...not sharing what I know..." M2

Communication was also described as a relational exchange where one gives and responds:

"Growing up, I have always known it to be...ummm... vahevahe [sharing]...talking was about that...I vahevahe with you and you vahevahe with me. Today I will have something that will help you out and tomorrow you might give me your ears that will help me out..." M1

"I know when I'm on the same page to other person because I just get the message straight away. I feel laid back and I can be who I want to be...at the same time the other person also feels the same thing...we can see the spark..." F7

Each participant highlighted the need for youth to have someone they could talk with. Six participants described talking to someone to be a protective factor for all youth:

"...talking to someone helped me to deal with my issues rather than wanting to end my life..."(F1)

"...it helped with me to feel good about me, I saw there was a way out..."F3

"Stops you from going there – stops you from going on the road to that dark place."F6

"...it helped me to let go of some of my anger and sad feelings."M2

However, six participants said there were times when they just wanted to be left alone:

“At the time I couldn’t and didn’t have anyone to talk to. I tried to talk about it but no-one was there. So what I did was just stay at home and lock myself in my room and bother about going out.” M3

“I don’t want to be with family or my friends. I just want to be alone, I don’t need anyone...I like to punch something...I’m thinking, would I be missed...probably not...” M4

“It starts off by not wanting to be around anyone...it pisses me off seeing people happy...I like to be on my own...I don’t like others to see me sad...” M1

For one this was time when alcohol seemed to help:

“It gets worse and worse and then the drink doesn’t work anymore. I say F&%%\$ it, I don’t have any interest to go out. I just want to stay at home, I just want to get lost in my head...” M2*

Power of the spoken and silent words

All youth described spoken words as fundamental to communication. However, there were different responses by those who were under 18 years of age and those who were 18 years and older. The response of the under 18 year olds focused on the power of words used (M4). Whereas, the attention of those who were 18 years or older valued and emphasized the importance of being listened to (F1), which will be explored in more detail later:

“...the words are important you know...they are painful...more sore than getting a beating. It’s never about the good things I do it’s about do better, do better, do better...” M4

“I’m sick and tired of having to tell them over and over again, it’s in one ear and out the other...” F1

Non-verbal – Body Language

The importance of non-verbal communication such as words, unsaid, body language was also raised. For example, all seven female participants said that non-verbal communication was important. In their view, it was essential that Tongan youth learn the skill of reading non-verbal cues, especially those used as a caution and warning but also to read the smiles and warmth:

“...it’s a look I get; if we have visitors and I get that look...that look meant I was in trouble...” F3

“I know when my dad is angry, he doesn’t say much...he just ignores [looks sad and stares at the ground, starts to cry]...it’s that silent signal that says it all...” F2

Two of the male participants expressed their ideas about non-verbal communication from a different point of view. To them non-verbal communication had come to signify authority within their peer group (M2). M4 indicated the power of non-verbal communication for territorial reasons:

"My mates and me have a way of looking at each other...mainly to those who we don't know...it's a respect thing...looking and nodding at each other in a way only we can understand...this says I respect you...if you don't get that look you are not respected..."M2

"...if someone comes into my turf and tries to be a botza [smart and cheeky]...I raise my eyebrows and look him straight in the eyes. It's to let you know that this is my turf and don't be disrespecting me..."M4

Three participants aged 18 years and under said that body language was important in their communication with their parents because it showed youth whether their parents cared or not:

"I can always tell by their body language, whether it's the voice or just the way they look at me. From that I know if they care or want to listen to what I have to say..."M4

"Whenever I talk to my aunty, she pretends she wants to hear what I want to tell her but it all shows because her words don't match her feelings that I am seeing."F3

"A smile does make a difference..."F2

What are the preferred ways of communication and who they communicate with?

Youth responses to the questions about ways of communication are presented in parts: their preferred way of communication, who they talked to during times of contentment and during vulnerable distressing times. It was clear that they had an understanding of communication styles. For example, during times when they were happy. When they were in times of distress their communication style often leads to self-destruction by way of self-harm and alcohol abuse.

Preferred ways

Youth gave clear descriptions about their desired ways of communication. Their responses were based on how they would have liked others to communicate with them as listening, non-judgmental and 1-1 face to face. For example, these youth held different views about the way they wanted their family, friends and strangers to communicate with them. The majority said 'talking' was the ideal way for communication with their family, in whereas, it was suitable for their friends to text them messages and to have contact over Facebook (FB), only a minority and mainly – (those who were in their 20's) outlined a way of communicating with people that they were meeting for the first time.

A major finding is that all the youth in the study preferred talking one to one, face to face. Youth identified three key factors which gives weight to their reasons. For the younger youth, face to face was about protecting their privacy:

"Talking in person...yep...I like to talk in person. I didn't text about it [things] cos everyone borrowed phones in high school...to send texts and I was scared that my friends would read them". F7

"No-one needs to know my crap, I don't trust sending messages so I don't know who might use it against me. You know one of my friend had text one other friend and the story got around". M4

Those in the mid-age group highlighted the importance of feeling safe:

"I feel safe having someone there talking face to face, it's a good vibe when they are there compared to when they are not there. I feel safe, I feel like I can listen to them better". F5

However, for the older youth responses were indicative of relationship with the person:

"When I talk to someone over the phone, they are not real in my head. They are nothing but just a figure, that's why I need to have someone I can talk to 1-1". F1

"I just like talking face to face, I like to see people's facial expression and stuff....It's important for me to see people's facial expression so I know how they really feel. Whether they are being honest. I want to see if they really care. Texting and facebook is not the same". M2

A difference was found between New Zealand-born participants and Tongan-born on this point. F4 and M1 who are Tongan-born stated strongly the importance of others listening to them:

"When they listen it shows that they care" F4

"I just want someone to listen to me or at least show that they are...they don't want to listen because if what we say is not what they like they cut us off...it was like their way or the highway..."M1

F3 who is a New Zealand-born youth claimed that her parents often listen but what she needed most was affection. F6 said having a sense of honesty was important to her. While FM1 wished that her parents could be non-judgmental:

"You know, I can't remember when I was told I was loved...I wish they say it to me everyday...I'd love that."F3

"I like them to be honest and be themselves just like I am...I want them to communicate with me like I communicate with them." F6

"When I bring up what I'm upset about I want them to stand on my side. I want them to feel upset the way I am upset. I want them to go through my feelings...I don't wanna be judged...when they do this I know that they care"FM1

Who do these youth communicate with?

Participants were able to identify and have people they could talk with. F1 said that she is able to talk with her best friend; F5 talks to her cousin and M2 finds it easy to talk to his girlfriend:

"I do talk a lot with my best friend by texting because she's busy with her kids..." F1

"I talk to my cousin loads, she's always keen to know how I'm feeling..." F5

"My girlfriend wherever I am, we always text and we always call each other every night..." M2

Female youth indicated that their paternal aunty was a key person that they were able to talk to because they felt safe:

"...it aint so awkward talking with my aunty...my dad's sister...she understands me best...but I choose what I tell her..." F6

As noted in Chapter Two, the dad's sister (fahu) has an influenced place within the Tongan culture. This places female in a position where they have power to advocate for their nephews and nieces. This aspect is highlighted by F3 and F4 responses that if they were able to talk to their aunty, she would be able to do something about it:

"My aunty [as fahu] on my dad's side has the power..." F3

"My first choice is my mehikitanga [paternal aunty] if I can get her to understand, then everything else will be alright..." F4

Two male youth identified grandparents as preferred choice they felt comfortable to talk to:

"I like talking to my granddad because I feel there is no pressure...we talk about things in the present and he tells me about his past. I learn a lot from him and I hope that I can be just like him someday..." M4

"There are things I am not comfortable talking about it with my parents... it's shameful. So I like talking to my grandparents, I wish I can speak fluent Tongan then all will be sweet as..." M3

It is notable that this group did not include their parents as people they felt they could talk to. This likely relates back to the culture of respect for their parents, and may also signify intergenerational differences as well. A few participants found it a challenge to name a specific person they could communicate with during vulnerable times. M2 said he found it tough to communicate with his girlfriend due to his feeling guilty because in his understanding males should be protectors. He saw sharing his views to indicate weakness. F4 could not communicate with anyone because of her fear of others knowing intimate details about her life:

"I usually talk to my girlfriend...but when it's difficult...I hide it cos I want to be strong for her. I didn't want her to think she had to carry us through this. So I talk to my girlfriend but then I don't. You know whada I mean." **M2**

"There was no other people I opened up to because I did not want them to be all up in my business. I don't trust people easily, I think they would tell other people about me that I was suicidal and selfish, low self-esteem person. I wanted them to think I am confident...The last thing I want was for people to know things..." **F4**

Communication during times of contentment

There were differences also in the way these youth communicated when things were going well for them. Age was a factor here, for example, for those who were under 18 years old, their method of communication was reflected in their willingness to engage in activities whole-heartedly:

"I spend more time on the kitchen table talking to mum, dad and my brothers and sisters when I am happy at home..." **FM1**

"...I do more chores without being asked to..." **M4**

"I like to be part of our family outings..." **F6**

Three male participants described humour as a strong indicator in their communication when things were going well for them generally:

"...when you hear me joke around it means things are good at home and at school. I crack a joke to make people laugh and start mocking people for the fun of doing..." **M3**

"My mates enjoy being with me cos of my stories, I spin those funny ones when it's all cool. It's another story when it's not...they don't like hanging out with me..." **M4**

"The funny side of me comes out...this will tell you that I'm alright..." **M1**

By way of contrast youth over 18 years old reported an increased use of social media to communicate with others when things were going well for them:

"...I always update my status on FB [Facebook] when I have exciting news. I like to let my friends know..." **F4**

"Cool stuff like new places or new learning I like to instagram it up so people can see what I'm up to. Some friends and cuzzies like to follow what I do..." **F1**

"I have txt 2000 and it always runs out...this happens when things are well..." **M1**

"Do you know of skypeing...yeah...I skype my family overseas even locally just to have a chat..." **M2**

Communication during vulnerable times

Those aged under 18 years of age shared their inability to talk when things were not going well for them.

For example, F3 described a sense of helplessness which stopped her from talking to anyone. Similarly,

FM1 felt powerless to communicate:

“Communicating is a big thing and if there is no communication like anything can happen. For example, how my incident at home... [Pause...crying]...me and my aunty couldn’t talk. She just totally shut me down. She made me feel like nothing...I told her stuff and it just went in one ear and out the other. I didn’t bother...I didn’t want to talk to her anymore. In my head, I was saying get stuff. I felt like a failure...” F3

“There was no need to talk because I felt unwanted... [Pause, look down to the floor], there was no point to share and talk about what I think...I knew nothing that’s what I was told. So I learned to shut up and listen.” FM1

A finding, that was alarming to me, was that 11 out of the 12 youth shared that they had either attempted to or had thoughts of ending their lives because they felt incapable of talking when things were not going well for them. F1 said cutting her wrist was a way of relieving frustration when she was unable to communicate. F2 said overdosing had helped her to be free from pain when she couldn’t talk about it.

F3 said she had reverted to suicide when communication was bad for her:

“I was cutting because they [parents] were not listening. I couldn’t talk to my parents, they told me to stop being laupisi...I was frustrated, I cried myself to sleep...I didn’t want to keep cutting but I found a way to let it all out...” F1

“You know I was bullied at school for a long time. I tried to tell my mum but she didn’t understand what I meant. I was scared and also lonely, I was pissed off at my mum and everyone else...I took pills to help me forget...” F2

“All the f%\$en time, always telling me I’m not like so and so...I got tired of all the comparing – I said that’s enough. It’s like I get beat up all day and every day. I wanted to stop feeling like this so what I did was I got the rope and left home...” F3*

Four male participants associated their anger with self-harm emotions when they were not able to communicate. They all commented that their intent to self-harm was driven by their anger:

“When I’m f&%\$d off, I can’t think...it’s hard for me to think. I can’t talk, it’s like all I see is black and all I want to do is to show them...I mean what I say...I wake up in ED [Emergency Department] and they told me I tried to jump off a tree...” M1*

“...[clenching of fist]...when I can’t share...inside feels like a fire, no water can make it go out. I hate the world, I hate my mum especially. I don’t wanna hate her, so I hate myself...I just wanna die...” M2

“They wouldn’t miss me...they don’t f’en [swear words] care. I wondered if they cared if I was gone. Would they really listen now, I bet they would...” M3

“...I always thought of the easy way out...It’s what I do when I need help. It makes me insane, I feel like a schizophrenic when my head goes round and round and round. I just want out so they know.” M4

All youth said that the use of alcohol assisted their ability to communicate when things were not going well for them. F4 said it provided her with courage; M2 stated that alcohol gave him confidence and for M1 it offered him comfort:

“...I wanted the feeling to go away...uncle Jimmy gave me the power to hide away in my mind...it was for a short time but I enjoyed the feeling of getting lost...I always turn to uncle Jimmy for help when I needed it...” F4

“I had balls...I could do anything when I’m on that buzz...you see drinking toughens me up. When I’m sober and meet up with friends they would tell me what I told them the night before...and I’m like [pause] sorry bro I just lied...” M2

“I don’t talk that much...the drink does help...when I have problems at home or at school or with my girlfriend...a drink always helps me to cope...” M1

Male youth decided to isolate themselves from their circle of friends and within their families when they are stressed and unable to talk about their feelings:

“At the time I couldn’t and didn’t have anyone to talk to. I tried to talk about it but no-one was there. So what I did was just stay at home and lock myself in my room and not bother about going out”. M3

“It gets worse and worse and then the drink doesn’t work anymore I say F&%%\$ it, I don’t have any interest to go out. I just want to stay at home, I just want to get lost in my head...” M2*

“I don’t want to be with family or my friends. I just want to be alone, I don’t need anyone...I like to punch something...I’m thinking, would I be missed...probably not...” M4

“It starts off by not wanting to be around anyone...it pisses me off seeing people happy...I like to be on my own...I don’t like others to see me sad...” M1

Factors impacting communication

Youth identified several factors they believed prevented them from communicating with others. These can be classified into two groups: those associated with cultural values and cultural patterns for example, language, customs, parenting styles, and those with the constraints associated with life in New Zealand. For example, the impact of financial constraints on family life.

Language and culture

The six participants who didn't speak Tongan saw their lack of language to be a barrier to communication and a negative influence on their relationships as well. F7 said not being able to speak Tongan often led to mis-communication, while M2 talked about this resulting in a lack of bonding that he had experienced with his family. For FM1 not speaking Tongan had made him question his sense of belonging:

"It's hard to talk to my dad because I don't speak the Tongan and he doesn't speak English. We start off well and at the end we are both angry at each other. There's always trouble when we try to talk". F7

"I did not feel like I could connect with my parents because I can't speak Tongan and my dad speaks fluent Tongan and not English and it was hard for me to know what it was like...how my dad grew up and what he went through because I could connect with my dad and ask him for fatherly advice". M2

"At one stage I tried giving up talking to my mother because I always made her feel bad that she can't speak English. I try to talk to her all the time but she just doesn't get it. I get so angry because I always need someone there to translate. Why do I bother? She has better relationship with the oldest ones because they speak Tongan and I always feel left out as if I am adopted or something. I feel I'm always a disappointment and it's my fault..." FM1

All participants discussed how being Tongan influenced the way they communicated with others and others with them. For example, respect, was central to youths' communication style and in their words impacted on their ability to communicate:

"...faka'apa'apa ... yeah...that's what I was always told. Respecting those who are older and not to question their instructions..." F6

"It's such a huge barrier talking... you just do what your parents say. If you talk, if you try to voice your opinion its taungutu (back chatting) and it's disrespectful. So I felt I had to hold it in because I couldn't explain myself cos I will just come across rude. So the problem is that it wasn't so much I was unable to talk with them it was about them accepting and hearing what I had to say". F1

"It was so confusing, I was always told to shut my mouth and don't be fiepoto [know it all] but my teachers at school encouraged me to question...I don't know I'm like hello...which one should I do?" F3

The cultural practices relating to honouring, respecting and listening to and obeying parents were seen to be very critical in the youth narratives, and in turn, this was a controlling fact on communication:

"When I grew up I was not encouraged to share my feelings and thoughts when talking to my parents because I have no right to question because if I was going to say something they are going to take it as a 'fie eiki' [royal like]." M4

"It's not about the communication because I can talk to my parents or friends, it's about getting them to see it from my where I stand. The issues I experience come from either my family or friends and it's hard to talk about things when the issues arise from the very people you are closest to. I feel that I can't talk to my dad because in the Tongan way you cannot challenge or question your father and his authority. He has his own point of views and it clashes with mine. With my friends I don't want to be separate from them. That's why I just shut up and pretend that nothing is wrong" M1

Participants also spoke of way their family roles and responsibilities impact on the way they communicated, in relation to older and younger roles, for example:

"Being the eldest in my family, I was fashioned to do things that would make my family look good. I believed that if I did something wrong it would not be me that people would talk about [pause] it would be my parents. I learned not to fakamā (shame) my family. There was always fear of making the family look bad. Out in the public eye, I learned to shut my mouth and within closed doors I also learned to keep my thoughts to myself. Because if I failed it meant that the family will fail as well" F2

"I'm expected to be a good example for my little brothers and sisters. Things were getting worse and I couldn't talk about it...I had to stay strong for them. I hate being the eldest..." FM1

It was interesting to note the responses by male participants, and their comments that in Tongan culture, for example, to show emotions was taken as a sign of weakness:

"Growing up amongst my Tongan uncles I was taught to be hard, manly and not to show any soft side to me. When I was hurting and had some stuff to let off my chest I couldn't talk about it because only fakaleiti [lady like] became emotional. I wanted to be manly so I tried to keep my emotions hidden" M2

"I was taught my place and when I could talk. Being the eldest son it is my task not to be weak, this means I can't show any weaknesses and have to be strong for the rest. It was ok in the beginning but soon it became tiring for me and I found myself feeling worn out" M3

"One day I wasn't feeling too great, I was having issues with my friends and my girlfriend wasn't talking to me. I felt so alone and needed to talk to someone just to get things out of my head. I went to my father and he told me that when he grew up in Tonga he would be told to harden up and get over it. He turned to me and said the same thing" M4

Cultural values and beliefs of obedience was another factor contributing to youth powerlessness to talk about their feelings. In addition, they know there were subjects they didn't talk about:

"...the idea of talangofua [obedience] is something I grew up with. I had to obey my parents, I was told that if I didn't I was ta'e'ofa [didn't love them]. I don't want to be ta'e'ofa, I wanted them to know that I loved them. So it was easy for me to keep it all in" F7

"I wanted to talk about sex...I wanted to ask about why is it that I had to wait until marriage because all my friends were pretty active. My mum said that's tapu [sacred]

don't know what she means but she went all angry about it. Even threatened to tell my dad about me having the thoughts so I just said I was kidding and dropped the subject..." F5

Youths shared that Identity can be a struggle especially but not only for a *hafekasi* Tongan:

"Being part Pālangi [European] and Tongan has its downfalls for me, you know my mum lets me explore and push my boundaries, I can be myself around her but I switch into this other person when my dad is around. I have to be wary about what I wear, what I say, and the way I behave because he says there's a certain way a girl has to act. I can't talk to him. I love my Tongan family but my dad makes me hate everything Tongan about me" F7

Of note is that for FM1 sexuality was an immobile factor in communication:

"I've been told several times to speak like a boy...I can't help it that I have a mixed tone...I don't sound female and I don't sound male. It's a disgrace to be a fakaleiti [cross gender] my family says I bring shame to our family and they can't accept me in the Tongan culture because I cannot be a in-between" FM1

Parenting

Parenting styles and expectations also set the mode and the tone of communication for this group. Most of the New Zealand-born youth emphasised that the strict parenting style by parents they had experienced as affecting their relationship and fracturing their ability to communicate:

"My mother would say that during her time she would not say anything back to her dad whether she is right or not, it was how it went...no questions...I had to take that on board even if I did not think so...it was hard and I would hate on my mum..." F1

"My dad is like a King, if I talk to him it has to go through my mum...I was scared to say anything to my dad...for a long time we never became close like the other dads I see..." F4

"I guess it's the way my parents were raised in Tonga I guess...They get raised differently in Tongan and they try and bring it here. They think their kuonga noa [old ways] will work here but it just fepaki [clashes] because it's a different way of life...to be honest I stop telling them things cos what's the point...right?" F3

*"I must do what I am told, WTF [what the *&%\$], I am told I have to behave like others do at the church...I have to act like a boy, walk like one and act like one. I don't think they will ever understand!" FM1*

The Tongan born participants' views of parenting styles including their fear of punishment when not abiding by parental instructions:

"I learnt It was best to keep it locked up...it was that or the beating..." F6

"The easiest way is to keep quiet and don't ask questions because they know best. It's better for everyone to agree and remain silent...one time my mum got it because of me..." M1

The *hafekasi* participants reported confusion with their parents parenting styles:

"I'm pissed when I am told by my Tongan dad that I can't go out with my friends when my mum had told me I can...he said this is to help me. How? I asked him why? Because all my friends are allowed to, he says what did I say? You have to listen I know what is right for you". F7

"They tell me loads of stuff, one thing after another. My mum has a different way from my dad's family who are very scary and strict all the time. My Tongan family fails to know that most of the time I don't understand why things are the way they are but they think I can read their mind. I am told this is the way it is and just accept it". F6

Some spoke of the absence of positive language in their communication with parents which made youth reluctant to open up and share. This was illustrated in the responses by those who were in their twenties:

"Most of the time, I feel what I am doing is not enough. He doesn't say much...he doesn't tell me if he is proud. I don't know whether anything I do will be enough..."M1

"I fear something negative will come out of their mouth...it always does...it makes me feel weak and oppressed. I feel depressed all the time. I am reminded of the things I should do and things I do wrong. I feel frustrated the only time I do something right...it is never acknowledged...it is things like this that I don't want to tell them anything." F1

"Its tough love my mum always tells me, this is her reasoning for the way they talk to me because they care. I am always a failure in the eyes of my parents, everything that is said to me is always about doing better, do better, do better, do better" F4

Time – Financial

All parents in the study were employed – many with more than one job.. This impacted on time which parents could open up with their children. It also meant, as seen in Table 1, that five participants were living away from home. Youth who were living away from home with relatives during the week quite sadly shared inadequate time with their parents and siblings. This, they said affected the way they communicated within their families and also influenced the way they communicated with others.

While these youth disliked not having the time to talk with their parents, they understood the reasons why their parents boarded them out, and the sacrifices their parents were making:

"My dad told me that he would love to have more time to talk to me but because we have a mortgage, this means he has to work to make sure we don't lose our house. I have to live with my aunty during the week because they are so busy with work... [pause – cried]. I wish that we didn't have that stupid house, I hate having the house. Things at home started to change when they bought it. Mum and dad started to overwork and the way we relate to each other also change."F5

"My mum usually doesn't have time to talk and when she does – she is always angry... [silence – cried]. She's been like this since she started holding down two jobs. There

*are things I want to talk to her about, things that I can't talk to my dad about but I don't because I am tired of her screaming at me for no reason. So I just keep it all in, I can't talk to my friends because I don't want them to mock me."***F4**

Youth said that despite parents aiming to provide safest place for them to stay, they could not help feel some resentment, which again impacted relationship and communication:

*"I live with my aunty, my parents cannot take me every morning and pick me up every after school from Mt Roskill. It's the only place where my dad will allow me to stay because he feels it's safe for me. I know that my parents mean well but when I am upset I can't help but think it's all their fault, making me stay with my aunty."***F6**

Although youth understood the hard lives of their parents they associated these feelings with sorrow, which often lead to anger in their words:

*"I hate them both, my mum and my dad. Why did they have me if they can't take the time for me. I'm a burden for them both and now they have pushed me to my aunty."***M3**

*"I couldn't get along with mum's sister now I am with mum's cousin."***F3**

How communication can be improved?

All participants were very open and willing to share ways they thought would help to improve communication for youth. Overarching all was the need for having a voice and places where they could express their thoughts

Give us a voice

'Giving youth a voice' was a phrase mentioned many times in every *talanoa*. Having a say in things was essential. A voice for youth meant being listened to, feeling accepted and having a safe space to communicate:

*"If I can't say it how it is then it's not worth me saying it all...I need to feel safe to speak that's what will help for me and also the other youth I speak with."***M4**

*"At times I hold back because what I want to say will hurt my mum. I think parents need to be brave to accept us for who we are. That will help the communication better."***FM1**

*"We need not to be scared of what will happen, we need to feel free to say it...shux we need to say it how it is... it might go against and make others feel bad...but what the hell...this is what will help to help us open up."***F5**

Participants highlighted that being given a voice meant that some communication practices needed changing. For example, a shift from the old school of communication such as being told what to do to a more inclusive way of talking together:

"I want to be heard, I want to make my own decisions, I am sick and tired of being told what to do...." F7

"I don't want to be feeling like I'm being controlled..." M3

"...about time that they know...we change in the way we talk. I remember when I was young I could handle being told what to do but now I have my own mind. I have changed the way I speak to my parents, so they need to change the way they speak to me." M1

"...we need to share the love...it's a share thing..." F2

All youth agreed that language, skills, words, body language and non-verbal communication was part of giving youth a voice and helping them to communicate better with others.

"I believe if my dad was able to understand the English language or if I could speak fluent Tongan it will make our communication much better." M2

"It's important for people to know that listening has power. When you listen I feel important, I know that you are interested in what I have to say..." F4

While, F1 highlights the meaning of communication exchange as valuable to improving communication:

"Having a two way communication is very important...youth need to learn that in order to get something, you need to give something. I remember I always want...want...want...but I did not want to give anything back. Just like when my parents always want...want...want...if things are to change. We have to expect that it's a two way thing..." F1

Seminars

Seminars were seen to be a way of educating parents about effective communication. Two females recalled how seminars had influenced their own relationship with parents. For example, F1 said the seminar had bought a realisation that she said hit her parents, which compelled them to see things from a different light:

"If only we can have seminars for both youth and parents. To give parents an insight of our lives as teenagers and the difficulties we see every day. I think if my parents went to a class and it told them at this age they are more outgoing they would know and understand about my development. If they knew more about us at different ages...I did attend one parenting seminar 'Gladiators of Change'. The speaker was Tofiga he spoke about how Pacific Island parents are strict and communicate with hitting or yelling in comparison to a European family who sits down and talk and parents are not afraid to apologise and I think they should do more things like that and get it more out there so

parents could attend. I felt they were giving a presentation about my life story except my parents weren't there." F1

F2 stressed the importance of having an external person tell the story which had made her parents to take time and listen:

"I think different seminars for youth and different seminars for parents because parents needs to know about youth and youth needs to know about parents and why they have the rules for us...then we can come together. But it would be better come from another person so that parents and youth don't fight..." F2

Views were strongly expressed about the importance of working together and collaboratively with families, the church and the community to promote services that can assist youth and families who are experiencing communication issues:

"There should be some posters of services that can help if we having problems...like at our church..." M2

"Every week I listen to my parents tuning into 531 PI Tongan program and sometimes when I am in my room I wish they would advertise services or ways that could help my parents listen to a different way of looking at things about the way they talk to me. ..."
F4

"In our youth get together, we shouldn't hide the issue. I wanna see some stuff happen there. I know who to talk to but I want the help for my parents and family." M1

Summary

This chapter has presented the voices of youth in regards to the four research questions. First, this group saw communication as more than words; it was listening, feelings and emotions and associated relationship with the person they are communicating with. Secondly, preferred way of communication for youth was face-to-face because to them this protected their privacy, enabled them to feel safe and be connected to person they spoke with. There were differences in the way youth communicated during happy and vulnerable times. When things were going well for them, youth said they could talk to people such as cousin, friends, girlfriend and grandparent. Female youth also felt safe speaking to their paternal aunty. However, during vulnerable times, youth said their thoughts sometimes turned to risky behaviour such as attempting suicide, self-harm and alcohol abuse when they were unable to communicate. Third, key factors that impacted their ability to communicate, were classified into cultural and socio-economic factors. While giving them a voice would assist to improve youth communication, they also said seminars for parents and youth together will contribute to connecting them as it would increase the effectiveness of communication and lessen risk behaviours.

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough”

Albert Einstein

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings in relation to the four research questions and other factors raised in the *talanoa* what communication mean to Tongan youth; their preferred ways of communication and who they talk to; some factors that impact on their communication and ways of improving communication. It concludes with some comments for future research around communication for youth.

The meaning of communication

These youth saw communication as much more than an exchange of words but as involving emotions and sense of belonging and identity as well. Even though participant saw ‘words’ as having a lasting effect on them emotionally, spoken words made them feel accepted. Communication for this group included non-verbal factors. For example, they spoke of observing (and judging) behaviours such as the lifting of the eye brows, hand gestures and facial expressions adding that these and other behaviours contributed to their understandings as well as their feelings of connection and relationships with others. This aligns with Shaver, Schachner and Mikulincer (2005) that non-verbal communication is important for emotional expression and ultimately relational attachment and satisfaction for approval to share. Also, with Metge and Kinlochs (1978) seminal work on ‘talking past each other’.

Hand in hand, was the prominence they placed on face-to-face communication – rather than written and IT (Information Technology). For example, they said that face-to-face contact enabled them to get the full picture, to observe facial expressions, body language of the person they are communicating with. Face-to-face also helped build trust within the relationship which is reinforced by Seiuli (2004). In sum, face to face gave these youth a sense of security and of feeling protected and order for these youth to talk about serious and/or at risk activities they needed someone to be present in the same physical space.

Face-to-face discussions were also a strong factor in relationship building, especially in times of vulnerability. This preference correlates with previous studies which place emphasis on relationships as being a protective factor for vulnerable youth (Sinisa, 2013, Puna, 2013; Tiatia, 2012, 2003; Fa’alau,

2011). As highlighted by Puna (2013) in her Cook Island study, maintaining positive relationships was essential for the health and wellbeing of New Zealand-born Cook Island youth. This finding also resonates with Resnick (2000) and Blum (1998) that relationships are fundamental to the positive health, wellbeing and development of young people. In the view of these Tongan youth good relationships were fundamental to good communication with others and relationships were also the pathway to wellbeing. To them, relationships were more than just the skill of listening to the intangible and the power of words. Strong and trusted relationships was a major factor in positive communication.

Although it is claimed in the literature that the preferred way for young people to communicate these days is through social media and helplines during times of vulnerability (Coveney, et.al, 2012; Kalafat et, al. 2007) the Tongan youth in this study preferred to communicate face to face and with words and non-verbal cues especially during times of stress.

The accessibility to helplines during vulnerable times was not seen to be an ideal option for these participants as they expressed it was not the safest medium especially in terms to maintaining their privacy. In addition, they did not want to risk having their personal story paraded in public. But just as importantly they were not satisfied with the process of sharing intimate information with a stranger in a helpline. This is at odds with and contradicts Kalafat et al, (2007) who claimed that young people prefer to access helpline when they are at risk to suicide in comparison with face to face contact because of privacy, autonomy and comfort. Any services which are considering preventative work in the field need to take these differences into account.

The prominence these youth gave to relationships aligns with cultural traditions such as *fevahevahe'aki* (sharing of information), *fakafekau'aki* (connecting with), and *tauhi vā* (relationship). Furthermore, it is notable that regardless of place of birth, length of time in New Zealand, mixed ethnicity or language competency, all youth in this study were well versed in the *anga faka-Tonga*. Moreover, most considered culture as a protective factor in strengthening and encouraging communication. Their cultural connections to ethnicity and understanding of the culture in relation to protocols and systems within communication suggest that their view of communication was influenced by the *anga faka-Tonga*. For example, sharing of information was powerfully highlighted by all participants, and is consistent with the literature (Churchward, 1959; DeVito, 2003). The practice of sharing is known by Tongans as *fevahevahe'aki* as a means to divide out to one another. The layer and art of *fevahevahe'aki* is far greater than simply the concept of sharing. To Tongan people *fevahevahe'aki* epitomises *'ofa* which is

love, compassion and affection. Moreover, 'ofa means more than just love and compassion and a 'self-sacrifice' (Mafile'o, 2005). 'Ofa activates *fevahevahe'aki* within the communication process. The participants reinforced this idea as a means of sacrificing oneself and/or needs for the benefit of the other (see Chapter Two). This resonates with the idea that if communication is delivered from the heart it is received by the heart.

It can be argued that *fevahevahe'aki* is also centred on delivering *fatongia* (responsibilities). One may not wish to share something, however because of obligation to *fatongia* one is obliged to share. This point highlights that sharing things or gifting relates to the rank in the *nofo 'a kāinga*. Within a Tongan worldview sharing that is attached to rank signifies acceptance of one's place in the *kāinga* (position within the family) as well as submitting to those of higher rank (see Chapter Two). In the context of a western view, the obligation part in the Tongan act of sharing may only be seen in the informal practice 'you buy, I buy' or 'I give, you give' or 'I owe you'. Sharing from a Western perspective involves giving away something like a piece of cake. This involves sharing what is yours. The owner of the cake must be willing to share the cake. The reason for sharing the cake might range from this being a surplus or it was asked for. In the Tongan ideal, sharing moves further away from individualism to collectivism where it can be said that *fevahevahe'aki* is more concerned about the collective wellbeing of all or the whole. In addition, the sharing commits to one's ability to fulfil *fatongia* accordingly to cultural traditions and customs ('Ahio, 2011; Kalavite, 2010; Prescott, 2009). In my view, this is what the participants referred to in their understanding of communication, that they recognised and understood the place of *fatongia* within the act of communication. As noted, *fatongia* has also been seen as a 'suppressor' within the communication relationship where it contributes to the hindrance of communication between people.

Fakafekau'aki – connecting

Connecting with people was central to the understanding these youth had of communication especially during times of vulnerability. Their stories suggest that the people they communicated with had little awareness of the disconnection the youth often felt. Perhaps the other party believed they were connecting simply because they were known to each other, physically present, and they appeared to be listening to the youth. In sum, to these youth, connecting required showing that they were being

listened to with intent. This design noted listening from the heart which draws on the Tongan concept of *fakafekau'aki*.

When construed within a Tongan worldview, the term *fakafekau'aki* best houses connecting with or “to bring into relationship with each other” (Churchward, 1959, p.33). This factor is aligned with the work by Mafile'o (2005) who refers to communication as a process that establishes associations, connections and belonging to each other. Furthermore, Mafile'o implies that *fakafekau'aki* becomes the agent for change.

A critical understanding of the concept *fakafekau'aki* can be examined in two parts. Firstly, the word '*faka*' and secondly '*fekau'aki*'. *Faka* is the prefix that denotes the making of something. The word *fekau'aki* can be broken down into three parts: *fe* (prefix); *kau* (root word, in this context means inclusiveness or belonging) and '*aki*' (suffix). *Fekau'aki* then implies that a relationship already exists. For example, the *fekau'aki* between a mother and a son can represent all the things that physically, emotionally and psychologically illustrate the connection and bond a mother and son has. This suggests that *fekau'aki* innately exists. Although they may seem very much connected, it is explained that without the word '*faka*' included in the beginning implies a disconnection. When the '*faka*' is placed in front of *fekau'aki* to produce *fakafekau'aki*, it signals that a third party element is involved and this is what facilitates the connection. For example, the mother will have her own position and views yet this may differ to those of the son. The *faka* brings together the two views, *fakafekau'aki* then is the action that helps to embrace, respect and accept differences (Personal Communication, Vaivaifolau Kailahi). I believe this may run along the same vein as what Mafile'o (2005) refers to as the 'agent of change' that connects and associates Tongan people to one another.

This is the *fakafekau'aki* (connecting with) that participants' are referring to in their *talanoa* where the meaning of communication extends from valuing the act of sharing to a system that absorbs, filters and processes differences to reach a level of acceptance. In sum, these youth emphasized the mutual benefits not only to themselves, but to the other persons engaged in the conversation. In my view, the participants saw things from a holistic perspective and that relationships were integral to their interpretation (Seiuli, 2013).

Tauhi vā

Participants consistently made references to the importance of relationships to their understanding of communication. Building trust and feeling safe with the person they communicated with was essential to their wellbeing. This view is in line with Mafale'o (2005) where *tauhi vā* is pertinent to the wellbeing of Tongans (see chapter two). It is possible that Tongan youth could have learned to suppress their feelings to communicate during vulnerable times in order to maintain the *vā*, for example, the expectation to maintain social harmony within the *nofo 'a kāinga* (see chapter two). The participants were mindful and valued how the other party was going to treat them because the sharing came from their inner and most private feelings. They felt the need to be reassured that whoever they invited into their space was going to value and respect them for who they are. Perhaps also the relational connection allowed them to measure their faith, belief and hope in the person(s) they were communicating with to authenticate and ensure a safe space for them to open up and share. In sum these ideas affirm the work by Seiuli (2013) that dishonouring the relational space contributes to the breakdown of the relationship.

The Tongan youth perceptions of and knowledge of the *vā* were as the social relational space that connected them to the other person they communicate with (Ka'ili, 2005; Pereira, 2011). However, they did not refer to this as a 'space of negotiation' they viewed this as being a sacred space that connects (Mila-Schaaf, 2006). Furthermore, it wasn't just about the space between two parties but signified by that space connections (Tu'itahi, 2005). The references made by Tongan youth meant more than just the weaving of the spoken and listening skills but a union that can only be found within the Tongan practice of *tauhi vā*. Even though the participants' views corresponded to the claim by Pau'uvale-Teisina (2011) they saw *vā* as a fundamental value which underpinned cultural identity and a sense of belonging that had been nurtured from birth through formal and informal practices. Tongan youth located the obligation and responsibility within the *tauhi vā* process and perhaps this was significant to their interpretation.

The function of *tauhi vā* gave importance to looking after something or someone. The focus for these youth was to nurture, sustain and maintain a connection with that person they are communicating with. Their view was similar but not limited to that of Mafale'o (2005) which entails *fetokoni'aki* (mutual helpfulness) where the practice is seen to be reciprocal. For example, if I come to your family's funeral in return you will *tauhi vā* by attending mine. For some, the practice of *tauhi vā* today is measured by

wealth in terms of money, fine mats, and boxes of corned beef that are donated to the person or family. However, the essence of tauhi vā here moves further than just the *fetokoni'aki* but is animated by a heart-felt obligation that ties the bond together within the communication relationship. The element within this obligation is contained in a notion of *mo'ua* which exemplifies “to be indebted” to something or someone (Churchward, 1959, p. 369). *Mo'ua* within tauhi vā is more than an act of reciprocity, it is an obligation to sustain good harmony within relationships and within the practice which enhances wellbeing. These ideas reinforce the work of Tiatia (2012) where New Zealand-born Samoan young people valued social connections and relationships. Furthermore, noted by Tu'itahi (2005) where he refers to the importance of harmony within the dwelling of the family in regards to wellbeing.

These youth were apprehensive about opening up their feelings to those who they did not have a relationship with. They seemed curious and had doubts about how the information they shared was going to be treated or respected. To me, this is what the youth make reference to when they spoke of valuing relationships within their communication. That, in order for them to share their sensitivities, there needs to be an element of *mo'ua* bond that binds them to the other person. In this context the other person will feel indebted to the relationship and develop a sense of loyalty which will reinforce youth sense of security to open up and share. Having this bond, allows the youth to feel safe and have confidence in sharing information that may be sensitive and unpleasant. If this is the case, then perhaps what is the way that builds a sense of self assurance and self-belief which can contribute to youth resiliency (Resnick, 2000). This is in line with the communication message of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa which stipulates that building trust and creating a bond is essential for positive youth development and building resilience within young people (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). Developing a grounded relationship for youth fosters a sense of harmony within the communication process which contributes to maintaining respectful relationships and an appreciation of the other person. It may be that these draw more towards the power of the unspoken rather than the words used.

Who do these Tongan youth talk to?

A second major discussion point relates back to who these youth talk to. These youth did not appear to talk to their parents much and/or about issues of concern to them. As much as they expressed their love to their parents, parents were not listed as those who these youth felt safe to talk to. This may not be an unusual finding – other global studies for example make the same point (Morton, 1996). For this

study however, my questions became, does this lack of ability to talk with parents relate to parents having no time, or are there cultural factors in the *anga faka-Tonga* which impact here including the division of power and authority which exists within the family structures (Morton, 1996). That aside, these responses warrant further study given the huge potential of parent – child communication and relationships especially with respect to reducing intergenerational factors.

Another finding, is that while they did not feel they could talk to their parents, the people these youth did talk to were mainly members of the extended family, for example, cousins, paternal aunties and in the case of one – his grandfather. Most of the female youth said they preferred to talk to their paternal aunty who they said held the status position as *fahu* within the *anga faka-Tonga* (See Chapter Two). In their view, these women could assist in bridging any communication gaps between parents and children. One male talked about his grandfather, who, he said he could discuss anything with. These responses gave a positive indication about the importance of family within communication which could be a good starting point in further communication focussed interventions.

Most reports suggest the importance of peer to peer communication. For this group peer communication was likely to occur when things were going well for youth. There were also differences by age, for example, those under 18 years expressed a high interest in using social media sites to communicate within their peer group. This is aligned to the view of O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson and the report from the Council on Communication and Media (2011) which emphasized that children and adolescents are increasingly using social media sites as a form of entertainment and communication. On the other hand, during times of distress and vulnerability these youth preferred way of communication was face-to-face. Male/ female communication (as with girlfriends) was not common in this group of youth.

However, for many it remained challenging for them to talk to anyone during times of vulnerability because they felt worried about how the other person was going to receive the information they wanted to share. An important finding that emerged indicated that when Tongan youth are unable to talk to anyone and/or express their feelings this increased their state of vulnerability and state of becoming at risk to harming themselves escalates.

Factors Contributed to Communication Breakdown

Cultural and socio-economic factors were the main influences on communication breakdown for these youths. These are discussed in the following sections.

Parenting Styles

As seen, while all youth expressed their own love for their parents they also said their parents' strict parenting styles impacted on their ability to communicate. They held their parents in high regard giving them respect and always making sure they did not disrespect them especially in public. As noted by Fa'alau (2011) the struggle other New Zealand-born youth experience was not about their parents but the style of their parenting. Indeed, suggestions from participants gave weight to the action and the process of parenting and communication rather than the person. These youth stressed the importance of harmony between parents and children as being critical to communication and wellness (Tu'itahi, 2005; Thaman, 1999). As is well reported also, the impact of negative parenting styles is said to exacerbate aggression and inattention and lead to potentially dire consequences for at risk Tongan youth (Rees, 2003).

These youth spoke of the detrimental effects of physical punishment and how this prevented them from having a voice due to fear. This finding aligns with those of the PIF (Pacific Island Family) study that Tongan mothers disciplined their children more than other Pacific mothers. Cowley-Malcolm, Fairbairn-Dunlop, Paterson, Gao & Williams, (2009) proposed that this was largely because these Tongan mothers had taken more time adapting to the new ways of life in New Zealand than other mothers in the study. Tiaita (2003) found that harsh physical parenting amongst Samoan parents towards their children contributed to negative outcomes as well as increase in youth vulnerability.

Cultural expectations regarding communication

These Tongan youth were very conscious of when and how to speak, they respected there is a time and place for them to speak depending on the context (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1979). In the modern parenting era the practice of communication between children and parents may be changing. For example, in New Zealand children in their schooling years are introduced to questioning and thinking outside of the square, they are being educated about rights and entitlement of having a voice. Fa'alau and Jensen (2006) refer to a 'transition in practices' whereby values, beliefs are diluted and transformed. The issue

is to change this by building relationships between parents and children, encouraging parents and teaching them how to talk, or their children will never understand.

A key finding by both female and male youth was the pressure and expectations to maintain the family status, especially for those who were the eldest in the family. They had learned not to put shame onto the family, but to suppress their views for the benefit of the collective (see Chapter Two). A male participant spoke about the demands of being a good role model and a good example for his younger siblings this forced him to remain silent despite things getting worse for him. It could be said that the responses provided by the female youth suggest that communication was centred on satisfying the expectations of others, for example, their *fatongia*. As mentioned this implies neglecting a duty to self for the benefit of another (Mafile'o, 2005).

Tongan male youth also expressed the challenges experienced of being placed against an ideal masculine persona which in a sense left no opportunity for him to show vulnerability. There was an expectation that one deals with the problem and carries on. To show emotion and any sign of vulnerability was linked with weakness. In both the male and female cases, suppressing emotion was critical and contribute to lack in communication. The suppression of emotion may have contributed to the inability for male youth participants' skill to regulate their emotions hence indulge in acts triggering vulnerability.

In sum, participants described intangible elements of communication that contributed to the communication breakdown. . In my view, this is not confined to the non-verbal cues such as body language, eye contact, posture to determine communication (DeVito, 2003). It is based more on the cultural meaning. Further, the intangible heritage such as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills and cultural spaces associated with culture (UNESCO, 2002). Understanding intangible cultural concepts plays an important role in the recognition of Tongan ways of communication. This idea is reinforced by the work of Nabobo-Baba (2006) where she highlights the significance of silence as a method of communication amongst Fijians.

Language as a factor

As noted in Chapter Two, various research propose that intergenerational conflict contributes to poor communication by New Zealand Pacific young people (Tiatia, 2003; Puna, 2013; Sinisa, 2013; Tupuola, 2004). For the youth in this study, they saw communication to be a two way relationship. For example,

findings suggest language barrier created communication issues for parents who could not speak English and Tongan youth who were unable to speak the Tongan language. On this point for six participants (the majority New Zealand-born), language competency created a lot of misunderstanding in their parent-youth relationship and communication. The findings support Tiatia (2003) and Puna (2013) studies where language barriers significantly contributed to the risk factors of New Zealand-born Samoan and Cook Island young people risk to suicide. Furthermore, this aligns to Taumoefolau (2006) who proposes that the Tongan language is essential for effective communication and the inability to speak in the language will impact on some fully engaging in customs and traditions.

Interestingly, the Tongan youth who was *fakaleiti* spoke of struggles and tensions of acceptance based on the gendered traditional values and beliefs that her parents and the community held against her. These struggles continued to fuel her inability to speak up and also prevented her from being able to freely express her sexuality.

Socio-economic factors

The high proportion of participants living away from home and the way this impacted on communication was another major finding in this study and warrants further in-depth study. Five of the twelve participants who lived away from home during the week held their parents accountable for the absence and/or lack of parent-child communication.

Meeting financial obligations appeared to produce tensions and strains on the way the participants communicated with their parents and/or family. While one male participant was genuinely sympathetic towards his parents, he had a lot of anger and resentment claiming that his parents' time was more important to him than the effects of earning money so they can live the New Zealand life.

It is said that having multiple parents or caregivers can create problems for youth (Cowley-Malcom et.al, 2009). Tupuola's (1998) study with Samoan youth reinforces that Samoan parents make sacrifices with the aim to improving the lives of their children and that this is likely to come at a cost such as the breakdown of parent-child relationship and communication (Tupuola, 2004). In my view, this is what the Tongan youth are referring to in their experience.

The way forward

There was a strong sense of pride amongst the Tongan youth when asked for ways and/or ideas that could contribute to the improvement of communication with youth. In first place, they felt that having a voice would assist in the improvement of communication. Second, was to increase of what they saw to be communication. Their view of having a voice was that this needed to be reflected not only at a micro and community level but at macro level where it will affect decision making.

Youth Voice

These youth stressed how important it was for them to have a voice. Having a voice meant more than just being listened to and having opinions, it reflected the desire to be accepted at an equal level regardless of background, cultural identity or diversity. Having a voice encompasses the skill sets such as language, non-verbal, intangible and a safe space to facilitate communication.

They wanted youth to be equal participants and contribute to positive youth development. For these participants working collaboratively meant consultation occurring at all levels and, that communities self-govern their initiatives and take ownership of appropriate programs that will assist address issues and challenges that young people face. If government policies and goals are to be effective, consulting and involving youth needs to occur. It is also important for youth participation be signalled within the communities and amongst the church leaders. As outlined, these youth felt a sense of working in isolation, and that people were becoming precious about what they do without collaboration. They saw it important for everyone to work together and share common goals.

Coming together meant to put aside personal differences and eliminate gate keepers and develop a common ground. Within a Tongan worldview, to work collaboratively is to be *uouongataha*¹⁹. This entails working for the benefit of the collective. It employs Tongan principles of *'ofa* (love), *faka'apa'apa* (respect), *mamahi'i me'a* (willing heart) and *loto fakatōkilalo* (humility).

Understanding of communication through Workshops

What they meant by communication was of central importance to these youth. Raising awareness about communication was seen to be a powerful way to improve communication for them. They highlighted the significance of workshops as a way for this education to occur; separate ones for and together with

¹⁹ *Uouongataha* means to pull together or work together as one (Churchward, 1959, p. 526).

parents and the community. They wanted a space where parents and youth can come together to learn about relational conflicts and tensions that may exist within their relationship. Youth recognize that communication is not solved overnight but it is the starting point for dialogue and understanding to occur. As noted, a handful of female youth reported on the benefits of 'Gladiators of Change parenting workshop' which they saw to be beneficial in facilitating a safe space where youth and parents can come together and learn together from their own experiences. Attending the workshop was not only an educational experience for youth but it contributed to improving their relationship with parents.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

*“Ko e pale ‘o e ngaue lelei ko e to e lahi ange fatongia”
(The reward for good work is being blessed with more).
(Grandmother Sela Fuavea Fuka)*

Conclusion

The motivation for conducting this exploratory study was a concern that stemmed from my professional work as a Social Worker and also on a personal level, as a *fefine Tonga* (Tongan woman) who was concerned about issues of Tongan youth vulnerability. As noted, in the several Tongan community meetings and presentations, regarding suicide and vulnerable youth, communication was identified as a contributing factor. I saw it as vital to get the views of youth on this matter. A random sample of 12 identified for the study which was a mix by gender, age and place of birth. The purpose of this chapter presents the study conclusions through the use of individual *talanoa* and offers recommendations for further research.

Summary of Findings

The non-negotiable principles of communication

Tongan youth understanding of communication was grounded in the *anga faka-Tonga* which comprises of three Tongan principles *fevahevahe’aki* (sharing), *fakafekau’aki* (connecting with) and *tauhi vā* (look after and maintain respectful and healthy relationships). To these youth, it was essential that these principles were incorporated in every communication activity. In their view, understanding and awareness of these communication principles could improve and strengthen the communication relationship. Clearly these principles need to be considered when planning communication approaches within youth. If not, it is possible that youth will disengage, and in turn this will have a detrimental effect on the communication exchange.

A deeper review of these three principles signalled the importance of identity in the communication relationship, and feelings of connectedness and acceptance by those they communicated with. Furthermore these youth saw the spirit of these three principles as instrumental in providing safety and security in every conversation and in maintaining their *vā* with others.

These youth reinforced their valuing the needs of the collective, rather than their individual needs. This has implications for professionals, families and friends. In sum, those who are working with Tongan youth need to understand competency and be guided by the *anga faka-Tonga* values.

Preferred way of Communication

Seen also was that communication comprised both the words and the intangible cultural heritage or nuances of meaning underpinning the words. Youth preferred face-to-face contact communication as this offered physical presence and also enabled them to feel safe to communicate. Face-to-face communication invoked the capacity for genuineness and reassurance. Despite various systems that have been set up to improve youth engagement in times of distress, (for example, helplines and text message services), youth preferred face-to-face communication especially in times of vulnerability.

It became crucial for youth to talk with someone. All youth were able to identify a significant person in their life to talk with: cousins, friends, aunties and grandparents. There will be key people in onward play of communication interaction. For the younger Tongan youth there was an increase in social media usage when things were going well in their lives but overall it was face-to-face.

Hostile Reception in Communication

Tongan youth identified parenting styles, cultural obligations and responsibilities, intergenerational conflicts and socio-economic factors as obstructs to communication. My study confirmed that it was not because they were unable to communicate, but more about the reception received when they tried to communicate. This warrants at length research.

Finally, the study showed that there was risk to the communication relationship when Tongan youth lived away from home. Lack of communication was due to not spending enough time with them for reasons that parents had to engage in employment to make ends meet. The participants felt that although parents had their best interest at heart and strived to provide financial security but this came at a cost to them.

Improving communication

Two key ways to improve communication for youth were raised: having a voice and education through workshops. It was found that having a voice would reinforce and validate youth place and position within

society. Engaging youth at these levels ensures their voice is present, enhances their communication, contributes to feeling positive and builds better communication relationships with one another.

In all ways, education was central to the improvement of communication. Youth saw education through workshops as bridging and bringing them, parents and family together to understand their differences. To them, workshops that included real life events as well as humour, were seen to be valuable. In their view workshops could be a bridge to develop new ways for them and their parents to improve communication and relationships.

Research Process

This study has brought new insights to Pacific literature about the effective ways of communicating with vulnerable Tongan youth. There is dearth of literature about Pacific youth vulnerability and suicide but more importantly Tongan, this qualitative study adds onto existing literatures providing perspectives that is relevant to the realities of Tongan youth. This finding is of value to those at policy level, as well as programme providers who work with vulnerable youth. Organisations and practitioners can use this study as a foundation towards developing appropriate frameworks in this field.

Research methodology was appropriate to this study, as was the *Kakala* framework. The method of talanoa is an empowering tool to engage vulnerable Tongan youth who is potentially at risk to suicide.

Recommendations for future studies

The following recommendations came from the exploratory study.

Policy Makers

It is recommended that Tongan youth participate at decision making level especially in developing opportunities for youth-led projects. As noted, the Ministry of Youth Development (2002) youth participation reinforces 'better and increased efficiency, strengthens community capacity and contributes to positive youth development. This study recommends that a model appropriate to Tongan youth communication warrants future research.

Organisations

It is recommended that educational resources be created to promote and enhance communication from a Tongan perspective and supports the communication further. Developing an effective Tongan

communication framework will provide an invaluable practical guide for those who are involved and/or working with Tongan youth.

Community/ Church Leaders

It is recommended that a collaborative approach must be with groups working as a community to facilitate educational workshops that focus on parenting, interpersonal relationships and communication. Creating innovative and entrepreneurial stages will build trust and enhance the wellbeing of the families and community.

Limitations to study

While the study investigates the experiences and perception of 12 Tongan youth in regards to their understanding of communication, it is important to note that the sample size does not represent the total population of Tongan youth in Auckland. Another limitation was the recruitment location which was limited to Mangere suburb within South Auckland. Extending the study to the wider Auckland region would possibly result in different findings.

Even though this research focussed on Tongan youth perspective from South Auckland, it is recommended that looking at the greater Auckland region will provide a different standpoint as well as exploring New Zealand in general. It will be beneficial to see whether a rural and urban Tongan perspective will be any different.

In addition, as the recruitment process was undertaken at local churches, findings may have differed if other forms of recruitment process were carried out. For example, with youth who do not have a connection with the church. Furthermore, a study that focuses on NZ-born in general.

Future Research

This study provides a Tongan youth perspective. A study of Tongan parents would contribute to finding better views and solutions for engaging families collectively.

One out of the 12 participants belong to the rainbow community, it is just as important to get a perspective from this community.

Closing Remarks

As I reflect upon the various learning's and highlights of this journey, the several repositionings that this research undertook were very empowering, from the planning stages to the final write up. Having the opportunity and privilege of speaking with these 12 Tongan youth gave me an appreciation of the smallest and unique elements within the act of communication which I often take for granted. I want to offer a final thought from both a personal and professional perspective that is central to this study which happened at the end of my last *talanoa* with the final participant where there were heartfelt emotions that filled the air. We sat there for almost ten minutes in silence. As much as I wanted to rescue the conversation, I sat there uncomfortably and trusted in the power of silence. Finally, this youth turned to me and said:

"I feel light and I feel free, it has taken me a long time to be able to talk about my feelings, I never really felt I could...you cared...you listened...you gave me hope...the hope that from my story others can take some time to listen and talk" (FM1).

This comment highlighted to me that Tongan youth are ready; our communities are ready to talk about sensitive issues that are robbing the lives of our young people as sensitive or hard as this may be. The narrative of this youth and all of the other participants challenged my perspective to re-look, re-evaluate and re-consider the power and strength of communication. It has strengthened my belief that through research – lives can be transformed!

***Tu'a 'Ofa 'Eiki Atu
'Aulola He-Polealisi Fuka-Lino***

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Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T

15 May 2013

Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Peggy

Re Ethics Application: **13/47 "Fofola e fala kae e kāinga : Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability"**.

Thank you for resubmitting your ethics application as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 14 May 2016.

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

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 14 May 2016;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 14 May 2016 or on completion of the project.

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

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

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

All the very best with your research,

Madeline Banda
Acting Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Aulola He-Polealisi Fuka-Lino aulolal@hotmail.com

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

Project title: *Fofola e fala kae alea e kāinga : Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability.*

Project Supervisor: *Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop*

Researcher: *Aulola Lino*

Individual Talanoa - **Question Schedule**

Indicative Questions

(Italics – Tongan Translation).

Introduce a bit about myself, go over participant information sheet, sign consent form.

Begin with a discussion about them (Tell me a little about yourself; how things are going for you at home, school? Where were you born and raised? What do identify with Tongan; NZ Born Tongan?

COMMUNICATION

What is your understanding of the term “communication”?

(Ko e hā e mahino kiate koe ‘a e ‘fetu’utaki / fevahevahe’aki’?

How do you communicate? (talking, texting, drawing, social media – facebook)

(‘Oku anga fēfē ho’o fetu’utaki How do you communicate when things are going well / when not so well?

(‘Oku anga fēfē ho fetu’utaki pe fevahevahe’aki he taimi ‘oku ke fiefia ai/ loto mamahi ai?)

How do you like others to communicate with you?

(Ko e hā e founa ‘oku ke fiema’u ke fetu’utaki pe fevahevahe’aki ai ha taha mo koe?)

How important is it that youth have someone to talk to and share their thoughts with (connecting with).

(‘Oku ke pehē ‘oku mahu’inga ki he to’utupu’ ke ‘i ai ha taha ke fevahevahe’aki mo ia?)

PREFERED WAYS OF COMMUNICATING: WITH WHO? AND WHY?

Who do you mostly talk with at home (school, church) why, how often, what about?

(Ko hai ‘oku ke fevahevahe’aki lahitaha mo ia ‘i ‘api (‘apiako, ‘apisiasi), ko e hā hono ‘uhinga’, tu’ofiha, ko e hā e me’a ‘oku talanoa’i’?)

Are there people that you could easily confide in?

(‘Oku ‘i ai ha taha ‘oku ke falala ki ai pea faingofua foki ke ke fetu’utaki/ fevahevahe’aki mo ia?)

If yes, why is it easier for you to communicate with that person?

(Io, Ko e hā e ‘uhinga ‘oku faingofua ai kia koe ke ke fevahevahe’aki mo e taha ko ia?)

If no, what are the things that make it difficult for you to communicate with anyone when you’re feeling down?

(‘Ikai, ko e hā e ‘uhinga ‘oku faingata’a ai kiate koe ke ke fevahevahe’aki mo e taha ko ia?)

Do you think being a Tongan, and Tongan values influence the way you communicate with others or others with you? (enablers and challenges)

(‘Oku ke pehē ‘oku kau e ‘ulungaanga faka-Tonga he me’a ‘oku tokoni ki ho’o fevahevahe’aki mo ha taha pehē ha taha kia koe?)

Can you describe the sorts of issues Tongan youth faces when they are unable to communicate?

(Te ke lava o fakaikiiki mai ‘a e ‘ū ‘tsiu ‘oku fehangaangai mo e to’utupu Tonga’ he taimi ‘oku ‘ikai ai ke nau malava ‘o fevahevahe’aki mo ha taha’?)

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

What are the things that could improve communication with youth?

(Ko e hā ‘a e ngaahi me’a ke ne fakatupulekina ‘a e fetu’utaki / fevahevahe’aki mo e to’utupu te nau ala fakalavea’i kinautolu’?)

What do you see as the biggest challenge facing Tongan youth when communicating with others?

(Ko e hā e me’a mamafa ‘oku fehangaangai mo e To’utupu Tonga’ he ‘enau fevahevahe’aki mo ha taha?)

When you look into your life and how you have communicated with others, what were some of the influences and how has this helped?

(Fakafoki ho’o manatu ki he kuohili pe ne anga fēfē ho’o fakafeangai mo ha taha kehe, ko e hā e ngaahi me’a na’e tokoni kiate koe’?)

Is there anything else you would like to add?

(‘Oku ‘i ai ha me’a kehe ‘oku ke faka’amu ke toe tānaki mai?)

Appendix 3a: Participant Information Sheet (English)

Individual Participants Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

28/04/2013

Project Title

Fofola e fala kae alea e kāinga : Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability.

An Invitation

Mālō e lelei

My name is Aulola Lino, I was born in Tonga but raised here in New Zealand. I am a student at Auckland University of Technology. You are warmly invited to take part in this research project that invites you to share your insight, knowledge and your personal experience about communication issues that youth face. I will be undertaking this research project as part of a Masters of Arts – Youth Development. It is important that you understand why this research project is carried out and what it involves. Participating in this research is entirely voluntary (up to you).

You have been invited to participate in this study through my presentation to the Tongan youth group church. You have indicated to me that you would like to participate. Please think it over and get back to me.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this research is to increase understanding of who Tongan youth communicate with and how, especially in times when they feel vulnerable and, their preferred communication patterns. Aims are that the study will assist and empower Tongan youth to talk about their concerns. The understandings gained will also assist the development of better ways for working with youth by professionals, community organizations and other stakeholders.

What will happen in this study?

You will participate in a 1-1 individual talanoa. This talanoa / interview are expected to take approximately up to one and a half hour. This will take place at MB Level 2 AUT University Manukau Campus (640 Great South Road, Manukau City) or any other public venue appropriate to you. The talanoa will be audio taped and the information will only be used for the purpose of this research.

What are the discomforts or risks and how will these be alleviated?

Minimal discomforts may arise during the talanoa process. Given the small size of the Tongan community I will do the utmost to uphold your privacy and confidentiality. Because the Tongan community is small I cannot guarantee strict confidentiality. However, all measures will be undertaken to protect your identity your name will not be used in the research. Should any discomforts surface from the talanoa session, contact can be made to the Youthline telephone counselling 0800 376 633, free text 234 or email: talk@youthline.co.nz. Arrangement has also been made with the AUT counselling

service should you feel the need to have face to face contact. Support and follow-up from cultural services will be available at no cost. If you decide to participate you can decline to answer any questions, withdraw from the study at any time or ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time. You can also have a support person present during the talanoa / interview if you wish. In addition, the talanoa / interview will be carried out in a safe environment.

What are the benefits?

The benefits in participating in this research will include the following:

You will provide awareness about how Tongan youth communicate. The reflections and experiences you share can empower other youth to communicate better.

The results from this research can be fed back into the Tongan community about preferable ways Tongan youth communicate today.

Your opinion will be valuable in the way support services and programs for youth are offered.

How will my privacy be protected?

Information about you will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone. Although your perspectives will be documented in the final report of this study, your name will not be used. A coding system will be used to refer to your responses in the main findings. The information you will provide will be kept in a secure-facility at AUT University for six (6) years then destroyed.

What are the costs of participating in this study?

There are no costs for you to participate in this research, it is voluntary. Refreshment such as water/juice/coffee with some biscuits will be provided at the end of our talanoa. Petrol voucher will be provided to help with transport cost.

How do I agree to participate?

If you are between the ages of sixteen (16) and twenty (20) and you would like to participate in this research, you will need to sign the Assent Form attached to participate as well as asking your parents / guardian to sign the Consent Form attached.

If you are twenty (20) years and over, you can give your consent to participate in this research by completing and signing the Consent Form attached.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this study?

A summary of the findings will be sent to you at the completion of the research. More detailed information about research results will be distributed upon request..

What do I do if I have concerns about this study?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor: Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Tel: 921-9999 extension 6203 or e-mail: peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTEK, Dr Rosemary Godbold, rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6902.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Aulola Lino, Ph: 021 0479357, email: aulolal@hotmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Tel: 921 9999 ext 6203 or e-mail peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz

Thank you for considering my request

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15th May 2013 AUTEC Reference Number 13/47.

Appendix 3b: Participant Information Sheet (Tongan)

Pepa Fakamatala



‘Aho ne fa’u ai e pepa fakamatala:

28/04/2013

Hingoa ‘oe Poloseki:

Fofola e fala kae alea e kāinga : Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability.

Ko e fakaafe

Malo e lelei

Ko hoku hingoa’ ko ‘Aulola Lino, na’e fa’ele’i au ‘i Tonga ka na’aku tupu hake heni, ‘i Nu’usila ni. ‘Oku ou faka’amu ke fakaafe’i koe ke ke tokoni mai ‘i he poloseki fakatoto’oku ou fai ‘i he Faculty of Social Science ‘o e Univēsi AUT. Ko e fakatoto’oku ni ki hoku mata’itohi Masters of Arts – Youth Development. Ko e kau ki he fakatoto’oku ni ‘oku tau’atāina pē pea ‘e lava ke ke mā’lōlō ‘i ha fa’ahinga taimi pē ‘o a’u ki he taimi hono hiki tohi pea tau’atāina foki ke ‘oua e tali ha fa’ahinga fehu’i ‘oku ‘ikai ke ke vekeveke ki ai fekau’aki mo e poloseki ni.

Na’e fakaafe’i koe ke ke kau he fakatoto’oku ni meihe ‘eku lea na’e fai he taha ‘o e ngaahi Potungāue Talavou he komiuniti Tonga’. Na’a ke fakahā mai ho’o fie kau’ koe’uhi’ ko e ngaahi ‘uhinga ‘i ‘olunga’. Kapau na’e ‘ikai ke ke fetu’utaki mai, na’e hanga ‘e ha toko taha ‘oku ne ‘ilo koe ‘o fakahinohino mai koe kiate au. ‘Oku ke ma’u e mafai ke ‘oua te ke kau ki he fakatoto’oku ni ‘i ha fa’ahinga taimi pē.

Ko e hā e taumu’a ‘o e fakatoto’oku ni?

Na’e tupu ‘a e fakakaukau e fakatoto’oku ni mei he lahi e mole ‘a e mo’ui ‘o ‘etau to’utupu Tonga’ mei he ‘enau to’o pe ‘enau mo’ui’. Ko e taumu’a ‘o e fakatoto’oku ni ko ha feinga ke ma’u e le’o ‘o e To’utupu Tonga’ pe ‘oku faingofua ‘enau fevahevahe’aki fekau’aki mo ‘enau fakakaukau’ pe ko ha me’a ‘eni ‘oku ne fakaloto’i kinautolu ke nau fai ha fa’ahinga fakakaukau ke uesia ai ‘enau mo’ui’. ‘Oku mahu’inga ‘aupito ke ma’u ‘a e fakakaukau ‘a e To’utupu Tonga’ ki he ngaahi founa ‘oku nau vahevahe’aki ‘i ‘api’ pehē ki honau ngaahi ‘ātakai kehe na’a ko ha me’a ‘eni ke ne fakasi’isi’i’aki ai e sitetisitika e to’utupu ‘oku nau to’o pe ‘enau mo’ui’.

Ko e hā e me’a ‘e hoko ‘i he fakatoto’oku ni?

Te ke kau ‘i ha talanoa tautaha mo e tokotaha fakatoto’oku. Ko e ‘ū talanoa’ kotoa ‘e hiki tepi pea e fakafuofua ki he houa e taha mo e konga. ‘E fakahoko e talanoa ko ‘eni ‘i he MB building, Level 2, Univēsi AUT – Va’a Manukau (Tu’asila 640 Great South Rd, Manukau City). Kapau ‘e ‘i ai ha palopalema ‘i he feitu’u ni pea ‘oku malava pē ke ta fetaulaki ki ha feitu’u fakapule’anga pē he komiuniti. Ko e ngaahi me’a kotoa ‘e lekooti mei he ngaahi talanoa ‘e ngaue’aki tafataha pē ki he taumu’a ‘o e fakatoto’oku ni.

Ko e hā ha ngaahi ta’efiemālie pe fakatamaki ‘e hoko?

Ko e talanoa’ ‘oku makatu’unga ia ‘i he falala mo e ongo’i fiemālie ke talanoa, felāfoaki mo vahevahe ‘a e ngaahi talanoa mo ha ni’ihi kehe. ‘Oku ‘iate koe pē, pe ko e hā e me’a te ke fie vahevahe’ pea mo ia ‘e ‘ikai’. Ko me’a kotoa ‘e ma’u ‘i he talanoa’ ‘e ngāue’aki ma’ata’atā pē ki he taumu’a ‘o e fakatoto’oku ni.

ni. Pea kapau 'e fakatupulekina leva ha ngaahi me'a 'tene fakatupu ha ta'efiemālie kiate koe, 'oku malava ke ke fetu'utaki ki he fika ta'etotongi ko'eni' ki ha tokoni; Youthline telephone counselling 0800 376 633, text meihe telefoni to'oto'o text 234 pe ko ho'o 'imeili kihe talk@youthline.co.nz. 'Oku 'i ai mo e felotoi mei he kaunisela AUT ke nau talanoa mo koe kapau 'e 'i ai ha palopalema.

'E fēfē hono fakasi'isi'i e fakatamaki 'e ala hoko?

'E malava ke fakasi'isi'i e fakatamaki 'e ala hoko' 'i ho'o 'ilo'i ho'o totonu fekau'aki mo ho'o kau ki he fakatotolo ni. 'Oku ke tau'atāina pē pe te ke kau ki he fekumi ko 'eni' pe 'ikai. Ko ho'o totonu' 'eni:

Fakafisi ke ke tali ha fa'ahinga fehu'i 'oku 'ikai ke ke fie tali pe te ke fakafisi ke 'oua te ke toe kau 'i he fekumi ni 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pē.

'Oku malava ke ke ha'u mo ha taha ke ne sapooti koe 'i he taimi 'e fai ai e fakatotolo ni. E 'ikai foki ke u ngāue'aki ho hingoā' he fekumi ni.

'Oku atā ke ke ma'u ha tatau 'o e fekumi ni 'i he'ene 'osi'. Kapau 'oku 'ikai ke ke fiema'u ke hiki tepi e talanoa' pea ke kole ke tāmata'i e tepi'.

Ko 'eta fetalanoa'aki' 'e fai ia 'i ha feitu'u 'e malu kiate koe.

Ko e hā e ngaahi lelei?

Ko hono lelei 'o e kau mai ki he fakatotolo ni 'oku kau ai eni:

Tānaki atu ki he 'ilo mo e mahino fekau'aki mo e ngaahi 'tsiu pelepelengesi'

Tokoni kiate kinautolu 'oku nau mo'ua he me'a tatau

Toe vakai'i 'ete tūkunga 'ilo', taukei' mo e a'usia' he te ne toe fakae'a mai ha vakai makehe te ne tokonia 'ete tupu fakafo'ituitui'

'E fēfē hono malu'i e ngaahi fakamatala fekau'aki mo kita'?

Ko e ngaahi fakamatala kotoa pē fekau'aki mo koe', 'e tauhi ia fakapulipuli pea 'e 'ikai vahevahe ia ki ha taha. Ko e ngaahi fakamatala ni 'e tauhi ia 'i he Univesiti AUT 'o a'u ki he ta'u 'e ono (6). Neongo 'e ngāue'aki e ngaahi fakamatala kuo ke vahevahe mai, 'e 'ikai ngāue'aki ho hingoā.

Ko e hā e fakamole 'o e kau ki he fakatotolo ni?

Tukukehe ange ho taimi', 'e 'ikai ha fakamole fakapa'anga kiate koe ho'o kau he fakataotolo ni. Ka 'ikai lava ke ma'u ha me'alele ke ke ha'u ai ki he talanoa ko 'eni', 'e malava ke 'oatu 'a e vausia ki ha tekisī. Pea kapau leva 'oku ma'u pē me'alele kae 'ikai lava ma'u ha 'utu pea 'e 'oatu 'a e vausia 'utu.

'E anga fēfē hono fakahā 'eku loto ke kau he fakatotolo?

Te ke lava 'o fakahā ho'o loto ke kau he fakatotolo ni 'i ha'o fakafonu e 'Foomu Loto Ki ai' 'a ia 'oku 'oatu fakataha mo e Pepa Fakamatala ni'.

Te u ma'u ha fakamatala ki he ola 'o e fakatotolo ni?

Ko e fakatotolo ni 'e ma'u ia 'i he initaneti' 'i he uepisaite Laipeli 'a e 'univesiti AUT – Scholarly Commons. 'E malava ke ma'u atu ha līpooti to'o me'a lalahi 'i ha'o kole mai ki ai.

'E toe tuku atu 'a e fakatotolo ni 'i ha talanoa ki he komiunitii' pea ala pehē foki 'i he letioo' pe lea he ngaahi siasi'.

Ko e hā te u fai kai'l ai ha'aku lāunga fekau'aki mo e fakatotolo ni?

Ko e lāunga kotoa pē 'oku fie 'ohake fekau'aki mo e natula 'o e poloseki ni kuo pau ke fuofua 'ave ia ki he supavaisa 'o e poloseki, *Palofesa Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop*, Tel: 921 9999 ext 6203 or e-mail peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz

Ka 'i ai ha me'a te ke tokanga ki ai fekau'aki mo hono fakalele 'o e fakatotolo ni, kataki 'o fetu'utaki kia Rosemary Godbold, rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz, telefoni: 921-9999 extension 6902.

Ko hai te u fetu'utaki ki ai fekau'aki mo ha toe fakamatala ki he fakatotolo ni?

Tu'asila fetu'utaki 'o e tokotaha fakatotolo:

Aulola Lino, Ph: 021 0479357, email: aulolal@hotmail.com

Tu'asila fetu'utaki 'o e supavaisa e poloseki:

Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop, Tel: 921 9999 ext 6203 or e-mail peggy.fairbairn-dunlop@aut.ac.nz

Fakamālō atu ho'o tali lelei 'eku kole'.

Tali mo Paasi 'e he Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee 'I he 'aho 15 'o Me 2013 mAUTEC Reference number 13/47

Appendix 4a Participant Consent Form



Project title: *Fofola e fala kae alea e kainga: Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability.*

Project Supervisor: *Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop*

Researcher: *Aulola Lino*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 21/02/2013
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the talanoa and that they may also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to keep the content of the talanoa session and the identity of participants confidential.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on _____
AUTEC Reference number _____

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Foomu Loto Ke Kau



Hingoa 'o e Poloseki: *Fofola e fala kae alea e kainga: Exploring how Tongan youth communicate during times of vulnerability.*

Supavaisa 'o e poloseki: *Tagaloatele Professor Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop*

Tokotaha Fakatoto: *Aulola Lino*

- Kuo u lau pea mahino kiate au 'a e ngaahi fakamatala kuo tuku mai fekau'aki mo e poloseki fakatoto ko eni 'a ia 'oku hā 'i he Pepa Fakamatala 'o e 'aho 21 Fepueli 2013.
- Ne u ma'u e faingmālie ke 'eke fahu'i pea 'omai hono tali.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au 'e hiki e nouti lolotonga e talanoa' pea 'e ala hiki tepi 'o hiki tohi foki.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au 'e lava ke u nofo 'o 'oua te u toe kau pea ko e ngaahi fakamatala ne u tuku atu ki he poloseki ni 'i ha fa'ahinga taimi pe ki mu'a 'i hono tanaki 'o e ngaahi fakamatala 'o 'ikai ha'ane kaungakovi 'e taha ki ha fa'ahinga me'a.
- 'Oku mahino kiate au kapau te u nofo 'o 'ikai toe kau, kuo pau ke faka'auha kotoa 'a e kongakonga 'o e ngaahi fakamatala felave'i mo au' 'o kau ai e ngaahi hiki tepi' mo e ngaahi hiki tohi'.
- 'Oku ou loto ke u kau 'i he fakatoto ni.
- 'Oku ou faka'amu ke u ma'u ha tatau 'o e līpooti ki he fakatoto ni. (Kataki tiki e taha):
'lo ○ 'ikai ○

Fakamo'oni 'a e Tokotaha kau :

Hingo 'o e Tokotaha kau :

Tu'asila fetu'utaki 'o e Tokotaha kau (kapau 'oku fiema'u):

.....
.....
.....

'Aho:

Tali mo Paasi 'e he Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee 'I he 'aho
AUTEC Reference number _____

Fakatokanga'i: 'Oku totonu ke ma'u 'e he Tokotaha kau ha tatau 'o e foomu ni.