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Spare the rod and spoil the child: Samoan perspectives on responsible parenting

J Pereira

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Cultural groups hold different beliefs, values and understandings that shape the way people parent. From a Samoan perspective, raising children as good citizens involves ensuring that children know how to behave appropriately. If necessary, there is a place for reasonable physical discipline. Moreover, many believe that the way western parents and teachers relate to children is socially irresponsible. This paper explores Samoan understandings of responsible parenting. It argues the case for cultural difference in approaches to parenting, and for the emergence of a 'third space' in which cultural groups negotiate the globalizing pressures of Western values. The paper draws on an emerging research literature and interviews with students, teachers and parents in Samoa. The study has implications for educators, social workers and policy makers in New Zealand and other Pacific Rim countries where Samoans form a significant proportion of a rapidly growing Pacific population.

Keywords: physical discipline; Pacific parenting; socialisation; Samoa

Introduction

Within each cultural group there are different beliefs, values and understandings that shape the way people go about bringing up their children. These are framed into discourses of parenting. In Samoa, many children and adults believe that there is a place for reasonable physical discipline. Furthermore, many believe that the way Western parents and teachers relate to children is socially irresponsible. From a Samoan perspective, raising children as good citizens means ensuring that they know how to behave appropriately. If necessary, this may mean using physical discipline. This paper explores these beliefs, attitudes and understandings and the way that they are configured into discourses of parenting that justify physical discipline.

This paper has special relevance to practitioners and researchers in New Zealand and other Pacific Rim countries. Most Samoans now reside in Pacific Rim countries such as New

Zealand. Although many have intermarried or were born overseas, traditional values and cultural practices continue in varying degrees to shape their lives. For example, a recent study by Cowley-Malcolm (2006) showed a strong relationship between the beliefs and values of Samoan parents in New Zealand and how they nurtured and disciplined their children. In this paper, by looking at parenting in Samoa, I aim to highlight the more traditional Samoan perspectives of responsible parenting and related values and beliefs that are brought to bear in metropolitan settings. The research also illustrates how Samoans, like any other cultural group, constantly reflect on and adapt their beliefs and actions.

Multiple and crosscutting processes of globalization are evident in this research. Over half the adult participants had travelled overseas and all had family members living in Pacific Rim countries. The rapid flow of people, ideas and images has contributed to a period of rapid

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change, construction and reconstruction. For example, internationally funded programmes and conferences, returning nationals and modern media promote global ideologies on children's rights and challenge the use of physical punishment. These processes have led to a heightened self-consciousness about what constitutes *faaSamoa* (the Samoan way) as opposed to the Western world.

Cvetkovich and Kellner (1997) observe that whilst global forces might challenge and at times undermine traditional structures and ideologies, they also create new opportunities for emancipation and the possibility of new ways of being and thinking. In Samoa, these processes have led to alternative cultural forms and ideas (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991; Liu 1991; Kruse Va'ai 1998). Not only are Samoans reflecting on how they parent but many are also exploring alternative ways of disciplining their children. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001a) calls this a 'third space'. These and other ideas are explored in the conclusion.

Research framework, methodology and issues

This research is qualitative in approach. Consistent with the ethnographic tradition, I endeavour to understand an aspect of Samoan culture through prolonged and empathetic engagement and dialogue. The research is also influenced by the social constructivism (Gergen 1985). From this perspective, the way we experience, perceive and live in the world is shaped by our culture, language and idiosyncratic experiences. The researcher is likened to a research instrument (Guba 1990) with the capacity to listen, empathize, reflect on and gain insight into the complex social world of the researched.

This study is also influenced by grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1997) where interpretation, insights and understandings are 'born out' of the data. In this paper, the data are drawn from a set of interviews, mostly in Samoan, and later transcribed into English. Glaser and Strauss (1967) believed that the grounded

approach would lead to the generation of formal theory. However, in this research I am more interested in the generation of local theories and local meanings, and understanding these within the cultural context of Samoa.

The qualitative framework recognizes that the researcher is a positioned subject (Rosaldo 1993). This means that our age, gender, cultural background, education, status, as well as other personal experiences shape the way that we view and interpret the world of the researched. Some researchers, particularly those representing indigenous groups emerging from colonialism, argue that only an insider can gain true insight into the complexities of another culture.

The concepts of insider and outsider are ambiguous, grey and slippery. As Saenz asks (1997), who determines who belongs, who does not and by what criteria? Where do we position the Pacific person raised in a Pacific rim country, possibly with no Pacific language, and possibly of mixed ethnicity? Where, asks Mahina (2004), do we position the 'outside' researcher with years of sustained engagement with Pacific peoples and culture?

These questions are pertinent to this research. I am a *palagi* (white New Zealander), yet for many years my life has been intimately linked to Samoa, Samoan culture and many people who identify as Samoan. My husband is Samoan and together we have raised five adult children. For much of our adult lives, we lived and worked in Samoa. There we were closely involved with extended family, contributed to *faalavelave* (cultural obligations) and enjoyed reciprocal and caring relationships with neighbours and friends.

This research was carried out in Samoa over a three-year period. It involved time spent as a participant/observer and in-depth interviews with a total of 35 students, parents and teachers at a rural and a semi-urban school. The students (aged 11–13 years), parents and teachers were invited to participate. Informal discussions were also held with six other educational professionals. The focus on education and schooling as well as the home allows me to

consider a wider range of relations in which children are disciplined and consider both key settings in which children are socialized—school and home. The two settings are closely interwoven with parents intimately concerned about the performance and behaviour of their children in schools for social and educational reasons, and teachers (often parents themselves) drawing on the home as model for socializing students. Most interviews were conducted in Samoan.¹ The research is also informed by many years living and teaching in Samoa, and an extensive review of relevant literature.

Like Kvale (1996), I see qualitative research as a craft, where the researcher gathers and cross-checks multiple sources of data, identifies emerging ideas, investigates inconsistencies, follows hunches, seeks feedback and explores alternative findings and ideas. This research is also influenced by Wolcott's (1994) concept of trustworthiness. To achieve this, I gathered the perspectives of different groups of people and later returned to revisit areas that needed clarification. Emerging ideas were shared with some participants and this led to further dialogue. In this way, the research was open to scrutiny and refined over time.

Overall, there was a surprising consistency between the responses of the different participants as to the nature of children, what constituted good parenting and the place of physical discipline. However, conversations with urban adults, particularly the educational professionals, produced more varied responses. This group differed in that many had lived and worked or studied overseas for long periods of time. They saw the ideas, beliefs and understandings expressed by participants as reflecting the Samoan way and their own childhood experiences. Whilst most had begun to question their own beliefs and practices and adapt how they related to their children, many commented that when faced with disrespectful behaviours, they too sometimes reverted to 'old' ways.

I approached this research like Anae (1998) believing that 'with any human relationship, reciprocity, responsiveness, commitment and

responsibility are essential ... mutual trust and understanding must be built carefully and sensitively' (ibid. p. 23). The research process followed Western and Samoan protocols. Participants signed consent forms and were informed about the purpose of the research and their rights. More importantly, every interaction was guided by the Samoan concept of *va fealoa'i* (relations of mutual respect). This involved showing courtesy at all times, moving through appropriate channels, acknowledging status relationships and using the formal language of respect when appropriate.

Physical discipline: an increasingly contested socialization tool

Physical punishment is an important socialization tool in Samoa (Mageo 1991, 1998; Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996; Vaipae 1999; Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a; Edwards et al. 2004; Odden 2008). Indeed Mageo (1998) describes physical punishment as the most important negative sanction in the socialization of small children. Despite being outlawed in schools, physical discipline and/or the threat of physical discipline continues at a reduced level. Over the last two decades, there has been increasing debate over its use within the home and school (Fairbairn-Dunlop & Associates 1998; Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a, b). Increasingly, an urban elite rejects teachers' right to discipline its children, and questions its own values and practices.

Beliefs about physical punishment

Discourses of parenting and the place of physical punishment within it are assembled from a mix of traditional social values and beliefs.

Biblical support

Samoans in Samoa and Pacific Rim countries frequently use The Bible to justify the use of physical punishment (Freeman 1983; Va'a 1995; Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996; Tanielu

1997; Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a; Singh and Dooley 2001; Pereira 2004). In this research, participants' attitudes were strongly influenced by biblical teachings. Parents and teachers justified hitting and smacking by quoting from Proverbs 10, Verse 13 in the Old Testament, '*E aoga le ta i le tua o le vale*' or '*O le sasa e tatau i le tua o le vale*'. (Hitting is useful/appropriate on the back of the person that is stupid [implied meaning—behaves inappropriately].)

In informal discussions and in interviews, several teachers and parents expressed the belief that fear/awe of God is the beginning of cleverness/wisdom. In each instance, God was described as a God of love and a God to be feared. Those who sinned risked being punished by the all-seeing, all-powerful and all-knowing God. Consistent with this biblical quote, a number of students, parents and teachers suggested that fear/awe towards authority is also essential in the child-adult relationship. In each instance, they implied that without this, children would not listen, obey and learn.

When talking about a disobedient child, adults often said that, *E lē fefe le tamaitiiti* (the child is not afraid/has no fear). Central to Samoan culture is the belief that in the same way that adults need to be *mata'u* (respectful, in awe, obedient and fearful towards God), children also need to be *mata'u*—respectful, obedient and to some degree fearful of their parents and teachers.² Fear in the form of respect, self-restraint and obedience are held in such understandings to be the foundation of learning and wisdom. As Ochs (1988) has argued in the Samoan context, adults use fear to maintain social control over children.³

Mageo (1988, 1998), on the other hand, emphasizes the use of negative sanctions to socialize Samoan children into appropriate behaviours. These include shaming, teasing and physical punishment. Ideally, children respond by displaying inhibited behaviours (i.e. deference, respect, obedience and attentiveness). The 'caring' teacher and parent will, if necessary, use physical punishment to ensure that the child exhibits these socially valued

behaviours. Socially valued behaviours, from a Samoan perspective, lead to academic success and the likelihood that children can and will fulfil their filial obligations to their parents.

If children aren't instructed and ordered by the teacher, the thing that will happen is that they will grow up not afraid. And not take any notice of the teacher. And they will just do as they like. But if the teacher is strict and the child is afraid of the teacher, the child will then put aside his bad behaviour. That's the reason why children from overseas (i.e. children raised overseas) are not afraid, because their teachers are not strict/harsh, especially palagi (i.e. white New Zealand/Australian etc.) teachers. In Samoa, you only have to say something once and the children obey. (RT5)⁴

Physical punishment is necessary for the child's and wider society's well being

Rural and urban participants repeatedly stated that when parents and teachers failed to discipline, and if necessary hit their children, they did them a disservice. Furthermore, parents and teachers linked failure to discipline children with failure to achieve at school.

From such a perspective, 'If the child is not hit they will not learn/become clever/wise' (UP1)⁵ and 'If the teacher doesn't hit or smack, children will be bad. They won't want to listen/attend to what the teacher is saying. Hitting is good' (Ust5).

Teachers and parents believed that by punishing a child, they assisted the child to know the difference between right and wrong. Furthermore, they believed that when they hit an erring child they acted in a moral and caring way (Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996).

Because if the child is not hit they will not know what they have done wrong. (RT5)

There is the belief-if the child does not suffer he will not know his mistake/wrong doing. (UP2)

A child is hit in order to teach them. In order to know his/her mistake/wrong doing. (UT6)

Tanielu found that many Samoan migrants in New Zealand continued to believe that

children would only learn through physical discipline. Parents expressed the belief that one must, '*Faamaini le pa'u ona uma lea o le faalogogata* (hit/smack etc. literally, 'sting the skin') to stop misbehaviour.' (Tanielu 1997, p. 47).

The responsible parent and teacher

Participants believed that children should not be left *saoloto* (to do as they please). They perceived Western teachers as soft and allowing children too much freedom. Several parents and teachers stated that this and the New Zealand laws banning corporal punishment led to poor student behaviour, poor academic results and an escalation of social problems. Indeed, some parents attributed the rise in youth crime to government interference in parents' rights to physically discipline their children.

The thing that will happen to children is that their behaviour will be bad. True, they might know the subjects they have studied, but their behaviour will be bad. Even [pause], they won't obey. When you ask/tell them to do something, they won't take any notice. They won't listen to you. Like (pause), sometimes when you tell them what to do, they suddenly answer back. They won't recognise you as the teacher (implied meaning-they won't show the respect due to you as the teacher). (RT1)

Students, parents and teachers often made links between the concept *faatonu* (order/instruct) and physical punishment. Participants compared the teacher to a parent, whose *tiute* (duty) was to *faatonu* (order/instruct) children in the area of values, attitudes and behaviour. Consistent with a society of clearly bounded vertical groupings, the teacher is perceived as the generalized adult, who has the right (i.e. as a parent) to assert his or her authority over children in their care.

If the teacher doesn't order/instruct it will lead to bad consequences. Even parents. There is no difference between teachers and parents. If parents

don't raise children properly, when they are older, they will be bad. They won't respect their parents. (Rst1)

The good teacher and parent endeavoured to *unai* (urge), *faatonu* (instruct/order) children towards what is good and right. In particular, adults desired that children would know and demonstrate *va fealoai* (appropriate and respectful ways of relating). The concept of *va* is central to Samoan culture. It denotes space or distance but more importantly 'social relations and the types of behavioural expectations and obligations they imply' (Van der Ryn 2008). The importance of showing respect to those of higher status and knowing how to behave in different contexts were repeated themes in interviews.

Participants believed that when adults failed to instruct, guide, correct and if necessary physically discipline children, a range of negative consequences resulted. Indeed, Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001b) found that parents in Samoa were not overly concerned about the negative effects of physical punishment on children. Instead, they were concerned about the negative effects when parents failed to assert their authority. In this research, participants believed that children's bad behaviour would escalate. As two urban teachers stated, 'If the teacher doesn't hit the child, he/she will become more naughty and not listen' (UP1). and 'You hit to teach. If you don't hit, other problems will arise' (UT3).

Informants believed that when parents and teachers fail to assert their authority and discipline children, they unwittingly turn the desired adult-child relationship upside down. In most instances in Samoa, adults are positioned as hierarchically superior to children.⁶ As such, there is an expectation that children will defer, show respect and behave appropriately in the presence of adults. When these things do not happen, and adults fail to correct the child, the order of relationships is reversed. Instead of the child deferring to the adult, the adult defers

to the child's inappropriate behaviour. As one rural parent stated:

It's not good, because it's as if the child is in charge of the teacher. But the teacher should be in charge of children. They should instruct the child as to what they should do. (RP1)

Participants believed that parents and teachers who failed to instruct and discipline their children brought hardship on themselves. Rather than a child growing up to be responsible, doing well at school, finding employment and caring for his/her parents, the child would *taa* (roam about), and '...in the end the parents will suffer' (Rst5). On a more subtle level, such children failed to acquire a sense of moral responsibility, including the commitment to provide for their parents.

Undisciplined children also brought shame on themselves and their families. Participants used strong, emotive language to describe how people felt about children who did not know how to behave appropriately. From their perspective, teachers and parents needed to focus on children's *amio* (behaviour), 'to ensure that they behave, and that they are not hated by other people' (RT1). Students and parents were keenly aware that their actions were observed and judged. In Samoa, children are not perceived as isolated individuals (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1984; Poasa et al. 2000, Cowell-Malcolm et al. 2009). Instead, they are seen as part of their immediate and extended family and village. A child's bad behaviour reflected not only on the child but also on their parents (MacPherson and MacPherson 1985; Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991; Taleni 1998; Tuia 1999; Singh and Dooley 2001).

Because if a child behaves badly, the parents are shamed/embarrassed. Shame is brought upon the parents but not him/her. Shame is brought upon the family. 'Look at that mother-she hasn't raised her child properly.' Shame is brought upon the mother. 'Look at her son-swearing at people.' It makes the family look bad. 'Who is the mother?' 'Where does the child come from?' 'Who is his

father?' 'They should instruct/guide/discipline him (i.e. the child).' (Rst1).

To love is to discipline

The failure to instruct and if necessary physically discipline children is regarded as a failure to love them (Gerber 1985; O'Meara 1990; Va'a 1995; Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996; Tuia 1999; Singh and Dooley 2001; Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a). By indulging a child, parents risk that others might dislike and speak badly of their offspring. In interviews, rural and town participants described such parents as *O matua lē alofa* (parents who do not love their children). 'To let them do as they please is to not love. If you let them be free, you do not love your children' (UP3). Fairbairn-Dunlop also found that caregivers described hitting as 'as an act of love and duty' (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a, p. 211), and necessary 'to show our children the right way.' (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001b, p. 39). Significantly, most children accepted these adult definitions and applied them to their relationship with their teachers.

When my teacher hits someone, it is forbidden to cry. We get hit and smile. Some people think the teacher is hitting because he is angry. Hitting-it's another way of showing love. It teaches you. (Rst 5).

Students and parents recognized an apparent contradiction between action and motive. Whereas some might think a teacher cruel or harsh when they hit, informants agreed that the 'insightful' person recognized that the teacher acted in the students' best interests. The apparently *saua* (cruel/harsh) teacher was in fact loving and caring.

Children think that the teacher hits them because he is cruel/hard. But no. The reason the teacher hits children, is because he wants [pause], he intensely wants them to understand their work. (Rst1)

The child feels that the teacher is hard/cruel. But the teacher earnestly wants the child to be clever and do their schoolwork. ... The harshness (implied meaning – physical discipline) is so that the child will know why they have been hit. (UP3)

Teachers and parents did not support undeserved or unnecessarily harsh physical punishment. Most described physical punishment as the last step, after one had attempted to *faatomu* and *u'ai* children towards the desired behaviour. Students, parents and teachers frequently differentiated between *fasi e tatau* (hitting/smacking that is acceptable) and *fasi e lē tatau* (hitting/smacking that is not acceptable). Physical punishment that led to injury was strongly disapproved of. However, all participants acknowledged that it did sometimes occur. In such instances, other adults often intervened on the child's behalf.

Nana lou alofa-hide your love

Parents believed that good parents endeavour to hide their love. An urban parent illustrated this with a story. Anxious about the busy town road beside the local school, he had forbidden his two young sons to cross the street to the shop. One day he arrived to find his boys sucking ice pops. He took the ice pops, threw them on the ground and told the boys to walk home (approx. 5 kilometres). He then continued in English, 'My wife was crying in case one of the children got run over. ... As I drive home I prayed to God to protect them. I hid my love in order to discipline them' (UP5). Later in the interview he revisited this idea, explaining:

Samoan parents hide their love. Don't show it. Hide it. You hide your love. You try to love, but you hide your love. *A ea* (expression seeking approval from the listener)? Don't show your love.

Gerber (1985, p. 152) explores different linguistic terms associated with the word *alofa* – love—and concludes that *alofa* 'serves

to guide behaviour towards particular moral aims, and reinforces the important Samoan value of mutual assistance and support between kin'. In my interviews, children and adults described expressing their love in quite different ways. Adults (high status) demonstrated their *alofa* (love) to children (downwards) by directing, chiding, guiding and if necessary physically disciplining their children (lower status).

Mageo (1998) suggests that the act of disciplining creates distance in the adult-child relationship and helps establish status boundaries and relations of respect, deference and appropriate social space. Adults endeavour to hide demonstrative and indulgent expressions of love (downwards) lest children become spoiled (Gerber 1985; Tanielu 1997; Mageo 1998). Children (lower status) in turn demonstrate their *alofa* (upwards) by obeying, respecting and serving (higher status) adults (Gerber 1985; Shore 1996). Shore and Gerber (ibid.) note that *alofa* is not necessarily associated with pleasure and intimacy. Rather *alofa* is often associated with feelings of obligation. Indeed, demonstrations of love might involve uncomfortable and negative feelings, especially when a person is obliged to act against their will. Interestingly, adult responses suggest that they sometimes felt torn and uncomfortable disciplining their children but did so for moral and social reasons.

The nature of children

Contemporary Western theories argue against the use of physical punishment. Physical punishment is perceived as unnecessary for prompting appropriate child behaviours and developing appropriate social subjects, an infringement of children's rights and potentially damaging to the emerging individual. Contemporary Western socialization holds that if a child is loved and good behaviour reinforced, the child will, 'develop his or her own inner resources of self-discipline and control' and 'will choose constructive behaviours that will benefit both

the child and other members of the child's social world.' (Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996, p. 140). This understanding of children as independent, individualized social actors stands in stark contrast to many Samoan beliefs and understandings.

In Samoa, young children are often perceived as inherently selfish and aggressive (Sutter 1980), mischievous, naughty, hard to control (Ochs 1988) and *valea* (foolish), in the sense of not knowing how to behave in an appropriate way (Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996). A key objective in socialization is to ensure that they will know their place and 'surrender self-interest to the common good.' (ibid. p. 140). In rural and urban schools, Year One children (mostly five to six year olds) displayed surprisingly egocentric and unruly behaviour. In the classroom they were often noisy. They shouted 'Me! Me!', waved their arms in the air, wriggled and pushed to get the teacher's attention. Teachers and parents excused their behaviour saying, 'That's just the way they are. They're young'. Associated with being young was the idea that children had not yet developed *mafaufau*—the ability to consider/reflect/think before taking an action.

They play. They make a noise. They don't think. (RP2).

Children who are small. They make a lot of noise. They don't have enough sense/thought. (RP6)

Children? Children have a childlike disposition but an adult has acquired enough common sense/learning. They know/understand (i.e. what is appropriate). When a person becomes older they know the difference between what is bad and what is good. Those things. (UP2)

Participants believed young children had not learnt the difference between what was right and wrong (i.e. socially appropriate behaviour). Children were frequently described as *amio lē pulea* (behaving without restraint or thought). The concepts *amio* (conduct/behaviour) and *aga* (manner of acting) are highly relevant to understanding Samoan beliefs about children. Shore (1982) described *amio* as 'a conception of

natural impulse' (p. 167) that is primarily selfish. In interviews, participants frequently used the term *amio lē pulea* to refer to uncontrolled/undisciplined/unthoughtful behaviour. By contrast *aga* implies 'culturally derived aspects of behaviour' (p. 167). *Aga* is used to prefix *agamalu* (gentle/peaceful disposition), and *agalelei* (good/kind/generous natured).⁷

Relevant to children's behaviour, Shore suggests that *amio* implies disorder, impulse expression and action. By contrast *aga* suggests neatness/order, impulse control and passivity. Fairbairn-Dunlop (2001a) builds on Shore's distinction between *amio* and *aga*. She suggests that Samoans have a pessimistic view of human nature where 'Samoan actions are conceptualized as being predominantly governed by *amio* (selfish, potentially socially disruptive impulses): individuals will not act "well" from choice or from freedom of will' (ibid. p. 220). Pereira (2004) attributes this view of human nature to nineteenth-century missionary teachings that portrayed human nature as 'fundamentally sinful and corrupt' (ibid. p. 27).

Fairbairn-Dunlop suggests that Samoan society has numerous rules (and sanctions) as a means 'to help control the *amio* and direct people's behaviour into socially acceptable channels' (ibid. p. 220). Given such a view of human nature, it is not surprising that Samoans place such a strong emphasis on appropriate behaviour. In this context, caring adults unremittingly *fautua* (advise and *faatoni*), instruct/order children, use negative sanctions (including physical punishment) and place strong emphasis on public audience as a means of social control.

Fairbairn-Dunlop goes on to describe *aga* as social action that is conditioned by external judgement and socially affirmed. Mageo (1998) notes that whilst *aga* is frequently used in reference to the socially proscribed self, it also means to 'take on a role' or to act. Indeed, it could be argued that the two meanings fuse at the point of human action. To behave in socially proscribed ways involves elements of performance. A child's display of respect,

courtesy and obedience towards an adult may not actually reflect the child's true emotions.⁸

Conclusion

As with any culture, Samoans do not form a tidy homogeneous group. Consistent with this, there is increasing debate as to the place of physical discipline within the home and at school. However, this research suggests that many students, parents and teachers in Samoa support the continued use of reasonable physical discipline. This is understood in terms of, and explained by reference to, a mix of cultural and religious beliefs assembled into relatively consistent and stable discourses of Samoan parenting.

This research found that parents and teachers see the young child as essentially *lë mafaufau* (lacking thought), tending to be *amio lë pulea* (uncontrolled/undisciplined), *ulavale* (mischievous) and *faalogogata* (disobedient). The duty of the good parent and teacher is to constantly *fautua* (advise), *faatonu* (instruct/order) and *faasa'o* (correct) children so that they became *poto* (clever/wise), *mafaufau* (considerate/thoughtful/sensible) and *iloa le va fealoai* (knowing how to behave in appropriate/respectful ways). When the child does not respond, the responsible and caring adult asserts his/her authority and if necessary disciplines the child physically. From a Samoan perspective, to allow a child to behave in a disrespectful way or do as they choose is to fail to love them. Such actions are believed to result in an escalation of inappropriate and unthoughtful behaviour, and ultimately bring shame on the child and their family.

The modern global world is typified by the rapid movement of goods, ideas, images, structures and people across cultural and national borders. One of the main consequences of globalization is a heightened self-consciousness of culture. Indeed, Giddens (1994) describes this reflexivity as the global condition. In our encounter with the 'other' we recognize alternative ways of thinking, being and doing, and self-

consciousness emerges about what and who we are. In such instances, the formerly tacit lived culture becomes explicit (Polanyi 1967; Giddens 1994; Featherstone 1995). In this research, I was constantly surprised by how articulate participants were as to what constituted *faaSamoa* (the Samoan way), as opposed to Western ideologies and practices.⁹

This self-consciousness creates the possibility of what Fairbairn-Dunlop calls a 'third space' or locally generated alternatives. In a paper on reducing physical punishment in Samoa, she argues that Samoans themselves must develop 'culturally appropriate and acceptable modifications' (Fairbairn-Dunlop 2001a). Participants in my study were already exploring 'third spaces'. For example, a Mormon parent recalled the harsh and often arbitrary punishment he received as a child. He then reflected on his church's disapproval of such, his spouse's views and his recent observations of parenting and children in the United States. The participant felt a strong sense of agency. He wanted life to be different for his children. Conversely he did not want *leaga* (bad) or *mataga* (spoiled) children. Hence, he resolved that there was a place for occasional physical punishment provided that it was balanced by love.

In the same way that Westerners hold certain ideas and images about Pacific peoples and their cultures, so too do Samoans about Western culture. In particular, Samoans associate the proliferation of social problems (e.g. drug abuse, armed robberies, domestic violence) in Pacific Rim countries with the failure of parents and teachers to advise, guide, assert their authority and if necessary physically discipline children. Where this is occurring within Pacific Island communities these failures appear even more responsible to a Samoan gaze. Given the increasing Pacific population in New Zealand and other Pacific Rim countries, it is important that educators, social workers and policy makers reflect on and attempt to understand Samoan perspectives and the ways in which these are being reproduced and/or transformed.

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Notes

1. In this article, I have included only the English translation for longer quotes. A version of this paper with the Samoan transcripts is available for the interested reader.
2. The word *mata'u* is not easily translated. Superficially, it is often translated as fear/fearful. However, the Western ideas of fear/fearful do not capture the more subtle nuances of respect, awe, self restraint, deference and obedience.
3. Ochs (1988) suggests that there are four important strategies adults use to maintain social control over children. These are: (a) simple directives, (b) affect arousal (appealing to the child's feelings in order to get the child to comply, (c) shaming and (d) fear.
4. Interview participants are coded to protect their anonymity, yet provide some contextual detail to the reader. The letters R and U indicate whether the participant is rural or urban. The letters S, T and P indicate whether the participant is a student, teacher or parent. Six participants from each category and from each context were interviewed. The number indicates which participant.
5. This parent used the word *poto*. The word *poto* has multiple meanings. Sometimes it is used to refer to the ability to think quickly, be smart or clever. In other contexts, it refers to using one's commonsense, acting wisely, or appropriately. Helu Thaman (1988) notes multiple meanings of *poto* in Tonga and suggests that *poto* has taken on new meanings in the context of formal schooling.
6. In some instances, the hierarchical relationships between children and adults are not as clear-cut. For example, in the relationship between a 'house girl' (often a teenager or an adult) and an employees' child or in the relationship between a locally trained teacher and a child of a high status/overseas-educated parent, the adult might feel compelled to defer to the child. In these instances, the child is perceived as an extension of his or her parents and the parents' high status lifts the relative status of the child.
7. It is important to note that prefixes *amio* and *aga* are not restricted to these groupings. *Amio* is

sometimes used to prefix adjectives that refer to socially valued dispositions. For example, *amio* is used as a prefix for *amiotonu* – righteousness, right conduct (Pratt 1912) and *amiolelei* – good conduct/well behaved (Allardice 1985). Likewise *aga* is sometimes used to prefix adjectives that refer to undesirable dispositions.

8. The discontinuity between feeling and action is beautifully illustrated by Alofa, the main character in Sia Figiel's novel, *Where we once belonged* (Figiel 1996). Alofa is sent with food for their minister. She delivers this with grace. Behind the mask of politeness, Alofa seethes with anger at the injustice of giving their much-needed food to the already well-fed minister.
9. The ability of Samoan's to articulate the differences between their and Western cultures is also noted by Liu (1991) and Gershon (1999/2000).

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