

MANUMALO: A STUDY OF FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE SUCCESS  
FOR NEW ZEALAND-BORN SAMOAN STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

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

*In accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee, the final ethics approval was finally granted on 15/5/07 AUTEK with reference number 06/209*

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Fa'a fetai tele lava i le Atua mo lana tausiga ma lana puipuiga mai i lo'u tina i taimi faigata i taimi fa'atoa taunu'u mai ai i Niu Sila.

Ou te fa'afetai foi i lo'u tina i lona alofa fa'amaoni ia te a'u na ia aumaia se meaalofo ia te a'u o le a'oa'oina o a'u e tautala i le gagana Samoa. O lona loto atoa ia mafai ona ou tautala ma malamalama i le gagana Samoa ma ia avea a'u o se teine loto alofa foi pei o ia.

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Nam Myoho Renge Kyo

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo

Nam Myoho Renge Kyo



## **Abstract**

This thesis is about factors which aid and hinder successful completions for New Zealand-born Samoans. The thesis explores the proposition that educational marginalisation of minority students will be perpetuated until AUT adopts policies and procedures which enable culturally responsive educational pedagogies and practices which honour indigenous minorities. The thesis asked New Zealand-born Samoan students, what is the nature of their aiga (family) and cultural support frameworks (structures), and, further, to what extent and how and why do these students engage with such networks (processes)? This study used a qualitative approach within which six New Zealand-born Samoan students were interviewed using a semi-structured approach to gathering data. The interview data were transcribed and a thematic analysis was manually completed both within and across the six cases. The turnaround time in gaining ethics approval impacted upon the capacity of the investigator to conduct this research in what she considered to be a culturally appropriate manner and the cautious vigilance of the final ethics committee approval was perceived as a barrier to making culturally appropriate contact. It was discovered that Samoan structures, especially family, are paramount in supporting educational success because of the Fa'a Samoa processes which they engender. A further discovery was that New Zealand-born Samoans retain cultural affiliations so their lifestyle shows deep regard for Fa'a Samoa identity. Through these affiliations, meaningful life metaphors become applied. It was concluded that transforming staff so that they understand Pasifika peoples is crucial to growing Pasifika educational success. Staff development must, therefore, be planned so that meaningful understandings of Pasifika concepts and frameworks become nurtured and that is a challenge which AUT must embrace and action.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION: SAMOAN STUDENTS, FRIGATE BIRDS IN AN ACADEMIC STORM

*Vilivili fa'amanu i matagi*

Persevere like a bird in the wind. Don't give up easily, but follow the frigate birds example in a storm and press on. Eventually the storm will pass and the frigate bird reaches safety. (*Samoan metaphor*)

This thesis is based upon the narratives of six New Zealand-born Samoan students and investigates, in an exploratory manner, the various ways in which those students relied upon a range of support systems in order to successfully complete their studies. The thesis rejects the notion that a traditional deficit<sup>1</sup> model should be applied to these students and instead, emphasises the releasing of attributes and strengths which students already have. In particular, this means that the importance of their family's input to their success has been illuminated.

This chapter introduces the research objectives and associated questions for this thesis, speculates on outcomes, provides the context for this study, and demonstrates how my personal and professional life has a bearing upon this research. Finally the thesis structure is outlined.

This thesis argues that Samoan intrinsic cultural connections are fundamental for these students and it further argues that their cultural identity of being Samoan and that participating with family in all dimensions of their studies was the single-most factor that led to successful completion of their

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<sup>1</sup> A working definition of the deficit model is needed here. A deficit approach focuses on the student as the major problem. Proponents of the deficit approach argue that their being 'deficient', renders them eligible for special compensatory educational provision but in reality, despite such extraordinary provisions, many who are considered 'deficient' continue to fail. This suggests that the underlying causes for non successful completion warrant investigation and that is what this thesis does in a small way.

tertiary studies. In brief, the justification for this thesis centres on the belief that the educational potential of New Zealand-born Samoan students is not being realised when they attend university. This thesis, therefore, explores ways in which the academic potential of New Zealand-born Samoan students can be realised.

Many social and academic aspects of student lives were explored in this study. Dimensions examined included levels of prior academic preparation, motivation and career expectations. In addition, perceptions were probed with respect to what students believed were university responsibilities to them in building their success. This thesis is intended to represent a resource contribution towards helping all Samoans achieve greater success in their tertiary studies; it is intended to unlock and unleash the potential that they already have but which they do not always release within a Palagi environment. Such unleashing involves transforming their potency into action. This is transformative learning.

Transformative Learning (Mezirow, 1991, 2000), describes learning whereby the learner becomes critically aware their own assumptions and expectations and those of others when they are assessing or evaluating the relevance of whatever it is that they are experiencing or learning (Mezirow, 2000). It involves three processes: critical reflection, reflective discourse, and, taking action. "Perspective Transformation." is the nub of Transformative learning and involves changes in understanding one self, altering (or reinforcing) previously held convictions or beliefs, and intentionally adjusting behavioral (Mezirow, 2000).

My interest in transformative education played a huge part in sparking my interest in this topic. I<sup>1</sup> am a New Zealand-born Samoan woman who,

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I do not shy away from using the first person whenever I think that it is appropriate to do so and sometimes, when some forms of data are being reported, for instance, it is not appropriate to do so. In such cases, the third person is used as a voice. Using the first person in a qualitative thesis about Pasifika education is considered to be acceptable (see, for instance, Anae, 1998).

whilst teaching in early childhood education centres, studied for a Masters in Education at AUT University of which this thesis is a part. I am a mother and daughter from aiga and generations of educators both here and abroad. I honour that it was my dual upbringing of Welsh and Samoan ethnicity that helped to shape my worldview. It is that dual cultural influence that in some ways has prompted this thesis but the spark which led me to this topic was also my curiosity about how other New Zealand-born Samoan students were faring at university. I have, personally, found that it has been a struggle and I wondered if I was unique in that regard or if others too were finding the experience of studying at AUT personally and culturally confronting.

A huge impetus and absolute passion for this work evolved from my heartache and frustration at continuously hearing what I deemed to be negative, media-fuelled inaccurate representations of Samoan and Pasifika communities. I personally interpret many Ministry of Education reports as being mainstream, politically correct and, therefore, controlling of opinion, or, hegemonic. I believe these are false representations of Pasifika people who, after many decades of trying to give voice to the social, cultural and economic injustices that have occurred for them in education, have had enough! I, like many other Pasifika people believe that our messages should not continue to fall on seemingly deaf ears. In reality, the Pakeha education system has not worked for Pasifika in the past and this has been at the expense of generations of Samoan and Pasifika people.

The global purpose of this thesis, therefore, was to explore the proposition that educational marginalisation of minority student groups will continue to be perpetuated until AUT<sup>1</sup> adopts policies and procedures across all campuses which enable continuous, responsive educational pedagogies and practices which honour the culture of indigenous minorities. But for this

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<sup>1</sup> Although AUT has been nominated here (and the term University has intentionally not been added to the abbreviation Auckland University of Technology because doing so is tautological) it should be noted that AUT is probably not alone in perpetuating marginalisation – it just so happens that AUT was the setting for this study.

thesis, while the overall focus has been on New Zealand-born Samoan students, a number of more specific objective and questions emerge and these are nominated in the following section.

### **Research objectives and questions**

Most academic contributions about Samoan students and their stories are to be found within their completed Masters and Doctoral theses. Utumapu,(1983),Savelio,(2005),Anae,(1998). Some of their narratives either describe their personal trials, tribulations and successes as students. Other's like Savelio critique the Aotearoa immigration and citizenship laws of 1982. Like the frigate bird, these authors have persevered and survived their academic journey and their chronicles celebrate their survival and growth. In some surrounding literature (Anae,Anderson,Benseman,Coxon,2002) aspects of Samoan educational achievement with reliance upon what can only be thought of as a deficit model as will become apparent in the literature review. A scholastic goal of this thesis, therefore, is to critique extant literature so that a judgement can be made about its usefulness with respect to promoting successful academic completion by New Zealand-born Samoan students.

As has already been noted, this research describes the perceptions of six New Zealand-born Samoan students with regard to harnessing support systems. In fact each of the students within this study attended AUT between 2006 and 2008 and they each met the criteria of access and of having been born within Aotearoa New Zealand. The research decision that was taken, therefore, was to consider each of these students to be 'cases' so that the nature of their individual aiga and cultural support frameworks (structures) could be described and so that recurrent themes across individual circumstances could be noted (processes).

Beyond detailing these support frameworks and processes, a research goal of this thesis was to reveal the extent to which the students engaged with support systems and to determine whether or not being Samoan was an important determinant of their engagement. In addition, a research goal was to explore reasons for engagement with aiga, i.e. to find out *why* they did or did

not utilise familial and cultural support services and systems which were available for them. Findings pertaining to these goals are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Expressed as research questions<sup>1</sup>, these goals can be re-stated as:

- For New Zealand-born Samoan students, what is the nature of their aiga<sup>2</sup> (see also glossary of terms) and other cultural support frameworks?
- To what extent do they engage with such networks and why do they choose to do so or not, i.e. what are the processes involved?

An additional goal for this study was to determine whether or not the six students accessed (optional) *academic* support services offered by the university and to what extent, if at all, they found those academic support services to be constructive in aiding them towards successful completion of their studies. The findings for this goal are also presented in Chapter 6 and, as that chapter explains, students did not use many university supplied services except for the library. As a question, this goal can be stated thus:

- To what extent did the students within this study use AUT supplied student academic support services (structures and processes) such as the library or Te Tari Awhina?

Finally, the study examined *other* forms of assistance which students sought whilst completing their studies and it was here that the importance of peer support, which extends beyond aiga (family), became obvious. As reported in Chapter 6, the role of peers (along with family) was considerably

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<sup>1</sup> Some academics claim that questions should precede the statement of objectives but Hansen (2008) argues that it does not matter which comes first – he proposes that the important thing is to make sure that questions are clear and objectives are unambiguously stated.

<sup>2</sup> Family is to Whanau as Whanau is to Aiga. The term does not merely embody members of the immediate (consanguinal) family and affinal kin (relatives by marriage; it extends well beyond such a narrow view because it embraces a much broader network of people including friends, work associates, neighbours, the offspring of key others, and so on.

more important to New Zealand-born Samoan students than were any of the support services offered by AUT. Put as a question, this goal can be stated as follow:

- What other forms of assistance did the students within this study access beyond their family and beyond those offered by the university?

As will become apparent, if this thesis has one key finding to trumpet, it is that aiga, as a pivotal core of Samoan cultural structures (along with, as appropriate, the church and the matai or chief system) must be truthfully acknowledged by the university and so must the importance of peer support – institutional tokenism (e.g. having welcoming ceremonies to which aiga are invited) must be replaced by cultural authenticity. This thesis asserts that the university must demonstrate practices that are based upon sincerely held beliefs rather than postured, unfulfilled promises (i.e. theory in practice instead of espoused rhetoric). To be responsive to its communities of learners, aiga must be collaborative partners in developing achievable, culturally appropriate opportunities to become engaged in the learning processes of their kin so that successful completion can be achieved. When these have been formed collaboratively, they will not only benefit Samoan people, but will also aid the university. That is what this thesis is about and the context, therefore, is undeniably Pasifika.

### **The Pasifika and Samoan cultural context of this research**

Because the context of this thesis has to do with New Zealand-born Samoan students, who are Pasifika<sup>1</sup> by origin, it is important to provide some background information about the context of what it is to be Pasifika. Pasifika is the name given to identify only six of the many Pacific Island groups which are found in the South Pacific region. These individual countries have unique

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<sup>1</sup> Most Pasifika groups in Aotearoa have been subjected to this terminology. However, in national data analysis it has become practice to report on the six numerically dominant populations of the countries of Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Tokelau, Cook Islands, Fiji Islands.

languages and separate cultural protocols and they are known as Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau and Fiji Islands. It is problematic, therefore, to assume that people from several Island groups and cultures could possibly have the same life experiences. For ease of purpose (in this study) the term Pasifika will be used when discussing all six island groups, but I will refer to individual groups when being specific.

The independent state of Samoa is geographically located in the South Pacific Ocean and has historical links to generations of Polynesian people who migrated from Hawaiki thousands of years ago (Government of Samoa,2009). At a time when westerners thought the world to be flat Samoans, Māori and their Pasifika cousins were successfully sailing back and forth across these oceans using the cosmos (stars) as their guide for navigation and the currents as well (Lewis, 2000). This example of the agility of Samoan intelligence and obvious physical capability to navigate these seas is also indicative of their sense of self, being at one with their natural environment. They also consider their aiga to be an intrinsic part of that environment and it is this very strong emphasis on family that highlights a fundamental feature of being Samoan.

The history of the colonisation of Samoa demonstrates the ongoing dominance of European cultures, notably German, British, and latterly, Aotearoa New Zealand. With regard to that latter, in what proved to be a dire and later a fatalistic visit, the New Zealand government sought to build relations with the Samoan government but instead, they inadvertently brought influenza with them which killed a third of the Samoan population. Western Samoa earned the distinction of being the first independent sovereign state in the South Pacific, ceding from New Zealand governance in 1962 (Savelio, 2005)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For this thesis, APA 5 referencing has been used. APA 6 is coming into vogue but it was decided to stick to APA 5 rather than change styles mid-thesis.



However, independence was preceded by the Mau movement which can be described as a peace movement initiated ‘by Samoans for Samoa’ as a direct result of the interfering and colonisation Samoa endured from other nations<sup>1</sup>. As a consequence, in 2002, Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark of New Zealand made a formal apology to the people of Samoa for the role it had played in the history of a tenuous relationship. Her apology included noting the tragedy of the New Zealand ship which had influenza and the bereavements that the New Zealand government may have inadvertently caused. Nevertheless, many generations of Samoans migrated to Aotearoa New Zealand from the mid twentieth century onwards.

In the 1950s Aotearoa New Zealand was in need of a labour workforce and as a consequence, Samoan people were invited to enter the country on temporary work visas to meet this largely unskilled labour demand. Many Samoans, therefore, became assimilated to the dominant host culture. Samoans thus learned to incorporate climatic differences, language variations, cultural norms and differences in socialisation.

These exigent experiences added to the marked loss, across ensuing generations, of the Samoan language and cultural identity and increasingly, Samoan children are facing educational marginalisation within the dominant Pakeha culture including at tertiary level. New Zealand-born Samoan academic Melanie Anae (2002) has made some assumptions about why this group is not successful at university in terms of participation and retention of Pasifika students, e.g. students were assumed to have failed because of the dilemma inherent in meeting their responsibility of contributing to the financial viability of aiga. Her report, however, was mainly descriptive and was not

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<sup>1</sup> Despite colonising aspirations by nations such as Germany and Britain, Samoa became a protectorate of Aotearoa New Zealand which meant it was governed from the New Zealand House of Representatives until 1962 when Samoa became an independent state. It was this close association with NZ that made it more likely that Samoans would migrate to these shores.

concerned with the cultural factors that these students to rely upon, to complete their studies. Her work will be amongst the work that is reviewed and critiqued in the next chapter.

Samoan students formed the largest Pasifika ethnic population in 2006 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) and for this reason, a study of Samoan people studying in tertiary education has relevance not only for tertiary sector providers but also for the country as a whole as far as long term economic and social development is concerned. As has been noted by a number of writers, the correlation between identity and how this affects learning for individuals of Pasifika descent is relevant in Aotearoa (Ministry of Pacific Affairs, 2004; Statistics New Zealand, 2006; Utumapu, 1992; Fanene, 2003).

Nevertheless, Samoan knowledge remains important for Samoans, be they New Zealand-born or not. Certainly, my personal experience confirms this is, and I know, absolutely, that the un-stated purpose and intention of Samoan knowledge is for the preparation and handling of life. It helps us to use life's situations in order to live peacefully. I also know, absolutely, that Samoan knowledge, the Samoan conceptual framework, assumes an ability to make beneficial decisions about my family and for my family. Moreover, even though it is true that many adults from all cultures learn by doing, it seems to me, from my experience, that many Samoan people especially learn and grow by 'doing'. In academic language, this can be described as *experiential* learning and it is facilitated by role modelling what a more experienced person is able to demonstrate. That way, someone less proficient learns by doing what they are shown when the person showing them what to do is skilful.

But that is not to deny that other learning styles also fit. Some Samoan learners excel at learning via oral traditions and some are visual learners. In fact, some learners, as is the case with all cultures, are multi-modal learners. But for Samoans, whether or not they are New Zealand-born, the importance of family cannot and must not be understated. This point is relevant to this thesis because, as will be shown in throughout this thesis, New Zealand-born Samoan

students who took part in this study were more at ease with learning when they could successfully model and practice being tacitly Samoan and that meant involving aiga. Being Samoan comes from the raw understanding of having ‘lived’ as a Samoan and aiga is a deep-seated dimension of that experience (Galumalemana, 1988).

Table 1.1. List of specific research questions and specific associated research objectives.

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Associated Research Objectives</b>
What does the literature about Samoan tertiary students teach us about their journeys?	To critically review and appraise the literature on Samoan tertiary education students as well as any other related domains of study which may pertain to this investigation.
For New Zealand-born Samoan students, what is the nature of their aiga and cultural support frameworks?	To describe the nature of aiga and cultural support networks for a sample of six New Zealand-born Samoan students studying at AUT.
To what extent do they engage with such networks and why do they choose to do so or not?	To determine the extent to which the students engaged with their aiga and cultural support networks and to explore reasons for such engagement.
To what extent did the students within this study use AUT supplied student academic support services such as the library, Te Tari Awhina, etc.?	To investigate the range of supplementary academic support services which New Zealand-born Samoan students used during their courses of study.
What other forms of assistance did the students within this study access beyond their family and beyond those offered by the university?	To identify and describe any other forms of assistance which the students used beyond those offered by either family or the university.

For this thesis, then, the main global intention is to unpack the importance of how family support indirectly is enabling their kin to successfully complete their studies. As has already been noted, this thesis has adopted a qualitative approach to investigating how the six New Zealand-born Samoan students who participated in this study approached their scholastic work and manoeuvred their way through the academic labyrinth that is AUT. The goals and questions which this thesis will consider have already been stated in prose but by way of summary, they are now shown above in Table 1.1

## **Structure of this Thesis**

This chapter, Chapter 1 has introduced the topic and its context, identified key research goals and questions and provided a rationale for the study. Chapter 2 critiques reviewed literature surrounding the topic of how New Zealand-born Samoan students learn and are supported in their learning within tertiary education. The chapter explains that the dominant discourse centres on deficit theory and proposes that a transformative approach to achieving successful completions is needed at a systemic level even though the espoused ideals of agencies such as the Ministry of Education and AUT are laudable.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used for this thesis. Literature concerning qualitative case study methods was used to inform the procedures used. The development of an in-depth semi-structured interview schedule is described and data gathering strategies are also outlined. The demographic characteristics of the six ‘cases’ are detailed and data management processes are nominated. The importance of keeping a researcher’s journal is described and there is a brief account of ethical considerations which needed to be factored into this study. Discussion about these, and the way in which the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEK) actually impeded rather than enabled this research to proceed in a culturally appropriate manner appears in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 presents a series of narratives (vignettes) about each student and then presents the findings of a cross case analysis. Key themes to emerge were, as have already been made clear, included the utter importance of aiga and, the various ways in which relationships between the students and other members of the Samoan community (including fellow students) were pivotal to them achieving successful completion.

Chapter 5 critically evaluates the study and discusses findings and their implications with reference to the literature. Again, the point is made that the literature, which highlights a deficit approach to education, should be revised so that a more positive, transformative approach to growing successful

completions becomes championed. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by suggesting that there are a number of avenues that can be explored by other researchers and AUT so that rhetoric becomes replaced by meaningful practice.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A CRITIQUE OF REVIEWED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction and overview**

This chapter critically appraises existing literature in order to demonstrate the centrality of importance of the Samoan culture to New Zealand-born Samoan students. This centrality of importance is at odds with the deficit model that dominates the tertiary education system. Key dimensions of the deficit model are, therefore, examined as are the dynamics of Samoan culture. However, the most important conclusion that this chapter, and this thesis draws, is that an alternative approach must be adopted to ensure that New Zealand-born Samoan students successfully complete their tertiary education studies. Moreover, such an approach, it is argued, must be consistent with core Samoan values and culture (Tamasese, 2007). Features of this thesis and its alternative approaches have been described in European terms by mainstream academics such as Freire (1974), Mezirow (1991, 2000) and more recently, Wenger (2002).

As well as defining key terms when they arise, the chapter introduces a number of key concepts that are relevant to this study. These concepts, however, are introduced throughout the chapter as the argument for adoption of Samoan cultural values is developed. Hence, the intertwined constructs of how culture counts and how culture is pivotal to the successful completion of qualifications within the Palagi system becomes a theme that arises throughout this chapter. The fact that cultural conceptual frameworks have tacitly shifted across generations so that cultural identity has become subtlety

reconceptualised over time is also discussed as appropriate throughout the chapter.

### **Importance of Samoan Culture**

In general, the concept of Samoan culture is important because it is driven by the strong linkages that exist between aiga, the church and the matai<sup>1</sup> (chief) system. These contribute to the success or otherwise of New Zealand-born Samoan tertiary students who are the focus of this thesis. But notwithstanding this, it is also important to consider a previous investigation into the notion and impact of institutional racism in Aotearoa as a barrier to successful completion (Nakhid, 2003).

Whether or not institutional racism (i.e. the ways in which an agency is racist) is intentional or ‘accidental’, the consequence of such barriers give rise to the continuance of the deficit approach which is commonly used by Palagi to describe the situation of Samoans and other Pasifika persons. Not surprisingly, therefore, alternatives to the deficit theory are posited in this chapter and they include consideration of theorists such as Freire (1974), Mezirow (1991, 2000) and Wenger (1998). Lifelong learning policies and practices are also considered and it is argued that alternatives, informed by theory, need to be applied by tertiary providers if they are to arrest the whole ‘D.A.M.N.’<sup>2</sup> cycle (Pan, 1997). The model was developed to guide Singaporean tertiary education. All together, these concepts and the critical review of the literature that is associated with the discussion of the concepts, provide a rationale for this thesis.

It is a self-evident truth to say that Samoan parents have high expectations for their children. In that respect they are not unique because

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<sup>1</sup> See Glossary of Terms.

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviation D.A.M.N refers to aspects of lifelong learning, i.e. Desire, Ability, Means and Need. The D.A.M.N. cycle was considered important enough to be the focus of a paper (from a limited range of selected 26 presentations) which were delivered at an APEC conference on the development of human resources in 1996.

practically all parents from all cultures share such expectations. For Samoans, the term ‘poto’<sup>1</sup> is important because it is about the centrality of learning; it is about knowledge as a privilege; it is about knowledge (education) as a journey along the road to wisdom and for some Samoans, a step closer to Godliness. Indeed, as Pitt and Macpherson (1974) have noted, “education is a prime value in Samoan life, a major motive for migration” (p.99). But upon migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoans routinely discovered that they had not found a ‘promised land’ and that conditions were hostile to them rather than supportive of their values.

Many Samoan parents, therefore, became poorly paid labourers when they arrived in New Zealand. They were, in effect, a labour workforce of migrants who had been imported into Aotearoa New Zealand as a source of cheap labour. They had then (and continue to have now) high expectations for their children to ‘make it’ in the Palagi (European) world (Utumapu, 1992).

Galumalemana (2000) has pointed out, schooling in New Zealand was (and remains now) very westernised. The general curriculum is ethnocentric and, this writer notes, very, very Eurocentric. Galumalemana notes that poor Samoan achievement rates are a consequence of Palagi or Pakeha culture that is ‘interwoven within the way schools are organised and run’. Moreover, he argued, as language is the ‘key value’ of culture, then schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand is culturally laden because the language of instruction is English. Thus, when the language spoken at home stems from one of the Pacific nations, then there is a ‘serious mismatch here between the cultural capital of the home and the school’ (2000, p.66). Schools, therefore, in overlooking biculturalism and multi-culturalism, as well as bilingualism and multilingualism, perpetuate a social injustice (Corson, 1990). Furthermore, there is an increasing body of evidence that points to the fact that operating

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<sup>1</sup> Poto means clever – using the mind – wisdom. This same term is applicable for the Tongan culture. The central point is that it is about education for development and improvement irrespective of nationality.

from a platform of more than one language enables improved “academic performance and intellectual prowess” to develop (Corson, 1990, p.161, citing Cummins, 1983 and Skuttnabb-Kangas, 1986).

It follows, therefore, that if New Zealand-born Samoans become encouraged by tertiary institutions to celebrate their culture, and their language, they too should be able to demonstrate improved academic performance and intellectual prowess. This argument alone represents a powerful reason for undertaking this study. But high aspirations for educational success are not being matched by the actual examination results of students. Research has repeatedly shown that Samoan students are not doing well at tertiary education. (Statistics New Zealand, 2008). In line with this, a number of reasons have been given to explain the mis-education of Samoans students at university and predominant amongst these reasons is the role of deficit theory which is explained below.

### **Deficit Theory**

One main explanation is what has been termed ‘the deficit theory’. This is a model that suggests that people who fail are deprived or are deficient in some way and hence additional resources and help must be made available to them (Utumapu, 1992). The problem with the deficit model is that even though it argues for the provision of extra help, it implies that students are deficient or lacking. Whether or not they are in fact deficient or lacking as deficit theory suggests, this worldview does not recognise human potential and the ways in which it can be developed. Pasikale captures the use of the deficit model against Pasifika people and its damaging effects:

... the images, information and stereotypes about Pacific Island people are rooted in assumptions based on the images of 'recent island migrants' ... [consequently] ... the displacement of the majority Pacific learners, especially in the formal educational establishments. By this I mean the assumptions (mostly bad) educators make about New Zealand-born Pacific Island learners, who either fail to meet expectations or worse still, float by without any expectations or demands on them because of some misguided liberal attitude (otherwise known as the 'soft option'). Either way, human potential is not recognised or developed. (*Pasikale, 1999, p.5*)

She elaborates to suggest that it is because of identity conflicts:



... suffice to say that 'identity' is a critical issue for many Pacific Islands learners, and understanding the issues can mean the difference to our positive cultural continuity and the alienation of a generation more comfortable with other forms of sub-culture. It can also mean the difference to continued academic failure and educational success based on the realities of future Pacific Islands generations. I have come to appreciate that 'identity' is not a static product but a process of constant navigation, based on a core of convictions that provide a foundation for self-acceptance. (*Pasikale, 1999, p.6*)

In this thesis, deficit theory is acknowledged but not supported. It is acknowledged because it is there. It has to be described if only to be able to move beyond the very idea of deficit. For this writer, the very notion of deficit is culturally derogatory and inept. What is accepted is that the education system still fails Pasifika people but accusations that 'we' are the problem and that there must, therefore, be a deficit (in us) are absolutely refuted.

In his 'Letter from America' radio programme, the late Alistair Cook noted that assimilation is but a subtle form of cultural genocide<sup>1</sup> and as Pitt and Macpherson noted:

...the undesirability of New Zealand's becoming a culturally monolithic country have been recognised in theory, in practise much official action has been designed to integrate minorities like the Samoan community into basically European society and economy. (*Pitt & Macpherson, 1974, p. 114*)

This example of New Zealand recognising the need to accommodate other cultures 'in theory' is precarious judging from nearly five decades of unfavourable outcomes for Samoans in New Zealand. While highlighting the need for adopting Pasifika values in learning theory is clearly seen as important by key agencies such as the Ministry of Education, 2008 the problem still exists that such ideals have yet to be translated into practice. In the case of this study, that means all Samoans, including those born in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, that is not to say that introducing and sustaining Pasifika values and practices alone will serve as an educational panacea. More than that is needed; it is a given that students need to complete set work and attain required

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<sup>1</sup> This quote was shared with me during a personal communication with Dr. Jens Hansen of the Woodhill Park Research Retreat.

standards in order to succeed. They need to play the game in order to become bestowed with the accolades that accompany successful completion!

Since the deficit model itself is seen as deficient, alternative theories of transformation are championed in this thesis (Mezirow, 1991). Such alternatives, as will be shown, are informed by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. In contrast to deficit theories which have a problem based focus, these are more positive (or appreciative) and this honour and dignify Samoan culture and family. Notwithstanding this appreciative approach, Mezirow's ideas about invoking perspective transformation have been adopted within this thesis. They have been adopted in order to encourage, indeed, even to urge, the mainstream tertiary system to transform itself, its perspectives and practices, in a Pasifika-positive manner.

In that regard, it is argued that because Samoan culture and family are the most positive resources available to tertiary institutions for enabling successful academic completions, communities of practice which acknowledge this should be encouraged (Wenger, 1998).

As it stands, Samoans have succeeded in New Zealand but they have done so by tapping into their own social resources, especially their aiga and the church. The practice of doing this can be likened to Wenger's theory of communities of practice (1998) but in this instance, the practices are geared towards supporting their family through the often harsh challenges of living in a foreign country:

That they have had to do so reflects in some measure the insufficiency or inadequacy of institutions in the host society. More significantly, that they for the most part succeeded in doing so reflects the strength of the social institutions that migrants brought with them to New Zealand, especially the aiga and the church. (*Pitt & Macpherson, 1974, p. 113*)

The above shows that Samoans not only bring their culture with them but as new arrivals, they also rely upon their culture as a lived experience to guide their children, to achieve success. This inherited culture for New

Zealand-born children shapes, as an element from the overall spectrum of factors which contribute to enculturation, the worldview of the child.

Tongan academic, Professor Konai Helu-Thaman is one academic who has written about culture and language by using indigenous research approaches. She describes the idea of culture as the way of life of a distinct group, which includes a communicative language, a body of accumulated knowledge, skills, beliefs and values (Helu-Thaman, 2001). Culture, therefore, is central to understanding human relationships with members of different cultural groups having unique systems of perceiving and organising the world around them. Furthermore, the ways in which people (be they Tongan, Samoan), have been socialised largely influence their behaviours and their ways of thinking. Together, these make up those elements which comprise their world view (Helu-Thaman, 1988; Helu-Thaman, 2001).

At the same time, it is also important to celebrate uniqueness; to define characteristics of a culture which are different. This is so because points of difference are needed to maintain the essence of distinctive indigenous cultures and to preserve their unique languages and this is the phenomenon known as cultural identity.

### **Cultural identity**

The notion of cultural identity as well as the conservation of unique cultures and languages helps us to understand the connection of lived cultural experience that is manifested. In this thesis, the description of cultural identity is more concerned with 'who we are' as the result of our family ancestors and how ancestry is connected to Samoan culture. In this thesis, therefore, Samoan culture refers, amongst other things, to the maintenance of our relationships with our aiga. The importance of this cultural theme will become very apparent in Chapters 4 - 6 which shows that this theme was strongly affirmed by the student voices.

The literature also reinforces the importance of cultural identity and in particular McIntosh (2001, p.141), describes the idea of (cultural) identity as

“...all identities, are formed in a social, political, historical, economical and cultural space and responds to diverse pressures and tensions”. Little (1990) extends this by noting that cultural identity is central to the development of learning. In effect, Little argues that without firm ideas of identity, learning will be difficult in most arenas of life, emotionally and socially. Hence, the linkage that exists between identity and how individuality affects learning for individuals of Pasifika descent is relevant to this thesis. Moreover, it is argued that the tensions and pressures to which McIntosh refers apply to New Zealand-born Samoans in particular. Furthermore, the growing Pasifika population (of which Samoans make up over fifty percent) makes this point even more relevant (Ministry of Pacific Affairs, 2004; Statistics New Zealand, 2006; Utumapu, 1992; Fanene, 2003).

At the time of writing this thesis, there appears to have been little research about New Zealand-born Samoans (Tiatia, 1997). The few contributions are mainly from Melanie Anae who wrote about her own journey as a New Zealand-born Samoan for her doctorate entitled *Fofoaivaoese: Identity journeys of New Zealand-born Samoan* (1998). In this pioneering work, the articulation of the New Zealand-born identity or, in other words, a ‘constructed ethnic identity’ is used to describe the notion of a subculture within the Samoan culture.

Because Samoan identity is a very individual matter, I support Tuagalu’s (2007) critique of Anae’s definition of Fa’a Samoa identity. His perspective concentrated in particular on what Samoans do; he uses the term consequentialist – linking this type of thinking with the realm of rules and emotions that pertain with Samoan behaviour (for example, consequentialists interpret Fa’asamoa in terms of its institutions but he thinks about it in terms of behaviours and emotions). Thus the culturalist in comparison to the consequentialist focuses on exploring the practices, behaviour and emotions in regard to central tenets of Fa’asamoa. Examples of these tenets are alofa (love), tautua (service), usiusita’i (obedience), fa’aaloala (respect) and feagaiga (covenant).

A culturalist is more concerned with the why Samoans do what they do. Anae, for instance, uses examples of institutions to explain her culturalist understanding of the Samoan worldview. She, therefore, includes the following as being dimensions of Fa'a Samoa: Tautala Samoa (spoken Samoan language), aiga (family), matai (Chiefly system).

I argue, however, that a comprehensive definition of Fa'a Samoa should mesh both the consequentialistic and the culturalistic ways of thinking. For this thesis the difficulty (as is discussed later) has been to uncover Fa'a Samoa concepts of learning within the Samoan tenets of why the behaviour and emotions are expressed. In particular, this thesis is concerned with why the students accessed the supports systems they used at university.

After these works, in 2002, Anae led a team of investigators in preparing a report for the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2002). Whilst her own work, because it was personal, seemed to be mainly concerned with describing dilemmas about identity, i.e. too Samoan to be Kiwi, too Kiwi to be Samoan<sup>1</sup>, the work commissioned by the MOE clearly appeared to follow a deficit approach to describing Samoan realities.

In other words, the Ministry of Education report 2002 although describing barriers which students faced mainly focused on their failures concerning participation and, retention and access to university; it nominated deficits, therefore, rather than identifying and celebrating Samoan cultural strengths which could be deployed in order to grow success. This adherence to a deficit model is especially highlighted in the fourth chapter of their report. That chapter describes categorising and comparisons of mainstream students to Samoan students by using categories noted from the report as: Successful students, Partial achievers, Non participants and Community perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> This notion borrows from the work of Dennis Foley who is Professor of Indigenous studies at Newcastle University. He wrote a seminal paper (Foley, 2000) on being too black to be white and too white to be black.

Beyond this categorisation, an example of a nominated barrier was the description of the amount of time which students devoted to aiga and the church. The Ministry of Education report did not, as this thesis does, ascribe aiga as being a significantly strong supportive factor for successful completions even though the importance of cultural strengths and practices, whether associated with aiga or the church, cannot readily be easily measured.

The comment above is particularly important to this thesis because it demonstrates that unless a deliberate focus of research is on success, a pre-occupation with failure may prevail. Of course, such an approach which stresses the importance of success is consistent with the central Samoan concept (which is the parallel to a Kaupapa Māori framework) – viz. Talanoa Lalaga. Literally this pivotal positive construct is the essence of Samoan knowledge – it embodies the combined elements of the heart, the mind and the spirit. That’s what it is to be Samoan! This too is the core for many New Zealand-born Samoans although for some it is partnered with tension.

The concept of Talanoa Lalaga is, therefore, of central importance to this study. However, it will not be expanded upon to any extent here for two salient reasons. First, this thesis is not about Talanoa Lalaga specifically – rather, it is about the adoption and deployment of a whole range of cultural values of which Talanoa Lalaga is but one aspect. Second, the intention of this discussion is not to amplify details about the ins and outs of Talanoa Lalaga. I do not for one minute, as a New Zealand born Samoan, feel qualified or experienced enough within my own culture to be able to unpack such a complex concept. Instead, my purpose here is to demonstrate that many scholars tend to emphasise deficit matters about successful completion as opposed to globally, and appreciatively, seizing the opportunity to confidently engage Samoan cultural norms for the benefit of students.

Many authors have mentioned tensions which include expectations of Samoan born Samoans (and of New Zealand-born Samoans) as well as the views and judgements surrounding these nuances. (Fanene, 2003, Anae, 1998).

The writer prefers to focus on other more pressing aspects for New Zealand-born Samoans, in particular successful methods like the Samoan concept of Talanoa which leads to successful completion.

Talanoa is a qualitative, ecological and oral interactive inquiry method that is a highly organised system regulated by cultural expectations (Helu-Thaman, 2001). In terms of research, these cultural expectations are accompanied with roles of social responsibility which means that because Samoans operate in collective groups, Samoan researchers (and/or researchers investigating Samoans) need to be mindful of family and social obligations to their wider community.

A selection process and discussions occur to decide upon the 'right person' to be chosen, be they Samoan or Palagi<sup>1</sup> for conducting research (Seiuli, 2003). In the case of Samoans, this selection process can be determined by their direct connections through kin, or other relationship networks (Seiuli, 2003). In the case of both unknown Samoan researchers or Palagi, being the 'right person' is essential with respect to adherence to protocols to be demonstrated not only when meeting with participants but, more importantly with respect to the intention of the research; for instance, will the information gained be used to benefit the Samoan people? This point highlights the depth of concern that Samoans hold for the overall betterment for future generations with respect to research and their concerns are both ethical and concerned with generational betterment. With regard to research, this intention to act with social accountability may be related to the limited success Samoan academics seem to have achieved thus far, with little help from the New Zealand education system.

With regard to this thesis, the point that emerges from this dimension of

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<sup>1</sup> Where the researcher is a Palagi, the *collective* determine whether or not the investigation has integrity and whether or not the research is trustworthy; the chances of acceptance grow when collaboration with a Samoan researcher occurs and the Samoan researcher can vouch for or be a sponsor of the Palagi.

the literature is that my study has not been entirely authentic, i.e. I know from my perusal of the literature that my research procedures were not ‘authentic’ because consultation with Samoan peers and matua (elders) did not occur prior to the fieldwork being undertaken. Another important dimension which emerged from the literature, although not until after the study had progressed to the point of writing up findings, was the concept of Talanoa.

Talanoa refers to a system of “oral traditions which provide continuity, authenticity and cultural integrity” (Vaiotele, 2003, p. 5) for Samoan and Tongan people. The strengths of Talanoa in providing self determination and integrity for Samoan people is partnered with a practice known as Talanoa Lalaga which refers to the weaving of theory and intertwining of this with practice.

Lalaga, then, is a metaphor that is symbolic of the weaving of these concepts together to create an emancipatory methodology which applies indigenous pedagogy to design a way forward (Manu’atu & Kepa, 2007). This indigenous metaphor is further supported from the works of Freire (1974) and Mezirow (2000). Indigenous research is thus able to be described as an accumulation of a series of fundamental principles which are rich in the teachings of respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, holism, inter-relatedness and spirituality (Smith, 1999; Tuileufuga, 2001; Tamasese, 2006; Archibald, 2008).

Tensions may emerge for some New Zealand-born Samoans because they are not staunch in their Talanoa Lalaga. Some may ‘sell their souls for the sake of assimilation<sup>1</sup>’ by becoming totally Kiwi/Anglicised which means that they reject their Samoan culture and values in order to fit more easily into Palagi systems. For others, a gradual seepage of cultural values occurs so that traditional ideals gradually become replaced by New Zealand norms as the processes of colonisation and assimilation become set in concrete. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Dr Jens Hansen.



relevant to this thesis because clearly, how New Zealand-born Samoans manifest their culture varies according to the individual. Put very simply, I want, amongst other things, to argue in this thesis that if you are clear about who you are and your commitments to your genealogy and cultural heritage, you will be more comfortable about your future direction and, when education is involved, you will be more confident in pursuing educational destiny.

Fa'asinomaga, or identity, is influenced by the very core of Samoan culture (Tupuola, 1993). Fa'asinomaga may comprise a certain tension for many New Zealand-born Samoans (because of the different experience context to their migrant parents) in respect to socialisation and cultural experiences (Anae, 1998). Addressing such tensions in a constructive and manner is a concern of this thesis.

### **Transformative learning and action**

It is hardly necessary to justify the need for changes which are brought about in a positive manner. However, their emergence occurs through what I have termed as a Model of Transformative Action. It is contrary to the deficit model which maintains the status quo by working in opposition to Samoan students by viewing them negatively and thus further marginalising them. In short, the deficit model perpetuates societal costs of failures and low morale which in turn affects other aspects of life. The Transformative Action Model, by contrast, celebrates changes in a positive manner and has as an outcome, a systemic shift in perspective. It is my experience, and I believe the experience of others which has led me to argue that such change is required in order to shift the status quo. There are three phases which are essential to achieving transformative action in education:

The first phase is to simply be aware that something is wrong or different. However, while such awareness conforms to deficit thinking, the point is to pursue positive solutions.

Positive alternatives are, therefore, intentionally explored and careful and intensive critical reflection on what has worked is crucial here. It is crucial

so that research into fresh opportunities for improvement, based on the fortification of known strengths, can be pursued. That second phase merely means that people need to acknowledge that change is needed but that the search for a new approach must be launched by using positive approaches to achieving change.

The third stage is, therefore, also crucial. Because a transition is required, old ways of behaving and sustaining practises must become selectively discarded and or, must be revised so that positive new ways of achieving success can become a feature of new plans. The goal, insofar as this thesis is concerned, is to ensure that successful completions become achieved by those implementing the new ideas which build upon positives. Increased successful completions will, when these measures have been established, become readily measurable as positive outcomes

The transformative process or method described above has links to Freire (1994) who politicised the awareness that the conscientization of education was needed. He notes that Education is political and preoccupied with domination of social and cultural power. The culture that is more dominant, therefore, holding more power, would coerce the less powerful (migrant and minority groups) to take part in their society (filled with their one world view) within the boundaries of this dominant educational system (schools and universities). This explanation describes a hegemonic relationship of power and of domination and the gap between power and reality.

The importance of this theme is to distinguish how this relates to the political, social and cultural nature of education and the implication that this has for New Zealand-born Samoan students studying at New Zealand universities. As Freire has said, “The chastity of university, but not academic knowledge probably hinders us greatly in understanding reality” (Freire quoted in Escobar, et al., 1994).

This notion that New Zealand-born Samoans and Pasifika people need

to be conscious of their pre-determined role by the dominating Palagi powers inside of education in Aotearoa. This thesis proposes a transformative approach to education using Samoan conceptual frameworks of Talanoa Lalaga so that a liberating direction may be achieved for New Zealand-born Samoans. This is planned using a transformative process because this addresses the problem within the context of the situation, it is mindful of self determining ethos and the search for a new way forward. Furthermore, this transformation from 'confusion' to 'clarity of belonging' for the students will bring back hope. By means of this hope, is the restoration of dignity for the students and their aiga because the Samoan community will have ownership of their own self determined change.

The next part of the transformative process that this thesis proposes is the notion of the new idea that is proposed to be the replacement for what has not worked. This progression of the transformative brings the argument to the point that action is needed and that can be manifested by communities of practice. Wenger et al (2002) provide the following definition:

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. (*Wenger, McDermott & Snider, 2002, p. 4*)

This theory of communities of practice was supported by the student voices/narratives that bore testament to Samoan cultural protocols and later the spiritual guidance of their aiga and church which enabled them to successfully complete their university studies. It is evident that Samoans already have a working system which is 'hope-filled' because at the core it is emancipatory using the Talanoa Lalaga elements. Tongan examples of this model of communities of practise have proved successful as an Auckland high school has demonstrated. They utilised the parent community to run a homework centre for Tongan students (Manu'atu, 2006).

Following these examples of communities of practice is the deepening and reflection of practice, therefore, creating experts (of cultural wisdom and ways to maintain these) within their own community group. These

relationships maintained hope and energy when students were lacking (Mafana<sup>1</sup>). Although this example pertains to the Tongan community, it also applies to self determination for New Zealand-born Samoans.

Although there were some students who did not attend church, they participated and supported their family members by driving them to and from church. They did this because they realise their collective and social obligations to their family and also realise that one person's happiness is inter-relational and connected to whole aiga's happiness and blessings. This successful factor is more concerned with appreciating the best of the cultural dimensions and is determined to create a way forward positively so people from Samoa and generations of New Zealand-born Samoans may dialogue with a new articulation (Archibald, 2008, Macpherson, 2001, Tamasese 2006).

### **The importance of Aiga**

Utumapu-McBride, Esera, Toia, Tone-Schuster, and So'oaemalelagi (2008) emphasised the importance of the roles of the family and lecturers and focuses on the achievement for learning Samoan students both in Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand. The study involved 24 Pasifika students studying education from the University of Samoa and Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland. The study examined Samoan pedagogy and learning processes used by Samoan students (Samoan as well as New Zealand-born). The study concluded that Samoan students use a range of learning strategies and there were no significant differences between those who were Samoan born and those who were born in Aotearoa New Zealand although fluency in English varied between the two groups. Additionally, the importance of the lecturer was emphasised in this study as was the deployment of a <sup>2</sup>Samoan pedagogy.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a Tongan concept that pertains to the nature, a sense of feeling (warm) of relationships between people and spirit that can be felt.

<sup>2</sup> My understanding of literature about Samoan pedagogy is that it is knowledge that is based on the preparation of everyday life that serves the successful survival of future generations. It is grounded in spirituality of living a peaceful existence with consideration for others in the collective aiga/group (Tamasese,2006, 2009).

Notwithstanding the importance of effective lecturers (or teachers) and their use of a Samoan pedagogy, the point to be made with respect to this study is that it recognised and emphasised the importance of aiga as a key to successful course achievements. In her study of how Pasifika students experienced their studies at AUT, Nakhid (2003) similarly found that the importance of aiga or whanau had been overlooked by members of the Faculty of Social Sciences at AUT<sup>1</sup>. These studies point to the relevance of this current investigation.

### **Concluding comments**

This chapter has reviewed and critiqued literature concerning the topic of how New Zealand-born Samoans learn and are supported in their learning within tertiary education. The chapter has explained that the dominant discourse centres on deficit theory and it has proposed that a transformative approach to achieving successful completions is needed at a systemic level. Such an approach is especially needed at AUT because even though the espoused ideals of agencies such as the Ministry of Education and AUT are laudable the reality is that New Zealand-born Samoan students have the desire and ability to succeed. They clearly have a need to accomplish academically if they are to become counted as students who have successfully completed their studies. AUT needs to be able to calibrate such success just as much as individuals and their aiga need to in life. But as this chapter has argued, the literature on positive approaches to achieving success is very meagre indeed. Hence, a considerable justification for this research has emerged from the literature – that is – the hugely important role which the family aiga plays in the education of New Zealand-born Samoan students warrants investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> She also discovered a degree of institutional racism

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

#### **Introduction and overview**

This chapter explains some approaches to qualitative research and in particular, the relevance of case study methodology to this study. It also outlines the methods/procedures used to gather data for this thesis and describes how data were managed and analysed. The selection of participants and the unique characteristics of the School of Education and the data collection process are also explained in order to locate the learning challenges which students encountered and the contexts within which they encountered those issues. The use of participant narratives and the benefits for researchers using narrative inquiry as a research method are also presented in this chapter as is a discussion on relevant ethical procedures. Matters of ethical concern are also introduced but these are considered more fully in Chapter 4. Finally this chapter concludes with cultural considerations which can be considered by future researchers.

An important point needs to be made here about the use of ‘voice’. Often, research procedures are recounted in a third-person voice although increasingly, there has been a trend to engage in first-person narratives so that accounts of what researchers do, and why, become personalised. For this study, therefore, the first person voice is used throughout this chapter, and indeed, throughout the thesis as appropriate.

#### **Methodological framework**

With a plethora of methodologies to choose from, it was necessary to learn about the characteristics of these in order to choose an approach that would best suit my research. As this was my first experience of research I was eager to keep things as uncomplicated as possible. I also wanted to be able to manage the data effectively in order to be able to unearth and clearly elaborate upon themes which were reflective of issues confronting New Zealand-born Samoan students. Despite being a beginning researcher, my intention was to

discover factors which supported and influenced the learning of my sample. The purpose of the research was to find out *what* these factors were, *how* they were important and *why* they related to successful completions by New Zealand-born Samoan students.

Research methodologies (what your approach will be) must always be consistent with the overall research objectives and, I would add, should also be selected so that they are culturally appropriate. Additionally, the choice of methods (how you undertake your data gathering) must also be culturally consistent as well as aligning with the research objectives. Given these considerations, it was very clear to me that this exercise of discovering how a small sample of New Zealand-born Samoans approached their tertiary studies would be a qualitative research exercise.

Qualitative research investigates the quality of human experiences. It is a type of inquiry that explores researcher chosen carefully justified social phenomena. These phenomena are typically naturalistic or authentic but the approach that the researcher uses is invariably interpretive. Although in contemporary social science, investigators increasingly draw upon multiple methods of inquiry in order to sharpen their focus and in order to ensure rigour (Patton, 2002), that was not possible for this very focused study. As will be shown, the ethical approval process within AUT was problematic and consequently time became limited so that the use of multiple methods became impracticable. The approach used in this study was, therefore, confined to case study research via in-depth semi-structured interviews. Such an approach is qualitative.

Qualitative research is the theoretical perspective that influences our engagement with the qualities of experience in our world. Meaning can be interpreted from the descriptions and experiences that are observed. It is weighted on the quality of these rich descriptions of experience which in turn gives value to stories that are told in order to keep a holistic background of the story and the person. Thus, it keeps the person's story intact according to their

background, providing opportunity to gain a more contextual understanding of the person. Within qualitative research, as noted above, cases were used as they represent a useful strategy for unearthing details about what people do and think.

I chose qualitative research principally because it matches the cultural background of this study. As noted above, the methodology used in this study involved the generation of a detailed qualitative description that narrates the influences of Samoan culture on the learning (and successful completion) of university studies being undertaken by six New Zealand-born Samoan students. Qualitative methodology allowed the discovery and understanding of “a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (Merriam, 1998, p.11). But as has already been noted from the outset of this thesis, the six students were each, for the sake of this study, treated as a separate ‘case’. This meant that phenomena associated with their circumstances could be described more clearly.

Historically the Samoan culture is an orally transmitted one (Galumalemana, 2000). Knowledge and information of importance was traditionally conveyed through story telling and ceremonial gatherings during which matters of importance could be discussed at length. The method of interviewing inside of qualitative research of case studies, therefore, matches the values inherent within the Samoan oral culture. The aim is to create a picture of the person, complete with their background, thereby maintaining the context of the stories/narratives. It is these contextual factors which connect people to their culture and which give voice to values and relationships. My reason for wanting to give voice to the stories of New Zealand-born Samoan students within their educational journeys was based upon the desire to highlight positive aspects of their experiences. I wanted the stories of their success and of educational determination and tenacity to be told. I wanted those factors which contributed to such success to be highlighted. This means that I was mainly concerned with emphasising the positives.



Logically, I could not overlook or ignore barriers to success but while I wanted to de-emphasise these, I mainly wanted to concentrate on discovering ways of overcoming barriers. Thus, institutional barriers are not ignored in this study but the deficit approach that has been so characteristic of much previous research is downplayed. Hence, case studies in this study are used as a podium through which 'student voices' can be heard with respect to what works for them. Positive themes are thus highlighted and negative themes, while not dismissed, are de-emphasised rather than stressed and this is consistent with an appreciative inquiry approach to analysis rather than adherence to a problem based methodology (Hammond & Royal),1998.

Although a case study can enable readers to understand how ideas and abstract principles can fit together, it is also important for all people, and certainly for Samoan people, to recognise that if participants are presented out of context, misrepresentation may result. However, even though case studies give researchers the opportunity to study one or more elements of a problem in some depth, a limitation can be that the investigator is only able to operate from within a restricted time scale. For this study that involved a two week period only during which to gather data. The reason for this condensed time frame was solely due to awaiting ethical approval of my study before I could interview the participants. The slowness of AUTEK, had to be experienced to be believed. The form was hardly user-friendly; the processing speed was snail-like and help was conspicuously absent. The net result was that I had very little time indeed in which to be able to complete my fieldwork and using multiple methods was clearly out of the question.

This tight time-frame, aside from being severe nuisance, meant that my general approach to creating a relationship with the interviewees became culturally clumsy. The slowness of AUTEK, in fact, triggered my recognition of the ensuing cultural clumsiness and it was that which mainly reduced me to tears!

Even though data for this study were collected systematically via a

series of semi-structured interviews over that two week time span, the important point was that this small time-slot still needed to be used in order to portray ‘what it is like’ to have been in a particular situation. This approach must be based on reality and upon what Geertz describes as ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973, cited in Cohen et al, 2000) of peoples’ lived experiences and thoughts and feelings for a situation” (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 182).

Case studies can be divided into three categories: the intrinsic, instrumental, and the collective case study. The *intrinsic case study* refers to a particular case which can be interesting itself and requires a deeper understanding. An *instrumental case study* is needed in order to provide insight into an issue or to reconstruct a generalisation. The researcher gains knowledge from the case to advance understanding of the issue or phenomena, which overall provides a more holistic approach to research. The *collective case study* refers to the study of a number of cases in order to investigate a certain phenomena, population or event it is useful in solving problems that emerge from day to day life (Merriam, 1998).

My research is situated in the category of *collective case studies*. The reason for using collective case studies include: first, it allows for the opportunity to study one or more elements of learning in some depth concerning the interaction of factors and events, and second, it provides the researcher the opportunity to understand the factors across multiple cases (Yin, 2003). In the instance of the thesis it allows for the phenomena and themes to be identified across all the six participants. In conducting collective case studies, it is a given that specific themes are identified from the data in order to then be able to link those data to literature and to theory. Moreover, cross-referencing across individual cases to discern commonalities occurs but this happens in tandem with isolating stand-alone cases. In this study, I was interested in discovering both prominent themes and points of exception.

A drawback of using case study methodology is the possibility of over-generalising. It is always difficult to generalise from a small sample group,

and generalising was never, ever an aim of this study. It is, after all, a small exploratory qualitative study (Bell, 1996).

Hence I am mindful of the researcher's responsibility to avoid accusations of attaching too much to findings by clearly stating that these are the stories of this small group in this place during this time and that the views expressed are not fully representative of all Samoan New Zealand-born students in tertiary education. Rather, these are some ideas and findings of a small exclusive group who identify with this unique cultural identity at the time at which the research took place. What has been reported stems from their narratives (Clandinin, 2007).

Narratives are based on the assumption that as humans we are participants in storied lives. The intention of using the narratives of the six cases within this study was to display their stories of educational and cultural situations in order to account and reflect their life experiences. The student interviews were recorded after permission had been gained to tell their story for the researcher to gain understanding or deeper awareness. Through their narratives, an understanding was gained of how they experienced their involvement with AUT. Supplemental data were also generated by keeping a journal within which field notes and critical thinking became recorded.

Samoan culture, like many Pasifika cultures, stems from an oral tradition where knowledge is passed on through dialogue. Part of the reasoning, therefore, for using interviews with Samoan people was to help the students feel comfortable in conversation rather than have them reading or filling in a questionnaire (Smith, 1999). Interviews represent a qualitative method for gathering information so that the stories and experiences relating to the participant and topic become captured. This means that data may be transferred into notes or, as was the case for this study, become audio-captured onto a tape recorder for later transcription. Increasingly, interviews are video-recorded so that body language and associated language nuances can be captured. In the case of this study, however, such behaviours were captured by

taking notes in parallel with completing the interview. For this study the interview was the primary mode of gathering data (even though, as discussed earlier, an ongoing journal was also important). This is consistent with what Anderson notes when he comments that “the interview is probably the most widely used method of data collection in educational research” (1990, p.222).

An interview is a qualitative method of data collection that can be defined as “a specialised form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter” (Anderson, 1990, p. 222). Marshall and Rossman describe interviews as typically “...more like conversations than formal events” (1999, p. 101). In this study, through these conversations, we were able to discuss and honour the stories and lived experiences of participants. We were able to consider how they regarded such situations from their own point of view (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

Interviews can be highly structured or closed, or they can be open ended and informal. Interviews or can be semi-structured (Cohen et al., 2000; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). In highly structured or closed interviews the questions are fixed and predetermined and, therefore, the set-in-concrete nature of questions can limit participants responses (Patton, 2002). By contrast there are no predetermined questions in an informal interview even though there may be, in the mind of the interviewer, a vague sort of purpose to such an interview. The absence of predetermined avenues of exploration is a weakness of this approach because different, or inconsistent clusters of data are gathered from a range of people and this sometimes causes analysis to become problematic (Cohen et al., 2000). The third approach to conducting interviews is that of the semi-structured interview within which open-ended questions are posed to obtain information from participants. Given the oral tradition that is indelibly a part of Samoan culture, and given the objectives of this study, it was decided to use semi-structured interviews as the main method for gathering data.

Semi-structured interviews involve the interviewer posing questions which enable predetermined foci (not sequence) to be explored. The aim is to

gather answers that relate to these foci of interest and to gain clear examples about these foci of interest from participants (Merriam, 1998, p. 73). In this study, posing of open-ended questions worked well because it encouraged participants to speak at length and they were also encouraged to elaborate on their answers. My intention was to encourage participants to share deeper descriptions of their thinking with me and to encourage them to illustrate their thinking by providing examples of behaviours or events to which they or their aiga had been party.

The criterion for recruiting participants was very simple: interviewees needed to self-select, be New Zealand-born Samoans, and, needed to be enrolled in an AUT tertiary level course focussing on EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. Piloting the interviews with people who met these criteria was the next step.

A pilot interview using the interview schedule was conducted with one participant who was told in advance that it was a pilot interview and that their comments were welcomed during the time of the interview. Before the interview began I introduced the research topic and briefly explained the interview process. Issues which arose from the pilot interview were discussed with my supervisors after I had transcribed the data. These included the need to ensure that all equipment was in place and that the furniture at the interview site was prepared.

After reading the transcript I also realised that I needed to allow the student more time to answer before giving him/her prompts or examples. During the pilot interview, I had clung tightly to my semi-structured questions and had doubted that I had constructed them well enough to be able to gather needed data. Part way through the interview, however, I became relaxed and had, therefore, a heightened sense of cultural connection from what I was hearing. I felt excited and delighted about my participant's ability to offer critical instances of their experiences. I felt that I was able to now conduct my interviews with integrity.

Each interview varied in length of time from about 30 minutes to over two hours and following transcription, each was iteratively examined to identify emergent themes. However, during this process, further questions arose which pointed to more information being needed. This occurred either when there was a need to extend stories or when fresh avenues for exploration emerged. In addition, the need for corroborative information, data which could strengthen the robustness of findings, also surfaced. Hence, follow up interview were undertaken to gather more detailed or even fresh additional data from some students. With participant consent, notes were taken throughout interviews and these (which were not shared with participants) recorded such matters as body language and additional non-taped comments. In accordance with the AUTECH approval, interviewees were told about the study and were also assured about ethical provisions including the right to withdraw without penalty, the twin matters of anonymity and confidentiality and their rights to access follow-up services should they wish to do so.

I interviewed each of my six student's using qualitative based semi-structured questions. Then I analysed the transcripts for emerging themes. It was during the analyses process that further questions arose and a follow up interview occurred to attain more detail from the student. I placed these findings into a table in order to clearly show the themes to compare or add supporting information to each case study within the group.

It was discovered the participants appeared to be more relaxed during the second interview. This was indicated in detail with one participant whom discussed at length an issue they experienced with their cultural identity and sense of belonging, which later affirmed his/her commitment to his/her course work. Another benefit of the follow-up interview was the chance to ask questions that were not fully answered in the first round. This reflection was vital to gaining in-depth information about cultural influences which made an impact on participants with respect to their studies. This time around I was more confident with my interviewing skills and in hindsight I think it helped the students to relax enough to allow the conversation to flow more in line with

natural conversations. This common social conversational factor aided the second interviews to gather a richer description and to build rapport over a short time.

A challenge I faced was to achieve a sample group (in two weeks) before the end of semester and to complete the required ethics administration. There was some urgency in this as I had to make contact and have consent forms signed before the looming semester holiday. A snowball approach<sup>1</sup> was used to recruit volunteers (Bell, 1996). Students ranged from twenty to thirty five years in age and, as noted above, fulfilled the criteria of being born in New Zealand with either one or both parents from Samoa and being currently enrolled at AUT. Participants came from two campuses, the Pasifika unit, Osterley Way campus in Manukau city and Akoranga Campus on the North Shore.

Osterley Way is small campus that has an inviting physical environment that contributes to making this a Pasifika inclusive environment. Each year group has communal beverages and access to the shared kitchen facilities and there is often sharing of food during these times. Lecturers join students and open dialogue and humour is the norm during this time. Further, students are able to have their children with them during class times if needed. Students also have access to learning evenings for one-on-one tutoring with a native language speaking tutor. This helps to clarify course and assignment work and illustrates the culturally inclusive environment within which these students study.

The Pasifika programme purports to cater to the indigenous learning concepts and cultural values of Pasifika people. It is claimed that this makes the setting unique. But although such a claim may be contestable, what is incontestable is the fact that the campus is conveniently located in Manukau

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<sup>1</sup> The snowball approach to sample recruitment involves those who have been recruited nominating further recruits.

city which has a large Pasifika population. Another unique feature of this education unit is that the lecturers are mostly of Pasifika descent and hold advanced qualifications. Being able to speak and write in their native languages contributes to their ideal teacher characteristics and they serve as culturally positive role models for their students.

The other School of Education is situated at Akoranga campus, North Shore City where, in their third year, students can elect to major in either Montessori, or Steiner and now, if they opt to do so, in Pasifika education (2009). Only two of the six students recruited for this study were enrolled Akoranga and the other four were recruited from Manukau. As will be shown in Chapter 4, location appeared to be an important factor insofar as perceptions about the giving of student support was concerned.

As noted above, participants ranged in age from twenty to thirty five years and were at different stages of their early childhood degree – some were second year students and others were completing their third year. Of the six interviewees, only one was male. Four of the six students were the first in their families to study at university. Three had children and of those, two were single parents. Four students were living with their parents, one lived alone with her baby and the final interviewee was married. The one male participant was married and lived with his wife and children. Three of the six indicated that they attend church but of those three, only one participated in church activities (sings in the choir) and the other two attend normal services (one rarely). Finally, five of the six came from a family where both parents were Samoan.

Each participant received their transcript of their interview for comment and verification of their story shared. No changes were made as a consequence of this although some students commented adversely about the way that they had ‘come across’. In light of this, I do not believe that this procedure was useful and in fact, it did not seem to boost the participants in any way.

In this study, in order to preserve anonymity, pseudonyms were used. I



had assured participants that I would keep sensitive data confidential and as some data which were shared were in fact sensitive, I not only kept such information to myself, but also used pseudonyms in order to protect those data whilst also ensuring anonymity.

I chose to complete the transcriptions myself because this helped me to become more familiar with the data. In reality, what happened was that as I transcribed, I almost automatically began to see linkages with the data and I made mental notes about these connections. These instances informed later analyses. When I had completed the transcriptions I emailed these to the students and arranged a time to meet for the second interview.

### **Data Analysis**

Data are symbols representing facts that exist in isolation. When data items become interlinked, or distilled into meaningful sequences they become transformed into information. In turn when clusters of information are interpreted and/ or applied, generally in order to heighten understanding, they become further metamorphosed-they become transformed into what we think as knowledge. (Davidson & Voss, 2002, p.75)

In the first instance, as previously noted transcripts were individually, iteratively but manually analysed. Emergent topic areas were colour coded for ease of thematic assembly and colour coding made the management of the material much easier. Much of this initial thematic analysis was *inductive* (i.e. themes were identified as they emerged from the data which means that they were considered with a view to finding out what the interviews contained. However, some themes were searched for in a *deductive* manner (i.e. themes were searched for from within the data. Such searches were undertaken because they had been sparked by ideas which had been considered within the literature or which had arisen as a result of mental notes made during transcription, for example, determining how often the marriage status of one student had a bearing on the behaviour of others during class.

Upon completion of these initial and individual analyses of cases, an across case analysis was undertaken. Specifically, all of the transcripts were analysed as a group so that repetitive themes could be aggregated and so that

exceptions and stand alone accounts could become isolated. The exercise of converting these into a matrix gave a stronger indication of the intensity or frequency of themes and helped me to manage the data across cases.

### **The researcher's conversation**

A 'reflective' electronic journal, or diary, can be kept throughout the field work process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). However, I extended the time of journal keeping right through to the conclusion of my thesis because I recognised that the process of keeping a journal was useful for a variety of reasons beyond field work. It became my way of generating an ongoing conversation with my study.

In my own domain of early childhood education, much has been said about the value of reflective journals but for this study, my journaling was mainly used as a mechanism for progressively making new data – that is – generating data in the form of notes about events, ideas and feelings relating to events that had either already occurred, and/or which were occurring, and/or which were going to happen (i.e. the past, the present and the future). All of these constituted new forms of qualitative data which were added to this study. But my journal was not just about this. It was also a useful tool for committing reminders to print and critical reflection was not always a part of that process.

Probably more important for me was the realisation that the routine of documenting my thinking and research experiences into a journal provided a form of self-accountability. It gave me an audit trail of what I had done; the dating of entries enabled me to track main themes to the study; it showed me some of the emerging patterns and later on, helped me to see reoccurring ones as well as exceptions to the rule.

The writing process was, moreover, a therapeutic tool. It helped me to work through and clarify ideas which were perplexing, challenging or even troubling; it helped me to ground my thinking, to order my thoughts. It was also helpful for me to re-read previous entries whenever I felt that I needed to 'nut out' themes or concepts that needed further clarification. At times,

however, I felt ‘brain blocked’ and ideas were slow to emerge. At those times it was necessary to allow time-out. Often, but not always, I continued to write during such times. What I produced were materials which somehow and hopefully related to my work. In fact, they did not always aid my study but the conversation at least kept my cognitive processes ticking over. Finally, another benefit of keeping a journal was that it provided me with a ready-made agenda of ideas, concerns and thoughts which I could discuss, as necessary, with my supervisors.

### **Towards an understanding of others**

I believe through learning and knowing about oneself one can truly learn to value and understand the stance/s of other. Aiono (1997) discusses this concept in relation to the Socratic maxim to ‘know thyself’. The beginning of (poto-knowledge) is knowledge of oneself. The narrative journal described above legitimated my need to express and validate my feelings. This is consistent with the observation that the researcher is never truly positioned outside of the research (Perry & Hansen, 2010). In this study, my experience of hearing the stories of participants had a major impact upon me as a Samoan woman. My reflection from listening to these stories has given me a renewed sense of belonging even when the shared commonality was a sad experience or a call to action towards overcoming injustices. On a purely personal basis, an overall consequence of the research has been that it has brought about a deeper understanding to how New Zealand-born Samoan students deal with their study. It was not until I had completed the interviews that I truly understood some of the cultural factors and family obligations and responsibilities that these students have. My own experiences did not coincide with the hardships some had experienced and neither could I emulate the obvious tenacity which some students had showed in order to be able to complete their studies. Scrupulous amounts of reading had not prepared me for the impact that hearing about their complex and adverse experiences would have on me. I strongly advocate that teachers of a non-Pasifika background take the opportunity to develop deeper relationships in order to gain a better understanding of Samoan

students and their unique way of life, especially in their endeavours to succeed at university in Aotearoa. They can do this, for example, through in-depth interviews.

### **Ethical considerations**

It was fortunate that I shared the same ethnicity as the participants; I believe that this created a more comfortable atmosphere and more culturally safe space for them to share their educational stories with me. Indeed, it has been recognised that a shared identity minimises the social distance between the researcher and their participants, thereby opening up the paths of communication.

My postgraduate ethics application took into account the interview locations. They were intended to be first and foremost determined at the convenience of the interviewee; they were, as far as possible, intended to take place at an AUT campus; they were not designated as home interviews. This means that AUTECH advised that home visits should not occur but they did not prohibit them<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, home interviews, although not planned, became inevitable because of the tight time-frame and because some interviewees had transport and child-minding issues. In this study there were only two home interviews but some really important realisations emerged from them.

As much as I was aware of the AUTECH 'advice', the cultural expectation of being willing to meet and talk with someone who is Samoan at their home was not lost on me. In reality, I was faced with having to make some pragmatic decisions based on my limited time frame because of the delay of receiving approval from AUTECH to progress my study. Although it could be seen as being unwise to interview students in their home, (due to possible safety issues for the researcher which was AUTECH's concern) to do so was

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<sup>1</sup> A personal comment was made to me by a member of AUTECH which 'corrected' the impression which both myself and my primary supervisor had held, namely that home based interviews were a 'no-no'.

appropriate within this context. Being interviewed at home, in the Samoan context was considered to be the most comfortable place to share a story. At home, the interviewee is surrounded by, and is supported by their relatives, their aiga (Anae, Anderson, Benseman, & Coxon, 2002; Mara, 1999; Fairbairn-Dunlop & Makisi, 2003; Smith, 1999).

Thus there was the dilemma of whether or not I could/should visit the interviewees at their home. On the one hand, it was difficult to establish a culturally suitable or comfortable environment whilst at University. On the other hand, participants, who asked that I interview them at home, appeared to be most comfortable with that and subsequently spoke in greater detail about their experiences than others whom I interviewed. A strong message to emerge, therefore, is that culture counts!

In order to establish a relationship that entails sharing information the sharing of food is a useful and culturally accepted practise because the sharing of food engenders trust. I regret that I did not seek in-depth advice from my Samoan community in advance of seeking to establish rapport with participants. I offered my participants a light lunch and a gift voucher to thank them for their time.

The factors that make for a good interview environment vary; for some it was having their child present or not. For others, it may have been the length of time that they had spent getting to know me and me them. Growing confidence and a stronger relationship platform was evident, in my view, with all the follow up interviews where all of the students described in greater depth their stories.

Overall, this has been a humbling and privilege bestowing experience. It has been a privilege to hear these stories that have been entrusted to me and their being entrusted to me has been awe-inspiring. I trust that I will be able to do justice to them in the chapters that follow.

The findings which I will recount next are, however, but one small snap

shot of these New Zealand-born Samoan students; it is but a glimpse of their personal lives and their aiga. For me, one of the most important insights gifted was the evidence they provided about their tenacity towards achieving successful completion. They displayed a determination and had an obvious commitment to preserving their Samoan cultural responsibilities in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained the qualitative research approaches used in this study and in particular, has outlined the relevance of using case study methodology. It has also outlined the methods/procedures used to gather data and described how data were managed and analysed. The unearthing and elaboration of themes and issues confronting New Zealand-born Samoan students was enabled, in a culturally appropriate manner, by using this qualitative approach. More specifically, the research procedures described in this chapter generated detailed qualitative descriptions which clarified some of the influence which Samoan culture has had, to varying degrees, upon the six New Zealand-born Samoan students who were the 'cases' within this study. Each of the 'cases' was recruited according to pre-specified criteria. However, the focus was specifically concerned with their tertiary studies and in particular the study sought to highlight positive aspects of their experiences.

Using semi-structured interviews with Samoan people helped them feel more comfortable as opposed to the rather impersonal procedures of asking them to read and complete questionnaires (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, by using this method of interviewing, links to Talanoa became more apparent to the researcher as the thesis progressed. This represents a further example of interviews being more effective than other approaches because the use of an oral procedure is more aligned with Samoan culture. For this study, the process was refined after a pilot interview had been completed.

As this chapter has shown, participants were drawn from two separate locations, the Pasifika unit-Osterley Way site in Manukau city and Akoranga

Campus on the North Shore. The Manuka site was accommodating for students needs and made allowances if their children needed to be with them during class times. That capacity to accommodate students and their circumstances was not only consistent with Samoan culture but is also an important factor in securing Pasifika involvement in research generally.

Keeping a journal as a tool for growing and clarifying data was an important dimension of this study because it became my way of generating an ongoing conversation with my study and throughout the study. Whilst the interviews were the main data source, the journal was a key supplementary source of information and the importance of keeping a journal cannot be overstated.

In this study, as this chapter has briefly shown, ethics was a concern – not my ethics, but rather, the slowness of processing which was apparent from AUTEK. It would appear that ‘student’ research may not be processed as quickly as other ‘paying’ projects. The ‘guidance’ received from AUTEK about whether or not to visit interviewees within their home settings appeared to overlook culturally appropriate procedures even though it was doubtless given in good faith. It is appropriate to visit interviewees, who are gifting their time and information, in a culturally secure setting – for them. Nevertheless, there is merit in AUTEK possibly exploring the realms of how to make ethical applications by researchers who are investigating matters pertaining to Pasifika (including Māori) become a product of having been collaboratively prepared i.e. ethics applications involving Pasifika should be jointly prepared by the researcher and a member of AUTEK so that a win-win outcome can be achieved.

In any research error or bias can occur as a result of either omission and/or commission (Patton, 2002). In this study, the ethical administration process mentioned above led to the commission of visiting people in their homes which ironically, as has been pointed out, was a culturally appropriate thing to do. Nevertheless, during my interviews, there was a tendency to

follow a 'structured' approach even though the interviews were intended to be semi-structured, or looser in design. What that meant was that I might not have been alert to following opportunities for exploring other matters and I attribute this to being a beginning researcher. By way of omission, I absolutely know, now, and far too late, that I should have sought more guidance about Samoan culture. Had I done so, I am confident that I would have, for example, ensured that my work was blessed by a Samoan elder. My journey has however, provided a rich menu of personal learning and development.

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ADD THAT COMMENT ABOUT TALANOA LALAGA IN HERE. Finally, if there is one key message that this chapter should convey to the reader it is that just as Linda Smith (1999) has indicated that Māori research should be decolonised, and Bishop and Glynn (1999) have similarly argued that culture counts, then so too does culture count for Pasifika research be it about Samoans or New Zealand-born Samoans. Culture must be made to count and research on Pasifika peoples needs to be decolonised if we are to proceed with integrity.



## Chapter 4

### ME'ALOFA- THE STORIES FROM THE STUDENTS

In this brief chapter, a background commentary about each of the six students is presented. From these narratives an understanding about the learning challenges of the six New Zealand-born Samoan students begins to emerge. As well, the importance of aiga begins to become apparent. Indeed, by far the most important finding to have arisen from the analyses completed here was the fact that aiga is critical to Samoan people in aiding their successful completion because, as will become apparent, they retain involvement with *structures* in order to sustain Fa'a Samoan practices (*processes*)<sup>1</sup>. Examples of these Samoan values are embodied within the descriptions given by the students when they explained the importance of having a culturally safe learning environment and the impact of 'owning' the realisation that each Samoan person has a place and a role within their wider communities of practice.

A number of consistencies seem to emerge from this chapter and these are discussed in Chapter Five. Additionally, in Chapter Five, the relatively large cluster of *other* interlocking factors which contribute to success or which impede learning are considered and critically reviewed. These matters will be examined with respect to the thesis that the deficit model of education is prevalent within AUT practices for supporting non pakeha students.

#### Case study descriptions

In this section each 'case' is introduced and an account of their study at AUT University is presented. The descriptions are intended to provide a framework that describes the context of each 'case' but more importantly, these descriptions are needed to be able to better view the student from within.

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<sup>1</sup> Included amongst these culturalist factors (which concentrate on exploring practices, behaviours and emotions in terms of central tenets of Fa'a Samoa) are values such as alofa (love), tautua (service), fa'aaloalo (respect), usiusita'i (obedience) and feagaiga (covenant).

## **Lisaki**

Lisaki was thirty five years of age, the fourth of a family of six children and is the first of his family to attend university. He is married with two, school aged children. Lisaki is a fluent speaker of Samoan and he strongly identifies as being Samoan, which connects him to Fa'a Samoa (cultural ways of Samoa). One of the ways Lisaki demonstrates this is with his tattoo. Although Lisaki is New Zealand-born Samoan he still chose to carry out this tradition Samoan custom. Lisaki and his three brothers decided to get their Pe'a done together as a support to each other in this adult phase of life. Pe'a or Tatau (tattooing) bears a special significance for Samoan people, dating far back into in Samoan history. Lisaki's decision to get a traditional Samoan tattoo was also considered and approved by his family.

This process of opting to apply to become chosen for having a Tatau unites the family (symbolically via the physical symbolisation of the Tatau) by the ink denoting family identity and village symbols. There is also a belief that there is a spiritual benefit to enduring the tattoo process as this enables the recipient to summon courage in order to overcome pain in all of its forms. The Pe'a/tatau symbolises the family unity and integrity. Lisaki discussed his family's efforts to support each other physically and emotionally whilst he was being tattooed surrounded by his relatives at home. This demonstrates his desire to integrate this Samoan cultural practice. Even though Lisaki was born in Aotearoa New Zealand, his commitment to his culture by speaking Samoan and following some practices was evident:

I think I'm pretty fluent in Samoan apart from La'uga and things like that, I'm not confident but I could talk with anyone and name all the proper terms when talking with a minister or a high chief.

An interpretation from Lisaki's narrative links to a strong connection of Samoan practises that Lisaki honours even when living in Aotearoa. He is proud to speak the Samoan language and is firm in his cultural identity. Other aspects of Samoan life includes the responsibility to others, especially those within his family.

### ***Responsibilities***

Lisaki has multiple roles of responsibility including being a father, husband, and a teacher. He also has commitments that involve ties and links which involve his wife's extended family members both in Aotearoa and Samoa. These responsibilities have reciprocal benefits which, he asserts, have aided and supported him in his studies. This support has come not only from immediate family members but was also reported as having been offered by members of the extended family as illustrated in the comment below:

...they would ask how my studies are going. As well as my uncles and aunts who were really pleased for me.

Lisaki has had to deal with heightened expectations from his family as he was the first to attend university even though, by his admission, his *parents were quietly joyful and are so proud.*

### ***University support***

Lisaki's knowledge about any of the supporting services at university relayed that he had accessed the Keys to Writing Success and Academic courses and deemed them to be useful and helpful. Another supportive learning mechanism was formed with peers when they created an informal study group, in which the students cared for each other in a variety of ways. He said they did this by looking out for each other and by using phone and text messaging services to communicate with each other. Another supportive dimension that Lisaki described was that of lecturers providing support by offering their time and encouragement for him to continue in his studies:

It's usually the conversations that you have with lecturers that you get a feeling and understand that these are real genuine people

He explained that these were often the relationships that were formed outside of lectures:

I have been fortunate to have met some really good lecturers.

### ***Challenges***

Lisaki encountered a number of challenges during his period of time

spent studying. The mismatch between tertiary breaks and school holidays was perceived by him as being disruptive to aiga and to the effectiveness of his study. Further, losing income was a problem but the most serious challenge arose when he was required to write a one page 'note' which outlined his reasons for attending the funeral of a family member.

### ***Cultural factors***

With regard to cultural identity, Lisaki said:

I have always been brought up to know who I am, my parents are first generation Samoans... so our first language at home was always Samoan... that I am Samoan, it's my culture.

Lisaki was fortunate to have a family who supported him throughout his study and Lisaki's wife had completed her training and was encouraging him to do the same; therefore, she too was familiar and versed in the demands of student life. She helped with assignments and together they shared the responsibility for their two children. Being a role model for his children was another incentive for Lisaki to study. One way he did this was to study at home after the children had done their homework.

### ***Motivation to study and complete***

Lisaki was motivated to gain a qualification that would help him to further his career. Another motivation to complete the study was his dissatisfaction that had arisen from an observation that primary trained Educational Review Officers do not appear to have the necessary early childhood knowledge and expertise to be qualified to be able to reviewing these centres. Training, he noted, is completely different for both specialties. He clearly demonstrated an understanding of, and had a degree of experience in, early childhood centres. He knew about management procedures and noted that his understanding of Pasifika communities would be beneficial in the future especially if he assumed a role as an advocate. This was a need that he recognised as motivation to complete his study. To further strengthen the early childhood community, especially for Pasifika children and their families.

Lisaki is a determined and mature student who was very focussed on achieving successful completion. He attributes his experience and maturity as a positive motivation to studying:

It definitely gives you discipline. I don't think I would be able to do it straight out of school with no direction and no experience what so ever.

Lisaki appeared to be firmly committed to the direction of his studies and the resultant career path.

### **Valasi**

The interview with Valasi took place in an office at the Manukau site. Valasi was the youngest of my sample group and returned to New Zealand from Samoa in her third form year. Valasi, a young woman in her early twenties lives with her aunt in New Zealand because of family circumstances. She is youngest of six children. She has three brothers and two sisters and one of her brothers has completed a journalism degree. She is fluent in the Samoan language and at times has difficulty with her course work because English is her additional language.

#### ***Cultural identity and motivation to study***

Valasi was clear of Fa'a Samoa (Samoan ways of being) which connected her with her ethnic group. She spoke of the need to be respectful and to display polite manners when speaking and relating to people. Valasi says that people know you are Samoan from your behaviour. Valasi's sense of identity was further displayed when she spoke about values that inspire her to keep studying. Valasi was very certain about her Samoan identity. She commented that knowing her Samoan language was a major strength for her life and her key motivation to studying was born from a desire to help Samoan children.

#### ***University support***

Valasi did not use the AUT University support services although she did attend the ethnic Samoan workshops because they assisted her with her course work and were facilitated in the Samoan language. Academic tutors

were available to lend a hand thus providing a culturally comfortable environment within which Valasi could learn. She described the environment of the Manukau unit as supportive especially because of the inclusion of Samoan lecturers who could help her to comprehend her course work. Valasi spoke further about feeling more comfortable about the close-at-hand Manukau learning environment and had this to say about it:

Manukau is about sharing and working together...(Lecturers) have more knowledge, it's just more comfortable. I like coming to Manukau campus because its Pasifika here, the people are Pasifika.

Support also came in the spiritual form as well from her family to complete study:

They pray for me and encourage me to focus and concentrate on my studies so I can get a better future.

Thus she was strongly of the view that Manukau presented as a supportive learning environment for her but the key point to emerge was that the contributions from her (Samoan) extended communities of practice<sup>1</sup> and learning communities was central to her ongoing success.

### ***Challenges***

One of the challenges that Valasi faced was her understanding of the course work for her early childhood education diploma as this was delivered in English. Financial difficulties added further pressure as did the need for being able to access the library at the Manukau site<sup>2</sup>. However, she was motivated to complete her studies:

I want to learn more, gain skills and see how the diploma is, if it's hard. I want to go for it.

Valasi told me that she chose the Manukau site to study at because she

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<sup>1</sup> The term *community of practice* stems from Wenger whereas Peter Senge was responsible for devising the term *learning communities*.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of completing this interview, there was no access to the AUT library at Manukau.

was helped by the teachers there. She was firm in her Samoan identity and often struggled with the academic side to study work because, as has already been strongly underscored, Samoan was her first language. The ethnic tutorials, therefore, were, she told me, a huge assistance to her comprehension and she enjoyed attending such sessions.

Another form of support to her learning was the encouragement and spiritual guidance she received from her family. A challenge that Valasi faced was accessing the required books and reading material for assignments because it was too expensive to buy books and the library, as noted on the previous page, was not yet operational at this venue. Financial hardship thus contributed to her challenges as an Early Childhood Education student but so too did the bureaucratically difficult forms for receiving financial assistance (e.g. the Training Incentive Allowance represented a labyrinth of paper-work).

### **Losa**

Losa presented to me as being a young and well adjusted New Zealand-born Samoan student. We met at her home in west Auckland after much deliberation over when would be a good time to meet and talk. It became evident later that Losa did not own a car, so transport was an issue for her. To consolidate her challenge to meet with me, she disclosed that she also faced financial difficulties as well being a single parent. Her two year old daughter was present for our interview and often needed her mother's attention. She is the third child out of four siblings and the first to study at university.

### ***Cultural identity***

Losa spoke about her childhood with her Samoan mother and European father and said that her parents had raised them in Palagi ways of living. They spoke English at home and there were not strong cultural links to Samoan practices; those which were apparent relating only to her Samoan grandmother. Losa did convey that if she had a car that she would visit her grandmother more often. She reported that it is with her Grandmother that she eats Samoan food and listens to the Samoan language and she spoke of missing those family

occasions.

During her high school education people would often mistake Losa for being of Māori ethnicity, which became an annoyance to her as she got older. People assumed because she was of an olive complexion that she was Māori. She would correct people and tell them that she was Samoan. Losa was aware that she was of Samoan ethnicity and that her mother chose to raise her children in the Palagi ways of life, using predominantly English.

### ***Role models***

At first Losa could not think if there was anyone who provided a role model for her to study and we, therefore, came back to this question later. She spoke of parents as being supportive but didn't use the word role model. From the interview it was clear that Losa relied more upon her own determination rather than the inspiration of others to motivate her. She is the first of her family to study at university.

### ***Current experience of studying***

It was not easy for Losa to study as well as managing her primary responsibility of caring for her young daughter. She spoke of financial difficulties, transport issues with not having a car and relying upon friends and family to take her daughter to childcare on the days she studied. An early start was required on 'uni days' in order to take her daughter to a childcare facility and embarking towards the North shore of Auckland. She would then catch a bus to the city before transferring to a connecting shuttle bus arriving at the North Shore campus within time to begin her first class.

Losa decided not to access academic support at university choosing instead to make use of her peers for help with improving her writing. She spoke of the challenges of being a single mother and not using the campus childcare facility, stating that she was not satisfied with the overall standard of quality of the centre.



## **Le'emo**

Le'emo is a young woman in her late twenty's who lives at home. She is the only girl in a family of seven brothers and upon the completion of her degree, will be the first of her family to accomplish this. Le'emo is a capable student having worked previously in office jobs to satisfy her parent's wishes. She expressed the need to contribute financially to the family household:

I found office work boring I didn't enjoy it and was in and out of jobs. Then training courses which meant that I was stuck for what I wanted to do. I didn't know what I wanted to do because I was doing what my parents wanted me to do. At AUT I really want to pursue this teaching thing.

Le'emo also cares for a member of her family who requires weekly medical attention and special care. Le'emo has a deep understanding of her Samoan cultural identity.

### ***Responsibilities***

Le'emo's responsibilities within her community involve, amongst other things, being secretary of more than one Samoan rugby club. This role requires her to have such skills as computer knowledge, administrative and document preparation for financial funding. Her supportive and voluntary role demonstrated her need to maintain her Samoan connections and this is consistent with the collective responsibility and action that is ingrained within Samoan cultural values. Le'emo's motivation to study and the challenging roles and priorities to her family do have a compromising effect for Le'emo:

I'm here to pursue this [study] and it's hard because I have had to juggle family and putting them first.

The importance of family support and responsibilities may at times be seen as a hindrance. The expectation of extended communities on Samoan students such as those at church may be viewed as a pressure or perhaps an example of high standards that parents place upon their children:

Like they want you to be this and that because people at church are like this and that its hard even to try and do home work when I have stuff at home that I need to do as well. That's why sometimes I don't go home; I do my home work at Wellesley (nearly sixty kilometres round trip by car from her home).

Despite these difficulties and the challenges she faced in order to stay in the programme, Le'emo spoke of feeling privileged by way of the opportunity made available to her to study at a university level.

### *University support*

The institutional facilities made available to students highlighted a favourable outcome especially as Le'emo accessed the computer labs and chose to participate when 'ethnic tutorial nights' along with 'Ako nights' were available. Other supportive factors that Le'emo found to be encouraging were the lectures that seemed to understand her cultural responsibilities to her family and maintained high standards of achievement but were flexible with deadlines of time pertaining to course work. This motivated her to stay in the programme and encouraged Le'emo to complete assignments even during difficult personal (family) times.

### *Cultural identity*

Le'emo did access some of the academic services in order to complete her studies and especially found the ethnic tutorials helpful as well as the open access to the computer laboratory. Other supportive factors were the lecturing staff at Manukau as they displayed cultural awareness and understanding because they were of Samoan ethnicity as well and could understand the challenges of study and balancing family responsibilities.

### **Talia**

Talia lives at home with her parents and has now graduated from AUT with a Pasifika Diploma of Education. Talia's previous school experiences had not been an incentive to study. Her two children lived with Talia whilst she completed her studies in order to become the registered licensee at a Samoan language nest. Talia is the eldest of nine children. The Manukau unit of AUT University was close to where she resides so it was convenient for her to attend.

### *Cultural identity*

Something that impacted on Talia and her cultural identity was a time in Talia's early years when she spent time away from her family. It was through this realisation of missing her family that she clearly understood the love and support they gave to her:

If I was to give advise hold on to your culture, hold onto what you have I wish that I hadn't ... That was a lot of lost time for me when I could have been...I have pride about being Samoan. Honestly I'm still trying to find myself with my culture and my language.

It was after this identity searching experience that she valued and has appreciated what she now works hard at maintaining

Talia spoke of her parents as role models and of the support they provided by caring for her young children whilst she studied; she noted that she would not be able to complete her studies without parental support.

During our first interview it became apparent that Talia has strong affiliations with her cultural heritage; it forms her identity (*fa'asinomaga*). Talia described her desire to increase the number of qualified language nest educators, including those working in the Samoan language, because for her, having become exposed to education had aroused an appreciation of her Samoan cultural identity:

When you are New Zealand-born you kind of feel...before I took on the programme I felt "fia Palagi" ... I guess mostly from influences outside of my family, and friends... but as soon as I came onto this programme I felt that my culture really does mean something. It's helped me personally

Although Talia was acutely aware of the importance of being fluent in English as a requisite for achieving scholastic success (and, by implication, successful academic completion), she was equally sensitive to her own yearning for being an indigenous Samoan born person rather than a second generation New Zealand-born Samoan . She compares this to what she observes of her fellow students who are Samoan born:

Samoan born tends to have little understanding of English and they are more reliant on the New Zealand-born. They come and ask me questions or ask about assignment stuff. Now with what we have learnt they are telling us

that based on research that if you are versed in your mother tongue and then you are more advanced to learn another so I'm like thinking I wish that I was born in Samoa to have had that advantage. I feel I'm in the middle now

Talia spoke of feeling a sense of obligation 'to put things right' in regards to her parents and doing anything they ask of her; she wants to honour them and to do so as a dutiful daughter. Talia told me that she endured much gossip (comments and whisperings) about her being an unwed mother from 'older and nosey members of the church'. Despite what they were reported to have said, she maintained her church obligations 'for the sake of her children and her parents'. In doing this honours and respects (fa'aaloala) the social and cultural behaviour of service to her parents (Tautua).

### *Study*

Clearly, tertiary study had not been easy for Talia but she indicated that study motivated her and she wanted to complete her studies and to enjoy the use and extension of her mind that study afforded. She told me that she has discovered an understanding of scholarship because she has begun to fathom the academic act of critiquing within her studies and she indicated that she aims to further her tertiary education by enrolling in a Masters programme! Her educational desire remains wanting to encourage other Samoan people and children in education. She had never considered becoming a teacher until attending AUT:

(studying) has really kept me grounded with my culture and brought me back to my roots and taken me back to everything I was brought up to do... because its early childhood education, Pasifika. Where else can you find a programme just for Pasifika, for us? I'm learning to proud of who I am now

As well as the cultural benefits Talia recognised the academic supports available from AUT University:

I wish I had gone to more but... I know AUT offer a lot of academic help for academic writing, I attended two of the writing classes

As will become apparent in Chapter Five, Talia was not alone in not accessing AUT support mechanisms and she was not alone in regretting that this had not happened.

### ***Roles and responsibilities***

Talia had many aspects of her life to juggle in order to study:

I work three days a week at a preschool with the toddlers and the responsibilities as a daughter, serving the elders and guests and the Fa'a Samoa which isn't always easy. You are expected of (in) so many ways.

However, as already noted, there was a lot of motivation for Talia to study such as her children and family and wider Samoan early childhood community as she describes these motivations below:

My children... I think it's a sense of belonging for me, hanging out with Samoans. It was my mum that I'm doing this for; they(my family) have made me look at myself and want do something better with my life. I have the passion to learn so much more now because of them.

Talia could see the need for expertise in early childhood sectors and most importantly for her, she believed that there is a need for the languages of the Pacific Islands to be spoken and nurtured in, amongst other settings, the Early childhood sector:

I thought to do the diploma to get qualified and to try and help in the Samoan language preschool.

Cultural identity for Talia appeared to assume a stronger level of importance as she 'grew' educationally. She felt that she had abandoned her heritage and had experienced a crisis in cultural identity during her period of absence from her aiga. A strength that she gained from this experience, however, was a greater appreciation of her family support and their valuing her potential to be able to contribute by becoming an early childhood teacher within the Samoan community. Talia's intention to 'give back' to her parents and love for her children is an additional motivation to complete her degree.

### **Lilly**

Lilly seemed relaxed and she dressed comfortably in a lava lava and baggy Tee-shirt as she greeted me at her house. She was, perhaps, dressed in such a traditionally comfortable manner because she was 'at home'. Lilly was surrounded by three family members at the time of the interview which was consistent with the fact that Samoan people typically are surrounded by

supportive family members who, just by virtue of being there, support them in their daily lives. Both of Lilly's parents are Samoan and she attended church with them.

Lilly (as she preferred to be called) was at this time a few weeks away from turning twenty years old. She lived at home with her parents and two brothers and a sister. Although she was the youngest she was the first of her family to attend university. She had always known that she wanted to study early childhood and had taken some early childhood papers in the sixth form. She was distinctively clear that she wanted to be an early childhood teacher.

Lilly's decision to study at AUT University, was based on the fact that it was the only institute that offered the Pasifika programme and this enabled her to meet her need to be with people from her own culture:

I'm surrounded by Pacific Islanders. I feel at home at Manukau.

It is interesting to note that Lilly was alone in making this comment and it can be speculated, therefore, that future investigators may wish to explore this unique point of difference in greater depth.

Living so far away from the Manukau campus, however, posed considerable difficulty for Lilly. She lives sixty kilometres from campus and the return bus trip takes over four hours of her day to complete and she attended AUT Manukau at least three times a week which meant at least twelve hours per week was spent on travelling. In addition, partly because she lives at home, Lilly had responsibilities to her family which, for example, included undertaking her share of the preparation and cooking of evening meals. There was an expectation from Lilly's family for her to complete her studies. Although this was a *pressure* for her, they did offer support and permitted her to take time away from church and family responsibilities.

### **Demographics**

Table 4.1 below summarises information about participants. It provides some demographic data which enables a 'fuller picture' to be gained of the six

students who participated in this study. However, in a qualitative study such as this, these points are not as informative as the vignettes which have been presented. What the data does enable is a brief glance at some points of difference as well as similarities across a range of attributes.

**Table 4.1 Family and Environmental factors**

<b>Name</b>	Lisaki	Valasi	Losa	Le'emo	Talia	Lilly
<b>Age range</b>	28-32	18-22	18-22	18-22	23-28	18-22
<b>First to go to university</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Has Children</b>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single
<b>Lives at home with parents</b>	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Attends church</b>	No	Sometimes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Both parents are Samoan</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

By way of commentary, it can be noted that although three of the participants had children (Lisaki, Losa and Talia) only Lisaki was married but the other two were not divorced. Four of the students were still living with their parents: Valasi, Lilly, Talia, and Le'emo. However, Losa lived by herself with her baby and Lisaki lived with his wife and children.

In Samoan culture, church is perceived as a central agency and mechanism for giving essential support both culturally and spiritually. Of the six participants, three attend church one of whom, Lily, sings in the choir and regularly attends). Of the other three participant one (Valasi) attends church rarely and the other two (Losa and Le'emo) do not attend at all.

Of the six students, only Losa had a parent who was not Samoan. Losa was the only participant of mixed ethnicity (Samoan and European) and she reported that she had been predominately raised with a European world view. The five other students were from Samoan parents and only one of these students expressed a belief that she had experienced identity confusion during her teenage years. The other four were firm in their belief and comfort in having a Samoan cultural identity. Four of the six students were the first in

their families to study at university. Importantly, all of the students in this study had expectations about achieving successful completion.



## Chapter 5

### THE DEFICIT MODEL OF PASIFIKA EDUCATION AT AUT

#### Preamble

In exploring the factors that influence New Zealand-born Samoan students in their learning, a large part of the study explored the student's motivation and support systems they used to complete their studies. Some of the emergent themes from the interviews with the six students' clearly show that the deficit model is alive and well if only because there appears to be a clear avoidance by Pasifika students (specifically the six New Zealand-born cases in this study) of sources of help available to them from within AUT. The findings in this study suggest that AUT has been unsuccessful at creating relationships with Pasifika students; that is, AUT appears to have been either unable or unwilling to work collaboratively with Pasifika students. Implicitly, therefore, this suggests that AUT is perpetuating the very existence and the well-being of the deficit model. Evidence which corroborates these observations is presented in this chapter.

However, the students who participated in this study also provided a substantial amount of evidence about the various structures and processes which do work for them in aiding successful completion. That evidence is presented in the next chapter. It is also argued that for permanent constructive change to occur, evidence such as that presented in Chapter 6 must be seized by the AUT leadership and used as a basis for formulating positive transformative practices. That is what this thesis asserts.

In assembling these chapters I have taken excerpts from the interviews to allow the voices of the participants to strongly speak for themselves. In doing so, it becomes possible to introduce selective and convenient quotes but I do not think that I have been impartial in my excerpt selection. Indeed, I have sought to intentionally capture and reflect the essence of overall messages and meanings which emerged from my small series of interviews. However, for the sake of making the analysis become more pointed, I have sorted what the

students told me into two separate chapters – this chapter, which is about matters that could be linked to a perpetuation of the deficit model and the next chapter, Chapter 6, which will examine how the lived experiences of those who are engaged with Fa’a Samoa can be used to chart constructive ways forward.

### **An overview of the challenges for students**

Some of the struggles students had to face were due to financial shortages, transport issues of getting to and from university, what was perceived to be inadequate childcare facilities, the added responsibilities students perceived that they had with respect to family members and difficulties in accessing libraries and institutional resources. They also found that AUT procedures were a hindrance and at times the students from this study felt that they were marginalised because of cultural differences. These various challenges are considered below and in sum, demonstrate that the status quo for New Zealand-born Samoan students is indicative that the deficit model pervades at AUT.

#### ***Financial difficulties***

Students spoke of financial hardship which added to the pressure of studying. Valasi articulated her concerns:

...the one thing I really need now are my text books; without them I’m a bit lost. I have to borrow from my friends and then I have to give them back. I am waiting for my incentive grant to come through so then I can buy them.

Another difficulty for Valasi was the absence of an Early Childhood Education library at the Manukau site; this meant that, like the other students, she either had to travel to North Shore campus or had to arrange for books to be couriered to the Manukau site. Whilst the geography of Auckland is obviously not something that AUT can modify, it does seem apparent that the university did not intentionally collaborate with these students. They needed to do so in order to evaluate the effectiveness of AUT strategies for helping students to bridge geographical distances which make library access for specialised books problematic.

For Le'emo the loss of wages, which contributed to her family household, was a difficulty. For most students, studying meant a loss of family income whenever they were on teaching practicum and typically, a teaching practicum lasts for several weeks. Although this is an issue that crosses many academic disciplines and all cultures, the reality is that Samoans (and Pasifika peoples generally) are generally not able to overcome the hegemonic behaviours inherent in such practices and as a consequence, they 'smile' and get on with it! However, the costs to aiga are considerable as this study revealed.

Other financial concerns described by interviewees concerned the expensive costs of text books and the exorbitant cost of food at the university. When asked about finances and costs, Losa, who is a single parent, responded with the comments below:

Losa: Finances really...I find things are real expensive there. I thought that it would be cheaper because we are uni students but it's real expensive.

Rose: Do you mean books of readings?

Losa: Yes they are quite expensive, I have seen some friends that are in other courses and their books are ten times more expensive. I think that our books are real expensive like eighty dollars or something. Food is over priced and real expensive too.

It seems difficult to align this reality with my thesis that the deficit model is alive and well (at AUT) and that transformative strategies are needed in order to bring about equitable platforms of educational access, thereby removing the hegemony of deficit. But the argument can be made, for instance, that an expensive book of readings does exemplify the deficit model. That argument goes something like this:

- If a transformative approach to overcoming obstacles/barriers is not explored, then implicitly the status quo remains. In the case of the book of readings, an alternative transformative approach was not explored and therefore, the deficit approach remain at least latently apparent;
- Given what we know about Samoan culture, a transformative approach might have involved collaboration with the New Zealand-born Samoan students to determine how best to solve the problem of meeting the costs of the book of readings in a way that enabled a win-win situation for the students and for AUT. That did not happen for Samoans, or indeed for

any other cultural groups such as Maori, Palagi and migrant students from, e.g. Asia.

### ***Student parents***

Raising a young family and encountering difficulty in finding quality, affordable childcare near campus was a further challenge to studying for three of the students. In the one instance, the children were at school and campus based childcare was not a relevant need. In the second case, the children were cared by their grandmother and that approach to childcare is consistent with Fa'a Samoa.

But for Losa, a single parent who did not live at home with her family, the circumstances were different. It was not easy for Losa to study and manage caring for her young daughter and having to rely on others for transport as her quote mentions:

... like my class started at nine, I get up at 6 and leave by about 7 and that allows enough time to get to shore for about half past eight ... about the only thing that really bugs me is having to drop her off early. Probably just getting there is a hassle... there's a break, that two hour break like I would prefer to have a one hour break instead of two hours and finish one hour earlier so I can be with my daughter.

It can not be argued that these circumstances are consistent in any way with the argument that this thesis is proposing, namely that the deficit model prevails at AUT. However, what can be noted is catering for single mothers in a responsive manner is problematic and it is ironical that a student studying early childhood education, chose not to leave her child at the AUT childcare centre because she did not find the standards of the AUT centre to be consistent with her own expectations.

### ***Family and other responsibilities***

Family responsibilities for Le'emo involved cooking for the family, especially when hosting guests and meeting their needs, also to help with child rearing while family members are at work, study or because of illness. This was an expectation of many Samoan families to assist where possible as this is representative of practice of service for others (Tautua). This pooling together

of resources (which include the services of taking care of each other) can be viewed as a strength of the Samoan community; they pull together in times of need as a matter of course; they unite to overcome obstacles and to achieve collective success.

The findings for the New Zealand-born Samoan group showed strong relationships and maintenance of the Samoan language and culture. These family relationships were the support system about which the students mainly spoke with respect to gaining support that would enable them to successfully complete their tertiary studies. Family support was thus linked to having confidence about cultural identity and AUT did not fit into this equation. These students did not have any face-to-face or interpersonal relationships with AUT and that, it is suggested, is consistent with the hegemonic nature of a deficit approach.

Thus the point is made that AUT did not feature with respect to families and the support which they provided because collaboration with families by AUT was not evident. In other words, it was not a feature that arose in the interviews despite prompts made by me. Their conversations with me relayed their hopes that lecturers would learn to become more culturally aware.

Here again, therefore, the deficit approach is implicitly (but not explicitly) present. It can be surmised, however, that this phenomenon of treating the New Zealand-born Samoan students probably applies to Pasifika students in general; it seems that they are not approached by AUT staff with any intention of working collaboratively or even responsively, but instead, are bypassed as a matter of routine. However, it must be noted that there can be exceptions to such a generalisation and in this study there were instances of students attributing their success to the assistance given to them by caring lecturers.

### ***Transport***

Travelling to the course location proved to be difficult for some of the students' families especially for those where there was only one vehicle

available to the family. Often, the student whom I was interviewing was the only licensed driver in the family and they would, therefore, have to ferry their children or younger siblings to school. They would also be charged with taking family members to the hospital, or to appointments with a doctor, with dropping off family to church activities, to places of work and so on. Despite these responsibilities, the timetabling procedures of AUT appeared, for these students and for this writer, to ignore the battery of needs which Pasifika people often have. Inappropriate timetabling is thus an access barrier to many people and it could be argued that poor timetabling is another subtle form of domination for which there is no present form of accountability. The upshot is that Pasifika students, who find these timetables difficult, end up feeling that *they* are failures when realistically it can be equally argued that they have been failed.

### ***Challenging institutional procedures and insensitivities***

In this study an important realisation occurred when I was told about the experiences of a student from Akoranga campus who had been disappointed that he could not be granted an extension of time to complete an assessment. He noted his sense of frustration with respect to lecturers who did not appear to have any cultural knowledge and who would or could not understanding the need for time extensions on assessments when the need arose to attend a family members funeral. (In this instance, the student was required to complete a form and to write a letter of justification. The student commented that completing the bureaucratic form was as time-consuming as the original assessment requirements.) It could be concluded that there are strong cultural differences between the New Zealand-born Samoan students and the dominant Palagi culture of the university. It is suggested, respectfully, that AUT staff have much to learn about acknowledging and using culturally appropriate communication methods.

### **Concluding comments**

In this chapter it has been shown that, in this study, students spoke of financial hardship as adding to the pressures they experienced whilst studying.

Moreover, studying meant a loss of family income during practicum and the price of text books was seen as expensive and the cost of food was thought to be drastically overpriced. Importantly, it has been argued that there was no collaboration with the students to determine how best to address (or even better, to solve) financial issues so that a win-win situation could be developed for both students and the university. It has argued that the hegemony which students encounter is symptomatic of the deficit approach to service delivery.

This argument clearly applied to student parents in this study. Raising a young family and encountering difficulty in finding quality, affordable childcare near to the campus was clearly a challenge for three of the students. Maintaining family responsibilities was also problematic. So what then is needed to redress this? In the following section, it is argued that there are considerable strengths to be found within the daily lives that are the reality of these New Zealand-born Samoan students. Arguments are thus developed, as appropriate, which propose that a transformative approach can be developed which can achieve permanent shifts in AUT attitudes and behaviour with respect to the cultures of other peoples.

## Chapter 6

### MANUMALO – FACTORS WHICH FACILITATE SUCCESS

Whereas the previous chapter described issues and problems which the students encountered, and which were presented as evidence that a deficit model still operates within AUT, this chapter presents findings about dimensions of Fa'a Samoa which, if tapped, can be used to transform the ways in which AUT and Samoan people work collaboratively for a common good.

The data indicated that Samoan cultural identity is very strong for these Samoan New Zealand-born students with five out of the six students demonstrating practices and behaviours (culturalist) which declared that this (Fa'a Samoa) was where they belong and hence they identified with calling themselves Samoan.

The first question I asked was concerned with identifying what country or ethnicity to which the students felt that they belonged? Four answered that they are Samoan and the two remaining students replied that they are New Zealand-born Samoans. Five of the students described how the Samoan language was important for them but only four indicated that Samoan culture was important for their identity:

Before I took on the programme I felt “fia Palagi” you know the influences from the outside, your friends but as soon as I came onto this programme I felt that my culture really does mean something. It's helped me personally.

Talia was very proud to be Samoan and when she was asked specifically about being New Zealand-born she responded:

It just means that I was born in New Zealand. My background my culture my values are all from Samoan culture, but I was just born here.

Lilly identified as being Samoan, and when people asked her where she was from she replied that

I say Samoa, oh New Zealand-born Samoan. That I'm Samoan.

I explored with her whether or not there was any difference between New Zealand born Samoans and those who were born in Samoa, to which she responded:



I don't think where they are born is important; I think it's how they are brought up for me its how they have brought up its not necessarily where they were born.

At high school Lilly chose to socialise with Palagi and Asian friends. She noted that this was a pleasant time for her but she still sensed that something was not quite right; she felt a sense of not fitting in with this group of girls. This realisation led Lilly to reflect upon her socialisation and culture and consequently she found herself gravitating towards her Samoan peers:

Um, I was more Palagi than I was Samoan attending school with mostly Palagi girls, but I always felt like something was always missing like I didn't feel a part of their group, like I was the odd one out.

Losa expressed similar feelings to Lilly of 'not belonging' and she described this in relation to her story of being mistaken for being Māori (already mentioned). Often people would mistake Losa for being of Māori ethnicity which became a source of annoyance, as she got older. She would correct people and tell them that she was Samoan, although in contrast to that she said:

It hasn't really affected me cos mum's not really that traditional. We have just been raised European white, so it hasn't really made any difference to us.

It appears that Losa seemed comfortable in her decision to be identified as Samoan and to differentiate herself from being called Māori, even though she was predominantly raised with Pakeha norms. There does not appear, therefore, to be any problems with Losa's chosen cultural identity.

Another domain that was explored during interviews concerned aiga and family relationships as these are an integral part of the Samoan way of life. This is evident through the way Samoan people interact and maintain relationships; the word *Tausi* refers to taking care in maintaining a relationship) with one another. Everyday activities are, therefore, influenced by their responsibility and duty to their family. These ties strengthen connections and relationships between family members.

Le'emo's relationships with her family and other Samoans are an important part of her cultural identity. She expresses her Samoan culture

through her style of dress and enjoyment of cooking Samoan food. It is also shown in the way she supported her family with church activities and driving them to these and how important this was:

I have to put the family first before anything else in my life.

Lilly also demonstrated the importance of relationship as three family members surrounded her at the time of her interview. This example demonstrates that Samoan people have their collective family support and that Samoan people often involve their families in their daily tasks (work or study) and especially when making decisions.

This home based interview was the longest and gave rise to the richest data and it is noteworthy that aiga were present. Hence the conversation became one which extended beyond the perspective of the New Zealand-born participant as it also involved contributions from the interviewee's mother and a New Zealand-born but Samoan educated cousin. These examples highlight the importance of family relationships in Samoan Culture. These examples also make clear the importance of the interactions and maintenance of relationships within aiga and how these connect to *Fa'a Samoa*.

Two important principles emerge here. First, the advice offered by AUTEK was, as has already been noted in Chapter 3, not necessarily aligned with best cultural practice. Quite clearly, data gathered were richer because they were collected within a Samoan setting and in Samoan time. Second, the potency of aiga represents a strength which, if harnessed by an educational agency such as AUT, could obtain even greater levels of successful completion. But for that to happen, a transformative approach to educational delivery must be ignited. Such ignition means that staff at AUT must learn how to value other cultures and this is a stage beyond merely acknowledging and appreciating cultural diversity. I would argue, therefore, that to be educationally responsive, means in practical terms, that valuing and creating meaningful connections with the broader context of student families is of paramount importance.

The solution of how to alter embedded hegemony is not, however, straight forward – it means that AUT has to critically self-review at all levels; policies as well as practices need to be earnestly and honestly examined, senior managers as well as beginning teachers and bureaucrats as well as service delivers must all participate. And the process, if honestly undertaken, is bound to be an uncomfortable experience for most. However, such a process of truthfulness is needed even before transformation from a deficit system to a truly culturally aligned system can ever begin to occur.

A likely casualty of such a truth saying exercise is that the office for Pasifika advancement may disappear or its practices may become radiacly altered. This so because the officefor Pasifika advancement, by its mere existence, exemplifies the perpetuation of the deficit model. I would argue that either a new Pasifika liaison unit should be established which is charged with transforming the ways in which staff at all levels engage with the various communities of practice who are involved with AUT, or that the existing establishment should be reviewed and revised so that their practices become adjusted. This means, especially in the case of Pasifika peoples, teaching AUT staff, how to effectively liaise with aiga in order to grow learning and successful completions. But there are other positives including *Fa'a Samoa*.

*Fa'a* has multiple meanings. It can mean 'to make like' or 'to be like'. (Galumalemana, 1988). The term *Fa'a Samoa* can, therefore, be defined as the *Samoan Way*. It can be used to identify the way we think, the way we communicate and the way we conduct ourselves in social settings. It can also refer to our customs and traditions, which ultimately make Samoans unique to other cultures. Lisaki spoke about cultural identity in reference to his tatau (tattoo) which has already been mentioned in the vignette about each student.

The Pe'a/Tatau is not just for the individual who wears it. At celebratory family events requests to display the Pe'a (which means taking off a shirt only) symbolises family unity and there is integrity in proudly displaying a tatau which symbolises Fa'a Samoa for others to see. Lisaki

spoke about this significant practice and realised that his Pe'a belonged to his family even though he wears it and was initially shy to display his Pe'a:

My tatau has become more personal now that I've gone through that journey and it's not for show, it belongs to my family and for me. So that sort of attitude change where I was going to show it off, didn't last long... because its (tatau) about aiga. I definitely think church and culture or as they say in Samoan. "o le ie o le nu'u " (your cloth of culture is worn around you forever).

This example may be seen as a strong indicator of how he views and maintains his allegiance to being Samoan. With respect to this thesis, I am proposing that it is important that staff at AUT learn about the importance of such symbols so that they embrace them into their schema of understandings. Such an appreciative approach is, by nature, perspective altering.

Traditional expressions of hierarchy and respect are important in the Samoan culture and in this study such respect was portrayed by the intergenerational relationships between students and their teachers within the classroom. Le'emo explained how this occurred during class discussion time. Specifically, younger students deliberately allowed the older women to contribute before they, the younger members of class, felt that they could. What was being demonstrated was an act of respect (Fa'a aloalo) and what was being followed were Samoan cultural values. The following quote illustrates this:

Le'emo: In my class it's usually the young ones that stay quiet and let the old ones answer.

Rose: Why do you think that is?

Le'emo: For me the older ones have more knowledge than we do and what ever they say is right but what we say maybe wrong. In our class we have Fale atua o le Fai Feau (minister's wife) and everyone lets her talk. We let her talk first.

In what she said, Le'emo justified the reason that many younger members of class did not promptly reply to a lecturer's question. They know that the Fale Atua should answer first because of Samoan hieratical protocols. Yet someone not well versed to Samoan perspectives may well have viewed these behaviours in class as being unresponsive. So whilst this example also

highlights that New Zealand-born Samoan students do adhere to Samoan cultural practises even though they are not living in Samoa, the implications for Palagi teachers is obvious; learn to understand the culture of those who are being taught so that culturally normative behaviours do not dismay. Transform.

Expression of Samoan culture was manifested by some of the students through their observance of traditional styles of dress. Valasi and Lilly each wear Samoan puletasi when attending their classes at Manukau. Lily has a small collection of these Samoan items of dress. Valasi also celebrates her Samoan culture by cooking Samoan cuisine. Both Valasi and Lilly shared their proud expression for their culture in their dress sense but for other students it was the experience of connecting and relating to other family and other Samoans which conveyed the magnitude of what it means to be Samoan:

...My culture is really important for me. I get really involved in with all the Samoan stuff. I reckon it will help me with the early childhood stuff more and help me to understand Pasifika children more.

These Fa'a Samoa practices represent important ways of relating with each other and the environment. Valasi is very proud to be Samoan. She was clear that there are Fa'a Samoa ways which connect her to her ethnic group. She spoke of the importance of being respectful and having polite manners when speaking and relating to people. Valasi said that people know you are Samoan from your behaviour:

Because I understand and I know more in my own culture I can reflect back and understand more, I can't talk about the Palagi view points because I'm not a Palagi. My culture is easy; I know what to do. I'm Samoan and I know what to do, I understand (pauses) I know what my people are like.

Valasi is fluent in her mother tongue and this is an important aspect of Samoan identity. These examples further reiterate the impact of Fa'a Samoa on our New Zealand-born Samoan students. This theme is closely linked to ways of communicating therefore the Samoan language plays a vital role in students learning. Le'emo has a deep understanding of her cultural identity and highlights her regard of Samoan culture when she made the following

comment:

There's a phrase we use 'savali ma le tautala Samoa' that means the way you talk should match the way you walk or act that it takes both of these virtues to be Samoan.

Lisaki was also fluent in speaking Samoan and was firm in his identity as Samoan. His love for his culture and relationships strongly connect him to Fa'a Samoa. In regard to cultural identity, Lisaki said:

I have always been brought up to know who I am, my parents are from generations of Samoans so our first language at home was always Samoan that I am Samoan, it's my culture.

Valasi's sense of identity was displayed when she spoke about values that inspired her to keep studying at Manukau. Valasi was very certain about her Samoan identity. She attributed knowing her Samoan language was a major strength for her life and it helped with her study when she was able to use her Samoan language.

My (ethnic) tutorials help me a lot when they translate it. I'm there I can express myself then. When I read it by myself I don't get it...but I work and understand when I work in a group.

The richness of the students' stories related to their sense of cultural identity and what being and living in Fa'a Samoa traditions mean for them. The connecting factors were the use of the Samoan language at university, expression of their culture through their dress sense and following the custom of Tatau. These New Zealand-born Samoan students are clear about their cultural identity and proudly show how they live their Samoan Culture. This practice of maintaining relationships and living Fa'a Samoa is further strengthened through their responsibilities and roles towards family members.

But two important principles emerged as well. First, manners are clearly very important for Samoans and accordingly, loutishness and vulgarity are to be discouraged; they are disrespectful and insensitive. Palagi humour, regrettably, is not always respectful. Second, just as Pakeha people within Aotearoa New Zealand have begun to make Māori language a routine part of their vocabulary, it is reasonable to suggest that transformation is likely to

gradually occur if AUT staff are encouraged to include the customary greetings of other cultures in their terminologies.

As noted in the vignettes, Le'emo is one of the main caregivers for a family member, who requires frequent medical attention. Le'emo's caregiving includes having to drive and be present at the medical appointments and sometimes having to advocate and interpret the medical instructions for them:

I'm struggling (with my study) as my auntie lives with us. I'm listed as main caregiver and haven't been able to go to practicum because I have to drive my auntie to medical appointments and tests at the hospital. I haven't turned up to practicum or done any assignments. I'm still struggling. I haven't completed an assignment that I know is due to be in this week.

Lisaki also experiences pressures due to his responsibilities which, for him, included being a father, husband, and teacher. As well as having his own family of origin commitments, his responsibilities extended to members of his wife's family. These commitments concern aiga who are in Aotearoa/New Zealand and in Samoa. Lisaki spoke positively about these pressures:

Having to juggle your commitments as a parent and a husband ...those experiences are going to make you stronger and affirm who you are through what you are doing.

The importance of this support being a two-way, or reciprocal process, was demonstrated by Lisaki when he said:

It reaffirms me in my studies knowing that I have their support.

The importance of family support, responsibilities and the expectation of extended communities on Samoan students may be seen as a two-edged sword – on the one sword edge is the need to provide support, sometimes to the detriment of studies. The observation is made that these kinds of responsibilities take time away from students to complete their studies:

Sometimes it makes me want to give up because for me being the only girl I have responsibility to my family and my parents. I have to put the family first before anything else in my life. Being here at school even though I have my mums support, it feels like I on my own, it's hard. It's a sad story.

But on the other edge of the sword are the benefits of having support in kind and in spirit whenever that is needed and evidence families providing

support was provided by the students who commented on their family giving them transportation to and from lectures, minding children, etc. From the point of view of this thesis, it may be an unspectacular phenomenon to appreciate that Samoan students have to simultaneously provide and receive support with aiga. However, given its centrality in the Samoan way of being, it assumes elevated importance for Samoan students. For this reason, the community of scholars and teachers at AUT need to take this into account. To transform current thinking, a lively suite of continuing professional development activities is warranted.

For Samoan people the Church is a central meeting place and this is the place where parents often make comparisons between their own children and those from other families. Comparisons of success are used as ‘fuel for gossip’ and from such gossip emerge standards about expectations; these are then pitted from family against another family. In this study, Talia attended church for the benefit of making her parents happy but she did not like the comments and whisperings of the other women who made derogatory judgements about her past. If she were to fail her studies the disappointment would affect her parents and her extended family:

My behaviour has an effect on all my family, my aunties and uncles and my older cousins too.

Lilly similarly had responsibilities and duties to perform for her family which included sometimes preparing and cooking the evening meal. She was an active member of her church choir and enjoyed this commitment as well as socialising with members of her own culture through attending church:

I love going to church I don't want to miss out on church activities, kind of like I am putting church before my studies.

The point being made here is that the notion of responsibility goes beyond looking after family insofar as their physical needs are concerned – there is an expectation that the mana of the aiga will be preserved and enhanced and it is this point that AUT needs to appreciate. As these notes about responsibility to family and to their wider Samoan community show,



many of the students see the importance of these relationships as being integral to being Samoan but does AUT recognise this and if so, what evidence is there that they do so? Notwithstanding this question (and the answer), the deep fundamental love that Samoan's have for their individual family members is reciprocated with support from her family as Talia reports:

They support me big time; they look after my children, offer advice they encourage me. Just looking after my children, has been a major support to me because I just need that space for myself.

The chronicles of the students strongly illustrate the essence how and why relationships are pivotal within Samoan culture. Relationships are forged through devotion to church and by looking after family members. The urge to help is paramount and AUT could well explore strategies for nurturing this urge so that members of the Samoan community will benefit as will AUT.

Valasi's motivation to study, for instance, was spurred by her desire to help Samoan children:

I just want to keep going... focus and I think I can be a help for Samoan children, they want someone to help them.

By contrast, Lisaki attributes his experience and maturity as a positive motivation to studying but he still wanted to help his community:

Being a mature student does give you some sort of discipline, some background and life experiences.

And yet, there was a desire simply to do better, to improve their situations. Losa wanted to attain a tertiary qualification in order to secure a job, a desire propelled by her parents so that her life would improve:

They expect me to do well and probably to get a good job because I have gone to uni and to get a better paying job than anyone of them.

Equally, Lisaki was motivated to gain a qualification that would help him to further his career:

To get that piece of paper that qualifies me, I have over ten year's service in....education. That's really the focus of taking my study.

He recognised this personal motivation to successfully complete his

studies was nested in his desire to strengthen the early childhood community, especially for Pasifika children and their families. Many similar themes of student motivation were demonstrated by participants but the overwhelming motive nominated by the students in this research for successfully completing their studies was undeniably linked to a strong and constant commitment to serve their aiga and the Samoan community. To that end, services offered by AUT were not greatly used and responses to the question which asked to all of the participants about their use (or lack thereof) bore this out.

Like most tertiary institutions, AUT offers academic student services such as Te Tari Awhina (student learning and academic centre) and such service centres offer a range of free academic workshops. The university provides academic staff which can help students who encounter problems of an educational nature. For this study, two of the support staff were Samoan and this proved to be important to Le'emo's success at university. Ironically, attendance for study skills was mandatory. Le'emo's commitment to travelling large distances in order to attend these workshops on writing and academic courses is a testament to her determination to succeed. This is highlighted by Le'emo's following comments:

I think it was at orientation week, with \*\*\*and \*\*\*. They were awesome. They said some things that opened my eyes and made me really think about learning patterns and how you learn. What we could expect of our study requirements and the barriers that you need to overcome so that really made me think about how I was going to manage a balance of this study in my life.

Le'emo spoke about her commitment and enjoyment of her study and the challenges she faces in order to stay in the programme. Below she describes the great lengths she goes to finding a quiet space to study:

I have driven over to Akoranga library (over sixty kilometres) just to get that space to study. If I know I have to drop family to church meetings or medical appointments, I take my books with me because I know I use the time waiting for them to do my homework. I just use the light in the car to write my assignments.

Valasi's experience of the official Palagi support services was non-existent as she had opted to attend ethnic Samoan workshops which also aided her Samoan language acquisition. Importantly, AUT has succeeded in this

domain. They have been responsive and they have transformed their practices by appointing academic tutors who worked in a culturally comfortable place with their students. Valasi described the environment of the Manukau unit as supportive, with lecturers who spoke in Samoan and that helped her to comprehend the course work better. Manukau, she noted, is about:

Sharing and working together. (Lecturers) have more knowledge, it's just more comfortable.

Hence, it seems that having an environment which is conducive to study and having staff of the same ethnicity as the students and who can also serve as role models are each important factors in assuring successful completions and indeed, the Manukau site achieved high graduation levels.

But an important supplementary point emerges here. If staff were not of Pasifika descent they were still understanding and approachable and clearly, Pasifika students respond favourably to this. Talia, for instance, spoke of two separate lecturers as having served as inspirational role models primarily because they are each at ease with their cultural identities:

I see them as role models because they know their language and both women are highly educated lecturers and well respected in their communities.

The Manukau site provided the students access to computer labs and the use of a free printer in order to encourage students to stay on site to complete assignments. This environment helps the students to study without the distractions of family roles and responsibilities and the option of working collectively on assignments. The university also offered convenient access to learning spaces and to technology. Students were thus able to discuss concerns and were able to arrange with administration staff to come into the labs either before and/or after classes to access equipment and space so that they could collaborate on their group work. Location of study for Le'emo did make an impact on her study, preferring a quiet space to learn:

I prefer to stay on after class and work in the computer lab, if I go home there are too many distractions and things I have to do for my family. If aiga arrive it is my duty to be hospitable and take care of them or their children.

Although this quote demonstrates the tensions that arise through being conscientious as a student, the example also highlights the flexibility and support that the Manukau team offered for their students in order to meet the demands of their study without the distraction of families. Another supportive factor was the Ako nights that assisted the students.

The Manukau unit hosts Ako nights as an opportunity for students to receive tuition from a lecturer with assignments or course work. The unit is open until late and sometimes students will sleep over night in the attempt to complete assignments. This monthly initiative provided a culturally comfortable place to learn:

It's local and the programme itself is really good. I never thought that I would be teaching and ever since I have started it has really kept me in grounded with my culture and brought me back to my roots and taken me back to everything I was brought up to do because its early childhood education ,Pacifica. Where else can you find a programme just for Pasifika for us?

I'm learning to proud of who I am now.

A major benefit and strength of the Manukau unit was the Ethnic tutorial sessions which appear to be unique to AUT. These tutorials are provided in six different indigenous languages including Samoan, and Le'emo attended these sessions. The purpose was to assist with course work in the Samoan language and they were clearly appreciated by those involved in this study. Valasi talked about difficulties in understanding the course work:

There is some work I understand but I need translation and into Samoan to help get my ideas out and to understand the meaning.

The Samoan tutorials help a lot, that's why I never want to miss one....the way they teach us, the way they (ethnic tutors) speak the same language.

Enthusiasm and a relation of ideas that brought the students to the ethnic tutorials were founded on the validation of applying their indigenous knowledge to the early childhood curriculum. From my experience of being at the Manukau site there was a dynamic atmosphere of meaningful and purposeful work, there was a certain buzz about the place and students. The next section describes the preferred study location of the students.

The students were asked to describe their best location for effective study. For Lisaki the preference was to be at home, because the campus was a long distance from his home and he had family commitments that required him to assist at home with his children. His coursework and study occurred:

... at the kitchen table at home. My study usually takes place in two parts first when my kids reading, spelling and homework in the evenings, once they are sorted then I do the rest of my study. I use the computer at work to write my assignments.

Losa had a spare room and access to a computer to work on assignments after her daughter was asleep. Talia preferred to stay on at university to complete assignment work because she could not afford a computer and would be less likely to be distracted from her children and other family commitments. Le'emo expressed similar sentiments, although she did not have children she had responsibilities to her other family members. Valasi and Lilly studied in a mixture of places that included, places within university, kitchen table, and bedroom.

In her interview Lilly spoke of the support and encouragement from her friends in class:

We text each other when we are writing assignments to check how each other is going or if we are going to be away to take notes for my mates. We help each other cos we are in the same boat

Another supporting factor was encouraging peers and they created an informal study group that was relationship based, where the students cared for each other in various ways. He also spoke about how they did this by:

Keeping an eye out for each other and checking on each other over times when pressured with writing essays or completing other course work.

Communication was in the form of a text or a phone call to maintain contact over study breaks or when their class was on practicum. Losa spoke of using the academic writing supports offered at AUT, but mostly asking advice from friends and relying on the methods they had used. Losa expressed that if she required academic help she would seek it.

It appears from these findings that many of the students preferred and

relied upon the skills and knowledge of their peers or someone else who had previously studied. A certain informal culture of support was established in their peer groups and this ongoing support continued over the semester breaks and practicum placements. Those few students that did access the academic services found them to be useful to the completion of their coursework. Students exposed that some knew of the other student services such as the financial hardship office, Scholarship office and Pasifika Advancement Office but had not accessed these. Some reasons given by the students were negatively phrased and closely linked to feelings 'of fear of rejection' and shame as is repeated from a student comments:

I felt that us proud Samoans you know we sometimes put the hand out for hand outs and then we sometimes we hold back in case of what people may think that we are going to tap into every single thing that's on offer.

For the six participants the inspiration to become early childhood educators stemmed from three sources of motivation. First, they were determined to attain a secure career path in the early childhood sector so that they could contribute to the well being of their families. Second, they wanted to be of service to their Samoan communities and thereby preserve and maintain their Samoan culture. The third motivation was to be a positive role model for their own children especially with regard to their offspring undertaking future studies. For Losa the expectation to attain a tertiary qualification in order to secure a career path was driven by her parents who were convinced that her life would improve. Her comment below expresses her summary of their thinking and articulates their expectations/demands and their reasoning:

They expect me to do well and probably to get a good job because I have gone to uni and to get a better paying job than anyone of them.

When asked about role models in her life Le'emo spoke about her mother reminding her of her childhood dream to become a teacher:

My mum is the biggest influence in my life. I know my dad means well and stuff but I think to him education (pauses)... it's just the fact that family is more important to him than anything.

Other supportive people that were role models for Lisaki included family members. There was no hesitation when asked who his role models were:

I have my parents, my mum and my dad

Being a role model for his children was another incentive to study for Lisaki. His aspirations are for them to study in the future, and as he says:

at their highest levels that they can achieve as all good Samoan parents want for their children. Seeing me study will definitely encourage them to develop further.

Others spoke of the expectation from their parents. Talia expressed the need for qualified expertise in language nests/early childhood sectors in order to nurture Samoan children using cultural practices:

I thought to do the diploma to get qualified and to try and help in the Samoan language preschool.

As noted above, however, *the* main motivation to complete their early childhood degree for many of the students was to enable them to have a career path that would enable them to benefit and make contributions towards the support of their aiga including members of the extended family. Samoan students were still considering their wider community as motivation to complete their studies, by providing service to preserving and maintaining their Samoan culture within their communities as early childhood teachers.

It was important for the students to be positive role models towards their children and those at the centre. This also supports the way in which Samoan people learn through experiential and from people we most admire and respect and in that regard, the church is highly regarded.

The Samoan church is important both as a meeting place, and a space of cultural and social gathering. It is also a place and space for discussing issues of the community. Samoan people have an historic link to religious affiliations and these ways of thinking have been adapted to a cultural connection and Fa'a Samoa. This also spills over to having the blessing of your parents in any life

decision in order to enable a smooth transition into new stages of life (e.g. leaving school, getting a job, becoming married, etc.). These protective blessings can be described as heart-felt connections which are experienced through the senses with interaction and meditation with each other as a collective. Prayers of gratitude, protection and blessings of love are a common Samoan practice. But the important point to make here is that the church has an underpinning role with respect to the ways in which people care for and about each other. The church, therefore, serves as the key teacher and role modeller.

The following are examples of how the church and/or prayers were used to support the students directly and indirectly. Valasi's support came in the spiritual form as well from her family to complete study:

They pray for me and encourage me to focus and concentrate on my studies so I can get a better future.

Lisaki talked of his parents using the church as a support, which was a further sense of honouring one parent by being a respectful, successful and obedient child (Usita'i) to the Samoan family. Talia felt that she was being a spiritual role model to her children by attending church with her parents and family:

If I go there I get judged at church, the way I dress and because I'm young and I have kids. I don't like it. But I go because my mum and dad want me to, even though I don't like to be judged and be there I just pretend that I don't know what is happening it feels odd when you really want to go for the spiritual part of it. I go to please them and myself.

Lilly comments on the support that she gets from church and says:

Just being with everyone there, everyone there is from my extended family it's like my second home

Lisaki accepted that his family members attended church and that they benefited from attending, allowing his children to attend with their grandparents, but deciding personally not to attend.



## Chapter 7

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that of the six New Zealand-born Samoan students who contributed to this study, the majority (five of the six) were steeped, or fluent to a greater or lesser extent, in their Samoan language and cultural practices. Importantly, this thesis has demonstrated that these linguistic and cultural realities shaped the ways in which those students approached their tertiary studies at AUT. Their cultural adherence to their root culture was, therefore, a positive feature of their being Samoan and, as this thesis has shown, that dynamic was acknowledged within the supportive pedagogical practices practiced at the Manukau site of AUT. Thus, although the two students from the Akoranga campus successfully completed their courses of study, they did so within what was predominantly a mainstream Palagi educational context. In many respects, this mainstream milieu overlooked, indeed failed to acknowledge their Samoan cultural heritage. Above all, this thesis has, therefore, shown how important the culture of origin is for students participating in mainstream educational situations. This research has also demonstrated that the depth of Samoan culture (and the associated practices which comprise that culture) is relevant to all Samoan students, whether or not they were born in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

As noted in Chapter One, the global purpose of this thesis was to explore the proposition that educational marginalisation of minority student groups will continue to be perpetuated until AUT adopts policies and procedures across all campuses which enable continuous, responsive educational pedagogies and practices which honour the culture of indigenous minorities. And for this thesis, the focus has been specifically on Samoan students.

It is asserted, nonetheless, that New Zealand-born Samoan students, as with all students from all other cultures, have the right to access tertiary providers who operate with educational integrity and cultural safety. They have to exercise that right of access in order to be able to learn, research and

produce knowledge in their own way. In particular, for Samoans, this means a focus on matters which will be of benefit to the family and create value for Samoan communities. Because Samoan people have resided in Aotearoa New Zealand for several generations, this is not only important for Samoan New Zealanders, but it is also essential for the rest of the Aotearoa New Zealand community. It provides a mechanism for ensuring that something approaching an equality of rights is considered and perhaps even maintained in this country so that race relations become strengthened, with non-racist and anti-racist behaviours becoming more normative.

More specifically, this research has described the perceptions of six New Zealand-born Samoan students who attended AUT between 2006 and 2008 with respect to their perceptions of links between Samoan culture and their preferred learning strategies. Above all, the overwhelming importance of family has been clearly demonstrated in Chapter 6. In all cases students spoke of the emotional, spiritual; financial and unconditional support which they received in a consistent manner from immediate and extended family. The location of such supportive family members spanned Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoa.

The data from this thesis have shown that New Zealand-born Samoan students discuss and consult with their families on all matters pertaining to education and they, in turn, are consulted by aiga. In other words, they involve their family in ways in which they can be supported during their studies not only in order to successfully complete their courses but also to sustain the integrity of Fa'a Samoa. Such collaboration can facilitate, for instance, travel arrangements to and from campuses; collaboration and support may see aiga share in the costs of resources; and aiga will also make cooperative arrangements so that students are able to successfully address assessment requirements. The crux of it all is that AUT, if it is to move beyond a deficit model of service delivery, must begin by acknowledging that which works – and that which clearly works is the support of aiga for individual students. Moreover, because such support is spawned by the cultural capital which

Samoan students have, that cultural capital can be harnessed to transform practices towards an even stronger affirmation of culture and success.

An additional goal stated in Chapter one of this thesis was the intention to determine whether or not the six students accessed the (optional) support services offered by the university, and to what extent, if at all, they found those (voluntary) services to be constructive in aiding successful completion of their studies. In fact, as the data have shown, few of the students accessed voluntary support services except for the library although they were very appreciative of the care taken by some lecturers and also, they were glowing in their praise for work undertaken during Ako evenings which were couched in Fa'a Samoa.

There is a certain irony here. My intention was to discover what, if any, student learning support services were *voluntarily* accessed. In fact, the Te Tari Awhina tutorials which were *mandatory* were appreciated because they were facilitated by Samoan academic support staff who had been sent from Akoranga to Manukau. However, the *voluntary* Ako tutorials were thought highly of too and these were home-grown within Manukau. Support services were thus accessed because the Manukau based curriculum made timetabling provisions for academic support staff to provide this within courses so that students would ultimately benefit.

It seems clear though that students preferred to use the informal structures of peer support when dealing with any challenges to their studies rather than re visiting the academic support centre Te Tari Awhina and certainly, the findings reported within this thesis suggest that they did not access existing student support services such as financial services (the hardship office for those who are deficient in the cash stakes), the scholarship office and the Office of Pasifika Advancement.

Again, however, what emerged most strongly was evidence of reliance upon family but it must be emphasised that the sample of six who contributed to this study are not necessarily representative of the Samoan student body as a whole. Hence, further research into such matters is required.

Finally, the study examined *other* forms of assistance which students sought whilst completing their studies and it was here that the importance of peer support, which extends beyond aiga (family), became obvious. As reported in Chapter 6, the role of peers (along with family) was considerably more important to New Zealand-born Samoan students than were any of the support services offered by AUT.

Put as a question, this goal can be stated as follow:

- What other forms of assistance did the students within this study access beyond their family and beyond those offered by the university?

It is useful when concluding a piece of research to include commentary about the relevance of the completed investigation. This study has relevance in the following ways. First, highlighting the centrality of family support for Pasifika students is important because the emerging demographics of Pasifika peoples indicates the imperative to address the learning needs of Pasifika young people will grow rather than diminish. While this thesis has been concerned specifically with young New Zealand Samoans, the principle can be applied, with cultural care, to other Pasifika communities.

Second, as was stated above, in order to enable maximum opportunities for Pasifika students, and especially Samoans who are a demographically the most represented community amongst Pasifika peoples, tertiary educators need to not only investigate this matter further, but also need to extend literature about tertiary education using indigenous conceptual frameworks to construct meaningful curriculum with Pasifika students. This means that Pasifika focussed research outputs have to be led and directed by Pasifika people for integrity of practice.

As was also shown in Chapter two, New Zealand-born Samoan tertiary students appear struggle to achieve feelings of culturally safety within tertiary settings and this impacts negatively upon the achievement of learning outcomes (Pasikale, 1996; Tiatia, 1997; Utumapu, 1992). The preponderance

of students enrolling in certificate or low level courses is consistent with this (Tofi, Flett, & Timutimu-Thorpe, 1996).

However, it is contended by this writer that such literature is mainly framed in a manner that reflects a deficit model. Indeed, the very fact that other writers have demonstrated patterns of Samoan underachievement illustrates adherence to a deficit model (Pasikale, 1996; Tiatia, 1997; Utumapu, 1992 and Tofi, Flett, & Timutimu-Thorpe, 1996). Within this thesis it has been asserted that there is an urgent need to contest that approach and this means that a re-conceptualisation is now overdue for the ways in which Samoan students learn. Judging from the findings of this thesis the participants (first and second generations) have demonstrated that Fa'a Samoa practices are alive and presently adhered to, even in the Aotearoa context. Such a re-conceptualisation is needed so that a responsive tertiary education system can begin to develop fresh approaches to facilitating transformative processes. Those processes should acknowledge and take into account the difference of culture and uses these strengths of Pasifika peoples, refugees and migrants from other quarters of the globe.

Thus, this thesis has been concerned with investigating ways of breaking the shackles of failure which have become accepted as normative amongst both Palagi and Samoan people. The emphasis instead has been on uncovering and appreciating Samoan cultural factors which aid academic success and yet remain intact because they are integral to preserving the very core of being Samoan.

The imperative, therefore, is firmly focused on championing the best where the best is about enabling the cultural strengths that Pasifika students have always possessed and to move them forward through successful completion of higher level (university) courses. To that end, there is much to learn from the difficult journeys which Māori have experienced. Although their journey has not been the focus of this study, it is suggested that future investigations of Samoan student life can benefit by considering the work of

scholars such as Smith (1999) who have critiqued how indigenous people have been colonised in various ways. Her work is highly commendable and relevant to the plight of Samoan people because of her articulate vision to champion education for minority groups. Educational systems designed by indigenous people that include curriculum that is conceptually positioned in context for those people is needed and that involves transformation. In the words of Freire (1994, p. 79) “the chastity of the university, but not academic knowledge, probably hinders us greatly in understanding reality” and it is my contention that this is especially true with respect to ways in which the university engages with indigenous people.

The motivation for my research was a desire to facilitate the identification of the learning needs of New Zealand-born Samoan and Pasifika students so that their struggles within the tertiary education system may become eased. A personal motivation was the desire to contribute to a better tertiary education for my daughter whenever she arrives at a stage of her life where she wishes to take part in such a learning adventure – a lofty goal, perhaps, but nevertheless a mother’s reality.

As has been made clear in this thesis, investigations into aspects of Samoan life need to be undertaken from a platform of respect, thoughtfulness and a mindfulness of time. I propose that the ethical considerations pertaining to minority groups may be different, rather than at odds with, mainstream ethics as proposed by committees such as AUTEK. In this study that was clearly apparent as there was only a limited time available during which I could liaise with hard working participants and the shortage of time available to a cash-strapped student investigator was not only irksome, but also grated culturally. AUTEK may not have got it wrong from their perspective, but it is respectfully suggested that they might not quite have got it right from the perspective of Pasifika researchers.

But notwithstanding mainstream ethics, Pasifika researchers also need to bear in mind ethical/culturally embedded considerations such as the

genealogy and status of participants and their attendant mana<sup>1</sup>. That means giving acknowledgment in practice not only to the status and culture of the researched but also of those with whom they are associated – their aiga. Furthermore, the research should ideally begin from the standpoint of having acknowledged their own genealogy and their own cultural capital. Only when these matters have been established can they seek permission with integrity and receive a blessing for the research to proceed. For this reason, Palagi timelines and rules simply do not apply to the collection of stories involving Samoan people. Indeed, as Smith (1999) has noted, differences in world views between Maori and Pakeha have also been colonised.

Finally, again, it is important to say that this thesis has uncovered a realisation that the deficit model is moribund and that an appreciation of culture can unlock success for both AUT and the students whom it is mandated to serve. Certainly, this thesis has shown me that ‘culture counts’ and I have come to appreciate that when culture does count, it can be harnessed to facilitate successful completion.

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<sup>1</sup> The term mana is used here because it is a well known and understood term within Aotearoa New Zealand.

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## Glossary of Terms

Aiga-family, blood relatives and those with close ties of a relational bond

Alofa- love and generosity of spirit

Fa'a aloalo-to show respect, polite

Fa'a Samoa-the customs and Samoan ways of doing things with decorum

Fa'asinomaga-identity

Fa'a-ways of doing, being or behaving

Fale atua o le Fai Feau-Ministers wife

Feagaiga-covenant or agreement

Fia palagi-ways of acting or behaving Palagi

La'uga-A speech or sermon

Manumalo-to win, victorious, successful

Matai -a chief or person holding a family title

Mealofa-gift or present given with love

O le ie o le Nu'u—cloth of cultural identity is worn forever (ie are fine native woven mats that constitute the most valuable property for Samoan people)

Palagi-Samoan word for a European white person

Poto-knowledge, learning intelligence and wisdom

Puletasi- Samoan designed dress usually worn long

Savali ma le tautala Samoa-The way you walk should follow the way you talk, with Samoan dignity

Tagata' Matua-elder person with greater knowledge

Tatau-Samoan word for tattoo

Tausi-care or support

Tautala - Gagana Samoa

Tautaua-service

Tautua-to serve

Usiausita'i-obediance

Usita'i-to obey

## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



Date Information Sheet Produced:

23 April 2007

### Project Title

The factors that contribute to the learning of New Zealand-born Samoan students: A case study

### An Invitation

Talofa Lava and Greetings

My name is Rose Penn. I am of Samoan descent and the researcher of this project. I am a Master's student in the School of Education at the Auckland University of Technology. I would like to invite you to participate in my study to share your experiences and expectations of what contribute to New Zealand born-Samoan student's success in Tertiary education.

### What is the purpose of this research?

This research is conducted as part of my Masters degree in Education. My supervisors for this research are Chris Jenkin who is a Senior Lecturer from the School of Education and Dr Tafili Utumapu-McBride who is a Pasifika Learning Development Lecturer.

This thesis will be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

The primary goal is to capture the environmental and personal factors that affect the student's ability to study.

Publications of the findings in educational journals and presentations at appropriate conferences and seminars are planned.

How was I chosen for this invitation?

You have been selected to take part because you are a New Zealand-born Samoan student who is studying at the School of Education. All New Zealand-born students can participate. There is no exclusion in regards to age. I am recruiting 6 participants to represent a group of New Zealand-born Samoans at AUT.

What will happen in this research?

The project involves an interview of about 30 - 45 minutes relating to your tertiary experiences and how culture affects or influences your ability to study at a tertiary level qualification.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is minimal or very low risk of the interviews causing discomfort, but in the unlikely case of something arising the researcher will stop the interview and see that you are comfortable at all times. You have the right at every point to decline to answer or stop participating.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

There are few identifiable risks that you may endure. If it is necessary, you will be able to access three visits for support free of charge from AUT Health and Counselling services available at both Wellesley and Akoranga campuses.

What are the benefits?

My study aims to contribute to the literature surrounding the issues of New Zealand-born Samoan students learning while at university. Also to highlight the factors that assists New Zealand- born Samoan students in their



tertiary study. My sincere hope is that it will be of benefit for you and our community and the lecturers at universities where our people attend.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your information will be used for solely research purposes only.

Signed consent forms, including your permission to be audio taped, will be kept separately from the taped transcribed interviews. This way, your interview will not be matched to your full name. You will be asked at the start of the interview if you are still happy to be interviewed, and that the interview will be transcribed, audio taped and used for this research. All care will be taken to protect your identity and all written parts of the study will not be linked to you.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

My contact details are provided for you in case further information is needed and also to confirm if you will participate. This is a voluntary project and you have the right not to take part or withdraw your information up until the analysis stage of the project. I will check with you after one week to see if you would like to participate.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are interested in participating in my project, then please email [rose.penn@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rose.penn@paradise.net.nz). Alternatively you can call me on (021 2648216). I have included a consent form for you read and sign before we can proceed with the individual interview.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

A time will be arranged for me to personally bring you a copy of your transcript and summary of the interview for the opportunity for you to check and authorise its use for the study.

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

The people to contact should you have any concerns about this project is:

Chris Jenkin (Primary Supervisor)

School of Education

9219999 ext 7911

Email [chris.jenkin@aut.nz](mailto:chris.jenkin@aut.nz)

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to

Executive Secretary, AUTEK

Madeline Banda, 921 9999 ext 8044

Email [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz).

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Research Contact Details:

Rose Penn

Masters of Education Student

0212648216

Email [rose.penn@paradise.net.nz](mailto:rose.penn@paradise.net.nz)

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15/05/2007 AUTEK  
Reference number 06/209.

## Appendix B: Consent Form



*Project title:* **The Factors that Contribute to the Learning of New Zealand-born Samoan students: A Case Study**

Project Supervisor: Chris Jenkin

Researcher: Rosemarie Penn

- Y I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23 04 2007
- Y I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- Y I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- Y 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.
- Y If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- Y I agree to take part in this research.
- Y I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): YesY NoY

Participant's signature

.....  
.....

Participant's name:

.....  
.....

Date:

*Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics  
Committee on 15/05/2007 AUTEK Reference number 06/209*