

Ietoga: Samoan Educators Educational Journeys

Bridget O'Regan

July 2006

Abstract



Senior educators in Samoa who are currently studying towards a Master of Teaching and Learning degree through the Christchurch College of Education face the usual range of challenges encountered by students studying from a distance. In addition, they face a range of expectations from their jobs, their communities, their churches and their families that are not the norm in the western society through which they are studying. Despite such difficulties, these educators are successful and are leaders in their fields. I was interested to learn how they managed these challenges. This thesis therefore asks, *How did a group of senior educators in Samoa undertake their educational journeys?* It also traces my cultural and research learning journeys and the pathways I followed as a *palagi* (white person) undertaking cross-cultural research.

It was important that I recognise my limitations as a *palagi* conducting research in the Pacific and that as far as possible I followed practices and research methodologies sensitive to *Pasifika* contexts. I therefore adopted a holistic and collaborative approach that entailed consultation with the community throughout the research process. During initial consultation community members confirmed they wished the research to occur, and that they approved of and accepted me as the researcher. We worked collaboratively to determine the topic and the nature of the study. The community drew clear parameters and established the main emphasis of the research as a narrative approach within an ethnographic framework. Ongoing consultation included regular visits to

Samoa to meet with the participants where we discussed progress and worked together to co-construct their stories.

My research approach *O auala i le fa'aPasefika (Pasefika Pathways)* guided me throughout the research. This approach, a combination of my own western social constructionist epistemology, *Talanoa* research methodology and Stephen Filipino's (2004) research approach *O auala i le fa'aSamoa*, enabled me to respect and value my participants while at the same time taking cognisance of the cultural limitations under which a *palagi* works. I was given cultural guidance and support by an advisor in New Zealand appointed by the College of Education. The participants voluntarily took on the role of cultural advisors during my time in Samoa.

I gathered data through a combination of *fono* (interviews), and *talanoa* (informal conversations) conducted in Samoa, and supplemented this with data from the participants' journals and from my own research journal.

I realised from an early stage that various aspects of the research such as the processes used, cultural aspects and the main themes drawn from the participants' stories were closely intertwined and difficult to separate. Consequently, I adopted the metaphor of an *ietoga* (fine mat) to present this thesis. The completed *ietoga* represents the participants' individual educational journeys together with my cultural and research learning journeys.

I argue that the participants live between two worlds as they balance tensions between the requirements of the western institutions that provide their education and the requirements of *fa'aSamoa*. The participants' formal schooling did not take account of *fa'aSamoa* and its related values. Nor did it take account of *Pasifika* people's preference

for oral and experiential learning. Codes of behaviour and expectations of *fa'aSamoa* such as *fa'aaloalo* (*respect*) for one's elders and those in authority have markedly constrained and influenced the participants' educational journeys. Their responsibilities to family, church and community, for example, have presented barriers to their success. Paradoxically, these same codes of behaviour and expectations have supported the participants and have made it possible for their educational journeys to be successful.

I contend that if western institutions wish to provide meaningful programmes and learning experiences for their *Pasifika* students, it is important that they take cognisance of and plan for these students' cultural values, beliefs and codes of behaviour.

This research determined factors that enabled a group of senior educators in Samoa to be successful. Two questions arise for me and present as opportunities for research to be undertaken by Samoan or other *Pasifika* peoples. Have the participants been successful in their postgraduate study because they are undertaking this while living in Samoa and therefore have ready access to *fa'aSamoa's* support systems? How have the participants' educational journeys differed from those of other educators who have not achieved the same success?

Ietoga: Samoan educators' educational journeys



Bridget O'Regan

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the degree of Master of Teaching and Learning
Christchurch College of Education

July 2006

Table of Contents



List of Pictures	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Glossary	vi
1 Setting the Scene	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Why This Topic?.....	2
1.3 <i>O le Ietoga (The Fine Mat)</i>	4
1.4 Samoa	8
1.4.1 Country.....	8
1.4.2 Fa'aSamoa.....	9
1.4.3 Christianity.....	11
1.5 Education in Samoa.....	12
1.6 <i>O auala i le fa'aPasefika (Pasefika Pathways) – Research approach</i>	15
1.7 Methodological Approach.....	19
1.8 Research Question	20
1.9 Summary	21
2 Methodology.....	22
2.1 Introduction	22
2.2 Establishing an Appropriate Method	22
2.3 Participants and Setting.....	25
2.4 Ethical Considerations	26
2.4.1 Gaining Access	27
2.4.2 Risk	28
2.4.3 Consent	29
2.5 Data Collection.....	30
2.5.1 Fono	30
2.5.2 Talanoa	33
2.5.3 Journals	34
2.5.4 Consultation and Member Checking	34
2.6 Data Analysis	35
2.7 Limitations	38
2.7.1 Cross-Cultural Research.....	38
2.7.2 Insider/Outsider	40

	2.7.3	My Silences.....	42
	2.7.4	Challenging Assumptions.....	43
	2.7.5	Size	43
	2.8	Exiting the Research and Reciprocity	44
	2.9	Summary	45
3		Ietoga	46
	3.1	Introduction	46
	3.2	Analysing the Data	46
	3.3	Storytellers and Weavers	48
	3.3.1	Annie.....	50
	3.3.2	Bridget	50
	3.3.3	Dawn	50
	3.3.4	Pak	51
	3.3.5	Sua Molimau	51
	3.3.6	Terri.....	51
	3.4	Summary	52
4		Authority	53
	4.1	Introduction	53
	4.2	Framework.....	53
	4.3	Parental Authority.....	55
	4.4	Authority and Christianity	58
	4.5	Authority and Education and Careers	59
	4.6	Summary	61
5		Duty.....	62
	5.1	Introduction	62
	5.2	Duty.....	62
	5.2.1	Duty to Family/Community	63
	5.2.2	Duty to Fa’atuatua.....	72
	5.3	Summary	73
6		Influential People.....	74
	6.1	Introduction	74
	6.2	Influential People - parents.....	74
	6.3	Influential People – other family members	77
	6.4	Influential People – teachers and others.....	78
	6.5	Summary	81
7		Lalāgaga o le Ietoga (weaving the ietoga)	82
	7.1	Introduction	82
	7.2	(In)formal Education.....	84

7.3	Living and Learning in Two Worlds	85
7.4	Determining Direction.....	88
7.5	Gaining Authority	91
7.6	They Have in Their Arms Both Ways	93
7.7	Achieving Success	94
7.8	Ietoga	95
8	Looking Back - Looking Forward	97
8.1	Introduction	97
8.2	Looking Back	97
8.2.1	Unique Study.....	97
8.2.2	Research Process.....	98
8.2.3	Research Constraint	99
8.2.4	Contributions to the Participants' and Research Communities.....	100
8.3	Looking Forward.....	100
8.3.1	Questions Raised.....	100
8.3.2	Opportunities	101
8.4	Final Reflection.....	101
9	Bibliography.....	102
10	Appendices	113
10.1	Information Letter	113
10.2	Consent Form	115

List of Pictures



1	Beach <i>fale</i> at Virgin Cove that I shared with two participants	1
2	Presentation of an <i>ietoga</i> at a funeral service	5
3	Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni looks on as his mother shows me the art of <i>lalāgaga o le ietoga</i>	7
4	Vavau, Western Samoa.....	8
5	One of Samoa's many waterfalls	8
6	Relaxing outside a beach <i>fale</i> with members of the FOE while on 'retreat' at Manase, Savaii	40

Acknowledgements



Undertaking this research has been a humbling experience. I have been overwhelmed by people's willingness to contribute to my thesis in a variety of ways.

The people of Samoa afforded me warm hospitality. The participants gave generously of their time.

My supervisors Carol and Jane both nurtured and challenged me on my research journey. They encouraged me to move out of my comfort zone. Their advice and wisdom were delivered with care and sensitivity. They never lost faith in me and were always there when the going got tough.

My cultural advisor Tufulasi provided wise counsel and guided me on my cultural learning journey. His support and advice gave me confidence in cultural protocols and behaviours.

Missy was always ready to listen, to engage in conversation and to offer support.

Judy has shown an interest from 'beginning to end'. Her unfailing support and encouragement helped me to keep going.

My friends and family gave me space but were there whenever I needed them.

Gavin, Rob, Adrienne and Elaine, who in addition to being 'sounding boards', undertook the task of editing my work.

The College Research Committee awarded me six weeks paid research leave to complete this thesis.

The MTchLn students, particularly the support group, were great 'critical friends'.

I could not have completed this work without my *husband Noel's* constant support and encouragement. His sense of humour and unfailing kindness saw me through the good times and the many difficult patches.

Fa'afetai tele lava to you all
(Thank you very much)

Glossary



Definition of Terms

The terms used in this research fall into two distinct categories. The first relates to culture/language with meanings sourced from a range of *Pasifika* writers and peoples including the participants in the research. The second, a general list of terms (including acronyms), did not require verification from other sources.

Culture/Language

<i>Aiga</i>	family, the primary unit of society, including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins
<i>Fa'aaloalo</i>	respect
<i>Fa'afetai tele lava</i>	thank you very much
<i>Fa'afaletui</i>	(pertaining to methodology) weaving together of knowledge from different people and sources
<i>Fa'aSamoa</i>	the embodiment of the Samoan culture – the principles, values and beliefs that influence and control the behaviour and attitudes of Samoans
<i>Fa'atuatua</i>	faith
<i>Fale</i>	house
<i>Fono</i>	meeting; confer with; meet
<i>Ietoga</i>	(fine mat) Samoan finely plaited cloth (mat) of bleached pandanus fibres bordered with red feathers. (<i>o le ietoga</i> – the <i>ietoga</i>)
<i>Indigenous</i>	first settlers and their descendents
<i>Lalaga</i>	to weave a basket or mat
<i>Lālāga</i>	the product of weaving
<i>Lalāgaga o le ietoga</i>	weaving the <i>ietoga</i>

<i>Loto maualolo</i>	humility
<i>Meaalofa</i>	gift
<i>Matai</i>	a leader, person of high standing. A person selected by the aiga to hold the family title. (Chief)
<i>Nu'u</i>	village – collectively owned and controlled by its <i>aiga</i>
<i>O auala i le fa'aPasefika</i>	Pasefika Pathways – research approach
<i>Palagi</i>	white person (shortened from <i>papalagi</i>)
<i>Pan-Pacific</i>	involving many of the Pacific countries
<i>Pasifika</i>	South Pacific countries including Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa
<i>Pasifika people</i>	people from South Pacific countries including Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Western Samoa
<i>Talanoa</i>	dialogue, informal talk. Verb: to talk, to tell stories from the past and to relate experiences of daily living. Noun: the talk, the story or the tale
<i>Ula</i>	edging decoration (feathers) on the <i>ietoga</i>

The above definitions are sourced from Anae, Coxon, Mara, Wendt-Samu and Finau (2001), Fairbairn-Dunlop (1998), Luamanuvao (2003), Manu'atu and Kepa (2002), Meleisea (1987), Polu (1998), Taleni, T. (personal communication, May 2006), Tupuola (1993), Vaioleti (2003) and from the participants in the study.

General

<i>CCE</i>	Christchurch College of Education
<i>Community</i>	Nominally the Faculty of Education, National University of Samoa, but also including some staff from the wider university and some members of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture
<i>Community leaders</i>	Gatoloafaaana Tilianamua Afamasaga, Dean, Faculty of Education, National University of Samoa. A research participant viewed by members as a nominal group leader

<i>Cultural advisor</i>	Leali'ie'e Tufulasi Taleni, <i>matai</i> from the village of Vaiafai, Iva, Savaii. Appointed by CCE to provide cultural support and guidance
<i>FOE</i>	Faculty of Education, National University of Samoa
<i>MTchLn</i>	Master of Teaching and Learning
<i>MESC</i>	Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (Samoa)
<i>NUS</i>	National University of Samoa
<i>Senior educators</i>	Teacher education trainers, university lecturers, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (Samoa), Curriculum Division Advisors, deputy principal
<i>USP</i>	University of the South Pacific

1 Setting the Scene



I walked out the door of the plane and the hot, moist air hit me. It was almost like walking into a steam room. I was immediately sticky, with my jeans like big thick bandages. There was also a sense of coming home. A beautiful, clear night, with the stars shining. They looked as if they had been individually polished.

(Personal Journal, October 31, 2005)

1.1 Introduction

In November 2005 while in Samoa gathering data for this research project, I had the privilege of working alongside participants, sharing food and adventures and going on ‘retreat’ with an amazing group of people from the Faculty of Education (FOE) at the National University of Samoa (NUS). How many researchers have the opportunity to share a beach *fale* with two of their participants at a resort named Virgin Cove? During this time of sharing their lifestyle I took part in *talanoa* (informal conversations), laughter, adventures and I heard many stories. I was truly welcomed into their lives and treated as a member of the family. I only needed to mention the words ‘research’ or ‘that is interesting, what ...’ and words came tumbling out.



Picture 1 *The beach fale at Virgin Cove that I shared with two of the participants*

This thesis asks *How did a group of senior educators in Samoa undertake their educational journeys?* It also traces my cultural and research learning journeys and the pathways I followed as a *palagi* (white person) undertaking cross-cultural research. The reader will observe the delicate dance in which I engaged as I moved between adopting practices that would honour and respect Pacific values and traditions, while remaining true to my own western values and beliefs.

I commence this chapter with the context for the thesis and describe how I, a *palagi*, came to be facing the challenges of cross-cultural research. I introduce the reader to the collaborative and holistic approach taken that led me to adopt the metaphor of an *ietoga* (fine mat) to present my thesis. I provide background information on Samoa, its customs and practices and the education of its peoples to assist the reader to contextualise the study. Included in this section are *pan-Pacific* views and considerations selected from a range of scholars from the Pacific region, for example Faanafi Ma'ia'i, Malama Meleisea and Konai Thaman.

O auala i le fa'aPasefika (Pasefika Pathways), the research approach that guided me through the process in a culturally appropriate manner is introduced and the methodological approach taken to this research established.

1.2 Why This Topic?

In 2003, under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding developed between the Christchurch College of Education (CCE) and the NUS, the CCE began delivery of its Master of Teaching and Learning degree (MTchLn) to a group of senior educators in Samoa. Delivery was through a combination of face-to-face in Samoa and distance. As the MTchLn Student Dean, I undertook a pastoral care role with these students. This involved corresponding with them by email and occasionally by phone.

In February and May 2004 I visited Samoa and met with the students. As we established relationships, I became aware that throughout their educational journeys these students have faced not only the usual range of challenges encountered by students studying from a distance, but also a range of expectations from their jobs, their communities, their churches and their families that are not the norm in the western society to which I belong and through which they are studying. While these expectations enrich their lives, I felt they may also make their ability to study more difficult. I was inspired by hearing their stories and how they managed the various challenges. This research provided the opportunity for me to develop a partnership with the students and be a conduit for them to share their educational journeys with a wider audience.

There has been considerable research conducted in New Zealand on Pacific peoples undertaking tertiary education, both by the government and individual researchers, for example, Anae, Anderson, Benseman and Coxon's (2002) report titled *Pacific Peoples and Tertiary Education: Issues of Participation. Final Report* and Lorraine Petelo's (2003) doctoral thesis *Fa'alogo i leo o le fanau: A qualitative study of the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury*. This research has focused on people studying in New Zealand. I have, however, been unable to locate research involving people living in Samoa and undertaking their tertiary study there. It is the absence of such research that makes this study unique.

Research in the Pacific has in the past tended to be *pan-Pacific*, that is, one research study will involve many of the Pacific countries, thus enabling Pacific generalisations to be made. There is now a move to more in-depth ethnic specific studies, for example Faoagali (2004), Filipino (2004), Petelo (2003) and Tupuola (1993). In recognising that each Pacific group has its distinct traditions, languages, histories and world-views, this approach

“enables a much more in-depth study that will allow inter and intra-ethnic nuances to be exposed and understood” (Anae et al., 2001, p. 9). By adopting this approach for my study it is not possible for the findings to be generalised across the Pacific. This local focus however, is more appropriate for a *palagi* researcher. Generalising across the Pacific could give an impression of arrogance on my part. In addition, it could be seen as an abuse of the privilege extended to me by the participants in welcoming me into their lives.

1.3 *O le Ietoga (The Fine Mat)*

My approach to this thesis has been holistic and collaborative. Throughout the process I have considered factors that are an integral part of the participants’ lives, such as their physical environment, spirituality, family and community. The participants and community leaders were closely involved with the development of the research topic and I undertook regular consultation with the participants, with the community and with my cultural advisor throughout the research and writing process. The community in this research is mainly situated within the FOE at NUS. Other members of the community are either based in the wider university, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture (MESC) Curriculum Division or in a local school.

Cultural considerations, my own position within the research and my learning journey played an integral part throughout all aspects of the research design and implementation. I found that they were so tightly intertwined that it was not possible to treat them separately in this report. It was more appropriate to attend to each issue as it naturally occurred throughout the report, weaving it into my story. Similarly, after coding and categorizing the data, it became apparent that the various strands that contribute to Samoan culture and to the participants’ lives were so interwoven that it was not possible to separate them. The concept of weaving once again occurred to me.

As I considered the notion of weaving, it brought to mind *o le ietoga* (the fine mat), “a finely woven mat of pandanus fibres bordered with red feathers [*ula* (edging decoration)]” (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998, p. 187). Traditionally, the daughters of chiefs were the only people who made *o le ietoga*, hence its sacred quality, its significance to Samoan people and its value within Samoan culture. *Ietoga* represented qualities of “respect, prestige, gratitude, deference, recognition and obligation” (Meleisea, 1992, p. 34). “The *ie toga* were presented at every ceremonial presentation” (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998, p. 7). They are still used today as gifts for weddings and funerals and other special occasions.



Picture 2 *Presentation of an ietoga at a funeral service*

Preparation for, and weaving of, *o le ietoga* is a long and careful process. Once cut, the long pandanus leaves are soaked and boiled, but not over-boiled. The leaves are scraped, with care taken to ensure they do not break. The final stage of preparation is to roll the leaves and dry them in the sun. The person charged with preparation of these materials

must ensure that the leaves are not over-dried and become too brittle. It is only after this intensive preparation that the leaves are sliced into thin strips and the mat woven (Lay, Murrow, & Meleisea, 2000; Taleni, T., personal communication, May 2006). Weaving of *o le ietoga* is often undertaken in a communal environment. Women of the village will sit side by side as they weave their mats, supporting and guiding each other with comments such as, ‘oh, yes, you’re going in the right direction’ or, ‘this part isn’t quite right.’ When the weaving is complete and everyone is satisfied, the *ula* is added (Taleni, T., personal communication, May 2006).

I chose to adopt *o le ietoga* as a metaphor for presenting this research. In a manner similar to *fa’afaletui*, the knowledge has come from different sources and different people. As these have come together I have been able to *lalāgaga o le ietoga* (weave the fine mat). The first knowledge I bring for weaving is the design and implementation of the process. The approach taken weaves aspects such as my position, cultural considerations and methodological issues as I write. The second knowledge comes from the participants’ stories. I carefully prepare aspects of these stories so that I am able to complete *lalāgaga o le ietoga*. The metaphorically woven and completed *ietoga* represents the educational journeys of my participants. It also represents the delicate dance and learning journey that I have undertaken throughout this thesis. I recognise the “centrality of culture in the lives of Pacific peoples” (Wilson & Hunt, 1998, p. 171) by representing the Samoan cultural environment within which the participants live with the *ula*.

In the same way that the women of the village support each other during weaving of *o le ietoga*, I too was given guidance and support from my cultural advisor, my supervisors and from the participants themselves. At various times throughout the process each of these people verified that ‘yes, you are going in the right direction’ or, ‘this part isn’t quite right,

you might like to consider going this way.’ An example of participant guidance relates to the spelling of *ietoga*. Initially I used two words, *ie toga*. The participants explained, however, that the literal translation of this is ‘materials of Tonga’ the country where the *ie toga* originated. It becomes more Samoan when *ietoga* is written as one word. They therefore suggested that I adopt the one word spelling. This is one of the many ‘cultural lessons’ delivered in the oral tradition that I have engaged in throughout my cultural learning journey.

I recognise the significance and value of *o le ietoga* to the Samoan people. As a *palagi* I considered myself privileged on one of my visits to the village of Vaiafai, Iva, in Savaii, Samoa, that Leali’ie’e Tufulasi’s mother spent time to give me a lesson on how to *lalāgaga o le ietoga*. In this thesis I am honoured that Tufulasi not only approved the adoption of *o le ietoga* as my metaphor thus enabling me to weave my story, he and his mother have also given permission for me to show a photograph of the weaving lesson.



Picture 3 *Leali’ie’e Tufulasi Taleni looks on as his mother shows me the art of lalāgaga o le ietoga*

1.4 Samoa

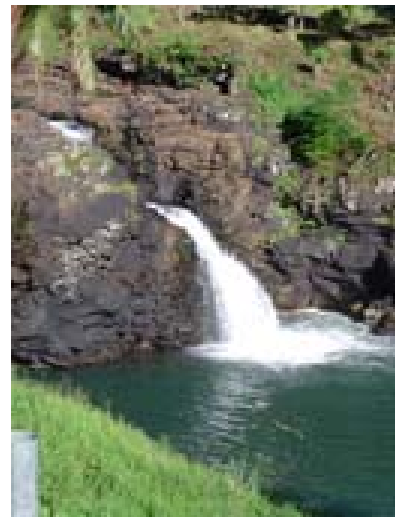
The previous section explained the metaphor of an *ietoga* that I have adopted to present this thesis. The values and assumptions of the peoples of Samoa are also woven into *o le ietoga*. This section provides the reader with additional background information that will assist her/him to contextualise the study and to understand the co-constructions of their stories that the participants and I have undertaken.

1.4.1 Country

The Independent State of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa) where the research took place is a tropical country situated in the warm South Pacific Ocean. With its palm trees swaying in the breeze, sandy beaches, crystal clear water, lush tropical growth, mountains and waterfalls, it is stunningly beautiful. Most of the population live on one of the two main islands, Upolo and Savaii. The capital, Apia, where the NUS is located is on Upolo. In my experience, its peoples are family, community and church oriented. They are incredibly warm, welcoming and hospitable.



Picture 4 *Vavau, Western Samoa*



Picture 5 *One of Samoa's many waterfalls*

1.4.2 *Fa'aSamoa*

Archaeological evidence has determined that Samoa was populated as early as 1500 BC (Lay et al., 2000). As the country and its people evolved, a hierarchical social structure and the principles of *fa'aSamoa*, a “framework for action based upon the social structure of the *aiga* and the *nu'u* and the authority of *matai* and *fono*” (Meleisea, 1987, p. 17) were established and are still in place today. The *aiga* (family) and the *nu'u* (village) are at the centre of this structure. Each *aiga* is represented within the *nu'u* by a *matai* (chief) who is responsible for the family and the land. Decisions relating to the *nu'u* are made by the *matai* who meet regularly (*fono*) to debate issues. Traditionally, “matai titles were inherited regardless of gender, although male leadership was the unstated norm” (Lay et al., 2000, p. 44). All individuals, however, have the opportunity to earn a *matai* title by giving service to the *aiga* and/or the *nu'u*. In addition to the *matai* there are other groupings within the *nu'u* such as

aualuma (daughters of the village), *faletua ma tausi* (wives of the matai), the *aumaga* (untitled men) and *tamaiti* (children). The relationships between these groups are articulated based on notions and understandings of roles, duties and obligations of each of these groups. Every single individual therefore is accounted for in a social group and as children grow up and become adults they move into other social groupings.

(Afamasaga, Moli, & Kruse-Vaal, 2005, p. 6)

Everyone within this society knows their place and the correct behaviour associated with it, an important component of which is to give service and respect (*fa'aaloalo*) to those of higher status. *Fa'aaloalo* is afforded to the elderly regardless of the position held within the community, clearly defining gerontocracy as one of the treasured values. Prestige is

gained “by giving – by sharing rather than accumulating resources” (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994, p. 123).

Samoa has an oral tradition. As with other *Pasifika* countries, knowledge is the responsibility of the community (Heine, 2002). It is passed from *aiga* to *aiga*, from *nu’u* to *nu’u* and down through the generations by storytelling. This knowledge is a treasured possession and central to the heart of Samoa’s culture. It is therefore important that great care is taken to sustain, preserve and maintain this knowledge. The relationship of the storyteller to the listener determines the level of knowledge that will be shared. A speaking *matai* will, for example, share much more knowledge with members of his *aiga* than with a visitor, even if that person holds a high title and is perhaps someone well-known to the *aiga* and community.

There is some reservation in there. A good example is someone coming to visit my family, another title holder, someone my father knows very well. Trust comes into it. If it is someone he trusts, then he will share. Can’t preserve it all for his own children, his own people. If not careful what to hold on to, what to give, will get attacked later on. (Talen, T., personal communication, May 8, 2006)

This cultural process of ensuring that knowledge is passed on through the oral tradition, while at the same time preserving aspects to share at other times, is called *fa’afaletui*.

Throughout the research I was aware of *fa’afaletui*. The participants were not necessarily sharing their cultural knowledge and traditions. They were, however, sharing knowledge that was precious to them. I therefore felt that the principles of *fa’afaletui* could influence what the participants chose to share and what they might retain for their future use. I took

cognisance of this and recognised that there would be participant silences throughout the research.

1.4.3 Christianity

Pre-Christian Samoans worshipped many gods. Of the numerous stories based on these gods, the one I have read and heard most frequently is that of Nafanua, the war goddess. She foretold the coming of a new religion that would end the rule of the old gods. Her prophesy prepared the way for the arrival of the new white gods - the missionaries - in the nineteenth century. When the white gods arrived, the Samoans, who believed that the universe was a dome which ended at the horizon, gave them the name of *papalagi* or 'skybursters', as they appeared as a bright light that seemed to burst through the dome on the horizon (Lay et al., 2000; Ma'ia'i, 1957; Meleisea, 1987).

The missionaries and the message they brought were embraced by Samoan society. There were some similarities between the Christian doctrines and *fa'aSamoa*. Cultural traditions such as status in the village and family for example, were often supported by Christian practices (Lay et al., 2000). The missionaries were seen as gods "who will have to be pacified, bribed and pleaded with for blessings and forgiveness" (Ma'ia'i, 1957, p. 286). This was a continuation of the way they had treated their pre-Christian deities.

It also signalled the beginning of colonisation. The missionaries came to *Pasifika* countries with the intention of reforming the 'heathen' population, to 'Christianise' and 'civilise' them, so that their doomed souls could be saved (Sanga, 2001; Vaioleti, 2003). They challenged much of the traditional theology and described some practices as 'pagan' (Luamanuvao, 2003). They brought about social changes that were more akin to Victorian England with roles such as the husband as the breadwinner and the wife the homemaker.

Many of the sacred powers of the chiefs were transferred to church pastors. Western clothing replaced traditional dress.

1.5 Education in Samoa

While this section specifically addresses education in Samoa, it also includes issues and debates from scholars across the Pacific region as their writings encompass all *Pasifika* nations.

The earliest form of schooling in Samoa involved the parents and *aiga*. It was an ‘oral tradition,’ that is, knowledge was passed down through the generations by word of mouth through myths, legends, proverbs and song (Ma’ia’i, 1957; Petana-Ioka, 1995). While this early schooling was the responsibility of the parents, it was undertaken on behalf of the community who looked for politeness and respect in the “well-educated boy or girl” (Ma’ia’i, 1957, p. 166). An experiential learning process of observation and participation led to the acquisition of practical skills.

When the missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century, they introduced a more formal European schooling with the establishment of Pastors’ Schools in the villages. “Activities focused on reading, writing and numeracy with basic knowledge of the world and the Bible” (Afamasaga et al., 2005, p. 6). Just 25 years after the missionaries’ arrival the Bible had been translated into Samoan and was being used in the Pastors’ Schools as a teaching tool.

When Germany took over the rule of Samoa from 1900-1914 the administration was happy to leave education to the missionaries. New Zealand took responsibility for and established a military administration of the country in 1914. An official New Zealand administration was established under a League of Nations mandate in 1920 (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2003).

This administration's education policy was to "encourage and supplement work of the missionaries and also to expand it further in the hope that a satisfactory national system of education might be built up" (Ma'ia'i, 1957, p. 171).

For 30 years the Samoan secondary school curriculum was driven by New Zealand curricula and syllabi (Petana-Ioka, 1995). The Samoan people's cultural knowledge bases and hierarchical systems were ignored, and often devalued, a common occurrence in *Pasifika* education (Heine, 2002; Thaman, 2005). This resulted in a dual education system for children. Sanga (2001) describes this system as In-School (IS) based on western methodologies with the main focus to prepare for a good job, and Out-of-School (OS) where the children learn the values and skills necessary to live in their communities. After gaining independence in 1962 the Samoan government gradually developed its own education system (Helsinki Consulting Group & ANZDEC Limited, 2004). It was largely based on that of New Zealand and influenced by many of the ideals, strategies and methodologies of Samoa's colonial past which is, according to (Holmes & Crossley, 2004), a common practice in small countries when colonial rule is relinquished. Until 1989 Samoan students still sat the New Zealand School Certificate and University Entrance Examinations. It is clear that these students were disadvantaged by questions that were based outside their culture and experiences. Two examples of such questions quoted to me from a New Zealand School Certificate examination are, 'Describe a sheep farm' or, 'Draw a picture of a daffodil.' While these would easily be answered by New Zealand students, they had no relevance to life on a tropical island.

All of these forms of education that are found in the Pacific region today derive their meaning from western culture and tradition and are usually

different in their conceptions from what education traditionally means in the culture and communities of the Pacific. (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002, p. 5)

Samoa education has in the past, and still does today place an emphasis on success in exams. Pressure to succeed is applied from an early age. Success throughout primary school is important as the national examinations held at Year 8 determine the top stream of students who go on to receive five years secondary schooling at one of the three government senior secondary schools: Samoa College, Avela College and Vaipouli College. Until recently there were three national examinations, at Years 11, 12 and 13. The Year 11 examination was phased out in 2001 (Afamasaga et al., 2005). During the period of my participants' schooling, students who were not top stream received only three years secondary schooling at one of the other secondary schools (Petana-Ioka, 1995). This system pre-determined those who would have the opportunity to go on to higher (tertiary) education. Nowadays the majority of secondary schools offer five years of schooling.

Public tertiary degree education was not available in Samoa until the NUS was established in 1984. It currently offers diploma and graduate degree programmes. In 1997 the then Samoa Teachers College merged with NUS and, as the Faculty of Education, continues to provide teacher training. Vocational and technical education is provided by the Samoa Polytechnic that became an autonomous institution in 1993. In the first half of 2006 Samoa Polytechnic and NUS underwent a merger process with the aim of rationalising post-secondary education and training.

Established in 1968 and jointly owned by the governments of 12 *Pasifika* countries, the University of the South Pacific (USP) encompasses Pacific culture in all its programmes. The Samoan campus of the USP teaches face-to-face agricultural courses. In addition the

USP offers distance and flexible learning of all programmes available through the university, although in its 2006 calendar it is stated that most postgraduate qualifications must be studied on-campus.

It is expected that senior educators both in the university and in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) will undertake tertiary study and hold higher postgraduate qualifications. Unfortunately, no tertiary institution in Samoa offers postgraduate qualifications. There is the option of attending the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Fiji. In most cases, however, such educators are forced to seek their qualification through a western institution that is steeped in western culture, tradition, methodologies and ideologies. These institutions make little, if any, allowance for “what education traditionally means in the culture and communities of the Pacific” (Taufe'ulungaki, 2002, p. 5). In some instances, these educators have been awarded a scholarship to further their study. These scholarships are usually from an overseas government, for example New Zealand, an overseas tertiary institution, or from the Samoan Government. Other educators are required to either fund their own higher education or to seek personal sponsors.

1.6 *O auala i le fa'aPasefika (Pasefika Pathways)* – Research approach

There is currently much debate among *indigenous* writers about the inappropriateness of traditional western or European theories in research on *Pasifika* peoples. Bishop and Glynn (1999), Huffer and Qalo (2004), Kana'iaupuni (2005), Smith (1999) and Tupuola (1993) for example, discuss the failure of frameworks based on these theories to recognise Pacific ways of learning and understandings of the nature of knowledge, wisdom and intelligence. Western academics who do not acknowledge other cultures' perceptions of scholarship and knowledge and do not incorporate these into their framework, run the risk of

compromising the validity of their research findings (Jahnke & Taipa, 1999, as cited in Fletcher, 2005; Tupuola, 1993).

In seeking to determine an approach for my study, I wanted to ensure that it was culturally sensitive, methodologically appropriate and collaborative and that it would take cognisance of and value the Pacific way of doing things. It was important that I explore theoretical perspectives that acknowledge the cultural paradigms under which the participants operate, for example the oral traditions of participants and their society (Anae et al., 2001; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Fletcher, 2005; Smith, 1999; Vaiioleti, 2003). It was also important to acknowledge that although I could step into the culture and endeavour to work within the constructs of my participants' values and beliefs, I could never truly be of the culture. My own experiences, knowledge, spirit and place shape who I am, what I say and do and determine my theoretical position. Therefore, before investigating the Pacific way of doing things, I needed to determine my position within a western theoretical construct. It was then possible to explore ways to adjust my western lens to incorporate *Pasifika* values and beliefs into an appropriate research approach. My own experiences and the way in which I contextualise them socially, culturally and historically place me within a social constructionist epistemology (Mutch, 2005; Scott, 2000). Interestingly, although not all aspects of this epistemology were transferable from my western world to that of my participants, it was possible to draw on many similarities to develop a suitable research approach (Huffer & Qalo, 2004).

While each *Pasifika* society has its own concepts and perspectives, there are many areas of commonality that can be drawn on to develop culturally appropriate *Pasifika* research methodologies (Anae et al., 2001; Huffer & Qalo, 2004). These concepts include methodologies that acknowledge and value common Pacific values such as “respect,

reciprocity, communalism, collective responsibility, gerontocracy, humility, love, service, spirituality” (Anae et al., 2001, p. 14). They should also recognise and be appropriate for the participant in this research who is of Indian descent.

The concepts introduced by *Talanoa* are recognised as appropriate for use by both *Pasifika* and non-*Pasifika* researchers. This qualitative, ecological (taking cognisance of the importance of the land and physical environment), oral interactive approach allows for continuity, authenticity and cultural integrity (Vaiotei, 2003). As both a “cultural theoretical and a methodological framework” (Vaiotei, 2003, p. 17), it is “empowering and gratifying to indigenous peoples” (Manu'atu & Kepa, 2002, p. 1). *Talanoa*, a derivative of oral traditions, is a coming together of two or more people during which they engage in *talanoa* (informal conversations). *Talanoa* allows respectful, reciprocating interaction between the researcher and the researched by allowing conversations rather than interviews. Codes of expectations and cultural practices such as goodwill, compassion, humility, respect are always present within these conversations. The word is used as both a verb and a noun. *Talanoa* the verb translates as to talk, to tell stories from the past and to relate experiences of daily living. *Talanoa* the noun is the talk, the story or the tale (Manu'atu & Kepa, 2002). The skilled researcher and the participants are able to select relevant information from the information gathered, then weave knowledge that is relevant to their own particular purposes in their own cultural ways (Vaiotei, 2003).

In his (2004) study on Samoan experiences of Catholic education in Auckland, Stephen Filipo explored a culturally appropriate research concept for study with Samoan peoples. *O auala i le fa'aSamoa* includes “codes of expectations and cultural practices such as *feagaiga* (code of conduct), *fealofani* (goodwill), *alofa* (compassion), *loto maualalo* (humility), *momoli* (to assist/express solidarity) and *aiga* (kinship/relationship)” (p. 179).

Interestingly, Vaioleti's (2003) conscious ethics, developed to help protect the mana of the researched, researchers and sponsors in *Pasifika* research, link closely to these codes and practices. He talks of respect and humility, tolerance and kindness, being well-prepared, knowing the right things to do and doing them well and finally, of *alofa* and appropriate compassion, being the bases of all encounters.

I recognise that some of these practices, for example *aiga*, are not culturally appropriate for a *palagi* researching with *Pasifika* peoples. Despite this, I felt a close alignment with these approaches as aspects such as humility, respect, goodwill, *alofa*, compassion and preparedness represent a strong similarity to the values under which I operate. It was therefore helpful to examine my values in relation to those of *Pasifika* peoples before finally adopting a research approach that would allow me to be true to both the participants and to myself. I have always had a genuine interest in and empathy for other people. My innate respect for their particular cultures and beliefs has contributed to my ability to develop positive relationships with a wide range of people. When it arises, I welcome the opportunity to share their worlds rather than be a distant observer. I have similarities to Kvale's (1996) traveler who travels alongside participants, engaging in *talanoa* along the way, forming relationships and friendships and developing an understanding of the worlds in which they live. I differ from this traveler who reconstructs the conversations as stories to be told to his/her own people and only possibly to those to whom they belong. I believe that these stories belong to all the people who were engaged in the *talanoa*; that the stories are co-constructed (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) and may in fact undergo multiple constructions. The traveler and the tellers negotiate and determine the appropriate audience for these reconstructions and the manner in which they should be disseminated.

Having established my position, it was clear to me that an approach that allowed me to work comfortably and at the same time respect and value my participants would be a combination of *O auala i le fa'aSamoa* and *Talanoa* that takes cognisance of the cultural limitations under which a *palagi* works. Built into this approach was the recognition of the necessity for me, a *palagi*, to regularly consult with a *Pasifika* person outside of the research to ensure that at all times I acted in a culturally appropriate manner. A further important aspect of the approach was my immersion within the community. Filipino's (2004) use of the word 'pathways' appealed to me. It allows for flexibility. It allows for the researcher and the participants to make adjustments to suit each particular circumstance. Further, it reflects the many pathways I have followed in my learning journey both as a *palagi* researching cross-culturally and as a fledgling researcher. I have therefore chosen to call my research approach *O auala i le fa'aPasifika* (Pasifika Pathways).

1.7 Methodological Approach

As a *palagi* conducting research in the Pacific, it was important that I recognise my limitations and that as far as possible I adopt research methodologies sensitive to *Pasifika* contexts. The impetus for this research arose from my observations and experiences and from hearing the participants' stories while I was in Samoa, working alongside, meeting and socialising with them. It therefore seemed natural to explore an ethnographic approach to the research that would allow me to study and observe the participants in their own setting (Mutch, 2005; Neuman, 2000). In addition, as a *palagi*, I felt it important that in order to understand the participants and their context, my perceptions should be based on settings that were natural for them. Importantly, this approach is integral to Pacific research methodologies (Anae et al., 2001). Immersion in the culture, albeit for just short periods of time, enabled me to gain a comprehensive picture of the participants' history,

religion, politics, economy and environment, and therefore assisted me to contextualise the study (Fetterman, 1989, p. 247, as cited in Cresswell, 1998).

The purpose of the study was to provide an avenue for the participants to tell the stories of their educational journeys. Narrative or storytelling has been identified as both the preferred and most appropriate method when researching with *indigenous* peoples (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999; Thaman, 2002). Storytelling enables the participants to choose what to tell and how to tell it, therefore allowing the power to remain in their hands (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Furthermore, the telling of stories provides an opportunity for the storyteller to hear what they say. Narrative storytelling can be a collaborative process whereby the teller and the listener co-construct stories (Smith, 1999).

I have drawn on aspects of ethnography and narrative and reshaped them to enable me to answer the research question. The research therefore takes the form of a narrative study that was undertaken while I was immersed in the participants' culture, thus situating it within an ethnographic framework.

1.8 Research Question

My initial research question was *How did a group of senior educators undertake the journey through their tertiary studies?* I intentionally kept the question broad and did not develop sub-questions as I wanted to ensure that the participants narrated their own stories in which they chose what to tell and emphasized what was important to them.

When I commenced *o fono* (informal, conversational interviews) and *talanoa* the participants chose to share and intertwine their tertiary education with their educational and life journeys. As a result of this I reshaped the question slightly to be *How did a group of senior educators in Samoa undertake their educational journeys?* I retained my original

decision to not develop sub-questions, to leave the power of what should be told in the hands of the participants.

1.9 Summary

In this chapter I have determined how I came to be researching cross-culturally with *Pasifika* peoples. As I set the scene, I introduced the reader to the country of Samoa and provided a short summary of its history and its education system. *Pan-Pacific* views of the relevance of western theories and methodologies in the education of *Pasifika* peoples were also introduced. The care I took to ensure that I acted in a culturally appropriate way from the outset was demonstrated as I described both *o le ietoga* metaphor adopted to present this thesis and my research approach, *O auala i le fa'aPasefika*. The methodological framework of a narrative study while immersed in the participants' own setting resonates with appropriate *Pasifika* methodologies.

In the following chapter the reader will follow the pathways I have travelled during these research and cultural learning journeys as I discuss the methodology of this research.

2 Methodology



*When my father was appointed as a school inspector he was a young man. When visiting the village he would buy soap to take to the matai as a gift. When he arrived they would bring out the little wooden stools and sit and talk all night. He visited ten times before he was accepted.
(Afamasaga, T., personal communication, May 2005)*

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a context for the research question *How did a group of senior educators in Samoa undertake their educational journeys?* It introduced the metaphorical *ietoga* I have adopted to present the research together with *o auala i le fa'aPasefika*, the approach I developed to guide me through the research process.

This chapter describes how I determined that a narrative approach situated in an ethnographic framework was the most appropriate method to follow for the study. Ethical issues, including how I dealt with the inability to guarantee participant anonymity, are discussed. *Fono*, *talanoa* and journals are explored as methods of data collection. The final sections of the chapter address limitations of the research, the process of exiting the research and questions of reciprocity.

2.2 Establishing an Appropriate Method

There tends to be a suspicion of outsiders coming into Pacific communities and undertaking research. A contributing factor to this is that many non-*Pasifika* researchers go into their research with little understanding of *Pasifika* beliefs and ideologies. Smith (1999) writes of experiences had by Māori communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand where researchers' philosophies and beliefs vary greatly from those of the community. This is demonstrated by the range of researchers who take from the community without giving anything in return.

A factor that is both insulting and hurtful to the Samoan people is that many non-*Pasifika* researchers come and take without asking and without giving anything back. This is an endorsement of the ‘finder-keeper’ concept considered by Vaioleti (2003) as a notion of many western methodologies. A story often repeated to me by a number of Samoan people is that of marine biologists who came to Samoa and took away samples without asking, without saying thank you and without giving anything in return. It was important, therefore, that the method adopted for this research addressed these issues and was both appropriate and acceptable to the participants. This necessitated consultation with the community (including participants) at all stages of the research design, implementation and reporting.

It was my view that the most appropriate way for me to find out what anything is like for *Pasifika* people was to listen to their collective stories. Storytelling is a form endorsed by Thaman (2002) who suggests that “any discussion about education by Pacific people is necessarily autobiographic and about culture” (p. 22). Bishop and Glynn (1999) and Smith (1999) also emphasise the preference of *indigenous* people (first settlers) for narrative. They further determine it as an integral part of *indigenous* research. Interestingly, this was supported by the participants and the community who determined their preference for storytelling and for this storytelling to occur in the participants’ environment. The oral and collective nature of *fa’aSamoa* (Petelo, 2003; Tupuola, 1993), in which each individual story is powerful but also contributes to a collective story, also supports this approach. This research, therefore takes the form of a narrative (storytelling) study that was undertaken while I was immersed in the participants’ culture, thus situating it within an ethnographic framework.

Stories are regarded as powerful research tools (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; McDrury & Alterio, 2002; Noddings & Witherell, 1991) in that they can provide a safe environment to give people a 'voice.' Witherell and Noddings (1991) warn of the possible negative impact of this power when it sits with the researcher who chooses what to tell, what to omit and ultimately what will be written. In contrast, Bishop and Glynn (1999) see power as being in the hands of the storyteller who selects, recollects and reflects on what will be told. The intent in this study was that the participants would hold the power, in that they chose what to tell and how they would tell it.

The use of narrative and storytelling in western methodologies has a strong base in feminist research and was developed to provide an avenue for women's voices to be heard (Chase, 2003; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). I was struck by the similarities between this feminist viewpoint and that of *Pasifika* peoples who are asking for their voices to be heard. This similarity enabled me to safely pursue and adopt aspects of narrative from western literature.

While I do not purport to adopt a wholly feminist perspective, there are aspects of feminist methodology that I value, for example, ways of affirming, supporting and encouraging participants to 'tell it all.' I was aware, however, that silence is an important aspect of narrative, that what is left unsaid is often of more import than the spoken word (Anderson, Armitage, Jack, & Wittner, 2004; Huffer & Qalo, 2004). It is important to be aware of these silences. It is important to listen for and to hear contradictions and tensions. The interviewer should also take note of body language, of the environment and other factors that can impact on what the storyteller chooses to leave unsaid. It was also important in this research to take cognisance of *fa'afaletui* and realise that many of the silences were deliberate choices on the part of the participants who wished to preserve aspects of their

knowledge for their future use. Researchers who develop an emotional engagement with their participants and who are prepared to listen carefully to not only what is said, but also to hear the silences, are able to use stories that “provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems” (Noddings & Witherell, 1991, p. 280).

It mattered to me that, as far as possible, I limit the imposition of western values and perspectives on the participants. I wished the outcome to “identify and promote a [Samoan] world view” that would “identify [Samoan] values and the way in which [Samoan] society creates a meaning, structure and constructs reality” (Anae et al., 2001, p. 7). The life experiences and cultural experiences of the participants and of me, the researcher, are markedly different. It was impossible for me to entirely eliminate my western values and perspectives. Consequently we each interpreted the stories differently (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; McDrury & Alterio, 2002). The participants and I attempted to address these differences as we collaborated and co-constructed multiple reconstructions of their stories to create something new through this interpretive process (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Sands, 2004).

2.3 Participants and Setting

At the commencement of this research 10 postgraduate students in Samoa were enrolled in the MTchLn degree through the NUS. Four of these students were initially invited and agreed to participate. The selection criteria covered a wide range of perspectives; male, female, *matai* (title holder), elite pathway, traditional female role and scholarship holder for initial tertiary education.

When I travelled to Samoa to gain consent and to conduct my first *fono* and engage in *talanoa*, another member of the group indicated that she would like to participate in this

project. She has brought a further perspective to the research, that of an Indian-born and educated woman who has lived and worked in Samoa for 30 years.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Kvale (1996) reminds us that ethical issues must be considered at all stages of the research study. Issues such as participant informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were considered. The nature of Samoan society, combined with the fact that the participants work closely together, meant that not only was it highly likely they would talk to each other about taking part in 'Bridget's research,' but they each would easily be able to identify the stories of other participants. In addition, as the participants are well-known both within, and in some cases beyond, the Samoan community in which they work, others who read the final thesis or who attend conferences and other fora where findings are disseminated may well be able to identify participants regardless of steps taken to change identity and data sources (the participants chose pseudonyms, although after sharing the draft themes one participant decided to use her own name). Consequently, while the guarantee of total confidentiality and anonymity to participants is generally considered a pre-requisite of research (Plummer, 1983, as cited in Glesne, 1999), it was not possible to give such a guarantee in this research study. With this in mind, during the planning stage I spoke to a possible participant who was seen by group members as the unofficial group leader. The nature and location of the research was important to this person. It was only after we had clarified that I would not be making judgements and that the research was to be conducted in Samoa, working alongside the participants, that the person acknowledged the issues as real and indicated informally that these issues would not prevent participation in the study.

I also considered my own position in relation to the participants. As the Student Dean for the MTchLn in which they are currently enrolled, I was automatically placed in a position of power over them. Engaging in this research with them meant that I would enter their lives and ask them to share with me personal information that would otherwise be unknown to me (Mutch, 2005). To address this it was important that I build a relationship of trust that was “negotiated with full disclosure of the risks which respondents are taking” (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 230). It takes time to build such a relationship. I had worked with the participants as their Dean since the beginning of 2004. This involved three visits to Samoa, regular email and occasional telephone contact. Acceptance by, and trust of, the community had already been gained. This trust was strengthened throughout the research process.

2.4.1 Gaining Access

The most appropriate, and according to Anae et al. (2001), the only way to develop a research relationship, is to undertake consultation with the community. Through this consultation, the credibility of the researcher is established. In addition, both the feasibility of the research, the research topic and the most appropriate methodology can be determined (Tupuola, 1993).

With this in mind, I travelled to Samoa in May 2005 to consult with the intended community - the ‘gatekeepers’ (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003; Neuman, 2000; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). This consultation took two forms. Initially, I held general discussions with the possible participants and, importantly, followed this with discussion with the community leader. In this hierarchical society, gaining the approval and support of the community leader is an integral part of the research process. The leader does not necessarily participate in the research or direct participants in what they can say or do.

Giving approval signals to community members that the research is legitimate and that they are free to participate if they wish. Together we constructed a research methodology that was culturally appropriate and would allow for collaboration between the participants and me.

Consultation also enabled the community to determine what benefits and for whom would result from the research. The benefits are reciprocal. As a researcher the participants have given me a precious gift by sharing their stories. The reciprocity of this is that I have been the conduit for their stories to be heard; that together we are constructing them in a professional format for others to read. A major benefit for me is that completion of the project will enable me to complete requirements for my Master of Teaching and Learning degree. The tentative beginnings of friendship and trust have developed into long-term friendships based on mutual respect, trust and understandings. Reciprocity will be explored further in this chapter.

I was concerned that the participants might feel an element of coercion from the community leader to participate. This did not prove to be the case. On reflection, however, there was a level of coercion that was positive in nature. I had established firm friendships and built strong levels of trust with the participants. It was as a result of these friendships and the mutual trust that the participants were 'self-coerced' into wanting to 'support Bridget and her research.' While I viewed this as positive, I was also aware that the desire to support me could influence what and how they chose to share in their stories. I therefore kept this to the fore during my interpretation of the data.

2.4.2 Risk

I considered two aspects of risk. The first covered possible emotional risks to both the participants and to me during the *fono*. A number of strategies were established to deal

with these issues, for example, the preparation of guidelines, undertaking *fono* in mutually agreed settings, reminding participants that they could ask for *o le fono* to stop at any time.

I was pleased that I had taken the time to establish these guidelines. At times during *fono* participants asked for the tape to be turned off. During these ‘off’ periods, they often told me personal and emotional things that they did not want recorded. I felt that their willingness to still share such deep and personal information with me was an affirmation of the trust and rapport that we had built. It also signalled that they were comfortable that although I came into the research holding power, I would not abuse this.

The second risk I considered was the possibility that, as I was working cross-culturally, I would inadvertently act in culturally inappropriate ways and therefore risk offending the participants. A number of strategies were used to attend to this issue. These included regular consultation with my cultural advisor, ongoing reference to Anae et al.’s (2001) *Pasifika Education Research Guidelines* and consultation with the community prior to, during and after the research.

2.4.3 *Consent*

In a western paradigm, the approach to participants in a study such as this is often by an initial telephone call, followed by a formal letter. Smith (1999) reminds us that consent for *indigenous* peoples does not necessarily mean consent for a “project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility” (p. 136). Consent also operates under the assumption that the trust that is generated will be reciprocated. Formal western approaches do not take cognisance of this and are not suitable for the Samoan culture with its traditional roots in oratory and verbal negotiation (Anae et al., 2001). Once academic and ethical approval was granted, therefore, I visited Samoa and approached each of the participants individually. Once they indicated their willingness to participate, I personally

handed them a formal letter together with a consent form to be completed and returned. At the suggestion of the CCE Ethical Clearance Committee I provided contact details of my cultural advisor in Christchurch and also a person in Samoa for them to approach should they have any cultural concerns throughout the research (Appendices 1 and 2).

2.5 Data Collection

2.5.1 Fono

The main method of data collection was individual *fono* (informal, conversational interviews) held in Samoa, in settings of the participants' choice. This helped me to gain an understanding of the way the participants interpret their experiences in their natural environment (Cresswell, 1998; Janesick, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Morse & Richards, 2002; Plummer, 2001). In addition, working face-to-face in the participants' environment enabled me to ask questions on occasions when I wondered about various events as they happened (Glesne, 1999). In keeping with the nature of *fa'aSamoa* as oral and collective (Petelo, 2003; Tupuola, 1993) however, I remained open to *talanoa* being the source of much rich data. Mara (1999, as cited in Mutch, 2005) also suggests that face-to-face methodologies are the most appropriate to use when researching with *Pasifika* peoples.

Glesne (1999) recommends taking time to establish a rapport with participants before going into interview questions. In this research there was a slightly different focus. I was confirming existing relationships, building on an existing rapport and clarifying considerations and expectations. I wanted the participants to tell their stories, to have the freedom to choose what to tell and, in keeping with the concept of *fa'afaletui*, determine what to retain for themselves, thus ensuring that the stories remained their own (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I therefore did not prepare a list of specific questions. Instead I prepared an opening statement similar to "You know the topic of my research. I'm

interested in how you came to be where you are, so where might you like to start to tell me your story?" In addition, I suggested that they might like to use a professional journey timeline that they had prepared for one of their MTchLn courses as a prompt (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Despite my desire to leave the story content open, in my own mind I was expecting that my assumptions that western education systems did not suit participants and that problems experienced with internet and resource access were major issues, would be evidenced in their stories. I did not however want these assumptions to drive the findings. I therefore decided to 'go with the flow' on the basis that these issues would arise if they were of importance to the participants.

I had anticipated that personal issues could arise during *o le fono*, thus introducing the possibility that they would become emotional and therapeutic (Kvale, 1996). I felt that this could be an issue for me as it is in my nature to respond in a slightly therapeutic manner when talking with people in that I wish to work with them to deal to issues raised. Glesne (1999) suggests that by asking questions such as, "How did you feel about that?" and "Would you like to tell me more?" provides positive feedback where the participant feels listened to and understood. In contrast, Oakley (1981, as cited in Bishop & Glynn, 1999), believes that comments such as these reinforce a power differential between the researcher and the researched. Bishop and Glynn (1999) suggest that by introducing an element of reciprocity whereby the researcher shares his/her own experiences with the participants, the trust in a relationship is enhanced thus leading to a non-hierarchical structure. As a very nervous, novice researcher in the grip of 'cultural sweat,' a term coined by C. Mutch (personal communication, 12 October, 2005) to describe the nervousness associated with ensuring that I 'get it right' culturally, without making any blunders, I clung to Glesne's (1999) suggestions during the first *fono*. I found, however, that as the participants and I

relaxed, *o le fono* became much more conversational and non-hierarchical. The benefits of this, plus the continued strengthening of mutual trust and friendship, were apparent when I returned for the second *fono*. It seemed that layers of reserve had peeled away and the participants were even more open than on previous occasions.

Together with my supervisors and cultural advisor, I undertook in-depth preparation for ‘doing it right’ prior to my first visit in November 2005 to conduct *fono*. This included role play rehearsals with my supervisors (Plummer, 2001) where we looked at possible starters and fillers should my mind go blank or I needed to fill a gap. We also discussed how I might address ‘cultural sweat.’ Although I was given assurances from my cultural advisor that, “your consideration of every aspect tells me that you are thoroughly prepared” (Talen, T., personal communication, October 2005), I was still concerned. The following excerpt from an email I sent from Samoa to my supervisors illustrates the impact ‘cultural sweat’ had on me during this visit:

All still going well. Yesterday I decided that I was ready to come home. I’m okay today. I think it was because everyone has been so wonderful and hospitable, but the offshoot of that is that I have had very little time on my own. All the time I am with others I’m aware of trying to behave correctly, to be culturally appropriate and to try and remember all the conversations.

Despite the in-depth preparation for ‘doing it right,’ I found from the first *fono* that it was important to just ‘go with the flow.’ I arrived for what I thought was going to be an appointment to discuss the research, formally ask for participant consent, sign the consent form and arrange a time for *o le fono* to occur. What actually happened was that we gave

the usual greetings and confirmed willingness to participate and then invariably the participants immediately launched into their stories. The manner in which this occurred meant that on many occasions I just flicked on the recorder. Other than a surreptitious glance to ensure the red light was glowing, I did not check that recording was happening. To do so might well have interrupted the flow and train of thought from the participants. This caused me a few anxious moments, but fortunately the technology proved reliable and I recorded amazingly rich data.

I felt after this visit that my position in the society had been firmly established and the trust and rapport I shared with my participants had strengthened. The following extract taken from an unsolicited email received from one of the participants after my return to New Zealand affirmed this view: “I really enjoyed your company. I felt very comfortable with you and as you probably noticed I opened up very easily to you.”

2.5.2 *Talanoa*

According to Richards (2005) an often ignored requirement of qualitative research is that the researcher must be ready for data. I was aware throughout the design of the project that my data would not come from *fono* alone. I felt that much valuable data would come from *talanoa* and that I must be ready to engage in *talanoa* from the moment I stepped off the plane and embarked on the 40 minute ride into town until I said my goodbyes at the end. At all times during *talanoa* I was mindful of aspects of goodwill, compassion, humility and respect. The participants were aware that I was recording some of our *talanoa* in my research journal. They have read and approved the inclusion and weaving of various aspects from our *talanoa* in the metaphorical *ietoga*.

I engaged in further *talanoa* with the many taxi drivers who transported me on a regular basis. They loved to talk. They loved to tell me about themselves and their families. Time

and time again I heard the story of the person who either had to return from overseas or who had never left Samoa because of the responsibility of caring for parents, or the responsibility of caring for family lands. While I have not used these stories as data in this research, I found it interesting that there were so many similarities to my participants' stories and that they provided a corroboration of the strong cultural spirituality that exists in the Samoan society.

2.5.3 *Journals*

In 2005 the participants completed a course within their MTchLn programme titled *Teachers Helping Teachers*. A major focus for course members is a reflection on their own experiences and positions as educators. Course members are required to maintain a journal containing relevant artefacts and reflections, to draw out issues and relate these to the literature. The artefacts and reflections are not assessed, however their ability to identify the issues and link them to the literature is. I felt privileged that, despite my role as their Dean and as a staff member of the programme in which they are studying, the participants willingly allowed me to use their journals as additional sources of data. This occurred after course completion and the award of grades. The journals had been written for a purpose other than the research and were therefore 'unpremeditated documents' (Anderson, 1990). The data they contained, however, not only added to the already rich, in-depth material from *o fono* and *talanoa*, but also provided an element of triangulation thus increasing the validity of the research. Data were also supplemented by material entered in my own journal in which I recorded my observations, thoughts and experiences.

2.5.4 *Consultation and Member Checking*

Remaining true to *fa'aSamoa* and *fa'aaloalo* I understood the importance of consultation with the participants throughout the research. Consultation on the topic, the initial

structure, and the framework of the completed research was critical. Participants were initially asked to check *o le fono* transcripts to corroborate the validity of my transcription. I returned to Samoa in February 2006 and met with the participants for a second time. This not only gave me the opportunity to engage in further *fono* and *talanoa* but also to introduce the concept of weaving a metaphorical *ietoga*. I was heartened when this concept was viewed positively.

During a further visit in May 2006, I shared with the participants a draft of the themes I had drawn from their stories. I showed how their stories are woven throughout the thematic analysis with examples given and with the hint of possible issues. I also shared with them my theoretical approach and discussed *o le ietoga*. My approach to the research had been collaborative with participant involvement throughout. Consultation at this stage was vital. It did not prevent me being nervous about participants' reaction to their stories and to the manner I had chosen to present them. My fears proved to be unfounded. I was touched when one of the participants expressed gratitude that I had brought back my work. She said "This is the first time that I have had any research come back to me. Usually people come, gather data and that is the end of it. I never know what happens to it." Another participant indicated she was so delighted with the draft that "every time I have nothing to do I pick it up and read it." Without fail each of the participants was positive and supportive. Any changes requested were minor such as correcting a degree name, for example. In another instance wording of a quote was slightly amended to better reflect the participant's meaning.

2.6 Data Analysis

I was pleased that I transcribed *o fono* verbatim. Had I followed Glesne's (1999) suggestion that verbatim transcription is not essential, the opportunity for member

checking of the data (Silverman, 2001) would have been lost, thus possibly compromising its validity. I was also able to ask the participants to add in missed words and check my spelling of Samoan words. In contrast to Glesne's (1999) selective transcription, the transcripts included 'ums' and such things as 'small laugh' and 'giggle' thereby ensuring that I had not 'tampered with the data' (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). I wanted to be very careful that the participants were satisfied that the way they wished to be seen by others was captured in their stories and the transcripts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Neuman, 2000). Overall they were happy with the transcripts, although in some cases amendments were made and sections deleted. Although this process took considerable time it was an important aspect of the collaborative co-constructing of their stories.

As I listened to the tapes several times to familiarise myself with the stories I was able to picture the person and the environment (Sands, 2004; Silverman, 2001). This helped me to give meaning to the pauses, different types of laughter and so forth as I made notes on the transcripts, identifying possible recurring themes and words (Richards, 2005). I was also able to tentatively determine what was not being said and what these silences might mean (Sands, 2004). I then listened to the tapes again and again in succession. As I listened to one participant's story I was able to relate back to and ask myself questions of the other stories. Examples of the type of question asked are "How did so and so react in this type of situation?" "Why wasn't it like that for so and so?" This initial data analysis enabled me to produce some tentative findings to discuss with the participants.

Three months after the initial *fono* and after undertaking some basic data analysis, I returned to Samoa. I took my tentative findings with me. I met with each of the participants on more than one occasion. We discussed the tentative themes. We engaged in further *fono* and *talanoa*. We also discussed my perceptions of them from my interpretation of the data.

It was pleasantly rewarding to find that in all cases but one they agreed with my thoughts. It was the Indian-born participant who raised some concerns. These related to my words, “You have embraced the culture.” She quickly pointed out that this was not the case. Rather she lives in the Samoan culture and respects it. At the same time she retains her own culture. Her children were encouraged to become conversant with and comfortable in both their inherited Indian culture and the Samoan culture in which they live.

Initially I found data analysis difficult. The handling of the data meant I became so familiar with the stories that I became desensitised to the significance of many aspects (Richards, 2005). My immersion in the culture, while really important as it set the context and gave me credibility as the researcher, also meant that some aspects of the stories did not stand out for me. I addressed this issue by reminding myself of the research question and by holding conversations with people outside the research where I spoke of the stories in general terms. The responses I received reminded me of the contrast between this *Pasifika* world and my western culture and experiences.

When I initially listened to the participants’ stories, I realised that each was moving and powerful. I therefore set out with the intention of telling each story in its entirety without my observations, comments, reflections or analysis. These would be included in a following section. I correctly anticipated that the rich and descriptive data in these stories would lend itself to thematic analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). I used three simple questions adapted from Mutch (2005) as a framework to interrogate the data. As I engaged with the data three main themes - authority, duty and influential people emerged. While separate, these themes were also closely intertwined. This led me to move away from individual stories and instead, in the way of *fa’aSamoa*, take these to form a collective story. I therefore continued with the metaphor of an *ietoga* to present the stories. I

endeavoured where possible to view the participants' educational journeys through a lens that allowed me to step outside my world and to recognise theirs.

2.7 Limitations

2.7.1 Cross-Cultural Research

As a *palagi* researching cross-culturally I faced a number of challenges to ensure that my research was carried out respectfully and that I was true to my participants and to myself. "Cross-cultural research requires time, patience, skills, and a clear acknowledgement that ethical and cultural matters are important" (Spoonley, 1999, p. 58). Informal preparation for this research commenced in early 2004. Trust and rapport were built with the participants over 18 months prior to the development of the research proposal by the use of rapport building techniques, such as attending church services, "the use of humour, sharing a meal, sharing common experiences, being attentive, etc., that [appeared] to be likely to best meet the needs of each [potential] participant" (Anae et al., 2001, p. 38).

The support and guidance provided by my cultural advisor assisted me to address cross-cultural challenges. It is a requirement of this course that the student researcher presents a seminar to an audience of peers at CCE based on six months of engagement with the research. The following excerpts taken from an email sent by my cultural advisor after my seminar affirmed for me that I was working appropriately in this cross-cultural research.

What a wonderful experience for me. You did very well in your presentation. What I thought you've done exceptionally well in was the maintaining of your honesty with your participants... Your responses revealed your great respect for the participants and their culture. You maintain the participants as the core of your research...

You learned so much already about our people and their culture and that is thrilling. I think the point you made around your participation/engagement in your participants' lives, eg going to church with them was well said.

You have a genuine heart and empathy towards your participants and the appropriateness of the setting you chose as well as your interest in engaging in their activities and lives were all contributing strengths to your research.

It is important to me that my participants and others reading my research do not think that the only purpose I had for engaging in these activities was for the benefit of the research. From the time I first visited Samoa, long before this research had been thought of, I was attending church, sharing food, experiences, conversations and generally immersing myself in the culture. I was privileged, for example, to join members of the FOE staff from NUS on one of their bi-annual 'retreats' at Manase, a beach resort on Savaii. These retreats provide an opportunity for the staff to relax away from the demands and requirements of work, family and community. In this environment they engage in many *talanoa* and generally 'recharge their batteries.' This research has heightened my sense of cultural appropriateness and behaviour and caused me to take additional care in this regard.



Picture 5 *Relaxing outside a beach fale with members of the FOE while on retreat at Manase, Savaii*

2.7.2 *Insider/Outsider*

A further area for consideration was that of the insider/outsider in research. It is not always easy to determine which status a person holds (Bridges, 2001). I have multiple roles, the nature of which positioned me both as an insider and as an outsider at various stages throughout the research. I am the Student Dean of the MTchLn programme in which the participants are enrolled. I am their tutor and mentor for various assignments. I am their friend. From time to time I live and work in their culture. I undertook my research with them. The institutional roles I fulfilled, for example Student Dean, also placed me in a position of power and authority. It was a fine line to balance these roles with that of the mentor, friend and researcher.

As an outsider, I am a *palagi* from a different culture and environment, education and family experiences. I felt at times that this was an advantage for me. The participants took time to explain many cultural nuances and behaviours that they would have expected the

insider researcher to know (Feldman et al., 2003). As an insider, I have worked with, become friends with and provided study support for the participants. In this capacity they could expect me to be aware of issues they have encountered such as institutional, internet and resource access. Furthermore, as a student within the MTchLn programme, the participants and I shared common experiences in the nature of postgraduate tertiary study. Sharing these experiences enabled us to construct an understanding of the differences and similarities (Bridges, 2001). Smith (1999) suggests that an additional dimension to insider research is the need to be humble. I endeavoured to practice humility throughout my interactions with participants. I am an honorary member of the community but as the researcher there is a “different set of roles and relationships, status and position” (Smith, 1999, p. 139). I found that I was often constantly required to balance all roles while at the same time maintaining my integrity, respecting the participants and remaining true to them. These multiple roles and the implications they hold, required me to consider other factors in relation to the information participants chose to share. ‘Did they say what they thought I wanted to hear?’ or ‘Did they want to make me feel good because I’ve been good to them?’ are two examples of these factors. In addition, I considered what they chose not to share because of my multiple roles. Have they, for example, had negative experiences at the hands of the CCE or from members of the institution’s staff? They might not want to share these experiences as they would not make me feel good. It is not possible for me to know the answers to these questions. They do however remain to the fore as imposing limitations on this study.

2.7.3 *My Silences*

Participant silences and the concept of *fa'afaletui* were explored in establishing the method and also in the insider/outsider section. In this section I explore my own silences in the research.

Prior to undertaking this research, I had begun to develop firm friendships with and deep respect for the participants. These strengthened throughout the research project. On occasion these friendships and respect meant that I deliberately chose to not record *talanoa* in my journal, thus perhaps losing valuable data (Glesne, 1999). On occasion during *fono* participants would hesitate, take a deep breath and preface their words with, 'I am saying something very personal now,' or 'I might ask you to delete that.' Much of this very personal material gave me insights into the participants and their lives that both surprised and intrigued me (Waldrop, 2004). The internal struggle they had when deciding if they should include it was apparent. Their decision to tell me was because we had developed a mutual trust. This resulted in an internal struggle of my own. I did not want to abuse their trust or friendship in any way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). On the other hand, I needed to be able to report on what I found. In addition, for the research to have credibility and integrity, I needed to be able to give my interpretations. Furthermore, I had institutional requirements to meet. Consequently, I once again engaged in a delicate dance as I balanced these issues of friendship and trust, and integrity of the participants, myself and the research. Interestingly, on reflection, the varying levels of friendship I share with the participants directly related to the ease with which I was able to draw on each of their stories.

2.7.4 *Challenging Assumptions*

Although I endeavoured to start with an empty mind with no preconceived outcomes, I found it impossible to completely set aside the expectations that I had. I concur with Witherell and Noddings (1991) that keeping detached and bias-free was one of the biggest challenges I, as a qualitative researcher, faced. Richards (2005) however suggests that by designing skilfully it is possible to use these expectations within the design. I developed my research proposal and went into *o fono* expecting to find that western education systems did not suit the participants. As I delved into the data, this expectation was realised. It was also determined that in spite of this each of the participants has undertaken an educational journey that has led them to become a successful senior educator. I further expected them to determine that internet and resource access were issues for them (Pennells, 2003). There seems to be a mismatch between what I had expected to find, what I have found and what I have read in the literature. I am led to wonder if some of these issues did not arise as the participants did not want to talk about some negative aspects because of my position.

2.7.5 *Size*

The constraints imposed by the requirements of the MTchLn created limitations on the study. I found that I needed to limit the number of people I could invite to participate in the study. In addition I had to limit the number of times I could talk to them. Despite these limitations, I found that I was overwhelmed by the amount of amazingly rich, thick, descriptive data that resulted from *o fono*, *talanoa*, participants' reflective journals and my journal. Consequently I was faced with difficult decisions when deciding which data to include. My main concern was that I would not do justice to the participants who were so willingly involved and who took great care to ensure that I was welcomed into their

community and their lives. I addressed this by explaining and discussing the issue with the participants. With their permission, I will use the remaining data in further writing.

2.8 Exiting the Research and Reciprocity

An important part of my research design was determining how I would safely 'exit' from the research (Feldman et al., 2003; Neuman, 2000). The completion of this report will not signal the end of my relationship with the participants. There will however be a change in our interactions. The research process has enhanced the friendships, mutual trust and respect that existed prior to the research. These will continue both on a personal and a professional level as participants continue their study towards the MTchLn. I hope that at some time there may be the opportunity for a collaborative research undertaking.

A further important aspect of exiting is to consult with participants re finalising the research and dissemination (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In Smith's (1999) opinion, it is more likely that an *indigenous* community will talk of 'sharing' rather than dissemination of results. She further suggests that oral presentations that "conform to cultural protocols and expectations" (p. 161) are an appropriate way to share the research results. Returning to the community to share the findings is an important step in the 'Koru Model' developed by Mutch and Wong (2005) when undertaking research in a kura kaupapa setting. During my visit in May 2006, the participants and I agreed I will present each of them with a bound copy of the completed *ietoga*.

Reciprocity is an important aspect of exiting the research. There are practical considerations such as how to thank the participants. My cultural advisor suggested that I should follow the *palagi* way and leave the *meaalofa* (gift) until I had completed all aspects of the research involving the participants. An appropriate *meaalofa* is therefore part of the exiting process. As the participants are about to embark on their own research

journeys, in addition to their individual copies of the *ietoga*, I intend to present each of them with a research text. These books will be different so that they can share with each other as they undertake their research journeys.

2.9 Summary

I have in this chapter described the holistic and collaborative approach taken throughout the whole research process. An appropriate methodological approach that combined aspects from narrative and ethnographic methodologies was explored. Ethical considerations and limitations of the research were discussed. The chapter concluded with processes adopted for me to safely exit the research and to address reciprocity.

In the following chapter, the reader is further introduced to *o le ietoga* metaphor, data analysis and to the storytellers and weavers of this thesis. This chapter leads into the development of themes and the final *lalāgaga o le ietoga* (weaving the fine mat).

3 Ietoga



3.1 Introduction

The context for this thesis was established in the first two chapters of this report. I commenced *lalāgaga o le ietoga* (weaving the fine mat) as I explored methodological issues and discussed aspects such as my position and cultural considerations.

In this chapter I discuss further my metaphorical *ietoga*. I next describe the framework developed to assist in data analysis. The chapter concludes with personal vignettes prepared by each of the participants and by me. These are to assist the reader to contextualise and understand our co-reconstructions of their educational journeys.

3.2 Analysing the Data

After working intensively with the data, it became apparent to me that Samoan society operates within the broad practice of Samoan culture, customs and traditions (Polu, 1998), and that this Samoan culture is central to the lives of my participants (Wilson & Hunt, 1998). I found that the various strands that contribute to Samoan culture and to the participants' lives were so interwoven that it was not possible to separate them. Examples of these strands are *fa'atuatua* (faith), family and community. This did not surprise me as it reflects the Constitution of the Independent State of (Western) Samoa that is based on Christian principles and Samoan customs and tradition (Meleisea, 1992; Polu, 1998).

I could, however, see common strands such as authority, duty and influential people in my participants' stories and how these have impacted on their education and their careers. I have selected these three strands and prepared them for *lalaga* (weaving) as they directly relate to my question *How did a group of senior educators in Samoa undertake their*

educational journeys? The participants' education and careers create the individual patterns as the mat is woven.

The skilled weaver knows that she will not produce a high quality mat if the materials are not properly prepared. Likewise, I knew that if my *ietoga* was to be of high quality I needed to pay close attention to preparation of the materials. The first stages of preparation were coding and categorising. Initially, I found preparation of the strands difficult. It was important to me that I respected the values of *O auala i le fa'aPasefika*. It was important to me that I respected and valued each of the participants and maintained both their and my integrity. I turned to Mutch's (2005) book *Doing Educational Research. A Practitioner's Guide to Getting Started* (p. 62) and the questions she suggests beginning researchers ask of themselves when defining their theoretical stance. Examples of these questions are:

- How does your cultural, social, and family background influence your choices?
- What cultural, religious, and/or political views do you hold dear?

These questions, that take cognisance of people's beliefs and culture, resonated with me. They could safely be adapted and applied to my participants. I used them as a basis to develop a framework for interrogating the data and preparing the strands for *lalaga*.

- What is important to my participants?
- What themes recur in their stories?
- What is the relationship between these themes and their educational journeys?

As the name *ietoga* implies, the strands are slender and closely woven. My metaphorical mat must also be closely woven. During preparation I found an innate *fa'aaloalo* (respect)

in each strand. *Fa'aaloalo* for elders, for authority and for others, exhibited itself as a natural part of daily behaviour. It is this *fa'aaloalo* that binds my strands tightly so that I am able to metaphorically *lalāgaga* a 'fine' *ietoga*.

In the following section I introduce the participants and the researcher; the storytellers and the weavers. The following chapters develop the strands of authority, duty and influential people in preparation for *lalāgaga*. First I develop the strand of authority and the codes of behaviour and practices developed under this strand. I next explore how the participants respond to the duties imposed by these codes of behaviour. The final strand explores those people whom the participants consider have had a direct impact on their educational journeys.

3.3 Storytellers and Weavers

In undertaking the research I endeavoured to follow practices that respect and model appropriate cultural protocols, values and behaviours (Smith, 1999). Telling the story is an important and culturally preferred method of passing on knowledge in the Samoan and other *indigenous* cultures (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Taleni, T., personal communication, 2005). This is supplemented and reinforced through observation and practice. The wider aspects of storytelling in relation to research from both western and *Pasifika* viewpoints were explored in the methodological section of this thesis, for example, Goodson and Sikes (2001), Thaman (2002), Tupuola (1993) and Witherell and Noddings (1991).

The participants and I are both storytellers and weavers. The participant-storytellers have shared with me the stories of their educational journeys. The participant-weavers have woven their individual patterns into the *ietoga*. The researcher-storyteller writes of both the participants' educational journeys and her own learning journey throughout the production

of *o le ietoga*. The researcher-weaver has final responsibility to *lalāgaga o le ietoga* and to ensure that it is worthy of the participants and represents them respectfully and fairly.

My participants shared their stories with me through a combination of *fono*, *talanoa* and their reflective journals from a recent MTchLn course. In addition to hearing the stories I had the privilege of personal contact and observation and involvement with them in their daily lives which assisted me to make sense of the stories. The reader does not have this opportunity, therefore each of the participants has written a personal vignette to assist the reader to contextualise and understand the stories and themes as they are drawn out in the following chapters. I have also written a personal vignette. The purpose is to provide the reader with an understanding of my place in the western world and culture to which I belong. In addition, it will provide her/him with an insight into how I have interpreted and reconstructed the participants' stories about their educational journeys.

The choice to take a western approach and list the storytellers' and weavers' stories alphabetically is deliberate. My understanding of the complexities of the Samoan hierarchical structure is insufficient to enable me to order the stories in a culturally appropriate way. It also illustrates the non-hierarchical approach taken to this research.

3.3.1 Annie

I was born and brought up in Kerala, South India. In a family of 4 girls and 2 boys, I am next to my sister Daisy who is the eldest in the family. Both my parents were Catholics and we all grew up in that faith. I still value that faith and I am bringing up my children in that faith. My dad was a medical practitioner and mum stayed home and took care of us. I have fond memories of my childhood education. All my brothers and sisters followed a timetable at home for our study. In our study room we were given a table and just a stool so we couldn't lean on.

House chores were not part of our home timetable. Mum took care of household chores with the help of a house maid. My dad used to motivate us giving special treatment when we performed very well in the examinations. This gave us encouragement to work hard. I am very grateful to my mum and dad for taking care of us and giving us education. All my brothers and sisters have completed their tertiary education. Now both my parents have passed away. I treasure the values that I have received from my parents.

3.3.2 Bridget

The youngest of three children, I was born in 1950 into a working-class Irish-Catholic family in a small New Zealand town. We had no extended family near us as my father's work as a policeman meant that we often moved towns. I still do not know my aunts, uncles and cousins very well. My father died when I was almost 21. I remember him as gentle and kind. My mother was very strict and domineering. Much of our lives revolved around the church and its doctrines. We lived next door to the convent school and from the age of three I was often to

be found sitting in the back of the classroom joining in wherever possible. This heralded the beginning of my lifelong interest in education and how it shapes people and the choices they make. Facing the challenges of marriage, parenting and changing roles within education has raised my interest in how other people coped with these. Through this study I now have a better understanding of how one group of people from a culture other than my own have managed these challenges.

3.3.3 Dawn

I was born in 1944 to part-Samoan parents. I am the fourth child of five children. I am Samoan of mixed descent, Danish, British and German. I live in the Apia town area at Malifa. My religious affiliation is with the Apia Protestant Church. My up-bringing was very much of a palagi or European way of life. Most of my education was at the government schools in Apia where I eventually gained a scholarship to do teacher training in New Zealand. After graduating with a New Zealand Teachers Certificate with physical education as my specialty, I returned to Samoa and taught

physical education at the Western Samoa Teachers College for the majority of my teaching life, with a short stint at two secondary schools in Apia. After raising 5 children I gained another award to study in Australia and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sports Studies. I was an athlete and represented Samoa in various international sporting events. I am currently teaching physical education at the National University of Samoa at the Faculty of Education and am doing a Master of Teaching and Learning degree by distance with the Christchurch College of Education.

3.3.4 Pak

I was born in 1964 to a family of mixed descent. My grandfather (on my father's side) is a German that migrated to Samoa and married my grandmother. My mother is a Cook Islander. My family was known as planters and had a very large commercial plantation with cocoa as its main crop. While I have a mixture of blood I identify myself a Samoan. My upbringing though was very much of a palagi or European way of life. Most of my education was at the English speaking government schools in Apia.

I gained a government scholarship to study in New Zealand and graduated in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Canterbury. While studying in New Zealand I realized the importance of my identity as a Samoan and began to embrace my culture. In 2003 I took on a matai title from my wife's family for which I am very honoured to hold and hope that I can do justice to the title. Religion is a very important part of my life. I grew up in the Anglican faith but now I have joined my wife's church (Roman Catholic).

3.3.5 Sua Molimau

I was born in 1958, third in this family of ten into an extended family in a rural village. We lived in cottages at my mother's family. Both my parents were very strict and my upbringing was based on spiritual and cultural ideologies. The economy of our family was solely dependent on agriculture to provide for family, Samoan Cultural, Congregational Christian Church and educational needs. And I have experienced my parents' struggle to ensure my education is continued and successful hence, I am internally motivated to do better so that history will not repeat itself in the family.

At the age of four, my aunt, who was a teacher, took me with her to school where I started my educational journey. At the age of 26, I got married and have four children. My parents were very supportive with my teaching career. Despite several financial barriers and changes of roles from time to time I was fortunate enough to do further studies that contribute to my achievements. I started off as a Junior Secondary teacher, then a Schools' Broadcasting Officer, a subject adviser and today I am a deputy principal in one of the colleges in town.

3.3.6 Terri

The eldest of four children and the only girl. I was born in 1961 in the island of Samoa, a very small island in the Pacific. My mother was a teacher and my father worked in our taro plantation. We stayed in our Samoan open fale where we all grew up. I used to collect coconuts and sold copra to our village stores because my mother earned very little pay. I attended our village primary school and was fortunate to get a place in Samoa College (Samoa's top school) when I sat the Form 2 national examination.

I stayed in the hostel for the four years of college then I joined the teacher's training college after which I graduated with a Diploma in Education and a teaching certificate. I have been teaching in both government and mission schools. I had a teacher education scholarship to NZ but I didn't finish it due to family problems. Fortunately I completed my degree at National University of Samoa. In 2001, I started working as a lecturer in this university. I still enjoy teaching.

3.4 Summary

This chapter explored the metaphorical *ietoga* and introduced the framework developed to assist in data analysis. The final section of the chapter contains personal vignettes prepared by each of the participants and by me.

In the following chapters I carefully prepare three strands from the participants' stories so that I am able to complete *lalāgaga o le ietoga* (weaving the fine mat).

4 Authority



*“O le ala i le pule o le tautua”
“The way to authority is through good service.”
(Popular Samoan saying)*

4.1 Introduction

The process of weaving my metaphorical *ietoga* was described in the previous chapter. The storytellers and weavers were introduced with personal vignettes prepared by the participants and by me.

The first section of this chapter describes the framework I have used to determine the codes of behaviour and practices established by authority and the authorities. The remaining sections explore these codes of behaviour and practices within the established framework and the impact that the hierarchical, authoritarian aspect of this Samoan society has had on participants' choices, their education and their careers.

4.2 Framework

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles variously defines authority as “Power or right to enforce obedience”, “Those in power or control”, “A person whose opinion or testimony is to be accepted” (Trumble & Stevenson, 2002, p. 154). It is in the context of these definitions that I explore the concept of authority in the Samoan society. Each is important depending on the particular aspect under consideration. Parents, for example, represent those with “power or control”, “with the power or right to enforce obedience.” The authorities provide a further example of those with “power or control.” Teachers exemplify those “whose opinion or testimony is to be accepted.”

It is generally accepted that members of Christian societies adhere to the Ten Commandments. In Samoa, these Commandments combine well with long-standing cultural practices to determine the codes of behaviour and practices for its peoples. The fourth commandment, 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother,' endorses the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of the traditional Samoan society, where politeness and *fa'aaloalo* (respect) for one's elders are among the treasured values (Ma'ia'i, 1957; Petana-Ioka, 1995; Taleni, T., personal communication, 2004). Adherence to this principle has formed an integral part of all the participants' lives. At first I viewed many aspects of this authority as harsh. I found, however, that as I endeavoured to look through a similar lens to that of my participants, I was able to view authority in a more holistic way, linking it to their cultural practices and behaviour rather than to those of my western world.

I saw how my participants respect their parents. I saw how they respect others with authority, for example, church leaders and authorities in their education and careers. I also saw that while accepting respect and authority as normal in their society, they are not a passive people. There have been times when questions have been asked and times when rebellion has occurred, thus creating tensions.

I have chosen to use these aspects of authority as a framework to develop the codes of behaviour and practices established by authority and the authorities. The impact on the participants' educational journeys and on their careers will be explored in more depth in the next chapter, where I investigate ways in which they carry out the duties and responsibilities imposed as a result of authority. For the purposes of this thesis, I have focused only on those aspects of authority that have had a direct impact on the participants' educational journeys and on their careers.

4.3 Parental Authority

Fa'aaloalo for one's elders is first and foremost in Samoan life. Everyone knows their place and correct behaviour in giving service and respect to those of a higher station (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994; Lay et al., 2000). As a young child, the prime instigators of this authority are parents and *aiga* (extended family). The Samoan child, for example, was educated at home with parents and *aiga* being the first teachers (Ma'ia'i, 1957). Sua Molimau describes the control her parents exerted while growing up. Her unquestioning acceptance of this authority is shown where she tells us how she came to be a teacher when her desire was to become a nurse.

My parents were very, very strict with me. In those days, whatever they say I have to do. No answering back. No questioning back at all. So what they say I have to do. For example, at the end of my Form 5 School Certificate level, I was looking forward to be a nurse. I just don't know why, but I wanted to be a nurse. I was aiming for that. I was taking biology and physics because I wanted to be a nurse. But my father did not allow me. He was saying, "You have to go to the Teachers' College. Teaching is the work of the girls." That's what he said. So I didn't answer back. I didn't question. I only took up teaching.

I asked how it felt to be forced to give up her dream. Sua Molimau reminded me that "You have to do what the parents say. In the bible, in our culture – it's the same. We have to respect our parents." There is no question that Sua Molimau did and still does respect and honour her parents, however this did not prevent her from rebelling against her father's authority.

But deep inside me I wanted to be a nurse, so all the three years I was here at the Teachers' College I tried to go away. So I did something stupid so that I'm sent home. Every time I was sent home my aunt came to see the principal.

Each time Sua Molimau returned to Teachers' College.

Terri describes the loneliness of her years staying in a hostel while attending Samoa College:

I just stayed in the hostel. My first year, second year, third year in the Samoa College hostel. I just stayed in the dormitories. I never went out with any friends. You know, some friends were asking me to go to their families and my father was like strict on me. Like telling me, "Don't go with anybody." That kind of thing. That's why I stayed like that for three years. I was in that shell.

Although this was difficult for Terri, there was no thought that she would not obey. With regard to this and similar experiences throughout her life Terri comments "I appreciate my father's advices."

As I listened to my participants' stories, I realised that while the participants spoke of parental authority, they sometimes interpreted the purpose in different ways. Annie, for example, who spent her childhood in India, describes her father as strict, organising their day and demanding obedience from his children. She identified his purpose in exerting such authority as a means to ensure that she and her siblings received maximum benefits from their education.

I grew up in a family where my parents gave prime importance for education. We didn't do house chores at home. We have a timetable at home. Alarm was set up in the morning to get up. We, my brothers and sisters, all get a cup of coffee in the morning and then went to study. Then, another alarm went to get out of our study tables. We were not given chairs, only stools, so no leaning, we would sit straight.

We used to get punishment. The worst punishment was to write out the editorial of an English daily newspaper, if we fought each other or any other wrong doings. We didn't have to write it often, but we knew that if dad said, "Editorial should be ready by the evening," it had to be done.

Annie was comfortable with this parental control as her father was also supportive and encouraging. As she says in her vignette, "This gave us encouragement to work hard. I am very grateful to my mum and dad for taking care of us and giving us education."

Neither Pak nor Dawn has spoken openly about authority or restrictions within the home. It was, however, implicit in their conversations. I found it interesting that Pak compared the 'restrictions' of boarding at Nelson College with the 'freedom' of home. He found various western style rules such as remaining in school uniform until after supper, doing homework after school and having to ask permission to go out in the evenings, restrictive. This was a marked contrast to the *palagi*/Samoan life he was used to in Samoa where other than the expectation that he would attend school and undertake his study, he appeared to be free to determine what activities he would engage in.

4.4 Authority and Christianity

The authority of Christianity is complex. There is God's authority under the auspices of which lives are lived. Participants viewed this in a number of ways, for example, "maybe if God didn't want me to marry this man, He won't give me the children" or from another, "it's the grace of God that we're here and we need to be thankful for that at all times." There are also set doctrines and principles such as attending church, donating money, tithing, supporting the priest/pastor. To illustrate, a common theme from my participants was, "whatever the pastor and the church ask for I have to do."

Failure to adhere to the authority of the church can at times have serious implications. Terri, for example, was fired from her teaching position in a Church school when she administered corporal punishment. She had broken one of the principles of the Church. One of the participants spoke of the non-renewal of a teaching contract after 22 years service teaching in Church schools as a result of a misunderstanding with the then Director of Education of Church Schools.

In contrast, God, the Church and its ministers are also seen in a positive light playing key roles in people's lives. Pak for example, says, "Reflecting back I do believe that the Christian principle had an influence on my education, considering the lack of studies I did, so someone, a being, must have been there carrying me through." It is not uncommon to call on the minister for support if a family member is in difficulties. It is usual to share family meals and special occasions with the minister. It was the pastor, for example, who gave Sua Molimau the key "that will not open anything but will strengthen the lock" on her 21st birthday.

4.5 Authority and Education and Careers

The virtue of respecting your elders carries through to the classroom, thus creating a classroom environment that is very teacher dominated. To answer back or to question is not culturally acceptable. Instead pupils are expected to listen. Sua Molimau sums this up succinctly in her journal entry:

The biblical theory is concerned with listening and obeying as emphasized by the minister that children need to just listen and do what they are told to do. This in a way encourages the idea of listening actively or listening with respect, therefore I feel that listening and obeying is the same as listening with respect.

As I listened to Sua Molimau and Terri I was surprised at the level of collusion between their fathers and education authorities. The school that Sua Molimau was first placed in when she graduated from Teachers College was too far from her family so her father requested the Ministry of Education for a transfer to a school nearby. Terri, too, was placed in a junior high school in a district next to her own as she needed to be close to the family. It seemed to me that this level of collusion existed only for those participants who were brought up totally immersed in *fa'aSamoa*.

An expectation of high performance is a further way that authority impacts on young people. When Dawn, Pak and Terri's exam results placed them at Samoa College they knew the purpose was to groom them as future leaders in Samoa. There was also the possibility of a scholarship to undertake higher secondary and/or tertiary training in New Zealand or Australia. The nature of these scholarships did, however, limit choices. Girls

generally had the option of nursing or teaching. Boys were directed to sciences, law or medicine (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998).

Dawn left for her scholarship years in New Zealand with the expectation that she would return to Samoa and teach Physical Education in primary schools. To her deep regret this was not the case. When she returned after three years, she was told that she was to become a lecturer at the Western Samoa Teachers' College where she was to train teachers of Physical Education. Dawn had no say in this appointment. With her typical attitude of facing up to and making the best of challenges, Dawn viewed the position as providing her with the opportunity to combine work with her passion for sport.

Pak, on the other hand, despite the irksome rules at Nelson College, had much more freedom of choice in New Zealand than in Samoa. He entered Canterbury University on a scholarship to study for a Bachelor of Engineering degree. Part way through his study he chose to transfer to a Bachelor of Science degree. This did not appear to cause any problems with the authorities. When he returned to Samoa he was free to make his own work and career choices.

As a young teacher in 1985, Terri was sent to a one year in-service course in Fiji where she was able to focus on Business Studies. She achieved well in the course and wanted to apply for a scholarship to continue study and gain a degree. This was not to happen as

The thing is, the only person who didn't want me to continue was the Director of Education. The reasons being he wanted me to come back to Samoa and introduce the subject in 1986. That was the only reason, but I don't think it was a valid reason for that.

Although Terri was not happy with the direction to return to Samoa, she respected her obligation to respect and honour those in authority and returned to continue her career in teaching.

4.6 Summary

This chapter developed the theme of authority and the consequent codes of behaviour and practices and the sets of expectations placed on my participants. In the next chapter I explore how the participants have undertaken their educational journeys as they interpret and act in relation to these codes of behaviour and sets of expectations.

5 Duty



5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the participants' response to the duties imposed on them by the codes of behaviour and practices that are placed on them in their everyday lives. The chapter commences by defining duty and describes how I have applied this to the participants' stories. It next addresses aspects of duty under the headings of family/community and *fa'atuatua*.

5.2 Duty

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* defines duty as "The behaviour due to a superior; homage; deference; an expression of respect" (Trumble & Stevenson, 2002, p. 777).

This western definition links closely to the Samoan values of *fa'aaloalo* for elders, for authority and for others. It provides the context in which I draw out the commonalities of duty and shape them in readiness to *lalaga* (weave).

Through my western eyes, duty can sometimes be seen as negative, an obligation that in some cases is unwillingly undertaken. This is not what I saw in my participants. I saw duty as being a natural part of their lives. I saw duty as being of prime importance to them and to the way in which they function. I saw duty carried out lovingly and with *fa'aaloalo*. I saw the sacrifices that duty sometimes called for willingly made. As they carried out these duties, I saw a strong respect for individuals, for their faiths, for their culture.

Initially, I separated duty in relation to family and community. I soon realised that this was not possible as one of the main concepts in Samoan culture is the extended family which is

the context of *aiga* and kinship in the community. The sharing of duties is an important concept in this community. It is in this way that the concept of reciprocity is developed (Taleni, T., personal communication, May 2006). When family members are unable to fulfil a duty, there is always a person in the community who will do this for them.

5.2.1 *Duty to Family/Community*

Samoa society is developed around a hierarchical structure. Traditionally, the position to which one is born in the family determines many of the formal duties and responsibilities a person may have (Lay et al., 2000). As Sua Molimau explains, this is particularly so in relation to the eldest son and the eldest daughter.

I'm the third in the family, but the eldest girl. Being an eldest girl also has different responsibilities. Eldest boys have special responsibilities in the Samoan family. Looking after the family and looking after the heritage and all the things that have to be passed on are the responsibility of the eldest boy.

For me as an eldest daughter, I also have special responsibilities to look after my mother, and then my younger sisters, and then my younger brothers. So, those are the responsibilities that I take as an eldest daughter in the family. They are lifelong responsibilities. So, I was staying with my parents until they passed away. Because I'm the eldest girl I'm responsible to look after my parents. And I did. My father passed away in '89 and then my mother passed away in 2004.

So those are my responsibilities. Now my parents both passed away, and

it's interesting that it appears to me that my other younger brothers and sisters, they take me as their mother. They want to go somewhere, they bring their kids and they stay with me.

It's part of our culture that when we stay with the parents they will bless the kids that they stay with. Because every time we serve them, every time we give them something, they will always bless. Especially with my kids who are staying with my parents. That's one of the cultures that we believe in. My parents also believe in that. My parents were taking care of my mother's parents. I think it comes down like that.

Terri, too, is the eldest in her family. Consequently, her first teaching position needed to be as close to her family home as possible. "In my family, I'm the eldest and the only girl, so I needed to be close to my parents, so that I can be around." Today, as a married woman with three children, although her parents are no longer alive, she still lives on the family land. She supports her married, unemployed brothers and their families who also live on the land. They care for the land and also care for their 88 year old grandmother.

As I listened to my participants' stories and read their journals, it became clear that these lines of responsibility can often be blurred. It is not always the eldest daughter who cares for the parents. It is not always the eldest son who cares for the land. Pak for example, is a male who cares deeply for his mother and who has full responsibility for her care. During our *fono* and from reading his journal it is evident that his mother always comes first for Pak. Over the years this has impacted on his study and on his career. The first example of this is when he completed his Bachelor of Science degree at Canterbury University:

Then you go through the crisis of, am I going back, or am I not going back? It wasn't hard in the end. It was just my mum lived here and there wasn't any choice after that. I had to come back.

Pak's love and respect for his mother was evident as he described carrying out the duty of caring for her when she was hospitalized during 2005. At this time, in addition to studying, Pak was Acting Dean of the Faculty of Science. His journal entry follows:

This week my mother was admitted to hospital. She was bedridden at home for the previous week. She was suffering from arthritis but we did not know she had diabetes. Her sugar level was 4 times the normal level. This caused an infection in her legs which had to be operated on. She will be in hospital for one or two months.

The duty of family members when someone is hospitalised is very different to that experienced by me in my western world. Pak explained this duty and its impact on him in our *fono*.

One of the things we have here, you have to have someone there [at the hospital] with the patient all the time, 24/7 really. The nurses are just to administer the pills, the injections and nothing else. They don't do bedpans; they don't change the beds; they don't get the food; they don't wash the plates or anything like that. You've got to have someone there to do all that for the patient. All they do is come in regularly round the clock to administer the injection, that sort of thing.

It's very stressful for us to go through. It's partly because of the extended family support that we have in Samoa. You know, have big families and people rotate in and out of hospital, that sort of thing. It's nothing really to them. If you pay a visit up there in the evenings, you find people sleeping outside on the verandahs. They're there to look after the patients. Someone has to sleep there to look after the patient.

When she was first admitted it was 24/7 round the clock. Someone had to be there all the time. In my case, it's my wife. There was a stage where she had to take time off work to be at the hospital in the early stages. Now that mum's recovering and she's getting better and better by the day, it's a lot better now, but she's still in hospital. I have a cousin that I bring up in the mornings to stay with her. It's okay now. When she was first there, it was very hard not to have someone there all the time.

In his journal Pak describes the impact his mother's illness had on his work and his current study.

The significance of this incident is as follows:

Family has always been an important part of my life and work. The values I have learned from her have served me well in my career as a teacher. Family (my mother) has always supported me with education and being a teacher. Hence when that part of me breaks down everything around it has a domino effect. While my work is important I place **FAMILY FIRST**. I had to seek someone else to be acting dean for the

last week of my deanship. My studies have come to a halt. I am glad I put in the extra hours a few weeks ago as I can't see myself doing much study in the next few weeks. I am basically just coming in to do my lectures/tutorials then go back home/hospital.

Duty and *fa'aaloalo* for parents can also cause tension and stress and have an impact on choices. This was particularly so for Dawn. She is the fourth child in a family of five, with only Dawn and her younger brother living in Samoa. It was expected therefore that Dawn would care for her parents, a duty that she carried out willingly with love, tenderness and respect. As a single parent with five children, financial independence is essential for Dawn. She won a scholarship to travel to Canberra and study towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sports Studies. Gaining this qualification would be beneficial for Dawn in her career and in her quest for financial independence. It also meant that she had to leave behind her elderly parents.

My course was for only three years and I could come home every year so it worked out all right. I was fortunate because one of my sons worked at the Polynesian Airlines so I was able to get a cheap fare home. It was a hard decision to make when I decided to do further studies. My parents were getting on in age and my mother was quite sick. There were people who questioned how I could leave my parents behind, especially my sick mother. My decision was not an easy one to make. But I felt that I needed to get myself qualified and I had the opportunity to do so. I could not give up that chance. Besides my mother was only a plane ride away.

Traditionally, the community has been overseen by *matai* or chiefs of various rankings. The chief, “serves as a kind of family patriarch who must promote family unity and prestige, administer all family lands, settle disputes amongst kinsmen, promote religious participation, and represent the family as its political spokesman in the village council” (Holmes, 1994, p. 22, as cited in Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994). Both Sua Molimau and Pak are *matai*. Sua Molimau’s title is inherited from her mother’s family. Pak’s title was bestowed on him by his wife’s family. In 2006, Terri is also to be bestowed with a hereditary title from her father’s family. Pak explained the impact that holding a *matai* title has had on him. This is representative of conversations I have had with a variety of people and observations I have made during my visits to Samoa.

Now I’ve picked up a *matai* title, it’s a new status. Different *matai* have different responsibilities. When you take up your place in the position as Acting Dean and positions of responsibility in the university it helps. You’re talking to equals as other *matai*. In the traditional Samoan gatherings untitled men and *matai* just don’t sit together and discuss things. I’ve always felt out of it. When I began having more awareness of my Samoanness one of the reasons I never strove for higher honours in terms of positions and that sort of thing, I was aware that I, being a non-*matai*, would be sitting there passing judgement or making judgement on peers who were *matai* and that sort of thing. I was very uncomfortable then.

You go through stages in your life, and being a *matai* wasn’t important to me at that stage. But when I grew, I understood not only the coolness that

comes with it but also the responsibility. It's an acceptance. You accept that and know your role. Then it makes it easier for me. It's not always about giving money, looking after the extended family and that sort of thing. There are two, talking chiefs and a high chief type of thing. So I've got a high chief title, not a talking chief title.

When you talk about responsibility, it's hard to say that oh, you take care of this, you take care of that. To me, it's how you carry yourself.

To me that's the biggest responsibility. What you do, or what I do now as *matai* working in the National University, does not just reflect me. It's the village and the family who gave me this title, so, when I do things I'm more aware now that I'm not just doing it for myself. Anything good I do and praise I get is praise for the family and the village. Anything bad I do, it's a black mark for the family and the village. It's not just about me now. So, that responsibility you know in how you carry yourself. To me, that's what it is. The title has come from my wife's family. I feel very honoured.

There are endless less 'public' ways in which family and community duties are fulfilled on a daily basis. These are carried out as normal routine, not as being what I and other westerners might think unusual. Dawn is one such example. It was Annie who reminded me how Dawn has cared for her ex-husband's children by his second wife. Dawn has the children to stay. She paid expenses for one of these children to be educated in New Zealand. When one of the children was to marry it was Dawn who made all the

arrangements. When her ex-husband died, his wife came to Dawn for support. Once again this support was given willingly and with respect.

As an Indian woman living in Samoa, Annie saw it as her duty to ensure that her children were brought up with an understanding of both their Indian culture and the Samoan culture in which they lived. It was also important to her that she maintained the integrity of both cultures. In Annie's words, "I value Samoan culture greatly. I am proud to say that my children are able to read, write and speak in Samoan."

It is her respect for the Samoan culture and for Samoan people that was behind her decision to not seek promotion in her work:

I always thought that certain responsibilities should be given to a local person. I think the main reason I thought they should be given to a local person is that I don't speak any Samoan. If there are certain issues that involve Samoan culture a local person can solve.

Duty to the family/community also means that it is taken for granted that every Samoan will inherently know their culture and know how to behave in particular situations. It is the role of the community to ensure that this culture is passed down through the generations.

It is not always the parents who take this responsibility. Dawn told me:

It was taken for granted at the time that every Samoan should know their culture. And it was just not true. For the student who lived in the village it was true, but the ones like me from the town, well we knew very little or none at all. My family did not practice too much of the culture. We lived a very *palagi* way of life.

Dawn explains how, although brought up “more *palagi* than Samoan,” she developed an understanding of, and respect for, the culture and the duties it entails.

I mixed a lot with my Samoan friends. Then of course family, on both sides of the family, although there was a lot of *palagi*, it was still that Samoanness in it, you can't take away. There are certain things that regardless of whether they liked or not, they were still part of it, they still had to acknowledge I guess. I learned a lot from my grandmother. My grandmother who was very Samoan in her ways. She taught me, taught us as her grandchildren, my Samoan religious part. The grounding of my faith in religion was really from my grandparents, particularly my grandmother, that's my father's mother. Every evening as a child we always used to have prayers and it was always Samoan prayers. This is when I go to my grandparents. We spent a lot of time with them. That was in the village. She taught us a lot. Taught us a lot about the Samoan way of life.

For some participants the expectation that every Samoan will know their culture applies not only to those living in Samoa but also to those born and/or raised in other countries. As one participant said, “It is also very important that the Samoans who have been raised overseas have a better understanding of our culture and the respect that is given to those older than them.” It is in this way that family ties with the land and culture can continue through the generations.

5.2.2 *Duty to Fa'atuatua*

In telling their stories, each of the participants reflected the ways in which *fa'atuatua* or Christianity influences their everyday lives, their approach to education and decisions they have made. Their duty is to honour the strong *fa'atuatua* that exists for each of them and is part of their everyday lives and vernacular. Much of this centres round Church. One of the participants described duty to the Church in this way:

We have a lot to do in the church. We have a lot of offerings. We have got a lot of things that we need to do. Building a church, building a pastor's house, feeding the pastor. Every Sunday you provide money for the pastor.

While there are marked commonalities in the participants' stories, there are also differences in the way that they fulfil these duties. Dawn, for example, is a respected member of her church. She takes a leading role in the choir and other church activities. In March 2006 she was ordained a deacon of her Church. Annie regularly attends and takes part in church activities. In addition to attending church on Sundays, Terri participates in Thursday morning sessions at the Temple. Both Sua Molimau and Pak also attend church regularly and are active members of and contributors to their church communities.

While attendance at church and involvement in the church community is the common and visible factor, there are many other ways that duty to *fa'atuatua* is fulfilled. Within the framework of duty I see a people of hope who rely and call on God, for example 'God bless' is a common way of signing emails and a common phrase when parting company. I see a people of *fa'atuatua* who accept God's will. As Dawn said

I have a very strong faith. Many times, a lot of the things that I have done, I strongly believe that it was meant to be. Even the trials and my tribulations, it was made to make me stronger, to make me a better person.... A lot of the times, a lot of things, I pray for it and I just leave it and if it comes through I always thank Him.

The stories the participants told together with my own observations demonstrated to me that they take their duty to *fa'atuatua* seriously. They honour the principles of Christianity implied in the official motto of western Samoa “‘Fa’avae i le Atua Samoa’ – Samoa is founded on God” (Lay et al., 2000, p. 52).

5.3 Summary

This chapter explored the impact of duties required in the participants’ lives on them, on their careers and on choices they made. In the following chapter the participants tell of the people who have been influential in their lives with a focus on their education and careers.

6 Influential People



6.1 Introduction

Most of us, when asked, are able to point to one or more people in our lives who have had a marked impact on our chosen pathways. This influence can be quite powerful. It may come from a family member or someone from the wider community. Many teachers, when asked, talk about those who were responsible for educating them. It is often the passion they observed in their teachers that inspires the teachers of the future. My participants also spoke of people who have had a marked influence on their careers and on choices they have made. In many instances the influence these people have link directly to the codes of behaviour and practices and subsequent duties that were established in the previous two chapters.

6.2 Influential People - parents

Almost without exception the participants spoke of their parents, more particularly their fathers, as the key players in their lives. In some instances this role was authoritative and directive, whilst in others it was very supportive and encouraging. Pak, for example, speaks highly of the influential role his mother has played in his education and career.

Family has always been an important part of my life and work. The value I have learned from her [mother] served me well in my career as a teacher. Family has always supported me with education and being a teacher. Hence when that part of me breaks down everything around it has a domino affect [sic].

Annie, too, cannot speak highly enough of the support and encouragement received from her father. She freely admits that it is through his influence in her early years that she and her five siblings were able to continue on to tertiary education and, in both Annie's and her sister's cases, to fulfil their desire to become teachers.

In contrast, while he was proud of Terri having the opportunity to study in Fiji for one year, her father still exerted control while she was in Fiji. He appeared to be more concerned with her behaviour than her education.

My father used to write to me maybe every week. It's a big letter of five pages. And all he said was not to make any boyfriend. You know what, I obeyed it. I never went out. We just went out to watch movies.

Her father's control continued, even when she was married with young children, until his recent death. Terri exemplified this when she described how she came back into government service when she was tutoring at an American-run private school after having being fired from the Church school.

My father who really wanted me to come back to the government, he went to get the form for me. I didn't want it. It's just like because I was so stubborn at the time, 'cos of what they did to me. So my father did go to the Education Department, get the form and then I filled it. Then I was lucky to get a job back in the Education Department. I was going to teach at Palalaua, the same school in our village, Palalaua Junior Secondary School.

Once again, Terri's father had succeeded in ensuring that she worked near the family and would be able to fulfil her obligations as the eldest child and only daughter.

Although she spoke of her parent's strictness and of how her choice of career was determined by them, Sua Molimau also acknowledged the sacrifices they made to ensure that she and her nine siblings received an education.

My father and my mother; they were very, very supportive with my education and with the rest of the children's education. It's not typical of Samoan families at that time. Some parents would not send their children to school. But none of my parents has a job, has a paid job. So it's a real difficulty for them to take all their children to school, but we were all in the schools in the past.

My father was a good fisherman. Fishes the fish, and then we go with the strings of fish and sell them to the people in the village. And we have a big cocoa plantation, coconut plantation. It's the money from there that the parents used to pay for our fees. But there were times that the money would not meet our expenses, because there were so many of us. You know what my mother was doing? She went as a labourer for one of the people in the church. So she was weeding the bananas with some other people. They weed the bananas, get the money and pay our fees. And when our fees are paid she stopped going there. That's when our cocoa and the fish would not support us. So that's one of the things that still rings in my ears.

Sua Molimau is unable to explain why her parents made these sacrifices. It has however had a big impact on her and her approach to everything she does. In order to honour her parents and the sacrifices they made, she always strives to “work hard, achieve good results and to invest in education.”

6.3 Influential People – other family members

Other *aiga* were also pivotal for some of the participants in their educational journeys. Sua Molimau’s aunt has been influential at different stages during her journey. She introduced Sua Molimau to school long before the official school starting age. She supported Sua Molimau when in strife at the Teacher’s College. She assisted Sua Molimau the young student teacher with lesson preparation and teaching strategies.

The interactions between Annie’s teacher-sister and her students provided a positive role model for Annie in her career choice. “My sister Daisy was a chemistry lecturer and was very good with the students. Usually in her spare time she was in the chemistry lab, so students could go in and complete practicals or ask doubts. I had a lot of influence from her.”

Annie’s husband was the leading light in her career. As she followed him first to Malaysia and then to Samoa, he supported her through the difficulties encountered in adapting to new cultures and curricula. They worked together as a team and as a close-knit family unit.

Pak mentions the big influence his wife has had on his teaching. This has been two-fold. She has been his support through difficult times. “My wife is my greatest supporter.” In addition, although Pak considers their teaching subjects place them at “opposite ends of the spectrum,” the ability to bounce ideas off each other is most helpful. “That has been a big influence on me. I can reflect off her sort of thing.”

6.4 Influential People – teachers and others

The participants spoke of individual teachers at various stages of their careers. Pak's primer 2 or 3 teacher instilled in him the basics of his mathematical skills. He talks of Albert Wendt and the profound effect he had on Pak as a young 6th former at Samoa College.

He would be the first teacher that I would credit with instilling in the students free thinking. To think out loud. To throw out ideas. To challenge Christianity. For a culture where you talk only when you're spoken to as a young person, you come through and all of a sudden we had this teacher come in. I don't know what impact he had on other students in our class. But to me the impact was that encouragement to throw out new ideas. Don't be scared to express your ideas. They're not right or wrong. They're just different ideas.

Today, as an experienced and successful educator, Pak freely admits that he still struggles with Wendt's philosophies. Although he welcomes constructivist principles and endeavours to adopt them in his classrooms, at times of stress he falls back on the teacher-dominated approaches that fit so neatly with his cultural environment.

It was Dawn's sports teacher at Samoa College who encouraged her to train as a Physical Education teacher, an opportunity she relished as it also provided her with a means to pursue her passion of sport. Dawn's typical attitude of viewing challenges and trials positively came to the fore during her third year of teacher training. This was her Physical Education specialisation year, but her main lecturer was a dance specialist. She speaks of

how this unexpected opportunity proved to be of benefit throughout her career, particularly within the last two years.

I am very grateful to Annette Golding, the dance lecturer at Wellington Teachers College, because not only was she a great dancer but she taught me a lot. She provided me with the opportunity to try out something that I enjoyed doing but was too shy and uncertain of performing, especially in public. Now when they talk about Performing Arts and Movement I have a good understanding and appreciation of dance and movement.

Throughout the years Dawn has called on her dance training. It was not, however, until 2005 with the introduction of a Performing Arts Curriculum in Samoa that Dawn has been able to fully utilise the skills and knowledge she developed during her training.

I found it interesting that Sua Molimau believes she was sent to the strictest principal in Samoa for her first teaching experience as a punishment for her unruly behaviour at the Teachers College. It transpired however, that this principal proved to be very influential for Sua Molimau in providing the basis for her own teaching manner, “A woman principal. Very strict, very professional, too. I am learning all my ways from her.”

Annie and I discussed the similarities between education in Samoa and 1960s education in India. As a student it was expected that she would sit and listen and not question teachers. They were the holders of knowledge and the experts who would pass this on to students. Consequently, Annie was inspired by her Science teacher who did not follow this practice but introduced a different approach in the classroom.

She was very pleasant in the class. She encouraged students to talk and ask questions in the class. Most teachers of that time didn't give any chance for us students to ask questions in the class.

As she understands it, education in her home country now takes a much more constructivist approach that allows for interaction and collaboration between teachers and their students, an approach that Annie has endeavoured to emulate throughout her career.

As a *Pasifika* student studying under a scholarship in Auckland, Terri found it difficult to talk to *palagi* lecturers in case they might think, "Oh, she's dumb, or something like that. Maybe they would underestimate me." When in strife with her scholarship officer, she felt lonely and isolated. Although there were *palagi* counsellors, she felt neither they nor her lecturers understood; that they expected her to adopt the New Zealand way and leave her culture and practices behind (Watts, White, & Trlin, 2004). She explains the importance to her of a Tongan lecturer at that time.

My lecturer also was a Tongan. A Pacific person to tell. Like us people from the Pacific. What I'm saying is that lecturer, that Tongan, she was a Pacific person, so I could easily, maybe when I look at the skin. Oh, okay we are Polynesians, that type of thing.

Finally, the participants spoke in our *fono*, in their journals and during *talanoa* of their most recent lecturers, those delivering the MTchLn and the impact their practices have had on the participants' own teaching approaches. They spoke of the skill and professionalism of the lecturers and of their belief in the students' abilities. They spoke of the lecturers' ability to relate to them and of the respect these lecturers afford them. They spoke of the

support, flexibility and understanding of the range of challenges; technological, family, church and community, encountered by the participants during their MTchLn studies. The lecturers work with the students to find ways around these difficulties. The following quotes from two participants summarise the feelings of the group towards these lecturers. “It is very important (and fortunate) that I have had lecturers who are understanding and accommodating in these situations,” and “At the age of 47 I didn’t think I would be able to continue with higher level education. Carol’s [CCE Lecturer] encouragement and professionalism encouraged me to continue with studies and makes me more confident to continue.”

6.5 Summary

Choices a person makes in his/her career can be influenced by many different people. This chapter identified people from all walks of life who have impacted on the participants’ educational journeys. Parents, particularly fathers, played a pivotal role with sacrifices made to ensure that children were educated. Other family members played dual roles as support people and as role models. Teachers at varying stages of their education, ranging from primer 1 to their current lecturers in the MTchLn programme have also proved influential. The importance of working with teachers of a similar culture was also highlighted.

In the following chapter I weave together the strands of authority, duty and influence to complete the *ietoga* that represents both the participants’ educational journeys and my own cultural and research learning journey.

7 **Lalāgaga o le Ietoga (weaving the ietoga)**



All that weaving of the knowledge you bring, the knowledge the participants bring in. We weave it. The whole process of what we have gathered is the outcome of the fa'afaletui.
(Talenī, T., personal communication, May 8, 2006)

7.1 **Introduction**

The participants in this study are all successful senior educators in Samoa. They are articulate, confident and regarded as experts in their particular fields. They have taken roles of responsibility in curriculum development, in teacher training and in teacher professional development.

Annie's interest in teaching arose at an early age. Her experiences of her own teachers and her observations of her teacher-sister fuelled this interest and she developed a "passion for teaching." It was natural that Annie followed in their footsteps and took up a teaching career. Dawn, Sua Molimau and Terri grew up in a society where girls who did well in their education would become either teachers or nurses. Dawn chose teaching as she saw it would provide a means to combine a career with her passion for sport. Terri enjoyed learning and teaching seemed a natural career choice for her. Sua Molimau was forced to give up her dream of becoming a nurse and train as a teacher. Despite this not being her choice, she always gave of her best and is now happy, settled and successful in her career as an educator. Pak left school and attended university with the intention of studying engineering. On his return to Samoa however, he was asked to undertake one term's relief teaching in mathematics at Samoa College. He enjoyed this time, was successful and teaching became his career.

The research question asked how the participants undertook their educational journeys and reached the point of being successful senior educators. The previous three chapters explored in depth themes that arose from our *fono* and *talanoa* in which we discussed their educational journeys, and from their and my journals. Together we identified that they live in a hierarchical society based on Christian principles and cultural values such as *fa'aaloalo*, *aiga*, gerontocracy, *alofa*, *loto maualalo* (humility) and service. We determined that their lives have been shaped by authority and the codes of behaviour and expectations that this entails. We discussed together the way the participants have interpreted and acted on these codes of behaviour under the heading of duty. Finally, we established that a number of people have had a marked influence on the participants' education and career choices and pathways.

In this chapter I draw on these themes and discuss the impact they have had on the participants' educational journeys - choices taken and pathways followed. As I *lalāgaga o le ietoga* I explore in more depth themes such as educational practices, tensions, inner conflict and authority. My intention in this thesis was not to conduct a critical commentary of Samoan culture or of the education of Samoa's peoples. The main emphasis was to use a narrative approach within an ethnographic framework that would enable me to determine how one group of educators in Samoa have achieved their success. The participants' educational journeys are woven into the *ietoga* with each journey creating its own unique pattern. As I came to write, I found the themes were closely intertwined, difficult to separate and overlapped, particularly in relation to *fa'aSamoa*. I have therefore chosen to undertake this section in a holistic, all encompassing manner, weaving the *ietoga* and creating the *ula* (edging decoration) as I write.

7.2 (In)formal Education

As the Samoan participants spoke of their educational journeys it became apparent that *fa'aSamoa* and its principles of *fa'aaloalo*, *aiga*, gerontocracy, *alofa*, *loto maualalo* (humility) and service have impacted on their education and their careers. As in many *Pasifika* countries, education in Samoa can be clearly separated into informal, where cultural skills, knowledge and values necessary to be members of the community are taught, and formal, based on western values and ideals (Sanga, 2001; Thaman, 2005). The Samoan participants' formal schooling, whether in Samoa or overseas in New Zealand, Fiji or Australia did not take account of *fa'aSamoa* and its related values. It took little account of *Pasifika* people's preference for oral and experiential learning. There appears to have been little attempt by those responsible for the curriculum in Samoa to make adaptations to the New Zealand curriculum that was in use at the time so that learning would be meaningful and appropriate (Puamau, 2002; Taufe'ulungaki, 2002). Dawn, for example, while at Samoa College, received a thorough grounding in English history and in Shakespeare. Nowhere in her schooling did she learn of her own country's history or culture. It was left to her *aiga* - in Dawn's case, her paternal grandmother - to pass this knowledge on to her by word of mouth in the 'oral tradition' (Ma'ia'i, 1957; Petana-Ioka, 1995). Dawn's intimate knowledge of Samoa's *indigenous* stories and culture clearly demonstrated to me the effectiveness of this tradition that embraces *Pasifika* values and ideals. She was able to speak fluently of events such as the coming of the *papalangi* (the white Gods). In turn, in the 'oral tradition', she educated me on my cultural learning journey as she regularly peppered our conversations with stories and with cultural protocols.

Interestingly, rather than being involved in a dual (in)formal education system similar to her Samoan compatriots, Annie's education during her early years in India resonated with and encompassed her cultural protocols and values. We did however draw strong correlations between her Indian societal values, codes of behaviour and expectations and those of *fa'aSamoa* in her initial education and teacher training in India. Obedience and respect for her elders, for example, were important aspects of her upbringing. As a student in the classroom she was expected to listen to and obey the teacher unquestioningly.

7.3 Living and Learning in Two Worlds

I was interested to hear of the challenges that the participants have encountered during their educational journeys and the tensions and inner conflict many of these have created. I have selected two of these to relate as they epitomise for me two differing aspects of the impact teachers can have on their *Pasifika* students. The first story clearly illustrates the view of *indigenous* writers such as Bishop and Glynn (1999), Heine (2002), Kana'iaupuni (2005), Smith (1999) and Thaman (2002), that within western methodologies there is scant regard for the *Pasifika* student's cultural background, beliefs and values. The second exemplifies the long term effects of carefully considered challenges that are given to students as an opportunity for debate with others and to make their own considered decisions.

The first story belongs to Dawn. She told it during one of our many *talanoa* and I later recorded it in my journal. It is therefore told in my words as I remember it and as approved by Dawn. The story is written in the first person. I have used italics to identify it as a quote from my own journal, rather than a direct quote from Dawn. Dawn has already explained the tensions she experienced around taking up her scholarship in Canberra and the need to

care for her mother who was unwell. This story demonstrates a further, thoughtless challenge to her culture from her *palagi* lecturer.

When I was in Canberra one of the assignments was to talk about how I would approach/work with authorities if I wanted something. I stood up and said that I would take the Minister or Director or whoever out to lunch. This drew a howl of protest from other course members and from the course lecturer. They said that I couldn't do this. "But", I said, "This person could be a friend. I may have gone to school with them. Why couldn't I take him or her out to lunch? This is the Samoan way. It is our culture." The lecturer would not accept my justification. I changed my assignment to give an answer that reflected the palagi viewpoint, even though it was not the way it would happen in my culture.

This same lecturer visited Samoa quite a few years later. He had been here only a few days when he talked to me. "Remember that assignment? You were right. I can see that is how things happen in Samoa."

Had this lecturer been prepared to take cognisance of his *Pasifika* student's cultural values and perspectives instead of devaluing them (Heine, 2002; Thaman, 2005), he would have been able to provide her with a learning opportunity with meaning and relevance.

In the second story, Pak, the impressionable 6th former, was markedly influenced by Albert Wendt who challenged the very foundations of Christianity and of *fa'aSamoa*, on which the Constitution of the Independent State of (Western) Samoa is based (Meleisea, 1992; Polu, 1998). Wendt opened the door to a world where it is acceptable to have ideas

different from others, where it is expected that students will think out loud and debate. Pak responded positively to this challenge, although it has, and still does, cause tension and conflict for him. He speaks of his difficulties in trying to adopt a constructivist approach in his own classroom where his students will debate with each other and with him, the teacher.

It isn't culturally acceptable to answer back. Still present in Samoan society, Samoan Schools. It's very much there and it's one of the reasons I have difficulties with a constructive approach to teaching where [you] encourage students to think out loud and throw out ideas. They're very careful that they don't want to overstep the boundaries. To me personally, it's still very much present even to my better classes here in NUS.

Despite these difficulties Pak is determined to continue developing a constructivist approach in his classroom that will provide his students with the opportunity to open 'Wendt's door.' He talks of his internal struggle, when things become difficult, to avoid reverting to the teacher-dominated classroom he experienced as a student and with which his students are comfortable.

These two stories clearly demonstrate the conflicts the participants have experienced during their education and in their own teaching between their duties under *fa'aSamoa*, their societal expectations and the dictates of western ideals, strategies and methodologies. As they have been exposed to these different approaches however, the participants have identified aspects that have enabled them to both develop confidence and increase their learning. They talk about how they would like to incorporate constructivist approaches and

western classroom practices into their own teaching. They want their students to understand that it is possible to debate issues and ask questions without challenging the authority of their teachers. This immediately creates tensions as so much of this learning and teaching is in direct contrast to *fa'aSamoa*. They honour and respect *fa'aSamoa* and wish to retain its codes of behaviour and practices that determine one must respect one's elders, parents and those in authority. They want their students to be proud of this heritage. The challenge they face is to weave the principles and concepts of *fa'aSamoa* with concepts from the western world and establish interactive classrooms where students work alongside and support each other in their learning. They are in essence caught between two worlds.

7.4 Determining Direction

The participants' lives have been bound by the principles of *fa'aSamoa* and of Christianity. They are aware of their place in society and the correct behaviour they should exhibit (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994). At all times it is important to provide service and *fa'aaloalo* to those of higher status. These clearly defined responsibilities within family and social structures determine that it is parents, *aiga*, teachers and others in authority who prescribe what to do, when to do it and how to do it. This has developed an ingrained obedience and dependence on those in authority that has spilled over into the participants' educational pathways and career choices. We have seen, for example, that although her heart was set on becoming a nurse, Sua Molimau was directed by her father to become a teacher. Her many acts of rebellion resulted in her expulsion from the Teachers' College three times. Such was the control not only of her father but also of her *aiga*, however, that these attempts to be listened to were ignored. They instead negotiated with the authorities for her to be reinstated and to continue with the imposed career pathway. While there was no

choice for Sua Molimau, she was not expected to follow this pathway without support. In keeping with the tradition of *fa'aSamoa* where members of the community support each other, her aunt was there for her through all the early stages of her career.

This dependence on authority caused me to question the impact on participants should the main authority figure be taken away. The practice of reciprocity within *fa'aSamoa* determines that should a family member be unable to fulfil a role or duty, a member of the community will do so (Talen, T., personal communication, May 2006). Terri's *aiga* and community were prepared to fill the gap left by Terri's father on his death. My discussions with her revealed, however, that while she was happy to accept this support, she also saw this time in her life as an opportunity to become independent, to take control and to make her own decisions. What I found particularly interesting was that when faced with a major crisis that impacted on her study and work, her ingrained dependence on authority came to the fore and she felt unable to make these decisions on her own. Instead of turning to the *aiga* and community though, she sought support from a higher deity, God.

I was fasting and praying, maybe everyday most of the time. When I drove to Siumu I started praying. I felt like I was talking to God. You know, the only thing I was asking was, 'Please can you come down and face to face with me.' All the way to Siumu I just talked to him. And then I had that inner love inside me that God loves me.

Terri describes a dream that helped her to reach the 'right' personal decision during this crisis.

I was asking God if I had made the right decision. You know, like, the spiritual and the beliefs in the church that I have... And then I woke up and I said, 'Man, so this is the answer. God doesn't want us to ...'

Terri told me that it was this support that helped her manage her study and work during this difficult time. She is still determined to retain her independence and make her own decisions but she continues to draw strength from her relationship with God and her involvement in the Church.

Pak is clear that his mother and his wife are at the centre of his universe. Although he has already been in the position of making his own career decisions, Pak is adamant that it is the support he received from these people that enabled him to make wise choices. At times, when the support has broken down, he has struggled to remain focused on his study. It was his 'study community' that motivated him and enabled him to continue with his studies. Pak's responsibility to care for his mother was the deciding factor in his return to Samoa after completing his degree. Pak had no idea what he would do. He fell into teaching, is now passionate about it, totally committed and determined to succeed. Alongside this however, is the man in his 40s with no long-term or career plan mapped out. In Pak's words he is waiting to see what stepping stone 'will fall in front of him next' or, "a stepping stone for me. It depends on where I've stepped on how things will come through." Family support and direction are essential components of Pak's decision-making processes. His mother is the only member of his *aiga* living in Samoa. He has, however, been embraced as a member of his wife's *aiga* who have shown their *fa'aaloalo* and *alofa* by giving him *matai* status. Reciprocity and the support of his community will provide the direction that he needs.

It seems that the practices of *fa'aSamoa* develop an ingrained dependence on authority that is very difficult to set aside. Interestingly, it is these same principles that have established mechanisms to ensure that there will always be someone available to meet this dependence. The practice of reciprocity within the community illustrates how these mechanisms can operate.

A common expression in the western world to which I belong is that s/he 'needs to stand on her/his own two feet.' Dependence on others can be regarded negatively. My initial reaction therefore to the dependence on authority that is exhibited through *fa'aSamoa* tended to be negative. My opinion altered as I endeavoured to set aside this western frame and view through a lens similar to the participants. I have come to the conclusion that the practices of *fa'aSamoa* are essential if Samoan society and its culture are to continue and thrive.

7.5 Gaining Authority

As the participants have studied, worked and become successful educators, they in turn have become people with authority. Each one of them, as an expert in his or her field, has taken a role in the development of the various Samoan curricula. They regularly facilitate professional development workshops for teachers. In these environments, they are regarded as having authority and are the recipients of the *fa'aalaolo* that this authority requires.

They speak of how their education, particularly their recent study, has given them a level of confidence that has enabled them from time to time to step outside the bounds of *fa'aSamoa* and engage in debate with and question others in higher authority in relation to their work. Sua Molimau, for example, spoke about her appointment as a school deputy principal in 2005.

I thought, “Oh, this is the time when I will talk.” That’s when I started talking all the time, asking so many questions. Just that I’m fortunate that I have training and I have that confidence that I was able to communicate with people... It’s about the issues when I have the confidence to speak. But it’s through education. It’s from the education that I have.

On the face of it, the participants appear to have the confidence to seek promotion and to look for positions that will give them more authority. As I delved deeper, however, it appeared that once again *fa’aSamoa’s* practice of *fa’aaloalo* has impacted on the participants. They find it difficult to put themselves forward for positions that would place them in authority over those whose societal position is higher than their own. Pak, for example, did not apply for a high level position even though he was well qualified and had been strongly recommended. He explains

I wasn’t a *matai* and I knew that as the ... you would be facing members of the public that would come in as *matais*, and I was not comfortable talking to them, not being a *matai* and talking to members of higher ranks than me.

An appointment to this position would have created tensions for Pak and for those with whom he would be working.

The context of self-promotion is an area where I see Annie’s natural behaviour fitting in with *fa’aSamoa* practices. While she has remained true to her own Indian culture during her 30 years of living and working in Samoa, she has also been bound by many of the codes of behaviour determined by *fa’aSamoa*. The hierarchical nature of the society is one

such example. A quiet and gentle person, Annie at all times exhibits *loto mauolo*. She is confident in her knowledge and her abilities as an educator. She does not however look for promotion. In her view it is far more appropriate for the people of the culture to hold positions of authority.

When making personal decisions, the participants have taken into account the likely effect the decision will have on the relevant community as a whole. If this consideration determines that the community, or certain members of the community, could be disadvantaged or placed in a difficult position, the participant will put aside his/her wishes. This causes me, through my western eyes, to view the constraints of *fa'aSamoa* as suppressing the desires of the participants - requiring them to act selflessly by giving a priority to the greater good of the community. Under *fa'aSamoa* however it could be argued that more prestige is gained by putting the community first (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1994).

7.6 They Have in Their Arms Both Ways

(Adapted from Adrienne Jansen's (1990) book, *I Have in my Arms Both Ways*, in which she tell stories of immigrant women who have come to New Zealand and who have retained their own culture while living within another.)

I was struck by the balancing act the participants have been engaged in throughout their educational journeys. They have balanced the expectations of the formal education they undertook in a western system that relied on "so-called universal truths and impersonality" (Thaman, 2002, p. 24) with their own cultural values and beliefs and the expectation that they would be accountable to their community (Polu, 1998; Thaman, 1998).

Pasifika, more particularly Samoan, cultural values and practices have been central to Dawn, Pak, Sua Molimau and Terri's lives (Wilson & Hunt, 1998). They have accepted the codes of behaviour and expectations that *fa'aSamoa* places on them and willingly perform

the duties it entails. At the same time they have been required to balance not only the demands of an education system that made no allowances for their culture but also to work with teachers who in some cases show little interest in understanding their culture and its demands on them.

For Annie, this has meant retaining her Indian culture while at the same time living and working within a community and society that is totally immersed in *fa'aSamoa*. Her Christian principles and her early education were similar to those to be found in Samoa. This perhaps smoothed her transition into the new society with its expectations. As we co-constructed her story, it was very clear that Annie has successfully balanced her culture, the expectations of a western education system and *fa'aSamoa*. She is a dedicated and successful educator and is a leader in her field.

As the participants have undertaken this balancing act between the western world and *fa'aSamoa*, they have truly 'held in their arms both ways.'

7.7 Achieving Success

Throughout the process of *lalāgaga o le ietoga* I have discussed challenges the participants have faced on their journeys to becoming successful senior educators. *Fa'aSamoa* with its codes of practices and behaviours appears to be central to this success, with the participants exhibiting a strong inner resilience when overcoming these challenges.

The community expectation that parents will ensure their children receive (in)formal education is not always easy for parents. At times they are required to make personal sacrifices and endure hardships. This in turn places a strong obligation on the children to succeed. As Sua Molimau says

Having experienced the hard life in a big family, I am urged to struggle and aim for the best. To honour my parents, I have a strong feeling of working even harder to achieve good goals and to invest in education.

As adults, success and failure reflect back on the community as a whole. Once again, therefore, success becomes a driving force. Terri illustrated this for me when speaking of how happy she was when her students achieved ‘A’ grades in their examinations. For her this meant that not only would the Education Board say “Oh, good teacher,” the community would also be told of “my success” at the prize giving.

Interestingly, rather than cause competition, this drive for success appears to carry with it an obligation of mutual support determined by *fa’aSamoa’s* values such as reciprocity, *alofa* and *fa’aalalo*. This for me demonstrates the enigma of *fa’aSamoa*. On the one hand it places constraints and demands on its members that can impede success. On the other, these same constraints provide support structures and systems that enable success.

7.8 Ietoga

My purpose in undertaking this research study was to determine how a group of senior educators in Samoa have undertaken their educational journeys. I was interested to discover how these successful senior educators had managed not only the usual challenges experienced by me in my western world, but also the additional challenges involved in honouring their *Pasifika* values and meeting societal expectations.

Much of the literature I engaged with pointed to the failure of western education methodologies and systems to meet the needs of *Pasifika* peoples. This proved to be the case. As the participants and I co-constructed their stories, it was revealed that the curricula in use in Samoa during the Samoan participants’ early formal education was entirely

western based. They became well-versed in western or European literature and geography, for example. They learnt little of their own country's history or culture. It was left to their *aiga* and *nu'u* to ensure that this important informal part of their education occurred. The mainly teacher-centred classrooms dovetailed well with some cultural practices such as *fa'aalaolo*, and with the Christian commandment of 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother.' Students were expected to sit, to listen, to obey and to not question the teacher.

Unfortunately the western teachers' methodologies and expectations took little cognisance of the responsibilities and duties *fa'aSamoa* placed on their students. Despite this lack of attention to their cultural values and practices, the participants have been successful and are educational leaders in Samoa.

In listening to and co-constructing the participants' stories it has been revealed that the many practices, codes of behaviour and expectations of *fa'aSamoa* have influenced the participants' educational journeys. Its values of *fa'aalaolo*, *alofa*, support, acceptance and reciprocity have both constrained and supported their educational journeys. They have had no choice but to operate between two separate worlds.

8 Looking Back - Looking Forward



8.1 Introduction

Throughout the research process and the writing of this report I have been mindful that the topic and nature of the study were established through consultation with the community.

Together we agreed that the research would not be judgemental, that it would not be a critique of the Samoan culture or of the education of Samoa's peoples. It would tell the stories of the participants' educational journeys.

In this chapter I look back and reflect on the research process. I raise further issues and questions that arose as I engaged with the data and that provide possible areas for further research. The thesis concludes with a reflection from my research journal.

8.2 Looking Back

8.2.1 *Unique Study*

Two main factors establish this study as unique. As indicated in the introduction to the thesis, there have been studies conducted in New Zealand on *Pasifika* people undertaking tertiary study. These studies have been based on the participants' experiences in New Zealand. I was, however, unable to locate research involving people living in Samoa and undertaking their tertiary study there.

The circumstances of the study are also unique. The study was possible because of the existing relationship between the FOE at the NUS and the CCE. It was possible because of the positive relationships between the MTchLn lecturers, the cohort students and the staff of NUS and the MESC. It was possible because of the friendships and relationships of trust that I had already begun to develop with the cohort students and the staff. These factors

enabled me, a *palagi*, to engage in ‘solo’ research with *Pasifika* peoples. This particular set of circumstances is not likely to occur again.

8.2.2 *Research Process*

A question often asked at the conclusion of a research study is what would be done differently were the study to be repeated. There are very few alterations I would make to this study. The community and the participants accorded me a great honour in allowing me to engage in this research. It was important to me that I returned the honour through careful consideration and planning during each stage of the research process. Consultation with and approval of the community were of paramount importance. This consultation determined that I would tell the participants’ stories and that I would undertake the research in Samoa. I worked closely and collaboratively with the participants throughout the process. They were fully engaged in the co-construction of their stories through on-going checking and consultation. I returned to Samoa many times so that the checking and consultation were undertaken face-to face-in the participants’ environment. In addition, I remained in regular email contact with the participants.

The research approach *O auala i le fa’apasefika* enabled me to combine aspects of my social constructionist epistemology with the constructs of the participants’ values and beliefs. The *ietoga*, taken from the participants’ culture, provided the means to weave together various strands of the culture, the participants’ stories and my own cultural and research learning journeys.

I was mindful of the privilege accorded to a *palagi* to engage in ‘solo’ research with a *Pasifika* community thus enabling me to fulfil the MTchLn requirement that the student undertake individual, independent research. This ‘solo’ research is in contradiction to the widely-held view that *Pasifika* research should be undertaken by *Pasifika* peoples, or, if a

palagi is involved, s/he should work alongside a *Pasifika* person or peoples (Anae et al., 2001; Smith, 1999)

At all times I endeavoured to respect the participants' culture and to act in a culturally appropriate way. The CCE appointed a cultural advisor in New Zealand to guide me through the various cultural protocols and behaviours. The participants themselves took on the role of cultural advisors during my time in Samoa.

Initial preparation for the research commenced in May 2005. The whole process has taken 14 months of part-time study. I have found this a very tight time-frame to work within. Were I to repeat the study I would spread the process over a longer period.

Finally, I would not work 'solo.' I would though welcome the opportunity to be engaged in a future similar study if it were possible to work alongside a *Pasifika* researcher or researchers.

8.2.3 *Research Constraint*

The community and the participants defined clear parameters for the research. As I engaged with the data, the impact of *fa'aSamoa* on the participants' lives and educational journeys was revealed. I am aware that I have literally only 'scratched the surface' of *fa'aSamoa*. I am comfortable with this as I concur with *Pasifika* scholars that any research in this area should be conducted by members of the culture. This was behind my decision to not call on people like Albert Wendt who has written many critical commentaries on his own Samoan culture. A consequence of this decision is that I have chosen not to use literature that would either support or contradict my interpretation of the impact of *fa'aSamoa* on the participants' educational journeys.

8.2.4 *Contributions to the Participants' and Research Communities*

I have identified three ways in which this research contributes to both the participants' and research communities. The research illustrates how the participants have balanced the tensions between the requirements of the western institutions that provide their education and the requirements of *fa'aSamoa*. Western institutions can provide meaningful programmes and learning experiences for their *Pasifika* students provided they take cognisance of and plan for these students' cultural values, beliefs and codes of behaviour.

I have determined factors that have aided these educators' success. This is in contrast to the focus of other *Pasifika* research studies I have read, the nature of which has been to consider what has contributed to the participants' failure to succeed.

My final contribution is the development of *O aua i le fa'aPasefika* as an appropriate approach for researching with *Pasifika* peoples.

8.3 Looking Forward

8.3.1 *Questions Raised*

This research was conducted with a small group of senior educators in Samoa, who have successfully balanced the requirements of western education systems with the constraints of *fa'aSamoa* and become leaders in their particular areas. Questions that arise from this are, how have the participants' educational journeys differed from those of other educators who have not achieved the same success? Have the participants been successful in their postgraduate study because they are undertaking this while living in Samoa and therefore have ready access to *fa'aSamoa's* support systems? Would they be as successful if they travelled away from Samoa to undertake this study? What impact has the combination of face-to-face delivery in Samoa and distance delivery of the MTchLn had on the participants' success?

The participants face a self-imposed challenge of blending the practices of *fa'aSamoa* with some of the constructivist practices of western education. Is it possible to successfully blend the two? What might be the long-term effects on Samoan education and Samoan society?

8.3.2 *Opportunities*

In the previous section I raised a number of questions I see as providing opportunities for the *Pasifika* community to engage in further research. Ideally such research would be undertaken by Samoan or other *Pasifika* peoples in Samoa who may choose to work alongside *palagi* researchers. *O auala i le fa'aPasifika* has been shown as a culturally appropriate research approach for such studies.

8.4 **Final Reflection**

I began this thesis with a comment from my research journal written as I arrived in Samoa to commence the research. My final reflection also from this journal was written shortly after returning to New Zealand from a visit to Samoa where the participants and I had spent time together checking and co-constructing their stories.

This thesis developed from feelings of respect, awe and admiration I had for a group of senior educators in Samoa who were undertaking tertiary study in what appeared to me to be very difficult circumstances. The willingness of these people to allow me to enter their worlds and their willingness to share their stories has enhanced these feelings and given me an understanding of how they have undertaken their educational journeys. I have developed firm and true friendships. I have a much greater awareness not only of their culture but also my own. Through my own research and cultural learning journey I have learnt the meaning of 'I have in my arms both ways'.

9 Bibliography



- Afamasaga, T. (2002). Personal reflections on education in Samoa. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education* (pp. 97-101). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Afamasaga, T., Moli, F. S., & Kruse-Vaal, E. (2005). *UNESCO/International institute for educational planning (IIEP) project. Reinforcing/incorporating skills development in the Samoan national education for all (EFA) plan. National study. Final report* (Draft). Samoa: UNESCO/IIEP.
- Anae, M., Anderson, H., Benseman, J., & Coxon, E. (2002). *Pacific peoples and tertiary education: Issues of participation. Final report*. Auckland: Auckland Uniservices.
- Anae, M., Coxon, E., Mara, D., Wendt-Samu, T., & Finau, C. (2001). *Pasifika education research guidelines. Final report*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.
- Anderson, G. (1990). *Fundamentals of educational research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Anderson, K., Armitage, S., Jack, D., & Wittner, J. (2004). Beginning where we are: Feminist methodology in oral history. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research. A reader on theory and practice* (pp. 224-242). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bishop, R., & Glynn, T. (1999). *Culture counts: Changing power relations in education*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative research for education. An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bridges, D. (2001). The ethics of outsider research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35(3), 371-386.

- Brody, C. M., Witherell, C., Donald, K., & Lundblad, R. (1991). Story and voice in the education of professionals. In J. Wittner & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Stories lives tell. Narrative and dialogue in education* (pp. 257-278). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Burns, R. (2000). *Introduction to research methods* (4th ed.). Melbourne: Longman/Pearson Education.
- Carter, K. (2003). *Itinerant teachers of music: A state of flux*. Unpublished master's dissertation, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch.
- Chase, S. E. (2003). Taking narrative seriously: Consequences for method and theory in interview studies. In Y. S. Lincoln & N. K. Denzin (Eds.), *Turning posts in qualitative research. Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 273-296). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Clandinin, J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry. Experience and story in qualitative research* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass.
- Clough, P. (2002). *Narratives and fictions in educational research*. Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). Research design issues: Planning research. In L. Cohen, L. Manion & K. Morrison (Eds.), *Research methods in education* (5th ed., pp. 73-91). London: Routledge Falmer.
- Cresswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design. Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crocombe, R., Baba, T., & Meleisea, M. (1988). The development of higher education in the Pacific Islands. In R. Crocombe & M. Meleisea (Eds.), *Pacific universities. Achievements, problems and prospects* (pp. 20-34). Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies. University of the South Pacific.

- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Davidson, C., & Tolich, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Social science research in New Zealand. Many paths to understanding*. Auckland: Longman.
- Denzin, N. K. (2004). The art and politics of interpretation. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research. A reader on theory and practice* (pp. 447-472). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (1994). Gender, culture and tourism development in Western Samoa. In V. Kinnaird & D. Hall (Eds.), *Tourism: A gender analysis* (pp. 121-141). London: John Wiley & Sons.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (1998). *Tamaitai Samoa. Their stories* (Rev ed.). Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific.
- Fairbairn-Dunlop, P. (2003). *Ole mailau a tamaitai: Women's leadership network*. Paper presented at the UNIFEM Pacific Regional Office and UNESCO, Samoa.
- Faoagali, S. (2004). *Home economics vs food and textile technology: Bridging the gap between the old and new secondary school curriculum in Samoan Schools*. Unpublished master's dissertation, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch.
- Feldman, M. S., Bell, J., & Berger, M. T. (2003). *Gaining access. A practical and theoretical guide for qualitative researchers*. Oxford: AltaMira.
- Filipo, S. L. (2004). In search of a culturally appropriate approach to research: A Samoan case. In T. Baba, O. Mahina, N. Williams & U. Nabobo-Baba (Eds.), *Researching the Pacific and indigenous peoples: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 179-185). Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, The University of Auckland.

- Fletcher, J. (2005). *Tales and talanoa: Using a culturally appropriate methodology to research the experiences of Pasifika and Maori second chance tertiary learners*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Foley, D. (2003). Indigenous epistemology and indigenous standpoint theory. *Social Alternatives*, 22(1), 44-52.
- Glesne, C. (1999). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.
- Goodley, D., Lawthom, R., Clough, P., & Moore, M. (2004). *Researching life stories. Method, theory and analyses in a biographical age*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Goodson, I. F., & Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings. Learning from lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Heine, H. C. (2002). A Marshall Islands perspective. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education* (pp. 84-90). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Helsinki Consulting Group, & ANZDEC Limited. (2004). *Samoa education sector project II ADB JA No 4256-SAM. Equity, quality, relevance, efficiency. Draft education Sector review. The independent state of Samoa*. Samoa: Author.
- Hinds, D. (2000). Research instruments. In D. Wilkinson (Ed.), *The researcher's toolkit: The complete guide to practitioner research* (pp. 41-53). London: Routledge Falmer.
- Holmes, K., & Crossley, M. (2004). Whose knowledge, whose values? The contribution of local knowledge to education policy processes: A case study of research development initiatives in the small state of Santa Lucia. *Compare*, 34(2), 197-214.

- Huffer, E., & Qalo, R. (2004). Have we been thinking upside-down? The contemporary emergence of Pacific theoretical thought. *The Contemporary Pacific*, 16(1), 87-116.
- Hyden, M., & Overlien, C. (2004). "Doing" narrative analysis. In D. K. Padgett (Ed.), *The qualitative research experience* (pp. 250-268). SouthBank, Vic.: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Jalongo, M. R., & Isenberg, J. P. (1995). *Teachers' stories: From personal narrative to professional insight*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 379-399). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jansen, A. (1990). *I have in my arms both ways. Stories by immigrant women*. Wellington: Allen & Unwin.
- Kacimawai, P. (1988). Reaching the off-campus majority. In R. Crocombe & M. Meleisea (Eds.), *Pacific universities. Achievements, problems and prospects* (pp. 147-154). Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific.
- Kana'iaupuni, S. M. (2005). Ka'akalai ku kanana: A call for strengths-based approaches from a native Hawaiian perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 34(5), 32-38.
- Kondrick, L. C. (2003). Back to school: Negotiating the transition from secondary to tertiary education: ERIC.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews. An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lay, G., Murrow, T., & Meleisea, M. (2000). *Samoa: Pacific pride*. Auckland: Pasifika Press.

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2003). Ethics: The failure of positivist science. In Y. S. Lincoln & E. G. Guba (Eds.), *Turning points in qualitative research. Tying knots in a handkerchief* (pp. 219-237). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Luamanuvao, W. L. (2003). *Ole mailau a tamaitai: Womens' Leadership Network*. Paper presented at the UNIFEM Pacific Regional Office and UNESCO, Apia, Samoa.
- Ma'ia'i, F. (1957). *A study of the developing pattern of education and the factors influencing that development in New Zealand's Pacific Dependencies*. Unpublished master's thesis, Victoria University, Wellington.
- Manu'atu, L., & Kepa, M. (2002, November). *Toward conceptualising cultural diversity: An indigenous critique*. Paper presented at the School of Maori & Pacific Development & International Centre for Cultural Studies (ICCS), India 7th Joint Conference "Preservation of Ancient Cultures and the Globalization Scenario", University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- McDrury, J., & Alterio, M. (2002). *Learning through storytelling: Using reflection and experience in higher education contexts*. Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Mel, M. A. (2002). Noman/Mbu Noman/Muim: The need for wisdom in our curriculum. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education* (pp. 91-96). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Meleisea, M. (1987). *The making of modern Samoa. Traditional authority and colonial administration in the history of Western Samoa*. Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific.
- Meleisea, M. (1992). *Change and adaptations in Western Samoa*. Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury.

- Meyer, M. A. (2006, March). *Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian epistemology and the triangulation of meaning*. Paper presented at the NZEALS Seminar, Christchurch College of Education, Christchurch.
- Monroe, S. S. (1995). *Changing woman: Aspects of renewal in Navajo tribal literature*. Retrieved August 23, 2005, from <http://www.eric.ed.gov>
- Morse, J. M., & Richards, L. (2002). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mutch, C. A. (2005). *Doing educational research. A practitioner's guide to getting started*. Wellington, New Zealand: NZCER Press.
- Mutch, C. A., & Wong, M. (2005). Confessions from the field: Unpacking and re-packing our research kete. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 11(1), 43-60.
- Nabobo, U. (2002). Computer tigers and coconut trees. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Re-thinking Pacific education: Tree of opportunity* (pp. 36-47). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Neuman, W. L. (2000). *Social research methods. Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Noddings, N., & Witherell, C. (1991). Themes remembered and foreseen. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Stories lives tell. Narrative and dialogue in education* (pp. 279-280). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Norsworthy, B. (2005). Changing expectations of research: Wrestling with the complex and unpredictable. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 11(1), 89-106.
- Pennells, J. (2003). Challenges in adjusting to new technology in supporting learners in developing countries. In A. Tait & R. Mills (Eds.), *Rethinking learner support in distance education. Change and continuity in an international context* (pp. 155-167). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Petana-Ioka, K. M. (1995). *Secondary education in Western Samoa: Developments in the English curriculum, 1960s-1990s*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin.
- Petelo, L. M. (2003). *Fa'alogo i leo o le fanau: A qualitative study of the ways in which students of Samoan background experience their education within the University of Canterbury*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Canterbury, Christchurch.
- Petrie, K. (2005). Coming unstuck as an interviewer. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 11(1), 107-120.
- Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2. An invitation to a critical humanism*. London: Sage.
- Polu, L. (1998, October). *Cultural rights and the individual in the Samoan context*. Paper presented at the Culture, Rights, and Cultural Rights. Perspectives from the South Pacific Colloquium, Apia, Samoa.
- Puamau, P. (2002). Rethinking education in Fiji: Issues and solutions in the 21st century. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Re-thinking Pacific education: Tree of opportunity* (pp. 60-71). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling qualitative data. A practical guide*. London: Sage.
- Richardson, L. (2004). Writing: A method of inquiry. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research* (pp. 473-495). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (Eds.). (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Sands, R. G. (2004). Narrative analysis. A feminist approach. In D. K. Padgett (Ed.), *The qualitative research experience* (pp. 48-62). SouthBank, Vic.: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Sanga, K. F. (2001). Beyond access and participation: Challenges facing Pacific education. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education* (pp. 52-58). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Scott, D. (2000). *Reading educational research and policy*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Shakya, A., & Horsfall, J. M. (2000). ESL undergraduate nursing students in Australia: Some experiences. *Nursing and Health Sciences* (2), 163-171.
- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative data. Methods for analysing talk, text and interaction* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies. Research and indigenous peoples*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.
- Spoonley, P. (1999). The challenge of cross-cultural research. In C. Davidson & M. Tolich (Eds.), *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding*. Auckland: Longman.
- Strachan, J., Samuel, J., & Takaro, M. (2005, December). *Ni Vanuatu women graduates: What happens when they go home?* Paper presented at the New Zealand Association of Research in Education Conference, Dunedin, New Zealand.
- Subramani. (2003). *Emerging epistemologies*. Paper presented at the South Pacific Literatures, Emerging Literatures, Local Interest and Global Significance, Theory Politics, Society Conference, Noumea.

- Taufe'ulungaki, A. M. (2002). Pacific education: Are there alternatives? In C. Benson (Ed.), *Tree of opportunity: Re-thinking Pacific education* (pp. 5-21). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Thaman, K. H. (1998). *Cultural rights: A personal perspective*. Paper presented at the Culture, Rights, and Cultural Rights. Perspectives from the South Pacific Colloquium, Apia, Samoa.
- Thaman, K. H. (2002). Towards cultural democracy in Pacific education: An imperative for the 21st century. In C. Benson (Ed.), *Re-thinking Pacific education: Tree of opportunity* (pp. 22-30). Suva, Fiji: The University of the South Pacific Institute of Education.
- Thaman, K. H. (2005). Whose values and what responsibility? Cultural and cognitive democracy. *Pacific Asian Education*, 17(1), 8-19.
- Trumble, W. R., & Stevenson, A. (Eds.). (2002). *Shorter Oxford English dictionary on historical principles* (5th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tupuola, A. M. (1993). Raising research consciousness the fa'aSamoa way. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education*, 3, 175-189.
- Vaioleti, T. M. (2003). *'Talanoa research methodology' a perspective on Pacific research*. Paper presented at the Power, Politics and Practice Pasifika Educators Conference, Auckland.
- Van Maanen, J. (2004). An end to innocence: The ethnography of ethnography. In S. N. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on theory and practice* (pp. 427-446). New York: Oxford University Press.

Waldrop, D. (2004). Ethical issues in qualitative research with high-risk populations.

Handle with care. In D. K. Padgett (Ed.), *The qualitative research experience* (pp. 236-249). SouthBank, Vic.: Thomson Brooks/Cole.

Watts, N., White, C., & Trlin, A. (2004). Perspectives on the cultural capital contribution of overseas-born students and staff in New Zealand Tertiary Education Institutions. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies. Te Hautaka Maatai Maatauranga o Aoteroa*, 39(2), 193-206.

Wilson, M., & Hunt, P. (1998, October). *Colloquium agreed statement*. Paper presented at the Culture, Rights, and Cultural Rights. Perspectives from the South Pacific Colloquium, Apia, Samoa.

Witherell, C., & Noddings, N. (Eds.). (1991). *Stories lives tell. Narrative and dialogue in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

10 Appendices



The information letter and the consent sheet were printed on Christchurch College of Education Letterhead.

10.1 Information Letter

2/114 Conway Street
Christchurch
New Zealand

22 August 2007

Talofa lava

I am a lecturer at the Christchurch College of Education and am also studying towards a Master of Teaching and Learning (MTchLn) degree. I am about to commence my thesis under the working title of: **Stories from the Pacific. Senior educators in Samoa share stories of their educational journeys.** To help me with my research, I need to interview educators who are willing to tell me how they have undertaken their educational journeys.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your willingness to be a participant in my research project.

In order to hear your story, it is important that we meet at a time and place that is convenient to you. The entire interview will be tape-recorded and later transcribed. Prior to the analysis of the data, a copy of the transcript will be provided to you to allow you the opportunity to check the text. Should you wish to clarify, change or have any part of the text deleted, this will be accommodated at your request. Should follow-up individual or focus group interviews be necessary, the same conditions will apply. In recognising the nature of fa'aSamoa as oral and collective, I anticipate that data may also be gathered through informal conversations. Your permission will be obtained before data gathered through these conversations is used by me. In addition, data will be supplemented by my own field notes.

As the participants in this research work closely together, each of you may easily be able to identify other participants from their stories. In addition, as you are well-known both within, and in some cases beyond, the Samoan community, others who read the final report or who attend conferences and other forums where findings are disseminated, may well be able to identify you regardless of steps taken to change identify and data sources. Consequently, it is not possible in this research study to guarantee you complete confidentiality and anonymity.

All information related to this study will be securely stored either at the Christchurch College of Education or at my home until the successful completion of my work. For auditing purposes, the data will need to be kept until this requirement no longer applies. At this point, the data will be destroyed.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do choose to participate you can withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The College has appointed two academic supervisors and a cultural advisor for my research:

Dr Carol Mutch, Christchurch College of Education

Dr Jane Robertson, Canterbury University

Tufulasi Taleni, Christchurch College of Education.

The Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this study.

Complaints Procedure

The College requires that all participants be informed that if they have any complaint concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to:

The Chair
Ethical Clearance Committee
Christchurch College of Education
P O Box 31-065
Christchurch
Phone: (03) 345 8390

If you prefer, you may give any complaint concerning the manner in which the research project is conducted to:

Gatoloai Tili Afamasaga
Faculty of Education Dean
National University of Samoa
Apia.

If you wish to discuss any aspects of this study, you can contact me at:
64 3 345 8339 or bridget.oregan@cce.ac.nz

Faafetai tele lava

Bridget O'Regan

10.2 Consent Form

Consent Form

I have read and understood the Information Sheet for Bridget O’Regan’s study under the working title of: **Stories from the Pacific. Senior educators in Samoa share stories of their educational journeys.** I understand that the study involves a/some tape recorded interview/s with me and may also include a focus group interview. I am aware that I will have the opportunity to request that clarification, changes or deletions to the transcribed text of the interview is carried out according to my requests before the material is used by the researcher. I understand that as the nature of fa’aSamoa is oral and collective, data may also be gathered through informal conversations. I understand that my permission will be obtained before data gathered through these conversations is used by the researcher.

I understand that as I work closely with other participants in this study, each of us may easily be able to identify other participants. I am further aware that others who read the final report or who attend conferences and other forums where findings are disseminated, may well be able to identify me regardless of steps taken to change identity and data sources.

I agree to participate in this study and I understand that I may withdraw at any time.

I am aware that this study has been reviewed and approved by the Christchurch College of Education Ethics Committee and that if I have any concerns about the content or conduct of this study I can contact the Ethics Committee.

I agree that the research data gathered may be published.

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

Name of Participant:

Participant’s signature:

Date:

.....

I have explained by means of an information sheet and orally, this study and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer. I believe that the consent is informed and that s/he understands the implications of participation.

Name of Researcher: Bridget O’Regan

Researcher’s signature:

Date: