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Global Tides, Samoan Shores: Samoan Policy Actors' Responses to the Shifting Conditions of Education Aid and Postcolonial Possibilities for Education Reform

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In the years since Samoan independence in 1962, and especially over the past 2 decades, the landscape of education aid to the Pacific Island nation of Samoa has changed dramatically as a result of ongoing geopolitical shifts and emerging global designs. Some of these include: rapid globalization across all spheres of human activity; the economic rise of Asia and the growing economic, cultural, and political role that China is now playing in the region; and shifts in the modus operandi of traditional donors such as Australia, all amidst continued talk of development partnerships and a post-2015 development agenda. These changes have affected Samoa in various ways and will continue to have tremendous implications for future education and development policy and practice. This article examines the emerging context in Samoa by analyzing data from semistructured interviews with a number of policy actors across different sectors of Samoan society, to obtain an understanding of the complexities, opportunities, and challenges that lie ahead. In ascertaining the central themes that emerged throughout these interviews, the article seeks to explore how Samoan policy actors are interpreting, negotiating, and responding to these ongoing shifts, and whether an opportunity exists for progress on the path to continued decolonization as articulated through Mignolo's concepts of "colonial difference" and "border thinking." This analysis offers initial insights regarding the extent to which education reform based on foreign aid in Samoa can be more closely aligned with local histories and current priorities.

> I am convinced that for far too long we have imitated and inherited imported forms of development, lifestyles, thinking. . . . Over the years these have taken a heavy toll of the vitality of our own ways, of our pride in our inheritance and of our self-confidence and self-respect. . . . I am equally convinced that . . . we must rediscover and reaffirm our faith in our values—the vitality of our past, our culture, so that we may develop our own uniqueness, our own ways of doing things, our own solutions to our problems. (Tuiatua, 1976, cited in Hunkin-Finau, 2006, p. 51)

> The transcending of the colonial difference can *only* be done from a perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and, therefore, from a new epistemological terrain where border thinking works. . . . Border thinking from the perspective of subalternity is a machine for intellectual decolonization. (Mignolo, 2000, p. 45, emphasis in original)

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The words of the current Samoan Head of State, Tuiatua Tupua Tamsese Efi, delivered at the University of the South Pacific in 1976, bring to life the ensuing excerpt from the work of the Argentine postcolonial thinker Walter Mignolo on colonial difference,[1] border thinking,[2] and decolonization, 2 decades before Mignolo's expansion of such concepts in his book, *Local Histories/Global Designs* (Mignolo, 2000). This article attempts to weave together the opening two passages by engaging a range of Samoan perspectives, held by social actors perceived as *stakeholders* in international development work, to better understand the ways in which they are currently interpreting the convergence of local histories with global designs in the field of education. Furthermore, by identifying a number of central themes that emerged out of interviews with local policy actors, this article seeks to explore the notion of how global designs of development assistance within education can be better utilized to ensure they are more authentically aligned with local histories and priorities in Samoa. Thus, in engaging with local perspectives—or, as per Mignolo's previously quoted phrase, the "perspective of subalternity"—this article also situates itself through a reflection upon the gradual, conflictual, and paradoxical process of decolonization that has been unfolding in Samoa since independence.

Although decades of commentary have centred on the supposed smallness of the Pacific Islands—that states and territories such as Samoa were "much too small, too poorly endowed with resources, and too isolated from the centres of economic growth" (Hau'ofa, 1995, p. 4) to ever move past a state of perpetual dependence and supposed insignificance, there appears to be a counter-movement firmly under way. Shifting geopolitical conditions and emerging global designs (explored in the following) arguably provide both new opportunities and constraints for Samoans to build on previous and ongoing efforts[3] to exercise their autonomy and have their voices heard in realizing education reform based on foreign aid that can be more closely aligned with their local histories and priorities. As the preeminent Pacific Islander anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa prophesied 2 decades ago: "Oceania is not small; it is huge and growing bigger every day" (1995, p. 6). His sentiments increasingly appear to be a worthwhile characterisation of events unfolding in the region.

Indeed, whereas the exercise of agency to align the global designs of education more closely to the indigenous context in Samoa will be demonstrated by drawing upon the recent history of postcolonial resistance, this article suggests that there are also merits to expanding the circle of Samoan policy actors who are willing to contribute their perspectives to the ongoing process. In the ensuing analysis of data from recent interviews with a diverse range of voices in the field of education and development, I argue that Samoans are not powerless in engaging with these processes, but instead are willing and able to build on preceding efforts. In addition, given the rapidly shifting geopolitical context and ever-evolving nature of global designs, such efforts of decolonization[4] stand to benefit from the constant regeneration of Samoan perspectives to continually inform and help shape relevant discourses. Only by privileging the voice of Samoan policy actors in this manner, in an attempt to understand the ways in which they perceive, negotiate, and are responding to imported forms of education, can there be an interruption of some of the more simplistic, and often unproblematized, approaches to decolonization. As per Mignolo's thinking on postcoloniality, such a process can begin to more fully manifest itself not only through the acceptance, but the encouragement, of *other* ways of thinking and knowing, which recognizes the diversity, relevance, and significance of a range of local histories.

It should be noted that in drawing on Mignolo's notion of global designs and local histories heuristically, there is a danger that this could be seen as an example of binary thinking. It is important, therefore, to make clear that although there is a distinction between *global* and *local*, this does not mean that the two are necessarily oppositional. Rather, this article aims to think these terms relationally; in doing so, it aims to avoid creating a false dichotomy on the one hand, while also acknowledging power differential, on the other. In considering the challenges and opportunities facing local policy actors by thinking through Mignolo's theories, the article aspires to disinvest the center and its normative assumptions; this is done through reflection on border thinking that seeks to interrupt the dominant narrative and global imaginary of development. In turn, this reflection serves to continue the rumination on long-standing questions surrounding "whose story or vision for development is being privileged, in whose name, for whose benefit, by what means and to what ends?" (Stein, de Oliveira Andreotti, & Susa, 2016, p. 3).

The article proceeds by providing an outline of recent education policy and practice in Samoa, with due consideration of some of the ways these policy processes themselves have reflected local histories and priorities; before moving to an analysis of a few central themes that emerged in recent interviews with policy actors on the current convergence of global designs of education and the local Samoan context.

CONTEMPORARY SAMOAN CONTEXT: EDUCATION POLICY CONSTRUCTS AND CONTESTATIONS

Samoa's local histories have long interacted with, and been heavily affected by, various global designs. Whether it be through the early work of Christian missionaries, as a colony of Germany in the early part of the 20th century, or under New Zealand's administrative rule for nearly 5 decades until Samoa's independence in 1962, these global designs were the precursor to official development assistance and foreign aid that have been offered in the years since independence—with much of it indeed directed towards the education sector.

This section continues by expanding upon the Samoan context, followed by a general outline of education policy and practice in Samoa over the past 2 decades, and conclude by exploring prior and ongoing local stakeholder involvement in these processes as an example of powerful local resistance to global designs at work through the dominant discourses of education and development.

Samoa, an island nation located in the Southern Pacific Ocean, is one of 14 Pacific Island countries. Home to about 200,000 inhabitants, it lies a few hundred kilometres north of its neighbour, Tonga. Unlike Tonga, however, which remained the only island in the Pacific to never undergo formal colonialism, Samoa experienced 14 years under German colonial rule at the start of the 20th century, followed by nearly 50 years under New Zealand's administrative rule—"as a great and urgent Imperial service" (McGibbon, 2014, p. 18) to the Crown.

In 1962, Samoa became among the first of the colonies in the Pacific to gain independence, and since then has garnered a reputation as an example of political stability in the region despite a multitude of social, economic and political reforms. Some attribute this delicate balance and preservation of stability to the "governance in Samoa, (which) blends the traditional and the modern ... allowing both sides to feel part of the current political system, thereby giving it legitimacy" (Iati, 2013, p. 443), alongside the fact that "traditional institutions such as the '*matai*'

(family leader) and *'fono a le nu'u'* (village council) continue to hold sway at the local level" (2013, p. 444). Iati presents, in his 2013 paper, some of the ways that Samoans have responded to global designs since independence, including the creation of a national identity and corresponding set of institutions, such as "a national economy based on free-market principles, which was then subjected to international forces through foreign aid, loans and international trade agreements" (Iati, 2013, p. 446). He further suggests that whereas these shifts may have brought Samoa to the brink of political instability at times, it seems to have so far been able to avoid the fate of some of its Pacific neighbours such as Fiji, the Solomon Islands, or Papua New Guinea (Iati, 2013).[5]

Since 1995, there have been two 10-year education policy frameworks[6] instituted by the Ministry of Education, Sports, and Culture (MESC) in Samoa to reform and guide educational development. A particularly helpful document that served to bridge the two frameworks together is a 2005 report,[7] completed at the request of the Samoan government in collaboration with the PRIDE Project,[8] by a small regional team consisting of 'Ana Maui Taufe'ulungaki, future Minister of Education in Tonga, and Abel Nako, former Director-General of the Ministry of Education in Vanuatu. The report sought to "assess how well the Education Sector has performed through the perceptions of the major stakeholders in education" (Samoa, 2005, p. 1), mainly in preparation for the development of a new strategic plan for the next decade (2006–2015).

Of marked relevance to the scope of this article is the report's clear assertion in the executive summary that the recommendations "emanate directly from the results of the Study and the ideas come from the Samoans themselves. What the Study has attempted to do is to give them some order and coherence" (Samoa, 2005, Executive Summary). This demonstrates a keen awareness, articulated over a decade ago, of the need for Samoan autonomy over their education system and the subsequent importance of local perspectives in this endeavour. Furthermore, the report repeatedly acknowledges the delicate balance required of education to improve the "quality of life premised on a competitive economy with sustained economic growth ... (in addition to) strengthened cultural and traditional values" (Samoa, 2005, Executive Summary).

Despite the inherent difficulties of local participation, including the potential for the manufacturing of consensus and consent, the aforementioned gestures can be read as an acknowledgement of the need to ensure the survival of local histories despite the ever-evolving influence of various global designs throughout the generations, such as the global market economy. Mignolo himself has commented on such recent global designs, referencing a wide-ranging theoretical canon to describe how "it is the market that is becoming the global design of a new form of colonialism, a global coloniality, that is being analysed as 'the network society' (Castells), 'globalcentrism' (Coronil), and 'Empire' (Hardt and Negri)" (Delgado, Romero, & Mignolo, 2000, p. 8). In an attempt to more effectively deal with these challenges in Samoa over the preceding decade, the report concludes that "human capacity has been enhanced through the various interventions of the last ten years and a core group of quite able professionals can be found at all levels of the system who are aware of the challenges and can re-think the strategies and processes" (Samoa, 2005, Executive Summary). Ultimately, this evaluation—carried out by a team comprising members from Pacific neighbors Tonga and Vanuatu (which, albeit outside of the scope of this article, presents an entirely new line of inquiry for further research on the merits and potential of regional collaboration for decolonization)—can be considered an earlier attempt at border thinking occurring in Samoa.

The strategic plan of the MESC for the 10-year period from 2005 to 2015 also acknowledges an awareness of global designs to be an important factor for local actors to consider during

policy deliberations and subsequent implementation. In his foreword, the Chief Executive Officer directly states that “the future will always hold uncertainties and external factors will be a risk to achieving the Ministry’s Vision of: A quality holistic education system that recognizes and realizes the spiritual, cultural, intellectual and physical potential of all participants, enabling them to make fulfilling life choices” (Samoa, 2006, p. 3). This suggests that key policy bodies in Samoa remain attentive to the (at times unpredictable) global influences at work through dominant discourses. In reclaiming local histories, the Ministry’s desire to enable Samoans to make ‘fulfilling life choices’ hearkens back to Amartya Sen’s theories on human development in the 1990s, articulated clearly in his book *Development as Freedom* (Sen, 1999). Sen’s ideas can be considered to have sparked a shift within development discourses that focused more on partnerships and collaboration, and indicators of human development—of freedom, choice, and capacity—rather than strictly quantifiable, economic metrics.[9] One could argue that this shift may have opened up the possibility for reclamation of some of these subalternized knowledges and local histories, which would thus be well-aligned with Mignolo’s theoretical approach to decolonization as utilized in this article.

Some critics, however, have argued that the MESC’s recently completed 10-year strategic plan, though acknowledging the importance of local histories and values, was in fact geared “explicitly on universal values in education rather than on core Samoan values” (Tuia & Iyer, 2015, p. 125). Tuia and Iyer (2015) further contend that this represents ongoing neo-colonial influences at work, which serve as an impediment to the unequivocal realization of a decolonized Samoan education system, and suggest rather the following approach: “Reconceptualizing the values from an indigenous perspective and employing a postcolonial response of resistance to uncritical acceptance of universal values would be another step to challenge the neo-colonial agenda of policy makers” (p. 131).

Ultimately, although the process of decolonization may remain in parts an agonistic and antagonistic one (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 25), there have nonetheless been attempts to “reconceptualize the values from an indigenous perspective” as a form of “postcolonial response of resistance to uncritical acceptance of universal values” in Samoa, and throughout the Pacific at large, over the past 2 decades. Key among them is the *Re-thinking Pacific Education Initiative for and by Pacific Peoples* (RPEIPP),[10] which has served as a catalyst for localized reflection, contestation, and rearticulation of Pacific education systems since its inception in 2001. Indeed, the Fijian academic Unaisi Nabobo-Baba (2012), in her recent paper which called for an expansion of the scope of the RPEIPP to include other regions of the Pacific (including Micronesia), as well as more rigorously incorporating a comparative studies approach, describes the initiative as an opportunity to rethink and redefine education to “ensure that aspects of indigenous peoples cultures and related worldviews and life values and philosophies inform the work of educators” (p. 82). She accounts for the inevitability of global designs, however, by acknowledging that this rethinking of Pacific education which makes space for indigenous epistemologies, philosophies and values would stand “besides the normal provision of global knowledge, skills and values that dominate schooling and higher education in particular” (p. 82).

This ongoing process of the decolonization of education in the Pacific—systems that have often lacked indigenized context, due to their colonial origins and ensuing legacies (Nabobo-Baba, 2012)—can likewise be situated in the broader field through the work of Crossley, Bray, and Packer (2011) on education in small states. Although they concur that powerful, quantitatively-oriented research approaches and corresponding global designs in the form of “innovative

international partnerships and collaborations can help small states to strengthen their own local research capacity" (Crossley et al., 2011, p. 52), they further argue that "priority should also be given to research strategies and modalities that are grounded in their own distinctive contexts and cultures" (p. 52). This seems an apt description of what has been taking place in the Pacific region through the RPEIPP, an outcome of aforementioned deliberations in 2001 which confirmed among leading Pacific Island educators and academics this sense that inherited colonial systems are, indeed, "antithetical to local ways of knowing and education" (Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 87).

A fitting example of Samoan voices contributing to the broader regional process at play can be found in Tilianamua Afamasaga's paper, published in the collection *Tree of Opportunity: Rethinking Pacific Education* (Pene, Taufe'ulungaki, and Benson, 2002), shortly after the first RPEIPP symposium in Fiji in April 2001. Speaking from over 30 years' experience in the field of Samoan education, Afamasaga presents a range of pertinent insights, including the need to differentiate between schooling and education. She references Konai Thaman to delineate that "education is introduction to worthwhile learning ... (while) schooling is worthwhile learning that is organised and institutionalised" (Afamasaga, 2002, p. 97). This distinction is useful when considering the confluence of global designs and local education, especially given Afamasaga's assertion that schooling in Samoa is often "exposed ... (to) evaluations carried out by the more systematic evaluators of foreign-funded project teams which abound in our small Pacific countries" (p. 97). Another relevant idea that Afamasaga raises in her paper revolves around the demands of a global market economy and its impact on educational processes in Samoa. She refers to the problematic nature of accepting the "current 'institutional strengthening projects' that are going on in our (Samoan) public service systems because we believe that the agents of the Market know best" (p. 99), before proceeding to offer a possible solution to this challenge through the suggestion of "indigenising schooling, or making Pacific schools our own, by not only including Pacific cultural knowledge in our curriculum but also re-thinking the structures of schooling as a western import into our systems" (p. 101). Indeed, many of these concepts presented by Afamasaga in 2002 were rearticulated and expanded in her subsequent work, including a paper titled *Education in a Pacific Context: Enhancing Ownership of the Processes of Education* (2007), as well as a chapter she co-authored in the book *International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education* (Afamasaga & Esera, 2005), another outcome of the RPEIPP project. The closing paragraph of her 2007 paper serves to eloquently reinforce a few of the central themes raised across her work:

> As we look towards moving further into this century, Pacific people must agree to recognize the survival of Pacific societies as a moral purpose for education. By accepting such a moral purpose the tools for progressing schooling in the Pacific then become those of rethinking values in education, especially those cultural values that provide meaningful entities in Pacific societies; reclaiming cultural survival as a purpose for education ... reclaiming the importance of Pacific languages and epistemologies within the curriculum of Pacific schools and inculcating Pacific ways of doing things into the schools' processes. All these tools would work towards the Pacific people claiming ownership of the processes of education in the Pacific. (Afamasaga, 2007, p. 16)

The RPEIPP has been reinforced in recent years, with its 10-year anniversary in 2011 celebrated at another conference in Fiji for "Pacific conversations about Pacific educational issues" (Thaman, 2014); to share reflections on the progress of the first decade and to consider future directions.

The papers presented at this conference were published in a collection entitled *Of Waves, Winds and Wonderful Things* (‘Otunuku, Nabobo-Baba, & Johansson-Fua, 2014), building on the work presented in the earlier volume, *Tree of Opportunity* (Pene et al., 2002).

In addition to the many indigenous researchers and policy actors involved in the process who call the Pacific Islands home, there have also been those who have supported local and regional initiatives in the Pacific as part of the nonindigenous cadre who “care deeply about its peoples” (Nabobo-Baba, 2012, p. 95). Eve Coxon, for example, remains among those involved in the effort to indigenize Pacific education as a frequent collaborator of related research processes. In a 2008 paper she co-authored with Karen Munce, the two draw on the scholarship of Crossley and Holmes (1999) to situate their own work, which addresses the tension between the global discourses of education (such as the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives) vis-à-vis the contextual realities and local priorities of Pacific education systems. They aptly move from a theoretical engagement with the matter to a practical analysis of a recent regional initiative (the aforementioned PRIDE Project), revolving around the Pacific Basic Education Action Plan,[11] to demonstrate the pitfalls of the global rhetoric of development partnerships being translated into local practice. In doing so, they seek “to highlight the extent to which global agenda are subject to local level contestation” (Coxon & Munce, 2008, p. 148) on the basis that “education communities within the small states of the Pacific ... do not accept the narrow conceptualisation of the education/development relationship that the global mechanisms imply, or what they uphold as useful knowledge” (p. 148).

The interminable canvassing of local perspectives to help inform and contextualize policy processes remains paramount—a notion that, indeed, serves as further rationale for the next section of this article. As Coxon and Munce highlight, “educational development in such contexts (small states) cannot be separated from the influence of social, cultural and geopolitical factors” (Crossley & Homes, 1999, p. 49, cited in Coxon & Munce, 2008, p. 148). Thus, amidst varied examples of both successful indigenization and postcolonial resistance in the Pacific over the past 2 decades, the example of a regional initiative explored by Coxon and Munce led them to the conclusion that the “attempt to respond to locally articulated calls for higher quality, more relevant and equitable basic education provision ... was stymied by the donor agencies involved, despite their avowed commitment to ‘partnership’ in the aid relationship” (2008, p. 162). They suggest that in this particular instance, such an obstruction had erased any opportunity for meaningful progress and reform.

In an attempt to further expand the circle of protagonists involved in the processes of policy formation, implementation and contestation (in addition to a few outlined previously) to include a wider range of indigenous voices willing to participate in the discourse on decolonization of education in the Pacific, the following section presents an analysis of a select few themes that emerged throughout interviews conducted in Samoa in late 2014. These interviews reveal how policy actors are interpreting and responding to the shifting global designs of education and development, bringing to light current challenges and opportunities for indigenized reform to support the efforts that have been well under way over the past 2 decades. This ties into the premise established at the onset of this paper—that being the need for border thinking, which seeks to recover the colonial difference, to imagine an educational future in Samoa that is more cognizant of its local histories.

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT WITH SHIFTING GLOBAL DESIGNS: SAMOAN VOICES

In drawing on Samoan policy actors' perspectives to reveal the extent to which border thinking is occurring within the context of their local engagement with shifting global designs, a brief return to conceptual underpinnings of the term is warranted. Arturo Escobar provides a useful exposition of border thinking as "an attempt to move beyond Eurocentrism by revealing the coloniality of power embedded in the geopolitics of knowledge—a necessary step in order to undo the subalternization of knowledge and to look for ways of thinking beyond the categories of Western thought" (2010, p. 60). To succeed in this endeavor, therefore, prioritizing the perspective of local policy actors would appear paramount. As Mignolo himself states, "Academic 'knowledge and understanding' should be complemented with 'learning from' those who are living in and thinking from colonial and postcolonial legacies" (1993, p. 131). Thus, although admittedly limited in scope, the interviews with Samoan policy actors used in this paper form a modest attempt to 'learn from' those living within the colonial and postcolonial legacies.[12] In doing so, the importance of obtaining "a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices" (Smith, 2012, p. 21) must be acknowledged, including the potential limitations of "non-indigenous researchers . . . researching with indigenous peoples, or about indigenous issues" (Smith, 2012, p. 17).

The following section shares with the reader a few prominent themes that came to the fore in discussions with Samoan policy actors, in an attempt to continue this thinking from another place. Further limitations of such an approach should be recognized, namely, in relation to important questions around "who is present and who is absent from this list of solicited 'voices' . . . and how and why this might discourage the participation of certain potential contributors?" (Stein et al., 2016, p. 9). Upon careful reflection of this challenge to help inform the ensuing research process, interviews were conducted in late 2014 with six people[13] in Samoa considered *policy actors* for the purposes of this article, across a diverse range of areas: (a) those working at educational institutions; (b) those affiliated with nongovernmental, nonprofit, and civil society organizations; (c) those holding a *matai* (chiefly) title within the community; (d) and government officials. Participants were selected through the snowball sampling method, in which potential interviewees who are deemed to best suit the scope of the research are identified through a continuous expansion of the researcher's initial contacts and networks (Noy, 2008). Snowball sampling was chosen given its "dynamic quality . . . where unique social knowledge of an interactional quality can be fruitfully generated" (Noy, 2008, p. 328). Furthermore, interviews with policy actors were semistructured and flexible, with a view to "address specific dimensions of the research question while also leaving room for study participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study" (Galleta, 2013, p. 1). Given one of the aims of this article being to engage with Samoan voices to better understand the current confluence of global designs of education vis-à-vis the local context, the measured element of open-endedness and nuanced discovery that semistructured interviews offer appears pertinent. Indeed, the conversational style of such interviews, with a general set of topics, rather than a rigid list of questions, subsequently leading to a reciprocity that creates "space for the researcher to probe a participant's responses for clarification, meaning making, and critical reflection" (Galletta, 2013, p. 24), allows for the indigenous policy actors' authentic insights—and perhaps, in turn, elements of border thinking—to organically emerge. Among a

few of these themes included the challenges of local engagement with the normative discourse and associated set of definitions, standards, and preferred practices emanating from these global designs; the need for a productive space in which the demands of globalization and global designs are not accepted or rejected outright, but more effectively engaged with; and finally, imagining future possibilities for border thinking and education reform in line with the Samoan worldview of considering both *tofa mamao* (the long view) and *faautaga loloto* (the deep view).

Challenges of Engaging With Global Normativity

First among the themes that emerged were the challenges associated with the normative discourse of global designs in education. Participants identified such challenges as a primary inhibiting factor that hindered their attempts to engage with global designs in a manner that accommodates local contexts and priorities. This notion can be expanded to include normative definitions, standards and outcomes, and preferred forms of *best practice* that are often a by-product of global designs. An example of this is evident in discussions around the use of such terms as *poverty*, *wealth*, and *(un)employment*. A few among those interviewed readily contested the problematic nature of the definitions stemming from various global designs and subsequently imposed within their local communities—in the ways this occurrence not only shaped local perceptions, but also local realities. Participants expressed concern around the ways in which global forces benchmark certain criteria (in this instance, to define poverty) before providing solutions to the problem. An interview with Leilani, a Samoan working at a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) who had recently moved back to Samoa after living in New Zealand, provides further insight on the above phenomenon:

> The last time I was here, the conversation around “unemployment” wasn’t as present as it is now . . . and a lot of the terminologies that come out of globalization, such as these indexes, how you measure poverty, all of these things. . . . So when you start getting these other metrics come in, and the country starts to measure itself against it, then you start to view yourselves differently. I don’t think this is initially a good thing. Because I don’t think an idea of telling people that they are impoverished, when they are actually really happy . . . if there were European farmers, living in France and off the grid like our farmers are, they are called self-reliant—whereas our farmers are called subsistence. So you know, it’s the lens that we use that polarizes the way we see things.

An excerpt from another interview with John, a Samoan working for one of the bilateral development partners operating in Samoa, reinforces Leilani’s point of view:

> I don’t know why people standardize what is poverty and what is quality living. I’ve seen people who by international definitions can be classified as poor, minimum of what, $1 a day? But I’m seeing families who live in these very humble homes, they eat from the plantation, they share food with others, they’re happy. They’re self-sufficient. But in the eyes of the outside, they’re not having a quality time. And once they’re called poor, they feel poor.

Both passages allude to the counterproductive nature of such normative discourses emerging out of global designs—in this instance, seemingly borne out of an economically driven, neoliberal agenda. Indeed, much of the harm seems to revolve around the self-actualising power of such

labels—Leilani's comment regarding "self-reliant" European farmers as opposed to subsistence Samoan farmers touches on the dominance of Western paradigms and the manifestation of colonial difference. The questioning of normative definitions and standards, as evident in Leilani and John's insights, thus offers an attempt at border thinking that imagines an Other logic. This reimagining opens up the possibility for terms such as *poverty*, *quality of life*, and *employment* to take on new meanings that are more indigenously authentic; firmly grounded in a millennia of local histories while simultaneously cognizant of, and actively engaged with, current global designs. The literature problematizing the notion of poverty and its implications on development also adds to this discussion. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2010) suggests, "Poverty is in the eye of the beholder. . . . It is the economism of development that is truly pauperizing" (p. 112). He reinforces this view by quoting Vandana Shiva (1998):

> Culturally perceived poverty need not be real material poverty: subsistence economies which serve basic needs through self-provisioning are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they don't participate overwhelmingly in the market economy, and do not consume commodities provided for and distributed through the market. (p. 10)

Thus, colonial influences on the contemporary urban geography and demography in Samoa, reinforced in recent decades by globalization and neoliberalism, have seemingly contributed to the construction of the aforementioned imaginary around poverty. That is not to say that the struggle of needing to ensure provision of daily necessities does not exist for many Samoan families. Along these lines, the following participant's focus on material impoverishment, which is in line with global design discourses, also draws attention to this important aspect outlined previously. Elena, the head of a Samoan NGO in partnership with a major bilateral donor, spoke of the challenge of earning a livelihood as representing a major obstruction, in her view, to more people in Samoa engaging with issues related to development, education and social progress:

> You know, when you're in Australia, in a well-developed country, people sit around coffee and this can be a topic. In our nation, everyone is just busy trying to get food on the table for today. So when people are busy trying to make ends meet . . . people literally live from pay packet to pay packet, from day to day when they are bringing their taro into the market and then out again. When we go to Pacific conferences and people challenge 'Why aren't the locals driving this?' I have to remind them what that looks like! I truly believe that you can start thinking insightfully after all of your work, your family, is secured.

Elena's incisive assessment offers further context for the complex situation unfolding at present in Samoa. Although earlier excerpts from Leilani and John contested the normative use of terms like *poverty* by arguing that the discourse of global designs had the tendency of inaccurately categorizing entire segments of the local Samoan population as poor, Elena's reflections provide a more comprehensive picture. Her assertion that local capacity is unable to fully develop, and that the local populace is unable to fully exercise its agency given the daily challenge of meeting immediate needs, is one that cannot be ignored in considering current and future processes of border thinking and the ongoing decolonization of education policy and practice. In consolidating her line of thinking, Elena proceeds to challenge the urban elite—those who have been educated and are financially comfortable—to take up the responsibility of shifting their own

frames of thought. This shift can arguably be directed toward using border thinking to reimagine development, education, and social progress that is more closely aligned with Samoan priorities and local histories. Elena states:

> It has to be leadership. It has to be insights from our educated—those who are privileged enough to have their education, privileged enough to be able to say that their basic needs are already taken care of. . . . So our urban population, who have coffees, need to absolutely challenge themselves about what their coffee topics are, so that we can start having these conversations.

In heeding Elena's call for the privileged segment of the Samoan population to contribute to the process of rethinking their country's future, the work of postcolonial theorist Frantz Fanon is helpful for further conceptualization. In his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, first published in English in 1963, Fanon's emphasis on the implications of national liberation and the ensuing phases of decolonization, with its associated concerns on questions of national culture, identity, and consciousness, all relate to Elena's comments on the urban elite—or, according to Fanon, the "native intellectual." In a succinct commentary on Fanon's work, John McLeod (2010) suggested that having obtained an education under the observant gaze of the colonial power, the "Western-educated native intellectual is in danger of identifying more with the middle-class bourgeoisie of the *colonising* nation than with the *indigenous* masses" (p. 103, emphasis in original). Fanon describes the native intellectual as eventually encountering a phase where it joins the postcolonial resistance as a "galvanizer of the people . . . (as) the spokesperson of a new reality in action" (Fanon, 1963, p. 159), with McLeod adding that "the native intellectual has *to learn from the people* to modify, reinterpret and reform traditional culture at the service of forging a new national consciousness in which the people's struggle is the bedrock" (p. 105, emphasis in original). This reinterpretation and reform, intended to forge a new national consciousness, appears to be a key aspirational outcome of the postcolonial resistance that has been under way in Samoa and throughout the Pacific over the past 2 decades, as demonstrated in the preceding section. In building on this recent history, Elena's juxtaposition of the luxury of coffee-shop conversations in Australia revolving around matters of social and economic development, with the subsequent responsibilities she feels must be shouldered by the elite minority in Samoa, indeed seems to echo Fanon's description of the native intellectual working to galvanize the people. The onus thus placed on national-level policy actors is undeniably pressing, given that they are expected to engage with the global designs of education and development through participation in its accompanying discourses—in a manner that not only acknowledges, but meaningfully accommodates, local voices, priorities and indigenous contexts.

Another example of the problematic use of normative definitions found in various global designs revolved around the manner in which specific global campaigns were highlighted in Samoa. Some questioned the relevance in some instances of such an approach, expressing concern about whether this meant that a uniquely indigenous cause was being neglected at the expense of the focus on a broader, more generic global one. John's comment sheds further light on this complex dynamic. He states:

> It is valuable if things are conveyed in an approach that is sensitive to the conditions of Samoa at any given time. For example, the gender equality talk, or youth . . . if you give it in a very Western view, very strong—just directly that women are not empowered, so women should be empowered—it will

> not be fully accepted by the community. But if it's given in a way that recognizes the intertwined, contextualized nature, then it would work.

Finally, Leilani's simple, yet telling, verdict toward the end of our interview, that "they keep on promoting the wrong answers because it's actually the wrong questions that they are asking," further unveils the complexities involved. Her judicious assertion that *they*—purveyors of global designs—are promoting the wrong answers because they ask the wrong questions is highly significant in how it relates to the need for border thinking to render the rhetoric of development partnerships in education into a more tangible form of practice. By taking into account the manifestation of colonial difference, there can perhaps be a more earnest effort to ask the right questions—questions that may be considered more open-ended and less inclined to represent ulterior motives and preconceived agendas.

'Best Practice' and *Fa'a Samoa* (The Samoan Way)

An additional element to the challenge of engaging with normative understandings embedded in global designs relates to the notion of *best practice*. A few participants expressed concerns around best practice being used as a veil through which local histories, indigenous voice, and contextualized responses were subsequently pushed to the margins, alongside due consideration of the colonial difference. In this manner, one could argue that only by incorporating border thinking into the process of reflection on appropriate forms of practice for each context can the idea of partnerships move beyond a theoretical construct. As Leilani states:

> I think it's just part of the postcolonial experience, where the teacher doesn't really want to allow the student to graduate. So although we got here doing things our way, our way doesn't really make sense to them. And that's what created confusion for them—that it keeps working, but it shouldn't work, because you know, this whole idea of best practice.

Although Leilani seems to be suggesting that *Fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way) does work—at times contrary to the notion of international best practice, and thus irreconcilable with certain global designs—other policy actors shared perspectives to the contrary. Some interviewees argued that Samoa was, in fact, not fully equipped; that it was too early in its independence and sovereignty to use strictly traditional means and methods for formal education, participation in the global economy, and complete engagement with other shifting global designs. These participants pointed to the perceived value of continuing to focus on building equitable partnerships with external agencies to keep developing the capacity of Samoa's own resources, methods, and institutions, until local actors are able to sustainably and autonomously lead the way in their own education and development. Sonny, who held a senior faculty position at the National University of Samoa, spoke of this challenge:

> When we started making our changes, a lot of people said, "Well, let's put in the Samoan context" and so on. I was kind of reluctant, really hesitant, to do that. I don't believe it's the right time. I don't think we're at the point in our history to say, "Hey, let's bring in the Samoan ways, and teachings, and philosophies, and so on. . ." In some ways, it's basically kind of hearsay. It's not proven. There is no

> research done to confirm that the Samoan way of doing it is better than the *Palangi* (Western) way. Until we can actually say, “Well, the research program at the Faculty of Education is going well, it’s strong. . .” And until we can actually prove, by studying these Samoan ideas, and Samoan practices, and to be able to demonstrate that they’re good, I will not be the one who encourages that sort of thing at the moment.

Sonny’s resolute belief that Samoa is not yet at the stage to press on solely with indigenous epistemologies until they are further proven through evidence-based research, suggests a nuanced complexity when considering the ongoing process of decolonization and border thinking. Although Sonny openly takes into account the colonial difference, and seems to accept the need for border thinking through his acknowledgment of the value and significance of an Other logic (in this case, *Fa’a Samoa*), he stops short at advocating their practice in isolation until there is a more rigorous understanding of which aspects to draw on toward specific ends—to not only suit the local context and priorities, but also ensure a more meaningful and sustained engagement with global designs. In other words, Sonny appears to reflect the notion of border thinking through the way he incorporates the local and the global while standing at the border—thinking from both within and beyond. Sonny shares a final anecdote on this theme, providing a metaphor to drive home his point:

> It can’t be hearsay, because there is so much research going on. And I have prioritized research, and I am looking at research as a heavy component. . . . You know, you read a lot of research where it says, “It should be through their (indigenous) eyes!” and that kind of thing. Well, sometimes I don’t understand why people say that! But I do feel that Western ideas and practices and concepts are very relevant at this point. Without an understanding of that, I don’t think we can make a lot of improvement. It’s like asking a soccer player to do what people like Ronaldo[14] do on the field, when they can’t even stop a ball! When they can’t even give the basic pass! You know, the pressure. . .

This passage brings into stark focus the complicated position that Samoa at times finds itself in. Throughout the history of global designs, including the onslaught of colonialism, the imposition of a hegemonic, globalized education and development imaginary, and the demands of neoliberalism all having shaped its contemporary political, economic, and cultural realities, participants also admitted to the seeming inevitability of such global designs. To more productively engage with them, therefore, Sonny appears to be advocating for certain fundamental pieces to be in place before building on them to gradually introduce a new hybridized set of capacities and ideas. Drawing on the formative contributions of Homi Bhabha, McLeod offers an adept synthesis of hybridity as something that is “composed from variable sources, different materials, many locations—demolishing forever the idea of subjectivity as stable, single, or pure” (McLeod, 2010, p. 253). McLeod continues his argument by stating “the concept of hybridity has proved very important as a way of thinking beyond exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity . . . instead, they remain perpetually in motion, pursuing errant and unpredictable routes, open to change and reinscription” (p. 253). This postcolonial repudiation of the pure, the static, and the singular, in favor of an acceptance of perpetual motion, change, and reinscription remains an important notion when considering the influence of global designs on local contexts in Samoa. By thus avoiding the creation of a binary when it comes to engagement with global designs, and

instead recognizing that local actors are at times constrained by the current hegemonic dominance of these processes, can border thinking flourish.

In closing this discussion on the normative definitions implicit in global designs, the following anecdote from Elena compellingly demonstrates the capacity she sees within her own people—in the process, illustrating how some of the disparities of colonial difference can at times simply stem from the ways in which indigenous epistemologies and local histories are framed and subsequently (under)valued by the powers that be within the global designs:

> We have a CEO of Justice, who never spent a day overseas for schooling. . . . Every other CEO has gotten a degree overseas. That CEO will tell you, "Whatever you guys come up with, I can tell you how we already did it 100 years ago. Give it to me, and I'll show you." . . . And he does, and he's great at translating new-age thinking, and breakthrough initiatives. . . . He gives the traditional, cultural equivalent of how Samoans do these same 'breakthrough initiatives'.

Globalization (Un)Reified

Another instance of border thinking as reflected in the perspectives of local policy actors revolved around the resistance of reified ideas about globalization. In moving beyond a simplistic binary of globalization (and indeed, other global designs)—often romanticized as either entirely beneficial or demonized as outright harmful—participants indicated a preference for thinking that led to a more productive space of engagement with the forces of globalization, while also remaining cognizant of the importance of indigenization and decolonization. In doing so, participants identified particular aspects of globalization that aligned with their local histories, while simultaneously highlighting a nuanced differentiation that they felt would benefit contemporary Samoan society. Papalii, a recently retired school inspector and teacher for many decades, as well as a *matai* (chief) in his village, states:

> Consultation is new now, because when I say consultation—in the villages, in those old days, only the elderly, the high chiefs could talk. They talk, and then they bring their decisions. But now, it's changing. Each member has to speak on the topic before coming to a solution and decision.

Other participants, however, raised a different set of concerns (whether consciously or not), relating to the problematic elements of globalization. Such insights considered globalization in terms of its hegemonic, neoliberal implications; the subsequent inequity this perpetuated, and the ways this disenfranchised indigenous voices. Although some interviewees articulated their perception of these disparities in clearer terms, other participants commented on the ways they felt such impositions of global designs of education and development affected Samoa in an unwitting manner. Anecdotes from these conversations bring to light the insidious potency of global designs in perpetuating colonial difference long after physical decolonization has occurred. The following excerpt from an interview with Michael, a prominent member of another Samoan NGO, provides a tangible example of this point:

> We can't stand alone; we are heavily dependent on our partners to help us achieve our goals. . . . That's a new concept that AusAID [Australian Agency for International Development] is bringing in

> now; they want us to work together, to link together, so we can produce something worthwhile for them. For instance, they wanted us to do research, leadership research—so we are doing that, starting in January. We are also working together with the National University of Samoa to make sure that all research on leadership has to come through us. . . . That was their [AusAID's] recommendation.

The sentiments expressed in this passage seem to indicate a reproduction of the colonial difference, which in turn suggests an acute need for more robust border thinking to take place. In later segments of the same interview, Michael follows up his discussion of Samoa's acquiescence to Australian interests by juxtaposing this with an impassioned appeal to *Samoanize* things:

> Too much pride in our people, man. We want to Samoanize what we do. Because most donors come, they think bringing in a concept from overseas will help this country, but we have our totally different issues. Like for instance, when you approach a village—some consultants when they come over, they say, "Oh, why don't we just walk to the village and talk to any old man!" Our village system, you can't do it like that. You can't just walk in and say, "Hey! I am here to do research on this and this." You can't. You have to approach the proper protocols here in Samoa. That's why when we say we want to Samoanize it; we have to do it the Samoan way, so we can get the best results out of it.

The seemingly incongruous nature of these sentiments expressed by the same individual in Samoa invokes the postcolonial concept of ambivalence. Bhabha's description of ambivalence, which expands on the notion of colonial mimicry, can be read alongside Mignolo's articulation of the colonial difference: "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha, 1984, p. 126, emphasis in original). McLeod expands on Bhabha's work to suggest that this ambivalence often leads to a condition in which "the discourse of colonialism is internally split and teeming with anxieties" (McLeod, 2010, p. 66). In this instance, the requisite balance between prioritizing the Samoan way, while also accommodating the influx of global designs, remains an important consideration in the process of border thinking.

A Way Forward: *Tofa Mamao* (The Long View) and *Faautaga Loloto* (The Deep View)

A final theme that emerged throughout conversations with Samoan policy actors was more aspirational in nature—of imagining future possibilities and a way forward for border thinking, which would buttress the ongoing process of the decolonization of education. Most of these sentiments appeared grounded on the tenets found within the Samoan worldview of carefully weighing both *tofa mamao* (the long view) and *faautaga loloto* (the deep view) within any discussion or when making any decisions. Toward the end of our interview, John acknowledged the value of the conversation that had just taken place, highlighting in particular the emphasis that had been placed on understanding the complexities at the point of convergence between local histories and global designs:

> This is valuable. It's a record that these issues exist. It can form as the basis of having conversations amongst partners, including governments. For example, everyone talks about the emergence of China in the Pacific. What is lacking, in my view—I mean, people sometimes complain about, "Oh, China is coming, what's going to happen to our land, to our culture, they're building poor quality infrastructure. . ." But why not change the conversation from a sort of criticism to rather try and work together with China. . . . Because what China and Samoa is at the moment, is what our relationship was with Australia and New Zealand back in the 60s and 70s.

This notion—of reflecting on Samoa's history of dealing with global designs, to more productively engage with their current and future iterations—serves as yet another manifestation of border thinking. Seen in this light, John's encouragement to change the conversation can be considered a means by which to begin thinking beyond the cycle of global designs as forms of hegemonic dominance; or as Leon Tikly (2009) puts it, to "go beyond critique and engage with the possibilities of a more progressive alternative to imperialism and colonialism" (p. 40).

Building on this sense of a more productive engagement as the way forward, another element that emerged was that of patience. A number of policy actors upheld the importance of time and patience to allow for a sustainable unfoldment of a robust, home-grown system of education and development. Leilani supports this notion through her emphatic contention that "development, or moving into the postcolonial, happened so long ago (in Western countries). . . what I'm trying to say is that the Industrial Age didn't all happen within a decade! So why would it happen within a decade in Samoa?" Her argument can be further conceptualized through the work of Tikly (2009), who argues that "the development of the Western episteme . . . took many centuries to evolve. The (re)creation of non-Western knowledges will not happen overnight" (p. 41). Finally, Elena astutely weaves together many of the sentiments expressed by participants by returning to the foundation of Samoa's local histories and indigenous epistemologies as a guiding tool:

> *Va* is a word that describes relationships; the *sacredness between* is what I interpret *va* to mean. This is the sacredness between relationships, and this is immersed into the fabric of our community-based culture. Yes, we have a lot of issues—but the true *Fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan Way), there is this sacred *va* in our relationships, and it is what allows our leaders to pause and make what we call *tofa mamao* (long view) and *faautaga loloto* (deep view). It allows us to pause and have long and deep views and thinking before our elders make decisions. Those decisions are not just made—they're made with what's instilled in our culture. That is what we need to do right now in the Pacific and in Samoa. We need to pause and look at the long-term vision of this model of aid coming through, and think deeply about the impact of what these are going to be.

Having ascertained a number of themes that emerged in interviews with Samoan policy actors, as understood throughout this section using Mignolo's concept of border thinking, perceived challenges appear to stand alongside promising opportunities in the process of reconciling the confluence of global designs with local histories, in order to reimagine the future of education in Samoa.

CONCLUSION

Nearly 2 centuries of dynamic global designs have left a profound and complicated legacy on local Samoan histories, in particular as it relates to education policy and practice. Contemporary global designs remain relentless and ever-evolving. In this article, I began by presenting an outline of recent education policy constructs and contestations in Samoa, before proceeding to an analysis of local policy actors' perspectives to more comprehensively understand the ways in which they are interpreting contemporary global designs; their effect on local contexts and histories; and subsequent responses. A broader question that arises from these discussions is whether emerging global designs will merely duplicate decades of hegemonic, neo-colonial development practice; or whether they offer Samoans a chance to renegotiate terms of engagement that better suit their local context and priorities. Indeed, set against the backdrop of a post-2015 global development agenda that promises further progress toward rendering the rhetoric of partnerships into reality, shifts in global designs could lead to promising opportunities for education futures to be reimagined in Samoa, in a manner that allows for closer alignment with local histories.

What came to light throughout these interviews with select Samoan policy actors was that global designs should in no way be *reified*, underscoring the complex point of intersection where global designs and local histories meet. Such complexities require an equally nuanced policy response, along with patience for the groundwork to sustainably take shape. Local participants made clear throughout the series of interviews that global designs didn't just happen to them, nor was it something that they wanted to reject outright. Rather, they mostly expressed a willingness and desire to engage in productive dialogue with these global designs, acknowledging that they could not be completely avoided, thus requiring a concerted effort and heightened awareness among Samoans to align them more closely with their own local context.

Finally, this article suggests that research and thinking on the intersection of global designs and local histories in Samoa needs to continue to privilege indigenous perspectives, to understand the ways they are interpreting, negotiating, and responding to these shifts. Only by ensuring that a full range of indigenous voices—and thus a more comprehensive perspective of subalternity, beyond merely the views of the elite minority—are foregrounded, can there be hope for a form of border thinking to truly emerge in order to address current educational and development challenges. Indeed, if the global development apparatus, as a paramount global design, does not sincerely engage with local histories, and respect the autonomy and agency of Samoans, then the entire practice renders itself obsolete. As Rizvi states:

> The colonized people (cannot) be regarded simply as innocent bystanders in their encounters with the hegemonic processes of colonization. Postcolonialism refuses to treat the colonized as "cultural dupes," incapable of interpreting, accommodating, and resisting dominant discourses. . . . This suggests that relations between global and local are always complicated and ambiguous and require detailed ethnographic case-by-case analyses. (2007, p. 261)

Continuing to reflect upon the ways in which Samoans interpret, negotiate, and respond to shifting global designs at this transitional moment thus becomes a crucial element of the politics of aid as we look to the future. Such a process would benefit from heeding the aspirational call to consider "the complexities, tensions and paradoxes of decolonizing work without an immediate

need for resolution, coherence and prescriptive action" (de Oliveira Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 22). In doing so, optimism remains for a future in which Samoans exercise this enhanced agency through the use of border thinking, in cultivating systems of education and development reflective of the ongoing process of both physical and intellectual decolonization unfolding in Samoa in the 21st century and beyond.

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NOTES

1. Linda Martin Alcoff offers a succinct exposition of the term *colonial difference* in her 2007 paper: "Mignolo's concept of the colonial difference is thus an attempt to reveal and displace the logic of the same by which Europeans have represented their others. Non-Europeans are seen as existing on the same historical trajectory, but further behind. . . . In this way, true otherness or difference is invisible and unintelligible. . . . (Mignolo) seeks both to reveal the way in which power has been at work in creating that difference (that is, the way in which colonialism creates 'backwardness' both materially and ideologically) as well as the way in which colonial power represents and evaluates difference" (2007, p. 87).
2. Border thinking is alternately described in the literature as "thinking from another place, imagining an other language, arguing from another logic; as a subaltern knowledge. . . that strives to break away from the dominance of Eurocentrism; not to correct lies and tell the truth, but to think otherwise" (Escobar, 2010, p. 59); in expanding upon this first description, Alcoff delineates that "the idea of border thinking is to specify the locality of subaltern knowledge as a border location rather than simply the beyond of Western knowledge or the site of pure difference. The goal of border thinking is de-subalternizing knowledge itself" (2007, p. 94).
3. Such as the *Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative for Pacific Peoples by Pacific Peoples (RPEIPP)*, for example.

4. The complexities surrounding the notion of decolonization must be noted. According to de Oliveira Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew, and Hunt, decolonization can be seen as having "multiple meanings, and the desires and investments that animate it are diverse, contested, and at times, at odds with one another" (2015, p. 22). Having acknowledged as such, the concurrent challenge presented by the "impulse to suppress these contradictions and conflicts in order to collapse decolonization into coherent, normative formulas with seemingly unambiguous agendas" (de Oliveira Andreotti et al, 2015, p. 22) must also be considered. Finally, as Chen states, "Decolonization no longer refers only to the objective structure of the historical movement, but also to action, subjectivity, thought, cultural forms of expression, social institutions, and global political-economic structures" (2010, p. 113).
5. Fiji has experienced numerous political coups over the past 20 years, mainly owing to political tensions between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians; the Solomon Islands erupted into civil unrest and ethnic violence in 1999 for a period of 4 years, requiring the intervention of an international peacekeeping force; and the crime rate in Papua New Guinea is considered to be among the highest in the world.
6. MESC Education Policies, 1995–2005 / MESC Education Strategies, 1995–2005; MESC Strategic Policies and Plan, July 2006–June 2015.
7. *Samoa Education Sector Evaluation Study: Final Report* (Samoa, 2005).
8. The PRIDE (Pacific Regional Initiatives for the Delivery of Basic Education) Project, comprising 15 Pacific Island countries and instituted by The University of the South Pacific's Institute of Education, seeks to "enhance the capacity of Pacific education agencies to effectively plan and deliver quality basic education through formal and non-formal means, and to improve the coordination of donor inputs to assist countries implement their plans" (About the PRIDE project, 2013).
9. Rather than a linear and economically driven view of development that considered growth in terms of GDP per capita, human development theory proposed that one should consider the quality of life as the primary objective, with production and prosperity merely as a means to those ends (Sen, 2003).
10. Described as per the University of the South Pacific's web site as "an NZAID-supported (though not led or driven) project in 2001 ... initiated and led by a group of Pacific educational leaders. While NZAID's grant support ended in 2007, the influences of RPEIPP have continued on as Pacific educational leaders, scholars and emerging leaders took up the mantle of contextualizing their thinking, scholarship and leadership" (Rethinking Pacific Education, 2015).
11. Referencing the Forum Secretariat (2001), Coxon and Munce (2008) state: "The Pacific Basic Education Action Plan (PBEAP), developed as an outcome of the first meeting of the Pacific Ministers of Education Conference in May 2001 ... According to the PBEAP, the development of basic education needs to be founded on distinct Pacific values, morals, social, political, economic and cultural heritages, and to reflect the Pacific's unique geographical context while taking account of the global context" (p. 154).
12. Furthermore, *subalternity*, as interpreted for the purposes of this article, is concerned with Samoan perspectives considered subaltern in a broader global sense. That is, the power differential with the global/local relation mentioned earlier in this article situates Samoan

as subaltern within the global. Yet, it should be acknowledged that some of the policy actors interviewed could also be understood in Fanonian terms as *native elites*.

13. For the sake of confidentiality, participants have been given pseudonyms.
14. Portuguese football player Cristiano Ronaldo, two-time winner of the prestigious FIFA (football's world governing body) Ballon d'Or Award, given to the best male player in the world.

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