

“Fanaafi o Fa’amalama”: A light within the Light

Nurturing Coolness & Dignity in Samoan Students’ Secondary
School Learning in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand

A Thesis

**submitted in Partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree**

of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the

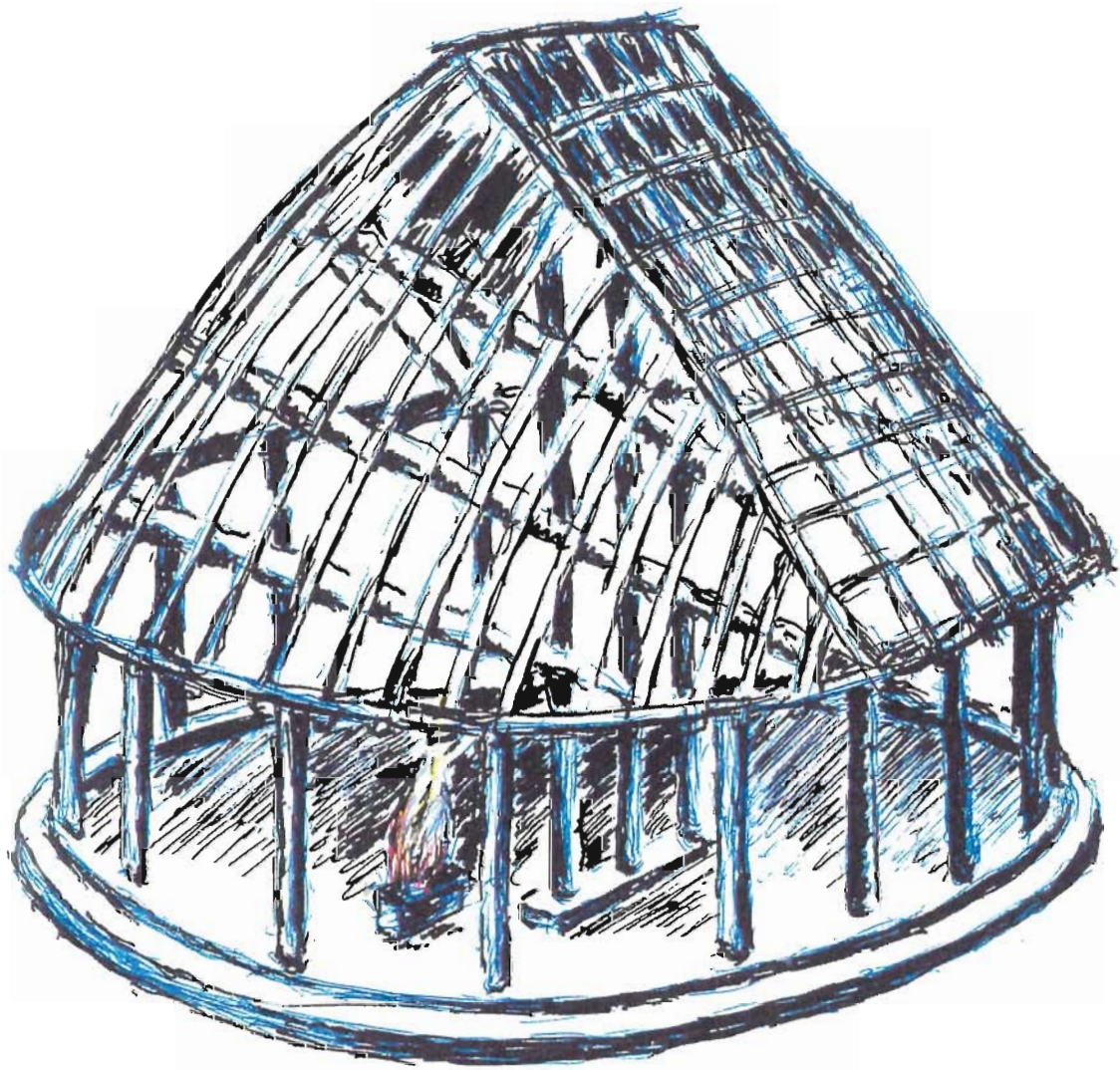
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by

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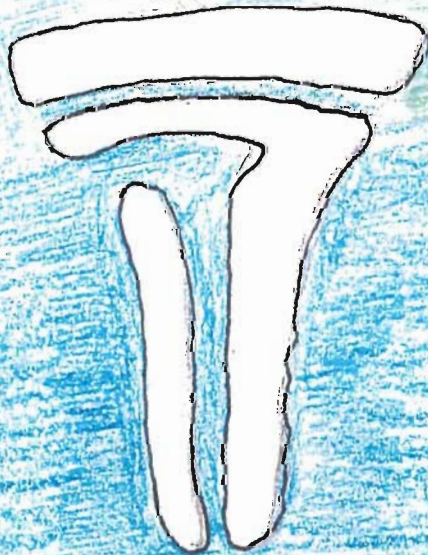


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ABSTRACT

This study examines *how* Samoan students at the secondary school level cope under intense pressure of their dual operation (*fa'asamoa*-western culture) in their social psychological-cultural learning constructions. A "Samoan fieldwork" study investigated the student-centred learning, particularly the realities of their experiences in the classroom. A *Matuaofaiva* Model (integrative *fa'asamoa* perspective) guided the multi-disciplinary methodology employed. Previous relative studies were nevertheless utilised for their exogenous frameworks, themes and concepts. This study developed an expected viable learning process, which allowed Samoan students to engage and cope within learning processes. The study specifically seeks to develop a substantive model of understanding that can interpret and hypothesise on students' invisible and visible behaviours in conjunction with their actions.

To examine the coping/managing strategies of learning, I worked with nine Senior Samoan students at a state suburban high school in New Zealand over a period of over a year following individuals and groups. Intensive observations of the student sample was complemented and supplemented by *fa'afaletui fonos* (forums) and informal discussions with parents, teachers and students' peers and cohorts. Data was analysed during the data collection process, which covered a period of over four years. During this time, it became necessary to broaden not only my understanding of what others were doing, but also substantially to modify my own approach.

The cultural conflict faced by Samoan students in their learning has been defined as "wavering" or more specifically, "content wavering" which relates to students' interaction with the content of the curriculum, and "feelings wavering" which relates to socio-cultural and psychological factors. Samoan students search to overcome both forms of wavering by way of: pacifying in apprenticeship; crafting in guided participation; and ascertaining in participatory appropriation. The ways in which they cope reveal a process of "nurturing coolness and dignity", a process that those involved in education need to be aware of and utilise to help Samoans and/or *Pasifika* students to succeed in the New Zealand education system, particularly in classroom learning.

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*Lo'u agaga e, ia e fa'amanu atu ia leova
ia aua fo'i ne'i galo se mea e tasi
O ana meaalofa.*

*Ierusalem e, afai e galo oe ia te a'u,
ia galo lava i lo'u lima taumatau.
Afai ou te le manatua oe, ia pipi'i a'e lo'u
laulaufaiva i lo'u gutu, pe a le fa'asili
Ierusalem i mea uma ou te fiafia i ai"*

"Are you still here? When are you going to finish? Still procrastinating, eh? I doubt it if he's ever going to complete his thesis on time. He should be back in the Islands doing something worthwhile".

The lines above were part of my "daily diet" in "my home" at the university. I hope I will never hear of them again in the years to come. Striving to complete and make sense of the whole process was my worst nightmare. Managing the final stretch was more difficult than was expected. Nevertheless, my 'ember of hope' was far from distinguished and certainly not one that could have been gained and enkindled on a solo effort, for as the adage goes "no man is an island". It is indeed with much appreciation that I now assume a very humble position and extend my sincere thanks to the "Island of people" that provided congenial advice and ongoing support. They rekindled the "*fanaafi o fa'amalama*" in my life, which illuminated the root from which I came, traversed and the route I was striving to reach: the business end of the thesis.

First and, foremost I thank my colleague Brian Cosgriff, who always believed I had the capacity and would finish, even when I was very far from finishing. Brian has kindly provided me with ongoing, brilliant academic advice and a supportive approach, particularly in proofreading and editing of my thesis. He has been tolerant of my dynamic writing style, especially my passion for big words, jargon, malapropisms and poetic nature. In the end, I incisively followed the philosophy 'KISS' (keep it simple, stupid) Fa'afetai tele & thanks a bunch Bro. This is as much his thesis as mine.

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Finally, I would also like to acknowledge and pay tribute to Afioga Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagaloa, whose name has been adopted given its cultural relevance to the very purpose of this thesis. Aiono paves the path for Samoan and indigenous education. Being the first Samoan to graduate with a PhD degree (foma'i o le tofa manino) (University of London), she has provided windows of illumination for Samoan learning and building bridges between Samoan and western scholarships and epistemologies. Fa'amalo le su'emalo o lenei ua sapi ai fanau a Samoa i le lalolagi.

DEDICATIONS

Firstly, dedication goes to the nine Samoan students, their peers, their families and the Community of Woodland High School for graciously allowing me to enter their lives and sharing their personal narratives, diaries and niches.

Secondly, I dedicate this to the memory of my parents. My birth mum, Pinesa Lei'asamaivao-Bentley, especially, would have been proud of this undertaking. Unfortunately she will never be able to read it. Her spirit and heart continues to reside in me as the "light" that illuminates any future endeavours.

Thirdly, I dedicate this to all the young generation of my extended aiga/families, particularly Corey and Summer Motufoua who constantly ask: "Uncle! When do you finish school?"

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"E ui ina poto le tautai ae se lava le atu i ama, ma e leai foi se faiva e maumau"

Fa'amalo, Fa'afetai tele le agaalofa ma le tofa manino ua mafai ai ona fa'amatuaofaivaina ai le auauna vaivai aua le galuega ua maea. Ia alofa le Atua ma tau'i atu lou tou agalelei.

Soifua.

PART I: PLANTING THE SEED

Chapter One: Introduction: Setting the Stage

Chapter Two: Methodologies and Methods

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

I. PREAMBLE

(1) Be sure (the ploughman said), not to sell the inheritance

Our forebears left to us

A treasure lies concealed therein

(Fontaine's fables, the Ploughman and his children)

(2) But the old man was wise

To show them before he died

That learning is the treasure

(Jacques Delors' re-adaptation of Fontaine's fables, 1998)

This thesis focuses on nine senior Samoan secondary students, four in Year 11 and five in Year 12, within a suburban co-educational high school in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, which I call Woodland High. The emphasis is on the students' 'lives' or to be exact their "educational lived experiences" not school systems per se. More specifically, it is about these students' classroom experiences and social psychological-cultural learning construction during one year of their educational journeys. It examines the students' managing or coping processes within the classroom. Moreover, it answers the following questions: How do Samoan students cope? What strategies do they use to cope? What facilitates their thinking and learning?

Not only is the thesis about Samoan students, it is, for the most part, a thesis by them. It is the product of the collaborative "*fa'afaletui*" (forum for shared knowledge) by the students and the fieldworker who recorded their thoughts, conversations and actions.

II. *NOFOAGA*: MY POSITION IN THE STUDY

I must advise the reader that I positioned myself as both an *insider* and *outsider* researcher to illuminate parts of the study, where necessary, to ensure compliance

with academic conventions and principles. As a Samoan researcher researching Samoans, it is always culturally appropriate, first and foremost, to introduce myself. For this reason, I have included an epilogue which details who I am, where I am from and my background. I wish, at this point, to acknowledge my *va* (space), *nofoaga* (position/place) and “*i le ava ma le fa’aaloalo e tatau ai*” (recognition of respect and courtesy) to my audience. Desirous to adhere to my global Samoan *aiga’s* oral tradition, I follow her traditional etiquette and protocol by offering the following brief Samoan salutation:

“Ou te muamua ona ou tapui le tapu a Tupu, ae ou te fa’afitifiti a tautai, aua le vaisausauina o outou pala ma faiga sau-tua-fa-fa, e le ma fa’alupea. Ou te talitonu i lou tou titifaitama o le a magalo ai se leo, aua e va’atele atu i’ina. A’o ai ea ita? Tulou, tulou, tulou lava.” (I first acknowledge and recognise Samoan protocols and etiquettes, and her people’s proud ancestry. What I beg of my Samoan audience is their blessing and forgiveness should I somehow I make errors)

During the study, I developed a rapport with my Samoan audience, and I wish here to recognise and acknowledge its diverse *fa’alupega* (honorific address) and *gafa* (genealogy). It is culturally appropriate for me to ask for forgiveness if I failed to accurately interpret, define and describe Samoan institutions, contexts and concepts. I formally invite and welcome the reader and my fellow Samoans on board my *va’a* (canoe) and hope they give me their blessings to ensure that it will not capsize while it sails the multi-discipline currents en route to its proposed destination.

While I am aware of the academic tradition of writing from a position of objectivity (see Jones, 1992 cited in Lee, 1995), I choose to write regularly from a position of subjectivity in order to provide the reader with key insights into Samoan culture. This approach is aligned with the oral Maori tradition of acquainting oneself to his/her unknown audience which Clothier (1993) postulates:

On introduction to a new audience the need to ‘position’ yourself, letting the listener/s know from where you come and thereby reminding yourself from whence you came, are part of an indigenous cultural tradition. (Clothier, 1993, p.10 cited in Jun Lee, 1995, p.5)

Indeed, aspects of the oral tradition pertinent to *Kaupapa Maori* (e.g Hohepa, 1990; Pere, 1984; Smiths, G. 1990a, 1990b; Smith, L. 1992a, 1992b, 1999) have significant similar bearings to the oral Samoan tradition. Thus, I gather threads from my personal experiences, and bind and fashion them, where appropriate, throughout the thesis. By doing so, I aim to develop rapport with the reader/s and my audience/s.

When listening to the vibrant stories and incites of the student participants, I became conscious of the fact that their stories were also my own. I aimed, therefore, to fulfil an obligation: to contribute my own story to a pool of stories, to form a quilt-like sheet to make a whole. As an insider-outsider researcher, I took the initiative to reflect on my orientation and personal experiences to contribute to the 'big picture', painted with the idyllic, emotional and naïve stories and narratives student participants willingly shared with me. This view is reinforced by Stanley's (1990) remarks in Lee (1995): "that we must be as willing to use our own experiences as we are to use those of others".

III. TAMA MA TEINE SAMOA: STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Here, the student participants are welcomed and introduced:

Aute was the most interesting and eccentric character of the whole group. A New Zealand born fifteen-year-old fifth form girl (Year 11), she was from a two-parent working class family, in which her mother was a preschool teacher and her father a supervisor within the hardware industry. While she had great potential, she was unproductive in both classroom work and assignments. Despite this, she was both witty and smart in her responses during classroom discourse and very quick in dodging and deflecting instructions, especially when in defence of some of her peers who were regular 'cruisers' and truants. She played a major role in the Samoan cultural group, as a brilliant singer and performer, which earned her a "cool chick" status. Her best friends were all Samoans. She aspired to follow her mum's career (teaching) but at the secondary level, for which she would require a B.A. degree before entry to Teachers' College. She also expressed an interest to become a lawyer. In short, her aspirations were closely linked to her parents' dreams and expectations.

Moli, a girl of fifteen, and **Ata**, a boy of sixteen, were sister and brother. They were well-behaved, respected and enthusiastic fifth formers, who were New Zealand born, like the rest of their siblings and were Samoan/Samoan-Chinese from a two-parent working class and semi-professional family. Both, like most Samoan-Chinese students, had naturally developed mathematical cognitive skills which they used to achieve most of the goals they set as early as third form: passing school exams. Despite this, Moli's interest and passion was for drama and performing arts. She jokingly talked about getting an audition for a part in the TV 2's popular soap, 'Shortland Street'. Her friends included both Samoans and *Palagi* (European) students. In contrast, Ata aspired to become a PE teacher as his interests were in sports, particularly perfecting his rugby and fitness skills. He was an easy-going 'cool' guy who people instantly warmed to. Both Ata and Moli were good role models of capable siblings from working class and semi-professional backgrounds. Moli's friend Aute was a bit domineering, while Ata and his friend Moso were a good match, despite the physical difference between them.

Moso, a 16-year-old fifth form boy, had an enormous build which meant he was easily the biggest student at school who matched the height of some of the tallest teachers. His vibrant character was reflected in his antics, which most students admired, especially the girls. He wore his hair long, tied back by a red and blue pandanus hair band or in ponytail. Apart from everything else, he was the face of hip-hop or popular culture at school, a subculture most *Pasifika* students identify with. His mother attended university, and she and Moso lived at home with both grandparents and other family members. Moso aspired to become a mechanic. Despite this aspiration, his rugby league came first, as his mindset focused on the fame and money of professional rugby league. He received regular warnings from teachers that his league should not jeopardise his studies, especially during his School Certificate year. Moso just shrugged up his shoulders in the face of such advice and looked forward to the weekend's league game, with the whole aiga and friends supporting him from the sideline.

Losa, a 17 year old, was a very neat, fair looking Samoan girl with hazel eyes and a matching complexion. A quiet and modest sixth former, she wanted to pursue an army career the following year. She was from a working class family, and was

determined to achieve her goals and ambitions in order to help her parents who worked in semi-skilled jobs for over twenty years to provide for their children. Like most of the Samoan and *Pasifika* girls, she was of average ability, although she was amongst the few who had a good pass (four subjects) in School Certificate examinations. Indeed, like all Samoan students, she also admired and adored her parents' courage in the face of their limited English proficiency. As the oldest girl in her family, she proudly talked about her teaching-translating role for her parents in their everyday dealings, for instance, visits to the doctor. She also played an important role in her church's choir and youth group. Her absences from class were the result of her attending to some of her duties outside of school. A very soft-spoken girl, Losa hanged around with her Samoan and *Pasifika* girl friends.

Teuila, a 16 year old, fair looking sixth form girl was from a single-parent family. She worshipped her mother and vice versa. Originally from the North Island, she and her mother moved south five years ago. She was one of the brilliant students who easily passed School Certificate and openly and intimately clung to her *Palagi* boy friend inside and outside the classroom. Raised solely by a young mother who was in her mid thirties, she was confident in handling classroom tasks and took pride in sharing her work her boyfriend who sat with her constantly during classroom academic tasks. She planned to become a primary school teacher, as she loved working with kids. This career passion was derived from her part time nannying job.

Pua, a 16-year-old sixth former, was an attractive girl of Samoan/Maori/*Palagi* extraction. She was extremely fair but had pronounced Polynesian features. One parent worked in the teaching profession, while the other was a telecom engineer. She was one of the most brilliant and organised students of the whole group. Although a modest and quiet girl, she spoke with authority in response to the teacher during classroom discourses. She also easily passed School Certificate and aspired to become a teacher, following mother and older sister. She planned to get a degree before she embarked on teacher training.

Iulai was a 16-year-old sixth form boy. He was from a two-parent, very religious working class background. He was determined to work hard to achieve his Sixth form Certificate. As the oldest in a family of four, he had to assist his family by working part-time. He was of average to good ability. Iulai aspired to be a lawyer,

which required passing sixth form and Bursary. Despite facing hardship and adversity at home, like many Samoan students, he was determined to enter the seventh form.

Eli was a 16-year-old sixth form boy. Like Iulai, he was the oldest in a two-parent working class family. He was modest and very passive, however this did not stop him from achieving the educational goals he set himself, and winning the prestigious award given to a *Pasifika* student based on all round performance, inclusive of good leadership and being a good role model. His strengths were mathematics and accounting, and thus his plan was to go to university to complete a double major or a conjoint commerce and computing degree in order for him to become a computer programmer. His weakness was understanding literary analyses and criticisms in English. He maintained that he had to read a passage several times before he understood the contextual meaning of a text. Overall, he was one of the brilliant students. He maintained his coolness and dignity when under-pressure and always looked for the light at the end of the tunnel.

The student participants discussed above persevered amid the intense pressure and adversity they experienced within the classroom. In so doing, their pride blossomed, and they won the respect of teachers. They were thus able to move closer to achieving their goals, which largely depended on the immense support of their parents and *aigas* (extended families). The latter is introduced below.

IV. TAPUAIGA A MATUA: SUPPORT OF PARENTS AND AIGAS

O au a matua fanau, o lo'o tu'i mai aiga le mulipapaga (Samoan children are the apple of their parents' eyes)

It has been well documented that Samoans have always keenly embraced schooling (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991). In New Zealand, Samoan parents desired that their children's education would always support *fa'asamoa* beliefs and values. While today's Samoan parents, especially the first generation New Zealand born, continue to believe that their children's educational success would result in economic stability, social mobility, enhanced family status and good employment, they stipulated that the absence of *fa'asamoa* values would be seen as a failure. An important recurrent

issue raised by parents was that they preferred seeing their teenage children succeed in life in whatever they chose to do, so long as their culture, sense of community, family and permanence were intact. Thus, Samoan parents' expectation and aspiration for their children was to strike a 'balance' between their way of knowing in the home culture and the acquisition of knowledge of classroom culture. While this might seem a difficult task, parents saw it as imperative to success.

V. SOME TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

Without teachers' direction, guidance and caring, Samoan students would never acquire the skills and knowledge to succeed in class. The discussion now turns to what teachers' thought of Samoan students. The following comments show the diversity of teachers' views, and the perception that the teachers like the students, but are concerned about their performances:

I find them very polite and courteous. They sometimes lack reading and writing skills to the national norm but most try hard.

I tend not to make any distinction between students based on race or sex.

Excellent as individuals that bring a more complex set of assumptions and values. They have the added diversity of western values and concepts tempered by *fa'asamoa* values and beliefs.

Sad really! I see what they could do, but they often don't reach their potential. They sell themselves short.

Very rewarding-they are open, generally good in class. Also challenging-trying to meet their needs linguistically and culturally.

Not very different from any other student.

It should be pointed out, however, that the majority of teachers were very supportive of Samoan students and wanted to encourage and assist them to achieve their educational goals, especially passing the major national exams. The following extract adopted from Cowley, Hill & Hawk, Sutherland (2001) sums up what most of the teachers noted about their Samoan students:

The level of acceptance of a teacher by her primary class is illuminated by her reflection on her Pakeha husband's visit to the school where children commented-'He's *Palagi*'. The teacher commented 'So they don't see me as *Palagi*. He's the *Palagi*. I thought it was nice, I'm one of them, they don't look at me and say you're *Palagi*. You're our teacher, you're one of us. (*Palagi* teacher).

Significantly, the development of good relationships between students and teachers promotes effective learning across all levels of the curriculum. As further reported in (Hill & Hawk et al, 2001), teachers treated students as if they were all of a similar status as the teacher. Such equal treatment produced mutual respect, feeling of belongingness and passion which motivated participating in classroom learning.

VI. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

A *matua o faiva* (Samoan fieldwork) model, specifically the *fa'afaletui* phase, was employed for the study. This approach underpins an inductive methodology that serves to develop a model of understanding from data in a logical style. The "Samoan fieldwork," underpinned by *fa'asamoa*, is in turn harnessed by elements from the following theories and perspectives: grounded theory (Strauss & Glaser, 1967); symbolic interactionism (Mead, G. 1934); hermeneutics (Ezzy, 2002) and the social and cultural cognitive constructivism approach (see Nuthall & Alton-Lee 1997). Encapsulated in the final approach are socio-cultural and linguistic perspectives of mental processes, which in turn induct "how language and social processes of the classroom construct the ways in which students acquire and retain knowledge (Nuthall & Alton-Lee 1997, p.73). This model provides an explanation of student participants' actions and behavioural dynamics in constructing their concepts and ideas of learning, using their way of knowing and classroom experiences. In essence, the model was purposely designed to discover the "realities" of students' experiences, as told in their own words.

VII. FRAMING THE STUDY

The study was conducted within a co-educational suburban high school in Christchurch, New Zealand, which had a substantial number of Samoan students. It was a response to a call for more research on *how* Samoans and/or *Pasifika* students

cope with the school community life of classroom learning in the South Island. The majority of broadly similar research has been concentrated mainly in the North Island, particularly in Auckland and Wellington. The student participants were doubtless similar to Samoan students throughout *Aotearoa/* New Zealand in that they were comprised of those between 14 and 19 years of age who were born in New Zealand, born overseas but raised in New Zealand, and those who had recently settled in the country. All the students were from working class or [semi] professional family origins. In practical terms, the location of the school within the local *Pasifika* community made it an ideal choice for the study.

VIII. CONCEPTUAL & PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE

In essence, this study contributes positively towards filling a number of gaps that existed in previous research. Firstly, it provides new models of understanding or conceptual frameworks specific to Samoan students' experiences. Secondly, it contributes to the contemporary debate regarding how student-centred learning in the classroom promotes (Samoan) students socio-cultural learning construction. It serves to raise consciousness within educators, teachers and the research community that in order to understand students, particularly Samoan students, classroom experiences, one has to consider the total elements of the school community's life and the classroom learning processes students engage and 'live.' Moreover, it looks at the relationship between students' toolkit of socio-cultural orientation/s and their ways of knowing that illuminates, elicits and shapes their formal classroom learning.

There remains a dearth of literature on *how* Pasifika students, particularly Samoan students, cope and manage in the classroom. The only studies carried out on classroom learning of Samoans or *Pasifika* students were by Jones (1986) and recently by Hills & Hawk (1998, 1996) (see Anae et al, 2002). However, the work on all areas of education by Samoans and *Pasifika* researchers from within or outside New Zealand have proven assisted this study (e.g. Helu-Thaman 1996, 1988; Sharma 1997; Koloto, 1995). In turn, it is hoped that this study's implications and recommendations will substantiate these scholar's efforts.

On a practical level, for instance, the findings strongly suggest that Samoan students' attempts to acquire relevant learning and appropriate knowledge to pass exams as a prerequisite for further education and or future employment. They believe that one has to have a 'work ethic' and 'total commitment day in, day out' to assimilate the necessary tools to achieve his/her educational goals. Similarly, the data shows how students who are placed in special literacy and numeracy programmes are embarrassed and feel segregated from their more able friends. Additionally, the influence of popular culture and globalisation on the lives of Samoan students and the majority of senior students which has become a major concern for teachers and the school community is assessed. Its inevitable strain adds to the already intense pressure students' face from the duality of their home-classroom cultures. The lessons about how students respond to such pressures, it will be shown, are applicable to our understanding of all *Pasifika* students.

IX. DEFINITIONS

At the beginning of this thesis, I must clarify a number of definitions. While most terms and concepts employed throughout are detailed within each chapter, three recurrent terms need to be outlined here: Who were the Samoan students? What is *fa'asamoa*? What is *fanaafi o fa'amalama* in this context?

Who are the Samoan students? I have tentatively identified Samoan students in three distinct groups. First, those students who were born and raised in New Zealand, second, those who were born overseas and raised in New Zealand, and third, those who were born overseas and arrived in New Zealand between the ages of 12-19. The three groups are closely linked to the homeland of Samoa through parent(s) ancestry. It is through 'blood ties' that Samoans outside Samoa are culturally identified as Samoans (see Crocombe, 1999). I maintain that whether or not a Samoan speaks Samoan or has knowledge of *fa'asamoa* does not matter as long as they have of Samoan bloodlines, irrespective of its strength. Despite the differences between the three groups in terms of historical orientation which have played an important role in shaping students lives, identities and worldviews in relation to their classroom experiences, they are bound together by their "shared endeavours" to accomplish their educational goals.

What is *fa'asamoa*? *Fa'asamoa*, can be viewed in terms of “*etic*” (easy comparison) and “*emic*” (self-definition) definitions (see Yee 2001). While I have defined *fa'asamoa* in detail elsewhere, especially in the epilogue, I will briefly discuss it here for the sake of convenience. *Fa'asamoa* or Samoan culture, in the context of this study, involves processes, systems of beliefs, values and ways of knowing. In every Samoan home, the total cultural package is transmitted to the next generation by word of mouth, observational learning and or hands-on experience. A Samoan child is born and socialised into assuming a status and role in the world, and engages in social learning and knowledge construction through *fa'asamoa*. Although it has evolved, *fa'asamoa* enhances one's “verbal/non-verbal diet” sense of security and identity, and particularly “points of reference and its referees” (see Le Tagaloa, 1996). To be able to cope and to manage the intricate details of *fa'asamoa* in cosmopolitan centres, particularly in classroom learning, one needs to have courage and to attend to *fanaafi o fa'amalama* (illumination or setting Samoan knowledge alight).

What is *fanaafi o fa'amalama* in this context? *Fanaafi* literally means ‘shots of fire’ and *fa'amalama* literally means ‘window’ (English translation), or specifically “introducing light or causing illumination”. In pre-Christian times, *fanaafi* was ‘fire votives’ and *fa'amalama* was the ‘family evening worship’. Thus, the full translation of *fanaafi o fa'amalama* was the offering of ‘fire votives’ to the God during family evening worship. Since then, this fire has been distinguished from the ‘centre’ of the *faletele* or *Samoan fale* (house). Putting this in context, I have ‘reignited this fire’ in relation to Samoan students learning processes. The management and coping strategies that students have developed and employed in their classroom learning are a measure of determination that is ultimately supported by the *tapuaiga a matua* (support of parents) and the rest of the *aiga*. In sum, Samoan students continue to engage in a learning journey that needs courage, determination and patience. In so doing, they design managing or coping strategies to handle the learning processes of the classroom, and look forward to achieving their goals, expectation and aspirations, while upholding the ‘light’ of hope-*fanaafi o fa'amalama*.

X. OVERVIEW OF THESIS

The thesis is divided into three major parts. The first, Part I: Planting the Seed, comprises the present chapter and Chapter Two: *Methodologies and Methods*. Part II (*Matimatiga: Fuelling the light*) consists of Chapter Three: *Samoan students' learning in the classroom: a review of Samoan and Pasifika literature* and Chapter Four: *Rethinking student-centred learning in the classroom: a theoretical discussion*. The final part, Part III, is made up of Chapter Five: *The tapuitea quandary: hypotheses schema*, Chapter Six: *Tafa o ata: shredded shadows of dawn: superceding circumstances: findings I*, Chapter Seven: *Fa'afaillelega: nurturing coolness and dignity: exploratory data and discourse analysis: findings II*, and Chapter Eight: *O le sulu: culture [in]forms Samoan students' learning: findings III*. The final sections of the thesis are the conclusion, Chapter Nine: *Taeao afua: new mornings, closing stages* and an Epilogue: *punavai o le malamalama: the spring of knowledge concepts and learning ideas in the Samoan tradition*. The latter tells my own story: my upbringing in Samoa and the influences of my *aiga* and *fa'asamoa* on my total development. It includes a discussion of both of these concepts as well as a commentary on the Samoan school system. In short, it supplements key concepts used the thesis and enables the reader to understand the author's viewpoints.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

I. INTRODUCTION

Siva siva maia (dance, dance in appreciation)

Siva maia ia manaia lo tatou aso (dance in appreciation of our day)

Siva siva solo siva i luga ma lalo (dance, dance sideways, dance upwards, downwards)

I liken this research process or Samoan fieldwork to the “Samoan *siva*” (dance). It involves a series of elaborate, subtle, dramatic and complex manoeuvres with the sophistication of actions and cues, which symbolise the celebration of human life and mortality. It also symbolises the physical, social, cultural and spiritual aspects of Samoan institutions and epistemologies. The *taupou* (female dancer) or a *manaia* male (dancer) exhibited these movements clinically, with the utmost gracefulness, in their performances in tune with the rhythm, tempo and lyrics of a medley of songs, like the one above. In essence, a Samoan *siva* commences from the ground upwards and from deep inside the dancer and takes many twists and turns, which sits well with the manner in which I undertook this research. Here, my *siva* begins by drawing firstly on the foundations of this study.

(1) *Soalaupule o le Matuaofaiva*: embryonic development stage

In this chapter I provide a descriptive account and explanation of the appropriate methodology and methods employed in the fieldwork, data collection and data analysis of this study. But, before I do, I wish to present a brief account of the development and planning of my research, a multi-dimensional approach to research a “community of Samoan learners” within a classroom community.

This research evolved through ongoing “*soalaupule*” (consultations and on going discussions) between me, the Deputy Principal, Samoan students and university supervisors. Approximately, more than six months were spent in securing formal

permission to begin my fieldwork at my chosen school. After oral and written negotiations and consultations with the school's Deputy Principal, teachers, Samoan students and their parents, I was eventually given the 'green light.' To enhance the security of my position within the school, I employed the *fa'asamoa* protocols and etiquettes. These included *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *onosa'i* (patience), *fa'atuatua* (trust), and, most importantly, the development of the *va feagai/fealoa'i* (good rapport space/position) between myself and these parties. My set of values and way of knowing aided this undertaking at every stage. While waiting for almost six months for approval from the Ethics Committee of the university, I conducted a pilot study which helped shape and fashion the formal study.

(2) The pilot study

The impetus for the pilot study was the outcome of mutual rapport I developed with the Deputy Principal. In our dialogue, we discussed the purpose and nature of my study, the methodological procedures involved, sampling issues and some potential constraints that might emerge. Data collection, through observations of student participants, was also discussed in detail. The Deputy Principal introduced me to various teachers who specifically dealt with Samoan students.

Guided by qualitative theoretical sampling, I adopted an *internal sampling* approach, which is commonly used in case-study designs (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). This approach relates to the decisions I made once I have a general idea of what was to be studied, with whom to talk, what time of the day to observe, and how many documents and what kinds to review would be used (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.67). The Deputy Principal's contribution to the development of this stage was through the distribution and circulation of information sheets to teachers, potential student participants and their parents and finally the recruitment of student participants for the pilot study. The sample (n=18), recruited for the pilot study were between the ages of 13 and 19. This sample was recommended by the Deputy Principal and the criteria for the sample selection were based on students' regular school attendance of classes.

The pilot study consisted of a series of unstructured interviews with students, either individually, in pairs, or in groups, using eight open-ended questions. These interviews were conducted concurrently with classroom observations. This undertaking took place in July 1997 and was extended to early January 1998. The initial purpose of the pilot study was to provide baseline data for the formal study. Data from these observations and interviews were analysed and the emerging themes were grouped under eight categories. The following categories provided general information to guide the formal study: (i) the general structure of the day for Samoan students at school; (ii) a general description of physical characteristics of the school and classroom; (iii) classroom discourse; (iv) the number of students present in class; (v) the duration of classes; (vi) the activity participation (interaction with subject content); (vii) the staff present (bilingual, sign language, teacher aide); and (viii) the extent of cooperative learning with peers within small groups.

From the pilot study I identified students' choices of subjects, and those who influenced their choices (e.g. parents and peers). Furthermore, I identified that student participants' interest and motivation in a specific subject unit depended on its prerequisite relevance for practical purposes, occupational aspiration and further education. The practical relevance of subjects to students' lives outside the classroom became evident, for instance, part-time work in which the practical application of maths, accounting, mechanics was necessary. Different learning behaviours, attitudes and interactions with teachers, peers and others were recorded. Learning behaviours, which were mediated and negotiated through students' different expressive language, acts and cues (e.g. body language, double talk (code-mixing and code-switching (Samoan-English bilingualism) and brief or unelaborated responses, were also recorded. Similarly, factors external to both the home milieu and school contexts that influenced students' classroom participation (e.g. globalisation, popular culture, youth subcultures, and Afro American copycat scenario) were also identified.

The data generated in the pilot study resulted in three important functional roles that guided the formal study, and they are as follows. Firstly, it helped fill the void in the literature on Samoan and *Pasifika* education; secondly, it facilitated the design of research questions for this study and; thirdly, it enhanced my theoretical

understanding on the nature of Samoan students' ways of knowing or learning and their classroom experiences.

The sample of eighteen students in the pilot study was deliberately reduced to nine to meet the formal study's criteria. Nine was a more manageable number given the nature of this detailed study. By this I mean that I hoped a small sample would enable me to observe any student at any one time. Even when the original sample was reduced to nine, it was almost impossible for me to keep up with their whereabouts.

(3) *Lagaga*: weaving alternative fibres of methodology

....research frameworks on Samoan people must prioritise their 'holistic' perception of knowledge and scholarship, oral communication style and protocol of respect. For too long, we have had to express our thoughts within a '*palagi*' framework. The time has come for Samoan research to be processed and written within a Samoan context (Tupuola, 1993, p.179-80).

Pasifika islands research involves an academic context, a community context, a public context and a personal context. The academic context is concerned with contributing to the body of knowledge on Pasifika Islands people in New Zealand. The community context is about the collaboration and participation of Pasifika Islands people in research. The public context is about making social change through the information made available by the research, and the personal context is about the role of the 'self' in the study. The 'insider' researcher voice cannot be ignored because of misplaced beliefs on objectivity and 'truths' (Pasikale, 1996).

Research is the gathering of knowledge-more usually, not for its own sake, but for its use within a variety of applications. It is about control, resource allocation, information and equity. It is about power...(Te Awekotuku, 1991).

...methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are 'factors' to be built into research explicitly, to be thought reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways in a language that can be understood (Smith, 1999, p.15).

As the above quotations suggest, studying different ethnic groups, in particular Samoan students, meant that I took into considerations a number of issues not

necessarily experienced by the ‘mainstream’ educational research community. The interaction between me and my research participants was carefully considered when the research was designed and conducted. The centrality of *fa’asamoa* etiquette and the protocols of *fa’aaloalo* (respect) and *auautai/fulisia* (consensus) guided this undertaking, as I am a Samoan researcher. According to Tupuola:

Analysis [must] be approached sensitively and checked by participants to ensure their experiences were neither read into too deeply (that is, saying things that were not there) or avoiding rephrasing their ideas into jargon and/or theoretical frameworks (that may distort them) just to please the intended audience (Tupuola, 1993, p.317).

When deciding on an appropriate methodology, I developed the “*Matuaofaiva Model*” (see Appendix for full model) or “Samoan fieldwork” approach, following the ethnographic tradition, in which I observed and interviewed participants. Underpinning ‘Samoan fieldwork’ is a number of key aspects of *fa’asamoa*, as summarised by Mulitalo (2000). These included the ‘Samoan heart’ (feelings attitudes, skills, knowledge, spirituality); the ‘Samoan Way’ (methods, psychology, food, money, fine mats); the ‘protocols and values’ (etiquette, respect, *feagaiga* or humility) social structures/institutions (*aiga*, church, *matai*, village) and; the ceremonies and rituals (*ifoga*, *faaleleiga*, *ava* ritual, *talosaga*) (see Mulitalo, 2000, p.17). The need to collect naturalistic data on a number of students meant that I drew on a combination of techniques and relative theoretical positions. These positions or approaches included grounded theory, symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. Such theoretical domains enhanced aspects of *fa’asamoa* which strengthened Samoan fieldwork. Coupled with these were the key factors highlighted in the works of indigenous researchers quoted above. Despite the fact that in a naturalistic study, like my own, in which data was immediate and first hand, I experienced a number of shortcomings. These included the hardship of identifying and separating variables and measuring the importance of such variables. Furthermore, the study proved to be both expensive and energy draining. Nevertheless, Hohepa (1990) posits the significance of naturalistic inquiry strategies, as she remarks:

...using naturalistic inquiry methods enables us to increase the scope or range of data revealed. One is able to develop an explanation about what is going on derived from

observations made in the setting and guided by outside or formal theory (Hohepa, 1990, p.32)

My role as a Samoan researcher, therefore, was by no means an easy one. It requires much discussion if it is to be clearly understood. For this reason, much of the following chapter deals with the issue as much as it does with the more standard methodological considerations inherent in educational research. Overall, my aim was to develop a relevant and culturally sensitive methodology, which required some deconstruction of traditional methodology. It was important that it followed academic conventions, which were combined with some improvised interpretations in the quest to enhance our understanding of the realities of Samoan students' classroom experiences.

(4) What happens when a Samoan researcher becomes the researched?

I am well aware that some quarters of the academic world will demand proof and corroborative evidence. I have none, other than the fact I am a Samoan (Wendt, 1984, p.96).

I was taught that in my researcher's role I was to be neutral and should refrain from bias, which meant I should divorce myself from my participants from start to the finish. Admittedly, it was almost impossible to do, as every time I stepped back, looking into the lives of my participants and the processes they engaged in, I could see reflections of myself. In the end, especially when trying to make sense of the processes Samoan students engaged in, I welcomed them on board my *va'a* (canoe) as collaborators, corroborators and interpreters. From the conventional requirements of research from the university's Code of Ethics, I was aware that my position as both the 'researched' and 'researcher' or 'insider and outsider' was somewhat of a dilemma. Wendt's contention above, however, served to ease my concerns.

Enlightened by the immense contributions of indigenous writers, some of whom have mentioned in this thesis, I [inter] weaved an alternative methodology, adopting a holistic approach using aspects of different perspectives. For instance, Tupuola raised an important issue here: "Is there room for an alternative *fa'asamoa* methodology

(Tupuola, 1993)?” My response to that is a reverberating “YES”, and this study is living proof of that. *Matuaofaiva Model* or Samoan fieldwork, which encapsulates key aspects of *fa’asamoa* protocols values and practises, facilitated my collection, analysis and interpretation of data and thus promoted our understanding of the school lives of Samoan students.

Fa’asamoa is more than just the ‘Samoan Way’ or culture, as it is commonly defined by both anthropologists and many Samoans. In my own mind, the term is extremely complex and relates to a number of aspects of Samoan life, from cultural myths to Samoan psychology (in relation to the body, mind and soul). Moreover, it is dynamic and seen in a different way by Samoan traditionalists and New Zealand-born Samoans, for example. Aspects of *fa’asamoa* should be defined and described according to the context to which they are being applied. In contemporary New Zealand, as the Samoan community has grown and evolved, so too have the practices and value contexts surrounding *fa’asamoa*. In youth sub-culture, for instance, the influence of popular culture and change is clearly evident. Contemporary Samoan youths have interwoven elements of Samoan culture and language into their everyday nuances and genres. This has seen it in lyrics of rap and hip hop music and the poetry/prose and fine arts which have become an integral part of Samoan youth subculture. Put simply, *fa’asamoa* is by no means static or fixed. For more discussion on *fa’asamoa*, please read the Epilogue.

II. OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is the “*Matuaofaiva*” or “Samoan fieldwork” that embraces *fa’asamoa* protocols values and practises. Samoan fieldwork is multi-faceted as it encapsulates significant elements from different research ‘models’ already developed by Samoan researchers in recent years. These models included “*Fonoifale*” (Pasifika Health 1997); ‘*Faafaletui*’ (Samoan Perspectives of Mental Health, 1997) and the *Lalaga Model* (A Samoan Model for social work practise) (Mulitalo, 2000). In reality, this section is the practical justification of the methodological arguments.

Nine senior Samoan secondary students were interviewed and observed continuously (three days a week for over a year) during specific subject units. The focus was on core subjects such as English, Maths, Social Science (including Geography and History) and Science (including Biology). At least five lessons on a specific unit were observed. In addition, observations were made of optional classes, such as Classics, Legal Studies, Physical Education, Office Administration and Drama Studies, to provide a comparison between those subjects students elected to take and the compulsory courses.

The observations took the form of detailed descriptive accounts of students' individual and co-operative learning behaviour, interactions with peers, teachers and teacher aids, and with me. The context in which different behavioural acts occurred was noted, as were the verbal and non-verbal cues. These were entered in my field notebook. Access to key documentation (assignments, school reports, students' exercise books, in particular) was also gained. As the sole data collector and observer, I wrote summaries of what I witnessed after each lesson, sometimes in poetic form, to illustrate what students thought about the teacher, and what the teacher thought about them, and their reactions to my presence. This tactic was used as a means of ensuring "trust", because a number of students were reluctant to talk whenever they saw me writing down what they said. Students' ways of knowing (see also Helu-Thaman, 1996) and prior knowledge of core subjects which were revealed in small group tasks and in brainstorming sessions were also recorded. These issues and concepts were constantly explored through on-going informal dialogue with students (on a one-on-one or in small group) before and after classroom observations. Such informal dialogues and anecdotes were augmented by in-depth (semi) formal interviews with students at their convenience. The latter were tape-recorded.

A comparison between Samoan students and other students was created to provide data on the different instructional formats administered by teachers. The comparison was based on the students' ability to use their prior knowledge/cultural orientation to make sense of and to mediate the content of the units, and/or to respond to the teacher's instructions. Students' apparent enthusiasm and curiosity towards laboratory experiments, written tasks, problem-solving or class tests were also taken into account.

A matrix file was kept on each of the students to record the frequency of their utterances and interactions with peers and teachers, to forecast how these interactions might influence their interest retention and learning outcomes.

By perusing students' school reports and national examination transcriptions, the teachers and I made some predictions about the learning outcomes of individual Samoan students. This was reinforced by the descriptions, detailed above, of individual student's overall performances in different units and lessons. Such an approach, in Alton-Lee's (1984, p.48) words, "provide[s] information about the accuracy of teachers and the researcher's intuitive or naïve beliefs regarding classroom learning and to provide insight into the kinds of research bias which might unduly influence data analysis." As a result, I devised a 'hypothesis schema' or 'analytical tool' for analysing predictions made by the teachers and me.

In short, three steps were taken in the construction of a data analysis procedure. First, observational data was sliced and divided into three matrices or sets, namely, classroom discourse, frequent behavioural episodes and actual involvement in learning activities. These matrices or sets of data were compared in order to yield consistencies throughout the study. Secondly, students' commonsense and prior knowledge or cultural experiences in relation to their classroom learning were analysed. Thirdly, students' relationships with teachers, their peers and others, which were predicted to have significant influences on their learning outcomes, were assessed. Furthermore, students', their parents' and teachers' narratives and perceptions gathered from unstructured interviews and ongoing discussions as well as the observations of students' classroom experiences were triangulated. This approach method was adopted because it has proven particularly useful in other cultural studies. Dialogue with former students, the researcher's lived experiences, and non-academic Samoan literature, including the media's coverage of the participants' community were also integral components of the study

An emergent model of understanding of classroom learning in this study was constructed from and grounded in the data. It derived from the Samoan students'

cultural orientations and patterns of behaviours in conjunction with short-term learning, life-long learning, potential learning and their perceived failure to learn.

(1) Qualitative methodology for educational research

The nurturing of the process of learning and how students' cope has never ceased to enthrall me. Samoan students' learning continues to be nurtured in the duality of *fa'asamoa* cultural contexts and rituals and the classroom culture and traditions of Western thought. Describing the social and cultural processes that make learning meaningful and worthwhile for Samoan students in contemporary New Zealand requires an examination of the very essence of qualitative research. Let me remind the reader that while qualitative dominates this text, the contribution of quantitative research used during some parts of this thesis should not at all be understated.

I needed to initially develop an initial "*va fealoai ma le avafatafata*" (reciprocal respect and rapport) with my participants and to establish a number of significant relationships with their parents, teachers, peers and others. Furthermore, I had to be aware of participants' shifting positions and identities and their different learning behaviours and performances in extra-curricular activities in order to make sense of their perspectives and interpretations of the realities of their learning and classroom experiences. To do so, I triangulated both parents' and teachers' narratives and perceptions. Essentially, this is because:

Qualitative research and qualitative data analysis involves working out how the things people do make sense from their perspective. This can be done by entering into their world so that their world becomes our world... the interpretative process in the heart of qualitative data analysis involves trying to understand the practises and the meanings of research participants from their perspective. Qualitative observation and data analysis is best done when the observer becomes part of the dance (Ezzy, 2002, p.xii).

The above summary clearly shows that the employment of a qualitative methodology allowed me to take up 'the role of the other or the researched' in order to gain insight into what life is like for the participants (Blumer, 1969). As a qualitative researcher, I was aware that I had to be:

...concerned with the meanings that people attach to their lives. Central to the phenomenological perspective and hence qualitative research is understanding people from their own frames of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it. Qualitative researchers emphasise and identify with the people they study in order to see how those people see things (Bogdan and Taylor, 1998, p.7).

In the light of the above description, the lengthy hours that are normally spent doing fieldwork were always rewarding for me in that they not only enhanced my understanding but also provided enough time to develop a rapport and close relationship with student participants.

One of the most important objectives, and strengths, of qualitative methodology is the way a social phenomenon can be zoomed into through various lenses and from different angles, positions and diverse viewpoints or perspectives. The meanings of all perspectives are all valid and equally important.

In my qualitative research, I assumed the position of the “*matua/tufuga*” (master builder) in “*matuaofaiva*” and perceived qualitative research as “*faiva*” (craft or guild). This does not mean that I went into the field without any pre-existing understanding and theories. However, I attempted to ensure that the emergent model of understanding (theory) was grounded in the data, by constantly [re] checking any reflections or assumptions against the data. (see Bogdan & Taylor, 1998; Hulston, 2000).

(2) Subjectivity and objectivity

Our Way

Your way objective

Objective

Analytic

Always doubting

The truth

Until proof comes

Slowly

and it hurts

my way
 subjective
 gut-like feeling
 always sure of the truth
 the proof is there
 waiting
 and it hurts (Helu-Thaman 1987c, p.40 in 1988, p.19).

Researchers are either objective or subjective or adopt somewhat of a middle ground. Whichever point researchers so wish to occupy, a qualitative methodology's reflexive nature makes this possible, through its intimate linkage to the emergence of a range of theoretical perspectives. These theoretical perspectives enable the complexity of human behaviour to be analysed. Such perspectives include hermeneutics, grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, and postmodernism. Each perspective "build theories of how these meanings and interpretations are patterned and produced" (Ezzy, 2002, p.29). For this study, I drew on aspects of each perspective wherever possible because of the important linkages between them, and the ways they harness the incorporative *fa'asamoa* philosophy.

(3) The position of theoretical paradigms in this study

The following are the more prominent qualitative theoretical paradigms that guided this study:

(i) *Grounded Theory*: (Strauss & Glaser, 1967)

Simply put, a grounded theory is built from the ground up, through the observation of the social world (Yee, 2001). It is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, theory is discovered, developed and provisionally verified from systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon (Strauss & Gorbin, 1991, p.23 in Ezzy, 2002). Furthermore, concepts, categories and themes are identified and developed while the research is conducted. Theory is built from observations, as it is grounded in the data.

(ii) *Symbolic Interactionism* (George Herbert Mead, 1934)

Underpinning symbolic interactionism is the assumption that human experience is mediated by interpretation (Blumer, 1969 in Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). In light of this interpretation, I drew on aspects of social and cultural constructs to understand and predict the behaviour of individual research participants. Proponents of this approach generate everyday cultural explanations of what, when and how students cope in the learning processes of the classroom. Symbolic interactionism can be defined as the “intersubjectivity, interaction, community and communication in and out of which we come to be as persons and to live as persons” (Crotty, 1998, p.62). Furthermore, it places primary importance on the social meanings people attach to the world around them (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

(iii) *Hermeneutics*

Derived from the Greek god Hermes, a messenger of the gods who interpreted and delivered messages to humans, hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. Hermeneutics provides a sophisticated philosophical background for the practise of applied qualitative research (Lalli, 1989; Crotty, 1998; Ezzy, 2002). Hermeneutics analysis is like a dance in which the interpretation of the observer and the observed are repeatedly interwoven until a sophisticated understanding is developed. This could be compared to a Samoan *siva*, where a *taupou/manaia*'s (dancer) solo effort is to gracefully perform and simulate daily activities and rituals in subtle ways attuned to the lyrics and beat of an accompanied medley. Both the *taupou/manaia* and the *aufaipese* (music provider) interact repeatedly in an intimate fashion until a total stylish caricature is reached.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

(1) An exposé of Samoan fieldwork

What then is fieldwork? While fieldwork has a myriad of meanings, I adopted Tolich and Davidson's definition of the term: “Fieldwork is the generation, analysis and

presentation of non-numerical data, based on the observation and (unstructured) interviewing of the people in the research setting (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p.5).” The underpinnings of fieldwork mentioned in this definition sit well with my own study. As a Samoan researcher researching Samoan students’ learning and educational experiences, I chose to implement *fa’asamoa* etiquettes and protocols to shape a culturally-sensitive methodology to guide and generate my fieldwork. *Fa’asamoa* etiquettes and protocols guided my position as a mediator, facilitator and participant within interview and observation processes.

I will now reflect on my ‘lived experiences’ during the course of the fieldwork. It may seem uncommon within academic bounds to have an experiential account interwoven with the practises of methodology. Nevertheless, I believe that citing my experience here not only will justify the essence of my subjectivity, echoed in Helu-Thaman’s poem, but it also helps to provide a context for my later discussions. As Yee explains:

...subjectivity is an inherent component of qualitative research. A discussion of researcher experiences is thus revealing of the project as a whole. That is, given the researcher is the sole research instrument, transparency in practise is one means of ensuring credibility (Yee, 2001, p.37)

In the light of the above quote, the issue of reflexivity emerges. Tolich & Anderson define reflexivity as “present their definition as “the idea that social researchers always remain part of the social world they are studying. Consequently, their understanding of that social world must begin with their daily experiences of life (Tolich & Anderson, 1999, p.37).”

It is not uncommon for the researcher to be involved in all aspects of the research process. Personal experience (as claimed by many qualitative researchers) can provide data, ideas for theories and contacts for research subjects. Furthermore, it can shape the methodology, conduct of fieldwork and means of data analysis (Mills, 1959, p.21).

(2) From ethnography to fieldwork

This thesis began as an ethnographic study that served to capture the realities of Samoan students' classroom experiences within a co-educational secondary school. It involved simultaneous data collection and data analysis, which attempted to build on the strengths of qualitative methods as an inductive method for building theory and interpretations from the perspective of the participants being studied. According to Renato Rosaldo (1989), interpretative ethnography is an evolving process:

Ethnographers begin research with a set of questions, revise them throughout the course of inquiry, and in the end emerge with different questions than they started with. One's surprise at the answer to a question, in other words, requires one to revise the question until lessening surprises of diminishing returns indicate a stopping point (Rosaldo, 1989, p.7).

From ethnography to fieldwork, is a frank depiction of the learning curve which was this study. Struggling to learn the rituals of qualitative research, its theoretical and philosophical nuances, I initially focused on the ethnographic tradition. However, my study evolved and so too did its method, which gradually saw me adopt the term or label "fieldwork" instead. This does not mean that I dropped the use of ethnography completely. I chose fieldwork over ethnography largely because many of the approaches (case studies, action research, focus groups, conversational analysis and grounded theory) that come under the rubric and canons of fieldwork have collectively contributed to the development of this study.

A fieldwork approach, more specifically a Samoan fieldwork approach, was chosen largely for personal, cultural and theoretical reasons. Firstly, I chose fieldwork because of its inevitable compatibility to *fa'asamoa* protocols and practises. This approach is inclusive and allows the participants to be part of the process. Being in the participants' own setting (the school) enabled me to develop a rapport and relationship with them, and to closely witness their daily lives, routines and classroom experiences.

Secondly, in contrast to a conventional qualitative paradigm, where the researcher is always an expert in the topic, a fieldwork approach accommodated the fact that I possessed a minimal knowledge of the research setting.

Thirdly, I chose this approach partly because the use of different data collection techniques (known as methodological pluralism), is a cornerstone of fieldwork. These various techniques and sources of information were used to cross-check the concepts and constructs that were constantly generated from the data.

Fourthly, the dynamic and flexible nature of fieldwork was influential. This allows new knowledge and general information to be used not only to understand and explain the research object, but also to adjust the approach design and methods so that the research topic can be studied more effectively. Furthermore, the choice of research instruments and research procedures can always be changed and amended as the research unfolds.

Fifthly, the reflective/critical nature of fieldwork appealed. The following cycle, in particular, was particularly helpful: Data Collection-Data Reduction-Data Organisation-Data Interpretation (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The cyclic notion indicated that data interpretation drives collection, and that the collection-reduction-organisation drives the interpretation. Overall, therefore, fieldwork is a rigorous methodology that is perhaps less complex and unambiguous than other qualitative methods.

(3) Rite of Passage: initiation into fieldwork

My initiation into fieldwork could be likened to the traditional process of rite of passage where a Samoan boy at puberty assumes the duty to provide certain services (*tautua*) for the family, the community and other Samoan institutions. This process entailed intense observational learning and hands-on experience, as important aspects of culture, both concrete and abstract, must be acquired (see epilogue for more details of this initiation process). In line with this tradition, I was aware of the need to learn fieldwork conventions and other matters pertinent to the study. This included reading

extensively about qualitative methodology, particularly the international literature, from an enormous and ever-expanding body of scholarship. Many questions, however, remained unanswered, and my peers, despite their enthusiasm, were of little practical value. Much of the literature, when read and re-read, provided little comfort. My learning-curve could best have been described as steep. However, I persevered and became aware that the invisible would gradually become visible. My many flaws and failures turned out to be worthwhile in that they established a platform on which many developments (e.g. concepts models and theory development) improved the changing nature of the research. Finding a balance between theory and practice proved equally 'troublesome' as they do not necessarily complement each other. In all, a number of imperfections and mistakes clouded this study, and these should not be denied:

By denying imperfections, hiding them from the reader, one never gets a sense as to how the project was really formed, how the analyst grew with the project, how concepts were arrived at, and how conclusions were realised. Methodological mistakes are often precursors to serendipity. They are one source of constraint that helps solve a research problem (Yee, 2002, p.38).

(4) Constraints

Research constraints are an important limitation in the empirical process: "...constraints are built into the research practise: these accumulate over the course of the project and eventually lead to a research problem being solved (Haig 1987, cited in Yee, 2002). Constraints do not come in one neat package, but in many shapes and forms. Whatever their nature, be they internal (e.g. the methodological flaws, blurring theoretical frames or unorthodox writing style, etc.) or external (e.g. home cultural obligations, lack of mentoring and depletion of finance, etc.), their effect was to impact on the productivity, scope and focus of this study. Yet, I was able to proceed, as I was inspired by the Samoan proverb *E lutia i puava ae mapu i fagalele*, which loosely translates to mean that in spite of hardship and difficulties at the beginning, the invisible will become visible as one will eventually arrive at some sophisticated point of understanding. In terms of qualitative research, Yee neatly sums up this approach below:

It is a funnel approach to research. As the analyst moves through the research process, the funnel narrows until the point of fine focus is reached. Mistakes, as a constraint, are merely part of the process. They are, in fact, useful and should not be underestimated as an aid to discovery. (Yee, 2001, p.39)

(5) Fieldwork in the classroom learning domain

Graham Nuthall & Alton-Lee (1997) suggest that a researcher who wants to best understand classroom learning must have an awareness of concepts and methods drawn from a number of disciplines in recent classroom research. These include anthropology, linguistics, discourse analysis and literary criticism, as well as psychology and sociology. With this in mind, the first approach I took was to frame the study in loose terms. This included the framing of starter questions (Wolcott, 1990, p.32 in Tolich and Davidson, 1999) in open-ended and broad terms, using some previous knowledge about the topic and initial sampling methods. To achieve this aim, I entered the school environment with few expectations about what I would encounter, and a desire to take note of it all I found there. Because so much happens within a school on any given day, it was necessary to focus instead on those activities that seemed interesting for the purposes of research.

The approach that I took was, in fact, blurry and disorganised. I was dumbfounded about how classroom learning theories and models could be applied, the logic behind classroom research designed to yield reliable data, and the actual practise of getting started. Resorting to what I knew, firstly through my teaching experiences in Samoa, and secondly, and more importantly, what I learned from studies based on critical theory and *kaupapa Maori* canons (Smith, L., 1999), *ako ilo* and *poto* conceptual models (Helu-Thaman, 1988) and children classroom learning (Nuthall & Alton-Lee 1997). My original plan was to carry out a study on “the learning strategies and educational achievement of Samoan secondary students”. My efforts to carry out this project took almost two years.

Reviewing the literature on Samoan students learning and achievements lured me into reading different types of literature, ranging from government reports to academic

studies, from prose and poetry to Samoan readers, and from public addresses to personal correspondence. I also conducted interviews with principals of local secondary schools which had a substantial number of Samoan students. I then conducted preliminary interviews and informal observations of 18 Samoan students from one of the secondary schools to pilot this study. Concurrently, I regularly attended the Education Department's postgraduate qualitative research group's fortnightly workshops. At the same time I read extensively about educational research methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative. My intention was to simply marry the two in a practical and interesting fashion. As a result, my interest and general knowledge grew. The discrepancy between qualitative and quantitative methodologies affected my confidence, particularly as I had wanted to use both. Unguided in this respect, I found out that what I was doing was strictly neither qualitative nor quantitative. I felt that, in terms of academic conventions, I was not doing justice to this study. I realised that I had misinterpreted both methods, and so I chose a new beginning: focusing solely on the qualitative method. It is to the latter that I next turn.

The new beginning required me to revisit my field notes and the school community's classroom domain where the fieldwork work was conducted, to gather further data from students and teachers. Contemplating how to respond to all sorts of questions on my return, I became overwhelmed with anxiety at the prospect of challenging questions: What are you doing back here? Weren't you supposed to finish your study last year? So how is it coming along? What have you found out? How are they coping? Why are some students doing well and others not? My responses were merely brief and fragmented. They took the form of yes/no answers, or the likes of "I never thought of that one," and "ok, I'm still trying to make some sense of what I observed and recorded." Using my sense of humour, asides and non-verbal language, I was relieved to avoid dwelling too long on these questions.

O le taeao afua, or the new beginning phase, proved fruitful and gave me a new understanding which diverted me away from a study on "Learning Strategies and Education Achievement" to a study of how "culture matters" in the nurturing process of Samoan students' learning. The latter differed from what was originally planned. I was now focused more on the learning processes, a more exploratory and illustrative study, rather than focusing on learning outcomes or a definitive study. In other words,

the study became an exploratory and descriptive undertaking. In spite of this, the body of data I had collected was sufficient to fulfil my goals. My constant interaction with the data had imbued in me a general understanding on what the data was suggesting and the images it was portraying. This, in fact, did not come without a cost: further reading for many hours. By re-reading the data, and acknowledging my misconceptions about methodology, I opted for a thought-provoking and open approach to study as part of my new beginning.

IV. CHRONICLE OF PROCEDURES

(1) Description of the setting

The study took place in what I called Woodland High School. A substantial number of Samoan students were enrolled in the school. The school's main building comprised of a two-levelled u-shaped complex, with additional classrooms to the left. Separated from the building were several units. The first unit was allocated to ethnic minority students' ESOL programme, the second classroom was a Maori unit, and the third was for special education and special needs students.

The school administration office was adjacent to the Deputy Principal's office and the school hall. Between the right and left wings of the second floor of the building was the staff room, facing the four full-sized concrete tennis courts. Surrounding the school were two rugby fields on both sides of the school complex. The concrete tennis courts were constantly transformed for basketball, netball, touch rugby and volley ball. At the very heart of the school complex stood the school's cafeteria. This is where everyone congregated around at morning break and at lunch time. There were four entrances into the school complex, which were under surveillance at all times, especially during intervals and lunch hour breaks.

(2) Samoan students within the setting

Samoan students' physical build and vibrant, dynamic behaviour made them particularly noticeable. In spite of this, such dynamic behaviour was never easy to

gauge. Given the fact that Samoan students were more visible as a 'social and cultural unit' than the majority of students, who were more individualistic, the school utilised this unity to get them to stage cultural performances (rehearsed or unrehearsed) to occasionally entertain the school population and their guests. The Samoan students, many of whom had brothers or sisters who previously attended the school, were acutely aware of and familiar with school rules and regulations, particularly those relating to suspension or expulsion. The majority of the Samoan students appeared to congregate in clusters around the cafeteria and on the playing fields. This was where they tend to showcase their *otherness* as being Samoans (or Pasifika coolness) by sometimes wearing *lavalavas* (wrap around skirts) or coloured bandannas, 'beannies' and caps. When a staff member approached, they would quickly disperse and remove their regalia. Once the boys got out of the classrooms at interval, they would head straight to the big rugby fields and in a matter of seconds and would engage in a bruising hard tackled game of football. On the other hand, Samoan girls tended to become involved in netball or chasing each other around during breaks. Both the boys and girls displayed their prowess at ball handling, as other students applauded in silence while looking on. By the time these students, especially the boys, went back to class they would often be drenched with mud, blood and sweat, and with adrenaline still pumping.

(3) Data collection procedures

My study took place for a period of over a year between 1998 and 2000. After I gained formal approval from the school Principal and Deputy Principal, I began to collect the necessary data. The primary data sources for my study were gathered from interviews and classroom observations, anecdotes, dialogues and on-going discussions with students, their parents and teachers. A substantial amount of primary and secondary data was also collected from a number of sources. These included: (i) field notes; (ii) documentation (student profiles/records); (iii) Pasifika education research literature; (iv) theoretical classroom research literature; (v) the researcher's biography; (vi) the pilot study; (vii) conference proceedings and paper presentations; (viii) Government Ministries' reports; (ix) Pasifika Literature-[non] fiction, short stories and poetry; (x) music lyrics, videos, films, televisions, radios, websites and

newspapers (xi) public and personal correspondence with ex-students and Samoan elders, (xii) the lived experiences of the researcher; (xiii) cultural festival and material artefacts exhibitions; (xiv) dialogues with peers; (xv) and evaluation questionnaires. All of the above helped to enhanced the theory building process, as they were [re]checked against the primary data to ensure a more complete and rigorous interpretation of both interviews and observations.

(4) Observations

Participant observation has proven to be an effective technique for collecting rich and robust qualitative data in the naturalistic setting of the school community, and particularly, the classroom context (Hulston, 2000, p.90). With this technique, “researchers try to convey a sense of ‘being there’ and experiencing settings first-hand” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.124, cited in Hulston, 2000). By employing participant observation, I immersed myself in the everyday realities of Samoan students’ classroom experiences, their total school experiences, and their behavioural dynamics inside and outside the classroom. In short, my sporadic presence at the school for more than twelve months allowed me to wear a ‘cloak’ woven from both my ‘lived experiences’ and my participants’ ‘school experiences’.

Apart from my continual observations of Samoan students engaged in classroom learning processes, and interacting with students and teachers, I also attended the likes of school assemblies, school guests’ receptions, senior students’ forums, fundraising activities and parents’ *fono* (forum). In the first six months, I regularly spent time in the staff room conversing with teachers during morning tea and lunch breaks. This all changed when my study began to germinate, which demanded that I get out of the staff room and experience what my participants’ experienced during their play outside the classroom. Consequently, my relationship with my participants grew, and the *va* (space) between us became narrower. Because of this, I felt the need to draw a fine divide between my participants and myself. Often, as a result of our close relationships, I was unable to record sufficient field notes, which proved to be a hindrance because I had intended to record the students’ activities in minute detail.

(5) Procedures and frequency

Initially, I engaged myself in a full-time trialling exercise of classroom observations which ran for five weeks. I set out to collect descriptive data on the following topics:

- (a) Verbal and non-verbal interactions of units
- (b) Different learning behaviours
- (c) Resources used
- (d) Actual Work-Note books
- (e) Influence of peers, class size, contexts and mood
- (f) Miscellaneous

Furthermore I wanted to obtain a general knowledge about students' total classroom experiences (for example, their knowledge of subjects, optional choices, promptness in class, interaction with teachers and other students, resistance and truancy behaviour and their interest in different subject matters).

Having gathered some general information at the preliminary stage, a number of questions were answered: Where do I begin? What steps do I need to take? What subjects should I focus on? Who should I observe first? How often do I need to conduct my observations?

Written field notes were gathered on each student's participation, interactions, mood and also what the teacher thought of them, and what students thought of teachers. Such data was collected all day for three days a week (Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays) over a period of more than a year between 1998 and 2000.

Diaries and a written running record were simultaneously taken of the characteristics of the setting, participants' behaviours and task/subject content in relation to student's involvement in learning activities and their different relationships with those around in the setting: such as student-peers, student-teacher and student-others relationships. These provided valid contextual information in collaboration with the information transcribed on the expressive language of students and those interacting with them.

In all, there were 360 hours of formal observations, whereby records were taken for each of the nine students for a full week on a flexible basis. Observations were more productive when there were a substantial number of students attending a single unit. Students accepted my presence in the classroom and they willingly agreed that it was fine for me to 'hang around' them for as long as I wanted. The duration of each class was one hour and the average number of students attending was 10-25. Having to sit with these students in class was an intrusive undertaking. As I was acutely aware of this, I cautioned myself to be as unobtrusive and non-intimidating as possible. However, as I was part of the class, I occasionally took part in students' group discussions, normally to encourage them. I participated only at the request of students and the teacher.

While the focus of my observations was on Year 11 & 12 English, Maths and Science, I had a special interest in student participants' other classes, in particular their special or optional choices in Drama, Legal Studies, Business Administration, the Army Academy and Physical Education. In contrast to the conventional English or Maths classes, students seemed to enjoy the greater freedom of these classes as they were more social and creative.

Over the last few years, I returned occasionally to the school to follow up on students' performances. Unfortunately, most of the students were no longer enrolled. Consequently, I spent time talking with the Deputy Principal about the general prospects and progress of Samoan students (see Appendix for observational excerpts).

(6) Interviews

According to Bishop and Glynn (1999), "interviews should be developed to position the researcher within the co-joint reflections of shared experiences and co-joint construction of meanings about these experiences, a position where the stories of the research participants merge with that of the researcher in order to create new stories." I developed my interview format in this manner, and I chose to engage in 'semi-structured in-depth interviews' where I sat with a participant and exchanged questions and answers in a two-way process. In this way, not only was the 'safety' of

information assured, but the 'trust' of both parties was enhanced. Furthermore, I constantly made comparisons between the consistencies of students' narratives with my observational notes.

The interviews were flexible and took many forms. Some were organised according to schedules, while others were spontaneous and held at the convenience of individuals or groups. The latter were purposely designed to invoke a sense of immersion and empathy. All of the organised interviews were audio taped. Interviews were about 1-2 hours long, and were carried out with the nine students, parents and teachers on several occasions. Transcriptions of interviews were shown to student participants to recommend changes. However, their total 'trust' in me as a researcher and as a fellow Samoan meant that they were reluctant to scrutinize what had been recorded. Yet they did provide, on occasion, additional information to clarify their opinions. In so doing, we exchanged ideas and this led to the emergence of key themes and theories.

The nine students were interviewed twice. Nine parents were interviewed once. Fifteen teachers were also interviewed on one occasion. Altogether, thirty two interviews were audio taped, excluding those which were largely conducted through ongoing dialogue, which were never tape-recorded, although brief notes were regularly taken (see Appendix for interview guide). These on-going discussions were very effective as they were open, often humorous, and helped to develop a rapport with the students. Another interesting and invaluable data source came from eavesdropping participants' asides and listened to them thinking aloud.

(7) Documentation

Topics for interviews with students emerged from document analysis, observational field notes, and general information gleaned from triangulation and slice of data from outside of the classroom. With regard to the former, I obtained the following documents: the school's brief history of Samoans at school, the current school prospectus, students' school reports, some test papers, assessment reports, exam transcriptions, and merit certificates for both academic work and extra-curricular

activities. The analysis of such documents provided me with both the historical and contextual dimension for the purpose of this study. Such documents “serve as sources of rich description of how people who produced the materials think about their world (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p.133).”

(8) The impact of my ‘lived’ experience on the research

Student participants’ stories and dynamic experiences appeared to be very relevant to me. To me, it was both a poignant and fascinating experience to hear and see what was indeed familiar and knowable, which gave me a profound realisation that like them, I myself was also an integral part of the research process. Moreover, I almost believed that I was studying myself. The anecdotes that the students and I shared can be likened to *lagaga* (which literally means the Samoan fine mat weaving process in which many people are involved). These stories generated imperative data for general comparison and understanding. I ensured that participants were comfortable in sharing and reciprocating anecdotal stories. This meant that a harmonious and trusting relationship *va fa’afeagai* (space) between the participants and myself was developed. My ‘lived’ or personal experiences aided my understanding of the social realities of the participants. Nevertheless, my inside knowledge was never taken for granted to account for what was going on in participants’ lives, in line with Yee’s observation:

But ‘insider’ status is never simple. Much of the conversational exchange, centred on issues of commonality and difference, the assessment of which was a gauge of how to complete my understanding was of how much of an ‘insider’ I really was. It kept me aware of where I stood in relation to the work, on how much I knew, and what I needed to know to complete the project. I needed the complete inside view (Yee, 2001, p.50).

Like Yee and many other researchers engaged in researching their own ethnic communities, I was determined use my insider status to gain a detailed picture of participants shared experiences shared with others in the classroom. In so doing, I needed to crack at what happened in their ‘heads’. It was here that I turned to my identity and position, and how these have influenced the research.

(9) The impact of my identity on the research

“Did your identity affect your research?” was the common question asked of me by my colleagues and supervisors. My simple reply was “yes, my cultural identity played a major role in the research.” Indeed, my identity penetrated the total position I assumed in this research, amongst not only my participants and their parents but also teachers and the school community as a whole. Simply put, my position entailed my being a data collector, analyst, interpreter, facilitator, moderator, collaborator, corroborator and both an insider and outsider.

Qualitative researchers are generally conferred the position or status of either ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders.’ My status or position in the research was as both an insider and an outsider. My total *Samoanness* made me an insider. However, being born and bred in Samoa, accent and role as a university student researcher guaranteed my outsider status. Yet my status shifted as I assumed various positions when interviewing student participants, their parents and teachers. By probing into the interviewees’ personal experiences, I was certainly an intruder and hence an outsider. Whatever I did or planned to do, I was aware and respectful of my *va fa’afeagai* (space) with participants’ and their willingness and / or reluctance to respond to some of the interview questions, which they sometimes perceived to be very personal. It became apparent that possessing a shared cultural identity with the participants did not guarantee their insights.

In hindsight, it was evident that a sense of trust developed when the participants and I were actively involved in social interactions. My relationship with the participants flourished through having developed a rapport with participants’ parents during parents’ night forum, community conferences and fundraising activities. “What a small world,” was a common remark from relatives of the participants or ex-students during community social functions. However, my accountability and transparency to participants had raised the ethical issue of the ‘confidentiality and anonymity insurance’ of data analysis, as discussed below.

V. OUTLINE OF DATA ANALYSIS

...data analysis is like searching for gold-you take a great deal of ore and crush and render it, and hope that, at the end of the process, besides a huge pile of tailings ('read waste'), you are left with a little gold. A more productive technique is to test the quality of the ore by routinely sampling it as it is collected (Tolich & Anderson, 1999, p.140).

In this study, data analysis was an on going part of data collection, as indicated in the above quote. My data collection started out like a funnel. Initially, I collected data in broad terms, focusing on almost everything. For example, I explored both the physical space and those who occupied that space to get a general understanding of the parameters of setting, as well as the different subjects participants studied, and their peer groups. After five weeks, however, I decided to narrow the focus of the study to what was feasible and what really interested me. The initial general questions that interested me (How do Samoan students cope with their school work? What is the nature of social interactions between Samoan students their peers and teachers?) were changed into theoretical questions as primary and secondary data became available. At this stage, I knew I was getting closer to engaging in what Glaser and Strauss (1967) have called the generation of formal grounded theory.

Influenced by Tolich and Anderson (1999), my approach to analysing interview transcriptions and field notes data involved the following phases: coding themes, [re] discovery and conceptualisation. It is worth noting that these phases are interrelated. These are discussed below.

(1) Details of coding themes

The process of coding is central to successful data analysis. In essence, codes are conceptualisations of data (Yee 2001:24). Following the tradition of data analysis, I used coding as an initial step in analysing the data yielded from observational field-notes, transcriptions of interviews, documentation and evaluation questionnaires. As Charmaz describes:

Coding begins the process of categorising and sorting data. Codes serve as short hand devices to label, separate and organise data. By providing the pivotal link between data collection and its conceptual rendering, coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis (emphasis in original) (cited in Tolich & Anderson, 1999, p.140)

In my fieldwork, coding and analysis were conducted simultaneously during data collection. This is a clear-cut distinction from traditional quantitative research where data analysis is executed at the end of data collection (Fetterman, 1989, in Tolich & Anderson, 1999). Tolich & Anderson (1999) concur that simultaneous data collection, coding and analysis can serve to fine-tune further data collection.

My data coding involved the thorough reading of extensive field notes and transcripts of interviews. I circled and marked (using highlight pens and coloured stickers) both negative and positive aspects (Tolich & Anderson, 1999). Positive coding provides insight into the *snowballing of theoretical underpinning and pragmatic compliance* in field note and transcripts. Conversely, negative coding highlights *flaws* embedded in the data. Although negative coding seemed to plague this research (for instance, my initial insistence to try to capture everything which led me to digress largely), it not only revealed the weakness in the data but also alerted me to the constraints in my data collection techniques. I was thus able to return to the field with revised questions for positive coding. It is here that I will reiterate the four distinct functions of positive coding. First, it identifies interesting data representing a research theme; second, it throws up interesting data that appears to be outside an established research theme; third, it signals that more data on a theme is needed; fourth, it flags an entry as worthy of storage in the thematic file (Tolich & Anderson, 1999, p.142).

Open coding or initial coding entailed theorising what was happening. Coding in this respect, involved questioning the significance of a given incident (Brooks 1998 in Yee, 2001). Yee further emphasises that comparison of incidents generates higher-level concepts and categories (a category is a higher-level concept). Therefore, in the process of open coding it is important that incidents are coded in as many ways as possible (e.g. different lens and diverse positions), as this provides allowance for the emergence of new codes that legitimise the data. Selective coding, on the other hand,

is the coding of central themes and categories. This leads to theoretical sampling (Yee 2001).

Coding data and drafting [sub] themes were ongoing processes. Paragraphs were cut and pasted into emergent thematic files. Positive and negative codes were signposted along the right hand side of the page which are included in the appendix. Along the margin of each page of notes were my written notes on different reinforcements/rewards, encouragement, discipline, frustrations and most importantly discovery words.

(2) Memoing of themes

To reiterate, coding is the approach of searching for patterns in the data and for ideas that help explain those patterns (see Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Tolich & Anderson, 1999) Coding entails an on going processes of writing memos. Memos are excerpts from which the theoretical underpinnings of data are derived. According to Yee (2001), 'the theoretical nature of memo writing means that it raises the conceptual level as the analysis proceeds.' As sorting and categorising data for central themes was a complicated and intense process, I chose to adopt and pursue the following list of suggestions (Tolich & Anderson, 1999, p.156):

- (1) Be familiar with the data extracts
- (2) Discard data extracts frequently
- (3) Compare and paraphrase data extracts incessantly
- (4) Rename files continually, maybe 'typologising' them to capture complexity
- (5) A bulging theme file full of interesting data extracts is healthy and competitive
- (6) Surviving empirical examples and theoretical ideas provoke theorising
- (7) Write early and write often
- (8) Integrate quotes in the text smoothly
- (9) Seek regular feedback on preliminary drafts
- (10) After a theme is drafted, edit it, polish it, redraft it, leave it idle and then rewrite it again and again (Lofland & Lofland, 1995, p.182)

In spite of the above recommendations, I was vigilant in using outside theory (for example, in dialectic binary analysis) to fit the details of data and/or participants' storylines. This approach adhered to Bishop's (1996) claim that theory building needs to be flexible and respectful of the experiences of the people in their daily lives:

This stance implies that the theoretical considerations on their own are inadequate and that the relationship between theory and experience should be grounded with the cultural context of the research participants rather than just within that of the researcher (Bishop, 1996, p.58).

(3) Ethical considerations

As the study progressed, I developed a rapport with student participants through dialogues in which the students were treated as friends. This raised a number of complex ethical issues in relation to intrusiveness, trust, confidentiality and anonymity. My greatest fear was revealing too much about the participants' personal stories. Consequently, I was careful in deciding what to observe and ask of participants.

In spite of the fact that the University of Canterbury's Human Ethics Committee had approved my ethics application, I was still overwhelmed with a sense of being an obtrusive researcher. With this in mind, I drew on my cultural identity and 'lived' experiences, and assumed an insider position throughout my fieldwork. My cultural obligations included buying lunches or offering money or food when I sat and talked with participants during lunch breaks. My rapport with participants led us to sharing, reciprocating, and comparing our stories, general knowledge, and cultural knowledge about things Samoan (sports and both national and local community gossip). My sense of attachment to participants conflicted somewhat with my need, as a researcher, to remain sufficiently detached. At times, I came to play an unorthodox role, mixing and mingling with participants, while I was at the same time observing and listening to them.

VI. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

“*Matua o faiva*” or “Samoa Fieldwork,” an ‘integrative Samoan ethnographic approach’ with a difference, was employed in this study. Underpinned by *fa’asamoa*, my Samoan fieldwork was shaped by grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, and hermeneutics and a number of indigenous methodologies and models discussed earlier in the chapter. It incorporated the social, cultural and physical contexts to facilitate our understanding of a given social and cultural reality.

The design of the methodology, as detailed above, was by no means an easy task. The limitations and shortcomings of the research were numerous, but this is not uncommon in qualitative research. Yet such constraints proved to be somewhat of a mixed blessing in that I learnt to cope with adversity and acquired the necessary resilience to make methodological changes.

As the study progressed, I became increasingly aware of the importance of my own cultural identity. For instance, I was able to develop quickly rapport with the research participants as well as parents and teachers. However, a number of ethical issues emerged which I still struggle with. In particular, revealing aspects of participants’ personal lives seem to be an abuse of the trust they placed in me and thus disrespecting the *va fa’afeagai* or space between us. I am still haunted by the issue of power relations, when the researcher emerges re-assuming a position or status of power, despite the supposedly cemented relationship with participants. Nevertheless, my cultural identity and lived experience appeared to have moderated these ethical issues.

The general nature of this integrative research design can be implemented in multicultural settings and multi-disciplinary practises. The composition of such a model relates not to a theory per se, but a family of integrative perspectives. These included praxis-orientated classroom research, an integrative *fa’asamoa* perspective, hermeneutics and phenomenology. Since these epistemological standpoints all have common elements, they have contributed to the discovery and identification of theoretical perspectives on the way Samoan students think and learn in the classroom.

These are grouped under the following categories: (1) learning constructivist perspective; (2) socio-cultural perspective; and (3) linguistic perspective. Each of these categories will be illustrated with the themes and concepts which emerged out of the data in the following chapters in Part II, which explore the model of understanding underpinning this study. Furthermore, Part II provides a context for Part III and its subsequent chapters which contain the findings of the research.

PART II: *MATIMATI*: FUEL OF KNOWLEDGE

Chapter Three: Samoan students' learning in the classroom: a review of Samoan and *Pasifika* literature

Chapter Four: Rethinking student-centred learning in the classroom: a theoretical discussion

CHAPTER THREE: SAMOAN STUDENTS' LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM: A REVIEW OF SAMOAN & PASIFIKA LITERATURE

I. INTRODUCTION

O le aso ma le filigaafa o le aso ma le mata'inatila: Sinnet should be made daily, and daily the rigging must be examined. (Schultz, 1980)

The above quotation, an important Samoan proverbial expression, has guided the manner in which I have undertaken this literature review. It emphasises that I must execute the review process thoroughly. In so doing, I have become increasingly aware of my duty, akin to a daily painstaking task of *filigaafa* (sinnet rigging), which entails dedication and continuity.

In recent years, the number of Samoan secondary students in New Zealand schools has grown significantly (Statistics New Zealand 1998, Ministry of Education 1999). A growing body of research into the experiences of Samoan students is emerging as a consequence, though much remains to be done. Recent studies have dealt with key themes, including educational policy, pedagogy, language, curriculum, identity and community-school relations (Anae, Coxon, Finau, Mara & Wendt-Samu, 2002). For the purposes of the current study, it is necessary to examine this new literature which is drawn from around the *Pasifika* and New Zealand. It takes a myriad of forms, including conferences proceedings, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Pacific Islands Affairs Reports, Academic Journals, MA, PhD theses/dissertations and research essays.

Before each was examined, the following key research questions were considered:

- (1) What are some of the common themes and issues raised in previous research?
- (2) What theoretical frameworks have scholars and researchers employed?
- (3) What methodological issues and methods did they consider and implement in their research?
- (4) What are some of the gaps and limitations of these studies?

- (5) What implications and recommendations can be drawn from some of these studies in order to shed some light on the classroom experiences of Samoan students?
- (6) How will the current study benefit future research by suggesting topics that require further investigation?

II. ORGANISATION

The review will provide an outline of previous research on aspects that have influenced the direction of my own current study. More specifically, I will indicate different issues that previous research has failed to address as a consequence of the paucity of studies specifically focused on Samoan students' thinking and learning. I will also highlight how my own study seeks to examine and develop various topics and thematic explanations found in the literature.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the limitations of the existing literature, which have shaped the direction that the literature review takes. Five broad categories based on the themes apparent in the literature are then discussed, though they are to some extent inter-related. Briefly, they are as follows:

- (1) *The Existing Cultural Dynamics of Learning;*
- (2) *Classroom Discourse: The Talk and the Chalk;*
- (3) *Language and the Curriculum;*
- (4) *The role of Identity in Students' Learning*
- (5) *Early childhood Socialisation*

III. GENERAL LIMITATIONS OF THE LITERATURE

A number of key issues emerged during the process of reading the literature. From the outset, it was apparent that there has been no study specifically conducted on Samoan secondary school students' conceptions of thinking and learning in the classroom. As a consequence, it was necessary to compensate by looking outside of 'traditional' literature, by gathering information from Samoan and *Pasifika* peoples, their families, communities and education providers. Studies of other groups of

Pasifika students were used as much as possible, but this was not without difficulties. The label 'Pacific Island people' is too general. It helps to accentuate a generic community or homogeneity among people of very disparate cultural backgrounds, and can thus confuse as much as inform.

Nevertheless, a range of relevant studies did prove useful. These included studies that were carried out in *Pasifika* countries and those conducted on *Pasifika* Island groups within metropolitan locations other than New Zealand. In particular, six studies (Koloto, 1995; Petana-Ioka 1995; Faamanu-Moli 1993; Tavola 1991; Helu-Thaman 1988; Sharma 1997) were deemed to be particularly helpful, and will be discussed below. The studies examine Fiji, Samoa or Tonga education, three countries with common colonial histories, geographical proximity, and common cultural, social and educational orientations. It should be remembered that Samoa was never isolated from its neighbours, as shown by *Pasifika* historian, Damon Salesa (1997), with the constant exchange of knowledge on all matters, from medicine to ship-building, between islands. Thus, despite the differing methodologies and theoretical frameworks employed in these studies, the issues of classroom learning processes and the importance of culture and language to learning discussed within them is of significance. Finally, it is important to note that *Pasifika* secondary teachers, who have drawn on their extensive experience to provide key insights into students' experiences, conducted each of the studies.

The lack of relevant studies of Samoan secondary students has also meant that recent studies related to Samoan and *Pasifika* education, from pre-school onwards, have been consulted whenever necessary to substantiate a number of themes discussed below. In addition, narratives and poetry by Samoan and *Pasifika* writers, and scholarship from such disciplines as history, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, politics, economics, education, cultural studies and psychology serve to augment an understanding of the topic.

IV. EXISTING CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF LEARNING

The role culture plays in the learning outcomes of students has been the focus of a growing body of scholarship, which has proved heavily influential. Maori academic,

Dr. Margie Hohepa's personal interpretation of the topic (from her Keynote Address at the NZARE Conference, Christchurch, 2001), provides a useful starting point:

culture [is] fundamental to the processes and shapes that learning takes. Culture organises and influences contexts, activities and interactions in which we learn. We can go further and see culture as not just playing a part in our learning but encapsulating and being encapsulated in processes and products of that learning.

While drawn from her experience with Maori students' learning, Hohepa's stance is relevant to the Samoan context. In recent years, the important influence of *fa'asamoa* (Samoan culture) and home language on successful learning outcomes has been acknowledged by Samoan researchers, academics and educators (e.g. Utumapu, 1992; Moll, 1993; Silipa 1993, 1998, 1999a and b; Tupuola, 1993 Lameta-Tufuga 1994, Brown, 1995). Furthermore, the role of cultural values in fostering learning successes have been advocated by studies conducted in Fiji, Tonga and Samoan secondary education (Sharma, 1997; Koloto, 1995; Petana-Ioka 1995; Fa'amanu-Moli, 1993; Tavola, 1991; Patisepa 1997, 1999; Helu-Thaman, 1996). The latter two studies have advocated the incorporation of culture and the student's home language into the classroom teaching processes.

To understand the culture-learning link, a number of studies of Samoan and *Pasifika* Education were closely examined, and merit discussion here. Helu-Thaman (1996) indicates that because the worldviews of differing ethnic groups are unique, then teachers without a detailed knowledge of the socialisation practices of that ethnic group will almost certainly experience problems teaching. As a result, the learning outcomes of the student will also suffer (1996: 13 also cited in Coxon et al, 2002). To illustrate her point, she uses the example of Tongan students. Tongan cultural values, she believes, have become inextricably linked with a Tongan conception of education. Helu-Thaman further explains, "Western form of knowledge and schooling are culturally specific and educators play a critical role in mediating the interface between the different cultural systems of school and home for students from ethnic minority groups (Coxon et al, 2002)". She stipulates that educators should acknowledge and recognise 'different ways of knowing' in order for students to develop strategies to promote learning objectives and outcomes (Helu-Thaman,

1996). This theme of cultural incompatibility between indigenous and western education in the *Pasifika* context, and possible solutions to these problems, is also evident in the following studies: Dakuidreketi, 1995; Mugler and Lnadbeck, 1996; Nabobo, 1998 and Ninnes, 1998).

In short, cultural incompatibility is, arguably, the reality for *Pasifika* students in the classroom (Helu-Thaman, 1996). The need for two sets of culture (home and school) to blend together to benefit students needs greater investigation. One pertinent study with such an aim was conducted by Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998). In it, the development of a Tongan homework centre, established by parents and the local Tongan community, is used as a case-study. The centre was attended by students and their parents and, staffed exclusively by Tongan tutors. After participant observation of attending students and interviews with parents and the students' mainstream teachers, their study found that the role of Tongan parents had a positive effect on the students' learning. These parents, prior to migration to New Zealand, had benefited from the Tongan education system, which encapsulates Tongan cultural, social, political and historical contexts. Their positive attitudes, reflected in their enthusiasm for their children to succeed through their involvement in the centre, indicate that cultural traditions can promote educational success among their children. Trust, respect and support between parents and children, all important aspects of Tongan culture, were deemed to enhance students' learning outcomes and attitudes towards school.

Fusitu'a and Coxon's (1998) study is particularly useful in that it provides a practical example of the role *Pasifika* culture can have on educational success. Their conclusion, that when theorising the academic performance of minority group children within multi-ethnic societies, we must examine it against the backdrop of the school's culture and that of the child, is helpful in understanding *Pasifika* students. Fuitu'a and Coxon's (1998) study, although focused on Tongan students and parents, benefits our understanding of the role Samoan culture plays on students' learning outcomes. In a practical sense, this was reflected in the development of *Aoga Amata* (Samoan early childhood education centres (Mara, 1998; Ete, 1993; Burgess, 1988) and the inclusion of the Samoan language in the secondary education curriculum, where the importance of culture and language was recognised by the Samoan

community and the government. Studies of Samoan students have further indicated the importance of this link. Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1982; Jones 1986; Fusitu'a, 1991 and Simon 1993 have all shown that the culture of the *aiga* and school influence and promote success in students' classroom experiences. Similarly, the impact peers have on students of all levels of the education system has also received attention (Wilkinson, Hattie, Parr, Townsend, Thrupp, Lauder & Robinson, 2000).

The importance of Samoan culture to learning outcomes should not be underestimated. According to Gage & Berliner (1988), "culture affects not just our sex role behaviour but also our intelligence, cognitive development and personality". Culture, however, is a problematic concept. In his Keynote Address (the Jean Herbison Lecture) at the NZARE Conference, Christchurch, 2001, Graham Nuthall remarked:

That the most significant thing about *culture* is that it becomes so much part of ourselves that we can no longer see it for what it is. The more familiar it is, the more it is like the air we breathe, the harder it is for us to see it.

He went on to suggest several pertinent questions that have influenced the direction of this study: how much of what we do is a matter of *cultural tradition* rather than evidence-based practice? And how much of what we believe about teaching-learning is a matter of *folklore* rather than research? The need to capture and understand students' worlds of learning through their classroom experiences, a key focus of this study, deserves additional comment. While the above studies examine some classroom experiences, they fail to adequately define and identify them in sufficient detail. For that reason, I have decided to explore Samoan students' experiences in greater detail (See Methodology Chapter) in this study. This is not to suggest that these studies are not beneficial, but rather that there is a need to develop further some of the themes contained within them if Samoan students are to be better understood.

V. CLASSROOM DISCOURSES: THE TALK AND CHALK SCENE

Alison Jones' 1986 study, 'At school I've got a chance' is one of only a few in existence that analyses the contemporary classroom experiences of *Pasifika* students. She explored the idea that learning is mostly an individual undertaking, competitive in

nature, where teamwork between students on academic tasks was minimal. She presented a marked distinction between two sets of girls (12 *Palagi*, 19 *Pasifika*, of whom 6 were Samoan), and provided a frank description of the unequal rewards of schooling for each group, according to Roy Nash and Richard Harker (1990). In particular, Jones found that the *Pasifika* girls, by comparison, were ill equipped with the necessary tools and skills to cope with and meet the requirements of classroom learning processes. Additionally, she noted that the school did not consider the importance of the cultural orientations of its *Pasifika*-Polynesian students, particularly the role of their home language in learning tasks. Her research led her to suggest that teaching and learning processes advantaged one group over another, based on class, gender and ethnicity. Such a view was heavily influenced by [re]production theories, including cultural reproduction (Harker, 1990; Bourdieu 1977b), cultural production, resistance and ideology (Harker, 1984; Willis, 1981).

However, Jones' study has received much criticism, not least of which was the claim that its findings are now dated. Similarly, Fairbairn-Dunlop (1991) has posited that Jones' 'method, content and findings' were problematic, particularly when she looked at cultural issues in tandem with gender and class issues. Two important themes that emerged out of Jones' study deserve additional comment:

1. that teaching is implicitly a cultural and political process which benefits some students and not others;
2. that the educational qualifications and credentials that students seek are not earned on the basis of 'ability', rather they are dependent on familiarity with the dominant culture.

While I will not attempt here to discredit Jones' views, the emphasis of my study is more positive in nature. In other words, the role culture plays in enhancing learning outcomes is of greater significance for my study than the reasons why culture impedes learning. Such a theme is evident in Lameta-Tufuga's 1994 study, which shows that students' use of the Samoan language can bridge and harness their understanding of classroom academic tasks. This importance of bilingualism for students from non-English speaking backgrounds should not be under-estimated (for more, see Hunkin, 2001; 1996; Cummins, 1984).

Jones' study, essentially the first to examine the classroom experiences of *Pasifika* students, was followed by Hawk and Hill's (1996, 1998, 1999) efforts, particularly their 1995 project 'Achievement in Multicultural High Schools'. That study aimed to raise achievement levels of students in eight low decile urban schools with very high ratios of Maori and *Pasifika* students, through a series of group discussions involving 900 students, and interviews with teachers, Board of Trustee member and a representation of parents. It was found that *Pasifika* students developed strategies to cope with conflicting values and expectations of the differing 'worlds' in which they lived. In brief, they examined several key topics, including the school's communication with parents and the qualities and skills teachers employ to enhance learning and achievement in students (see Coxon et al, 2002) The important role of teachers was apparent:

While it could be argued that there are qualities and skills that any fine teacher in any school would have, the teachers in schools with high proportions of Pacific Island and Maori students are able to apply these qualities in a special way that acknowledges and respects the backgrounds and experiences of these students (Hawk & Hill 1999, p.3).

Because of the extensive nature of the research, Hawk and Hill's efforts have increased our knowledge of the unique issues facing *Pasifika* students. However, combining *Pasifika* and Maori students together in classroom research is problematic. To generalise and fail to acknowledge the unique cultural diversity of Samoan, Tongan and Maori students detracted from the study. Nevertheless, the wealth of data and depth of discussion in their research has proved most useful for the current study. Some of the general findings of Hawk and Hill's research were reinforced by my own research at the time (Silipa, 1998). My pilot study of 18 Samoan secondary students in years 9-13 involved interviews, informal dialogue and classroom observations of core subjects, including English, Maths, Science and Social Studies. I discovered, among other things, that the students' home, church, community, school and peers played a crucial role in shaping the realities of classroom experiences, as will be discussed in later chapters.

To supplement the paucity of relevant studies, research from outside the classroom or school has proved most useful. Such research provides invaluable data on *Pasifika*

students' personal experiences of teaching and learning. Of particular value is Pasikale's 1999 qualitative study of 81 students on TOPS Programmes (government-run practical training programmes for school leavers or the unemployed), many of whom had not gained formal academic qualifications while at school. She suggests that teachers should not apply blanket assumptions about *Pasifika* people, such as that they are 'group learners', shy participants and non-performers. The teaching process, she asserts, must emphasise the students' individualism and ethnic background, though the importance of the 'teacher's empathy, not ethnicity' is not downplayed. Similarly, Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) showed that Tongan students benefit from having homework centre tutors who are bilingual. Key concepts in different subject areas were translated into Tongan, in an atmosphere that was supportive. Both Pasikale (1999) and Fusitu'a and Coxon (1998) show that culture and language can enhance the educational achievement of *Pasifika* students, inside and outside of the classroom, a theme I will develop below and in much detail elsewhere in the thesis.

VI. LANGUAGE IN THE CURRICULUM

Over the years, there has been a growing awareness among *Pasifika* communities of the importance of *Pasifika* languages within secondary education. This has led to the provision of Samoan language at the secondary school level (Fetui & Malaki-Williams 1996; Franken 1999; Shameen 1999; Davis, Bell and Starks 2001). Within *Pasifika* communities in recent years, the issue of language loss across generations of *Pasifika* New Zealand born has surfaced (Coxon et al 2002). Community, church leaders and language teachers all argue that the seriousness of the problem becomes apparent at the secondary school level, and campaigned to have Samoan language approved as a senior secondary school subject. Unfortunately, many Samoan parents and New Zealand-born Samoan students do not see the value of such a move (Silipa, 1998). These parents continue to value English and have remained sceptical about the notion of incorporating Samoan language as a subject. The importance of the maintenance of *Pasifika* languages, such as the Samoan language, helps to build self-esteem, confidence and a sense of identity among Samoan students by making them aware of their cultural heritage (Fetui-Malaki, 1996, p.234).

Early Samoan migrant parents did not consider the Samoan language to be of any educational value in terms of enhancing their children's economic potential (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001; Fetui & Malaki-Williams, 1996; Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1982). These parents encouraged their children to learn English at school and speak Samoan at home (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1982). Today, Samoan academics and researchers have confirmed the importance of the Samoan language in bridging the cultural divides of formal schooling, and also in improving the academic achievement levels of Samoan learners (Hunkin-Tuiletufuga, 2001). What emerged from this literature has been support for bilingualism, provided that there were a substantial number of language teachers who were Samoan-English bilingual.

Studies of how Samoan language can improve students understanding of academic activities and hence promote learning outcomes have been conducted on secondary students in the past (Lameta-Tufuga 1994; Brown 1995; Silipa 1993). Lameta-Tufuga's comprehensive study is particularly relevant. It aimed to investigate *how* the use of the Samoan language for academic learning tasks could benefit Samoan students with limited English proficiency (LEP), by assessing 35 adolescent girls studying in an English medium high school who were native speakers of Samoan. Of that group, 16 were drawn from four science classes and 14 came from specialised science subjects such as physics, biology and chemistry at the sixth form level. It developed on Saville-Troike's 1984 study, by following several key questions that required further research:

- (1) Does the use of Samoan language influence the performance of academic tasks when assessment is conducted in English?
- (2) Does the use of Samoan influence the development of academic vocabulary in English?
- (3) How do Samoan students use their linguistic repertoire in academic contexts?

Lameta-Tufuga found that LEP Samoan students who discussed their work in Samoan performed better than similar students who used only English for the same purpose. Two explanations have accounted for this: firstly, the use of Samoan may have led to a greater focus on the essential information in the texts; secondly, the need to integrate English terms into Samoan discourse via lexical borrowing may have led

to greater repetition of the new scientific concepts. These findings have indicated to the reader the imperative of using the Samoan language not only to understand classroom discussions but also to improve performances of Samoan students in academic tasks in science and social science within the secondary school level.

Pasifika students and teachers alike have, in recent years, endeavoured to develop a mastery of the key knowledge and concepts of Maths through utilising *Pasifika* cultural concepts and languages (Sharma 1997; Bakalevu 1996, 2000; Koloto 1995). In Bakalevu's opinion "mathematics and science are not a-cultural objective bodies of truth". Instead, they are certain types or kinds of cultural knowledge. She further maintains that educators must consider that mathematical ideas are culturally constructed and she presents a number of fascinating examples of indigenous math skills. Advocating this philosophy is Lauaki's (1996) study of cultural contexts in mathematical education. In summary, almost all of the above studies maintain that by utilising cultural concept and the student's primary language, his or her understanding of maths, science and social science will benefit, resulting in greater self-confidence and success.

VII. THE ROLE OF IDENTITY IN STUDENTS' LEARNING

There has been a growing interest by researchers in the concept of identity among *Pasifika* students, with emphasis on how it positively impacts on students' confidence, self-esteem, learning and classroom experiences (Anae et al, 2002). Recent studies by Samoan researchers and academics have provided insights to the personal, social and political issues that surround identity (for example Anae, 1995, 1998; Tiatia, 1998; Tupuola, 1993). Interestingly, these studies have been conducted by first-generation New Zealand born Samoans, with a focus on both cultural identity and its relationship to school performances, and the tensions between Samoan youth and the church. While the above studies have focused more on the realities of Samoan secondary students' experiences regarding the role religion, gender and sport in their identity development, they are nevertheless useful. They invariably take into account school learning experiences of participants and how these experiences influence students' conception of identity.

Recent studies conducted by Anae (1998), Pasikale (1999) and Petelo (2002-in progress) have identified the existence of different categories of group identity. For Pasikale, *Pasifika* Islanders fall into three broad groupings: (i) traditional, (ii) New Zealand blend and (iii) New Zealand made. The degree to which a student affiliates with cultural tradition and practices, including language, through the influence of parents and extended family is seen as the major determinant of which group students identify with.

While a sense of pride in one's culture can foster self-esteem and better attitudes to schooling, how teachers perceive *Pasifika* students can prove to be counterproductive. According to Paikale:

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

The focus of this thesis, however, is on the positive aspects of students' identification with their Samoan backgrounds. In order to do so, I build on my own previous research (Silipa, 1998) which developed many of the issues raised in the above studies. Of particular note were two key findings. Firstly, the close partnership between parents and the school reinforces students' pride and dedication towards their studies. Secondly, the relationship between *Pasifika* students and their teachers, particularly if based on mutual respect, caring and excellent rapport, leads to the development of passion within students to enthuse about school and to motivate their classroom learning (Cowley, Hawk, Hill, Sutherland, 2001). Significantly, this critical inter-relationship between parents, teachers and students stems largely from the home life and upbringing of the students, which is discussed below.

VIII. EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIALISATION

In contemporary New Zealand, there are three types or groups of Samoan students attending secondary schools. The first group comprises students who were born, raised and educated in Samoa up to Year 9-10 before migrating to New Zealand with their families. The second group comprises students who were born in Samoa but were raised in New Zealand. The third group, Samoan students who were born and raised in New Zealand, is by far the largest, and the students in it identified themselves as New Zealand born Samoans or Kiwi Samoans. All three, it must be noted, were shaped by a unique Samoan parental philosophy on raising children. The merger of religious principles and cultural values which shaped the way the children of the first generation of *Pasifika* migrants learned, has become a tradition which is still encouraged by most of today's Samoan parents (Taulealeausumai, 1997). This philosophy is characterised by an emphasis on conformity and the acceptance by the child of his/her position within the hierarchy of the social structure based on age. Through interaction with older family members, including older siblings or cousins, Samoan children are thoroughly socialised to be responsible family members by mimicking everyday practises and domestic chores at home.

Through such practises, children develop values of conformity to family, and group and its internal political order (Schoeffel, 1979). Older children assume responsibility for looking after younger children, and children are conditioned from early childhood to learn passively, by careful observation and listening, reinforced by admonition, so that they become sensitised to other people at an early age (Ochs, 1988; Meleisea, 1996, also cited in Pasikale, 1996). Aligned with this is the universal scenario in many societies that children are *seen but not heard* in the confines of the home or any setting with adults or people of authority:

The patterns of socialisation employed for Samoan children emphasises teaching the child to learn its place, appropriate to its status, in a household group and community, which includes learning to surrender self interest for the common good. With regard to gender difference, a girl is protected at all costs under strict supervision and she is refrained from going out. (Schoeffel, 1979)

Not surprisingly, when many Samoan children reach the secondary school level, the all the realities of their home lives do not complement their classroom learning processes, as many scholars have claimed. For McNaughton, the issue stems from the fact that:

Samoan families' selective nature in choosing certain learning activities, where the roles of older siblings and relatives become significant... implied that classroom learning might not always complement the home culture. (McNaughton, 1989)

In early childhood language development, the child is trained to observe unobtrusively in order to be sensitised to and to accommodate other people (Ochs, 1988). Furthermore, one's status can have a significant bearing on what a child learns, as Meleisea remarks:

Knowledge in Samoa like some Polynesian societies is not something that everyone has an automatic right to it: it is restricted because it is associated with authority and privilege (Meleisea, 1996, p.29-30)

Children are socialised into believing that it was unorthodox to show off in front of everyone, talking without being spoken to, and to usurp those who are older. Consequently, as Kavapalu (1991) writes:

The process of western education entails questioning, critical thinking, and, independent expression, all of which conflict with the cultural values of obedience, respect and conformity (Kavapalu 1991, p.191).

While others have claimed that students understanding and conceptualising of foreign concepts is hampered by the cultural background of *Pasifika* students (Thaman, 1992, 1996).

It can be seen, therefore, that there are aspects of Samoan childhood socialisation that do not transfer effectively to classroom learning (for more, see Fairburn-Dunlop, 1982, Nicol 1995 and Jones 1986), but it is erroneous to assume that the Samoan child's background cannot enhance his or her learning success. It has been shown that the highest respect for those in authority, including teachers, is an aspect of

fa'asamoa that can aid students' classroom experiences. Additionally, researchers have undervalued the importance of parental support. Meleisea (1996) suggests that parents are very distraught when their children perform poorly at school, such is their well-intentioned desire for their children to succeed educationally, their paramount expectation. In short, however, parents' high expectation is sometimes incongruent with their children's choices and abilities. Unfortunately, most Samoan parents have only a primary level education, with rote learning and memorisation experiences (ibid). Financial assistance, disciplinary measures and prayers, not help with homework, is the only support they can offer. However, Samoan parents would rather see their children possess positive attitudes to schooling rather than perpetuating their own negative attitudes based on experience. They very much want their children to succeed in the New Zealand school system, while at the same time, maintaining *fa'asamoa* tradition of cultural values and attitudes practised on a daily basis in the contextual milieu of the *aiga*. This parental enthusiasm for their children's schooling is reflected in the fact that they 'shop around' in search for a secondary school that will give their children the best possible education (Mamoe, 1999).

IX. CONCLUSION

In order to understand more fully the unique experiences of Samoan secondary school students, one must first examine the influence of their home lives, culture, language and family values. It can be seen that there exists a growing body of research of this nature, though it has been too often '*Pasifika*' in nature, and less focused on individual communities, particularly the Samoan community of New Zealand. While useful parallels can be drawn from this literature, the need for more studies that specifically focus on Samoan students are urgently needed. Of the studies of Samoan students at the secondary school level already conducted, there has been an overwhelming focus on Samoan girls, despite the marked differences between males and females that exist within *fa'asamoa*.

Previous research has arguably, emphasised the negative – why students fail – rather than examining the learning processes and the processor of such processors, how a student's culture and family, and the teacher' knowledge for example, can all

collaboratively enhance stability and security of learning processes progressing to relevant outcomes. It is widely documented, for instance, that Samoan students go to school with differing literacy levels, some of which were not always congruent with the school's curriculum practises (Brown, 1995; McNaughton, 1995; Jones 1991; Clay, 1983). Few studies, however, have offered practical suggestions for improving Samoan students learning outcomes. Helu-Thaman (1996) is a notable exception, with its emphasis on how Tongan cultural values can not only aid our understanding of Tongan students classroom experiences, but can also be utilised to improve their performances. Her key finding – that it is imperative for educators to acknowledge *Pasifika* students' contrasting home and school cultures, which can be combined to foster educational success – is a tangible, though rare, example of how *Pasifika* educational research can have practical applications.

To a large extent, this thesis serves to fill the research void that exists at present. Understanding Samoan boys, for instance, needs further investigation, though they need not be looked at in isolation from their sisters. Instead, there is a need to examine Samoan students' educational successes, to make sense of the specific cultural aspects that have fostered this success, and to present the findings in a manner that can aid future researchers, and ultimately benefit the ever-growing number of Samoans in the New Zealand education system.

CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM: A SOCIAL LEARNING CONSTRUCTION PERSPECTIVE

I. INTRODUCTION

Sa'a faaoti le utu a le faimea: (Let the fisher's bamboo container be completely emptied out)

The above traditional Samoan proverb symbolises the “mutual relationship” between the teacher and students - the ultimate goal of the student-centred learning in the social processes of the classroom. The phrase conceptualises the ‘authenticity’ of the “mutual understanding” developed between the “*faimea*” (in this context, the teacher) and the “*au totoma*” (fish-hook seekers) referred to students.

An examination of the theory and research in relation to student-centred learning in the classroom is required if the experiences of Samoan students are to be more fully understood. When writing chapter Three, the review of literature on Samoan and *Pasefika* education, I became aware of the paucity of research on Samoan students' learning and classroom experiences. While a small body of relevant research has emerged from within Pacific Island nations in recent times, it is necessary to build a discussion of these by looking at educational research drawn from elsewhere in the world. The focus taken in this chapter is on conceptions and theories of thinking and learning, developed both inside and outside the classroom and school contexts, highlighted in the progressive classroom research of Graham Nuthall & Adrienne Alton-Lee (2000, 1998, 1997, 1994, 1993 et al, 1992, 1991 et al.). The majority of concepts are illustrated here by examples and findings drawn from research on the classroom experiences of Samoans, Tongans, *Pasefika* or New Zealand students. What I have attempted to do here has been to collate current research and identify themes and issues that bound them together.

In so doing, I have placed the research into the socio-cultural and community-focused perspective and the language-focused perspective. The theorists that I discuss have taken a multi-disciplinary approach, integrating general knowledge from several disciplines into their own research. As an advocate of such an approach, I have

employed it to widen my general perspective on the cultural dynamics of the everyday realities of Samoan students' experiences in the classroom.

Recent *Pasefika* educational research provides a useful starting point. According to Koloto's (1995) doctoral study of 'estimation' in Tongan Schools, the "constructivist theory contends that learners actively construct their own knowledge for themselves." In her description of the constructivist view relation to understanding the mathematics concept of 'estimation', she reiterates the two basic tenets of constructivism espoused by von Glasersfeld (von Glasersfeld, 1989, p.162 cited in Koloto, 1995): (i) knowledge is not passively received but actively built up by the cognising subject; and (ii) the function of cognition is adaptive and serves the organisation of the experiential world, not the discovery of ontological reality. In relation to the former, she claims that learning is the responsibility of the student. The implication is that we constructs meanings in unique ways through interactions with our environmental milieu (Sharma, 1997). The prevailing importance of 'estimation' in Tongan life, according to Koloto, is effective in enhancing the development of a student's mathematical thinking and learning skills, and in generating mathematical concepts. Simply put, the learner makes sense of the world by creating meaning through embodied or previous knowledge configurations. I became aware, during the pilot study for this research, that Samoan, like Tongan students in Koloto's study, have constructed their conceptions of mathematics through ideas of 'estimation', through social interaction with peers and through their common sense knowledge. In my observations, students often gathered in small groups to observe the logic of a mathematical problem, and the most confident of them put pen to paper and worked out a problem-solving strategy or tool, using various examples from a textbook, which were often shared with the others. Such social constructivism empowers the student to become an active learner, which reinforced Koloto's findings.

Recent research on teaching and learning in mathematics education (Afamasaga-Fuata'i, 1998; Sharma, 1998, 1993, Koloto, 1995, 1989; Cobb, 1994, 1990; Novak & Gowin, 1984), in science education (Driver, Squire, Rushworth and Wood-Robinson, 1994; Lameta, 1994; Fa'amanu-Moli, 1993) and in social science and sciences (Lameta, 1994) has increasingly focussed on the perception that many students construct their own idiosyncratic tools to facilitate learning in all phases of the

education system. In so doing, they interact with the content, sorting it via methods they have already acquired. Thus, from a re-conceptualised social and cultural perspective stance, learning should no longer be perceived in its entirety as the product of cognitive processing.

Researchers in recent years have been faced with the dilemma of identifying how students' minds interact with aspects of the subject matter in the classroom. Nuthall (1997) contends that these researchers have been "confronted with a reality in which many different and conflicting demands are constantly being made on students' attention and involvement". In students' encounters with new experiences, their mind dynamics allowed for the development of 'mapping constructs' and 'visual living images' that portrayed and represented these experiences which were thus structurally understood through their embodied knowledge and beliefs. It should be noted that the self-development of such 'mapping constructs' tend to collaborate well with one another in building new knowledge and ideas.

The studies by Afamasaga-Fuatai (1998) and Sharma (1997) clearly illustrate important aspects of the discussion of Samoan and Pacific students' interactions with subject matter. Samoan educator, Afamasaga-Fuatai's (1998) research, which drew on Ausubel's (1981) and Gowin & Novak's (1984) paradigmatic ideas, suggested that, more general, more inclusive concepts should be introduced first before any new material, to enable the learner to attempt subsuming new knowledge with old knowledge (Afamasaga-Fuatai, 1998, p.11).

Afamasaga-Fuatai further argues that assimilating new knowledge to gel with the student's prior cognitive structures stem from either *progressive differentiation* and or *integrative reconciliation* (Afamasaga-Fuatai, 1998). In brief, the former relates to when new concepts are subsumed under general propositions and the subsumed concept subsequently modified. She cites the mathematical example of the concepts of 'magnitude' and 'direction' which are subsumed under a general concept of 'vectors'. 'Integrative reconciliation' is when established ideas in cognitive structures are recognised relative to another set of ideas. For instance, the ideas of "straight lines" and "circles" can be defined as "sets of points." (Afamasaga-Fuatai, 1998)

In recent years, educators and teachers have been faced with the arduous task of how to structure, guide and stimulate students' mental processes so that the "residue" of these processes is consistent with desirable curriculum outcomes. However, when students' commonly-held beliefs are inconsistent with significant concepts in the disciplines and when students' underlying conceptual structures are inadequate for comprehending and acquiring complex skills and abilities, then the likelihood of desirable outcomes is diminished. It is thus imperative that Samoan and *Pasefika* students, in my view, must be assisted to appropriate and utilise the cultural concepts and tools that are essential to the discipline (Driver et al, 1994 in Nuthall, 1997), as discussed below.

II. THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED PERSPECTIVE

If we step back and see the whole integrated system of schools, classrooms, students (and the norms, beliefs, and concepts that bind them together) as an example of a specific cultural practise, we will begin to see the concept of individual cognition as nothing more than an embedded fragment of a larger and more inclusive cultural processes. Seen from outside or from the perspective of other cultures and, other cultural practises, learning and, cognition take on different appearance. They are distributed across, or spread between, all aspects of the activities and contexts in which they occur (Nuthall, 1997, p.29).

Lave's (1991) study of a variety of non-Western settings led to her claim that the process of acquiring culturally significant knowledge should be seen as the process of becoming a member of a community. Lave relates this to "an emerging property of a whole person's legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practise (Lave, 1991 p63)". To elaborate, let us consider the "community of practises" involving a group of people who have identified themselves as having special skills and expertise in various fields significant cultural practises (e.g. midwives, teachers, baseball players). Thus the learner's concerns were to establish an identity as an affiliate or member of a community of both practise and process (Nuthall, 1997).

Lave further argues that the present school practise is essentially plastic and artificial. Curriculum knowledge and thinking, she argues, are removed from their real origins and converted into merchandise with minimal meaning or significance in the everyday lives of students outside the classroom. Thus, the knowledge students

acquire at school is viewed as lacking authenticity, and students' unsuccessful progress is viewed as an inevitable end-result of alienating students from legitimate participation in authentic communities of practise (Lave, 1991).

How then do we situate cognition/knowing to identify and understand learning processes in every-day community settings? To provide some answers to this question, are three aspects described in Nuthall (1997): (i) the involvement of other persons; (ii) the way the culture structures and gives meanings to the setting within which the cognition or knowing occurs; and (iii) the tools and practises involved in the activity. In his illustration, Nuthall (1997) considers Saxe's (1988) often-quoted study on mathematical knowledge and the skills of young children selling candy on the streets of a Brazilian city. In his study, Saxe showed that these children were unconventionally using the currency denominations as units for counting. Such pricing ratios which children used to make profits on their candy had evolved among successive young generation of sellers. Central to Saxe's study was the discovery that the pricing conventions structured the mathematical procedures the children invented and mastered. Saxe's classic study rekindles my own personal experiences of the children vendors (selling handicrafts, fruits, food of all varieties, coconuts etc) on the streets of Apia, the capital of Samoa, over the last three decades. Successive generations of vendors, like the children in Saxe's study, developed their pricing conventions in accordance with mathematical procedures they so cleverly invented, especially getting the *right or estimated change* in the blink of the eye for not only the Samoan *tala*, but American or New Zealand dollars. This reinforces Nuthall's claim that in order to get an understanding of what children must learn, educators and teachers need to "step back from the culture of the school and see how mathematics forms as part of the larger cultural context".

(1) "Learning and cognition are socially and culturally constructed"

How can Rogoff and Lave's findings be applied to understanding Samoan or Pacific students' social and cultural learning in the classroom? It is necessary to consider Samoan children's early socialisation into learning and development, which of course builds on the intimate *relationship* between the child (novice) and parents (experts)

(see Utumapu, 2000; Sauvao, 1999; Burgess, 1998; Silipa, 1995; Tagoilelagi, 1995; Ete, 1993). It should be noted that this relationship continues to play an *influential* role in Samoan students' thinking and learning within a secondary school classroom. This is evident enough in a Samoan-English bilingual secondary classroom (Brown, 1995; Lameta, 1994; Silipa, 1991). In a small study (Silipa 1991) conducted at a New Zealand suburban high school in the early 1990s, involving 23 fourth form Samoan-English bilingual students, I found that most of the time the majority of these students appeared to have sustained motivation and interest retention in a social science unit given that 'joint activity' was sustained. The endurance of the joint activity was facilitated by the Samoan-English bilingual teacher, who not only applied a motherly interactive rapport with students but also encouraged and disciplined students to actively participate in classroom discourses, through code-switching and code-mixing of her language of instruction (Silipa, 1991). This comfortable 'mutual relationship' seemed to sustain rapport between the novice (student) and the expert (teacher) in relation to skill, understanding and knowledge. Gradually the novice will come to think, perceive, reckon, and act like the expert. In academic terms, this process is known as appropriation and internalisation of information.

At this stage it is worth noting the legitimate role played by two featured processes namely *appropriation* and *internalisation*. The distinctions between these concepts are as follows: on one hand, 'internalisation' involves the incorporation of behaviour and knowledge into the cognitive processes of the individual's mind, and, on the other, 'appropriation' is a process by which two people share a mutual understanding of each other and work cooperatively and effectively together (Lave, 1991). This is succinctly summed in Lave's words:

It is not that behaviour is all there is to it, but that behaviour is the same thing as culture, that cognition is the same thing as social interaction, that 'mind, culture, history, and the social world...constitute each other (Lave, 1991, p.63).

Reflecting on Lave's comments, let us revisit Vygotsky and Soviet psychologists' work from which most contemporary socio-cultural models of thinking and learning in the classroom are derived.

(2) Vygotsky and Soviet psychologists re-visited

In order to build on the social-cultural theories of Lave, Rogoff, Lemke, Wertsch and many others, it was imperative that I consider Vygotsky's work on the social genesis of intellect, ability and skill. Central to the nature and purpose of Vygotsky's psychological research is the belief that children's thought must be seen in biological and cultural contexts. His genetic law of psychological development states that:

Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. It first appears between people as an *interpsychological* category, and then within the child as an *intrapsychological* category. This is equally true with regard to voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts, and the development of volition. (Vygotsky, 1981, p163)

Vygotsky asserted the idea that the genesis of all mental processes was embedded in the social interactions children engaged in with other people. The forms and structures of the higher mental processes are said to be the mirror image of forms and structures of social interaction. To a large extent, such forms and structures are shaped by the technical and psychological mechanisms accessible in a culture. Apart from these mechanisms which comprise technical tools, culture artefacts, such as art, mathematical symbols and so on (Nuthall, 1997), the most important milestone in children's early development is the acquisition of language (Case, 1996).

In a similar vein is Aiono Le Tagaloa's (1988) study of the origin and nature of Samoan literacy. In it, she emphasised that Samoan children mastered speech through reciprocity and social interactions, which enabled them to become experts in poetic imagery speech, a *literacy tradition* that influenced and facilitated the spread of Christianity, especially the translation of the Bible into the Samoan language. Similarly, Minick's study provided some insight into the links developed between dyadic or small group interactions and the broader socio-cultural system, which are a vital aspect of an individual's progress (Minick, 1985, p.257 in Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1988) This could also be supported by the claim that children learn a higher order of cognitive and linguistic skills through everyday interactions in their domestic life long before they go to school, through the assistance of adults who regulate a child's performances (Gallimore & Tharp, 1988).

True to almost all Polynesian societies, especially those of Samoa and Tonga, is that almost everything in everyday life continues to revolve around the *church* and thus children's early development and learning were initiated and nurtured within Christian teaching-learning processes (Silipa 1999a; 1995). This involves the transmission of Biblical doctrines and principles within the *aiga* (home), the umbilical chord which functions as the *first* school and classroom. The focus within the *aiga* is on reading, memorisation, recitation and simulation of the Bible and religious texts and hymns through social interaction and culturally preferred pedagogical styles (Afeaki, McNaughton, Wolfgramme 1996; Tagoilelagi, 1995; McNaughton, 1991; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986). Central to these learning processes at home is the role of the adult as the expert, who assists, facilitates, disciplines, monitors, and confirms what children learn or do not learn. Therefore, a Samoan student enters formal school equipped with Samoan literacy on top of attributes embedded in his/her home culture and subcultures.

I have come to view Vygotsky's work as an alternative to understanding Samoan students learning. In a similar vein, Mageo (1998), from what she observed first hand of Samoan children's learning and development draws parallels to Vygotsky's work. In Vygotsky's concept of "zone of proximal development," the "zone" is referred to as the 'space' or "distance' between what a child can do alone and what a child can achieve with an adult or expert (1978:86). This process recognises and distinguishes aspects of child development transitioning between the social (assisted) and the psychological (self-regulated). In Vygotsky's own words, these are "functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86)". There are three important characteristics of the transitional processes involving the child's zone of proximal development (Nuthall, 1997). First, in the transition from social to the psychological, the knowledge, perceptions, and skills of both parties grow together side by side, one influencing change in the other fuelled by stimulating social interactions. Second, the interactions that the child internalised somehow become mental processes, not in their original form but in "quasi-social" form (Vygotsky, 1981, p. 164). Thus, the language used in interactions is processed and progressively transformed to a more fluid and richer state in personal associations (Wertsch, 1991). Third, the result of the transition process in the zone of proximal development is the child's ability to behave and think unassisted, or independently.

However, as claimed, the child does not construct new knowledge, understandings and or skills. For Vygotsky, the accommodation occurs in the social interaction, not within the mind of child. Therefore, language development occurs in social and cultural contexts in which the child's life is centred and deeply-seated.

Following Vygotsky's implications, "Neo-Vygotskians" have generated their modifications of Vygotsky's theory in alignment, for the most part, with contemporary contexts. To a large extent, such modifications have served to legitimise the purpose and nature of the present study. Neo-Vygotskian perspectives have drawn on five ideas and they are as follows:

- (1). physical and intellectual tools are now seen as having specific rather than general effects on children's intellectual capabilities (Cole, 1991; Frake, 1985; Olson, 1994)
- (2). notational systems (diagrams, numerical systems, print, etc.) are now acknowledged to be a vital class of intellectual tool (Cole, 1991; Green, Smith, and Moore, 1993; Gardner, 1991; Olson, 1994)
- (3). the process of extending children's thinking is now seen as taking place via a process that is referred to as "scaffolding" (Wood, Bruner, Ross, 1976)
- (4). formal education is now seen as having much to learn from traditional forms of learning such as apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990; Lave & Wenger, 1991)
- (5) intelligence is now explicitly viewed as distributed across a social group rather than being localised exclusively in its individual members (Brown & Duguid 1991) (Case, 1996; in Olson and Torrance 1996)

(3) Putting a socio-cultural perspective into classroom practise

From what has been discussed so far, I became aware that the social and cultural processes seemed to occupy "*centre stage*" in the teaching-learning processes of the classroom. In my view, it is high time for educators and teachers to become more versatile and creative in designing social processes in the classroom that diversify and motivate effective learning processing. It is imperative, in my opinion, to understand *how* the socio-cultural perspective be transformed into classroom practises. Nuthall (1997) quoted Brown and Campione and associates, who conducted a series of

experiments in which they endeavoured to apply the socio-cultural perspective into specific classroom practise (Brown et al 1993; Brown 1994; Campione 1994 quoted in Nuthall, 1997). Two issues are particularly important in this context: what kind of community should be formed and, if learning is an *apprenticeship* involving the gradual transformation of the *identity* of a student from that of the *novice* in that of the *expert* in the classroom community, what kind of transformation should be involved? It is imperative, first and foremost, that “students become expert learners within contexts of different curriculum areas. Efforts must be made to construct within the classroom a “community of learners” in which the teacher displays the characteristics of “an expert, self-motivated and intelligent learner (Nuthall, 1997)”. To create a community of learners, it is essential, in my opinion, that the activities of learning must be defined, modelled and practiced and that norms of practice be established to structure effective participation. From here, students can be encouraged positively to assume the status of “learning apprentices” (Brown et al, 1993, p.190 in Nuthall, 1997, p.26).

Brown & Campione (Brown, et al 1993; Brown & Campione 1994) and the teachers who participated in their study set up two reciprocal activity structures. The first activity involved students collaborating in teaching-learning groups in which they communicated their newly acquired knowledge and developed new research questions. The method employed in this study was reciprocal teaching with a ‘jigsaw puzzle’ technique for configuring group cooperation (Palincsar & Brown, 1989). It was found that students’ active participation in such teaching-learning groups culminated in their assuming the roles of both the teacher and learner. The second activity entails students working collaboratively in research groups, asking and seeking answers to questions on a selected aspect of the curriculum. Each research group contained one member of each teaching-learning group, so that each member of the teaching-learning groups had a different field of knowledge to bring to the group (thus the jig-saw technique). Students accessed the available technology, resources and information to better equip them for potential discoveries to be used for later teaching to others in their teaching-learning groups.

According to Brown and Campione, ‘cooperative collaboration’ encouraged in students a ‘position of responsibility’ for their own learning in tandem with

collaborating their understanding, ideas and skill with others. The underlying principle at the *core* of this process was the *common respect* between students and between the teacher and students and others who provided resources for the students. The employment of the jigsaw method, and the efforts to flood the classroom with concepts and resources, ensured that every student had the capacity to collaborate with others. Furthermore, students enhanced their capabilities in “social facilitation and dispute reconciliation (Brown and Campione, 1993)”. The aim of such “benchmarks” was to create a classroom within which “constructive discussion, questioning and criticism were the mode rather than the exception” (Brown et al, 1993, p.200 cited in Nuthall, 1997). Such a classroom environment nurtures the total student to become reliable “members of a community of research practise in which they adopt the ways of knowing, the cultural practises, the discourse patterns and beliefs systems of scholars” (Brown et al 1993:223).

Rogoff’s (1994) study, within which she exemplifies the concept of a community of learners runs parallel with the real life experiences of Samoans recently shown in a number of perspectives and research studies of Samoan and *Pasifika* students as “community of learners” (Sauvao, 1999; Burgess 1998, Brown 1995; Silipa 1995; Tagoilelagi 1995; Ete, 1993; Fusitu’a 1992; Aiono Le Tagalao, 1988). Rogoff attributes the accomplishment of learning goals to the involvement of students, teachers and parents in cooperative learning activities, where relationships of power and control were substituted by the collaboration in which adults and students consider themselves as learners who support each other. This is closely aligned with Fusitu’a’s 1992 study in which she analysed a Tongan “homework centre” involving students, parents and Tongan teachers of specialists subjects engaged in cooperative learning activities. The success of the “homework centre” was attributed to the sitting of the *Faka Tonga* and Western culture side by side which culminated in the achievement of *poto* or knowledge (Fusitu’a 1992; Fusitu’a & Coxon ,1998, p.23).

While Rogoff, Brown and Campione viewed the development of an effective classroom as a matter of producing a ‘learning focused community’, Zuckerman (1994) approached it as a matter of developing ‘specific socio-intellectual skills’. Zuckerman posits the importance of the role of “mutual trust” coupled with the employment of “un-authoritarian teachers with gentle, democratic style of interacting

with children (Zuckerman, 1994, p.412)". She established a programme to prepare young students for the transition from kindergarten to formal first grade. What fascinates me most about her study was the evaluation of the programme in terms of gains in targeted skills and through students' intellectual development. *Decentralising* their thinking by coordinating the beliefs, perceptions and emotions of other students with their own, she argued, plays a key role in the child's intellectual development. In brief, Zuckerman saw that the development of effective social and classroom skills is viewed as *central* to the development of students' intellectual skills. This is synonymous to the challenges of learning the culture of being a student to which the discussion will now turn.

(4) The challenges embedded in the 'culture of being a student'

The student must come to realise that it is he or she who must attend classes regularly, engage willingly, and share meanings lucidly with peers and teachers. Given a safe and open classroom climate and contemporary curriculum, the quality of one's education is chiefly self-controlled. One can expect schools to provide only opportunities to learn, seizing those opportunities is the student's job (Mintzes, Wandersee, Novak, 1997).

Learning to become students in a traditional school system for Samoans and Pacific students has been and still is, to a large extent, littered with doubt, confusion and a lot of unanswered questions (see Pasikale, 1996; Lameta, 1994; Silipa, 1991; Jones, 1986). Within New Zealand classrooms "are communities that inherit and develop their own institutional culture (Nuthall, 1997)". As students are formally admitted to school and assigned to various classes and teachers, "they also inherit and must negotiate anew their own individual positions, roles and status (Ball, 1980, quoted in Nuthall, 1997)."

Therefore, the platform upon which the place and status that students *negotiate* with their teachers and other students in their classrooms encapsulates all the evolving patterns of comradeship, friendship and varying relationships that account for the total life of the students within the school. This is revealed within the Tongan homework centre example (see Fusitu'a & Coxon, 1998). Within the framework of the positions and roles that students employed at the Tongan homework centre, there was evidence

that Tongan students were able to translate and transfer their negotiation skills into their classroom experience within the formal school setting. Thus, all the aspects of the total school life of students need to be critically considered when developing a holistic account of the approaches in which socio-cultural processes and cognition are intertwined.

(5) Summary reflections on the socio-cultural perspective

In developing the above discussion on socio-cultural perspectives, I attempted to paint school learning within a broader cultural framework and context. This resulted in the direction I took in this thesis: to concentrate on cultural embodiments of classroom practises and the imperative status that cultural rules, regulations and artefacts contribute to the configuration of the conceptions of learning and the approach we take to perceive learning. In our subconscious and perhaps unconscious minds, very often we educators tend to see the cultural and social contexts of classrooms as commonsense knowledge, and continue to focus and gauge individual students on cognition and the workings of the individuals' minds. Using different lenses, when zooming into the compositional effects of the total school and classroom learning (e.g integrated school systems, classrooms, students, teachers, others and the norms, beliefs, values, concepts and knowledge systems that bind them in a cluster), we should be able to visualise and sum this up as a specific "cultural practise". As now viewed by many scholars, "individual cognition" is just a portion of the broader picture of cultural contextual processes.

From a Samoan and/or a *Pasefika* perspective, I view learning and cognition as reflections or images from many mirrors of intricate cultural traditions interacting and interrelating with different modern ideals and concepts. These complex images seemed to permeate every layer of the processes and contexts in which they occur. Thus, "social groups and communities and the collective activities they engage in should be the focus of analysis (Nuthall, 1997, p.29)." If a potential radical change to the educational process needs to be made, it is critical to consider shaping the nature of the community in which it occurs, especially its diverse population. Put simply, educational change is the same as a cultural change. By revisiting the implications of

studies such as Rogoff, Brown & Campione and their teachers, we are provided with a new “classroom culture”, within which “communities of learners” are created. Central to social and cultural processes is “language” through its potential in instructional genres, communication and in negotiating and mediating academic tasks. Here the discussion now turns to the language perspective.

III. THE LANGUAGE-FOCUSED PERSPECTIVE

Lave and Rogoff’s theories emphasised the importance of language as the primary socio-cultural instrument or tool through which membership of communities is ascribed and which in practise is socially negotiated. If this is the case, then the ‘role’ and ‘position’ of Samoan and other *Pasefika* languages should be stipulated and encouraged within the classroom. The central role played by language in education has long been recognised within *Pasefika* communities, both nationally and internationally. In the New Zealand context, the growing diversity of cultures, religions and educational backgrounds within schools, mainly through the large-scale arrival of migrants from Southeast Asia and the Pacific has been an ‘eye opener’ for the education system in recent years. This phenomenon is reflected in the growth in the field of English as a second language education. This transformation, in turn, has increasingly led to researchers’ passion and interest in developing ‘theoretical paradigms’ of students’ thinking/cognition and learning through the means in which language is employed in the classroom. One useful example of such research is Elaine Lameta’s 1994 study, “Using the Samoan Language to understand English concepts of Academic Learning Tasks”.

In her study, Lameta discusses the benefits of the vernacular language - the Samoan language - in mediating and enhancing Samoan students’ learning to understand academic tasks within the classroom. Her results show that Samoan students benefit from using Samoan as the language of discussion during interactive tasks with other speakers of the language. Overall, Forms Four & Six students who employed Samoan to discuss aspects of science cards scored on average of 48 percent higher on English language tasks involving recognition of vocabulary, display of knowledge, and the production of expository text than did similar samples of students who used an

English-only approach (Lameta, 1994, pp.78-9). The normal instructional format of New Zealand secondary schools for students with varying degrees or different levels of English proficiency, she claims, has been to negotiate instructions solely in standard English. Thus, students of limited English proficiency (LEP), such as Samoan students, are inclined to operate in a dual fashion in order to complete a learning task. That is, while they are required to develop English proficiency skills for school learning or classroom activities, at the same time they are expected to attend to the essential requirements of content learning (Lameta, 1994). This is supported by the view expressed in the Lesotho Report about “successful language learning”: “Children learn what they live, what they hear and try to speak in a context of meaningful, functional use with people who care about them and have the confidence that they will learn (Cazden 1992)”.

With this in mind, I now identify some language-focused theories of the classroom process. The first language focused perspective is based on “concepts and methods of analysis in linguistics and socio-linguistics (Halliday, 1978 quoted by Nuthall, 1997)”. Green and colleagues at the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group (c.f. Linguistics & Education, 1993) argued that knowledge and learning are “negotiated and talked into being” in the classroom. The second language-focused perspective is based on the concepts and models embedded in the interrelationships between language and the social and cultural contexts. It is closely related to the socio-cultural perspective, which is based on the idea that “language is a cultural artefact” (Nuthall, 1997). Furthermore, language is perceived as comprising of “genres” or discourses that embody the concepts, ways of thinking, actions and values that define the different curriculum areas (Hicks 1993; Holland, Anderson & Palinscar, 1994; O’Loughlin, 1992; Wells, 1994 in Nuthall, 1997). This language based analysis of students’ cognition and learning is derived from the notions of Vygotsky 1962; 1978; 1981; Hymes, 1972; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; & Leont’ve. The third language-focused perspective involves an expert’s assistance to language development through scaffolds, models and direct instructions (Cazden 1992; Parker & Davis, 1983; Michaels, 1981; Vygotsky, 1981; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Scolon & Scolon, 1979; Shaughnessy, 1977; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976). This is synonymous with Samoan learning and development in which language becomes an “integral tool” (see Silipa, 1995) as observed in the Samoan oral tradition to which Samoan people are exposed

constantly. It should be noted that Samoan language derives both prestige and knowledge. Thus, talking in Samoan is what I refer to as not just ‘gossiping’ but ‘chatting knowledge into being’ as discussed below.

(1) ‘Chatting knowledge into being’ as mutual classroom discourse

While Samoan language is not spoken in New Zealand classrooms, it is very evident during problem-solving tasks where Samoan students constantly used it to understand academic tasks (see Lameta, 1994; Silipa, 1991). The majority of Samoan fourth formers in my own study felt confident and secure when speaking Samoan to decipher different aspects of social science lessons. Conversing with the bilingual teacher about their shared endeavours is what I have referred to as ‘chatting knowledge into being’ within a mutual classroom discourse. This scenario is also highlighted in a study involving Tongan secondary students within a Homework Centre, where students have developed rapport with parents and tutors using Tongan language (see Fusitu’a 1992; Fusitu’a & Coxon, 1998).

The Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group have focused on “understanding how everyday life in classroom is constructed by its members through their interactions, verbal and other, and how these constructions influence what students have opportunities to access, accomplish, and thus learn in schools.” (Green & Dixon, 1993, p.231 in Nuthall, 1997). Green and Dixon attempted to identify the significant roles language plays and draws on, in terms of negotiation manoeuvres, responsibilities, norms and mutual expectations between teacher and students. Language is the key instrument that is employed to bind the teacher and students together in building a common ground of comprehension and understanding of the objectives and aims, proceedings, tasks and curriculum content of all classroom processes. My fascination with this perspective arises out of its centrality to classroom processes that appear to be a result of two overlapping dimensions. Firstly, “the social life of the students and teachers is developed and played out through the negotiation of roles and status”. This led to the development of a “unique culture” which seemed to encapsulate many perpetual negotiations and proceedings (Baker 1992; Heras, 1993 also quoted by Nuthall, 1997). Thus, any change in the culture of the classroom

would doubtless be understood and noticed by members of its community - the teacher and students. The second dimension relates to “the evolution of the curriculum knowledge and the opportunities and processes of learning”. The interaction between the teacher and students reaches new heights of understanding of what is required and interpreted as knowledge: “...kinds of knowledge (academic and social) are talked into being by a range of discursive practises that coexist in teachers’ and students’ talk.” (Hera, 1993, p.295; Nuthall, 1997)

Consider this abbreviated transcript excerpt from Yolanda (a Pacific Island student) in Nash’s (1997) published ‘progress at school study’, titled “A Year in the Sixth Form” Yolanda’s Sixth form Science Lesson on Electricity is discussed in a dialogue between the researcher (R) and Yolanda (Y) herself.

[Y] I’ve never passed a science lesson in my life/

[R] Can you explain how Mr. Prasad teaches?

[Y] Can I describe?/ Well / sometimes it depends / It depends on the teacher / I mean / some people don’t think he’s good / but I think he’s a good teacher / and I like the way he teaches / because he talks / you know / and he instead of saying / ‘Copy this out’ and telling us /you know / ‘Do it’ / and just not /. He explains it / he shows you every detail that you want to know / he goes through it in stages and like / not even after he’s done it the first time / he goes / he refers / to it again and again it’s / you know / going through your head all period so by the time you’re finished / you know half of what he’s talking about anyway. / Today he took our papers in / and he showed us how the current on the voltmeter was ‘increasing-at-the-same-time or decreasing-at-the-same-time’/. What else did he show us? /

[R] Did you pick up that ‘line of best fit’?

[Y] Yeah / that line of best fit thing / Oh I dunno / Oh I knew kind of what he was talking about / and it just shows which one / is connected with each / yeah /He went over that work we did....He’s a good teacher /he is disciplined but you can be funny with him / (*Jack with that fuse*) Yeah / Mr. Prasad goes / What is this fuse used for ? / and Jack goes ‘its used in a car’ / and he’s not answering the question / you know / ‘What does it do?’/ and he’s going completely off the track / quite funny / but he, Mr Prasad kept asking him

[R] Yeah he did. / So why do you use fuses?

[Y] Why do you use fuses? / So that you don’t damage your machines and stuff / the fuse is high resistance / No problems / (Nash, 1997).

Reflecting on the above example, it becomes apparent that Yolanda manages to illustrate the efficacy of the teacher's "*talk*" with students which evokes, on one hand, a sense of explicitness in 'direct instructions' on the part of the teacher (see (Cazden, 1992), and on the other hand, a sense of fun, humour and community on part of the students (Pasikale 1996), which provides the motivation for students' to think about, learn and understand the subject matter. It shows that the open negotiation of norms and expectations concurrently occur within ongoing negotiations amongst student themselves which leads to the development of their own culture of norms and expectations.

While Yolanda may have never felt worthy of a pass in Science, she was capable of verbalising which aided her knowledge construction. In the excerpt above, in relation to one of the science units ("Electricity"), it becomes clear that Yolanda had learned something regarding the nature of electrical circuits and the properties of electromotive force. Obviously, from the manner in which she *talks* and *conducts* herself in a conversation with the researcher, she reveals self-assurance and confidence by responding without much hesitation. Constant dialogue between Yolanda and the teacher, especially demonstrations and guided experimentation, proved most beneficial in allowing her to observe the nature and characteristics of "Ohms Law" in a 'fused circuits design' which was applicable to an everyday practical context (Nash, 1997, pp.137-9). One interesting aspect of this illustration is Yolanda's ability to 'co-hold' a common understanding with that of the teacher regarding the unsatisfactory responses or answers produced by other students, for example Jack. His answer was refuted because it rejected the specific construction of the reality and the discursive grounds on which it was based. This conjecture enkindles the debate in pedagogic theory.

The above discussion, in my view, draws parallels with Brilliant-Mills' (1993) analysis. Brilliant-Mills described mathematics as a "language variety" or "register" that in a specific classroom is socially and discursively constructed (Brilliant-Mills, 1993, p.307). In Nuthall's description, the induction and nature of activities designed by the teacher to be carried out in the classroom are the grounds upon which social and mathematic jargon and social and discursive practises are established and bound together, leading to the composition of "talking mathematics into being".

Private conversations between Pacific secondary students and their peers have long been of interest to educational researchers and teachers in New Zealand classrooms (see Lameta, 1994; Silipa 1991; Jones, 1986, 1991) Pacific students are described according to one teacher (Silipa 1991) in two ways. Firstly, as exhibiting “boisterous behaviour” (Jones 1991) and secondly, as “gossip mongers” (Silipa, 1991) which entails what I term as “multiple talk”, code-switching and mixing languages. While part of these students’ conversations was always about their outside-of-classroom-life experiences, the most critical and significant part of this *talk* seemed to focus on developing “common understanding”, norms and expectations between themselves which they used to understand a particular lesson.

Consider Lemke’s (1990) analysis of the language of science, quoted by Nuthall (1997). According to Lemke, “the language of science explores not only the social interaction structures that provide the framework for talking, and understanding talk, about science, but also the ways in which the meanings of science concepts and ideas are constructed and elaborated in the classroom.” Lemke’s study, which has implications for both a semantic and a socio-cultural analysis of the classroom, is generated and driven by his interest in terms of embedded meanings; the ways the meanings move together and interact with one another, and the manner that ideas and concepts are translated through reflections of other ideas and concepts. Put another way, “Everything makes sense only against the background of other things like it.” (Lemke, 1990, p.204) Nuthall draws a parallel by citing a simple example: “dictionary definitions of words normally describe meanings by reference to the meanings of other words that are also defined in the dictionary”. Further to his example, Nuthall describes Lemke’s “web of semantics” as connections that translate ideas and concepts which are normally entrenched in the manner that such ideas and concepts are verbally used. Subsequently, whatever and whenever a teacher is involved in classroom discourse (e.g. discussing topical issues, dialogue exchanges, or engaged in instructional formats-demonstrations and experimentations) there is “an enormous potential array of meanings that are implicated and from which the student must select and adapt appropriate meanings. According to Lemke, “every action is made meaningful by placing it in some larger context. In fact we place every action or event in many different contexts in order to make it meaningful.” (Lemke, 1990, p.187).

How, then, does this help us understand what a Samoan-English bilingual student experiences, thinks about, and learns from classroom activities? Since the 'medium of instruction' in the classroom continues to be monolingual, understanding where a bilingual student situates his/her learning requires a detailed analysis of the multilayered nature of classroom discourse.

(2) A bilingual student's social learning construction

Bilingual students (for example, Samoans and/or *Pasefika* students) are described as "having facility in two languages, and can be functionally proficient in either or both of their languages (Lameta, 1994, p.2)". Within the classroom, however, bilingual students must tackle tasks by using the language of the curriculum (Lameta, 1994). Yet, as Cummins' (1984) linguistic theory indicates, the knowledge acquired through linguistic interaction in one language may play a major role in making input in the second language understandable. In the case of Samoan students, very often their Samoan orientation has generated and developed their ability to use Samoan language to confidently discuss and negotiate learning concepts and ideas through signs and symbols (inclusive of intricate gestures and non-verbal language) with their peers, an important attribute of their "cultural identity" in the classroom (Silipa, 1998; 1991). These symbols seemed to shift in terms of their formal and informal status, depending on participants' hierarchical position, status or role within a particular context or community. Thus, such genres could be described as "cognitive meta-systems" (Muscovici, 1961 in Doise, 1991 quoted by Nuthall, 1997), which legitimise outcomes of other cognitive systems in accordance with socially constructed and regulated linguistic structures and norms.

So what role does the language of the classroom or the curriculum play? Specifically, classroom language functions not only as the medium of instruction for student cognition, but also as a primary source of the content and structure of student cognition (see Nuthall, 1997). From classroom language comes classroom discourse or classroom *talk* (see Cazden, 1988, 1992) which envelops a variety of genres. If this is the case, then to be able to understand the logic of classroom discourse, we must¹ consider the specificity of genres embedded in the total classroom as a "community" as
 ise,

learners". Three factors need to be considered: (i) each subject matter has its own genres (e.g. concepts, technical jargon or vocabulary and recurrent talk about related new insights); (ii) the genres of everyday classroom discourse or talk; and (iii) the different 'packages' the teacher (e.g. standard English) and students (combination of aspects and elements of bilingual e.g. Samoan-English) bring to the classroom.

Researchers have focused on the complexity of the learning of students with limited English proficiency in relation to the requirements of successful learning outcomes in the classroom (Richards, 1990; Tikunoff, 1985; Cummins, 1981). Here I consider an approach for classroom language based on the work of Vygotsky (already discussed in this chapter) especially Leont'Ve and Neo-Vygotskian's such as Olson 1994; Rogoff, 1990; Lave, 1988; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976. Let me firstly contemplate Leont'Ve's idea that the development of mental processes (e.g. thinking and memory) occurs through the mastery of cultural tools within a social context: Every object made by man - from hand tools to modern electronic computers - embodies mankind's historic experience and at the same time embodies the mental aptitudes moulded in this experience (Leont'Ve, 1981, p.42 quoted in Nuthall, 1997).

The above quote draws parallels with the mastery of cultural tools (e.g. language, the art of story telling and crafts, such as weaving, house and boat building etc.) which Samoans have acquired. The mastery of the essentials of such cultural tools echoes the way English-Samoan bilingual students acquire the mental facilities and skills that are embedded in the language of the classroom. Thus, this acquisition process does not occur in isolation; rather it occurs within social contexts in which social interaction becomes central to the mastery process. Imperative in the total education of students, then, are cultural tools relative to the language genres of the classroom and curriculum.

As I have discussed earlier in this section, what students learn consists of not only the specifics of a single curriculum discipline (such as a set of concepts and ideas) but different approaches to perceiving, thinking and categorising (like piecing a puzzle of experiences) what is embedded in the curriculum language, the signs and symbol systems and technology employed by its experts. This view describes students as "semiotic apprentices" as they are involved in the total learning process (discourse,

technical and cultural practises) of a particular curriculum discipline, such as Mathematics, Science or Social Science. Wells describes “semiotic apprenticeship” as a tool which validates the approaches in which meaning is elicited from activities. (Wells, 1995 personal communication in Nuthall, 1997).

Jones’ (1991) describes how *Pasefika* and *Pakeha* girls’ different perspectives of learning have influenced and shaped their interactions with each other and with their teachers. While both groups held a “mutual perception” that engaging in school work served to obtain school knowledge, their interactions, especially those with teachers, indicated a marked difference in the manner in which *Pasefika* and *Pakeha* girls acquire knowledge. Polynesian girls, on the one hand, frequently engaged in interactive talk among themselves, in small groups and with their teachers. Often, they provided the teacher with responses in unison “involving memory and low level of thinking operations (Lameta, 1994, p.6).” This seemed to adversely affect the potential of the girls to interpret, elaborate and contextualise abstract information to construct new insights. Moreover, they assumed that their role was to merely recite the knowledge passed on by the teacher (Jones, 1991, pp.81-82). Their silence and cooperative behaviour within the classroom served to impress the teacher.

The *Pakeha* girls, on the other hand, considered that undertaking “school work” was in tandem with collaboration and active participation in “school knowledge”- “discussing it, seeking to understand it, using it in projects [let alone] working it out for oneself (Jones, 1991, p.86)”. This is revealed in the girls’ interactive talks with their peers and also amidst classroom discourse, where they actively participated in discussions, bouncing their ideas off the teacher. The role of the teacher, they claimed, was to facilitate, encourage and legitimise their learning ideas, belief systems and knowledge construction. They utilised a multi-discipline approach to facilitate academic discussions progressing to qualitative feedback, expansive elaboration of central issues, resourcing information from teachers and most importantly of all, sorting what counts as knowledge.

The *Pasefika* girls in Jones’ study were largely passive recipients of the teacher’s knowledge, whereas the *Pakeha* girls’ were more proactive and sought to engage in discussions to facilitate their acquisition of knowledge. This echoes Bernstein’s

(1971) well-known contrast between “elaborated” and “restricted” codes. Succinctly, “elaborated” (e.g. the *Pakeha* girls’ code) is associated with independence of context, objectification of experience and analysis of experience resulting in meta-linguistic potential, while “restricted” (e.g. the *Pasefika* girls’ code) is associated with dependence of context and taking pre-established meanings and values for granted (Cazden, 1992, p.175). Thus both groups of girls had different beliefs about what counted as school work in collaboration with what they perceived as school knowledge. Thus, while *Pasefika* girls believed that at school they had a chance, unfortunately they were neither afforded a chance to re-visit their ways of knowing and experiences, nor were they given recognition that such knowledge could be incorporated in their classroom learning. Jones’ study inflames the discussion on *re-thinking* student-centred learning in the classroom to accommodate the diverse population of secondary schools in New Zealand. Teachers and educators should be made aware that learning should entail both a “multi-vocal discourse” and “semiotic apprentices.” Researchers have claimed that this would create a rich understanding progressing to meta-linguistic thinking (see Nuthall, 1997)

From the literature on the language-focused perspectives, I became aware that language plays a pivotal role in teaching and learning processes and that cognition is now viewed as culture, as a narrative, and as a classroom discourse. Curriculum is now classified as language learning, while the classroom becomes a language or knowledge community and a ‘community of learners’.

(3) Summary reflections on a language-focused perspective

The above discussion on classroom cognition and learning has indicated varying approaches in which language shapes the social configurations and collaborations between students, their peers and with teachers and builds classroom knowledge and the understanding required to meet the demands of the curriculum. The acquisition of classroom or curriculum knowledge is shaped through the use of language. As classrooms become “language communities,” they have the potential to develop their own languages, not only within the learning process but with the processors-the students of these processes. Learning to implement language is a resourceful process

that enables all students within a class to acquire the same learning and knowledge, irrespective of their different backgrounds.

IV. CONCLUSION

My purpose in this chapter has been to describe the current nature of studies on models of understanding about “student-centred learning” in relation to Samoan students learning within the classroom. It is noted in the above discussion that traditional classroom concepts and ideas of learning are no longer valid, as current research has re-conceptualised windows of understanding of students’ classroom experiences, given students’ different social and cultural background. There remains some ‘grey areas’ in relation to traditional definitions and assumptions of how students think and learn. I am aware that such grey areas perpetuate as they inform some aspects of the whole classroom picture. Nevertheless, what I am interested are the implications of current research findings that promote understanding on student-centred learning in the classroom. In so doing, I have drawn on both socio-cultural (community-focused) and language-focused perspectives.

The general assumptions drawn from the above discussion indicated that the teaching-learning processes of the classroom could no longer be perceived or determined as exam-driven, instruction-specific domains of the curriculum. Rather they should be viewed as reciprocal teaching and learning relationships in which both students and teachers engage in the management of such processes within a community-oriented classroom. In general terms, we have seen how language informs and forms students’ classroom experiences, how social and cultural activities influence the configuration of specific subject content through its linguistic genres, and how students reflect on both their cultural and classroom experiences to negotiate and mediate their understanding of the current content and context of classroom academic tasks. Putting these in one *fafao* (basket) provides us with a crystal-clear picture: that the ‘actuality’ and ‘entirety’ of what happens in the classroom does matter, as it determines how students think and learn.

To rethink student-centred learning in the classroom, I have paid special attention to four scenarios: (1) understanding how students and teachers manage their experiences and life in the classroom community; (2) understanding how students' dual cultural-classroom experiences influence their learning; (3) understanding how students and teachers develop a good rapport and the significance of such relationship during learning processes; and (4) understanding the relationship between students' "way of knowing" and their "classroom experiences". These conceptualisations provide the "community of learners and teachers" with a 'springboard' of models of teaching-learning principles and practical understanding of such principles. Teachers should be mindful that without constant awareness of the evolving realities of the total life in the classroom, particularly that of students from non-English backgrounds, they will continue to live with assumptions of what they see of the 'portrait' in front rather than what is behind it. In my own effort to get closer to what is behind the portraits of Samoan students, my discussion now turns to the first phase of my findings.

**PART III: FANAIFI O FA'AMALAMA: WINDOWS OF
UNDERSTANDING**

Chapter Five: The *Tapuitea* Quandary: Hypothesis Schema

Chapter Six: *Fue lavelave*: Superseding Circumstances

Chapter Seven: *Fa'afailelega*: Nurturing Coolness & Dignity

Chapter Eight: *Taeao Afua*: New morning lights

CHAPTER FIVE: THE *TAPUI TEA* QUANDARY: HYPOTHESES SCHEMA

I. PROLOGUE

O le mea e te luluina e te toe seleseleina (What you sow, you reap)

E poto le tautai ae se le atu i ama” (Even the most expert fisherman makes mistakes)

E leai se faiva e maumau” (None of a fisher’s catch will ever go to waste).

In this chapter, I reveal the hypothesis schema used to predict assumptions about the processes Samoan students engage in during their learning. To begin, I drew on the concept of the status and nature of the Samoan metaphor about *Tapu itea* (see Le Tagaloa, 1996). Some believe that the *Tapu itea* is comprised of two different stars, while others, supported by astronomy, claim that *Tapu itea* represents one star which is both the evening and morning star. In many respects, this difference of opinion can be likened to the forming of hypotheses or predictions, based on many differing sources, including everything from models of understanding to direct observation. Let me remind the reader that I constantly use both ‘hypothesis’ and ‘prediction’ interchangeably for the sake of convenience throughout this chapter. It is also worth noting that inaccuracies in the hypotheses mirror the unavoidable bias shared by both the teachers and myself.

Just as predictions are an important part of educational research, so they are in Samoan life. Concerns about productive ‘returns’ in one’s daily tasks (for example, fishing) are ever-present. Such returns are seen as the result of the likes of positive attitudes, dedication and courage. The essence of this approach is evident in the phrase above -*O le mea e te lulu e toe seleseleina* (what you sow you reap). The Samoans concern with predictions is also a product of the importance they attach to change. Samoan parents, for instance, often consider what sorts of people their children ought to be, which goals they should pursue, and how they should relate to others. When trying to answer these questions, Samoan parents generally consider their forebears’ wisdom which has been passed on to them and the power of prayer.

They see education as a catalyst of change for their children. Professor Le Tagaloa Aiono Fanaafi (1996) the first and most decorated Samoan academic, through a socio-cultural perspective, captures the essence of this belief:

Let us picture change as a powerfully built free running stallion...strong and fleet. This free running animal must be given the bit ...bridle and harness. I see education, that complex and life giving process, as the only hope man has to give rein to this free running animal. I am certain that you will agree with me when I say that it is most desirable for education to be able to mount the free running horse of change and to be in control: the rider education must set the pace, must decide and measure the steps as well as the stops, must measure the burden and weigh the load as well as map out the destination. Eventually, the rider-or true education- should be able to demand the type and quality of horse or change it (Le Tagaloa, 1996, p.2)

In section II, I discuss the development of the hypothesis schema. Section III details the actual predictions, both inaccurate and accurate, while Section IV focuses on the implications of the analysis of early predictions. Section V is devoted to summary reflections on the process.

II. BACKGROUND

The hypothesis schema that I developed was primarily to unearth some generalisations and assumptions that I held based on the notion of the potential of the home culture (*fa'asamoa*) to enhance/hinder Samoan students' learning. It operates as a selection of relevant factors for the sake of discourse and exploratory data analysis. For the sake of comparison, I asked the teachers' to make speculations about factors/variables (e.g. home culture), which affected Samoan students' prospects and potential to engage in and cope with classroom learning processes.

Students and teachers anecdotes were very helpful in crafting my hypothesis schema. My observational notes were supplemented with transcripts of interviews with students, parents and teachers. To supplement the initial responses of students, the teachers and I accessed the raw data (field notes and teachers' record of students). I based my initial predictions on students' contemplation, frequency of responses in classroom discourse and progress to complete work, such as homework and research

projects. Observational data and interview transcripts highlight recurrent thematic concepts and ideas, and served develop a 'base' and 'foundation' for later analysis.

The first five weeks I spent at the school site challenged my predetermined conceptualisations which emerged from my readings of the growing statistical evidence of the continual decline of *Pasifika* students' progress compared to their non-*Pasifika* counterparts (Ministry of Education, 1998). The Ministry of Education spearheaded most of these studies, in which researchers were seemingly prone to sketching a sympathetic diagnostic picture of the negative and bizarre learning circumstances that *Pasifika* students employ in the classroom. The one common general assumption they shared is that "working class parents reproduce working class children" and this generates the general underachievement of *Pasifika* students, of which Samoan students make up more than 75% of the total (Ministry of Education, 1998). I pondered the widespread perceptions about the mismatch between the home-school culture relationship, which leads to the home culture being negated and discontinued, which have not received sufficient academic attention. Consequently, I designed a hypothesis schema to uncover *fa'asamoa's* potential to enhance Samoan students learning.

What I gathered first hand during my time at the school reinforced some of the findings in recent studies. For example, the majority of student participants were from non-English speaking backgrounds and were Samoan-English bilinguals (see Tanielu, 1999; Lameta, 1994, Jones, 1991). Some experienced problems with reading instructions (see Wilkinson, 1998; McNaughton, 1996; 1995), although it was evident that they eventually managed to 'catch up' with others through negotiating and networking with peers or in small groups under the direction and guidance of the teacher.

Some of this information emerged either by accident or partly by chance during the many informal and unstructured interviews and social interactions with student participants. During the numerous interviewing sessions I conducted, it was amazing how I bonded with participants through our consensual *fa'asamoa* protocols of respect and trust, which meant that I would not use a tape recorder or take any notes during the interviews. However, as soon as interviews were over, I hurriedly jotted

important points in my notebook. The participants and I would sit side by side, a sign of respect, and share our stories, many of which found their way into this study.

It is imperative that I acknowledge the participants, who are the providers and sole owners of the information gathered. This information, in turn, breathed life and gave flesh to the bones of skeleton for this research project.

III. PREDICTIONS

My aim in the development of this hypothesis schema was to consider factors and circumstances that affect or influence students' learning in the classroom. In effect, students' responses would help guide me closer to understanding the effects of the total elements of the school life on students. In broad terms, students were categorised into three groups according to their ability.

First, it was easy to account for students with a sound understanding of a specific unit because of their prior knowledge and good previous exam results. Essentially, these students had the right 'toolkit' to respond adequately to instructions and tasks, and this behaviour was consistent throughout the study. In spite of certain circumstances, such as absence from class for prolonged intervals, students in this category have grasped the "core" of the learning process coupled with the necessary self-discipline. Thus, the teachers' predictions, as well as mine own, were highly successful here, which was not surprising. In spite of this, some of these students were susceptible to losing self-discipline and losing interest.

Second, students with a mediocre understanding were not yet competent in accomplishing tasks' objectives. In terms of predictions, the teachers and I were not very successful in forecasting the reality of students' with mediocre understanding. These students tended to develop misconceptions of different topical issues, particularly mathematical problem-solving mechanisms in different unit standards.

The third prompt was the problematic "I don't understand" response. Sometimes students joined forces and chorused the phrase, especially during classes held straight after interval/lunch and late afternoon. While the "I don't understand" group were

characterised by their giving of incorrect responses/answers to classroom discourse and brainstorming activities or for tests, the degree of success in these predictions were low as they reflected the unpredictability in both the trial phase and the post stage of the study.

(1) Inaccurate predictions

Untrue predictions were those that ignored for the most part the cultural repertoire of students. These predictions failed to identify, for example, Year 11 & 12 students' misconceptions and their opportunity to interact with content and their failure to identify feelings towards learning as an activity. Each is outlined below:

- *That student participants constructed their knowledge and learning on the basis of their cultural repertoire or what was already known and the series of experiences to which they are exposed.*

Interviews with Ata and Moso, two male Year 11 English students, revealed that they found English to be "awesome and cool" if it incorporates cultural and interesting everyday "stuff," "Like in *Animal Farm*, you can relate to animal characters like the pig". When I probed further, Moso replied: "well, a pig is both a Samoan's pet and valuable food. Like I gathered from a cousin in Samoa... a pig is more important than a human being. I did not believe him at first, but after he had told me the story about this guy who killed a pig by accidentally running over it in his four wheel drive, and then the guy got a big chase from the rest of the village with machetes and stones, I listened in awe."

Observations of Year 11 and 12 Maths classes proved particularly informative. Unconsciously, students regularly used their cultural repertoire whenever they had trouble understanding mathematical principles. They resorted to estimation, misconception, generalisation and reflection as problem-solving strategies. Teuila, for example, saw them as "shortcuts", "flukes" or "pure guesses" to reach what is expected of them - the correct answers. According to her, "Sometimes it works, other times [it is] not so lucky." She felt she applied everyday commonsense knowledge of

cultural ‘stuff’ to make sense of statistics and probability. Iulai noted that he did the same, but he combined that with his classroom experiences in past years. These findings reinforced Sharma’s claim that *Pasifika* students’ mathematical learning is often beset by misconceptions, such as representativeness, equiprobability, and unpredictability (Sharma 1997, p.174) and Koloto’s theory that they have a tendency to estimate (see Koloto, 1995).

It is important to note, however, that it appeared that students were not confident in using their socio-cultural repertoire within the classroom. In part, this appeared to stem from a belief that it was inappropriate. It was, therefore, difficult to gauge conclusively how students’ cultural repertoire influenced their learning processes.

- *That students’ feelings determine their desire to learn*

Those who participated in this study have reported the significant feelings they have experienced which in turn became the reasons for them choosing to learn (see Fuata’i-Afamasaga, 1998), and at other times those which override learning. This strongly suggests that for this particular group of students, learning is not at all cognitively based. Fuata’i-Afamasaga contends that very often teachers/educators are too busy trying to cover the prescribed curriculum, and getting students to learn, and thus unaware of students’ feelings. Here we see the importance of the concept of feeling in any effective learning situation. In this context, the term ‘feelings’ refers to how the influences of their home lives impacted on students’ desire to learn. It is worth recognising that the home lives of some of the students were at times troubled, which meant they attended school when very often too tired or stressed to learn effectively.

Other students noted that they often felt frustrated by academic conventions. For instance, written formal English was a constant concern for a number of students. According to one Year 11 participant, “It is just a nightmare. She expects you to write in good, standard English and stuff like that in the third person.” It should be remembered that Samoan youth popular culture, especially the influence of “hip-hop” culture, had a profound influence on all the students, who regularly used youth/street speech in verbal and written communications, to the detriment of their work. This

further compounded the difficulties they had as products of a home culture in which English is very much a second language. It is also important to note that Students were always reluctant to make use of special school learning unit programmes to improve their oral and written communications. Those who did perceived themselves as unworthy, incapable and 'un-cool.'

It was also apparent that the students lacked interest in much of the literature of the Year 11 English curriculum. In part, this stemmed from a lack of reading during primary school years, for some of the students. While the place of *Pasifika* students and their cultural background is acknowledged in the Year 11 English curriculum, nevertheless the texts offered are dated, conservatively mainstream and academically dry. A distinct and long-established feature of English as a subject is the focus on the curriculum to provide students with the opportunity to learn more about themselves and relationships with others (see Nash, 1996). The selection of texts and topics discussed in the classroom were largely foreign to the majority of the student participants. In turn, student participants, especially Moso and Ata, were not motivated to participate and hence were wrongly assumed to have lacked the language competence to extend their learning.

Overall, then, the extent to which students' negative and positive feelings influenced their desire to learn was difficult to judge.

- *That Pasifika students require no more time than other students to interact with subject content in order to understand it*

It was apparent that the students, largely because of language difficulties, required more time than others in the class to understand specific subject units, which surprised some teachers. The implication reported by Sharma (1997) suggested that teachers should be made of these problems when determining the amount of time for students to interact with the lesson or subject content. If student opportunity to interact with content is the best predictor of student learning (Alton-Lee, 1984:161), then its significance should not be understated.

(2) Accurate predictions

A number of accurate predictions were made about Year 11 & 12 students:

- *That working with others in groups enhanced students understanding and ability to learn.*

Most of the Year 12 maths student participants welcomed the notion of working in small groups, particularly the two boys, Iulai and Eli, who were modest, passive learners but very talented students who both received good marks for School Certificate. Although the three girls, Pua, Teuila, and Losa, had passed School Certificate maths, they told me that sometimes it is hard to follow some of the concepts in Calculus and they always had an anxiety attacks about failing which was lessened by the mutual rapport established during group work

The teachers also accurately predicted that group work was particularly effective, and the idea was frequently passed on to students: "It makes life easier this way," the teacher told the Year 12 maths students, "if we can all work together to achieve our common goal then our journey will be as simple as it looks."

- *That students with above average TOSCA test score on entrance at third form coupled with an all round good performance in Year 9 & 10 final grades were easily predicted to have a sound understanding of Maths and English.*
- *That students who had a mediocre understanding and who did not have enough time to interact with the content were easily predicted from short mental impromptu tests given to students straight after the lesson*
- *Those who always said "I don't know" were either disinterested or did not know how to successfully apply their prior knowledge*
- *That students applied their classroom knowledge to activities outside of the classroom (for example, mathematical knowledge was applied to the likes of shopping, budgeting and part-time work).*

- *That students preferred learning materials or resources which related to their own personal and cultural experiences (for example, writing projects for English on Pasifika celebrities)*

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS OF EARLY PREDICTIONS

The makers of predictions, like students, are inclined to making estimations and overestimations. On one hand, teachers' naive assumptions influenced their predictions about the minimal time students need to interact with content. On the other hand, for instance, students often used their sense of estimation and predictions to compensate for their limited understanding of mathematical conceptions. Teachers, in particular, often made assumptions and speculated about students' capabilities in developing their potential, predicting that students should have no trouble coping with almost every strand of unit standard tasks, including class tests. Teachers' predictions were often based on their "high expectations" of students' potential, based partially on the students' social class, the eagerness of their parents, and their abilities in other subjects. Errors in teachers' predictions stemmed largely from their lack of awareness of the fact that different students have varying "ways of knowing" and interest in units. For example, in Year 11 Science classes, the two boys, Ata and Moso, actively participated in the Energy and Velocity unit because of its practical application to their interest in engines and not because of their fascination with the scientific principles involved.

Another important issue that promoted errors in teachers' predictions reflected their unconscious ignorance and naivety. One of the important aspects of the majority of the Samoan students' childhood socialisation which prevails throughout most of their secondary education is their deep grounding in a "typical closed" Samoan upbringing. In such an upbringing, students were socialised into observational learning of "what to think" rather than "how to think". Thus, teachers failed to recognise that "more time" than expected was needed for students to interact with the content in order to facilitate their learning. It was evident in this study that when students were given sufficient time, their understanding of subject matter greatly increased.

I felt that the frequency of responses of each of the two groups of English students (Year 11 & 12) was based on their interest. However, teachers predicted that the frequency of students' responses was based on their "prior knowledge" and good literacy skills. Thus, while the teachers failed to understand fully students' interest in English, they also understated their own role as facilitators of curiosity, passion and eagerness within students. Indeed, the ability of teachers as catalysts of learning, as the following chapters show, played a key role in the participants' successful learning.

V. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

The hypothesis schema described was developed with the aim of uncovering and understanding how Samoan student managed their learning and what facilitated or influenced their learning in the greater cultural context of the classroom. My primary naïve assumptions failed to fully reveal the creativity, talent and integrity of different ways of knowing and learning that Samoan student participants employed. This led me to focus on Rogoff's model which states "that students' cultural repertoire influences classroom learning rather than just classroom experiences" and her three planes, namely guided participation, participatory appropriation and apprenticeship, in relation to student participants' classroom learning.

The teachers and I viewed learning processes quite differently. For instance, I viewed them as elements of socially-constructed activities (see Leont'Ve, 1981). In contrast, teachers took a less academic approach, and based their assumptions on their practical experiences within the classrooms. However, both approaches have merit and in the end tended to complement each other.

From a socio-cultural perspective, student participants' cultural mannerisms, their collective cultural identity, strategies and coping processes they used during classroom learning reveal much about Samoan students. The inaccurate and accurate predictions shaped the nature of my data analysis and further data collection procedures. It is important to note that the initial hypotheses heavily influenced the key issues on which I focused which are detailed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER SIX: *Tafa o Ata*: SHREDDED SHADOWS OF DAWN: SUPERSEDING CIRCUMSTANCES: FINDINGS I

I. INTRODUCTION

- (i) *Ia fa'atutu mai foe ina ia faiaina ai le savili*: Pull hard so that we may overcome the wind.
- (ii) *Ia o gatasi le futia ma le umele*: When two are in partnership they must be of one mind, and should one be weak and fainthearted, the undertaking will fail.
- (iii) *Ia su'i tonu le mata o le niu*: Pierce the correct eye of the coconut

These often-quoted Samoan expressions collectively allude to the challenge for a person to be motivated and self-assertive, for without action any mission will fail.

It is widely acknowledged by Samoans that everything is part of a duality, both negative and positive, and there is a need to strike balance. In the educational context, this view can create difficulties as parents want their children to maintain the Samoan culture but at the same time to embrace a western education. There is, therefore, room for conflict between the two cultures, although students can be shown how to draw on Samoan culture and language to enable them to succeed within both cultures.

In essence, the *tafa o ata* (shredded shadows of dawn) echoes the significance of the traditional Samoan sense of “time frame.” It is within this time frame that both good and bad things happen in tandem. One dies and a new life begins. One succeeds and the other fails. One falls and the other rises. Since the Samoans are undoubtedly devout Christians, it is essential to mention the time frame in relation to the Bible. In Biblical terms, it was about the time of the *tafa o ata* that a host of both evil conspiratorial events and miraculous incidences happened. The best known is that during the “*tafa o ata*” Jesus Christ overcame death and ascended to the right side of his Father in Heaven. An important Samoan “time frame” related to when the coconut came into being, according to traditional Samoan mythologies. It is believed that a Samoan virgin called *Sina* obediently carried out a “verbal contract” made between her and her pet the *tuna* (eel) by severing his head and planting it in the ground,

which eventually produced the coconut tree. The contract stated that the tree's fruits would serve as a form of life-long nourishment for *Sina* and those who followed.

So, through the cruelty of night time which brings with it death, Samoans would journey into the "*tafa o ata*" (shredded shadows of dawn), "the divide of night and day", with both certainty and uncertainty. This is particularly true of students. However, there is a determination within all Samoans that they can overcome any difficulties. In the case of Samoan students, there is the expectation that they should be well-informed and equipped with the right frame of mind, a positive attitude, determination and enthusiasm to be able to tackle and master teaching-learning processes, despite the difficulty of the content of some subject matter. The real issue is how, in practical terms, mastering school should be materialised.

In Chapter Five, preliminary and tentative procedural findings were initially developed to reveal the latent assumptions and forecasts held by the teachers and myself. From within such assumptions we saw the emergence of what I call "superseding cultural circumstances" that continue to override Samoan students' social learning processes. In this chapter, I discuss the "superseding circumstances" for a model of understanding for Samoan students learning in the classroom. These circumstances can generally be viewed as 'burdensome' as they are perpetual 'deficits' for Samoan secondary students. What I mean by 'superseding circumstances' are overruling or overriding conditions (i.e. insecurity, lack of skills) which are deeply embedded in the total elements of Samoan students home and school lives. This dilemma between the two that students tend to face shapes and fashions the ways they think and learn in the classroom.

II. OUTLINE

The chapter falls into three broad though inter-related sections. The first section deals with the "wavering context" in which I discuss the varied factors that shape and develop a "wavering consciousness" amongst Samoan students. Here, I elaborate why the majority of Samoan students have an inclination to feel vulnerable, ashamed, inferior, hesitant and uncertain. These feelings have led to students' self-imposed lack of confidence, lack of self-esteem and lack of security.

The second section looks at the circumstances revolving around the close-knit connection of the Samoan *aiga* and its affiliated institutions. Here I discuss the *aiga's* role and impact upon students' classroom experiences.

The third and final section deals with "students' perceived status" and their shifting identities. It presents an overview of what Samoan students think about themselves and how they view their place in the school community life of the classroom. This section also deals with students' changing identities in their search of meaning and belonging.

III. THE WAVERING CONTEXT

This category deals with the issue of structural wavering. Structural wavering concerned the overlap between the dual operation of the "culture of the home" and the "culture of the school's classroom where a "student culture" was nurtured. "Student culture" refers here to how students learn to become students within the traditional school system (see discussion in chapters 4 & 8). Here I discuss both external and internal factors that are likely to influence students' culture. Put simply, student culture or studenting is about the 'culture' of being a student within which students individually place themselves in different positions, roles and responsibilities to negotiate, compromise and understand information in classroom activities and discourse with teachers and other students in the classroom.

When Samoans students began school, they were assigned to different classes and teachers and expected to negotiate anew in compliance with their new learning environment. In such negotiation, it was expected that students develop adequate strategies that allowed them to assert their own needs and to pursue their own goals. As such an experience was in contrast to Samoan students' cooperative and group orientation, it was evident that most students constantly experienced feelings of uncertainty, susceptibility and subjugation - "wavering consciousness" - which always puzzled teachers. As one teacher noted (over-page):

Samoan students are very respectful and well-behaved kids and they have a lot of potential, however their unusual, eccentric behaviour has been a constant problem towards their thinking and learning in the classroom. I think it is a cultural thing (Year 12 Maths Teacher).

In short, structural wavering is perhaps the single most important aspect of Samoan students' behaviour within the school's classroom. For that reason, I outline 12 interrelated aspects below.

(1) Socio-historical wavering

Socio-historical wavering relates to student participants' "growing up Samoan" in New Zealand, which typifies the *duality* of the roles Samoan students have come to experience in their daily lives. They are strongly influenced and encouraged by values and principles transmitted by parents and members of the *aiga* which have been transmitted to them by their forebears. Such values and principles stem from *fa'asamoa* dictates and Christian principles, and continue to impinge on the everyday lives of the majority of Samoan students. Through early childhood socialisation and social interactions with parents/adults and other family members, including children, Samoan children learn to internalise elements of everyday familial activities and practises. This is very much the case within most Samoan families in New Zealand.

Most of the Samoan parents and extended family elders and members from the Islands to whom I am referring in this study have come from typical traditional Samoan villages, mostly in the rural areas of Samoa. This group includes both recent and early Samoan migrants, who are now either permanent residents or full citizens of New Zealand. Samoans from the villages have faced great change in adapting from a lifestyle which was very slow and relaxed compared to the lifestyle in metropolitan centres of New Zealand. From a typical traditional Samoan village to the urban areas of New Zealand, particularly the main cities, is too great a step for most Samoan families to make easily. The "*speed*" factor of the New Zealand urban lifestyle has, I believe, partially contributed to the development of a "wavering consciousness" in Samoan students. The wish of Samoan students to live up to the multiplicity of their home-school-youth roles has very often proved problematic.

As a 'wavering consciousness' is an outcome of "growing up" amidst the politics of human learning and development in the Samoan context, it is essential to discuss briefly the complex effect of the cultural and instructional values of the family and the church on one hand and the cultural values and belief systems of school on the other (see Tiatia, 1998). In so doing, I will place the "trinity" of the family, the church and the school into one body which I call the "*gata ulu tolu*" (the three-headed serpent). The family's and the church's heads are intimately connected by *fa'asamoa*, enmeshed within Biblical dictates, while the school's head is solely an independent and foreign entity. The venom discharged by the three headed serpent, enters the body, mind and soul of Samoan children, and in turn transform into "demons" that are likely to reside permanently. The influences of all three shape Samoan students' "*olaga talavou*" (adolescence phase) from ages 15-20. In effect, as Samoan children reach maturity, so do their 'demons'. Such demons are thus considered responsible for contradictory decisions and choices. As noted by some of the teachers I spoke with, there seemed to be a number of perpetual conflicts between the family, church and school or the 'three headed serpent' which led to students' having an impenetrable wavering consciousness. I soon encountered this scenario after five weeks of preliminary procedural findings of the main study.

With the bonds I soon developed with student participants, it was difficult to avoid trying to 'exorcise' their demons and instead focusing to understand their nature and the influential role they play in Samoan students' minds. I must remind the reader that when I talk about the superseding circumstances and their different features, I am also talking about the influence of Samoan students' "demons" as a result of the overwhelming influence of the family and church and of course the school. It is widely acknowledged that on one hand the 'family' and the 'church' complement and reinforce each other, while on the other hand the 'school' offers formal Western educational values and its own belief systems. Subsequently, Samoans, like other *Pasifika* New Zealand born students in Tiatia's (1998) study, have openly remarked that such conflict has led to their dilemma.

The institutions of both the 'home' and the 'church' have been the foundation of Samoan early childhood education of almost all Samoan children in New Zealand. A number of student participants went to *Aoga Amata* (Language nest for school

children) while many attended Early Childhood Centres. However, a significant proportion was involved in neither due to economic reasons, church, community, and employment commitments, and most of all the “speed” of the urban lifestyle. As one student remarked:

I didn't go to a Samoan Language Nest because my family didn't belong to the church, which run the centre and because mum said that the staff weren't qualified teachers. I sometimes attended the palagi preschool, but didn't last 'cause my family had shifted to the north while I was four (Iulai, Year 12)

Attendance at the Church and Sunday School, coupled with what was imparted to the child at home by parents, siblings and extended family members on a daily basis was to most parents sufficient for the child's early education. The most important part of the formal education, they claimed, would begin at Primer One or Year One. Thus, the home culture reinforced by the church pedagogical principles and doctrines, continues to perpetuate and influence Samoan students' education from early childhood right through to the senior secondary level (see Tanielu, 1999).

In spite of a lack of preschool education, however, the Samoan students' stories indicate that almost all of them were “competent” in most things that they were exposed to in either the *Aoga Amata* or Mainstream Early Childhood Education. According to some student participants, their competencies were “multidimensional”. They had acquired early social skills with peers and teachers, early English-Samoan bi-literate skills, early numeracy and mathematical skills, early motor skills and ability at sports and basic learning and remembering skills. One student's remark echoes all the other students' stories. According to him:

Throughout Early Childhood Education I have no problem at all with mingling and sharing what I know without a problem with other children and teachers. My parents and family were very supportive at this stage. Being inside and doing different activities with other children, I managed to learn everything from reading in both Samoan and English to doing basics of mathematics. Also, I learned to blend *fa'asamoa* and Biblical/religious teachings and the importance of *fa'apalagi* education. Also, I have developed my interest in sports, especially the basic techniques on how to play different sports [and] becoming good sportspeople. I gathered from our athletics that I could run faster than most of the children in my age group and older. I guess I had developed a

positive attitude towards what we learned at early childhood education as a result of positive feedback, support from everyone, rewards and heaps of sweets, birthday parties and things like that. (Moso, Year 11)

From the above extract, it appears that most Samoan students' early childhood and primary education was well nurtured. This experience allowed for a thorough and smooth transition for some Samoan children from early childhood education and primary to secondary education. While some have continued to make sound progress through such changes, others have experienced a dramatic change having a "wavering consciousness" in relation to their learning in the classroom at the senior secondary school level, despite the fact that most of the students still have vivid memories of a good early childhood, primary and intermediate education.

The evidence suggests that changes in circumstances, such as socioeconomic problems and /or a lack of a socio-cultural network, have contributed significantly to students wavering attitude at the secondary level. For instance, many migrant Samoan parents, for economic reasons, regularly shift homes. They were forced to try to maintain a "network" of extended family and fellow Samoans to reproduce the support and familiarity of life in a village setting, sometimes without success. Samoan children' education has been constantly put in jeopardy, as a result.

All nine Samoan student participants in the main study commented that the single most important reason why their parents left their families in Samoa and emigrated to New Zealand was to give their children an opportunity to get the best education, which the parents were not able to access in Samoa (McPherson et al, 1996, Utumapu 1992). Samoan students are expected to live up to these expectations.

The importance of the blend of *fa'asamoa* and religious principles and doctrines on Samoan learning is valuable for some and problematic for others. The interrelatedness of these factors is deeply implanted in the mind of a Samoan child during early childhood socialisation before they enter formal school. When a Samoan child is born, he/she is generally socialised into learning and becoming aware of his/her "point of reference" or *fa'asinomaga* (see Le Tagaloa, 1996) in relation to parents and a multiplicity of extended family members. In Le Tagaloa's explanation, she refers to

the “words” of the Samoan mother tongue to be the proper diet for a Samoan child. Samoan families continue to maintain this tradition with their children. Central to Samoan learning, at this point, is that a child learns everything without questioning it.

Today in New Zealand Samoan families continue to adhere to providing their children at home with a diet of words, following the legacy rooted in the homeland of Samoa. All but two of the student participants (Iulai & Eli, both Year 12) in this study were born in Samoa and migrated with their families to New Zealand while they were babies. These two students were reared and grew up code-mixing and code-switching between Samoan and English with their caregivers, siblings and cousins, a common aspect of childhood repertoire experienced by the rest of the participants (see Silipa, 1995; Tiatia, 1998). Almost all of the participants have many humorous examples regarding their earlier years of what was perceived to be culturally appropriate behaviour attitudes and conduct. Consider this remark by one of the participants.

Mum’s favourite saying is ‘honour and respect your parents and your days on earth would be longer’. And when we get the caning for misbehaving she says “e kau le ka i le kua o le vale” or ‘a stupid person deserves the cane on the back’ (Aute Year 11).

Growing up Samoan in New Zealand meant that all participants were expected to conduct themselves with a sense of community, respect, love, dignity and prestige, internalising the ‘legitimate knowledge’ of Samoan valued contexts and concepts. These have been the cultural underpinnings by which Samoan children should live and abide and become active participants at home, in church and within the community. At school, it was the duty of students to do their best to get a Western education by fully assimilating the English language and the culture it enshrines, while ensuring that the Samoan language and culture remained intact.

All the children in the study were instilled with the essential Samoan concepts and values: *ava ma le fa’aaloalo* (reverence and respect for everyone, especially elders and people with authority), *gaua’i ma le usiusitai* (submission and obedience), *agamalu ma le fa’amaualalo* (modesty and humility) and *fa’atuatuaaina ma le auautasi* (trust and cooperation). Congruent with the Biblical principles and doctrines, such concepts and values are strongly reinforced by the institutions of the family and

the church. The influence of these concepts and values upon Samoan students' everyday life has led to Samoan student developing a "wavering consciousness" towards their classroom experiences. Thus, the dual role pertinent to growing up Samoan in New Zealand involves alternating and crossing boundaries between Samoan culture and the church (see Tiatia, 1998) and the English language and school culture. Here we see Samoan students growing up within a 'familial political subordination position', where they learn almost everything through osmosis and participant observation, without questioning the authority of parents, elders and church ministers.

(2) The politics of adolescents' wavering

The second characteristic that typifies Samoan students is their political subordination, which largely is harboured by the security and shelter of the *aiga* or extended family. Stepping out of the comfortable and tolerable family milieu, students' freedom and vulnerability took precedence, especially inside the school community's classroom. Samoan student participants grew up within an environment in which their learning was fostered and negotiated through interactions and interpersonal communications between their cohorts, peers and adult relations. Therefore, it was not surprising that all nine student participants maintained that they preferred cooperative learning in team or small groups to individual learning (see Noa, 1999) and welcomed teachers' guidance and directions. However, to succeed in the classroom culture, Samoan students need to acquaint themselves with its culture, refrain from depending too much on others and to try to develop an individual orientation, so that they can contribute as part of a group or in discussions involving the whole class. Samoan students, therefore, learn to manipulate their home cultural and classroom experiences to make sense of what they learn and what they encounter in the classroom. As a result, most resort to the support of peer networks and peer tutoring, group work, and most of all team and/or cooperative learning.

There are three concepts central to all student-team learning methods: team rewards, individual accountability and equal opportunities for success (Slavin, 1994). According to Slavin (over-page):

Research on cooperative learning methods has indicated that team rewards and individual accountability are essential elements for producing basic skills achievement. It is not enough to tell students to work together; they must have a reason to take one another's achievement seriously (Slavin, 1994, p.2).

What, then, is the significance of the above evidence in relation to Samoan students? While some students have the capacity to re-orientate to the new order of the classroom, by sharing their individual ideas and views on many issues with their peers, others have an inclination to rely solely on team members, especially during group work. In a study I conducted some years ago, which focused on 23 fourth form students in a Samoan-English bilingual unit (Silipa, 1991), I showed that some of the students were more or less supporting what other students were contributing rather than saying what they really thought of the issues discussed. Some of the common phrases provided included: "I agree with what he/she said"; "Same here"; and "Got the same problem" to name but a few. To a large degree, this dependence on the group in class discussions and internally-assessed work greatly increases Samoan students' vulnerability. Almost all students thought about common issues pertinent to the family, church and school and the out-of-school youth lifestyle, despite their different family backgrounds. When, for example, I asked three Year 12 students why they all chose to do a Legal Studies Course as an option, all three chorused that they wanted to become lawyers so that they could help with their families and communities.

The consequences of the numerical strength of Samoan students in the classroom in my observations merit discussion. In classrooms with a minimal number of Samoan students, participation by and collaboration among Samoan students invariably took place. According to some teachers, a substantial number of Samoan students in a specific class meant that they would provide healthy support and encouragement for each other in terms of "team collaborative work". In subject options, such as PE, Legal Studies, Office Administration and the Army Academy, the Samoan students tended to play a major role in knowledge construction and skills training and maintained positions of leadership. However, sometimes one or two students would instigate disruptive behaviour, such as perpetual gossiping and the rest would always follow suit. This behaviour also became infectious for other students in the class. The

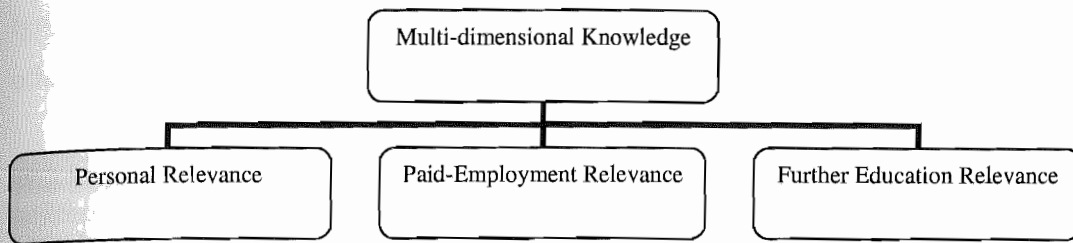
pattern of conscious avoidance of “going solo” or becoming individual is commonplace amongst Samoan students across New Zealand classrooms (Silipa, 1991). It was common for students to lack confidence when working by themselves, because of this their lack of knowledge of what to make of a learning situation. Yet, it is important to note that there are a small number of Samoan students who, like most of their *palagi* counterparts, had established individual control and self-motivation in almost every class they attended. Overall, however, the reluctance of most students to participate in class stemmed from four major factors: (a) constraints imposed by parents; (b) home hierarchical structure resulting in a culture of collectivity and dependence orientation (c) resistance and passive compromise for respect of the “*va*” (space) between students themselves and the teachers and (d) a Samoan frame of mind (Silipa 1998).

In summary, it was the tight-knit attachment of students to a combination of factors, such as the blend of *fa’asamoa* and church principles and doctrines, the influence of the Samoan community, and the dynamics of youth culture, that was the “basis” or “source” of wavering in itself, especially considering the common historical, ideological and socio-cultural orientations shared by almost all Samoan students.

(3) The evolution of learning and knowledge construction

The evolution of what counts as the right knowledge for Samoan students’ reflects their immediate interest in some parts of the curriculum and not others. It is in such a context that the wavering consciousness is most transparent. At issue are what counts as the right knowledge and whose knowledge it is. What counts as “knowledge” to most Samoan students is the multi-disciplinary “interest relevance” and the practical application of different subject matters (both compulsory and optional courses). In brief, one is perceived to have made progress in his/her secondary education should he/she have the capacity to make sense and implement the applied knowledge of specific subjects. Thus, learning and applying the ‘right’ knowledge is of paramount urgency for most Samoan students. My observations led me to categorise the relevant knowledge into three broad categories, namely personal, occupational, and prerequisites for further education (over-page):

Figure 1: Knowledge categorisation: The multidimensional model



The multiple dimensional model above (Figure 1) shows the different types of knowledge that students wish to pursue. The first type of knowledge relates to ‘personal relevance’, which serves to enhance both personal priorities and familial duties. For instance, Year 11 students Moso and Ata both enjoyed Science and Physical Education as these subjects related to their career passions (becoming professional sports men and mechanics). The second type of knowledge is more focused on knowledge that will lead to paid employment, particularly part-time, to fund students’ social lives. For instance in Year 12, Eli’s passion in accounting and maths was essentially to get him a good part-time job anywhere. The third and final type of knowledge is to acquire learning and knowledge to pursue further the next phase of their learning and education. For example, Pua (Year 12) was determined to get a good pass in Sixth Form Certificate in order to advance to the seventh form, and if all went well, she hoped to get an A Bursary and enter university.

Like many *Pasifika* students at the senior secondary level, Samoan students continue to lead a “multiple life” which includes their youth and team sports subcultures. Subsequently Harker contends that the “cultural tug-o-war between Samoans and the adopted European value systems [creates] discontinuity between the home and school... between academic knowledge of the education system and the common sense of every day knowledge of the home community (Harker 1995 cited in Tiatia 1998)”.

The development of institutional barriers, coupled with cultural protocols and etiquettes embedded in Samoan students have constrained some of the students’

progress, restricted their considerable ability to think and learn and curtailed their knowledge processing through classroom experiences (see Anae et al, 2001; Petelo, 2003 in-progress). This draws parallels with Tiatia's claim: "The education system ignores the fact that the curriculum knowledge serves the interest of some groups not others, and that educational failure is accountable to the individual (Tiatia, 1998)."

The knowledge processing and knowledge construction context in the classroom is perhaps the most crucial component of all. The most talented students, not surprisingly, tended to be from the best family backgrounds which had an excess of 'human capital' (De Bruin 2000 in Anae et al 2001). Generally, however, the students had a "human capital" deficiency, which parallels Jones' (1991; 1986) illustrious comparative study of *Pasifika* and Pakeha girls, which is well documented in chapters three and four.

Samoan students' "seen but not heard" status (Pasikale 1997) or their passiveness (Jones 1991) in the classroom indicates their perpetual "wavering consciousness". Wavering is the product of insecurity, unconfident, uncertainty, anxiety, fear of failure, indecision and self-consciousness of being ridiculed and devalued. Samoan students in the classroom cannot guarantee that they will not be punished and ridiculed when making mistakes or owning up to misunderstanding during classroom tasks. Generally speaking, Samoan students have no sense of assertiveness to openness and sharing with other students uncertainties/certainties, opinions and/or a personal learning difficulties.

The evolution of knowledge context in relation to the subject matter and classroom learning tasks within which Samoan students position themselves can be explained and understood through a series of conceptualisations. The first concept is *Pasifika lumping*. This conceptualises the supposedly homogeneity of *Pasifika* groups based on their similarities in physical features, culture and language and the proximity of the geographical location of the homeland from whence their ancestors came, the vast Pacific Ocean. The second concept is the notion of *pendulom swings*, which I referred to as the *coconut mentality* (Silipa, 1998). This concept relates to both a Samoan mindset and intuition and the embedded perceptions that teachers and educators are likely to hold about the general nature of Samoan students. It is this conception which

corresponds with my contention that Samoan students' intuition and preconceived conscious minds (coconut mentality) are closely scrutinised by the education system and could, without doubt, be overcome and cracked open given the right type of encouragement (Silipa, 1998). In the paper titled "Cracking the coconut Mentality", I argue that Samoan students could easily remove or detach the "inferior complex" attached and perpetuated by the everyday branding and use of the label 'Pacific Island'. The third concept is what I call the *nexus or relationships between teachers and students*. This concept outlines and illustrates the most critical factor in relation to teaching-learning relationships between teachers and Samoan students: good rapport. A number of recent longitudinal and ethnographic studies have captured the same notion involving Maori and *Pasifika* students (Hill & Hawk 2000, 1996, with the Auckland University of Technology & Ministry of Education). Nevertheless, this particular idea has never been conceptualised in a systematic manner regarding individual groups. Thus, I discuss these concepts below to illuminate the context in which Samoan students position themselves.

(4) *Tagata Pasifika* lumping context

A thorough knowledge of one Pacific country can make the student wary of accepting what he reads, or what he is told about another (Davidson, 1968).

At its simplest, *Tagata Pasifika* lumping is when individual groups such as the Samoans, Tongans and Niueans are placed in one basket by others, overlooking the group's and individuals' uniqueness. It is potentially dangerous, especially when one group is responsible for causing controversy and the individual suffers the consequences of societal collective condemnation. Pasikale's (1999) qualitative study of 81 *Pasifika* learners indicated that students have a range of diverse preferences regarding teaching-learning processes. Pasikale contends students' ethnic backgrounds must be considered when teachers determine teaching and learning strategies. Pasikale further suggests that "teachers should be wary of applying blanket assumptions about *Pasifika* peoples as 'group learners, shy participants and non-performers' (Pasikale, 1999). This perception is the product of a lack of knowledge of *Pasifika* students' individual backgrounds (see Fusitu'a 1992; Wendt 1989). Wendt, for example, claimed that it is only in New Zealand that is he called a

Pacific Islander; elsewhere he is Samoan (see Fusitu'a, 1992; Jones, 1991). The uniqueness, diversity and richness of cultures and languages are neglected when *Pasifika* people are seen as homogenous, based on how they look, talk and behave.

Samoans in New Zealand are often categorised under the local blanket term "Pacific Islanders" (see Jones, 1991, p.33). According to Jones, the term "illicitly conceals the historical, cultural, political and language differences between the separate Island groups (Jones, 1991, p.34)." In recent years, the term perpetuates negative stereotypes and cultural barriers. From my experience during the first five weeks of school observation, Samoan students generally identified themselves as Pacific Islanders. Even under the umbrella of 'Pacific Island' are further differences aside from nationality differences, and these relate to whether a student was born in New Zealand or overseas. In my own study, it was apparent that there was a degree of difference between those born in New Zealand and those born overseas. The Samoan or Island born students sometimes pretended that they were New Zealand born, while the New Zealand born students did the opposite.

It was common for male Samoan and *Pasifika* students to seek attention by 'posing' and trying to portray a charming, macho image. Furthermore, imitating Afro-American students' dynamic and vibrant classroom experiences as evident on television (e.g. Boston Public and Dangerous Minds) and in movies has had a profound impact on almost all Samoan students. In the light of these conditional changes, the "shifting positions" of Samoan students could be understood and explained in both negatives and positive ways. This enigma remains puzzling and perhaps a mystery to most teachers, which leads to their perceptual reference of what I refer to as a "contemplating pendulum swings."

(5) Contemplating the Pendulum's Swings

As communities and cultural tools have an identity of their own across individuals, across occasions, across settings and across times, so individuals have an identity of their own across settings, across communities, across cultural tools and across times. In persons, it is the mental representations of their experiences that provide the continuity that constitutes this identity (Nuthall, 1997, p.51).

What I refer to here is the continued evolution of teachers' and educators' perceptions about how Samoan students think and learn. The swinging of this pendulum is typified by two perspectives, and they are the disadvantage swing and the advantage swing.

What is wrong with some of the Samoan students and not others, do you have any idea, and why do some of them do well and others don't? Almost all of Samoan students have a lot of potential. We want to see them materialise their potential. Sometimes, most of them are so attentive and participate well in classroom activities, but very often they just cruised, tripped, relaxed and switched off completely, eventuating into bunking, wagging and just cruising (concerned teacher).

This is an example of the many common puzzling naïve comments made by some of the teachers, alternating with probing questions of what "I" as an insider Samoan researcher could make of these behavioural circumstances. It was upsetting that the general assumption was that I should know, and if I did not, I must be like the students or trying to defend the truth. As an insider, there was no guarantee that I would be able to make sense of what actually happened inside Samoan students' heads. My respect for most of the teachers stemmed from their establishment of good classroom governance-as good managers and facilitators of learning and as guardians to Samoan students five days a week from 8:30am until 3:30pm during term time, and outside of school time, during extra-curricula activities such as sports, fundraising and drama rehearsals. With an empathetic tone, teachers pitied most of the students for their lack of 'standard' English for a start, and their inability to concentrate for long periods, and lack of interest retention, enthusiasm and motivation during academic classroom learning tasks.

Some students' perceived "puzzling" behaviour in the classroom was in fact part of the development of their identity, as illuminated by Nuthall's (1997) remark above. This type of behaviour was unpredictable and perceived by teachers as unusual and thus incongruent with the culture of the classroom. Whatever crises the students experienced might be, whether they were social, cultural, political or economic, they induced the pendulum's swings. It is to both the disadvantage and advantage swings' perspectives that my attention now turns.

(6) A disadvantage swing perspective

Most Samoan students in both the main study and those who were involved in the pilot study experienced “emotional suppression” and the “quelling of their creative minds” because of growing up amidst the rigidity of cultural constructs in a typical traditional Samoan home milieu. These students continued to live their lives with “passive pride” which resulted in *fear*, *anxiety* and *resistance* which led to *passivity* in classroom discourse, the performance of academic tasks and one-on-one dialogues with teachers. As a result, most students struggled to achieve their long-term goals to pass School Certificate at (Year 11), followed by Sixth Form Certificate at (Year 12) and giving Bursary examinations (Year 13) their best efforts. Thus, senior Samoan students and perhaps the rest of their counterparts contemplated that the reward of assertiveness and hardworking was “success” translated as passing Bursary only. According to former Prime Minister, David Lange, this is overly simplistic:

We talk about success in terms of bursary. We never talk about success in terms of the numbers of children whose English vocabulary has expanded by 50 percent in two years at school. (David Lange, Schools for Scandal. Listener, 14, October 1995:36 cited in Nash & Harker, 1998)

I regularly heard some very experienced teachers’ conversations about the successes of Samoans and/or *Pasifika* students who were educated in New Zealand schools some decades ago, at times when their numbers were very low. In their anecdotes, they compared and contrasted the pioneering students’ demeanour, mannerisms and all-round performances to the inconsistencies in the school performances of the current population of Samoan and *Pasifika* students. In brief, they saw the early wave of students as superior to those of the present. This was reinforced by the media’s negative portrayal of Samoans and *Pasifika* students’ performances at school, the “numbers and narratives” (Nash and Harker 1998) and statistical and qualitative information (Mamoe, 1999) which shows time and time again the increased level of underachievement at all levels, and which emphasises that *Pasifika* students lagged behind their Pakeha and Asian counterparts in terms of successful learning progressing to achieving outcomes (see Ministry of Education in media 1999, 2000, 2001).

Negative stereotypes have thus been created and perpetuated, based on the students' cultural background and Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) orientation. Portrayals of the increasing number of youths drifting away from schools, the increased number of school leavers without qualifications, and, sadly, the increased number of youth crimes have further captured the media's attention. The media's sensationalising of the label 'Pacific Islander' is widespread and as a result, I hear people talking about the Pacific Island communities' problems: "juvenile delinquents", "stupidity", "negligence" and "broken families". It was not surprising that almost all of student participants indicated that they were very conscious of what they constantly saw in the media and what they had heard from friends at school.

(7) An advantage swings perspective

Almost all of the students I observed were prepared to 'do the hard yards' coupled with the necessary "work ethic" to reap the rewards of school learning - a positive interpretation of school transmitted to them by their predecessors. This notion is evident in Jones' study: "...in the classroom, the girls act on their interpretations of the ideological demand that 'hard work' is needed to reap the opportunity offered by the school." (Jones, 1986, p.247) Most students drew on their culture, everyday common sense knowledge and spiritualism, and utilised them to translate and solve exercises in the classroom. This was also the case in studies of Indo-Fijian and Tongan High School students (see Sharma, 1997; Koloto, 1995). Students also drew on their experiences and knowledge from other subjects to facilitate learning. As one respondent remarked:

I use my general knowledge of one subject and apply it to understand aspects and stuff of another subject, especially sitting tests and doing homework. For example, what we learn about in Science is compatible with our Technology option, it is just cool, it is just wicked like we learn about nature, the living, the physical and different elements of the environment / awesome stuff, its like the subjects are connected, you know. (Aute, Year 11).

In a close observation of a Year 11 English activity, I wondered what Aute was up to, leafing through her science note book, while in the middle of a character study

activity on George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. I inched forward and simply whispered to her, "What are you doing flipping through your science note book?" Her brief response was that she wanted to use some information, which I could not comprehend at first. Not wishing to disturb her, I waited until the end of class and repeated the question, to which she replied:

I was trying to get as much information as I possibly could about the nature of animals, especially their behaviours and other similarities in comparison to people. I want to do a good job for the character study that I'm doing on one of the animals (Aute, Year 11)

Almost all of the Samoan students engaged in the above Year 11 English Unit were doing the same task, sorting and trying to make sense of the content of one subject matter via different subject matter.

Changing gender role perceptions have also had a positive impact, as my observations have shown. For instance, girls were for so long undervalued in science education (see Ministry of Education 1996). Now, however, this is not the case, as Pua (a Year 12 female) suggests:

Mum told me on entrance into secondary school that doing Science was for boys and doing art subjects and "hands on" courses like home economics were for girls. What I discovered was not the case. Everybody was open and was encouraged to do science and most of the science teachers that I had were women. So I began to do science seriously as I learned heaps to do with the living, the human biology, the material and the physical world. My cultural background continues to be an important factor that helps me understand science and doing science helps me with home economics and both optional and compulsory subjects (Pua, Year 12).

Getting the "outcome" or the "end-product" of an assigned task, for instance getting the right answers/solutions to mathematical/science problems, was more important than understanding the learning process, for many of the students. This was because the driving force behind most of the students' daily attendance and participation in classroom activities was to learn to obtain the appropriate knowledge considered relevant to paid employment. The impact of paid employment on students' daily lives has escalated with the regular "careers advisory" forums and employment seminars at

school conducted by spokespersons from both the private and public sectors. Like almost all students, the Samoan students perceived the secondary education phase as crucial because it largely prepares them for the world of work or for further education and training. The greater intensity and a heavily exam-driven curriculum beginning at Year 11 has deterred many students, many of whom decide to leave school to take up employment. For most, however, school serves to better their futures, particularly financially:

No matter how hard I work doing all sorts of hard stuff, at the end of the day I am paid a wage of an unskilled worker at the students' rate...so it is better to stay on at school rather than sweating away underpaid (Moso, Year 11).

Like most *Pasifika* students, Samoan students have internalised the notion that “hard work” is the norm. Failing to do so, they believe, would mean they end up in poorly paid, unskilled jobs for the rest of their lives. However, this mindset that to fulfil educational goals each must work “110” percent can be quite destructive.

(8) The non-spoken agreement between teachers and students

Samoan students have earned much respect and many compliments from teachers for their “good all round conduct and behaviour”. This is so, partially because Samoan students enter into an unspoken agreement with teachers which they adhere to because of their deeply-rooted orientation where one did what he/she has been told, without query as it was considered to be an insult to the integrity, intelligence and the authority of the giver of instructions, such as parents, older sibling, family elders and church ministers. In effect, the expectation is that Samoan students should always show respect, leadership and good mentorship for juniors and most of all that they be calm and unthreatening. For the sake of convenience, the issue is divided into the following four sub-sections.

(9) Assimilation and disintegration

The need/desire to assimilate every aspect of the subject matter and the processes it entails, requires the creation of distance from aspects of the home culture, including

its language, where one's orientation was heavily based. Most students must divorce themselves temporarily from their home culture as they painstakingly tried to *think* and *do* things in the same manner as their classmates of all backgrounds. Samoans who have achieved the most are judged on their further education (tertiary) success, professional employment and their transparency and accountability to the *aiga*, church, community and societal circles. From conversations with ex-senior secondary students who had undergone New Zealand secondary education, including those who went to Woodland High School, the single common element that binds these students was their "indoctrination" of both the classroom learning process and its outcome and some disintegration of the home culture. This indoctrination for these Samoans did not mean an adoption solely of Western education, its cultural values and belief systems. Rather, they assimilated or adopted the ideals and principles of Western thought in tandem with Samoan epistemology: *fa'asamoa* values, etiquettes and protocols to positively contribute to the welfare of the *aiga*, the church, community and to New Zealand society at large. In so doing, these students sorted through their cultural experiences for cultural gems and combined them with mainstream culture's demands, particularly those of the education system (see Jones, 1986, 1991). This, in effect, is a case of adhering to the common Samoan dictum: Providing a quality education for a Samoan child is the prerogative of the family, the church/community/village and the society as a whole.

In this particular study, however, the students varied greatly in their attitude, behaviour and abilities, and I placed each of them into one of three broad categories: (a) students who passively internalised both the learning process and its outcome and made remarkable progress in their senior secondary education; (b) students whose 'mindset' was to transform classroom culture through their non-academic passions, such as sports, arts and music; and (c) the substantial number of those who were referred to as 'cool' students, who are relaxed and just appeared to 'cruise' until at some point in time their interest in subject matter materialised, often as a result of the influence of peers. Students in the latter category were more oriented to part-time work and more likely to leave school to enter full-time work. For these students, money was largely what matters as it plays a major role in their everyday lives as it ensures some security and helps further social interrelationship with peers.

In this study, one of the most critical factors in the teaching-learning processes lies in the “good rapport or relationships” that exist between Samoan students and their teachers. This is the case for both Maori and *Pasifika* students, as stated in recent studies:

An important new insight we gained through this research was how critical this relationship is for these students in low decile schools. It is our conclusion that the forming of the right kind of relationship is, for these students, a prerequisite for learning to take place (Hill and Hawk 2000).

A positive relationship (Cowley, Hawk, Hill & Sutherland 2001) between Samoan students and their teachers has seen the students embrace learning. Conversely, the absence of such relationships results in students’ alienation.

(10) The embedded sense of place

The embedded sense or knowledge of place becomes an important section in the student-teacher agreement mentioned earlier. It means that Samoan students could internalise New Zealand English and society’s values and principles which they encounter at school, especially in the classroom. However, when the student goes home they are expected to adhere to speaking Samoan (see Fairburn-Dunlop, 1982) and to engage in tasks according to “*tu ma aga faasamoa*” (the etiquettes and protocols of *fa’asamoa*). Samoan society continues to uphold its traditions and cultural fundamentals regarding a “person’s place” which are passed on from generations to generations. “*O Samoa o le atunuu tofi, o le ia ua uma ona aisa.*” This well quoted and widely-known Samoan phrase literally translates to mean that Samoa could be likened to a fish which has already been allocated its rank and status. Thus, every Samoan child is raised to know where he/she comes-his/her family tree. Each child acquires the skill to absorb family genealogies and be able to memorise them and hence be able identify his/her affinity to people, *matai* titles, land/landmarks, indigenous knowledge and so on.

Every Samoan child happens to be a prince/princess in his/her own family. The child happens to be the *suli moni* or rightful heir of the family. This is supported by a

common Samoan dictum "*E tupu le tagata i lona aiga*" (Everybody is a 'king' in his/her own family). As one steps out of the confines and shelter of the home, off comes his/her 'crown.' However, the majority of Samoan students are very insecure when challenged and overwhelmed by a different 'culture' such as that of the school and the classroom. On a number of occasions, I witnessed students' feelings of being overwhelmed, especially when the teacher 'bombed' them with questions in front of everyone. In defence and protection of one's "pride," the majority of the students resorted to silence and non-verbal behaviour during classroom discussions.

In short, the majority of Samoan students' sense or knowledge of their place was deeply rooted within their cultural orientations. "Knowing your place" could be difficult for an outsider to understand, because there was not much evidence of it, other than observed non-verbal behaviours punctuated with a short comment. Reasons for such silence are many and complex. The following factors could be referred to as possible explanations, as they all contributed to safeguarding one's place. To be silent is: (1) to respect the "*va feagai*" (maintaining respect of space between people) relationships, intelligence and authority of elders/teachers; (2) to prevent shaming oneself or family by making a fool of one's by making mistakes in front of class; (3) to engage in deep thinking to make sense of what was happening in class; (4) to be alarmed and to anticipate cynicism, sarcasm and ridicule; (5) to be just cool.

What is at issue here is the role of students' sense of their place in relation to their classroom experiences. Through an ethic of 'hard work', some students persevered and become successful in accomplishing their long-term educational goals, while the others who lacked the ethic were less successful. 'Knowing their place', however, does not guarantee students' self-confidence and self-assurance in relation to their classroom experiences. Knowing your place generates both a 'challenge' to be motivated and assertive in classroom learning as well as a 'struggle' to put up with the dilemmas of expectation and competitiveness. As one student commented:

I'm very happy with myself and the way that I'm going with my studies and that and look forward to exams/ Got to do well 'cause / have got two other cousins in Auckland who are also sitting School Cert. /Not sure what subjects they are taking but I reckon they are

really good 'cause their older brother and sister have been to Uni and they have got flash jobs, they help my cuzzies with their school work / so I should work extra harder perhaps 150 % (laughs) too much man/ Struggle to put up with all this / studying hard / practising and / re-learning my stuff / Got my stuff in my head but during exams it is / kind of / like very hard to remember and that umh / get them on paper / will see / should be alright I reckon / Good to do well at school so that when you / meet up with your aigas on Christmas you feel good when they praise you / rather than doing poorly and they will join forces condemning you "ua gei la? ua lega le fiapoko kele le kulipi" (what now? pretending to be smart, too much trip) /don't wanna hear that (Moso, Year 11).

The pressure to be competitive with other students, and especially with Samoans and *Pasifika* students, is now more prevalent than ever. An ex-student of Woodland High, who graduated with a postgraduate degree and who now occupies a senior managerial position in government, recalled his father's advice:

Tautuana lou tulaga ma lou va ma tagata faapea le ma galuega ma le tapuaiga o lo'o faatali
(Be cautious and mindful of your place and your relationship with others and do remember our work and the collective support that awaits). Do whatever you have to to be successful at school, you know what to do. You have to learn to know how to strike the balance between your studies and your social life so that you will remain on safe and tolerable grounds at all times (Ex-student)

From the above example, it is apparent that despite the countless difficulties and hardships that Samoan students and their families have experienced in New Zealand, the importance of education is as strong as ever. Most students have balanced academic demands and expectations with their life-long passions in non-academic avenues, such as sports, music, art and other entertainment. For instance, the majority of male Samoan students are passionate about sports. For most, it was their dream to represent New Zealand or Samoa on the international stage in future. Many even held sports (e.g. rugby union and league and others) in a higher regard than classroom learning. Girls, on the other hand, were more academically oriented and desired to pursue further studies and training at tertiary institutions. Most students of both genders, however, were indecisive about what they wanted to achieve in life.

Formal education remains the hallmark of the Samoan migrants' ethos, the one key to success in terms of socio-economic mobility. Through educational achievement, the

boundaries of class, ethnicity, gender and religion can be transcended. However, if a student is to succeed, a number of barriers must be cleared. Firstly, students are perpetually pressured against their will by parents' unspoken expectation that they should pursue courses that will enable them to enter white-collar employment. Secondly, at school, student ability is measured on the scores in common tests/exams, and they are pigeonholed and designated to do applied subjects (the 'soft options'). Thirdly, the teacher-student relationship, which is so crucial, must be established. If students are to make the best possible progress, a teacher must encourage in them a sense of faith in their identity and place, and instil in them the need to 'never give up.'

Recent studies (for example, see Hills & Hawk, 2000) have highlighted the importance of the teacher-student relationship. All too often, however, Samoan students are generally perceived as average, and lagging behind other ethnic groups. This perception pervades the media and is well captured by the often-quoted excerpt titled "Coconut starts with a C" (Pasifika Island Students Academic Achievement Collective, 1992). Together with the media's role and the Ministry of Education Statistical Reports on Progress and Exam Results (1997, 1998 1999 2001, 2002) it is widely known that a very low percentage of Samoan students achieve in specific courses.

(11) The home 'package'

Within the home, Samoan students have been surrounded with a sense of love, respect, modesty and humility. The adage "Do unto others as they will to you" pervades every aspect of Samoan life. It is expected that Samoan children will not deviate from Samoan norms and values. In the classroom context, violating "*va ma le ava fatafata*" (space and congenial respect) between themselves and other students and between themselves and the teachers.

Samoan students are very aware that along the "classroom learning continuum," which can be referred to as the "bell jar" of learning, are two extremes or poles, the positive and negative. The negative pole is characterised, on one hand, by melancholy and a lack of the following: motivation, willingness, security, assertiveness,

confidence and commitment. In contrast, the positive pole is largely the opposite, and likely to foster success.

Too often, individual groups are judged on their ability to entertain, to dance and sing in school assemblies, to play for the school sports teams and to partake in fundraising functions and extra-curricular activities. In one of the school's fundraising functions I attended, the money donated by Samoan and other *Pasifika* parents exceeded what they could afford. This 'Samoan Model' of giving with pride, even when there was no money to spare, meant that parents' wallets and purses were emptied. As one parent commented:

O le a le isi kala e koe fai? Ua sao lava le faa upuga faasamoa ua sa'a faaoki le uko a le faimea aua maka o le fagau ma a lakou aoga. Kalosia ia malo maua se kaeao afua. What else can I say? As the well known Samoan phrase which translates to mean that the fisherman's container of fishhooks has been emptied out clean is proven right, however, it was money well spent especially for our kids and their education (male parent).

In parents' minds, their total support financially or otherwise helps their son/daughter enjoy and sustain classroom learning and motivates them to develop their potential, aspirations and expectations.

(12) Unspoken potential, aspiration and expectation

The unspoken parental aspirations and expectations to perform and progress in secondary education are common to almost all senior Samoan secondary students. This section converses about recurrent issues and themes, detailed in the above sections that emerged out of the field-notes and transcriptions which have already been partially documented in unpublished papers which I presented in conferences held in New Zealand. These conferences included the New Zealand Association for Research in Education Conference University of Otago December 3-6 1998; the Pacific Island Educator's Conference in Auckland 13-15 April 1999; and finally, the Pacific Vision International Conference held at the Aotea Centre, Auckland, July 27-30 1999.

I wish to remind the reader that the information generated from conference papers was constantly revised and revamped because of ongoing discussions with student participants about their potential and future aspirations. Through this process, I have managed to zoom into Samoan students' diverse perspectives concerning their total schooling, reflecting on the realities of their classroom experiences. It proved fascinating to discover the varying influences on classroom learning of both home and school and of those within these domains, particularly their *peers*.

Peers play a major role in students' decision-making regarding (for example, which course to take or what unit of the subject matter they should be focus on). Students rely heavily on their peers for confirmation of what to do, what not to do and how to do it and so on. My discussions with individual students about what inspired them to take a certain course or option revealed that more than 75% said that they were partially influenced by their peers and partially by themselves. Peers, in this context, included individuals or groups of close friends of the same ethnicity, gender, religious faith, bloodlines or family alliances. As one student remarked:

I took PE 'cause three of my best mates are doing it too. I always look forward to going to class and am fond of both playing and learning the theory about sports and taking care of your body so that you're fit and endure an 80 minute match, it's been really good. We are learning different parts of the body their functions and how to avoid injuries. The class is just awesome 'cause we tend to share ideas and stuff and we are confident of working with one another. We are not scared or feel shy anymore 'cause your friends are there (Eli, Year 11 PE).

This draws parallel to the information contained in the Literature Review, entitled "Influence of Peer Effect on Learning" collated and organised by some of the most prominent academics and educational researchers of recent years (Wilkinson, Hattie, Parr, Townsend, Thrupp, Lauder & Robinson 2000).

Teachers were well aware that of Samoan students' potential and aspirations. According to one teacher:

We are very much aware that most of the Samoan students like other *Pasifika* students have a lot of potential to perform and to do far better than what they are actually doing

in class. We know that they know about it and most of the time they sit on it, doing nothing about it. What we really want to see is for these students to develop to the fullest of their potential and to fulfil their aspiration and meet what their expectations are. Our role to provide them with all the information there is coincides with students' responsibility to process the information and to apply it favourably to learning circumstances in the classroom. In the past, the minimum numbers of Samoan students at school have proven to be capable of achieving their set goals (A concerned teacher)

The issue, however, is how to ensure that students' potential is realised. In my mind, students who do not develop their potential are too dependent on peers which results in them taking classroom learning for granted. Instances of close cooperation between students within the classroom result in one of three outcomes: (i) some students have used them to express their opinions on what was at issue (agree/disagree, criticise and elaborate) through the practical application of their thinking in written/oral report or experimental work, group discussions or classroom discourse, (ii) others used them to 'pick others' brains', to be enlightened and informed, and (iii) the rest used them to be amused and liberated from the intensity of individual tasks and thus as a gossiping platform.

Thus, while cooperative learning and social collaborations between Samoan students and their peers have facilitated effective learning, there was a suspicion amongst the teachers about their potential negative effects. That is, too much social collaboration would hamper students' creative minds and hence eventuate in a lack of learning. However, Samoan students' preferred to tread within the bounds of conventional/tolerable behaviour. These "bounds" maybe termed as the "comfort zone". This is what I referred to here as the "*cool trodden grounds*". This will be typified by the graphical representation on the following page.

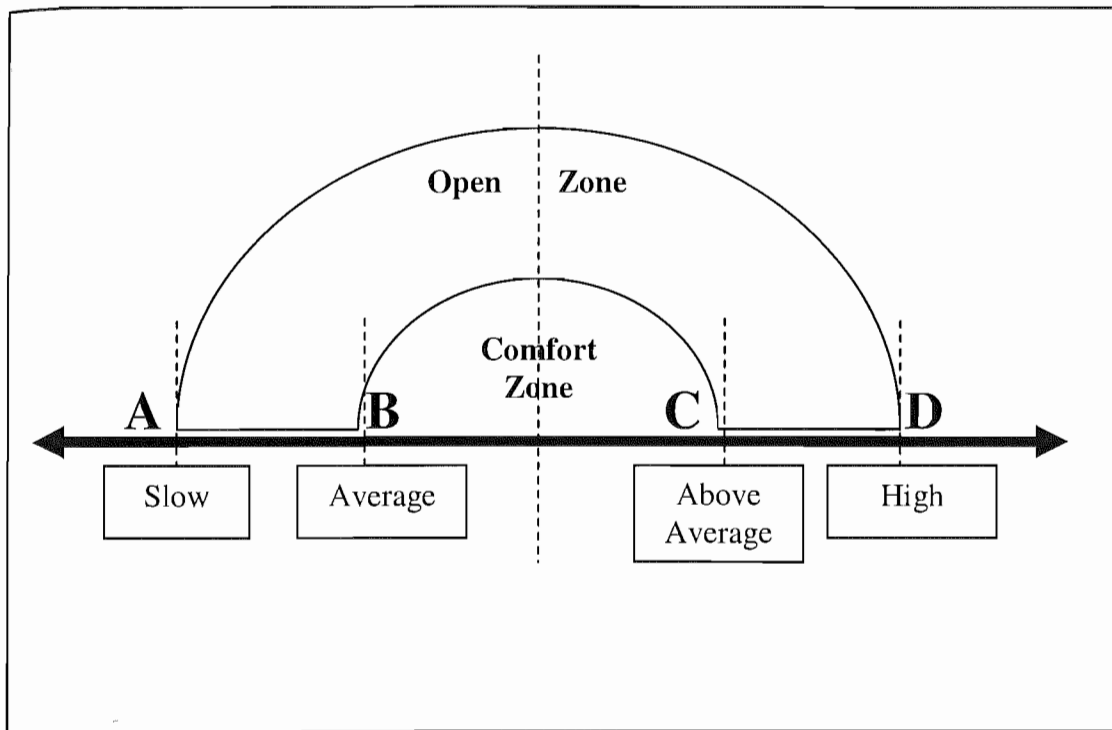


FIGURE 2: Cool trodden grounds

In Figure 2 the “learning progress frequency” continuum is represented by the line running horizontally at the base, passing points A B C and D. The perpendicular dotted upright lines that meet the horizontal line on points A B C D are indicated representing “slow” (A), “average” (B), “steady/consistency” above average (C) and high (D) frequencies of learning progress. Points A, B and C are well represented by a significant number of students, especially point B, and between point B and C where the majority resided, whereas D is underrepresented. Points B-C, in the students’ minds, is sufficient or perhaps a more tolerable and less threatening zone. It thus indicated the essence of the non-verbal deal /unspoken contract between students and their teachers. Triggering the volume of the “non-verbal deal” would only come about when students descended into a steep decline (entering point A) and when students passed point B and ascending to point C. Thus the changes or shifts of students circumstantial dynamics at home (e.g. social cultural, economic and political) in tandem with the socio-cultural processes of the classroom, can decrease or enhance the students *cool trodden grounds* in nurturing their thinking and learning.

IV. THE TIGHT-KNIT TENTACLES OF THE AIGA

To this point, I have discussed reflections on the multi-discipline aspects of structural wavering. Here, I discuss another key factor: the influence of the *aiga*. The *aiga*'s significance in the development of the "total person" cannot be understated as it continues to greatly influence Samoan students' thinking and learning in the classroom. Like many *aiga Pasifika* in New Zealand, the Samoan *aiga* continues to evolve in terms of its structural, cultural and functional contexts. These contexts have helped shape the wavering coping mechanism processes. These processes will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

(1) The diaspora of the Samoan *aiga*

The well-established way of life in Samoa shapes the values and attitudes of the majority of the membership of the global Samoan family worldwide (see Sutter, 1988). This is particularly so for the population of Samoans in New Zealand, which has grown since the early migration of the 1960s (see Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998) after Samoa's independence in 1962 and the introduction of the "quota system" under the Treaty of Friendship. On arrival, the early migrants (mainly youth) sought employment and quickly acquired unskilled and semiskilled labouring jobs which paid relatively high wages. Consequently, the notion that New Zealand was "the land of milk and honey" quickly permeated every sector of Samoan society, from rural to urban. The wealth of jobs in the 1970s led to Samoan migrants sending for not only close/distant/adopted relatives, but also allies and friends. Thus, as the migrant population grew, *aigas* spread across New Zealand. According to Meleisea:

There are substantial Samoan communities in the USA and Australia, but the largest overseas community is in New Zealand. Since the 1940s, Samoans have always comprised more than half of the population segment which New Zealand referred to as "Pacific Islanders" (Meleisea, 1998).

Despite being portrayed as the "Jews" and the "Irish" of the Pasifika (see Gaugau-Vaafuti 1994), Samoan migrants ventured courageously to New Zealand driven by their strong sense of *aiga*. In the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of potential migrants

bound for New Zealand were single youths (normally 18 years and over) (see Utumapu, 1992). Thereafter, a new wave of migrants set forth, many of whom were bound for semi/unskilled labouring work or study at secondary or tertiary institutions. A small number were parents and elders.

As Meleisea and Schoeffel have shown, the first generation of Samoans recreated and adapted the typical Samoan *aiga* model (Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1998). However, the *aiga* has evolved particularly because of mixed marriages and emergence of second-generation Samoans. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the Samoan *aiga* in relation to its role in human development has remained, particularly its influence on key decisions: starting a family, health and reproduction, parenthood, raising children and taking care of the welfare of the entire *aiga* (see Anae, Fuamatu, Lima, Mariner, Park, & Sualii-Sauni, 2000). Although the Samoans in New Zealand have become more liberal in nature, the “*va tapuia*” (common respect of space between people) prevails. Thus, Samoans have always been known and typified by their “genuine sharing character”, “give and take” and “transcendental congeniality” which stemmed from the tranquillity of the *aiga*. Empowered and encouraged by their ingrained Christian beliefs (see Tofaeono, 2000), contemporary Samoans continue to embrace the interrelationship and interaction between their evolved Christian beliefs and their insight into Samoan myths and traditions from which *fa’asamoa* is derived.

Within New Zealand, Samoan communities grew out of links with churches (Taulealeausumai, 1991). Since the 1960s, the church has played an integral role in shaping not only Samoan identity but also education. In 1989, for example, the church helped to spearhead the development of the first *Aoga Amata* Language Nest/Early Childhood in New Zealand (See Burgess 1998 & Ete 1998). This marked “*taeao afua*” or the dawning of a new morning for Samoan education. The growth of the Samoan Early Childhood Centres has since flourished. Their main function is the promotion of Samoan literacy/numeracy for New Zealand-born Samoan children. Not only do children learn to speak Samoan fluently but they are also taught the notion that language and culture are inextricably linked. From *Aoga Amata* emerged the development of Homework Centres for Samoan Youths, which are now being utilised by many nationalities (Burgess, 1999) and the inclusion of the Samoan language in the school curriculum and tertiary institutions.

(2) Cosmopolitan character

The Samoan aiga's cosmopolitan character stems from three factors: (i) the early contact with and exposure to German, British, American (and later New Zealand) influences (for example, my great grandparents were fluent German speakers); (ii) Samoans have ingrained a local sense of the global community which developed an urbanisation within Samoa, the influence of neighbouring American Samoa and also the early Samoan migrant settlement in New Zealand and elsewhere; and (iii) the increase in mixed marriages. The latter, in particular, has influenced the aspiration of most Samoan parents to enrol their children in the best schools along with the "cream of the crop". I asked students, for example, about how such influences affect the way they think and do things. The common response given by almost all of the students was that their thinking was more metropolitan and cosmopolitan in nature and they could identify with popular culture and youth [sub] culture worldwide, especially the Afro American Hip Hop melody filtered through Hispanic/Latino/Jamaican sounds. However, students' orientation to doing things was always deeply rooted in *fa'asamoa*.

The community-based life style of Samoans has positive and negative consequences. In positive terms, Samoans have continued to rely on each other, as they traditionally did in village life. The village's role has been largely taken over by the church in contemporary New Zealand. The church has the potential to play an even greater future role in Samoan life, according to a "revolutionary *fai'feau*" (Church Minister of EFKS):

...when they [Samoans] came here it was with the dream to give their children a better education. Most of their time and money has been given to develop churches. It is now, I believe, the church's turn to give something back (Vailaau, 2002)

On the negative side, too many *fa'alavelaves* (family/church obligations where a family faced monetary demands) meant that there has been too little food on the table and not enough money to finance children's education. One interesting scenario that concerned parents voiced was that their children would be too influenced from being with others, especially those who have drifted away from school. These families envisaged that curbing this influence meant breaking away from the community in

search of solace and peace of mind in the best interests of their children, especially their education. Wherever one has shifted to, however, one always keeps in constant contact with the community, as one student commented:

I hate shifting. I missed my family especially my cousins and school friends up North. They are just cool. When we first arrived I did not feel at home here and now I have made a few friends I am just right. But my brother, it's too hard for him to just forget his friends, still feels homesick and misses their company and stuff, that's why he gets into a lot trouble with the school. So now we go up during the holidays to see my family (Iulai, Year 12)

According to Meleisea and Schoffel (1998), Samoan children clearly feel the pressure of the *aigas* responsibilities to its members:

The attitude of New Zealand born children to *fa'asamoa* (Samoan customs and values) is also often ambivalent. Far from withering away in a new environment, Samoan ceremonial exchange practises (*fa'alavelave*) have increased in scale in New Zealand (Meleisea & Schoffel, 1998).

The increased emphasis on *fa'alavelave* has become a great burden on some *aiga*. Some have either "broken up" temporarily or "grown apart" permanently, which has serious consequences for the children. There has been a tremendous increase to the list of major *fa'alavelave*, and the hybrids of new occasions and ceremonies have covered such things as first, 21st 30th 40th 50th birthdays, cutting of boy's hair, graduation celebrations (Meleisea & Schoffel, 1998). Today, more monetary donations, fine mats and food contributions are demanded and expected. As a result, some parents have been too often busy with Samoan *fa'alavelave* to pay much attention to the potential problems affecting the progress of their children's secondary education.

Thus, the Samoan *aiga* can be seen as the "oasis" of the holistic of things, but for my purpose I will adopt what Tofaeono (2000) has referred to: the *aiga* as "the household of life". That is, in my mind, the *aiga* derives the "centre" or "core" of a Samoan student's commonsensical knowledge, rational intuition and concept of self-efficacy. It in turn designates a person's important features, and they are as follows (overpage):

- (i) *fa'asinomaga* (pedigree/identity);
- (ii) *si'osi'omaga* (ecological surroundings/environment);
- (iii) *ava fatafata ma le va tapuia* (good rapport and respect of space between oneself and others)
- (iv) *to'omaga* (peace of mind and soul and spirituality)

These are ingrained within students and serve to strengthen them when faced with new experiences within the classroom.

(3) Culture matters

The pivotal role played and assumed by the *aiga* is to shape and fashion the “total student” to better prepare him/her to engage in western education, particularly the classroom’s various learning tasks. In order to understand Samoan students’ thinking and learning in the classroom, we have to understand from a different angle the cultural context within which they decipher aspects of learning tasks. In this study, very often the implementation of cultural aspects have been evident when students engaged in academic tasks like expository writing/reporting diaries and portfolios on social issues and technical problem-solving (e.g. Maths and Science). In other studies, students discussed, wrote and reported social issues/different land forms using Samoan and transferred it to English in relation to their actual cultural experiences in the community setting (see Lameta, 1994). Thus, the ‘centre’ of students’ thinking and learning (formal/informal) continues to be deeply rooted in the home culture and language.

A number of Samoan students in New Zealand grow up with a “limited command of even the colloquial Samoan (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998).” Reasons why this is so include: (i) because there was “minimal verbal interaction/communication” between Samoan young/older children and their parents (Ochs, 1988; Nicols, 1985); and (ii) because there was a strong emphasis that English should be encouraged for the sake of children’s education (Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998). One consequence of the differing language capabilities of parents and their children has been a lack of open dialogue. Such dialogue, according to one parent in my study, enables parents to

“develop good rapport [with] their sons/daughters and perhaps getting closer to understanding their everyday needs and education goals they want to achieve.” Furthermore, a lack of knowledge of their own language seems to impact on students’ ability to draw on their culture when confronted with new learning circumstances and the development of learning processes.

The prerogative of the *aiga* was and still is to provide its children with the best of everything. There has always been guaranteed support for students needs, be they money, food, moral support, prayers or some academic advice from older siblings/friends or those who have succeeded at school. Some *aiga*/parents in recent years have gone out of their way to pay private tutors to teach their children Maths, Science and Commerce. Like other *Pasifika* groups a Samoan *aiga*/parents encourage their kids to attend ‘After School Prep’ (Letufuga, 1998) or Homework Centres (see Fusitu’a, 1992). As Letufuga remarked:

Encouraging students to stay after school and study needs the collaboration of both parents and teachers on duty. If students don’t turn up after school when they are supposed to stay behind to do their work, I won’t rest until I know that they are coming back. I even call the parents to send their children back to school so that they have to do their work. It is very hard to keep track of students’ whereabouts and also dealing with their circumstantial dynamics. Parents have been remarkably cooperative and prominent in supporting the mission of the After School Programme. They occasionally drive their kids to school, to attend after school tutorials on various subjects, whenever they forget to stay after school. Sometimes too much concern makes parents turn up at the wrong time that is during school time unannounced and ... even knocking on classrooms while lessons were in progress, checking if their children are in class. I have to refrain them from doing that (laughingly) (Personal correspondence with Mrs Letufuga, Principal of Cathedral College).

Sadly, not every *aiga* or parent provides the support their children needed and the school demanded. Students from the “haves” background were hardworking and gravitated naturally to their studies with passion, while those from the “have-nots” background were not so forthcoming. The latter tended to dissuade other students’ interest retention and attention to classroom learning tasks. Some of the students have a lot of potential to perform but often end up in trouble with the teacher. As one student commented (over-page):

It's not my fault /they kind of / make me do it / cause they are like very "aamu" (making fun of) and "kaulaikiki" (cheeky). Sometimes when I try to defend my friends the teacher, especially the science teacher, kind of like always pick on me /she won't understand and she always blames me for disrupting and too much gos(sip) not doing my work /but causing trouble/ whatever. (Aute, Year 11)

Aute would sit with her three Samoan girl friends at the very back of the laboratory during her Science class. No one dared take their seats. Whether they turned up late or not, the back seat was always vacant, as if designated to them. One jumped in defence of the other, should one of them fail to turn up to class or turn up late. They lazily glided in as a group, with or without books. Their teachers noted their "clinging behaviour" in/outside the classroom. This "clinging behaviour" has become a major trend amongst Samoan youths in the classroom and outside of school, especially on the streets of the main urban centres. Furthermore such behaviour has stemmed from students' inability to 'face the music' alone.

(4) The attitudes of Samoan children

The 1970s common attitude and aspiration in Samoa -"that secondary education was a badge of great prestige and a gateway to white collar employment (Meleisea & Schoffel, 1998)"- has perpetuated. However, studies have noted parents' lack of active support, because of their lack of confidence, lack of security and lack of quality time (Meleisea & Schoffel, 1998), or because of the increased "speed" of life. Some parents claim that they wish to help their children in whatever way they can, but they lack a thorough knowledge of the school system, what it involved and how it worked. Subsequently students' social, emotional and learning problems grow without the knowledge of parents.

The current study provides an opportunity to compare Samoan students' attitudes towards learning and their capacity to endure learning with their own peers and classmates. Some of these students, when compared with their peers, have shown the following common traits: procrastination, flippancy and a lack of both motivation and enthusiasm. These traits, it was noted, have curtailed learning progress. Those who persevered and put a lot of effort into their work were those who wanted to succeed.

The wrong attitude, as one teacher puts it, does not 'drag' students towards successful learning. Their ignorance and moderate dedication preclude long-term learning. Despite the efforts of the school in offering and providing programmes (interventions) to enhance or facilitate these students learning (for instance, English as a Second Language Units and different reading programmes), students who made the least progress never seemed to utilise the opportunity, and if they did, they never sustained persistence and endurance, largely because of their pride or shyness, especially where there were many Samoans in the class.

Despite *Pasifika* parents' aspirations (Malama, 1996, p.23, 28) and the current accelerated rate of *Pasifika* students embarking on tertiary study, researchers have time and time again proven *Pasifika* education to be in a state of crisis (Coxon & Fusitu'a, 1998, Statistics New Zealand 1998, Ministry of Education 1997/98). At all levels of the system, *Pasifika* students have done considerably less well than their *palagi* counterparts (Ministry of Education, 1997/98). Having recognised this dilemma, the 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy called on schools to introduce more culturally appropriate solutions (Tamasese et al, 1988, p. 566). Jones' (1991) discussed the demise of *Pasifika* students at school. She argued that schooling did not provide them with the necessary 'set of tools'. She further emphasised the need for appropriate intervention in schooling processes to alleviate existing patterns of underachievement, and identified the input of *Pasifika* communities as a crucial factor in the development of the success of *Pasifika* students.

The data provided by the students in my study showed that students focused on achieving their educational goals. Some students, based on what I gathered in my observations and according to teachers' comments, were potentially very good learners, if only they unlocked or broke away from shyness (*ma*), uncommunicative/muteness (*gugu*) and ceased being monosyllabic. Consider this example:

Every body knows everyone / I don't want to be singled out, I know the answer, it is all in here (pointing to head), but/ dunno how to explain it. It's kind of hard, you know, to come up with the correct terms, and sometimes I kind of get too shy/*ma* to say a word and it isn't the word that the teacher is after (Eli, Year 12).

Students often pretended that they knew everything, and never asked for assistance, which tended to jeopardise their chances of effective learning. They did not want their peers or other students to know that they needed help in all areas of their classroom learning. They also did not want to admit that they were 'lost' or did not want to ask the teacher to repeat any question/s:

It is a challenge for me to learn how to do the work myself rather than having everybody's attention on me. I reckon I need to work extra hard and try to get some motivation to do my work. I've got an older cousin at varsity and I know I am capable of doing the same. My parents always say, "you are the one who receive the consequences of your actions at the end of the day. "What you sow is what you reap." So that is why I want to do my best. My parents are very supportive of my education, but they do not understand what I'm learning and have no clue at all what the school curriculum is offering. I know what I'm going to do when I leave here. (Aute, Year 11)

Therefore, while students had internalised school practises, conventions, rules and regulations that govern everything from behaviour to what students' wear (school culture), they were not necessarily willing to follow the norms and participate during class activities.

(5) Everyone knows everyone and about everyone

I quickly became aware of the perpetual lack of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity that existed between the students from my time at the school. A lack of privacy, however, has both positive and negative effects. On one hand, the positive effects could influence Samoan students to develop good rapport between themselves and their peers and to collaborate with peers to enhance their learning and knowledge of different subjects. On the other hand, the negative effects could drive some students to social and emotional problems due to excessive anxiety building and fear of failure. To a large extent, both the enthusiasm and vulnerability of individuals stemmed from the relative similar position and equal status they were likely to occupy and assume within smaller team groups.

Essentially, within the Samoan community everyone knows everyone: which village in Samoa he/she was from, their children, the school they attended, and their general progress, which church he/she belonged to and so on. It was interesting to discover that my interviewees knew almost everything about other students/peers, their families and personal issues about them. Whether one likes it or not, the lack of privacy or anonymity perpetuated has its roots in Samoan village life, in a closely-knit community setting. While some students choose to dwell within the bounds of anonymity, the majority did not. It had a significant bearing on learning how to cope within a learning community which required the “sharing” during learning processes. This issue will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

V. THE CULTURE OF SHIFTING IDENTITY

In recent years, the development and promotion of the concept of “identity” within students has enhanced their progress and potential in secondary education (see Coxon et al, 2001). Defining Samoan identity is problematic, given the difference between those who are New Zealand born and Samoan born (see Anae, Mcpherson, Spoonley, 2001; Anae, 1998). Nevertheless, my own definition necessitates that a Samoan identity encapsulates the “total elements” (e.g. physical body, mental, social, cultural and spiritual) of the orientation of the “total person”. Students constantly manipulate and shift their identity to suit their everyday circumstantial dynamics, hence the concept of “shifting identity”. Generally, Samoan students (whether born in New Zealand or overseas) feel estranged when meeting complex learning circumstances in the classroom. They developed an acute awareness that no matter what/how they do or do not do, they are always seen as *different*, in spite of the fact that most of them are born and bred “Kiwis, as Aute’s remarks suggest: “Hello...no matter how hard you try to be *fiapalagi*, teachers and others know you’re not, that’s ok so long as you’ve got a stunning record (Aute, Year 11).”

While their flexibility enabled them to shift temporarily their identities wherever possible and whenever it suits, many students remained unsettled. This contributes to the growth of their sense of wavering. In brief, shifting identity has resulted from the following: (i) protection of cultural pride; (ii) suppression of Samoan cultural values

and principles; and (iii) assimilation of classroom culture and the belief systems of school.

(1) Shifting identity and the protection of pride

Samoan students allude to shifting their identities in order to protect their cultural pride. They project a positive image and endeavour not to show insecurity and uncertainty. In order to protecting one's pride, a student would implement both cultural and commonsense knowledge to resist participation and to refrain from querying the teacher or verbalising any misunderstanding during classroom tasks (Silipa, 1999a; 1999b; 1998, 1991). Students would also resort constantly to silence and passivity (Jones, 1991; Silipa, 1991). These responses could also be referred to as "non-verbal" or simply the "art of miming", an important aspect of growing up within Samoan culture. Such acts could signpost both uncertainty and certainty. Should the teacher not get a response to a question from a student, I noticed that the teacher was aware of the silence, and without wasting time, he/she moved on to the next student so that it would no longer be an issue or so that it would be fixed at the end of class. Thus, almost every Samoan student shifted his/her identity in order to protect his or her cultural pride, which tended to result in increased fear of failure.

(2) Shifting identity and the suppression of cultural values

Feelings of ambivalence towards various aspects of the home culture (especially *fa'atavelave*) (see Meleisea & Schoeffel, 1998), are common to many Samoan students. As devout parishioners, the Samoans remain loyal to the essence of the doctrines of the church. In spite of tremendous pressure to give more than what they can afford (Anae, 2003), they continue to honour the church Minister and the ministry. In the face of these cultural pressures, Samoan youths were likely to rebel and suppress their culture. Other factors that caused cultural value suppression included the negative stereotype of Samoans by the mass media and society's "collective condemnation" of Samoans when one commits a serious crime. All this led to the shifting of identity by many students whenever it suited them, especially when they were with their non-Samoan peers.

While Samoan students continued to uphold their parents' cultural moral values they indeed adopted and sought the "majority culture" as the key "passport" to success and social mobility. This has driven students to creating a sense enthusiasm and interest retention in relation to the personal, educational and occupational relevance of different subject content. Thus, some aspects of the home cultural values and etiquette are suppressed to make way for the elements of classroom culture. For instance, the majority of Samoan senior students exhibited a diminished sense of value in their mother tongue, in an effort to 'fit in' to the school environment.

Responses by four Year 11 students, listed below, reveal three significant themes. Firstly, students overlooked their deeply embedded cultural values and beliefs in order to be like the rest of the class. From listening to these students, I felt that it was not at all easy for them to act in accordance with what was perceived to be the norm by suppressing their own ways of knowing. Secondly, the embodied *fa'asamoa* cultural values of *fa'aaloaloa* (respect) and *usi'usita'i* (obedience) result in students' limited verbal interaction in classroom discourse. Finally, students face a dilemma regarding how and when to utilise their cultural way of knowing to make sense of academic tasks such as writing and problem-solving:

My culture is always inside me but I have to learn to become a good student and act like the rest of students. Speaking Samoan and understanding *fa'asamoa* is ok, but I have to sit all my exams in English. (Aute, Y11)

Attitude that's the one, /will have to change my attitude and behaviour like almost all the kids. Pakeha students are just doing well/ they don't care, they argue with teachers many times and the teachers would not put them on detention. So you have to leave your culture at home and do what others do. (Ata, Y11)

Am not denying my culture but my worldview is similar to other Kiwi kids' who are New Zealand born. Samoan stuff I think is for the home/ church. My friends have been talking about the Sa(moan) who murdered that other guy and I felt offended and I said/ sorry have nothing to do with it. (Moli, Y11)

I reckon when you come to school you have to change / act and do what everybody else is doing. Dunno but I think too much *fa'asamoa* is not good if you want to succeed at school. Reckon the home is "the" place for Samoan culture not the school. Well

sometimes you can use some good aspect of *fa'asamoa* in your classroom learning. (Moso, Y11)

(3) Shifting identity and the assimilation of classroom culture

Samoan students desire to assimilate/indoctrinate all aspects of the classroom culture to enhance their thinking and learning in the classroom. It is within the classroom that students learn to develop the 'student culture', or the culture of becoming a student (studenting) discussed earlier. In the process, students not only orientate to their designated teachers but also signpost their place, role and status regimes. This process is referred to as negotiation, where students develop and use relevant strategies that enable them to assert their own needs and pursue their own goals (see Nuthall, 1997). It was evident that students undertook enormous changes in the patterns of personal relationships/rapport in an attempt to adjust to the holism of student school life (see Deegan cited in Nuthall, 1997). I have tried to spin the threads and strands in which socio-cultural processes and thinking and learning (cognition) have become interwoven. In so doing, I have tapped into elements of the "school life" of students. Indeed, the shifting identity of students has been one of the most significant aspects that enhanced confidence of students in their thinking and learning during classroom tasks.

Most of the students in this study did reasonably well in all subjects (some better than others), especially in Social Sciences, Maths and Science. They were largely hardworking, prompt, attentive and active participants in classroom learning processes. Elements of the total school life of the students began at (8.15 am) once they entered the school gate. They attended the likes of school assemblies, ceremonies and rituals in the school's calendar and different classrooms where compulsory and optional courses were scheduled. Adherence to the "total school life" required students to participate actively in classroom learning tasks and extra-curricular activities such as cultural group performances, fundraising, cultural performances like drama and belonging to sports teams. However, not all students were comfortable with such multiple roles and struggled to develop friendship and rapport with teachers and other students. Their anxiety over whether they were accepted was visible. Very often, some of these students scanned the room as if in

search of attention and confirmation of what they contemplated doing next. Others who were more outgoing managed to develop good rapport and friendship with teachers and other students. This group of students was more articulate, enthusiastic and motivated in almost every classroom activity.

The better students appeared to have adequately assimilated aspects of classroom culture that fuelled interest retention and sustained endurance in learning, particularly aspects of the unit standards of different subjects that created specific interest relevancy of a personal, occupational or educational nature, as mentioned earlier. That is, different elements or aspects of one subject could be correlated with those of another. For instance, statistics and probability in Mathematics could be linked to Economics and Accounting, and the more mechanical-oriented topics or experiments in Sciences could be very much connected to the total make up of cars, especially their engines and what makes them run. This has triggered in some students (the majority of whom are males) their personal or occupational passions of working with and owning cars. For example:

I like probability and statistics in Maths because I could also use it in my Accounting. The topics on engines and stuff in Science would give me some ideas on how to fix any mechanical problem with Mum's car and also the biological part that deals with diets and body building which are relevant to sports like rugby (Moso Year 11).

The common perception was that a person's ownership of Mathematics/Scientific thinking would lead to a feeling of personally achieving what was worthwhile. In contrast, during a Year 12 English class on Shakespeare's Hamlet, some students appeared to resist some classroom activities. Their resistance through their perplexed impressions, gestures and non-verbal language could be translated to mean many things.

One activity that was never fully encouraged during English classes was the writing of diaries in which students were expected to make daily journal entries about all aspects of their experiences inside and outside of the classroom. From my observations, this was perceived as a personal learning activity and self-evaluation exercise. I accessed three students' diaries and immediately became aware that

despite the content being fragmented they indeed highlighted students' everyday realities. One or few words said it all. The following were some of the typical examples:

today am not really in the mood of studying got a hideous headache too gross still feel sleepy too much tv ... (Aute, Year 11)

not too bad today...bit of this and bit of that..busy schedule today but it's cool ..(Ata, Year 11)

am still tired from my youth groups stuff, have got many things in my mind, especially my maths test, so will do some hard studying starting now (Losa, Year 12)

While writing their journals, students would periodically employ some of the normal non-verbal cues such as canvassing the walls, head/eyes movements, shrugging of shoulders, tapping/flicking of pen and fiddling with school bags whenever the teacher's instructions were directed at them. These gestures were an indication of students' boredom, unwillingness, naivety and subtle denial of the activity's significance and relevance to their current circumstantial dynamics. In some ways, this was not surprising given that this class took place after lunch in a very humid, unbearable environment. In the face of such evidence, I contend that in order to get closer to understanding Samoan students various classroom learning behaviours, not only do we have to consider socio-cultural processes, and cognition but also the "total student", his/her' dynamics and the physical environment in which they dwell.

Thus far, Samoan students' involvement within the various communities within the school and the intricacies of the formation of "communities of learners" (Rogoff, Brown, Campione (1994) and the creation of a new culture within the classroom (see Nuthall 1997) have been introduced. It is not surprising, then, that in recent years some of the most decorated and prominent *Pasifika* academics/educators have advocated the inclusion of the diversity of *Pasifika* cultures and cultural practises in the culture of the school. Proven to be effective, an inclusive school curriculum would enhance the confidence of students in the classroom (Helu-Thaman, 2000; Gatoloaifa'aaana, 2001; Fusitu'a, 1998).

VI. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

My purpose for this chapter has been to “set the stage” for the ensuing chapters. In so doing, I identified and described the “superseding circumstances” in their current state in relation to this research and other on-going studies of Samoan/*Pasifika* education. From here, a tentative model of understanding emerged. In the first section, I focused on the topic of configured/structural wavering. In this section, I described the three pertinent aspects that influence and shape Samoan students’ learning, namely (i) socio-historical wavering (ii) the politics of growing up wavering (iii) the evolution of learning and knowledge construction. Here, my aim was to get closer to the reality of the learning experiences of Samoan students. Following this, I described the detailing of the “*aiga*” and its significance. In the final section, I discussed “shifting identity” and its increased relevance to understanding Samoan students’ classroom experiences in recent years by looking at three aspects: (i) the protection of cultural pride, (ii) the suppression of cultural values, and (iii) the assimilation of classroom culture.

In this chapter, I have radically re-conceptualised an understanding of Samoan students and their classroom experiences given that traditional definitions of thinking and learning are no longer necessarily applicable. As a consequence, we have to consider the “total student” from different angles in the light of the impact of the home and of the school, especially inside the classroom where learning and cognitive processes occur. Only through understanding the total elements of students’ circumstances can we come closer to viewing their uniqueness and difference in the context of the school’s classroom.

I wish to finish this chapter by contending that Samoan students’ potential could be unlocked by simply involving them in writing diaries and portfolios about their progress, decision-making and predictions and goals. This could be closely monitored in an unthreatening fashion. It might sound like a primary school task, but I strongly believe it certainly works for Samoans or other *Pasifika* students. Writing diaries and portfolios was one of the most enjoyable, rewarding and fruitful monitoring and self-assessment strategies that Samoan students engaged in. One word, two words, or a fragmented sentence was enough to gain a glimpse of what is happening in students’

minds. Unfortunately, writing diaries/making journal entries (or creative writing) was never closely monitored in the classroom as it was seen as a covert remedy to writing about and remembering events or as a past-time activity. Self-reflection using diaries and/or portfolio generates and facilitates students' thinking about the schooling process rather than the product, and can help allay fear. According to Vandel (1997), the real strength of "portfolios lies in what goes on inside students' heads as they dig through their work, analyse the ways they have changed, and think how best to order, display, or write about their work to make sure the portfolio tells the stories they want them to tell (Vandel,1997, pp. 578-579)".

Despite the potential of dairies/ portfolios to enhance and enrich students, they do not necessarily benefit all students. (Vandel, 1997). However, creating portfolios stimulates and encourages students who do not favour talking in front of others to put their thought into writing, which provide a vehicle for them to share their problems or challenges through their own eyes and in their own words. This, I must stipulate, could provide teachers and educators with a better understanding of how different students think and learn, especially how they should set their goals and evaluate their social and cultural learning construction processes.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FA'AFaILELEGA: NURTURING COOLNESS & DIGNITY: EXPLORATORY DATA & DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: FINDINGS II

I. INTRODUCTION

E lei se faiva e maumau (None of a fishing catch would go to waste)

Some animals are more equal than others (George Orwell's *Animal Farm*)

Our increasing knowledge of the control exerted by the environment makes it possible to examine the effect of the world within the skin and the nature of self-knowledge (Skinner, 1974, p.19)

In this chapter, my discussion focuses on a general process used by Samoan students which I call "nurturing coolness and dignity". This is in fact the "core" of this study, in which everything student participants' covertly/overtly do relates to transformation. What I am referring to involves not just the total elements of the dual operation of cultures, such as different system of beliefs, ideas, values, practices and dynamics, but the interrelated processes in which these cultures occur. Samoan students generally engage in a "nurturing process" [un] consciously while surfing the waves of their classroom learning. In short, the "nurturing process" encapsulates a range of interrelated discursive coping mechanisms and problem-solving strategies. The purpose of this process is to put in place strategies to negotiate student participants' learning and to remedy those feelings of scepticism, susceptibility, alienation and defensiveness. It becomes apparent that Samoan students reside in a circumstance of intense cognitive constructivism of both socio-cultural and linguistic bewilderment within the classroom domain. Samoan students have contemplated that adhering to the school's and classroom's norms, rules and regulations or manipulating and shifting their identity in compliance with what the classroom culture and its teachers dictates are, in turn, aspects of nurturing coolness and dignity of their learning. Here, therefore, I discuss strategies that Samoan students tend to implement to accommodate the total elements and demands of the duality of the home-classroom

cultures embedded in classroom learning particularly interacting with the content of subject matter. Furthermore, the discussion also indicates the coping mechanisms they used.

II. OUTLINE

This chapter opens with an outline of two aspects of the wavering consciousness that Samoan students continue to perceive to be burdensome and problematic. These are the “curriculum content wavering” or interaction with content and “mixed feeling build-up wavering”. These are related to cultural and classroom identities as they play a pivotal role in the nurturing process. Such aspects could be further related to the constructivist, socio-cultural and linguistic perspectives underpinning thinking and the learning processes of the classroom (see chapter 4), particularly the socio-cultural approach (see Rogoff, 1995, 1990). Such aspects contribute to our understanding of the “stability” of the nurturing strategies Samoan students employed. I then discuss the interrelatedness of the three significant task dimensions enmeshed in students’ learning domain or their classroom experiences. These are *reconciling in apprenticeship*, *crafting in guided participation* and *ascertaining in participatory appropriation*. The above processes are produced not only to remedy participants’ different weaknesses when interacting with content, but also to resolve the consequences of their wavering consciousness.

III. SUBJECT CONTENT AND FEELING BUILD-UP WAVERING

Here I describe the strategies that serve to remedy Samoan students’ supposed ‘weakness’. However, before that, I must diagnose and treat students wavering consciousness. In turn, I will assist the reader to understand what I mean by “Nurturing coolness and dignity” in relation to Samoan learning. Firstly, however, I reiterate the two kinds of wavering consciousness, which are dealt with separately despite their interrelated nature.

(1) Wavering consciousness: the subject content dimension

One type of wavering consciousness relates to students’ interaction with subject content or unit standards. It is revealed here in two ways. First, students’ interacted

with the current and previous knowledge of a unit standard by recalling what they saw and heard in conjunction with the dimensions of reading, writing, problem-solving and hypothetical speculations. Second, based on their cultural background, students' interaction with peers and teachers resulted in the development of mutual relationships with each which led to the development of a 'student culture' Consider the following classic examples, which illuminate the point:

Oh my God! I haven't made up my mind yet of what to take for SC as this is my first year in form five. Well! It's too scary eh, especially the content of the subjects and stuff like exams. Don't wanna think about it / too "gross". Anyways I hope a good background knowledge of English, Maths, Science and Social Science from last year (Year 10) will help me with my work. What I learn outside the classroom also helps. Will have to pretty much adapt to what is going on in the classroom and I should be sweet as, yeah / pretty cool....
(Aute, Year 11)

It's pretty good, I look forward to sitting SC for the first time this year. My concern is the content of the subjects. I am not totally secure if I pass or not, I have to do some hard yards if I really want to nail this one. Dad always encourages us to try to be like other successful Samoans who've been there, done that, "no fear". It's funny but, oh well, what can I say, but to get my act together this year. Samoan and school stuff should go together. I'm like good at maths and stuff like science which don't need a lot of written expression.
(Ata, Year 11)

I want to be like my cousins in Auckland. They all passed SC and Bursary and now one is working and two are at uni. I want to go to uni too and passing SC is "the way" to go and perhaps make my dream come true, whatever. Sometimes I'm not confident with content of some subjects and how to tackle different subject units, but I guess that won't be a prob[lem] if I begin to utilise the learning opportunities well and resources in the classroom. (Moli, Year 11)

It's cool eh! I look forward to sitting SC. It's gonna be a stunning experience although I hate studying for long hours. Have to work really hard this year and make use of every opportunity I've got. I guess I'm like the majority of the Sas who have predominantly similar negative attitudes towards studying which makes them become underachievers. Don't want to be like that, I reckon if I want to pass SC will have to change my attitude. I'm not good in expressing myself, especially in English and Social science, yeah yeah / pretty rugged. (Moso, Year 11)

I did pretty well in SC. But I am slacking down a bit due to the intensity of the six form schedule. The load of work is just unbearable and I don't know whether I will manage to finish them all before the end of the year. The pressure at home and this work are just too much. Will have to overcome a lot of hurdles this year, if I don't want to repeat this work all over again next year. (Pua, Year 12)

I got a good pass for SC, but it doesn't guarantee my getting through the work load of Sixth Form. My problem in English and History are too much critical thinking and logical reasoning exercises. It takes ages for me to make sense, and write out what I think about a single task. Too much thinking which I don't really have slows down my progress. But I will get there so it's just cool (Losa, Year 12)

I want to get to bursary. One problem with me is making sense of content of subject. Reckon speaking English is just not enough for me. It doesn't mean I can express issues in greater depth. Will use every opportunity that I can get from my peers and teachers. I'm aware of the pressures from home and the intense work that I'm supposed to do. I will try and drop... either my sports or part time work. I know I can do it if I commit myself to my work. Sixth Form Year is too hard but, well, you have to submit and resubmit work after work at the end, you don't feel like doing it anymore /its just chronic man... (Iulai, Year 12)

I want to get to bursary and to uni and I have to do it fast before my parents get older and retire. I owe this work to my parents so I refuse to lie down when I encounter problems. Have a lot of problems with content, my peers and youth stuff, like going out in town and hanging around together. I have set my goals and I'm determined to achieve them, so its choice (Eli Year, 12)

It is not an easy task being a six former. SC helps you in related areas, but you really have to up the tempo and work extremely hard to get through year 12. I want to pass my sixth form course, so that I could pursue my teaching. My inspiration comes from my mum. Mum raised me to get the best education and she wants to see that happens in the very near future. She and I have become very close since we moved down here from the north. So whatever weaknesses I tend to have with the content of my course will get "whatever" to resolve them. (Teuila, Year 12)

These informative comments by students reveal intertwining issues and themes, which indicate some of the students' realities about a "mixed bag" of ambitions, aspirations, frustrations and scepticisms. In the light of students' remarks, I became aware that subject content wavering is widespread. Samoan students' decisions on

their choices of ‘*what*’ subjects to take and ‘*how*’ to deal with unit standards for different subjects in the classroom fall into three groups. First, students aspire to the “interest relevance” of subjects, for example, personal relevance, occupational relevance, tertiary or further education and training. Second, students’ choices are sometimes shaped by the “influence of peer networks”. Third, students’ choices are fashioned by the type of “expectation” impinged on them by teachers’ based on assumptions about possible test scores or portfolio progress from classroom experiences, as discussed in chapter 5. Teachers have often made assumptions which are to some extent problematic for some Samoan students members of this third group. What I mean by this is that some Samoan students were placed in applied options classes and thus denied the “opportunity” to become creative and develop their potential to think and learn. This draws parallels with Jones’ 1991 study (see chapters 3 & 4). Jones emphasises that in spite of *Pasifika* students’ familiarity with “*palagi*” culture (e.g. classroom culture), their own biculturalism did not correlate with the school’s cultural “expectations” of what was required to be a “good student”. While Jones’ study is generally dated, it continues to echo and illuminate the realities of some, if not all, Samoan students in today’s classroom.

Furthermore, Samoan students generally shared a common *habitus* (see Bourdieu, 1977). Feigning seemed to be one of the most common aspects of this *habitus* exhibited by Samoan students during classroom tasks. Whether or not some of the students were disinterested, bored or purely could not follow the content of a specific strand of a unit standard was difficult to gauge. However, some of the students, given more opportunity or time to tackle tasks (usually five minutes after class), showed increased confidence in dealing with content and gradually mastering a sound understanding of a specific aspect of a unit.

(2) Wavering consciousness: the emotional dimension

The second kind of wavering consciousness is the accumulation of feeling or the psychological dimension outlined in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7. Feeling wavering encompasses depression, withdrawal, anxiety/fear, estrangement, intimidation, isolation, powerlessness and hopelessness. The quelling of feelings or emotions is a

critical aspect of Samoan children's early childhood socialisation which has a lasting legacy for students in this study. It was evident, for instance, that some of the students were suffering from anxiety build-up when contemplating the content of specific subjects, such as Maths and English, and other elements of their school life. Here the legacy prevailed. Previous studies (Pasikale, 1996; Utumapu 1992; Jones 1991; and Silipa, 1991) noted Samoan students' anxiety/fear build-up about making mistakes and fail to progress. In my own study, most of the students denied, refused or remained reluctant to disclose their emotional state to either the teacher or the school counsellor. As a consequence, trust and confiding in peers is especially significant for students. As an insider, I instinctively tracked not only the student participants but also his/her close confidant. The closed upbringing common to Samoans meant that it was not easy for students to discuss their feelings. Nevertheless, the following examples reveal much about the participants' own anxieties:

There is no such thing as anxiety and stress-out at home. When you know it's approaching you just have to combat and rise above it and act normal. Like my anxiety against maths, I just don't know how to explain it. I struggle to put up with my fear of failing maths tests and just live with it, hoping it will go away someday. At home you will be nagged at when you say you're under a lot of stress or anxiety, the only words you hear are *pepelo, paie, augaka, faikogafiki* (lying, lazy, unwilling, put on). So at school when the teacher asks "what's wrong" you just say "nothing" really. Too shy to tell, reckon it's none of anyone's business, just trust yourself and no telling. (Teuila, Year 12)

Mum is at my back all the time. When I says I'm not going to school 'cause I'm not feeling well, she hits the roof and says "you're not staying home" *kele lou pepelo ua ga kele le makamaka kv.* (you are lying, 'cause you watch too much tv). Sometimes I don't go to my normal classes. I just turn up to my PE classes 'cause you don't feel sleepy there. But when I go to my normal classes I just keep shut up and trip. (Ata, Year 11)

I just become silent when I'm stressed out cause I don't feel like doing anything. Other times I pretend nothing is happening and I just talk with my mates non-stop to get it out of my head. (Moso, Year 11)

When there's too many things I can't handle in my head, I just become silent and draw pictures or scribbling practising my different signatures. (Iulai, Year 12)

Teacher asks what's wrong with me as I says "nothing whatever". Something is wrong with me but I don't know what. I can't shut up for once is what the teachers say. But at least I'm learning something at the same time. At home I behave well, cause if I don't "ia gao le fisupa'u. lava le mea e maua (a dosage of the belt is the reward). (Aute, Year 11)

The problem with me is that I'm too scared of making mistakes in front of everyone, especially the girls. I know what I want to say but sometimes I guess I am too ma (ashamed) and too fa'amagaia (self-important). Becoming silent is just cool as long as I've got everything down its sweet. (Eli, Year 12)

I'm affected when something happens at home. At school I don't feel like doing any work. I'm also affected when something happens to my close friends at school. Otherwise, I look forward to going to school and learning new things. (Moli, Year 11)

I guess I've got a different orientation and I know it's important that you reported to the teacher or counsellor if something happens to you, anything that is wrong with you. Like if you're not right you should seek counselling from school counsellor. It's good, you feel good after removing something or whatever off your shoulders.
(Pua, Year 12)

From the above excerpts, it can be seen that most Samoan students suppress their emotions when in the classroom. The continued suppression of these emotions often leads to even greater uncertainty and anxiety. To overcome the feelings discussed earlier, some students have instinctively chosen to be positive and motivated and they have merged or shifted their sense of home cultural identity to be compatible with an identity created through the dictates of classroom culture to avoid feelings of indignity or stigmatisation.

IV. CULTURAL AND CLASSROOM IDENTITIES

The authenticity and significance of the notions of identity are discussed below. In particular, two concepts will be the focus. These are "cultural or Samoan identity" and "classroom identity" or the culture of being a student. *Pasifika*/New Zealand born adolescents identity issues have been closely examined in recent years. While these studies were not necessarily school/classroom based, many of the researchers have reflected on schooling's rewards or more specifically the classroom experiences of

participants to gain a general overview of the role education plays in the shaping and formation of youth identity. Drawing on the personal, social and political aspects of identity, these studies have explored issues pertinent to Samoan students in tertiary education (Petelo, 2003), New Zealand born Samoan youths (Anae, 1998, 1995), tensions between *Pasifika* youths and the church (Tiatia, 1998) and cultural identity and school performance and recently issues in relation to young Samoan women's sexuality (Tupuola, 1983, 1999).

Common to each study is the notion that Samoan cultural identity is drawn from the culture and language of students' parents and/or grandparents (including systems of beliefs, values, morals practises and the *fa'asamoa* process, including language). It is also evident that there are at least three broad categories of Samoan contemporary youths, as identified by Pasikale, (1999) & Anae, (1998): (i) traditional (ii) New Zealand blend (iii) and New Zealand made. As the Samoan community has grown and changed, a high proportion of youth were New Zealand born. "Being 'Sa' is cool" says Moso, Year 11. What he means is that a Samoan identity is associated with a numerical advantage (a populous group within New Zealand), prowess in sports (e.g. the Manu Samoa Rugby team and national Samoan representatives in New Zealand teams etc.); and the number of prominent entertainers and celebrities of Samoan origin. Identifying as Samoan, however, can be problematic for some youths, as Pasikale maintains:

...assumptions (mostly bad) educators make about New Zealand born Pasifika Island learners [mean that they] either fail to meet expectations or worse still, float by without by any expectations or demands on them because of some misguided liberal attitude (otherwise known 'soft options'). Either way, human potential is not recognised or developed (Pasikale, 1999, p.5)

Like every *Pasifika* Identity, a Samoan Identity is often associated with pre-existing stereotypes and a raft of stigmas. To deconstruct these stereotypical nuances and destigmatising the different labels, Samoan comedians, especially those born in New Zealand, have relied on a strong sense of humour in portraying themselves as adhering to certain amusing characteristics. Others have built on these stereotypes in the design and marketing of clothing and food products, for example. Additionally,

Samoaan actors have also transformed the re-enactment of real events (such as the raid dawns of the 70s) into *faleaitu* or skit theatres. Thus, out of the negative comes the positive.

Bearing a Samoaan identity helps generate mutual rapport, socialisation and friendship amongst new acquaintances or within a new and different setting. In this study, a Samoaan identity played a significant role in facilitating and mediating Samoaan students' classroom learning. The development of a 'student culture', which at its most basic refers to "how students learn to become students in the school system (see Nuthall, 1997), is an integral aspect of Samoaan youths' schooling. Inherent in schools and classrooms are communities that inherit and develop their own institutional culture (Nuthall, 1997). As Samoaan students enter the school community and as they are designated to a different/new class and teacher, amidst the presence of a different/new community of learners, they also must re-negotiate their own individual places, roles and status regimes. In due course, students accumulate multiple identities and develop as well as employ a range of coping mechanisms and strategies to enable them to reach their goals. They must also negotiate with teachers and other pupils to create a social order in the classroom (see Denscombe, 1980).

The development of a 'classroom identity' is an individualistic undertaking which Samoaan students often treat with cynicism and conservatism. Unlike their cultural identity, which has the potential to accommodate changing patterns of rapport and friendships and new personal relationships, a classroom identity generates feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness in some Samoaan students. However, this is not always the case. For instance, some of the Samoaan students who appeared to be passive and inarticulate, proved to be more than capable (for example, Eli, Year 12 who at the end of the year collected two of the most prestigious School Awards of Woodland High School; one for the best all round Pacific Island student and the other for being a good role model, leader and mentor). Eli was typically passive, modest and conservative but at the same time a talented student. In all of the classes that I observed, Eli would not talk unless spoken to and if he was spoken to, his responses were barely audible. Luckily, he enjoyed a 'word up' (discussion) with me after class:

Students think I'm thick, yep "whatever"... but nah, I'm not the show off type. I know what's going on. It's cool to be silent so long as you know somethin' and understand the process, do the work and complete everything in time. I don't wanna be seen as *fiapoko* (to be the know-all) and that when I express myself in front of everyone. Reckon it was the way I was brought up. I'm too shy making mistakes or sayin' somethin' wrong especially in front of the *keiges* (girls). I prefer expressing what I know in my book in tests and in our projects, or when the teacher directly asks me. It's kind of cool / cruising along in silence yeah, yeah. Sixth form year is groovy; no exams but the workload's too intense. (Eli, Year 12)

Being articulate or openly expressive in class can be intimidating for students. In this respect, the "impression" generated from Eli's behaviour differed greatly from that held by the teacher. What students' learned and knew could best be determined and gauged by tests and exam results and/or school reports rather than by classroom interactions. Sometimes the results surprised teachers, especially if a passive student managed to accomplish unexpected results. Those students' who happened to project themselves as capable were perceived to have assimilated classroom culture and hence become "good role models" of classroom culture. In short, the covert or passive nature of Samoan students was a result of protecting the dignity of their ways of knowing and learning behaviour. Given this type of behaviour, teachers and educators seemed to hypothesise and predict Samoan students' ability based on their general assumptions for all students to be potentially passive learners (discussed in chapter 5).

What I am about to discuss in detail in the next section involves an illustration of the emergence of a model of understanding. In so doing, I will use the Samoan house or "*Faletele*" Model to outline the significance of the nurturing process in counterbalancing the superseding circumstances. The model sketches one of the possible pictures of my [re] presentations of individual student participants stories, insights, acumen and their goals. This picture displays and exhibits individual students' circumstantial dynamics in the classroom, supplemented by their description, interpretations and individual analysis of what they think about themselves in nexus to their identities.

Description of Faletele Model

The shelter of the *faletele* protects at all costs a Samoan *aiga* and its members. Everything is nurtured within the ‘open space’ of the *faletele*, particularly Samoan early childhood socialisation into learning and development. I have placed the “nurturing process model” Samoan students employ in their classroom learning into the congeniality of this space. The space is divided into three large sections: the left the middle and the right sides. The left *matuatala* (side), where the throne of mats is located, seats the “crafting in guided participation” and “pacifying in apprenticeship” processes. Within this side, students nurture the coolness of their learning. In the middle, where three central posts and the kava place are situated, is the position of moderation-where circumstances are affirmed, mediated and negotiated. It is here also that the unspoken agreement between students and teachers is generated and community lifestyle is deeply seated. On the right *matuatala* (side) is situated ascertaining in participatory appropriation. On this side, there resides the *taigaafi* (fireplace) within which the *fanaafi o fa’amalama* (fire votives) are located or the light of learning is lit. Within it, students nurture the dignity of their learning, affirming the three planes. It is also here that *fa’autauta* (expected status) is maintained. Therefore, the two sides are the comfortable nurturing grounds for Rogoff’s three planes which Samoan students employ to remedy their “subject content wavering” and “feelings wavering”. The left side and the right side of the *faletele*, in the context of this model, correspond via the central part in which all social and cultural actions are moderated, mediated and negotiated. Within the open space of the *faletele*, is embedded the ‘potential’ of “superseding circumstances” in the tranquillity of the *aiga*, which in turn generated both “subject wavering” and “feeling wavering” experienced by students in their school life.

The Model can be seen on the following page.

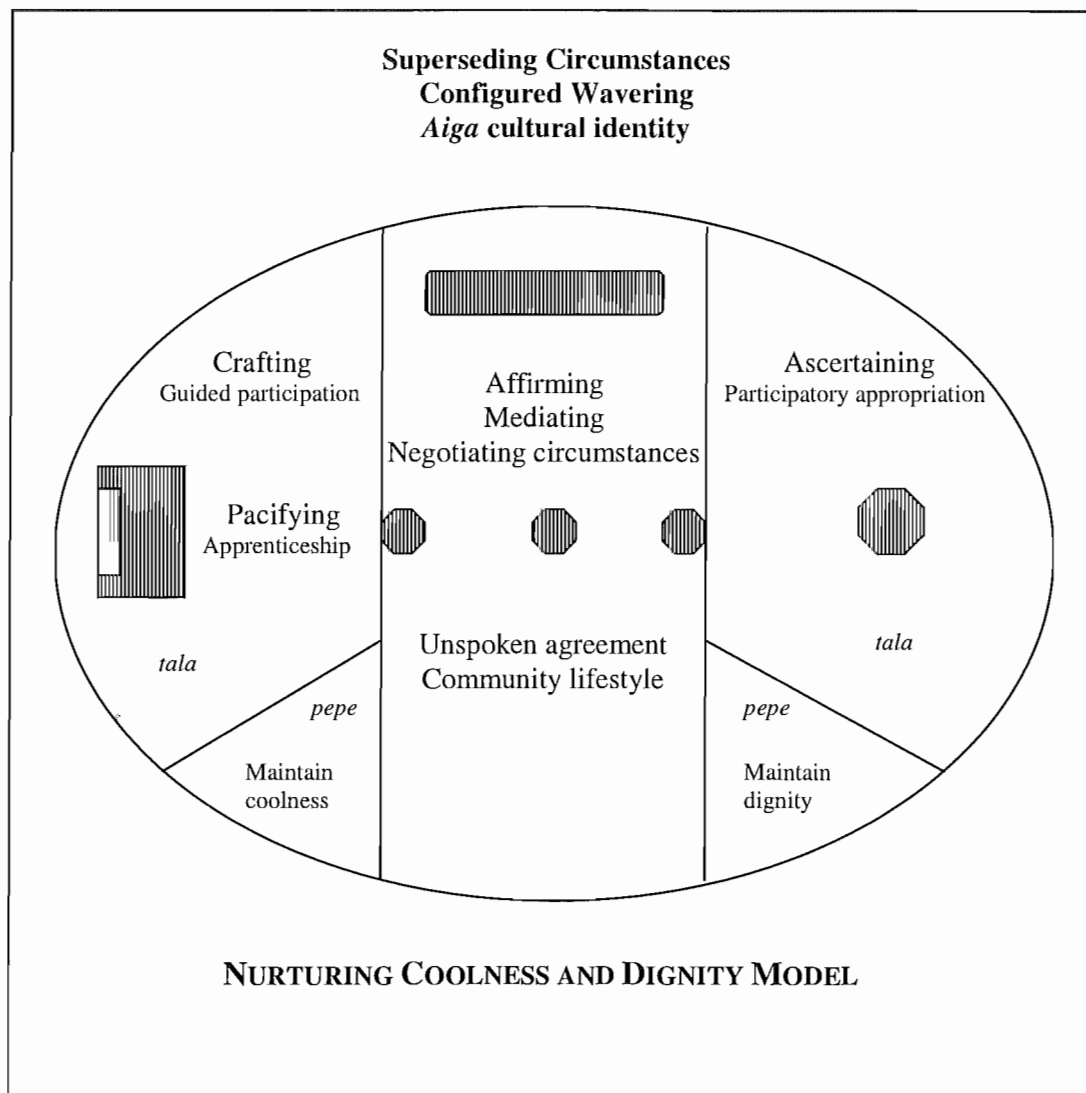


Figure 3: Faitele Model

V. NURTURING COOLNESS AND DIGNITY

So long as learning is cool, everything is just cool and you feel kind of cool, you know, about um ...respect and that" (Aute, Year 11)

To the majority of Samoan students, learning is 'fun' and 'enjoyable' if it is 'cool'. Whether a subject is cool is largely determined by students' interest in its relevance as discussed in the previous chapter. If it is relevant, students' sense of self-respect in their learning and the acceptance of their peers largely follow. Nurturing coolness and dignity in students relates to three overlapping processes which are influenced by Rogoff's socio-cultural model: (i) pacifying in apprenticeship (ii) crafting in guided participation and (iii) ascertaining in participatory appropriation.

Rogoff's (1995, 1990) socio-cultural approach, in particular the three planes, correspond to personal, interpersonal and community processes. The most significant aspect of Samoan students' learning is the influence of "culture" in classroom activities and the social setting where these activities occur. *Fa'asamoa* takes precedence in everything participants do, and most teachers have been acutely aware that culture plays a major role in all aspects of Samoan students' school lives. However, there is always some conflict between Samoan cultural identity and the way they were expected to act in the classroom. Getting students to interact confidently with subject content, then, results from students' believing that the content is meaningful and relevant.

Student participants must learn to adhere to classroom culture, but they also must negotiate their positions in tandem with teacher-directed intervention to promote their motivation to learn. Therefore, student participants' learning and knowledge construction can be accomplished given that they have the positive attitude and motivation to learn. Participating with peers in classroom activities motivated both student participants and their peers to learn. It could be referred to as the germination of classroom identity or total assimilation of classroom culture. Teacher-directed intervention (common in today's classroom) occurs as part of an affirmative action by the school community to promote the motivation to learn within the diverse population of the community of learners in the school's classroom.

The process of ascertaining in participatory appropriation relates to individual Samoan student's transformation of their understanding of and responsibility for classroom activities through their own participation. It involves changes to classroom instruction, which can influence Samoan students' motivational beliefs and behaviour. In this process, student participants [re] assert their sense of place, commitment and volition, and pacify their social and cultural identity with classroom identity. This provides Samoan students with the opportunity to deconstruct and de-contextualise their learning and the total elements of their everyday school life. We now see the interrelatedness of the elements of the three processes and each gives rise to one another and vice versa. This process is not at all perfect as its elements shift with because of numerous negative changes.

VI. PACIFYING IN APPRENTICESHIP

Mind and the social world are said to constitute each other

(Lave, 1991, p.63)

It's cool working closely with the teacher in solving problems and equations. The teacher will know you and you'll know she'll know exactly where you're coming from, when you ask any question. It's pretty cool that way, if your answer is wrong, it's ok 'cause she knows the right answer. And if you don't know how to solve a problem, she won't bother asking you in front of everyone which is kind of cool (Aute, Year 11).

Samoan students in the classroom are physically visible but seldom heard. This often leads them to pacifying in apprenticeship. According to teachers, the majority of Samoan students tend to lack the ability to adapt quickly to school culture because of their socio-cultural background and the influence of their unique youth culture. Samoan student participants are acutely aware of their unspoken agreement with teachers and the nature of the teachers' perception of them, as the following transcriptions illustrate.

Samoan students never cease to amaze me... [they are] very respectful, well behaved and a very nice and quiet bunch. Most of them are still passive learners and very often some of them just sit around until they are told what to do. Most of the Samoan students generally have a lot of potential. Concentration and motivation are badly needed for them to be confident in dealing with subject content. I hope to see them using aspects of their culture appropriately in their classroom learning which, I believe, will add value to their progress. (Miss Z, Year 11 Science teacher).

Reckon teachers like us because we're cool. Another thing is that our cultural group always performs when the school's hosting visitors or when there's an important occasion. But apart from this the teachers put heaps of pressure on us not to cruise but to get stuck into our school work. Some of us get sent to the dean every now and then for failing to turn up in class or failing to complete work or assessed projects. If you have everything up to date, you will be sweet as (Ata, Year 11).

Really I'm ok but at times I get stressed out trying to understand the content of my subjects, not all, but in some units, too rugged... Teachers won't bother you if they see you are at least trying or attempt to [do the work] it's pretty cool and primo as (Moso, Year 11).

Our good sort of non-verbal relationship with the teacher deteriorated once we slack down on our learning. And also when there is not enough explanation as to why we bunk class. The funny thing is the other teachers also know (Teuila, Y12).

Students' pacifying through apprenticeship involves a range of socio-cultural strategies, both conscious and unconscious, which are carried out in compliance with classroom culture and in response to the teacher's expectation. The purpose is to pacify the classroom community's culture. In so doing, the majority of Samoan students learned the student culture and thus portrayed an unobtrusive and cool image. Being cool creates popularity with peers. This leads to the development of mutual rapport between the cool students and their peers, which inadvertently generates open interaction with (apart from in/out of class habitués, such as hip-hop culture), the subject content, progressing into discussion of relative topical issues, themes and concepts. This results in the boosting of the level of dignity amongst students and peers when they interact with the subject content in the presence of other students.

As can be seen, socio-cultural strategies are shifted to accommodate the dynamics of different student participants' apprenticeships, guided participation and appropriation in classroom activities. At the apprenticeship level, Samoan students' have come to pacify a safe place in the classroom. However, doing so could be interpreted in the light of both advantage and disadvantage planes. Pacifying in apprenticeships becomes commonplace as it was embodied in the total elements of both the students everyday school life and that outside school. However, a clash between the cultures of home and school usually result, as highlighted in the following quote:

It was not until I got into tertiary education that I really noticed everything. When you think about it really you are just learning all *Palagi* stuff. It's their ways but you don't realise it....We had this paper on communications skills [in which] the majority of our class are *Palagi* but in my class there were only ten of us who were Samoan, and some of the *Palagi* complained saying 'You're not looking into that person's eyes' but then we said in our culture looking into someone's eyes is like being disrespectful to them (Mele in Tiatia, 1998, p.41).

Generally, when pacifying through apprenticeship, Samoan students project a simple impression of themselves as having assimilated classroom culture. It is

commonplace for Samoan students, like their *Pasifika* counterparts, to “cast” their nets into the depth to haul and assimilate as many strands of classroom culture, especially subject content, as they possibly can, while retaining their home culture. Students’ assimilation of classroom culture is expected by teachers, the total school system and indeed parents. However, Pacifying assimilation principles could either enhance or hinder students learning process. For instance, the majority of student participants accepted what they were taught without questioning it, and went about compiling notes which they did not understand:

These lessons reproduce and produce these working class Pasifika Islands students’ belief (already re/produced in the family) that it is the teachers knowledge and words which must be directly assimilated. This leads to the girls’ compiling neat but often meaningless notes (Jones, 1991, p.126)

Assimilation also refers to students’ ability to absorb and transform textbook knowledge and the teacher’s knowledge. While some students have the capacity to assimilate aspects of learning and thrived, the majority of students strived to learn and remembered everything, particularly mapping or relating what was contained in the learning processes to the elements of their own school life, including their everyday experiences in the classroom. However, learning and remembering was a daunting experience for most of the Samoan students. Thus, for most Samoan students, their desire to assimilate classroom culture could be affected by their individual upbringing.

In the last three decades, the Samoan community has undergone widespread change, however some elements, if not all, of the typical Samoan learning and remembering system still exists in some students. While some Samoan students appeared to have sought out patterns of logical reasoning, others were still prone to rote learning and memorisation, learning everything by heart, repetition, passive learning and doing nothing until told to. The prevailing usage of these traditional learning styles by Samoan youths (15-18 years) reflected their adherence towards the cultural aspects of deference, the unquestioning acceptance of authority/hierarchy, and submission. Many answered ‘yes’ when in fact they meant ‘no. The nature and origin of such complex behaviour stems from growing up in traditional working class Samoan

families in which the elements and dictates of culture, or what Bourdieu calls “habitués,” are incongruent with classroom culture (see Jones, 1991). The following responses by students are particularly informative. They reveal a number of pertinent issues, including: students’ preference for group work; their trouble with remembering what they were taught; how they related what they learnt to previous experiences; how each was taught by parents from an early age ‘what to think’; their problems with writing; their use of individual learning strategies; their need for additional time to finish schoolwork; the influence of peer pressure; and parental expectation. I discuss some of these themes below, and the remainder are outlined elsewhere in the thesis:

I still remember things, not everything, by memorising and learning my stuff by heart when I study for tests or exams. Sometimes my problem is formulating ideas for discussion and stuff like that. Reckon we rely on mum and dad to do stuff like thinking for us. Like me and my sister, we were taught what to think, not really how to think and stuff like that. But I’m not a passive learner, I’m not scared to say what I want to say even if it’s full of crap (Aute, Year 11).

As long as you have grasped the problem-solving skills to do Maths and Science you’ll be sweet as. Have no problem in Maths and Science ‘cause they’re straight forward. My problem is developing discussion of Social Sciences or English concepts and stuff especially when the teacher tells you to discuss something and give examples. I can do it. I’m learning how to think and relate to my previous language (Moli, Year 11).

I learn and remember a lot of things by doing them more than two or three times. Lab experiments and problem-solving exercises are choice, but when the teacher tells you to write an essay for English and build a logical argument, far out I’m stumped.... Sometimes the teacher tells me that I’m going in circles, yeah, whatever! That’s why it’s good to discuss stuff in groups first so you can scab ideas from other students (Ata, Year 11).

It’s hard to remember everything. I’m not good in remembering stuff. I can only remember things that I learn and understand and relate to. Good feeling if you give the teacher the right answer. Very often I use short cuts to solve Maths. But for English and Social Sciences, it’s kinda really hard to think, especially when stuff are new and foreign to the ears, new language, it’s just too much. I like group work ‘cause you can get new ideas from others and what they think is cool (Moso, Year 11).

There are things that I learn by heart to be easily remembered like the Chemical Periodic Tables and numerical stuff –like problem solving equations where you need a lot of practises to get the gist of it. I have no problem with thinking exercises like developing concepts and giving discussions of different issues. Mum is a teacher, so I was taught how to think and stuff like that (Pua, Year 12).

I can remember things after a good re-read of stuff like a novel or something like that. Can't really concentrate when I go home. I learn and remember stuff that I can relate to from a concrete experience, and sometimes in Maths, when I'm forgetful or have not enough time to solve problems, I use short cuts like I apply my own different style and rules to solve a different problem. Sometimes it clicks other times not so good. Reckon I misconceive and generalise too much (Teuila, Year 12).

Trying to get to do my best. I need more time to do any piece of thinking work. I'm good but can't really think logic most of the time, you know what I mean. Did not really experience structuring this individual logical thinking anywhere until two year ago, when my fourth form social science teacher assigned us to a task in which we have to use our thinking to identify and discuss and write about themes and concepts in a unit standard on the effect of migration. I'm trying my best to think in a logic sense. Reckon it's partially the way I was brought up, that is, all the thinking is done for you, and absorbing everything, whether you like it not, just say 'yes' and you would be fine (Losa, Year 12).

My parents are devout Christians, so you have to think what they expect you to think and it's pretty cool. I have no problem in learning and remembering not so complicated stuff. Can remember well stuff that are taught yesterday, and I can't store everything that teachers teach. It's just too much. I know what to do but it is really hard to explain. Like there is this thing that comes and goes, like reminding you to do it this way and not that way. I think it's a cultural or family thing. If not, it must be me (Iulai, Year 12).

Have no prob with Sixth Form. The only problem with me is lack of motivation, and too much peer pressure. Am not too bad in remembering things especially if stuff are related to my interests and experiences. I love my parents and really want to do well at school, get a job or somethin' before they get older and retire. To my parents, school is still the pathway to stable employment, and my role is to absorb everything about school knowledge, but I will also have to live the Samoan way. Still very hard to remember everything, sometimes it is there and other times its not. It's cool, no worries, if I could assimilate everything so that I won't have any worries for things like assignment and stuff like that (Eli, Year 12).

Despite the strong relationship between assimilation and pacifying, however, there are still difficulties for students. For instance, Samoan and *Pasifika* students have come constantly under the scrutiny of the education system because of their generally poor progress at the senior secondary level, based on recent studies and examination scores and outcomes (see Hawk & Hills, 1999; 1996; 1995; Nash & Harker, 1998; Nash, 1997). A combination of socio-cultural and working-class factors were reported to be contributing factors to the initial dwindle in the general success rate of these students. Simply put, these contexts are seen to be partially, if not fully, jeopardising students' ability and or opportunity to assimilate the classroom culture, especially the content of its curriculum. Therefore, as Samoan student participants pacify their socio-cultural position through apprenticeship in the classroom, they tend to assimilate some elements of the classroom culture but not others.

Through the apprenticeship process, students have come to pacify a place in the classroom. The nature of apprenticeship generates student's actions and cues, both verbal and non-verbal, behaviour and communications. It is interesting to note that various elements of the other two planes, guided participation and appropriation, are embedded in apprenticeship.

Pacifying occurs not on just one plane but on the three interrelated planes, namely apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation. Each of these is discussed below and is closely referenced to differing activities and the context in which these activities take place.

(1) Pacifying in search of place

When reconciling a place or position in terms of apprenticeship, newcomers to a community of practise advance their skill and understanding through participation with others in culturally organised activities (Bruner, 1983; Dewey, 1916; Goody, 1989; John-Steiner, 1985; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1990). It is important at this point to show how Samoan students pacifying a place in the classroom community. This can be seen as the processing of identity formation from interactions in the culturally structured activities of the classroom community.

The two groups, Year 11 and Year 12, were analysed on the apprenticeship plane in terms of both teacher-student dyads and student participants and their peers shared role and endeavour towards accomplishing a common goal in each unit. Observing small groups, it became apparent that most of the participants utilised their closely knit and trusting relationship with peers as the number one resource to understand the subject content and to share their mixed feelings. Additionally, student participants resorted to peers and peer networks, particularly with students that are more able, to see how their peers made sense of the activity. Samoan participants' strong socio-cultural home orientation enhanced their interpersonal engagements and arrangements in which they engaged in culturally organised activity of the classroom in which apprentices become responsible participants. Nevertheless, the majority of Samoan students continued to value the student-teacher dyads as the only way of getting closer to assimilating the teacher's knowledge.

I observed two groups of students, four from Year 11 and five from Year 12, in subjects such as English, Maths, Social Science and Science. The two groups were, in fact, newcomers to these phases of secondary education. They were encouraged by teachers to work cooperatively with their peers in classroom learning in order to stimulate one another to accomplish their shared goals and endeavours. Nudging, slapping, smacking and tapping on each other's back were some of the varied interactions used by both groups. By drawing on Rogoff and Lave's argument that the mind and social interaction constitute each other, I became aware that "change" occurred during different experiments in Science and Biology when the science teachers and student participants engaged and interacted, as outlined below:

Year 11 Science

At the onset of a Year 11 unit entitled "Force and Acceleration", the science teacher briefly completes some housekeeping events before she introduces and explains what the lesson entails. In a lecturing position, the teacher explains the lesson's different steps, sets up the equipment and demonstrates the way the experiment should be carried out and then provides the 14 students with equipment and the lesson's worksheet. During the process, both the students and teacher collaborate, reciprocate

and corroborate information, and the teacher periodically confirms and verifies the relevant information embedded in student participants' previous knowledge evident in their responses.

At this point, the four student participants, who seem subdued at the beginning of the class, have developed mutual rapport with the teacher and other students. In this way, student participants have come to reconcile their position in the School Certificate science class, through their active participation and some self-initiated basic questions regarding the worksheet. After 30 minutes, student participants manage to operate expertly on their own, [re]setting the apparatus and repeating the experiment for each of the 5 masses to familiarise themselves with the experiment's procedures and also to gain an understanding of the concepts of force and acceleration. Interestingly, students encounter the two concepts but recognise neither the concepts' significance nor their daily presence in their everyday lives until the teacher briefly explains their essence and writes on the board the equation: $\text{Force} = \text{mass} \times \text{acceleration}$. In a one-hour class, not only did the teacher closely assist students' by setting up the apparatus and demonstrating the experiments but she also relates it to everyday life of the students.

Year 11 Science Worksheet for Lab on Force and Acceleration:

- Use five different falling masses-pencil case, book, some masses will be supplied. (remember $\text{Force} = 10X$ the mass used)
- You may need to secure the pulley with the clamp of the clamp stand
- When the apparatus is set up, all the mass will fall pulling the trolley with it. Catch the trolley before it flies off the bench.
- Record the time the falling mass takes to fall to the floor (in seconds) and the height that the falling mass fell (in meters).
- Repeat the above steps for the five different masses

Questions:

- (1) Use equation $F = ma$ to calculate what the force should have been for each of the five masses. It is the same as the actual force used in each case.

- (2) Do you believe the equation $F=ma$ has worked in this experiment?
- (3) What problems did you come across in this experiment?
- (4) How could you improve this experiment and make it better next time

Comments

Fifteen minutes before the end of the one-hour unit, the four Year 11 student participants successfully completed the experiment. The two boys were able to understand and solve the equations. However, it took sometime for the two girls to familiarise themselves with the principles behind the equations, and although they managed to 'learn the ropes' with the help of the teacher, they still could not see how to solve the different equations for different masses. The teacher struggled to simplify the process on the board, despite the use of many examples. Interestingly, the students asked the teacher to explain why the result of their calculation was always wrong. The teacher simply replied, "you are not following the rules and written formula". Aute's aside was striking, "*O ai e oga ia formula?*" (Whose formula is it anyway?) I gained the impression at the time that this remark came out of both Aute's sense of humour and frustration. Because the two girls confused one another due to their miscalculations of and misconceptions about different steps of the formula, it could be seen that their pairing merely escalated their confusion. In their struggle, Aute and Moli manipulated various combinations to try to get closer to the answer on the board. "Something's not right here," Aute exclaimed. Toward the end of the lesson, the two girls slowly eased their fear as they mastered particular science problem-solving skills. Like Ata and Moso, Aute and Teuila managed to interact cooperatively with other students and the teacher. The mutual rapport between them encouraged a sense of individual responsibility to contribute positively to group and class activities' objectives. The four students' orientation of "shared roles" in carrying out tasks at home reinforced their progress not only through the practises of the science activity, but the contextual milieu in which these practises occur.

Year 12 Biology

Out of a class of twenty five students, five Samoan Year 12 student participants are involved in a Biology unit standard titled "Phyla of animals and the Food Web". The

teacher arrives carrying all manner of resources, including a large poster of lake organisms and their feeding requirements. The science teacher briefly explains the functions and rituals typical of lake organisms. For the sake of simplicity, she reduces the list to only a dozen from thousands of different species. When the teacher finishes her presentation, she gives out the excerpt containing students' task. Instructions on what to do in the excerpt are self-explanatory. She reads out the list from the notes on overhead transparencies. The teacher periodically poses questions: "What does P stand for?" Two boys seated at the back row chorus "Producer". "What about C? Put your hand up if you know the answer." Pua puts her hand up and responds "Carnivore". The teacher encourages students to work cooperatively in groups (the norm for effective output), constructing their samples of the food web before they attempt to do the task on their own. The five participants enjoy this opportunity to 'pick brains', share ideas and analyse what others have to say.

The noise was unbearable and the teacher periodically stops to discipline students: "Be quiet". The five student participants blend in well with the rest of the class. When I caught up with Eli and Iulai they said the same thing: We prefer to be treated equally like the rest of the students. Nevertheless, the two boys have instinctively or rather intuitively detected that they were being singled out by the way the teacher phrased her questions. The teacher, after canvassing the room, approaches the two boys and says: "Let's hear what Iulai has to say about his food chain." When Iulai responds that he has not finished, the teacher shifts to Eli. "What about you, Eli, what have you got?" The two boys are dumbfounded, staring at their unfinished food chains. I talked to the teacher after the lesson, and she said that very often she encouraged Samoan students to be assertive and positive about their learning.

Comments

Sixth form students have the privilege of being called senior students. This was an unspoken feature of every sixth formers life, which the five participants take pride in, as they always see it as both 'cool' and a sign of status. While the amount of the internally-assessed workload is obviously too intense, student participants were very moderate about it: "There is enough time to do the work, because we don't have to study for heaps of exams." At this level, students are encouraged to engage in deep

and logical thinking. The girls were more vocal than the boys during learning processes, especially when the teacher took centre stage lecturing and disciplining sixth form students. Unlike the group in Year 11, the student participants in Year 12 were more conservative and withdrawn. I caught up with Teuila and Pua after the class and they said that they were expected to be good role models for the Juniors, third and fourth formers. They also said that in sixth form everyone has to show a lot of dedication, commitment and perseverance. Student participants were also expected to blend in and comply with the sixth form culture. Losa said that the intensity of the workload has driven most students towards individualism. Losa further commented that Pua and Teuila were always ‘hanging around’ with their *palagi* friends. She felt that was part of the reason why they were brighter than most of them, although she indicated that she preferred hanging around the group she called the “Sa’s”. “We pride in our learning and education and that’s just cool because we are proud of ourselves and our families are also proud of us. We have come a long way and getting this far is just cool, because we earn ourselves, our parents and community a sense of respect and dignity,” said Eli. The group maintained that their quietness and modest behaviour did not mean that they are not learning. Students appreciated the close assistance provided by the teacher at every part of the lesson. As a result, they were able to tackle and master the skills needed in science problem-solving. These skills were upgraded through constant practise and confirmation with the teacher. Students reported that they contemplated what was talking about before they worked closely with the teacher, following her guidance systematically through instructions until they could grasp the main themes and concepts:

I feel good and confident and safe learning and taking my place in a classroom when I know that I have a good relationship with the teacher and the rest of the class. I know what the teacher thinks of me. She wants me to succeed and that and I respect that in her. Good to know that there is a network of support in the classroom, it kind of gives you the motivation to develop your potential, and getting new stuff from you peers and classmates (Eli, Year 12).

Drawing on pacifying in the apprenticeship process, this subsection has described what took place in participants’ Year 11 Science & Year 12 Biology classes. The description depicted the classroom structural organisation and the changes involved in classroom practises with specific reference to individual students participants, their

peers and classmates, who all shared the same educational goal. Through the apprenticeship plane, I became aware of what took place and how Years 11 & 12 newcomers, such as the nine participants, reconciled their position in the classroom community.

(2) Pacifying in student-teacher dyads

Some students' understanding of the world match more easily with those of the teachers (Jones 1991, p.115)

Student-teacher dyads can be best understood by considering, firstly, parent-student/expert-novice dyads in the Samoan home milieu. In Samoan early childhood socialisation, everything transmitted, assimilated or learned (concrete and abstract) was channelled through the parent/adult expert-child or multiparty dyads. To illustrate the expert-novice relationship further, I draw on traditional Samoan knowledge of house building, boat making and so on. The "*matua of faiva*" (house builder or boat maker), irrespective of their prior knowledge, would always seek advice, guidance and expertise from elders at the beginning, during and after a complex task. Samoan parents and elders remain the bearers of the right knowledge and wisdom in the expert-novice dyads within the Samoan context. As the novice or fledgling builder gradually assumes expertise, he/she remains submitted to the close supervision and guidance of mature experts.

On entry to the senior level of the secondary school, Samoan students continue in their pursuit of common education endeavours and information seeking, although the relationship has shifted to expert-novice or teacher-students dyads. Detaching or divorcing from the unspoken contract of such novice-expert dyads and transcending their passivity in order to foster individual thinking and learning was undoubtedly difficult for the majority of Samoan students. Reflecting on this notion the majority of student participants, irrespective of their senior status, continued to "wait" for the teacher-directed instructions of "what to do?", "how to do it?" and "how to reach the right answer?" However, this was not what the teacher expected of students at this level:

Think! (pointing to head), you should think and act like senior students. You need to prioritise where you are at with your “assigned projects.” You also need to prioritise your time, responsibility and, please, do take positive action in your individual learning, use small group discussion to stimulate your individual thinking. Remember, you are the sole critic of your individual work before it is submitted for final grade evaluation. So take some time and really think about it. I am not going to stand here and spoon-feed you and see that everything is in place (Year 12 English teacher).

Most of the students were viewed as wanting to be ‘spoon fed’ by the teacher. This saw students gravitating towards the teacher, particularly when she actually participated in problem-solving tasks. Student-teacher dyads were effective in stimulating “pleasant gestures” and “good rapport” in social interactions. Different strategies were always explored and employed in problem-solving tasks during teacher-student dyads. While these were rewarding for some students when they undertook individual tasks, others were still uncertain and doubtful. This uncertainty led to students’ questions to teachers, regardless of whether the teacher had thoroughly covered the information, as the following example shows:

Year 11 Science: Force and Acceleration:

Aute: Excuse Miss, How do you calculate force?

Teacher: If you had listened, you would be able to know. Read the work sheet.

Aute: Do you want me to read it out?

Teacher: No! You read in quietly to yourself

Aute: (Chats with Moli trying to figure out what to do). Miss, can you help us with this (tying the string and setting up experiment)

Teacher: (Intervenes, sets up the experiment, tying the string to pulley and trolley) Didn’t you go to boy scouts or rather a girl scouts?

Aute: Girls can’t tie that kinda knot

Teacher: Do the same for the five masses

Aute: Do the whole experiment all over again five times, far out

Teacher: I want all trolleys, weights and strings neatly placed in different boxes when you finish

Aute: Miss, can you help us solve this one

Teacher (approaches): You do the same as you did for the first calculation.

Aute: We’re not really maths geeks

Teacher: It is very simple, you’ve got the formula right in front of you and an example. Can’t you follow simple instructions?

Aute: Yeah right... whatever!

Teacher: (worked out calculations on board, randomly asked student to give her measurements of different masses) **What are we finding out?**

Aute (the bell sounds): **Miss the bell has gone. Where do you want us to put these?**

Teacher: **Do I have to tell you again-in the boxes**

Aute: **Everything?**

Teacher: **Everything**

Teacher: **No one is going to leave if you don't answer what we're after?**

Ata: (starting to pack away equipment) **We are finding the number of times the weight didn't move.**

Teacher: **Very good! If you like, you can do this at home using different masses. Don't forget to do calculations.**

Teacher: **You may go now.**

In the above science experiment, apprenticeship is evident through the classroom structure and cultural tools employed such as string, pulley, trolley masses, pens and books. It shows the activity as an apprenticeship which was focused on the cultural aspects of the group effort. It was apparent that Aute continues to depend on the teacher and others to provide her with different prompts for each step involved in the Force and Acceleration Experiment. This type of behaviour invokes a sense of coalescence, a safe place in the classroom and close relationships with the teacher.

Pacifying in apprenticeship relates to dedication, coalescence, feigning, acceptance, simulations and sense of humour and crafting which will be discussed in the following sections.

(3) Pacifying in dedication

Year 11 & Year 12 students were expected to at least show dedication and commitment during classroom activities. They were encouraged by teachers on the merit of their status as senior students, School Certificate candidates and/or Sixth Form Certificate candidates. I felt the pride in almost every student sitting in the classrooms. I talked to both groups about the issue of dedication and commitment, and the majority related and justified their dedication to the road paved by their parents and those who have gone before them. Migration and working class status were at issue in students' justification of their 'drive' or dedication. Through

pacifying in apprenticeship, a student participant would have to develop a sense of dedication and commitment. Dedication, according to Iulai, entailed patience, tolerance, toughness (both physical and mental), endurance, consistency, respect, and dignity for others. Similarly, According to Eli: “I have learned to follow what/how the teachers want us to do different tasks. It was very hard for me as I learned everything in the hard way, relying on the teacher to give me tips to work out a lot of hard stuff. I guess it was my total determination and dedication (Eli, Year 12).” Eli’s Maths teacher commended him for his dedication and hard work. She also felt that Eli was a tolerant and very quiet young man, who effectively employed the cooperative small group discussion to unlock his learning potential.

(4) Pacifying in coalescence

Although Samoan students were encouraged to disband from groups or small clusters during classroom activities so that they can construct their own individual thinking and logical reasoning, they continued to prefer coalescence to individualism. Through apprenticeship in learning activities, in which participants and their peers collaborated and students banded or joined together to contribute to discussions to arrive at some shared outcomes. This provided students with the insight to be successful.

Coalescing made students participants more visible. The perception shifted from the individual to the cluster. When in a group, student participants became more proactive in discussions of relevant themes and concepts. Apprenticeship work was more practical within a group level. When students were apprenticing a task within a group, they and their peers would take centre stage in the coordination of task completion. Cooperative learning in small team groups continued to be a comfortable zone within the classroom for most students in this study, irrespective of the level of difficulty of a task. As Moli acknowledged:

I look forward to going to class because I know exactly where I sit and I’m comfortable and secure sitting in a group with my friends. We get on well with each other in terms of class discussion and comparing notes for our assignments. I trust them and they always cover my back when I’m absent. We share everything with my friends, some personal stuff but not serious ones. I reckon we learn a lot from each other, when we discuss or do stuff,

especially solving maths problems. The good thing about my group is that we have some experts in maths and English, so we're not short of brains. My fear of failing maths will soon go away when we do problem-solving tasks in group. We openly talk about failing and passing, not that I want to fail, but it's good to talk about it now so that we won't feel bad when at some point we don't pass and stuff like that (Moli, Year 11).

Thus, apprenticeship was particularly prominent in cooperative learning in small groups in this study. However, some teachers continued to be wary about the notion of assigning students into groups of their choice. Teachers' principal concern was that too much noise and too many distractions emanated from social groups, especially those whose members knew each other well. Teachers always sought to minimise noise. In fact, this noise often came from simulations of real events and participants' collective sense of humour.

(5) Pacifying in simulation and humour

E malie eseese lava nota: (different musical notes have a unique staccato)

The Samoan people are renowned for their exotic, unique and raw senses of humour. One of the most important parts of Samoan learning involves simulations and humour, when the learners were either role-playing and/or re-enacting a learning situation in the classroom. This sits well on the three planes, particularly on the apprenticeship plane, in which student participants employed humour to pacify their 'cool' position and to make light of the often dry and abstract nature of classroom learning. Humour served to entertain, excite, incite, arouse curiosity and soothe boredom, anxiety and unhappiness.

The school's Samoan cultural group, which comprised the majority of senior students in this study, performed regularly during school functions and special occasions where the school was hosting 'VIP' guests. Samoan students' raw talent for role-playing, entertaining and crisp but subtle humour was embedded in their performances, which always amazed teachers, who applauded them after every show. "That was a witty and impromptu performance," chuckled one teacher, as the school community honoured the group with a standing ovation as they left the stage. The

volume of noise of the group, many of whom were regarded as passive learners, was as an indication of their untapped potential. In my view, Samoan students' simulation and humour were used to sell the multiculturalism of Woodland High to its potential clientele. Samoan students are collectively perceived as "entertainers" and their role was to entertain and amuse. However, this impression sometimes counted against them when it came to actually attempting classroom activities. Through simulation and humour, some of the more able and determined students would become the class 'clown' to disguise their academic potential. In so doing, they remained very much part of the group while being able to study in secret. This behaviour is also common in the behaviour of the minority students abroad (see Ogbu, 1992).

As simulation and humour were inseparable, they indeed enhanced the development of good rapport between students and others and helped to encourage collaboration in completing complex tasks. It could be said that it is used here as a craft to disguise.

VII. CRAFTING IN GUIDED PARTICIPATION

In effect, guided participation conceptualises how Samoan students fare in classroom processes, particularly the way they craft their learning and motivation. Crafting is the social learning construction process within guided participation in which the teacher and student participants both occupied centre stage. I have employed the concept of crafting to construct an explanation of how Samoan students nurture their learning in this particular study. When developing this explanation, I considered the 'nuts and bolts' of students' school and classroom life, including the actions involved in their interpersonal engagements with peers in classroom activities. Student participants regularly employed various strands of both cultural backgrounds in crafting their learning and motivation when engaging with peers during class. In the process, they made decisions about the allocation of resources.

My observations showed that students' perpetually quiet and modest behaviour for the greater part of the activities and lessons seemed to lead them to developing a mutual rapport with peers and other students through their social interactions during small group work. Thus, the efficacy of cooperative learning in small groups was evident.

Nevertheless, every student was constantly encouraged to work individually in terms of critical thinking about themes and concepts of the different subjects. Teachers explained that cooperatively learning in small groups, particularly sharing responsibilities in helping one another to carry out collective endeavours (Rogoff, 1995; 1990), was designed to stimulate the potential of students' individual learning. Stimulating individual thinking leads to students crafting their own ways of learning and motivation, based on their cultural backgrounds, values, attitudes and behaviours in conjunction with the interest relevance of different subjects. In many respects, students' and their parents' backgrounds account for the differences between student participants (see Ogbu, 1987; 1992). Indeed, crafting through guided participation was students' major means of striking a balance between their home and school cultures.

It was evident that the subdued behaviour and withdrawal shown by four of the students, two from year 11 and two from Year 12, was soon resolved through participants' social interactions and collaborations with their peers. Promoting involvement and resolving problems, participants and their social acquaintances, peers/classmates co-managed and negotiated arrangements with each other to suit the individuals' personal agenda and vice versa.

There were numerous variations in the nature of guidance and of participation in the relationship between student participants, their peers and the teacher. In both groups, Year 11 & Year 12, the teachers deliberately promoted interpersonal mutual interaction between participants and their peers. Good rapport between participants and their teacher was seen to be an effective means of stimulating learning (Crawley, Hawk & Hill, 2001). Teacher-students relationships were significant because, first, they remedied individual weaknesses when interacting with the subject content and, second, they promoted security and confidence which combatted students' feelings of anxiety, uncertainty and exclusion.

Thus, "guided participation", in terms of the interpersonal plane, was developed from the events of the participants' everyday school life, as they interacted, engaged and negotiated with their peers in the classroom. It involved tacit and explicit direct face-to-face interaction and sharing School Certificate goals with peers and others,

including teachers. Additionally, it involved deliberate and direct attempts to instruct, which indicated the direction or guidance students should or should not follow. It was common for some students to partake and blend in with the group or class discussions without contributing directly to group decisions. Every Samoan participant who was required to work on a report or a big assignment project participated in a cultural activity with guidance and directions related to interactions with peers, the teachers, siblings or family members and so on. This would provide the student with the help to set out to craft the task, obtain relevant materials and determine what model to use. This is, of course, a classic example of guided participation.

As passive apprentices, Samoan students craft their learning strategies during their shared endeavours with peers participating in classroom activities. However, understanding their shared undertakings proved to be an arduous and very complex task. I became aware that students rarely articulated their learning goals. Sometimes, students' subject choices and goals seemed to be incompatible with classroom tasks. Some students, for instance, spent time resting in class when their interest levels were low. This has become apparent in a Year 12 English unit on Shakespeare's Hamlet, in which students were required to do a "comparative character study" on any two characters. Most of the student participants in this particular lesson used this as a quiet winding down period or day-dreaming break. It was not uncommon to find students yawning, half-asleep, resting their heads on desks or staring out the window or even engaged in unrelated talk with friends. However, their involvement in future English classes where "language and culture studies" replaced Shakespeare was considerably different.

The analysis of two groups, Year 11 Science and Year 12 Biology, in relation to crafting in guided participation involved focusing on the interaction between student participants and peers, teachers and others. During Year 11 Science, the four participants, two girls and two boys, worked in separate groups where a confident student performed the experiment while the remainder watched. After the experiment was twice conducted, student participant took turns setting out the experiment procedures for what was to be done for five different masses. The teacher monitored student participation and ensured that everyone had a go. Students soon got the feel of

performing the experiment unassisted, collaborating with their peers when verification was needed.

In the second group, Year 12 Biology, student participants worked well in groups, admiring the colourful pictures of different lake organisms and trying to grasp the nature of their feeding habits. Their task was to construct a food web based on their previous knowledge and the notes on the board about different phyla of animals and the diverse nature of their feeding habits. Pua, Teuila and Losa enjoyed working collaboratively, and sharing information so that they all achieved the task's objective. The three girls also interacted well with others in negotiating the use of resources and other arrangements. On the other hand, the two boys, Iulai and Eli adopted their peers' strategy in dealing with the task, that is, individually constructing a food web and filling out the chart of lake organisms in the activity worksheet. The task was successfully accomplished, in part because of the two boy's knowledge about aquatic and marine life which stemmed from their interest in fishing. This experience seemed helpful for the two boys.

Overall, both groups of students fulfilled the general objectives of the two different classroom activities and settings. As senior students, they were aware of their responsibility to work with peers and to negotiate over the use of resources. Their learning incentive to pass School Certificate or Sixth Form Certificate was their individual responsibility, although the teacher was always around to offer support and encouragement.

(1) Crafting and motivation

Students craft different coping skills to motivate their learning. Motivation is an internal entity that arouses, directs and maintains behaviour (see Pintrich, 1994). Motivation is seen to be manifested in the classroom by behaviour such as behavioural choice, the level of activity and involvement, the persistence of behaviour and regulation of effort (Pintrich, 1994). My analysis of students crafting and motivation was heavily influenced by examining socially negotiated processes,

socially distributed processes and context specific processes, as outlined below (see Rueda & Moll, 1994).

Socially negotiated processes suggest that the intricate rules, norms and behaviours evident in Samoan students' behaviour were developed by the students themselves. Therefore, their crafting can be seen as a response to the needs and dictates of the classroom and home environments. To illustrate this claim, consider the following extracts from my informal discussions with Aute.

I don't wanna attend any "word attack" skills lesson. Miss E says that I haven't got the reading and writing skills required for SC and then she assigned me to that special group. That is where all the special needs kids go. I haven't got any disability. Don't care now, will do my own thing. Am too embarrassed to be in that classroom. My friends think I'm some dork or *sumthin'*.

The teacher said that you have a lot of potential, what do say about that?

Doubt it, (laughs) I know what I wanna do, and I know I can do it, but (pause) they always think I'm dumb 'just because I'm disruptive and gos[sip] too much, doesn't mean I'm thick. Mum wants me to pass SC so that I can do sixth form next year. Will do my best and prove them wrong, Far out, too much stuff to digest, not enough time (Aute, Year 11).

I talked to Aute's teacher who felt that Aute had a lot of potential, and if she had concentrated more, put her mind into her work and become less hyperactive, then she would be capable of producing quality work. Aute was also described as a very nice girl, but sometimes she had an attitude problem. Additionally, she used a combination of complex mixed verbal and non-verbal behaviour common to *Pasifika* students (see Metge & Kinloch, 1978), which she used to communicate with her peers. Drawing on the socially negotiated scenario, Aute's behaviour can be seen to have been developed in response to a combination of factors, such as social and cultural background, the contextual milieu and the classroom belief systems. Like most students, Aute complacently carried her parents' aspiration and dream of getting a good education. The latter migrant ethos was common to the majority of migrant parents throughout the world (see Ogbu., 1987; 1992). Teachers described other students as very modest, respectful and passive, and, like Aute, they were all capable in both compulsory and optional courses, particularly "hands on" activities.

Socially distributed processes relate to Vygotsky's theory that learning takes place first on the "interpsychological" (social) level, and only later on the "intrapyschological" (personal) level (Vygotsky, 1978). In this respect, children and adults need prompts from those around them to stimulate their thinking and remembering. In this study, students had a tendency to be forgetful and could not remember what was taught if a test was to take place. In the process of trying to retrieve information, the majority of students relied on their peers and others to provide them with hints or cues to stimulate their memories. The same situation was also true for assignment deadlines. This revealed that almost all of the students' long-term memories were relatively poor. Conversely, when I asked students what they learned yesterday or the day before, the majority would be able to remember almost everything, thus their short memory was naturally functioning well. In the Year 11 class, for instance, after the teacher had run through the lesson's content and tasks, I regularly heard students saying the likes of "What are we supposed to do?", "Do you have any idea or know what we're doing?" and "Gosh! I forgot my homework". Fortunately, some of these students' peers and the more able students would provide the information. The void left due to forgetfulness would always be filled with by students' ability to craft a suitable response.

The *specific context* specifies that learning and motivation are social activities which can be understood within a given cultural context. Using Samoan students' language to illustrate the dynamics of this model of motivation, it was apparent that the language processes (Standard English requirements) used in classroom, both in speech and writing, were incongruent with the verbal discourse experienced in a Samoan home. In recent years, the majority of Samoan students have become semi or fully-fledged bilinguals. Therefore, their bilingualism has benefited their own personal or group discussions with peers, but it has restricted their verbal interaction with others in more advanced discussions. Teachers perceived that making mistakes in front of the whole class was an effective learning strategy. However, the Samoan students certainly did not agree. Despite the fact that students' cooperative learning in small groups has promoted their enthusiasm and motivation to learn, they preferred to have an individual private verbal interaction with the teacher. Thus, to understand Samoan students' crafting and motivation, we have to consider the total elements of

their lives. Only through such an approach will we have some clear understanding of the involvement of students in activities, the nature of their crafting and motivation, why some persevere and others just 'cruise'. This begs that I pay attention to the nature of students' participation in tasks.

(2) Crafting in classroom tasks

Both life experience outside the school and the life experience of textbook and teacher's knowledge motivate students to participate in activities. With regard to the former, it was apparent that participants sense of "interest relevance" (personal, occupational, further training) of an activity or subject heavily influenced the effort they exerted. This can be seen in the responses of three students who exhibited modest and passive behaviour:

I'm taking PE because I plan to become a rugby player. I plan to go to the Sport Academy next year, will see. Doing PE at high school has taught me a lot. I don't get bored, hype up all the time. I'm pretty good, the right type of exercise, different ways to take care of your body, your diet, and the time that you need to rest and all that sort of carry on. It's pretty cool. Dad's dream is to see one of us boys playing rugby like other Samoans who are now earning heaps. I want to represent the Crusaders in the future. Big money, no work, just exercise, do your thing and do what you love doing best, seven days a week, its just cool. I also value my education on top of playing rugby. I enjoy learning if it's cool, but sometimes it's just too much - assignments and not enough time to complete them all (Ata, Year 11).

I am still doing Maths, English and Science because they are the requirements to stay in the Army Academy. I'm also doing Business Administration and Legal Studies to provide me with the essential skills needed in the army. I'm so far so good, but I'm determined to get into the real army as a clerk or something. It's a real cool experience 'cause most of our instructors are real army people. Wearing a uniform is cool (Losa, Year 12, attends Army Academy).

I've got the motivation from my parents and what I have learned so far. My parents have been working all their lives and now they're nearing retirement. So, this is my time as the oldest in the family, it's my duty to look after both of them and two young brothers. Getting a good pass in SC, particularly in Maths and Accounting, has given me the boost to go all they way participate in all my classes (Eli, Year 12).

I could tell by the way students handled tasks that they much preferred tasks that closely related to their life experiences outside of school. When attempting such tasks, students were more enthusiastic and motivated. Consider this example on “language and culture” in a Year 12 English class in which students were required to complete a ‘Character Study’ of a favourite person, celebrity and/or good role model or mentor:

Learning episodes in a Year 12 English unit: “character study”

I’m doing a study of Jonah Lomu-he’s da man because he’s the number one PI rugby player of the century, he’s cool and boy isn’t he a freak? I love rugby and I’ve got heaps of rugby magazines and posters of Jonah at home, so that’s cool (Iulai, Year 12).

I’m doing a study on Michael Jones because he’s a Christian and the best and he’s also Sa (short for Samoan). Michael is my mentor and I guess Samoan boys aspire to be like him. He came down to do some mentoring stuff at school and that was just choice. He is really cool and enjoys chatting with everyone (Eli, Year 12).

I’m doing a study on Bernice Mene. I love playing netball. Bernice is the first Samoan to captain a New Zealand Netball side. I’ve got a lot of posters of her. She is involved in a lot of charities that is why she’s cool and I like her for that, apart from her brilliance on court (Losa, Year 12).

I’m doing a study of my grandmother. She has passed away last year, she is my mentor and I love her and miss her so much. She was the one who raised me when mum was in the North Island. Every weekend mum and I always go to the cemetery to clean her tombstone, and give her fresh flowers and even talk to her. I enjoy reading the epitaph on the tombstone, and I guess I’m going to use some of the language of death (Pua, Year 12).

I’m not sure really, whether to study one of my favourite characters on Shortland Street or to study my favourite singer, Mariah Carey. I might go for Mariah. She is the greatest singer with a beautiful voice. Wouldn’t mind becoming a singer myself like her, am I dreaming or what? (Teuila, Year 12)

The above examples revealed that tasks were interesting, meaningful, challenging and authentic when they were related to actual experiences which were relevant to students’ life outside the classroom. Interestingly, there were always elements of superseding circumstances (chapter 6) that students experienced in their everyday life

outside school which were embedded in what they produced (for instance, students' cultural identity and their close connection to their *aiga*). Unfortunately, the characters that the teacher suggested and recommended, such as Shakespeare, opera singers and those from a long list of high profile characters that Samoan students did not know were not considered. I talked to Losa and Teuila about why they did not choose a Shakespearean character, since it was one of the prescribed texts, and Losa replied, "It is too boring and hard, it's written in old English which is pointless and frustrating to read." 'Hard' and 'frustrating' were recurrent themes of these English activities which served to deny most of the students the opportunity to assert authority and ownership over their learning in the classroom.

(3) Crafting with authority and ownership

The teachers had a broad range of opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of students. One common belief was that the majority of students have little or no inclination to learn. They were always perceived to have a lot of potential, so teachers encouraged them to use intervention facilities provided by the school. While the teachers were supportive and empathetic, their strategies were more or less exam-driven and control-oriented. Preparing Year 11 students for School Certificate exams and evaluating the assessments of Year 12 students for Sixth Form Certificate were the main duties and responsibilities of the teachers. However, they were very proactive in motivating and rewarding students. There was always a warm, supportive student-teacher rapport, which was always associated with positive motivational outcomes.

Student participants also engaged in warm relationships with their peers. Here I refer to Samoan students as obedient citizens of the classroom community adhering to the unspoken agreement/contract between their teacher and themselves and their peers. This meant that they tended to avoid being intolerant. Students cultivated and maintained a "cool portrait" at all times to ensure that the peer relationship was not violated. Being passive and modest was expected. Taking risks and questioning the integrity or intelligence of teachers would reveal their naivety or weaknesses. One

common strategy that some students (*s*) used was to answer the teachers (*T*) with 'yes' when sometimes they should have said 'no' as shown in the following example:

Teacher's questions and students' replies

T: Have you finished your home work?

S: Yes

T: Did you solve question numbers 10-15?

S: Yes

T: Did you watch Shortland Street last night?

S: Yes

T: Do you know why Alamein Kopu jumped ship or left her party?

S: Yes

T: Do you know anything about the treaty?

S: Yes

The above questions are examples that were asked for the sake of impromptu checking, gauging and monitoring the extent of students' general knowledge. Interestingly, two of the girls answered 'yes' but shook their heads from side to side and shrugged shoulders as if unsure. When I talked with the two girls at the end of a social science class, I asked them how well they knew the Alamein Kopu and Treaty issues. The two girls did not know who Alamein Kopu was nor understood treaty issues. Quite simply, they replied, "it sounds cool to say yes; sometimes others will look down on you if you say no. Pretending is the word, we can always find out later the answers to questions, but we knew the teacher would not pursue it any further." From this example, it is evident that these girls crafted their own responses based on their impression of what expected of them, and in turn feigned the situation because it would be 'cool' to the ears of the teacher and perhaps other students. In other words, feigning was a key part of the girls' coping strategies to avoid embarrassment.

(4) Crafting and self-efficacy belief

By crafting, students unconsciously learnt to take ownership of their own learning. Most had clear educational goals (since third form) which were set in accordance with their task value beliefs or the personal package they have brought from home into the

classroom. However, at the senior secondary level, students were began to question their potential and self-belief. One of the most common themes, which emerged from talks with teachers regarding what they thought about Samoan students, was their simple reply: "most of them have a lot of potential." The real issue, however, is how can this potential be unlocked? The key, it appears, is their belief in self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, according to Bandura (1982), refers to a student's evaluation that he/she has specific performance capacities for a particular type of task. Some students, for example, were generally confident about Science and Maths, but knew they were less effective in solving equations on the unit of "force and acceleration" or in the maths' unit on statistics and probability. Four students believed that they had the high self-efficacy while the majority of students had a declined efficacy. Those who were in the low or declined efficacy succumbed to fear and anxiety when faced with problem-solving tasks. Their self-efficacy was sparked by their cultural repertoire, especially their concrete experiences which resulted in students making estimation (Koloto, 1995) and misconceptions (see Sharma, 1997) when solving maths problems. Such external beliefs have played an important role in students' academic performances. These beliefs could be related to students' interaction with the subject content, which in turn influence their self-efficacy. This could therefore affect the way students think and learn in the classroom. Reactions, such as tension, nervousness, troubling ideas and so forth could undoubtedly have a debilitating effect on students. While crafting in self-efficacy beliefs worked for some, it did not work for others. This could lead to procrastination, not reaching goals and underachievement (see Covington, 1992).

VIII. ASCERTAINING IN PARTICIPATORY APPROPRIATION

The living creature is a part of the world, sharing its vicissitudes and fortunes, and making itself secure in its precarious dependence only as it intellectually identifies itself with changes about it, and, forecasting the future consequences of what is going on, shapes its own activities accordingly (Dewey, 1916, p. 393).

Ascertaining (or determining) in participatory appropriation processes encapsulate apprenticeship and guided participation. They cut across the phases of both the home culture and the socio-cultural activities of the classroom community. Samoan students' conscious realisation of their modest, respectful and passive position in the

classroom has driven them to clarify what is appropriate. Crafting in guided participation has allowed for pacifying in apprenticeship, without hindering the student-teacher relationship or unspoken contract. This has encouraged solidarity and stability in the coping strategies in response to the demands and dictates of classroom tasks. Samoan students employed ascertaining in appropriation to capitalise on their cultural identity and the 'student culture'. In so doing, individual students transform their understanding of and responsibility for activities through their own participation. Appropriation, as it is termed, in short refers to people's change through participation, and, in the process, engagement in subsequent similar activities (Rogoff, 1995).

Ascertaining in appropriation is defined both privately and collectively. Samoan students camouflage their overt enthusiasm and motivation or "integrated studenting" in order to promote their collective identity. Despite the precedence of cooperative learning in small groups, Samoan students continue to prefer individual, private talk with the teacher. This allows the determined learner to retrieve information in order to study in secret. Ascertaining in appropriation could be seen as a toolkit by which Samoan students remedy the mixed feeling, wavering or emotionality experienced by students in daily classroom tasks. To ascertain is to strike a balance between the individual and the group. Three types of ascertaining will be considered: ascertaining in cooperative learning, ascertaining in cultural background and ascertaining in student culture in the classroom community.

(1) Ascertaining in cooperative learning

Ascertaining in cooperative learning occurred through the perpetual interdependence of Samoan student participants and their peers within the classroom contextual milieu. By pacifying their shared roles, students mediated processes such as decision-making, shared non-verbal and verbal communications, which could be seen as cognitive development (Rogoff 1995). The focal point of participatory appropriation employed here directly deals with the active changes involved in an unfolding event or activity in which Samoan students participate in the classroom in collaboration with their peers. Samoan students, whose self-efficacy belief was high, were at ease and flexible

and hence sought the company of any student. The ones who always succumbed to emotionality preferred Samoan peers or other Pacific Island and Maori students:

I don't mind, whoever is willing to be in my group, that is fine by me. I'm comfortable with everyone. I enjoy everyone's input of different ideas and knowledge. Sometimes other students suggest some weird ideas, but they all help stimulate our thinking, I guess ,before we attempt our tasks (Pua, Year 12).

I prefer to be in a group with all the Sa's, 'cause we can speak Samoan most of the time and sometimes if we don't understand concepts, we discuss them in Samoan first before we transform them to English. I guess we have different ways of thinking, like the things that aren't funny to us are funny to them and sometimes when they debate issues, they are like teasing you, speaking right into your face. It's cool to be with the Sa's, but sometimes the teacher doesn't trust us because we make too much noise (Aute, Year 11).

I am easy. I can be in any group. You get new stuff if you keep changing your group rather than sticking to only one group. Sixth formers are a very sociable bunch. Most of the knowledgeable students enjoy debating issues and stuff that [you] don't know, but it's good, it makes you think, I reckon. It shows that we have different ways of thinking (Efi, Year 12).

Reflecting on the above examples of cooperative learning in small groups, we saw an indication that other students, particularly those from different backgrounds, by sharing different ideas, provoked students' curiosity. Students learned much from such group interactions. Furthermore, while they were dependent on each other for input, sometimes feelings of doubt were exacerbated. Before brainstorming exercises, students usually congregated in groups, discussed the topic, and thus maintained interest and attention through the entire class. On occasions, the teacher monitored group discussion and established contracts with students to urge them to assume responsibility for their undertakings and to be the principal critic of their own learning.

Students were given the authority to choose their own groups, the topic of interest, the materials relevant to their task and the methods that they would use. They were encouraged to relate any aspects of the task to their own experiences. As a result, students made their own choices which thus promoted their interest to learn.

Furthermore, the use of simulations or role-playing and educational games effectively enhanced students learning.

Peer networking, modelling and mentoring have all enhanced cooperative learning in small groups. Interactions with close peers, even those who have less understanding of the subject matter, stimulate learning. Moreover, students became envious or were inspired by those with ability and confidence to engage in classroom discourse.

(2) Ascertaining in cultural background

In essence, ascertaining in cooperative learning in small groups has its roots in Samoan culture. It invokes a sense of interdependence (to accomplish shared endeavours) family and community. Ascertaining in cultural background involved generating beliefs that assert students' sense of belonging and security in the classroom. This is closely associated with students' self-efficacy. Identifying with peers who have the same endeavour to accomplish similar education goals has become the stepping-stone for students to feel at ease and to develop a sense of acceptance. As one of the most important aspect of their learning, Samoan students' identity plays a significant role in their negotiating classroom tasks to illuminate their understanding of themes and concepts. According to Rogoff: "Any event in the present is an extension of previous events and is directed toward goals that have not yet been accomplished. As such, the present extends through the past and future and cannot be separated from them (Rogoff, 1995, p.155)."

Thus, participatory appropriation focuses on ongoing events. I analysed Samoan students based on previous experiences where their past becomes the present during learning. Here students were explored in relation to their learning processes (in their actuality and entirety) by which they participate with others, including their peers, in classroom cultural activity and the ways they transform their participation. Although Samoan students have numerous definitions of what/who is to be Samoan they were closely linked by their experiences of growing up Samoan in New Zealand.

Ascertaining in cultural background has seen Samoan students adopt different types of cultural images for ascertaining their dynamic identity. The most common type of imagery has led most Samoan students to adopt an imagined youth identity based on hip-hop culture, which originated among Afro-American youth. In spite of this, Samoan students continued to live up to an acceptable Samoan identity they are destined to follow.

(3) Ascertaining in student culture

In brief, student culture, as defined earlier, is the culture of becoming a student (or studenting) in the classroom. Student culture and assimilation processes are fused within the classroom. Correct uniform, equipment, attitude for success, and the school motto printed in big letters on every classroom door at Woodland High all played a key part in this process. Student participants were expected to comply with what was expected of them, particularly showing dedication and commitment at all times. I asked both groups of students what they thought about pacifying classroom learning, and these are some of their thoughts. One reply was particularly informative: “It is necessarily essential that everyone must learn to blend in well with cool and peace with the rest of the class and be prepared or at least attempt to engage in classroom learning.” Their reasons were subtle and they included such things as avoidance of the shame of being singled out; feigning and normalising the context; ensure their coolness, peace and silence by simulation and humour; flexibility in shifting identity; and reducing teachers’ ‘nagging’ and monitoring glances.

Ascertaining in student culture is a key part of the model of understanding of Samoan students as part of the community of learners in the classroom community. Ascertaining, in this sense, permitted Samoan students’ cultural experiences to mediate and negotiate their performances in classroom tasks. Furthermore, ascertaining in student culture can also be understood in terms of Samoan students’ attempts to strike the balance between the duality of cultures in order to thrive.

This analysis has indicated that subject content wavering is remedied by pacifying in apprenticeship, crafting in guided participation and ascertaining in appropriation.

These processes are interrelated. Here, ascertaining in appropriation becomes necessary for restoring the stability of and in striking a balance between cultural identity and student culture or classroom identity. Ascertaining remedies mixed feeling, wavering or emotionality (feelings, fear, anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty, self-estrangement etc.). Therefore, subject content and mixed feeling wavering were suppressed by individualism and assertiveness. This perpetuated the subordinate position of the majority of Samoan students which was facilitated by their silent status regimes as well as their “unspoken contract” with teachers, which were never questioned. Indeed, some Samoan students have undergone personal change which influenced their decision making and design of personal strategies that sought to remedy their subject content and mixed feeling wavering.

IX. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

This chapter has discussed the means by which Samoan students nurture their learning and strike the balance between the duality of their cultures of their daily lives and that of the classroom. The chapter began with a discussion of two types of wavering-subject content and mixed-feelings or emotionality. The two types of identity - cultural identity and the classroom identity or student culture, which demands individuality – were subsequently discussed. Three processes designed to analyse Samoan students “nurturing process” which were closely related to Rogoff’s three planes were outlined. Pacifying in apprenticeships and crafting in guided participation are strategies that were presented and categorised on the merit of the extent of social interaction between Samoan students, their peers and the teacher in relation to their participation in socio-cultural tasks in the classroom.

Embedded in the three planes of the socio-cultural model were both subtle sociocultural and psychological strategies. This implied that both pacifying in apprenticeship and crafting in guided participation were the remedies to subject or task content wavering. The climate in which such strategies were enacted was a consequence of feelings of nervousness, anxiety and self-exclusion.

Samoan students employed Rogoff's three planes to affirm their coping mechanisms in relation to the interpersonal and cultural processes of classroom activities. This leads to change and the development of mutual rapport with peers in learning tasks and the stabilisation of their sense of cultural identity. Observations on this plane have shown that cognitive developmental processes occurred as students participated in socio-cultural activities. Their participation led to changes in students' later participation. Ascertaining thus perpetuates the demands of pacifying in apprenticeship and crafting in guided participation.

However, I must remind the reader that we cannot construe all students' behaviours and actions according to the above explanation. For instance, there is always the possibility that Samoan students who have a high self-efficacy belief gravitated naturally to whoever they want to be with in cooperative learning of small groups. These students' different orientations have shaped their perspectives about what it meant to become a successful student. While very few were in this category, the majority were in the low self-efficacy belief bracket. These students preferred to be in a Samoan group to being in a mixed group. Some in the latter group were motivated and determined to study, but because of their close affiliation with their group, they can only camouflage themselves by studying in secret, or talking to the teacher in private. It was only natural that intelligence was the exception to these students unspoken contract with peers.

Thus far, I have presented alternative coping strategies to remedy the various forms of wavering. The words and actions of the nine Samoan participants can be seen as both conscious and unconscious behaviour which seek to counterbalance wavering contexts. In the following chapter, I provide some alternative and general conclusions about an emergent model of understanding.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *O LE SULU*: CULTURE [IN]FORMS SAMOAN STUDENTS' LEARNING: FINDINGS III

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant things about culture is that it becomes so much part of ourselves that we can no longer see it for what it is. The more familiar it is, the more it is like the air we breathe, the harder it is for us to see it (Nuthall, 2001).

...the territory of culture and learning is characterised by powerful psychological aspects: *a passion for ignorance* and interwoven with it *a fantasy knowing* (Jones & Jenkins, 2001).

...culture [is] the way of life of a discrete group of people including language, a body of accumulated knowledge and understandings, skills and values (Helu-Thaman, 1996)

As the above quotes highlight, culture, and particularly its close partnership with learning, is notoriously hard to define. Samoan parents and *aiga* transmit to every child a number of interrelated beliefs, protocols and values. These included the “*mana o talosaga*” (power of prayers), “*usiusita'i*” (obedience), “*fa'aaloalo*” (respect and congeniality), “*loto alofa*” (kind heart), (*tausaili ma le punoua'i*) (striving to succeed) and “*fa'autautau*” (expected status). Students believe that each helps them in their pursuit of learning in the school community's classroom. Every student naturally inherits and pursues the aspirations and expectations of parents who they so respect and adore. Living up to these expectations, however, is not an easy task, as it demands compliance to the cultural binary operation of the institutions of home and the school community's classroom. In recent times, students must also adjust to their dynamics and multiple cultural identities based on popular culture, globalisation and change.

At this stage, I want to reflect on a question that is central to this discussion: how does culture inform and form Samoa students learning within the social processes of the classroom? To provide an appropriate explanation, it is prudent to explore firstly Samoan culture in relation to Samoan learning and education. Understanding the pervasiveness of culture in students' learning and educational journey is also required. Furthermore, this discussion will shed some light on the realities of students'

everyday experiences in the classroom, especially how students engage in learning processes and what managing/coping strategies they employ.

What I want to do here is to raise awareness about the extent culture shapes and determines the way Samoan students learn and think when interacting with the subject content as well as with their peers within the classroom. I wish to remind the reader and educators alike that without bringing this issue to the fore, the “riddle” about Samoans, and perhaps their *Pasifika* counterparts, will continue to exist in a school system that inevitably [re] produces underachievement and unequal opportunities (see Nuthall, 2001; Jones, 1991 1986).

II. CULTURE & SAMOAN STUDENTS' LEARNING JOURNEY

A'oa'o le tama ia tusa ma ona ala a a o'o ina matua e le toe te'a ese ai: Teach the child the right knowledge and when he/she comes of age, he/she will never be able to forget it.

E iloa gofie le tama po'o le teine Samoa i ana tu ma aga, e aofia le savali, tautala, ma le anio: A Samoan girl or boy is clearly identified by her/his attitude and behaviour, inclusive of the way she/he talks and conducts him/herself.

E fafaga le tama a le tagata i upu ma tala a'o le tama a le manu e fafaga i fuga o laau: Human offspring are nourished with a verbal diet, while the offspring of birds are nourished by flowers.

Culture cuts across every layer and aspect (both covert and overt) of the total elements of Samoan students' school community. Like most *Pasifika* cultures, Samoan culture continues to be a ‘unique relic’ that permanently resides in the mind, body and soul of every Samoan. It is apparent in both the ‘cognitive and practical processes’ a person engages in. It is necessary for me to identify a number of cultural values that Samoans uphold and employ in their educational endeavours. In so doing, I interpret “*fa'asamoa*” in terms of “affirmed communities of knowing.” These include communities on spiritual symbolism, cognitive symbolism, traditional symbolism, genealogical affiliation, and personal, familial and societal links. In brief, the individual communities are part of the bigger community-*fa'asamoa*.

Thus the basis of Samoan learning and multi-dimensional development conceptions are deeply embedded in the values and beliefs of the culture. Inspired by *Helu-Thaman's* (1996) description of an ideal Tongan person, I have attempted to try and describe an 'educated' or a 'learned' Samoan person through the spectacles of my own experiences. He/she is "*atamai/poto*," the one who has the ability to know what to do and how it should best be done. In Samoa, both traditional and contemporary ways of knowing continue to run parallel to one another as separate institutions. On one hand, a contemporary/modern person is known to be *atamai/poto* (learned and knowledgeable), if he/she employs the *tomai/iloa* (skill/knowledge) in an appropriate manner that positively contributes to and enhances the stability and security of the *aiga*, the community and society as a whole. Thus the aim of *a'oa'oina/aoga* (schooling or classroom learning) is the acquisition of the *atamai/poto* (school knowledge). On the other hand, a traditional person is seen to have the *tomai* (specialist skill/expertise/experience) if one uses the *faiva* (specific craft/guild) in ways that are beneficial to the *aiga*, village and the community. Therefore, the purpose of the "*fa'atufugaga*" ('hands on' practical experimenting of a specific guild) is to get closer to becoming the "*matua o faiva*" (master builder, maker, tattooist, weaver etc.). While traditional indigenous and western ways of knowing continue to be separate, they are increasingly relevant to classroom learning in recent years. Whatever degree of credential a person may hold, if he/she does not have a sense of *fa'autauta* (expected status) and *fetufaa'i* (sharing and dissemination) of skill and novel knowledge for the good of everyone in the group, his/her knowledge will be deemed to be of little value.

The above account shows an all-encompassing nature of culture in Samoan learning and education. Culture has informed and formed learning in a number of developments within the lives of the Samoans, including status, prestige and authority. However, as *Helu-Thaman* argues, there is always friction between the culture of the school and that of the home setting. The meeting of two cultures, as she claims, is always problematic.

The well-documented 'mismatch' of the home-school cultural relationships in the literature will prevail unless radical change is encouraged. Samoan cognitive processes involve "metaphors" of mental representations and mappings which are not

very difficult to concretise but are incongruent with the mental abstract conceptualisations and discourses of the classroom. Metaphors play an important role in Samoan culture and language, just as they do in classrooms of New Zealand. In the Samoan context, metaphors are a key learning tool that assists students' sense of identity development and social and cultural learning construction.

I stipulate that teachers and students must make an effort to break down walls and build bridges in order to create a common ally in which elements of both the home and western classroom cultures could interact. In so doing, we would be able to see the transparent richness and the inevitability of mutual learning endeavours grounded within both cultures as indicated in their metaphors. It is only then, I argue, that students would celebrate the usage of their own culture to enhance and mediate their learning and understanding of the diversity of classroom cultures. On that note, I will now join my participants in their illustrious cultural learning journey.

III. STUDENTS' BELIEFS AND VALUES

Samoan students' shared journey begins with an explanation of the realities of their everyday experiences, system of beliefs and set of values, based on their narrative transcripts and observational data. Analysis of findings suggests that students adhered to a rigid instructional format when interacting with peers and in their negotiations with teachers. Samoan students' learning was based partially on their previous classroom experiences and partially on their ways of knowing. However, there was always an imbalance in the implementation of both cultures in the learning processes of the majority of Samoan students. Students' ambivalence, for the most part, drove their lack of confidence and insecurity to use their cultural values in their learning. Fairbairn-Dunlop claims that Samoan students follow a dual motivational goal within which the "*fa'asamoa* ideology based on the kinship values is still the central core (Fairbairn-Dunlop 1991, p.117)." In my study, participants assumed a different degree of dual motivation, based on their different potential scientific knowledge and their processes for retaining knowledge. Essentially a number of cultural factors have been responsible for Samoan students' thought in connection to their classroom learning. Firstly, on a personal and interpersonal level, there was proven support for the *va fealoa'i* (mutual respect of space) in student-teacher relationships or what I refer to as

power-sharing relationships in the classrooms. This was evident in some of the remarks provided by students, which are illustrated in Eli's words (over-page):

Eh! getting to know the teacher is cool. Hello... without getting that relationship with the teacher, you'll just end up cruising. Your mates will always be there for you, but the teacher has the knowledge of the subject and stuff. You understand and learn about stuff after the teacher explains different things for like maths which she uses different examples. You won't get into a lot of trouble, even if you don't talk, 'cause the teacher knows exactly what you're getting at or trying to say and that. So it's a kind of disrespect if you play around while the teacher is talking. That's the main thing. You have to respect the teachers 'cause a lot of them show that they care for us and other students, so its up to us to make use of that if we want to learn something (Eli, Year 12).

Throughout my time at the school, one significant thing that stood out was students' sense of respect towards the teachers inside and outside the classroom. From Eli's comments, we can understand that the existence of a relationship between a student and the teacher promotes students learning in the classroom. Furthermore, such a relationship also promotes mutual rapport, respect, empathy, and feelings of security and assertiveness in students. Having developed this relationship, teachers were always concerned when Samoan students 'slacked' about or 'bunked' school. Teachers sympathetically talked about the intense pressure from home faced by some participants, for instance, and clearly seemed to value their relationships with the students.

As Samoan students-teachers relationships strengthened, teachers reported that the students were more motivated to learn. Reflecting on older siblings or relations who have previously attended Woodland High, a number of teachers claimed that their close relationship with the students lifted their learning performances in the classroom and their progress towards achieving their educational goals. The majority of these ex-students either were completing university studies or had gained employment in both the private and public sectors. Thus, teachers were aware that the mutual understanding between themselves and students' siblings or relatives who had previously attended the school could influence the current students. As one teacher explained:

Samoan students are just very nice and respectful kids. Their older siblings or relatives that have been educated here in the past, and have shown responsibility and willingness and enthusiasm, not only during classroom tasks but in school extra curricular activities. We have a good working relationship with them, something that we very much want to develop with this lot. As a teacher, I want to see these kids developing their full potential by getting to know them better, and without developing a relationship with them, I would not be able to offer my total support. I want them to incorporate their culture in their learning. As of now, they have been very assertive and open about their inside and out of school lifestyle, what they don't know and what they want to achieve or hold for the future. Time can only tell, as I am wary that most students have been enormously influenced by change, especially the popular culture that they have become hooked on (Year 12 Maths Teacher).

Interestingly, recent studies (Hill & Hawk, 2000; 1999) as reported in a conference paper (Hawk, Tumama-Cowley, Hill and Sutherland, 2001) reinforced the significance of student-teacher relationship in *Pasifika* and Maori students' learning.

In my study, it was evident that teachers cared greatly about their students and wanted to foster a sense of mutual respect. For instance, teachers encouraged students to ask questions if they did not understand. During classroom tasks, teachers sometimes engaged students with real examples drawn from their own lives to stimulate conversations and classroom discourse. Sometimes this proved an effective teaching strategy to encourage students to share their experiences. Consider this remark from a student in a Year 12 English:

Man! Sometimes the teacher shares with us her own story about her family and where they spent Christmas or the weekend and stuff like that. It kinda makes you feel confident to share your own story and stuff. Cus, it's like saying your story aloud before writing it down. Doing this in a group is choice, better than saying it in front of the whole class. The teacher is just choice. She really encourages you to do your best by doing all sorts of stuff to make us want to learn or do the work (Ata, Year 11).

The above remark shows that teachers have been very versatile in stimulating Samoan students learning activities. Very often, teachers introduced a number of resources and activities to provoke curiosity, arouse attention and promote different goals amongst students. For instance, students were allowed the chance to select activities for assignments, decide when they would be able to realistically finish their projects, who

they choose to work with and what methods and pace of learning they were likely to use. Providing students with ‘optional choices’ in their learning, in my view, heightened their enthusiasm and sense of ‘ownership’ over their work. Similarly, the use of open-ended questions by teachers stimulated unmotivated students to learn, particularly within group tasks with their peer role models. Thus, the student-teacher relationship fostered a sense of ‘trust’ between students, their peers and teachers. Teachers and students both recognised “*va fa’afeagai*”(mutual respect of each other’s space). Through a socio-cultural approach, I could see the high degree of enthusiasm and enlightenment in students faces in relation to their position and status in the classroom. As the following quote suggests, participants’ were most appreciative of their relationships with teachers and peers:

Wasn’t going to do one of my big major assignments, but without the help and encouragement of my English teacher and my mates I wouldn’t be able to do my work. The teacher has been very helpful, giving me tips, heaps of ideas and that jazz, which me and my mates used to develop for my argument in my project. The teacher talked about effort and stuff that lead to success. Was just cool to have the teacher and my mates around to encourage me. They said if I believe in myself, I can do it. So, it was really a big push, and even if I believe in myself-dunno how. I reckon it also helps my own mates’ projects (Iulai, Year 12).

My observations of relationships between teachers and students revealed that the success of these relationships could be attributed to three factors. Firstly, the provision of enough challenging rewards, second, the promotion of belief systems and the self-efficacy of students, and finally, discussing the benefits of hard work or consequences of laziness. In so doing, students not only had the opportunity to learn in teams but they were also less concerned by competitiveness within the classroom.

Synonymous to the above account was the discussion of research findings in Hill & Hawk et al 2001, which provided a descriptive account on a range of relationships between teachers and students. They reported that students were more motivated to learn and more active participants of learning if they were of equal status with the teacher. In the process, teachers treated students as if they were of similar status, and provided them with a number of rewards and encouragements. Furthermore, teachers

developed a strategy to participate personally in classroom activities to provoke a good work ethic model:

I find that if I do the work with them, it shows them how much they can do and need to do in a period. They watch me and increase their pace. It's better than telling them to hurry up (Secondary Art teacher in Hill & Hawk et al, 2001).

However, I found that there were repercussions for any student who appeared to be closer to the teacher than others were. Those who were not close to the teacher suspected that the 'good' students would act as informants and provide the teacher with information about them. Furthermore, they disliked *fa'asususu* (milking of rewards) which were given to teachers' 'pets' and the favouritism and leniency they enjoyed.

IV. EDUCATION AND CULTURE: THE INTERFACE

One of my major aims in this study was to obtain further relevant information about how culture enhances the progress of Samoan students in their senior secondary educational journey. In so doing, I prepared three questionnaires: for teachers, parents and students. I gave the questionnaires to students at the beginning of the second year of this study, when students in Year 11 ascended to Year 12 and Year 12 students to Year 13. The majority of students had average or above average grades. Students were asked to write down a line or two about their aspirations and goals, who/what influenced their learning: for instance *aiga*, friends, peers and teachers. Significantly, students who showed distinct 'all round performance' in both exam results and school cultural activities maintained that their *aiga* had the greatest influence, with close friends and teachers on the periphery. Culture played a major role in setting student participants learning goals. It was important to note that students' aspirations were very similar to what their parents wanted. The long-term goals students set as early as third form remained, although they had changed slightly. The following illustrations from participants reveal that their aims for their learning journeys were deeply rooted in their cultural self-efficacy beliefs.

I want to become a teacher like my mother-but do a degree (BA) first at uni. My mother is only a preschool teacher. I want to teach at high school level so I need to get a degree so that I can teach a subject like Social Science and that jazz. I would not mind going back to Samoa, teach for a year, and check out mum and dad's *aigas*. I want to learn my culture (Aute, Year 12).

I want to pursue an acting career-getting a certificate or diploma in acting or performing arts at Polytech. I love acting and I know I can do it. If I don't get into acting I want to become a primary school teacher. I can teach kids drama and language. Two options are Tea Coll. and Polytech. Will see what happens after sixth form. My parents are really supportive of whatever I choose to do. They remind us of our culture (Moli, Year 12).

Becoming a PE teacher is cool. I want to do Tea Coll first and then do a degree at Uni. I want to continue playing rugby and at the same time studying to become a PE teacher. I reckon it certainly works for me. My dad wants me to play rugby and at the same time work in a real job (Ata, Year 12).

I am a practical person and I am into hands-on stuff like mechanics. I might do a certificate in mechanics at the Polytech. I heard from a cousin that it is practical qualification. Apart from cars and stuff, I am also pursuing a league career and I am determined to do well so that I can play in the Australian competition in future (Moso, Year 12).

My plan is to become a computer programmer or an accountant, but first get a good bursary grade. My favourite subject is Maths so I will have my options open. I want to do a double degree in Maths and Computing after seventh form. My parents are very supportive and I am determined to do my best to achieve my goals (Eli, Year 13).

I want to do law. My plan for next year is to attend Uni and do a B.A./LL.b double degree. My parents want me to become a lawyer, so I will have to live up to their expectations. I reckon you will have to rely on yourself for all the learning (Iulai, Year 13).

My plan for next year is to join the army academy. I always have this passion working for the army. I could work as a clerk or an army officer. It is fun and I love it and I hope to serve 2-3 years overseas if I get the chance. My family supports me and I will have to do my best to reward the support (Losa, Year 13).

I have set my mind on becoming a teacher. I love working with kids. My part-time job is nannying, so it's cool because I have got some experience. So my plan is to do Tea Coll for three years and probably get a B. Ed. My plan is to get a degree first before settling in a

job. My mum wants me to do whatever I want to do as long as I am happy doing it. At the end of the day, you are the one who suffers the consequences of not doing your work (Teuila, Year 13).

I want to get an A-bursary at the end of the year. I do not want to think about what happened in the past. After this year, I want to do teacher's training certificate and a B. Ed. My older sister is doing a conjoint degree B.Ed. /B.A. history. Mum is a primary school teacher. As teaching runs in the family, it is my sole responsibility to learn and pass my exams (Pua, Year 13).

Most students' aspired to getting a professional job, especially a teaching job. As most students want to move forward and forget about the problems they faced in previous years, they were forthcoming in outlining their ambitions. Furthermore, despite concerns about their less successful performance in some areas of the curriculum, due to lack of skills or self-discipline, students were positive in their responses to the questionnaires. The boys, especially, continued to articulate the coolness and dignity of learning which made it meaningful and worthwhile, embracing both its attractive and difficult domains. Becoming cool refrained them, for instance, from being called names like '*fia poko*' (trying to be smart) or '*fia palagi*' (want or try to become European).

Samoan students were always reminded of their culture which was not confined to the *aiga* or community, but also included their interaction with those in the school community. They faced and lived their everyday lives reflecting on definitive, clear-cut perceptions of parental advice, obedience, rigid discipline, spirituality, trust, piety, respect for elders and those in authority, familial obligatory duties, maintenance of '*va fealoai*' (peace and harmony in space) and refraining from mischief. Furthermore, students showed self-determination, patience to achieve their common educational goals

It was also evident that students followed their instincts and made assumptions based on their self-efficacy belief and experiences. For instance, in Year 11 Maths unit on Integers and Prime Numbers, Aute and Moli expressed the following opinion: "Why this and not that? Why is it wrong to have a negative answer when two negative signs are put together? What is the point? What happens if I minus or add a negative and

negative, a positive and negative, a negative and positive and two positives or a negative and zero?” These questions by the two girls were commonplace in maths and science lessons. Both girls, according to Aute, were not ‘flash’ at maths, which meant they tended to estimate answers and misconceive mathematical principles. They tried to manipulate different combinations and sequences of numbers to arrive at the correct answer, although often they got the answer from eavesdropping or glancing at their peers’ work. Interestingly, Aute and Moli tended to estimate the answers. For example, they estimated that the smaller the negative, the greater the likelihood that an outcome would be positive (e.g. negative 3 plus six equals 3). They were not alone in creating their own strategies to problem-solve mathematical equations, as other studies of *Paskifa* students have shown (see Sharma, 1997; Koloto, 1995). It was also interesting to note that the students had internalised the Samoan belief about the “fate of odd numbers,” whereby such things as leaving one blind shutter open, going out alone at night and taking photos in groups of threes or fives were considered bad luck.

Many of the quotes and examples that have already been mentioned to illustrate former chapters (e.g. chapters 6-8) could also be used here as they have shown the extent to which students’ beliefs and values pervade their participation in tasks, particularly their thinking and learning. For instance, most students were confident that they could handle subjects like Science or Maths, but they did not have the ability to tackle other aspects of the subject matter, such as Physics in Science or Calculus in Maths. Furthermore, the findings strongly implicated that the interest relevance of a particular tasks could be related to personal, occupational and future endeavour. Most importantly, students’ preferred to work cooperatively in small group tasks rather than as individuals. One interesting aspect of our focus group discussions was “the same here” or “same” articulation by students after one has said something. In short, a student confirmed what was said in line with his/her own thinking. It almost seemed to me that most of the students “thought together”. This is synonymous with Rogoff’s claim that mind and cognition are property located and exist in social interaction between people in the processes of the community (Rogoff, 1995; 1990).

V. THE CULTURE OF PEER INTERACTION

Peer interactions often took the form of more talented peers collaborating with those who were less able, in which all assumed an equal status. The majority preferred working in small teams or groups, rather than working individually. This unspoken coping response to the demands and requirement of the classroom culture was a result of three factors: first, students' equal status regime; second, identity/belonging and; third students shared endeavour or educational goals. According to the majority of the students, working in small group tasks provided them with some authority and freedom to organise and arrange their own learning, particularly the rationing of resources. Moreover, small group tasks were common in the lives of the majority of students outside school, especially in the home. This is related to the common sayings: "many hands will lighten a complex and arduous task" as "no man is an Island" which is summed up by common Samoan saying, "*E leai se isi e tu fa'amauga*" (No person will forever remain at the top of a mountain). These metaphorical quotes are widely used at home to stress the significance of collaborating and sharing information.

In this study, Samoan students normally organised themselves in small group tasks, which were made up of groups of three, four or more students, depending on numbers in the classroom and the preferences of students. While some had different systems of grouping, all were peer-directed, peer-managed and peer-arranged. The following are examples of students' thoughts on working together within small teams or groups:

I feel a lot better in small group tasks. I can relate well with my buds, share with them what I know and stuff that I don't know We're really open to one another and we hang around inside and outside school. We are all like similar when we're in a group, but if you're by yourself you're dumb or stupid or sumthin'. Working together is good with your mates, it's so cool, kind of chills you out, no pressure or tension. Manage to finish tasks on time 'cause we have some smart people, so good to knick their brains. In my Legal studies class we were told to role play a real trial in court. Man, I was so nervous, didn't know shits and stuff, but luckily some of my *palagi* mates have self-confidence and re-enacted their parts well. I myself decided to be a member of the jury instead (Iulai, Year 12 Legal studies).

I enjoy being in small group tasks. Me and my Sa friends have heaps in common, share a lot of stuff. We are like equal but some of my friends are smarter, that's no problem. We share the same name the "Sas" and same goal and that makes learning cool, eh bud! Just awesome. Like the lesson on "Guardianship." We learnt the meaning of guardians, how to become a guardian, the rights of guardianships, responsibilities of guardianships and that carry on and stuff. It's like adoption but not quite. Don't know if there's a Samoan word for guardianship, but I reckon the Maori word for it is whangai-meaning to feed or protect-far out. I know 'cause some of my Maori mates are being whangaied (Aute, Year 11 Social Science).

Makes things easier, solve problems quickly and less stress 'cause you don't have to respond to the teacher if you're not confident. I guess I learn a lot from group work, one of my mates simplifies stuff and that, he's great with the English and stuff I can't see, you know. So it is good. We relate to each other well (Eli, Year 12 English).

Small group tasks is the way to go. We enjoy learning together, more fun and less threatening. It's probably the best way of learning, peer network and stuff like learning from each other. We manage to do experiments and labs and solve equations together. Other times we contribute in reporting our results which is just great (Moli, Year 11 Science).

I think group tasks is just awesome. You'll be updated on everything that you missed from your buddies. Learning to solve problems from friends is cool without the teacher around. It's just like in the Samoan culture in which you do a lot of things in group. So everybody helps out everybody. You get all sorts of ideas to choose from and test against your own peers work. So whatever ideas you have, you just throw it in and the group will tear it apart if it's a choice one, otherwise you'll get it on the face. I enjoy group works, you don't feel left out unless you choose to do so (Ata, Year 11 Maths).

You're able to think properly and compare your ideas with your mates before the teacher sees or hears them and I think that is the way our parents learn and do things when they were students, and even now. Unless you're a brilliant scientist, then you can go solo, and then you will have no friends and you will be a loner or something. I trust my friends and I share almost everything with them. Well, you don't get anywhere if you don't share what you've got with peers (Moso, Year 11 English).

Good to be in a group 'cause we've got common goals to achieve. Sometimes we speak Samoan and role play, teaching one another and things like that and stuff like imitating different parts of the play we studied in class. It is fun and we love doing it (Teuila, Year 12 English).

I say Amen to group work. It makes you feel good, it's magic. Sometimes the teacher becomes concerned [about the] lack of learning when there's too much noise. She doesn't know that we learn through the noise, sure I'm not kidding. This course is too intense, a lot of note taking, too much to remember, but good stuff. They make you think and its work related, like different filling and clerical stuff. Group tasks help us finish our homework and class exercises. We can borrow and compare notes with my buddies. We socialise and interact with one another, that is the main thing, forget about trying to absorb everything (Losa, Year 12 Business Admin).

Reflecting on the above intimate narratives about group work showed how open students were with each other in their classroom undertakings. Group work invoked students' sense of equality or equal status regime which progressed to developing a sense of belonging. This can be equally understood through the three planes of Rogoff's (1995; 1990) socio-cultural approach (discussed in chapter 7 and towards the end of this chapter), and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. This reveals that cognitive development occurs during peer interaction in groups.

Embedded in the above narratives and collaborations are significant issues and themes about the essence of working in small groups. I interweave these issues and theme in the ensuing categories. It becomes clear that working in small group tasks has promoted openness and built-up confidence which allowed the students to develop a sense of belonging.

VI. BELONGING AND IDENTITY

Due to their lack of the cultural capital of the school, students' felt a sense of subordination and alienation. Almost all participants remarked that no matter how hard they tried, they never seemed to understand fully the task requirements of the classroom, irrespective of their fluency in English. In this respect, teachers tried to intervene by advising some of the students to seek help from the student learning intervention programmes, such as reading recovery, word attack skills and the ESOL unit. While students always claimed that they were fluent in English, the teachers said that they did not have the "Standard English" required for academic tasks. This simply created the impression that being a New Zealand born Samoan was enough to grasp the culture of studenting.

In this study, a number of the Samoan students who were New Zealand born and raised struggled to tackle academic tasks of the classroom. This was exacerbated by the fact that teachers were always faced with 'tight time' schedules for teaching subject units, and thus unable to spend extra time helping them. Teachers' recommendations for the students to enter intervention programmes were by no means popular. Most refused to do so. Students viewed these programmes as a sign of their unequal status, which made them question their sense of belonging. One student, for example, was told off by the teacher in front of the whole class and ordered to attend a 'word attack skills' session, and made the following comments which were typical of all the study participants:

Miss E (English teacher) keeps nagging me to go to the word attack skills session. She said that it would help me out with my reading and writing skills. I tried to tell her that I have already got the skills but she persisted that I haven't and therefore I have to go. I am too *ma* (ashamed) to go. Other students think that I am too thick... but I doubt it, I'm like the rest, and I reckon I'm better than some, yeah too real...hello, I am also a New Zealand born, a brown, cool Sa chick with an accent-do I have an accent-whatever? (Aute, Y11)

The above statement depicts both Aute's sense of equal status and sense of belonging. It is important to note, however, that she felt that she was still different from the others. This could be viewed as Aute's resistant response to the way in which she was perceived and placed. Aute's self-confidence suggests that she had the "right tools" (potential) and she was confident in communicating perfectly with the teacher, her peers and others. From the teacher's perspective, Aute's writing skills were not up to standard. She was perceived to be an articulate speaker, but a poor writer. Indeed, a lack of logical flow, disjointed arguments and bad grammar use were the common descriptions of not only Aute's writing, but also the majority of participants. As writing is one of the most difficult aspects of classroom learning, students like Aute, whose language background was not English, tended to have considerable difficulties in learning to transfer her articulations into any form of coherent writing. This frustrated some English teachers who tried unsuccessfully to teach some basic principles of writing skills, while some of the students were still gossiping or failing to pay attention. To alleviate the pressure, teachers often sent students to reading and writing intervention programmes offered by the school. Failure to attend these would mean a visit to the Dean's office, given his role of monitoring the progress of every

Pasifika student. Visiting the Dean was the last thing that the majority of students would ever wanted to do.

Grasping the right tools or knowledge and putting them into practise, especially in writing, proved too difficult for the majority of students. Students like Aute, who was both verbal and proud of her equal status with other students, attended the word attack skills programme or used the time to catch up with friends from other levels. This was noticeable throughout my time at the school. It sends a clear signal to teachers that although some of the students were born and bred in New Zealand, they still have difficulties due to their different cultural background. Only if the background of students was taken into consideration could their sense of identity and belonging within the community of learners be realised. Developing the effectiveness of the classroom culture as a community of writers, teachers and students are to “*decenter*” their own perspectives, and to construct shared and mutual understandings or “*intersubjectivity*” (see Nuthall, 1997). This in turn validates the majority of students sense of sameness, belonging and identity

Very often in their journeys, students crafted their own learning strategies not only to reconceptualise their ideas, but to [re] assert their Samoan identities when interacting with the content of a lesson. The logic behind such a move was that it served as means of avoiding a raft of negative stigmas associated with being a Samoan or a *Pasifika* person. Topical issues such as “othering”, “segregation” and “cultural deficits” were subtle and commonly embedded in classroom tasks, however, it was perceived to be the student participants’ responsibility to overcome these. Thus, most participants have adapted relevant aspects of the culture of the classroom to enhance their own educational journey, through their relationships with teachers, their peers and other students. Participants became aware that in order to maintain these relationships, they had to work hard to accomplish their common goals or shared endeavours.

Students’ cultural identity has at its core in the home’s set of beliefs and values which are deeply rooted in *fa’asamoa*. These beliefs influence their student culture and their participation with their peers within classroom tasks. The student culture, as discussed in chapter 7, relates to what students should adhere to in order to ensure a smooth entrance into the school community. As students entered the classroom, they were

assigned and designated to the institutional culture and were expected to negotiate anew with teachers and peers, developing strategies to assert their own needs. Within these negotiations, students exhibited the concepts of respect, obedience, kindness, congeniality, and cautiousness. At this point, the influences of Samoan culture had led students to develop multiple identities, which had become all apparent during their social interactions with their peers and other students during classroom activities. It is here that my discussion will now turn.

VII. THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING

Samoan students' integration of their home cultural beliefs, values and experiences in their learning conceptions and ideas becomes more evident by the time they reached the senior school level. I have shown that the utilisation of cultural values largely determine students social interactions with peers, teachers and other students during their participation in the social processes of the classroom. What I want to look at here is how students' classroom experiences influenced their learning or participation in Year 11 and Year 12 classroom tasks in compulsory subjects such as English, Maths and Science lessons plus a host of option courses.

During the early days of my classroom observations, I made a number of assumptions. One assumption was that students would continue to be hyperactive, talkative and troublesome in the classroom throughout the duration of my study. This was evident in my early contact with Aute, who cheekily greeted me in the first instance with question after question, while one of her mates kept telling her to "shut up and leave him alone". Aute's questions included: "who else is in your study? Are you going to be in class all the time? Are you going to help the teacher? What are you looking for? What village in Sa are you from?" I provided brief answers to these questions and hoped that other classes would not be the same. It is profitable at this point, then, to examine what really happened in the classroom, through the following examples:

Year 11 Maths

“This work is from your teacher who is away sick,” the Relief teacher says before introducing the topic “Numbers”: Order of Operations, Integers, and Significant Figures. As she writes on the board, her peripheral vision checks whether students are paying attention. Aute never stops talking as she tries to disrupt Moli’s attention by showing her new nail polish, while Moli is trying to copy what the teacher is putting on the board. Aute says, “We’ve done that stuff in fourth form, don’t worry gal.” Aute’s influence becomes infectious and two of her friends quickly drop their pens and stop writing. Moso and Ata are gossiping about rugby while keeping an eye on the teacher. The noise continues to grow.

Year 12 Maths

Pua and Teuila, seated together with their books open and pens poised, await the teacher’s instructions. The teacher scans the room twice. Before she introduces the topic, she makes some announcements about the student vandalism: “Remember, you are responsible for the desk you are using and, be warned, you are being watched... expulsion when you are caught. The topic she introduces is Trigonometry. She begins with a brainstorming activity of topics the teacher assumes the students already know: “What do we know about a triangle? What is a Pythagoras theorem? What does SOHCAHTOA mean? Who knows what a sine rule is?” Losa pretends she cannot hear as she copies down the questions, and moves her head from side to side to scout for answers, as if they are hidden in the decorations on the four walls of the classroom. Iulai and Eli are doing what everyone else is doing, copying down questions and some possible answers. The room is quiet as the teacher instructs students to get in groups of 3, 4 or 5 to discuss the exercise that she is going to put on the board. Losa is the first to move into Pua’s and Teuila’s group. Losa enjoys the company of the other two girls because she gets a lot of help. They help stimulate her memory which she says is “rusty.” The three girls’ mutual rapport helps them learn from one another. Iulai and Eli join two boys seated at the back of the classroom. It becomes apparent that students learn a lot from participating in small groups. They are comfortable working with their peers and immediately begin to work out the answers.

VIII. STUDENT FEEDBACK

From the above extracts, I became aware that students experienced learning difficulties because some were hyperactive and talkative, while others were respectfully quiet or completely silent and more inclined to working within the

comfort of small groups. Teachers' opinions strongly supported my impressions. I was desperate to find out from the students what they thought of their classroom experiences and why they were not developing their potential. One thing that came to mind was that their previous experience was incongruent with their learning. Was their unusual behaviour a contributing factor to the hindrance of their potential development? My assumption was that the type of behaviour students displayed contributed to their inability to learn or unwillingness to participate in classroom processes. This was of course inaccurate.

I decided to use a *fono* (small focus group forums) to investigate these important issues about students' classroom experiences and how these contributed to students' learning. Two *fonos* were scheduled, one for Year 11 and one for Year 12 participants. All nine students said that the way they behaved had nothing to do with their inability to learn or unwillingness to participate. Students enjoyed their time in the classroom. Our *fono* developed into an interesting discussion about reasons for different behavioural patterns and their preferences for working in small groups. The following key points emerged from our discussions. Firstly, hyperactivity and talkativeness were strategies for providing humour and to preventing boredom in the muggy classrooms. Secondly, respectful and silent behaviour served to promote good listening and comprehension. It was also a sign of respect for the authority of the teacher and developed out of the fear of publicly making mistakes. Finally, students' preferences to engage in small group tasks stemmed from their willingness to negotiate in task activities, to enjoy the congeniality of peers and to draw on the skills of more able students. These points are evident in the following excerpts:

There's time for everything, like we talk but we don't blast the classroom. We become loud in the afternoon 'cause we're still hot from our tackle footy. Group work is just choice and fun to be in. When the teacher gets serious, we all sit down and become silent (Ata, Year 11).

I'm not loud. It is the others that make the noise. When I say anything, my mates think it is funny and they blast. I can learn while my mates are making some noise in our group. It's just cool (Moso, Year 11).

I'm sort of quiet, but not completely silent. I respond to the teacher when I'm confident. I love group work (Moli, Year 11).

I'm loud and talkative, but I'm not thick. I go up and down the classroom, to make me awake, especially some afternoons [when] it is too hot and stuffy, especially when you sit in one place (Aute, Year 11).

I'm not really the talkative person. I only talk when the teacher asks me, otherwise it's cool to cruise with your mates and share stuff in different units (Iulai, Year 12).

I'm the same, I'm not a speaker. I can speak with the teacher when she asks me, but getting up and speak, nah. That doesn't mean I don't know anything. I enjoy talking with my mates and share our ideas (Eli, Year 12).

I'm just like any other student. I'm neither loud nor silent. I'm comfortable in talking when the teacher asks me. Not just jumping in when everybody is talking. Enjoy very much being in a group (Pua, Year 12).

I'm like everybody. I reply to questions and stuff. I enjoy our small groups 'cause we explain stuff to one another. I sit with some of my Samoan friends and its cool that way. When the teacher points to you, if you don't know the answer, the others will help out and that kind of stuff (Losa, Year 12).

I'm not silent or maybe I am if I don't talk. I speak when spoken to. I talk a lot in group sessions and it's been good (Teuila, Year 12).

In Year 11 & 12 Maths classes, students' developed a problem-solving approach which comprises concept learning, maintenance skills and learning new applications. Students learnt new mathematical rules and a range of procedures to solve maths problems. The teacher identified the diversity of individual's needs and provided a range of appropriate resources to stimulate students' understanding. Greater use of textbooks was recommended, given that they provided plenty of practical examples. Nevertheless, a number of students from both Year 11 & Year 12 continued to construct concepts and generalisations based on misconceptualising some rules and procedural concepts.

In Year 11 Maths, during an Order of Operations and Integers lesson (Basic Number Theory), the teacher outlined the order of operations for calculations (brackets first,

multiplication and division next, and addition and subtraction last of all). The two girls, Aute and Moli, continued to overlook the brackets and attempted to calculate an operation from the beginning in the way a problem was presented in the textbook, worksheet or on the board. Such miss-applications escalated whenever a problem became more complex. For instance, they easily solved straightforward operations such as calculate $8 \times 27 + 7 \times 27$, but operations such as $19 - 27 + (27 + 12) \times -14 + 16$ proved far more problematic. In short, the more the complex the problem became, the more the likelihood that Moli and Aute would not be able to arrive at the expected or correct answer. Another misconception experienced by the two girls involved basic operations using both minuses and pluses. For instance, the following calculation puzzled them:

$$(1) 21 - (-15 + -19) \times -11 + 13 = \quad (2) -4 + -20 - 12 \times 5 + (10 \text{ divided by } -7) = ?$$

I consistently found that it was difficult for the two girls to develop a clear-cut distinction between what they have already known, such as to begin solving every operation or problem from left to right, and what they were learning at the time. Furthermore, the girls constantly inaccurately manipulated the minuses and pluses signs, particularly when one side of the operation was negative and the other side was positive. There was no major problem with Ata, but Moso, like the two girls, experienced difficulty retrieving or connecting new learning to what he had learned previously. Discussing the problems they experienced within small groups seemed to relieve the pressure and tension harboured by some of the students.

Before I talked to the whole group, I wanted to catch up with Moli. My intention was to get Moli to talk, since every time I caught up with the two girls, Aute seemed to dominate. Here is what she said:

I'm kind of nervous when I see a long, complex calculation. My number crunching isn't that great at all. I have to do maths 'cause dad keeps reminding us its Maths and English, that's the way to go at school 'cause that is the most important thing for work these days. I'm ok when I can relate to old stuff for like fourth form Maths, but for new stuff I'll have more time. So I've got to start practising heaps. I'm not too bad for like numbers. Sometimes I remember rules (Bema) but I keep forgetting where to put the minus and plus stuff when calculations are harder and tricky-too much for the head. I know I can manage

a pass in SC maths 'cause we're studying together with my best friends sitting Maths SC (Moli, Year 11).

As the above comment suggests, students like Moli successfully learned maths concepts when they were associated with those she had previously experienced. While she could remember the bracket rule and the minuses and pluses signs in mixed operations, she had difficulties remembering and using it effectively. One concern of both girls was to do well in Maths so that they could use their problem-solving skills in solving science equations and for reading statistical information in Social Science, particularly the calculation of population percentages. Assistance from peers during small group tasks clearly promoted their enthusiasm. While the rest of their peers moved on to complicated tasks, the two girls quietly attempted more and more examples to familiarise themselves with the problems, and called on their peers for assistance when required.

Similarly, in a Year 12 Probability and Statistics Class, some students such as Losa continued to be frustrated about deciding when to apply new rule. Losa had memorised the formula of probability ($P(E) = \frac{\text{number of ways } E \text{ can occur}}{\text{number of possible outcomes}}$), nevertheless, she often employed misconceptions. (see Sharma, 1997) For instance, the small group task required students to provide answer to the following questions from the worksheet: (i) When two coins are tossed together, what is the probability that they will both be the same; (ii) If the die is thrown, what is the probability of getting more than a four. Her answers were half and one-third, respectively. Although these were correct, Losa's naïve predictions and strategies were very often unreliable when she attempted to solve probabilities herself, without the help of her group. This reinforces Sharma's finding:

Students who based some of their reasoning on naïve strategies or intuitions showed some understanding of chance and data, but they were not sensitive to other features of the data. Their conceptions of probability and statistics were based on representativeness, equiprobability and unpredictability bias (Sharma, 1997, p.165).

During both Years 11 & 12 Maths classes, long periods of problem-solving by students followed a brief explanatory session by the teacher amounting. Students were constantly required to solve problems by themselves, either out of textbooks,

worksheets or off the board. After spending long hours of observations in both classes, I found out that the majority of students were using their previous experiences of not only Mathematics but other subjects, such as Science and Social Science, to make sense of and to enhance the construction of their mathematical concepts and ideas. The following quotes from our *fonos* highlight this trend:

Tell me how your classroom experiences influence your learning?

I think all the subjects are interrelated. A good understanding of English is something we should all get because it's the language of communication and also we use it to learn every subject. For instance, when doing our "character study" project in English, we are encouraged to use sequence of events and the logical reasoning behind the cause of events, and from there we are to construct our argument (Pua, Year 12).

For me all the years that I have been at school help out my learning like from form 3-5. Now I reckon the subjects that I take interrelate to one another, for instance my skills in Probability and Statistics and other topic in Maths help me out with my Accounting and Economics. Reckon everything relates and influences one another. Like this knowledge is useful at home everyday when doing budgeting for things like shopping paying bills, seeing a doctor and heaps of stuff around the home that we have to do. So it's been cool, the practical side of my classroom experiences not only helps me in the classroom but outside the classroom and that's the main thing. Now my parents rely on me for everything 'cause they have little English, so I explain them things and stuff and speak on their behalf on many things outside the home. So classroom experience is useful at home (Eli, Year 12).

Sure, all subjects relate to each another. If you have any problems with homework in anything, then you can use your experience with other subjects. Like English influences my Drama studies, everything from speech to acting to learning, what you need is the language stuff (Moli, Year 11).

Same. I always do that if I don't remember right the stuff in some of the subjects. Even in tests and exams I will use what I learned from another subject and sometimes it works other times not so good. I reckon everybody agrees that there's heaps of important things that classroom experience helps or influences your learning in/outside the classroom (Aute, Year 11).

If that is the case, then what do you think is the one important thing you get out of classroom experience?

Let me think, there's heaps. How do I know one is more important than the other? Wait a minute got it, it gives you the "key" to learning and knowledge, and everyday things like social and cultural stuff and that (Teuila, Year 12).

Classroom experience helps you learn your subjects in the classroom and also what you do outside school, like part time work or doing stuff at home and things like that (Moso, Year 11).

Reckon it makes you think and learn whatever is taught in the classroom and what you meet outside the classroom (Ata, Y 11).

What things do you enjoy doing in the classroom?

Sharing and doing things together with your mates and friends in small group, like solving things in Maths and Science, debating our ideas while teacher is around listening (Losa, Year 12).

Taking part in reading and writing activities and stuff like doing Science experiments, and sharing with the teacher and peers and others any new knowledge, information and technology. They also include social and cultural stuff like field trips and extra curricula activities like fundraising (Iulai, Year 12).

From the above *fa'afaletui* (sharing of knowledge forum) dialogue with students, I became aware that classroom experiences and home cultural experiences facilitated Samoan students' participation in social processes of the classroom and shaped their learning and knowledge construction. However, Samoan students' participation in various *fa'afaletui or fonofono* and the rich information they provided can not be fully understood unless we examine students' practical role in their own learning.

IX. OPTIONAL CLASSES

Students were well aware of the coolness and dignity associated with School Certificate and Sixth Form Certificate. Passing these levels meant one would receive praise from parents, *aiga* and the community. Like the students, their parents could foresee the future of their teenage children. All sorts of careers were possible at this stage, both-blue and white-collar jobs. Apart from the traditional core or compulsory subjects, it was very common for Samoan senior students to take up optional courses,

aligned with their career passions or sometimes because of their peers' influences. New courses offered were attractive to students, particularly those with a practical 'hands-on' element. The favourite options of students in this study included Physical Education, Drama and Performing Arts, Legal Studies, Business Administration and the Army Academy. Students claimed that should they fail in academic subjects, they would pursue a career from their optional choices. Furthermore, they felt that a balanced education included both academic and practical options. They said it made learning 'cool' and it would earn them much respect. The following examples of my discussions with the students are particularly informative:

Tell me what you mean by making learning cool and dignified?

Ata: PE is the beginning of a person's sporting career, rugby, cricket, soccer or golf. Sports people nowadays are well-respected celebrities and highly paid too. Doing PE is pretty cool and heaps of fun. Reckon PE is real learning, 'cause its kind of practical, its cool. Like some people don't know, they think that PE is nothing, but I tell you it does do you good. It toughens you up, not just your abs and build but mental stuff too.

Losa: Being in the Army Academy is the best thing that I have done so far. I wished I had started it at third form, its pretty cool, eh. I'm using a lot of my Business Administration course and Maths and English are the core subjects. I reckon the army was created for the SAs and PIs, because it is a hands-on course. People say it's a soft option, but, man, it is really hard.

Moli: Doing Drama is cool. I watch Shortland Street almost every night and I have always wanted to play a part in it yeah... too real. It connects well with English, and it gives you confidence to speak in front of people. Before, I was very shy and now I can speak in front of many people with 'no fear'. We are encouraged to take various options like Drama 'cause the teachers think that we are born actors or somethin'.

According to students, option courses were just like traditional academic subjects. The difference was that they enjoyed doing their favourite options more than the latter. Most of the students could relate well to optional courses in relation to their social and cultural beliefs and values. Jones' posits this claim:

...Pacific Island girls' beliefs about schooling and their practises in the classroom [are] simply part of a positive attempt to take control of their particular historical situation.

Drawing on their own collective histories and beliefs, as well as the prevailing ‘common-sense’ about schooling, the girls actively attempted to form a reality which they considered to be in their own best interests. (Jones 1991, p.50)

The enduring belief about the prestigious value of secondary education in the lives of working class families is evident in a range of studies (Lauder (1982); Jones (1986); Nash (1996) & Harker and Nash (1998); Hills and Hawks 2000; 1999, 1996), which all show that hard work at school can lead to social mobility. This is succinctly summarised by Jones: “... it makes an offer to all; it offers knowledge and credentials (potential job qualifications) in exchange for ability, hard work and motivation (Jones 1991, p.50).” Such an ethos of the benefits of schooling heavily influences Samoan students.

X. STUDENTS’ NOTE TAKING: AN ANALYSIS

Analogous to previous studies, such as Jones (1991), this study found that Samoan students valued highly the ‘teacher’s knowledge’ and placed great emphasis on copying notes of the blackboard or from the teacher’s presentations. Equally, they were pre-occupied with ‘textbook knowledge’. The two types of knowledge complement one another. Nevertheless, very often throughout this study, teachers tried to prevent students from copying notes without providing them with a meaningful explanation of the content, for instance:

Year 11 Science Teacher: Do not copy down the notes on the aboard as yet. Put down your pens and listen. I want your attention not your bowed crowns. You have plenty of time to copy the notes down before the end of class. It is crucial for you to fully understand the task before you copy down the notes.

The above instruction was a common in almost all the classrooms. Teachers provided explanations before students were allowed to copy notes. Inherent in students was their conditioned behaviour to copy notes off the board once they arrived in the classroom. As students had an acute awareness that the teachers’ knowledge was embodied in the notes, (see Jones, 1991), they tried to copy them without being noticed by the teacher. The status they ascribed to the teacher has its roots in Samoan students’ social and cultural orientation. For them, the teacher was the role model and source of knowledge. Keeping a good notebook filled with lots of valued information,

illustrated by intricate diagrammatic representations or statistical data, was common to most of the students. They took immense pride in their effort to create a reliable notebook, which was laid out neatly and beautifully hand written. The logic behind keeping a good notebook was its easy accessibility for studying for tests and exams. Sharing note books with peers and marvelling at the different ways each student kept his/her notes was a common activity for students and their peers. The students and I discussed the issue, as outlined below:

Why do you need to copy all the notes down?

I learn a lot from my notes. My friends always borrow my notebook, especially when they decide to bunk class. It's a must, particularly if you still in doubt about what you hear in the first explanation. It's up to the teachers what they want us to get, but I think a good teacher is the person who gives out heaps of notes (Aute, Year 11).

Copying notes is the way to go. My handwriting is not good as it should be, but I always want to copy everything down so that I can use them in classroom work. Notes also help you out with your own studies; make you remember important stuff for exams (Ata, Year 11).

All notes are important. If you decide not to copy notes, it means you're going to lose out on most of the learning. You've got to copy the notes and copy them correctly or else you will be lost when rush through in time of studies. It's pointless copying notes if you don't understand them. Some teachers are good in class, but don't give out heaps of notes to copy (Moso, Year 11).

If you get all notes in your book, you will be able to read and read them at your spare time. Copying notes is just like filling your head with the facts, in subjects like history and geography. It helps you remember stuff that was done in class. Sometimes it's a good practise to speed up your writing, especially when there's not enough time to copy everything down. You just have to speed up your writing to get everything before the bell goes (Moli, Year 11).

Copying notes makes you learn and remember what goes on in every subject. If do not have notes, it means that you are wasting your whole day doing nothing at school. It makes you feel good after copying down heaps of notes. It's almost like you've got everything in your head, that kind of stuff. I also take notes constantly while listening. I reckon the notes depend on what the teacher wants us to get (Losa, Year 12).

Some very good teachers explain topics and stuff with heaps of notes. Taking notes and copying notes make you think because you are reading at the same time you are copying notes. Some of the sixth form students have different ways of copying notes usually in short form (shorthand type of stuff) or using numbers in different colours so that they can understand them easily. That too is good, but I prefer copying out everything in long form (Teuila, Year 12).

The teacher fills the board with notes with a purpose. So if you don't make use of notes, like copying them, you'll be a fool. You will ask less questions if you copy almost everything down. Like one day one of my mates asked about something and the teacher says "if you can read English, you will have no problem finding it on the list on the board". To avoid getting embarrassed in front of the class, for asking the wrong questions, you have to copy or take notes. Taking notes, especially main points, is the wise thing to do while you're listening and help you out doing tasks (Eli, Year 12).

Copying notes helps me think and learn about everything that is discussed in class in previous lessons. You know what to do with the notes, no sweat. Good to have something to do re-read your notes when bored in other classes or at the end of the day when you go home at night. I also take notes, rough ones, while I'm listening to the teacher (Iulai, Year 12).

Note taking and copying down notes off board are important in sixth form learning. It's just like copying down formula and rules for Maths and Science and examples of calculations. It makes you remember and while you are doing your homework you refer to your notes for direction and stuff. So good notes, whether they are rough or not, so long as you understand your own writing. Good practise for handwriting. Good notes show good teachers (Pua, Year 12).

Illustrated above is the logic behind copying down notes from the board and keeping a good notebook Copying notes was a preferred means of learning for these students. Underpinning the above illustrations is the notion of "learning as basically receiving, memorising and consuming the knowledge embodied in the notes (Jones 1991, p.74)." To students, note accumulation provided them with the ability to remember, think and learn and achieve knowledge. Furthermore, they saw that the efficiency of the teacher could be determined by the organised structure and simplicity of notes he/she provided.

While teachers regularly advised students to listen and ask questions if they did not understand before they attempted to copy notes down, they did not do so and thus did not always comprehend the notes. This was evident when students looked to their peers for guidance about the notes' meanings. Small group tasks were effective in easing misunderstanding about some sections of notes. However, having the notes for future study, rather than understanding them, was the priority. Previous studies, such as Jones (1991), highlighted students' attitudes towards notes. My study, has reinforced this finding, and it is my contention that copying notes is an effective coping or managing strategy to promote learning.

XI. CLASSROOM SOCIAL PROCESSES: A DISCUSSION

The examples of a Year 12 Legal Studies class and Year 11 Science help illustrate the significance of how social processes within the classroom impact on Samoan students learning:

Year 12 Legal Studies: Sentencing

The bleakness and dullness of the wintry weather continues to spoil the day. Two sixth form classes combined for this class. Six form students keep switching and changing seats as they await the arrival of the teacher and the guest speaker. The teacher glides into the room and tells them the guest speaker is running a bit late and they will have to wait for ten minutes, and if the guest speaker does not turn up, it will be a normal class. Before ten minutes is up, a tall, fierce looking shaven headed middle age man in old khaki attire is escorted into the room. He is the guest speaker, here to talk about his experience in gaol. The noise transposes into complete silence as the teacher introduces him. In his talk he tells them that "The worst thing is a strip search. You have to watch your back every time you move around. You are lucky to get a job if you get out. I have learned a lesson after three times in gaol. If you are in a relationship, before you go to gaol you must break it up. In gaol, if you want to survive you have to build friendships, relationships with inmates that you can trust. Some prisons are more dangerous than others are. The more dangerous ones are those

that prevent contacts with the love ones outside. I am lucky. I got out alive and are attending rehab now.”

Over the page is a selection of questions asked by the students:

Losa: Are there many facilities for rehab?

Guest: Yes

Losa: Were you paranoid when you get out?

Guest: Yes, when I'm on the street, I look around checking if anybody is after me

Teuila: What made you want to change?

Guest: I wanted to be with my daughter

Iulai: Were there many suicides?

Guest: Yes

Pua: Do you think going to gaol was a good thing for you?

Guest: Yes, I learned a lesson, I got burgled myself

Teacher: Part of the course requires pupils to evaluate the person's gaol terms

Losa: What makes you commit crimes, is it boredom?

Guest: Just lost my job, didn't have any money. I have just started a management course.

Pua: What was the effect on family when you got back?

Guest: Very hard conditioning to normal life, especially with wife and whole family The cops said that if I ever get burgled, not to consider ringing them. I got will and aggro

Losa: What were wardens like?

Guest: Some were pretty fair

Teuila: What is your worst experience?

Guest: It is degrading showering in front of inmates

The extracts from the lesson above which was followed by a lesson on evaluation report writing, showed that student participants developed quick rapport with the guest speaker and dominated the conversation. During the lecture, there was tension throughout the classroom as the majority of students were subdued. I suspected that this might be a consequence of fear and intimidation or primarily ignorance. Samoan students, however, soon broke the ice. I talked to the teacher and he expressed surprise at the behaviour of Samoan students. When I caught up with students in our usual chats at interval, three of the girls had had past experience with criminals, through either relatives or friends. This was a very interesting scenario. I asked Losa what was on her mind when she asked some personal questions of the guest speaker, and she replied that she wanted to make him feel welcome and in so doing, share his

real experience with the rest of the class. She also mentioned her experience discussing prison life with a relative: "I know he was in gaol, but at the end of the day, he is a human being, with some great values". This example shows how the Samoan girls, especially Losa, used their past experiences to facilitate the present discussion within this social process of the classroom. Furthermore, it illustrates the ways that learning and knowledge acquisition take place as social processes as well as cognitive processes (Nuthall, 1997, P.65).

Year 11 Science: Gravitational Potential Energy

The teacher gives out worksheet nine entitled "Testing a bungy". She strolls to the board and introduces the topic with a range of examples. The teacher reads from her notes:

Energy occurs in many forms, and is measured in joules, symbol J. Kinetic energy equals the energy of an object when the object is moving. Solar energy is the energy produced by the Sun. Electrical energy, energy, heat energy and sound energy. Any form of energy that is stored is classed as potential energy (Ep.). Potential energy only has an effect when released, and includes: gravitation potential energy (stored in objects placed above ground level, energy is released when released when objects fall to ground); chemical energy (stored in food, fuel and explosives); and elastic energy (stored in stretchy materials such as springs and elastic). When energy is changed...the changes are called 'energy transformations'

The teacher encourages students to use their experiences outside of school to make sense of the topic. Students call out all sorts of examples associated with their own experiences:

Teacher: Stored energy is also potential energy.

When the pen is dropped what sort of energy?

Aute: Kinetic energy

Teacher: Take an example of a wheel. Where is the chemical potential energy stored in?

Aute wants Moli (sighs to the other girls) to say what she thinks the answer is, but Moli giggles and shakes her head from side to side. 'Calm down,' Aute mumbles to herself and utters 'you chicken.' Aute replies: On the wheels

Teacher: No

Girl 1: shame (followed with laughter)

Aute chuckles: Whatever! Chill out, so what is it then, you cheap bitches?

Girl 1& 2 whisper to one another and giggle: You tell us (the feud breaks the monotony of classroom).

Aute whispers in Moli's ear saying 'the mongrels never put up their hands but...'

Teacher: Be quiet. Would you mind shutting up, the three of you.

Moso talks to himself and says 'Yes!' and he confidently says: Is it the Engine?

Teacher: No

Ata, while bolding and shading the picture of a car on the worksheet, says: In da petrol

Teacher: excellent, If it is stored in the petrol then petrol transforms to what? And when?

Ata (talking to himself, pressing his pen on contours of illustrations on worksheet): petrol transforms to other forms of energy as a car moves.

Front bench (3 students, two boys wearing glasses) choruses: heat by engine, energy loss to sound, heat is caused by air resistance, heat is caused by friction of wheels, and kinetic energy when car is not moving.

Again, the second example from a Year 11 Science class indicated the various ways in which learning and knowledge generating processes occur as social processes as well as thinking processes. The two examples show student-peer dialogue and their self-speech (code-mixed flavoured with expletives) or non-verbal gestures, which suggested the significance in "the transaction relationship that exists between social and cognitive processes." (Nuthall 1997, p.65) Such behaviour shown by the majority of Samoan students was always perceived as unusual and therefore a perceived potential hindrance to their learning. The code-switching and code-mixing of Samoan and English common to students was a key part of the communicative skills they employed inside and outside the classroom. The elements of the "foul tongue," "racial remarks" and "jokes" in both languages were effectively used to symbolise students' feelings and emotions about a particular situation.

Open-ended questions were common in the classes described above and particularly in the instructions. For example: "Why do you think Mr. Guest was a genuine person?" and "why do you think petrol can transform to other forms of energy?" In classroom discourse, the girls were more articulate than the boys when a teacher asked questions which needed interpretation. As the boys chorused: "one word sums up a long problem. Better to stay cool and say a few words than getting lost on the way." Interestingly, the boys appeared to help one another when responding to

classroom discourses. In so doing, the person who knew the answer either interjected or passed on the message to his friend.

Many of the tactics or what I refer to as “coping strategies” experienced by Samoan students in this study were very similar to those experienced by the five Masons girls in Jone’s (1986; 1991) comprehensible study of *Pasifika* and *Pakeha* students. As Samoan students integrated more with their classmates, they had the flexibility to join small groups of their choice, comprised of non-Samoans. In fact, Samoan students’ learning strategies were almost similar to those employed by non-Samoan students’ from working class backgrounds. It was amazing to note that, irrespective of students’ cultural background, ability and gender, the common element that bound Samoan students and other students together was their working class backgrounds. They could relate adequately to one another through this unspoken, intimate connection, and quickly established a sense of rapport.

The following tactics or learning strategies, which Samoan students used, were easily the most common. The first were “deflections.” This relates to when students redirected the teacher’s questions to avoid teacher’s further probes. The second was reflections/associations, in which students used their cultural or classroom experiences to connect their representation of images to answer questions or problems for other subjects. Thirdly, inflections, in which students craftily used different nuances, code-switching and code-mixing and shading their speech with elements of their Samoan-English bilingualism, which often confused the teacher. All of the three have their basics embedded in students’ cultural background and served to promote students’ social and cultural learning and knowledge construction in the social processes of the classroom.

I describe Samoan students’ implementation of such strategies as means of both challenging and affirming the system, particularly the classroom learning processes and the knowledge or “cultural capital” it [re] produced (Bourdieu, 1977). This challenge can be seen as a counter-balancing or coping act within which Samoan students engaged in order to get closer to acquiring the “cultural capital” of the school community, specifically the classroom. While educational researchers, particularly educational sociologists, have reiterated the school’s social and cultural reproduction

theories coined by Bourdieu (1977), none has examined fully how the “home cultural capital” and the “school’s cultural capital” can be placed side by side on a level playing field. I see that there can be a legitimate correlation between the two sets of “cultural capital”. Amazingly, one enriched the other and vice versa. Whether one likes it or not, the truth is that the duality of both home and classroom cultures continues throughout secondary education. Samoan parents and *aigas* continue to expect their sons and daughters to achieve the best education against all odds. In sum, the majority of Samoan parents are not aware of the current debate amongst academics and educational researchers about the ‘ills of schooling’, and desire only that their children receive a good education, as outlined below.

XII. PARENTS AND AIGA’S ASPIRATIONS

Samoan parents, like many *Pasifika* parents, continue to “*tapuai ma tui le mulipapaga*” (provide ultimate support) for their children’s educational journey. They pray daily for their children, and persist with long hours of work in order to ensure that there is enough food on the table, to pay bills, to contribute to *fa’alavelaves* and most of all, to pay for their children’s education and the demands and dictates of students’ popular youth culture. Parents also tried to carry out their ‘duty’, that is, to provide cultural, moral and spiritual support for their children to enhance their success in gaining the ‘right knowledge,’ as demanded by the world of work. The parents of students’ in both Year 11 & 12 all professed that the ‘right knowledge’ or the ‘right learning’ would only result if their children possessed a positive attitude, were respectful, obedient and motivated to work hard.

This brings the outline of the educational journey to how Samoan students strike the balance between the binary of cultures, when they interact and participate with their peers and others in the social and cultural processes of the classroom community. In this last phase of students’ journey, I will turn to some general perspectives and explanations to shed some light on Samoan students classroom experiences.

XIII. FURTHER EXPLANATIONS OF STUDENTS' CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES

You can take a Samoan girl or boy out of Samoa, but you can't take Samoan culture out of the Samoan boy or girl

The focus of this final section is on three related themes which shed light on how Samoan students' home and classroom experiences affect the way they think and learn in the classroom. The first concerns students learning from social interactions with their peers and other students in the processes of the school's classroom community. The second, a consequence of the first, involves how students negotiate and incorporate in their own minds the structure and content of their experiences in their interactions with their peers and teachers. Finally, learning and knowledge generation is viewed as an individual undertaking.

(1) Socialisation into learning

Jones (1991) argues that thinking is no longer the property of the individual mind but one that belongs in the social interaction between students and in the processes of the 'school community' or specifically, the classroom processes in which the 'community of learners' participate. Socio-cultural theorists, such as Lave (1967) and Rogoff (1993), generally herald this perspective.

"What am I suppose to do and what is this task asking?" Samoan students tended to ask their peers this question at the onset or during every task, event or action. Likewise, teachers noted the unusual behaviour displayed by students when they interacted with task content, especially if the content was far from their grasp. Lemke (1990) claims that tasks should be given meaning and assigned a relevant contextual position. Consider this example of an everyday explanation about the usage of a word. To understand a word is to know how it is used, its user, and in what circumstances it becomes used (Nuthall, 1997). Words used in thinking processes are those that students employ in their social interaction with their social partners within "thought-related activities (Nuthall, 1997). Lave posits this in light of the pre-eminence of the social and cultural context of human activity. Furthermore, Lave claims that

“learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world (Lave, 1991, p.67 also cited in Nuthall, 1997). Lave further explains that cognition is perceived to be distributed or stretched over mind, body activity and setting.

Similarly, Rogoff contends that learning is no longer the property of the individual, but of the interaction process (1994). She stresses that the specific processes by which students and teachers interact and share in decision-making and the progress of an activity are the substance of cognitive development (Rogoff, 1993, p.393). Both Lave and Rogoff’s stress the significance of socio-cultural entities as units of analysis of the individual mental entities, and the prominence of the social and cultural context. For Rogoff, the primacy of unit analysis focuses on the entirety and actuality of an event/activity, its social, cultural and historical context. Thus, the product is in the process.

In order to make sense of the abovementioned claims, I will consider the classroom in this study as a ‘hive of complex social and cultural systems’. Here I want to explore how Samoan students’ thinking and learning occur there as a function of the system as a whole and whether or not social processes are cognitive processes. Simply put, I want to analyse Samoan students learning and classroom experiences as socio-cultural processes. I also want to see when and how the individual students think alone. Consider these abbreviated extracts from transcripts:

Pedagogical Authority Context

Year 11 English:

Teacher: Advertising has been and is still dominating every aspect of our lives. We are surrounded by it on TV, on radio, in newspapers, in mailboxes and magazines, you name it...you can add your own examples to the list if you like, but those are the most common and obvious examples. Advertising can be disturbing, pressurising our responses when we do not realise it. Advertisers generally appeal to the basic human instincts such as peer pressure, fear or desire to keep up with the Joneses and so on. Advertisers target different audiences (specific and stereotyped) according to age, gender, interests, ethnicity and

status. This brings us to the very purpose of an advertisement which is to ‘persuade’-to attract attention, to convince, to retain interest, in order to induce a particular action.

Well! You must have some general understanding so far about the nature of the task. First, in your group, identify what the product you want to advertise and what do you think will attract your target audience’ attention, and how will your audience attention be retained? Secondly, think about what we have discussed so far. How will your audience be persuaded or what is the intended purpose your advertisement? I can see that everyone is enjoying the picture and message in the advertisement, and you are all eager to construct your own advertisement. Discuss this first in your group, and I will come around to check your work and then you are set to go with your own project. Use your experience to draw out objects’ symbol values, write them down and their symbolic associations, such as fur coat, book, red rose, horse and things like champagne drinks etc. Use as few words as possible as you can-three words.

Aute: The objects and their symbolic associations (yeah whatever is that?), how do you put these in meaningful ways? I reckon you have to draw and cut out images and then explain briefly. Don’t think my ad will sell with only three words

Ata: You follow the advertisement sample, you’ll be able to see, look at the three words-“quicker, faster, cheaper” just for windows”

Teacher: Design a poster first from a number of sources like magazines newspapers and posters on the wall. Then ask yourself who is my target audience? How many are going to buy my product? What makes them want to buy the product and so on.

Moso: Far out! A product from a Sa? Don’t think so Miss, you’re not kiddin’ me, it’s not funny-ah ha I got it - ‘coconut cream’ - since every PI wants to buy my product. So what are my three words?-yummy, creamier on sale.

Teacher: ‘That is an excellent effort.’ Picks up Moso’s work and says ‘listen up class, shh this is what Moso has designed for his poster, isn’t that clever and original? So I hope you can do the same or even better.’

Moli: Well this is not so hard. I reckon I can do that, but the next section on description of features of language is tougher

Teacher: Very simple if you follow step by step, for instance in the next part of the exercise, you will need to explore tv ads according to three things: head details, body copy and standing details. Will come to that later. In the meantime, finish your poster and have a read of the next activity.

From the above example, it seemed that almost all the students have benefited from socialising and interacting with their peers in small groups. When students were left to their own accord to design their own work, they adhered to previous stimulation which made them acted out alone “in socially isolated settings” (Salmon, 1993). Although these students think together with their peers in and through cultural tools

(same cultural issues and language use), most of the time when they were assigned to small groups, they still thought individually. Moli, for instance, was convinced that she too could do the task, by merely visualising Moso's effort.

Pedagogical Authority Context

Year 12 English: Characters and Characterisation

Teacher: You should all have finished reading Hamlet. You have been given more than 3 weeks to do that. Raise your hand if you still haven't finished. Ok, it shows that everyone has grasped who the protagonist is, the villains and other characters. Characters in novels and plays take centre stage and dominate the action as they provide background or fulfil one or more roles. Just as you are students, you've got to fulfil your many roles as sixth form candidates. Some characters have more roles than others, some only one or two. To get to the point, using the model in front of you for this class you are to describe the protagonist through his speech and actions, through his attire and background and affiliations, through what others say about him, and how other characters interact or react to him. This should take you this class and the next one to finish. Discuss this in your groups before doing it yourself.

Losa: Is this really him, will he wear these clothes today? I suppose I will have to describe him according to this picture and make up somethin' from the other Shakespearean plays I've seen

Pua: I guess so, read the passage and see what the character is like, how does he behave and how is his character developed and write something about his motivation.

Teacher: You need to consider how the character develops and changes. This will stimulate your thinking describing your character. You might like to enquire what relationships the character has and how such have developed. Use simple, short sentences.

Teuila: Is it ok to use the first person here? This exercise is hard but challenging. It makes you remember what you have read about. If not, you have to re-read the play.

Teacher: It is a wise idea to refer to your copy and the passage in front of you for comments and actual events. Sometimes including quotes from the text will strengthen your argument or discussion. So any relevant information you may want to include is fine.

Iulai: I guess I can use any position I want, either from another character's position or from an observer's position. This depends on an important relationship in the book that I choose an easy one, with heaps to write about

Teacher: Good point you raise there, however it depends on the important episodes in the relationships you are going to choose. In that way you can learn about your character from each episode.

Eli: I will try to be a detective or a person from outside looking for the character. In that way I can generalise and assume because I don't really know the character, unless I have a re-read of the whole blooming thing.

In the above example, sixth form students' thinking was stimulated through their social interactions with peers and the teacher. While negotiating ideas with the teacher, the students work solely as individuals to create and execute the task. There is a wealth of issues enmeshed in the above extract. One of which is the effectiveness of the socio-cultural processes, through which individual students were stimulated and motivated to conduct the task individually. As Nuthall explains:

As communities and cultural tools have an identity of their own across individuals, across occasions, across settings and across times, so individuals have an identity of their own across settings, across communities, across cultural tools and across times. In persons it is the mental representations of their experiences that provide the continuity that constitutes this identity (Nuthall, 1997, p.51).

To critique, I describe Samoan students learning in terms of collective consciousness or sense of remembering, in which the student's individual mind provides the essential stability between the juncture and contextual milieu of socio-cultural activity/event whether that activity is social or individual.

The shifting and changing roles of individual students appropriated their participation in different tasks and activities within the classroom community. It seemed puzzling sometimes for teachers when an individual student was perceived as almost a different person in different settings. Teachers often noted "they are very illusive, very complex personalities." Therefore, different personalities or personal representations and mappings of experiences stemming from different community settings are ingrained in individuals, which facilitate the simulation of social roles in individual situations. Like the language Samoan students used, while it comprised of genres and nuances of different utterances, "so the mind is a system of parallel processes (Nuthall, 1997)." The following explanation appropriates and further elaborates this notion: "The mind is itself a community. It is a complex system of multiple representations of experience, a community within that reflects and is in some way a creation of the community without (Lee, 1987 cited in Nuthall, 1997)." Mind as a

“community,” in a Samoan context, relates to mental representations, metaphors, maps and scaffolds. All these are deeply embedded within the complexity of the Samoan culture and language. Unlocking these ‘mental maps’ to make sense of classroom learning is not an easy task as Samoan words and meanings are often incongruent with English translations. This, in my view, partially contributes to Samoan students learning dilemma. For instance, consider the concept of “*a’oa’o*” which means learning, learner and teacher. If a Samoan student has this idea in mind then it means while he/she assumes the position of a learner engaging in a learning process, in her/his mind she/he should also assume or imagine the role of a teacher.

(2) The mind as a community of socio-cultural processes

This section describes the way in which Samoan student participants’ minds represent their experience. As mind and cognitive processes are closely related to students’ engagement in classroom learning activities, their nature and role in learning should not be understated. Here, I consider both appropriation (Rogoff 1995) and internalisation (Piaget, 1962). Sitting these processes side by side provides a window through which we can understand how Samoan students appropriate and internalise their learning conceptions within classroom activities. Furthermore, appropriation and internalisation could be both seen as means of representations of student participants socio-cultural worldview.

One of the most important aspects to consider in relation to learning is how much of a role language plays in students’ internalisation of information. Language, when its concepts and structures are acquired, becomes a significant entity, a channel or medium for the process of internalisation and or appropriation in the classroom. During my observations, I overheard much self-talk (that is, where students talked aloud to themselves). Most of the students whom I spoke with who habitually experienced self-talk said it was just a common habit of “thinking aloud,” or as Aute put it, “dreaming aloud.”

In my view, self-talk is a personal creation freed from the structural constraints of the subject content in classroom discourse. Much recent research has been conducted in

relation to self-talk among elementary and middle school students. The common implication from these studies showed that the considerable proportion of students' talking was in fact self-talk (Alton-Lee, Nuthall & Patrick, 1993; Nuthall & Alton-Lee, 1993). Samoan students self-talk was complex and full of code-switching and code-mixing of aspects of the languages they were exposed to (English and Samoan) coupled with 'street talk'. I refer to the self-talk made by Samoan students as a type of inflection to feign off pressures by public gaze. It could be seen as a coping strategy that only the students could understand. Self-talk was always transformed into more complicated social talk. This was always done through the process I call Pacification. This process permeates every layer and phase of Samoan students' learning or secondary educational journey.

Socio-cultural processes and structures are said to be the major determinants of cognitive development (Nuthall, 1997). Aspects of socio-cultural processes of the classroom and learning processes students used to acquire knowledge interrelate in a type of process known as transactional relationship. Samoan students' knowledge acquisition involved a set of thinking processes that allowed new classroom experiences and new data to be assimilated, by either fusing it with old knowledge structures or sitting them side by side with one another. The mind sorted which knowledge structures were worthy in terms of their relevancy, compatibility and coherency with Samoan students' aspirations and long-term goals. Knowledge acquisition processes were thus shaped and structured by the social processes of the classroom.

(3) Creating individual strategies

Knowledge acquisition involves identifying the ways in which new experiences or information connects with existing knowledge (Nuthall, 1997). Classroom observations of Students in Years 11 & Year 12 revealed that students often identified the processes of associations, elaborations and implications (Nuthall, 1997) to the notions and concepts of the specific units. For example, in a Year 11 Maths class, the onset of a brainstorming session on "probability and statistics" led to students accruing an interesting list of concepts and ideas. Students elicited ideas and concepts

through sharing with one another, self-talk and public talk. These are some of the everyday associative words collated: die, coins, luck, unlucky, lucky, strike, pool, sixes, snake and ladder, bingo, housie, dominoes etc. Likewise, elaborations were also evident when students predicted the possibility of getting all heads or tails when a coin was tossed, and when in tossing a die, students predicted the number of times a number they chose would come up, for instance a six, a four and so on. Likewise, in a sixth form English lesson, students were required to do a study of their favourite character, mentor or celebrity, where they employed the associations, elaborations and implications. Cultural associations and elaborations were common. For instance, one student chose her grandmother, another chose Jonah Lomu and so on, depending on how close these characters were to these students' minds. This was an interesting exercise which was successful in terms of facilitating student participants' knowledge acquisition.

Overall, Samoan students developed their own counterbalancing strategies for their learning to balance out the pressures and tensions released as the consequence of many conflicts between aspects of a number of relationships in the classroom. These included home versus school cultures, new versus old knowledge, and subject content versus mixed feelings. Subsequently, Samoan students reveal the nurturing process of their learning, through pacifying, crafting and ascertaining processes at the expense of the socio-cultural contextual milieu.

XIV. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

This chapter has described how culture informs and forms Samoan students learning in the classroom. It focused on the learning and educational journey of Samoan students. Any conclusions, it is suggested, are invalid unless the total elements of Samoan students home and school lives are considered. Many traditional definitions of thinking and learning as well as boundaries that defined different learning theories were rebutted in terms of their effectiveness for understanding how students from different cultural backgrounds think and learn in the classroom.

To understand Samoan students learning we have to consider the total aspects of different learning perspectives, particularly various elements of what I call social and

cultural constructivist perspectives. These perspectives encapsulate all aspects of learning as socio-cultural processes especially the cultural capital of both the students and the cultural capital of learning processes.

The implications from the current research on Samoan student thinking and learning in the classroom are in part transparent. In general terms, both teachers and students need to work cooperatively to clear the air of any foreseeable apprehensions and conflicts that may arise before and during learning processes of the classroom. While teachers must see the classroom as a 'community' when considering their management and pedagogical stances, students must strike a balance between their home-school cultures, and look to extract the 'gems' from their cultural background and wed them with the best aspects of the classroom community culture.

The evidence I highlighted related to the culture and language that informed and shaped classroom experience, to how social processes manipulated the subject content, and to how students reflected on the contextual milieu and content of their classroom experiences as well as their cultural experience. All heavily influence what happens in the classroom which establishes and cultivates the way students (irrespective of backgrounds) think and learn in the classroom. How teachers, as classroom managers, should oversee the learning community needs further investigation. Similarly, solutions to enhance Samoan students' thinking and learning in the classroom are by no means easy to make, a situation not uncommon to classroom-based research. I wish to conclude by presenting a poem about these students uniqueness, which I hope will aid our understanding of how they cope in the learning journey:

Every fisher depends on his own fishing line to haul a successful catch
Every hunter has an animal sniff to track a good kill
Every builder has his own lashing to architecture with finesse
Every orator has his own tattooed oratory to utter with mana
Every student, a novel of one's total person, one's own tale
And every tale, its own cool image
to paint
If I bring myself closer to the cool image
I would understand

**The reality of their everyday realm, the big picture
that is painted (ode dedicated to students)**

CHAPTER NINE: *TAEAO AFUA*: NEW MORNINGS: LOOKING AHEAD: CLOSING STAGES

I. INTRODUCTION

*Sau le va'a na tiu, ae tali le va'a na tau
o lo'o maumaulago i le va'a sa faoafolau:*

This proverb relates to Samoan students educational journey.

The successful return of the fishing boat is met by the
applause and celebrations of parents, *aigas* and the whole community.

My purpose in this thesis has been to describe the emergent model of understanding about the 'current nature' of Samoan secondary students' learning situation in a New Zealand classroom. In other words, what I have attempted to do was to provide a descriptive, extended explanation of the "nurturing process" Samoan students engage in during classroom activities. In so doing, I have reconceptualised the traditional 'theoretical framework' used to interpret and understand students' classroom experiences. To understand Samoan students, I have drawn on various 'learning models' and placed them in one *fafao/utu* (receptacle), which I refer to as the "social and cultural learning construction perspective". This multi-dimensional approach encapsulates not only the "mind and cognitive processes", but the "community of learners" and the "contextual milieu" in which students' learning processes occur. I have tried to indicate and illustrate that traditional conceptions of thinking and learning, and the conventional discrepancies between the culture and the language of the classroom, are no longer applicable to understanding the realities of students' experiences. To open this discussion, it is necessary that I draw some comparison with the existing scholarship and literature in the validation domain.

II. RE-CONCEPTUALISING EXISTING LITERATURE

To re-conceptualise our understanding of how Samoan students cope and manage in the school community's classroom processes, I revisit the significance of the outcome

of my hypothesis schema. In so doing, I want to paint a clear picture of how this study sits well with existing Samoan and *Pasifika* scholarship and literature.

(1) The hypothesis schema revisited

In general terms, hypothesis schema was that *fa'asamoa* or the home culture has the potential to enhance the way Samoan students think and learn when engaged in the social learning processes of the classroom. It became evident in this study that most students acquired learning by engaging in those activities that closely related to their home experiences and career passions. This saw students successfully carrying out activities with enthusiasm, a sense of fun and humour. Illustrated in this respect are Ata and Moso's passion in cars, which they associated with Science, helps to illustrate the point. In the context of the classroom, this correlates to the 'value progress' that occurs in the manner students reflect on and implement their cultural experiences. Here, the value progress fashioned by those tasks begged that students used their previous knowledge and experiences.

When devising this hypothesis, I attempted to reveal my naïve assumptions to link the field of cultural repertoire or experiences with typical Maths, Science, Social Science and English units. In so doing, I identified and categorised students into three groups according to their ability or specifically interest retention. If my hypothesis schema was substantially legitimate, then I believe that teachers and educators should prepare to change the way they perceive classroom learning. The three groups of students, which I refer to as 'the good, the bad and the ugly' or the 'sound understanding', 'mediocre understanding' and 'I don't understand' groups, were established on the basis of students' classroom experiences. To understand these effects, I have tried to extend my horizon to incorporate not only students' interaction with the curriculum content, but also the development of those managing/coping strategies they employed to understand academic learning.

There is enough evidence from the inaccurate predictions that suggest that in Year 11 and Year 12, the development of Samoan students coping or managing strategies correlated with their cultural repertoire which usually emanated from the home, where students interacted and participated with their parents and *aigas* in culturally

structured events or tasks. The second inaccurate scenario saw feelings as one of the most important elements of learning. Feelings of uncertainty and self-exclusion resulted as a consequence of the effects of the home, lead to the development of different “attitudes” in students. Subsequently, Samoan students experienced tiredness and stress because of a combination of factors, such as adhering to familial obligatory roles and responsibilities. Thus, students’ feelings determined their reluctance and or volition to learn. The third inaccurate prediction related to students’ desire for more time when interacting with the subject content, especially in subjects like Physics, Maths or Chemistry.

In essence, the significance of the above predictions should raise awareness within teachers and educators that making assumptions and generalisations about different students at the expense of the larger majority are no longer valid. The above predictions also raised one of the most debated issues in the terrain of classroom learning in both previous and current educational research, the issue of “cultural discontinuity.” which derived the likes of cultural mismatch, cultural conflicts, and cultural alienation.

(2) Issues of cultural discontinuity

Ever since Europeans introduced their schooling system to Samoa, *fa’asamoa* has been under threat (see Tanielu, 1999). In my view, the formal school system was a “civilising agent” to override, if not completely expunge, Samoan institutions which were seen by colonisers as primitive and incompatible with Western institutions (see Meleisea, 1987). In recent years, there has been an accumulation of studies of the mismatch of the home culture and the culture of school. For instance, it has been shown that the literacy-language socialisation of non-English speakers’ home backgrounds does not facilitate learning success in a formal classroom (Cazden, 1988). Helu-Thaman (1996) maintains that *Pasifika* people continued to adhere to dual learning. In her opinion, conflict between the two was the norm rather than the exception (Helu-Thaman, 1996). Nevertheless, like many educated/learned *Pasifika* people, the majority of educated Samoans have been the product of this dual operation. In my view, such successes were possible given the learners’ sheer

determination and motivation and self-efficacy belief to succeed, guided by Samoan metaphors and expressions such as this well quoted Samoan proverb: "*O le ala i le pule o le tautua*" (the path to power/authority is through service). Indeed, the essence of such proverbs and metaphors certainly stimulate the enhancement of Samoan thinking and learning.

Considering my own study's findings, it became apparent that culture continues to influence the way Samoan students think and learn in the classroom, despite efforts by some to disguise the notion. While Samoan culture is said to be discontinued in classroom culture, it nevertheless permanently resides in students' minds and learning processes.

In my contention earlier in chapter Eight, I claimed that the richness of the metaphors in Samoan culture and language are synonymous to the western concepts of learning embedded in classroom culture and its learning processes. These concepts, when clearly clarified with examples, can help bridge understanding between the two sets of cultures. While this works for some students, it does not work for others.

A good number of studies and emergent relative models of understanding on the 'duality of home-school culture' have increased our understanding of Samoan students learning behaviour and attitude in the school community's classroom. These models essentially emerged in response to a call for some interpretation of why the majority of Samoans experienced "tension and pressure" when engaged in learning processes of the classroom. Why some students persevered, others who were less fortunate languished far behind. The debate loomed about whether students who tended to obtain and sustain successful learning progress had either managed to strike a balance or completely assimilated the Western norms and values (or cultural capital) of the classroom.

Consequently, the appropriation and / or internalisation of such norms and values gave rise to learning success (Silipa, 1998). It becomes evident that the enthused and motivated group of students had successfully learned the culture of becoming students. Drawing on Samoan student culture discussed earlier, I have become aware that Samoan students shift their identities to accommodate the culture of the

classroom in order to become good students (see Macpherson, Spoonley & Anae 2001; Tupuola, 1999; Anae, 1998). In contrast, students who tend to experience inevitable tension and pressure due to the incongruence of their own worldview or knowledge package to that of the classroom cultural norms and values silently suffer the consequences of their actions.

Helu-Thaman (1996) stipulated that *Pasifika* students must operate in the binary or dual settings of the home-classroom cultures. She further contends that the lack of understanding of students' socialisation dynamics could prevent any learning success in teaching-learning processes (1996, p.13 also cited in Coxon et al, 2002). *Pasifika* conference proceedings, Ministry of Education Reports and other recent publications have recognised the dynamic conceptualisation of *Pasifika* culture as a integral "tool" not only to evaluate teaching-learning processes but to analyse research methodologies and methods for *Pasifika* research (Answers are within us, 1996; Educating *Pasifika* Positively 1999; *Pasifika* Vision 1999; *Koe kakai Pasifika*, 1997/98). The contentious issue of the incompatibility of the home culture with the (Western) way Samoan or *Pasifika* students must think and learn in the classroom has received recent scholarly attention (see Dakuireketi, 1995; Mugler and Landbeck, 1996; Nabobo, 1998; Ninnes, 1998; Helu-Thaman, 1996). Collectively these scholars stipulated the notion that identifying and recognising different ways of knowing would not only promote mediating and negotiating strategies, but also facilitate learning and knowledge acquisition.

This study has shown that the duality of the home-school culture permeates every layer of Samoan students' learning inside/outside of the classroom. Nevertheless, due to the intense pressure of classroom processes, the majority of the students sometimes feigned the idea that their home culture hindered rather than enhance their learning. The clash of cultures creates a dilemma for most students. This dilemma creates an "attitude" and "behavioural mindset" within the majority of students. I refer to this attitude as "*le mautiloa ae iloa po'o le iloa ae le mautiloa*" (unsure but know or consciously know but do not want to know or unsure). Manifested within classroom discourse, were the complexity of a raft of contradictions, which saw students often fail to express what they really mean, believe or know. For instance, they don't know but know; know but can't remember; agree but disagree; or disagree but agree).

Consider this recurring phrase prevalent in discussions with students' chats as articulated by Moso:

I know it's all in my head, but you sort of don't know how to say/write it, and other times you surely know but you're out of it-wanna-be but far from it. Like you disagree with some of what the teacher is say-in' you know what am sayin'... but agree in the end-dunno, is that disagreeing or agreeing or both? (Moso Year 11)

The above phrase denotes and underlines the overriding power of a "Samoan cultural mind" which dominates the individual students when he/she tries to internalise and make sense of new information. Consequently, the majority of the Samoan students struggled to discriminate or distinguish what to say and how to say it (or express it in print) as a response to their dual thinking modes.

From discussions with the students about the influence of their home culture in their learning, it was apparent that most felt that they were like everybody else in the classroom, and the only difference was that they thought and learnt in Samoan terms or context while *Pakeha* students did likewise in *Pakeha* terms. After many informal *fonos* and informal chats, the students developed a self-efficacy belief of appreciation in their home culture. Developing an acute awareness about their culture, students saw that 'culture matters' in every layer of their learning journey at secondary school. In this respect, their Samoan culture can be seen as an 'enhancing agent' of learning.

Pondering classroom learning activities, such as Year 12 Maths Probability and Statistics lessons, it has become clear that student participants often made specific reference to their cultural beliefs and home orientations as means of interpreting their mathematical conceptions and understanding of probability and statistics. Similarly, in a Year 11 Maths unit on 'order of operations, integers and mixed operations calculations' students used their general knowledge based on their home cultural repertoire or home cultural capital (see also Sharma 1997; Koloto 1995). Furthermore, it was evident that students regularly used their knowledge of one subject to assist in others.

What this study has found was that the majority of Samoan students unconsciously implemented their cultural 'way of knowing' to make sense of their classroom learning. A number of classic examples emerged in which most students denied that their problem-solving had been determined by their cultural background. In my analysis, the quelling of students' culture in the classroom led them to become insecure every time the word 'culture' was used. The perceived negative stigma linked to culture perpetuated in most of the students' minds was all-powerful. Because students were rarely encouraged both at home and in school to implement their home cultural repertoire to facilitate and mediate their learning, they continued to doubt its practical significance. One commonality for the students was that they shared the common endeavour and aspiration of parents: achieving a Western education while keeping the Samoan culture closely intact (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1982; Nicole, 1985). This is what I refer to as the unspoken agreement, implanted in the minds of students.

Overall, it was clearly apparent that the majority of Samoan students used aspects of Samoan cultural values and language to legitimise and bridge their understanding of the social learning processes of different subjects in the classroom. This supports Helu-Thaman's tenet, with special reference to Tonga, in which she argues that Tongan cultural values serve to enlighten Tongan behaviour and performance, particularly in the arena of Western formal education systems and processes (Helu-Thaman, 1996; cited in Coxon et al, 2002, p.78). Analogous to this view is an interesting study by Fusitu'a (1992) (described earlier in the literature review). It showed that Tongan parents' detailed cultural knowledge was successfully applied to assist their children and tutors within a Tongan homework centre.

The above analysis, despite its focus on Samoan students in a New Zealand classroom, provides a conceptual model of understanding that is relevant to *Pasifika* groups and Samoan groups overseas. It draws on and extends key aspects of the classroom studies conducted on Samoan and *Pasifika* students, for instance in the following: among *Pasifika* girls in the 5 Masons class (see Jones 1991; 1986); among *Pasifika* students at secondary education (Hill & Hawk 2000; 1999; 1998a; 1998b; 1996); among Samoan-English bilinguals who used Samoan to bridge and enhance understanding of English concepts (see Lameta, 1994; Silipa, 1991); and finally

among high school students in Samoan, Tongan and Fijian classrooms (see Bakalevu, 2000; 1996; Sharma, 1997; Koloto, 1995; Petana-Ioka 1995; Moll, 1993; Helu-Thaman, 1996b; 1988).

Reflecting on the cultural learning emphases in the above works, I welcome the socio-cultural unit of analysis of classroom learning adopted from Rogoff's (1995; 1990) approach. I must remind the reader that while I complied with the traditions of many models used in this thesis, I used a *Samoan fa'amalama* (window) underpinned by *fa'asamoa* values and protocols to view, monitor and evaluate their legitimacy. In her approach, Rogoff introduced three planes (apprenticeship, guided participation and participatory appropriation) which I believe are very applicable to studies of students from other cultural backgrounds. While I am aware that no model is perfect, I have adopted this model solely on its cultural merit and design as an alternative framework to understand the makers and the constant [re] making of indigenous cultures.

A significant aim of my study was the promotion of a model of understanding that would show how the dual operation of home-school cultures could generate meaningful learning. Whether or not Samoan students have totally appropriated and internalised classroom culture and its rules and regulation is a contentious matter. Embedded in the data is the implication that while some students persevered, the majority followed other students to display a good and tolerable image or simply a 'cool' image at the expense of feigning the assimilation of classroom culture.

Feigning gave rise to the 'art of crafting' in which the majority of Samoan students engaged as a response to the intense requirement of learning processes. In a pacifying manner, Samoan students crafted their own self-regulated coping strategies, in which they employed to nurture their own learning the way they saw fit. In so doing, Samoan students would ascertain and affirm the content of subject units in different tasks and events in conjunction with their ways of knowing and career passions. Furthermore, this strategy helped alleviate students' feelings of anxiety, self-exclusion and insecurity in relation to some parts (if not all) of the curriculum and classroom processes. The implication here is that the duality of the home-school culture debate transcends the bounds of many assumptions. These are evident in terms of students' interaction with the subject content and their subsequent feelings of wavering and / or

ambivalence towards coping with different learning situations. It suggests that prevailing superseding circumstances embedded in students “way of knowing” could be remedied, in part, through strong student-teacher relationships.

Samoan students upheld the principles of schooling: staying in line with normative behaviour and refraining from breaking conventional school rules. This could be seen in the light of an unspoken agreement, in which Samoan students should negotiate and compromise their place to ensure that they were occupying a ‘comfort zone’. In this zone, Samoan students were able to cope with the social pressure of the classroom.

This study has shown that the students-teacher relationship promotes learning and a mutual rapport between students and the teacher as well as peers and other students. It is common for Samoan students, like their *Pasifika* counterparts, to develop easily a relationship with those around them, especially the teacher. In many respects, this ability to form relationships stems from the influence of the students’ *aigas*, in which children are socialised into knowing their place and status and the values expected of them.

This study also revealed that there was a correlation between Samoan students’ socialisation at home and the nurturing process of learning they generally engage in. The process of socialisation has been significant in facilitating cultural appropriation and internalisation in both the home and school. If the two institutions, the home and school, are perceived to be social agencies for children learning and the transmission of both cultures, then their connection may influence the dual operation of Samoan students in the classroom. Consequently, there are links between aspects of the culture of the classroom and the cultural package that students bring with them to school.

What is at issue here is what are the relevant aspects of each culture and how these aspects can be employed in classroom learning? For instance, Samoan students very often considered the spatial reverence of “*va fealoa’i*” (respect of space), and avoiding eye contact with the teacher as well as others students. Violating space is reflected by a reminder in this line, *O fea lou faiai/mafau, se faaoga ou mata?* (Where is your mind? Well, use your eyes!). The logic behind shows the association

of visualisation to thinking and vice versa. Eyes and seeing are always considered as the *fa'amalama o le malamalama* (literally means windows of light or knowledge) or “windows” of thinking and consensual perception. Reflecting on their cultural experience, students reserved due respect not only their space but for the giver of knowledge or teacher while trying to make sense of complex classroom tasks. In so doing, they crafted their learning in compliance with the social processes of the classroom, and utilised cultural aspects wherever they saw fit, as discussed earlier in Maths and English tasks. Here I saw more similarities than differences between Samoan students and their classroom counterparts in their mutual endeavours of living up to the culture of studenting. In this respect, I contend that there are many elements of congruency existing between Samoan culture and the Western culture of the classroom which thus allow easy access for some Samoan students to adopt, adapt and adjust to both. Nevertheless, many Samoan students see the traditional national curriculum as irrelevant and of little interest. Consequently, a large number of them are destined to fail academically. Furthermore, they are not encouraged to tap into their home culture, the core of their learning, for learning activities. Therefore, the provision of more relevant and interesting curricula materials that could build a sense of community and commonly shared by a ‘community of learners’ irrespective of backgrounds and status, is one of the recommendations of this study. Consider the following examples:

Maintaining your culture is very important, however, you have to learn about other cultures especially the English culture. Reckon English is just like Samoan culture, [at times it] values individuals, other times it values the group thing-a unit. Am glad I've got a *palagi* boy friend whom I can share common sense knowledge and stuff (Teuila, Year 12).

Have no problem with whoever, I choose to be with in group. Am happy and easy to be with everyone. You learn heaps from different students especially non-Sas. Got some *palagi* friends who're very smart and I mean we help each other out in many things in and out of classroom-so we're all cool no prob with my culture and stuff-we're all a happy bunch (Eli, Year 12).

Reflecting on these two examples, it appears that Samoan students preferred to be treated the same way as their classmates and that they learnt much through their socialisation with non-Samoan students.

Despite covert learning pressures, Samoan students adhered to the norms of school while steadfastly holding on to the culture of what it means to be Samoan. Through elements of their cultural experiences, Samoan students developed “coping strategies” to understand the learning processes of the classroom. One of the students’ favourite saying which became a recurrent theme throughout this study is the concept of “cool”. Almost all of the students participating in this study articulated that learning must be cool. Being cool, on one level, results from students’ recognition and identification with aspects of the Samoan youth sub culture, which in turn facilitates a sense of shared learning endeavour among Samoan students. Among Samoan boys, a focus on being cool is commonplace and permeates the social processes of the classroom. Simply put, one has to be cool to be accepted and well liked by peers and the rest of the class. Thus learning and earning ‘coolness’ were part of the everyday life of students at school.

Students’ collaboration in small groups, as has been shown, made many difficult and complex classroom tasks easier. On a different level, their shared endeavour to learn was evident throughout the study. Students, for instance, who constantly attending classes felt obligated to providing notes, reading and assignment tasks for their peers who were absent from class. The absentees experienced the ‘coolness’ of this particular situation. Sometimes, students even covered up for their friends who happened to ‘bunk’ class regularly. Thus, helping one another was common, and took many forms. As one student said, she had no problem in explaining to others what she knew because there was always the next time around in which she too would be asking the same thing of her friends.

Acting cool and just ‘cruising’ is the aim of the majority of Samoan student participants, which teachers confirmed to me. On the brighter side, coolness served as a discipline measure within the classroom and elsewhere within the school, as it was characterised by silence, passive respect and modesty on the part of students. Indeed, coolness and its attributes have a lot in common with Samoan culture. A common Samoa saying, “*fa’atoa iloa lava lo ta valea ina ua matala lo ta gutu*” (one’s stupidity can only be revealed when one’s mouth is opened) clearly influenced these students. On the contrary, the repercussion for a person who is prone to be inquisitive

and talkative can be referred to as *fia potofa'afiapoto* (trying to be smart). In short, the concept of 'coolness' can be referred to as a subset of both Samoan culture and classroom culture. According to male participants, being cool earned them respect and enhanced their dignity. Moreover, it provided them with the peace of mind to strive towards their goals and meeting expectations. Their self-efficacy belief to live the school life the way they want to, through a nurturing process they created, is the focus of the following section.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE NURTURING PROCESS

"Nurturing coolness and dignity" could be likened to aspects of Samoan house building "*fausaga mai le afa tagai*" (tying knots from sinnet or rope). This is so, because it is a process which involves a series of complex overlapped layers of problem solving strategies. The findings and themes discussed have relevance and similarities to other *Pasifika* students. Furthermore, the emergent model of understanding can be recognised as that of social and cultural cognitive constructivist perspective. What I want to do here is to highlight the general significance of the model of understanding to the current study. Essentially, I will extend on what has been presented above. It should be noted that this model is grounded in the data, and any emergent property should be referred back to its origin, the classroom, the content of its processes, and the community of learners who dwell within such processes. This discussion will identify terrains for further study and hypotheses to be tested and examined. My focus, overall, is predominantly centred on various circumstances that promote the nurturing process.

Protecting pride and cultural identity is an important aspect of an emergent model of understanding. Simply put, "it is not by choice, but the way we are," Eli maintained. The lack of confidence by the majority of students to talk within class related to the conservative nature of their upbringing, with its basic aspects rooted in Samoan culture and language. Those who had the confidence to be articulate during classroom discourse tended to have grown up in a non-traditional home context, and were often from a home in which the parents were Samoan and non-Samoan. Interestingly, the numerical size of a particular class both makes and breaks the confidence of students

in relation to their learning. Keen students preferred to camouflage their keenness to study from their peers. It seemed that it was an anti-social (or 'anti-cool') to do work or study while your peers were around. Should a student wish to catch up with work or finish homework, he/she would have to surreptitiously leave their friends and go to the library to do so. Some students' depended on small groups in which they would negotiate and mediate learning ideas and concepts with peers. Others were more flexible, developing relationships with everybody, particularly the teacher. These actions can best be viewed through the lens of the social and cultural cognitive constructivist perspective.

The social and cultural cognitive constructivist perspective, or what I refer to in Samoan terms as "*utu a le faimea*" (toolkit, receptacle of knowledge), I believe, provides a more legitimate validation of a model of understanding to analyse and understand Samoan students learning and classroom experiences.

Let me reiterate the three processes (discussed in chapter 7) that Samoan students employed in nurturing the coolness and dignity of their learning journey. Firstly, "pacifying" in the classroom processes among Samoan students was evident. *Pacifying and apprenticeship*: students used the varying student-teacher dyads and student-able student dyads and extended these to small groups in which they worked cooperatively to ensure the completion of their shared learning task. What was important in this process was that it centred on a pattern of interpersonal engagements and organisations in which students became involved in culturally orientated classroom activities in which they, as apprentices, occupied centre stage, assuming authority as responsible collaborators, corroborators and active participants.

The second process, which relates to the first, is *crafting through the guided participation plane*. It relates to Samoan students and their peers collaborations using the communicative skills or genres they preferred in socio-culturally oriented common activities. Through guided participation, which included all interactions with either the teacher or others, Samoan students tactfully crafted their own ways of knowing. It should be noted that pacifying and apprenticeship also existed in this process or plane. A classic example of crafting was when students, during individual

tasks, often tried to cover their work from others. According to one participant, this behaviour had a clear purpose:

I feel ma (ashamed) to let others see my work, except my mates, and I don't want them to have the impression that what I'm writing is nonsense and that kind of stuff, you know, unless I know it's good. But, I only want the teacher to have a look at my work, whether it's good or not (Eli, Year 12).

Crafting through guided participation, therefore, involved processes that informed the mutual collaborations between students and their peers in order to carry out and achieve similar or shared goals.

The third and final process is *ascertaining through participatory appropriation*, in which students established self-efficacy in transforming their own understanding or way of knowing of and responsibility for activities through their own participation. According to Rogoff, participatory appropriation is the companion of apprenticeship and guided participation. I contend that appropriation extends to accommodate 'internalisation' in which students sometimes acted and thought as individuals, but also as a unit when in small groups. These processes of the socio-cultural approach are synonymous to aspects of Samoan culture and language. Thus, ascertaining the appropriation and internalisation of aspects of learning processes correlates with the nurturing process through personal, interpersonal and community relationships.

In summary, this section espouses an emergent understanding grounded in the data which is relevant to Samoan students learning in New Zealand classrooms. From a significant standpoint, the model of understanding aligns with students' behaviour to protect their eagerness to learn surrounded by their friends.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

O le falefautele: This Samoan phrase depicts that getting closer to understanding students' classroom learning and providing them with the right support to enhance their learning, begs the collective effort and work of everyone involved in the process, including teachers, curriculum developers, the classroom learning research

community, the “aiga community” of students and, of course, parents. The following are, therefore, implications which these stakeholders must consider:

(1) Teacher Education and Curriculum Development

I suggest that teachers and curriculum developers should pay close attention to the “total student,” by considering the total elements of the school life he/she lives. Consider the following account of what I experienced first hand.

At the backdrop of the total elements of Samoan students’ classroom community life, which this study has attempted to explore, the two cultures (*fa’asamoa* and classroom culture) play an intriguing “hide and seek” game amidst classroom activities and their pedagogical phases. The consequences of the “dual operation” of these cultures saw some students swinging in different directions in their studies, either positive or negative. It should be noted that the influential effect of *fa’asamoa* on Samoan students thinking and learning in the classroom was confirmed by the data of this particular study. Some of the revelations captured included that most of the students used *fa’asamoa* and Samoan language to bridge, improvise and enhance their understanding of English concepts in socio-cultural processes. This was the case when they develop problem-solving strategies to manage tasks in subjects like Maths, Science and Accounting. The influence of *fa’asamoa*, according to Fairbairn-Dunlop, is particularly pervasive:

...the *fa’asamoa* influences ideas about learning. The behaviour valued in the *fa’asamoa* involve knowing one’s place in the system and being able to identify and apply correct behaviours for a specific situation. Acting above one self, by showing initiative or originality ‘out of turn’, for example, is not appropriate behaviour (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1991, p.298)

The effect of *fa’asamoa*’s dictates often constrained students from being assertive to openly discuss or critique, which in turn denied these students access to the most integral part of classroom learning. Breaking into new grounds or developing original ideas has always been seen as unorthodox and thus inappropriate. The classroom culture’s academic activities have impacted on and stimulated the ways Samoan

students think and learn, especially if learning processes were congruent with their “ways and ideas of learning and knowing” or when activities were of particular interest to students. They also show a preference for cooperative learning in small groups, while also retaining a competitive ethic.

Here let us meet the “newcomer” and third party to the classroom community: popular culture (or more particularly, hip-hop and Afro American culture) with which almost every *Pasefika* student now identifies. Students’ social disposition (see Silipa, 1998), which encapsulates “hip-hop-ism” settles between *fa’asamoa* and classroom culture. I refer to students’ social disposition as a “moderator” which sifts and sieves information from one culture to another. It is like a funnel that collects the residue of students learning experiences. It is clear that this culture seems so attractive to the majority of not only Samoans but also *Pasefika* students, and has become so infectious that its existence in the minds of Samoan students cannot be overlooked. Recognising and acknowledging students’ “social disposition” in relation to their diverse subcultures, particularly hip-hop, I stipulate that teachers and curriculum developers should consider its potential benefit for motivating students’ learning. For example, studying hip-hop songs instead of poetry would greatly enhance students’ interest. Moreover, this particular popular culture has the ability to enhance their ‘coolness’ and ‘dignity’ of their learning voyage. However, they must also recognise its potential to hinder the learning relationships between students and their counterparts within the “community of learners”. For instance, hip-hop culture has to it a separatist element, which could prove counter-productive in facilitating harmony within the classroom.

The model of understanding that I devised was the social and cultural construction of learning perspective. While some people may not agree with me, this study has proven that the above model or perspective provided some legitimate understanding about the realities of Samoan students’ classroom experiences at secondary education. Furthermore, this model has broadened my horizons to other avenues that students ventured into while in the classroom. Despite my dislike of making assumptions, however, I assume that by yielding some valuable data on both covert and overt themes and issues about elements of students’ lives, I was not very far away from understanding what really happened in these students’ heads and their minds.

Becoming aware of the danger of relying too much on assumptions, I tried to refrain myself from using them all the time, as Nuthall (1997) comments:

We cannot continue to depend on assumptions and theoretical predictions about how students are affected by their classroom experiences. Teachers need to know how the classroom processes that they manage, and have responsibility for, affect the lives and development of their students (1997:75)

Teachers should assume various standpoints in order for them to work effectively with those students under their pastoral care. As mediators and managers of classroom learning, teachers should be versatile, flexible and “good actors”. While it is hard to teach and work with adolescents students in this age of technocratic change, guesswork and predictions based on an outcome-focussed approach does not quite capture the real needs of the majority of the students, what their real needs are, and what they are up to during classroom tasks.

Therefore, previous exam scores and tests should no longer apply, if we really want to get closer to know more about the needs of students We have to develop a “process-approach” exploring social and cultural learning processes, the processors (students) of such processes and the context within which such processes occur. In so doing, we can promote a student-centred learning which is closely related to how students cope with the content of these processes. I was fascinated by the significance of writing diaries or portfolios as a means of getting closer to what is inside students’ heads. Diaries and portfolios are personal property, however, but if we want to foster change in students, we have to access some of the information in these daily entries (e.g. what students think of themselves and how they perceive what others, including teachers, think of them). It is only then that we can reach out to offer support.

In sum, classroom teachers must assume a versatile position to: (i) facilitate and develop attractive situations for the classroom’s community of learners; (ii) take time to explain students’ misconceptions and misapplications of learning concept and ideas in subjects such as Maths and Sciences; (iii) cultivate competence in unravelling students’ cultural package and previous experiences; (iv) develop an ambient social

and cultural milieu that enhances and restores the confidence of students to develop a positive attitude towards learning and knowing through both cultural and classroom experiences; and (v) allow more time for students to interact with subject content, negotiate and mediate their problem solving-strategies to maintain their self-efficacy belief.

(2) The community of students and parents

The strong relationship between students and parents must be utilised to ensure the success of the former. It is critical that parents instil in their children the values of *fa'asamoa* and a devotion to learning before focusing on western education. Arguably, Samoan culture and language are undoubtedly among the richest in the Pacific. Its oral genres, metaphors, and nuances “talk Samoan epistemology into being” and they could be likened to the Old English of Shakespeare. I believe that in order for a Samoan student to master classroom culture and, of course, its linguistic instructions, he/she must first develop an appreciation of his/her culture and language.

In this particular study, it is evident that *fa'asamoa* and Samoan language, irrespective of their discontinuity at school, continued to play an important role in how students think and learn in the classroom. Despite the erosion of Samoan speech, most students thinking is deeply rooted in Samoan culture. One concern I wish to mention is that students' fragmented Samoan speech is symmetrical with their unelaborated English speech. Thus, it is imperative for parents to encourage their children to learn the significance and symbolism of elements of *fa'asamoa* and Samoan language. The symbolism of classroom culture and its linguistic instructions could not be fully understood if a person could not define his/her own identity in the vernacular language. Furthermore, successful learning could be executed through *falefaufaatasi* (building together). This issue merits further investigation from the research community.

(3) Classroom learning community

A paucity of research has focused on the classroom learning of Samoans and *Pasefika* senior secondary students. In particular, emphasis on the issues of how students cope at school, the coping strategies which they employ, and those factors that facilitate

their learning, was required and thus influenced the shape and focus of this thesis. I sort to provide explanations of how classroom learning can be more inclusive which may help the majority of students who continue to experience anxiety and a sense of self-exclusion in a school community which continues to favour the finely-tuned product – the ‘brilliant student’ – as a marketable asset.

Investigations of such issues, however, have methodological implications. I developed an integrative *fa’asamoa*-based research or Samoan fieldwork method called the “*Matua o faiva* Model”. This model not only enhanced the confidence and security of research participants, but it also promoted their openness and reduced their feelings of anxiety which stemmed from their awareness that they were the ‘subjects’ of research. My model was suitable for studies in both social and cultural contexts with which the realities of the experiences of the research participants, through their perspectives opinions and actions are generated, evaluated and analysed. Developed as a response to the complexity of ethnographic models, the *matua o faiva* model underpins by *fa’asamoa* involves five steps built from the ground upward. *Matua o faiva* (Samoan fieldwork) involves *soalaupule* (planning and development), *fa’afaletui* (research process/methodology), *fa’atufugaga* (practical application/methods), and *umusaga* (analysis and presentation). Western paradigms, it must be pointed out, also informed this model which sought to reconceptualise an understanding of Samoan students’ classroom learning because “We need to match the complexity of our evolving conceptual understanding of the classroom with an equally complex set of procedures for investigating and verifying that understanding (Nuthall & Alton-Lee 1993).” The model showed, for instance, that the exposure of students to a broad range of examples of resources has positively contributed to their classroom experiences and that in group task discussions, students regularly used their first language with peers to bridge their difficulties with English.

As Samoan students journey into the *taeao afua* (new mornings), their undertaking is supported and guided by the spiritual blessings of parents prayers. Thus, I shall leave you with this morning prayer which I hope will bring *taeao afua* or new mornings to enhance Samoans and *Pasefika* students thinking and learning in New Zealand classrooms.

The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man, help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces, let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us to go blithely on our business all this day, bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonoured, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep. (Stevenson, 1915)

Fa'amumu fanaafi o fa'amalama: Light the light of learning alight

The Journey Continues....

EPILOGUE: *PUNAVAI O LE MALAMALAMA*: Spring of Light: Concepts and learning ideas in the Samoan tradition

I. INTRODUCTION

(i) *E lele le toloa ae maau i le vaivai* (the bird *toloa* takes flight and shall always return to its aquatic habitat.)

(ii) *E auau le tava'e i ona fulu* (the bird *tavae* takes pride in its furs)

(iii) *O lupe sa fa'alele* (a pigeon/dove symbolises the “holy spirit” which aligns with Samoan youth setting out in quest for knowledge and a quality education)

(iv) The great sea of life knows both tranquillity and turbulence.
The canoe that crosses its depths must know from whence it came.
(Pere, 1983)

The first three epigraphic quotations are derived from the Samoan oral tradition. In essence the three expressions, literally depicting the nature of Samoan birds, help to explain the emergence of a Samoan's (like myself) cultural heritage and identity, and his/her deployment of concepts and learning ideas. Akin to the very nature of such birds, there is a general conjecture amongst Samoan people that we all process and synthesise information in a similar manner. Such belief pervades every layer of the Samoan society, and its existence is resonant within the New Zealand Samoan community.

The four epigraphic quotations have served to provide me with the motivation and inspiration to compile this account of my educational journey. Moreover, my socio-historical, political, cultural, emotional and spiritual orientations and stances have provided me with the courage to complete this task. This is highlighted in my following free verse:

An imbedded insight

My moral intuition, heritage and cultural identity

Bid me to rig a sinnet pertinent to the truth.

For who? I intriguingly asked, as it was merely opaque.

**For me, and my community, it responded,
 For me, and my community to knot and use
 Synthesising strands of my discoveries
 The strands and threads of my experiences are
 Placed side by side as warp and weft.
 Indelible, the two sides of the product emerged**

My educational journey began within my “*aiga*” my home, my castle as my first school and classroom populated by my “*matua ma aiga*” my parents and members of my extended family as my first teachers, mentors and “community of both teachers and learners”.

Many concepts and learning ideas were planted and embodied in my mind by the time I was seven years old. I aim to outline these here, although this chapter is by no means a detailed life history. While my experiences were no doubt similar to other Samoans of my generation, I can only outline my own story with any degree of confidence. My own outlook has undergone tremendous change from the time of my education in Samoa to the present days of post-graduate study in New Zealand, although the basis of my belief system has changed little. These beliefs and my knowledge of the Samoan tradition stemmed initially from three key institutions: the home, the church and the village. These social structures, and the practices of each, forged my learning and development and fashioned my total *tagata* or person and cultural identity. My cultural identity, in turn, enhanced my concept of self and sense of belonging to the Samoan community. That community is now spread throughout the world, although its members vigorously and steadfastly maintain their traditions through churches and language schools, in particular. The Samoan oral tradition, one of the oldest in the South Pacific, plays the key role in the dissemination of *fa’asamoa*.

In outlining my educational journey, I reflect firstly on the experiences of my youth, particularly my informal and formal educational experiences. My Samoan ‘worldview’ is both ‘traditionalist’ and contemporary in orientation. By this I mean that the attributes of *fa’asamoa* I acquired in my formative years as well as my latter experiences have combined to shaped a worldview which incorporates the two spheres. As a result, my interpretation of my own journey has doubtless transformed over time. I focus on important themes, such as who influenced me, the phases of my

education, where I was educated and the influence of my culture on my learning experiences. My aim is to contextualise my position in terms of the research. I examine the principles which instilled in me my passion for life-long learning, and reveal the significant influence of my *matua* (parents), *aiga*, (family), *lotu* (church) the village/community (*nu'u*) and the *aoga* (school).

My story, as outlined in this chapter, was inspired by the nature of the Samoan oral tradition of story-telling (*su'ifefiloi*). *Su'ifefiloi* literally means the careful threading or stringing of different flowers together to make a beautiful *ula/fa'asolo* (garland). Within one story there are many stories. Threading my story can be likened to *filigaafa* (sinnet rigging) and *lagaga* (fine mat weaving), which signifies continuity and change. Succinctly, these traditional processes or art form/s comprised many strands, many voices, and many hands in their making. Each encapsulates practical expertise, cultural artefacts, mental toughness, consistency and endurance. Like many Samoan stories told in the same tradition, my own story seeks to provide the reader with vignettes which are woven and interwoven into a quilt-like sheet to make a whole. The process itself was difficult and emotional. I was guided by two expressions, in particular: "*E leai se faiva e ma'umau*" *aua* "*E poto le tautai ae se le atu i ama*" (None of a catch would go to waste; and notwithstanding the knowledge a fisherman possesses, he still makes errors). My recollection is by no means perfect, but it is honest and sincere. I am mindful that there are many Samoans, other than myself, whose educational journeys may have traversed similar paths. I invite these people to step into my canoe and paddle with me, to share their stories and contribute fresh insights drawn from their own experiences as products of traditional *fa'asamoa* and Christianity, Colonialism and Post Colonialism, and Samoan and Western tradition of modes of learning and formal education.

The growing demand for alternative theoretical windows aiming to understand Samoan students' thinking and learning within the classroom influenced the nature of this epilogue and thesis. The over-riding aim here was to answer the following questions: Does the author's insight on concepts and learning ideas in the valued contexts of the Samoan tradition still have any significance in understanding Samoan students thinking and learning in the contemporary classroom? If it does, what underlying principles do they entail? What actual role do these concepts and learning

ideas play? While I realise that a chapter of this nature is unusual in an academic thesis, it has been included because of its significance in terms of providing alternative theoretical mechanisms. My purpose here is simply to provide an insight into the concepts and learning ideas in the Samoan tradition which I hope will create new windows to view the circumstantial dynamics of a generation of Samoan students' thinking and learning in the classroom. This, I believe, will help reveal what coping mechanisms Samoan students employ in their various encounters with school culture and curriculum and the pressing aspirations and expectations of parents and the Samoan community. Furthermore, I modestly believe that this process should help us plan how to improve the quality of other students' (from diverse backgrounds) thinking and learning in the classroom.

II. OUTLINE

Section III begins with a general overview of the history of education in Samoa, focusing on pre-European learning, the influence of the missionaries, the New Zealand Administration and post-independence Samoa. In Section IV I focus on key components of *fa'asamoa*: the *aiga*, *ava/fa'aaloalo*, *alofa* and *loto maualalo/agamalu*. It concludes with a commentary on the significance of *fa'asamoa*. Section V is comprised of my own journey, beginning with my own *aiga*. It includes a discussion of key aspects of my upbringing, including my pre-school education within the *aiga*, primary schooling (with discussions on the importance of discipline and pedagogies) and my intermediate and secondary schooling. Section VI is an examination of Samoan educational emphases and discourse. Included are a commentary on the issues of cultural identity and a concluding discussion on concepts, modes and contexts of Samoan thinking and learning.

III. EDUCATION IN SAMOA: A BRIEF HISTORY

As outlined in the Western Samoan Education Department's 1986 Annual Report, the history of education in Samoa has undergone four important phases:

Present day education in Samoa is the product of four successive influences-indigenous Samoan culture, nineteenth century Christian missionary efforts, twentieth century colonialism under New Zealand, and the convictions of Samoan educational leaders who

have directed schooling since the islands attained political independence (Western Samoan Education Department, 1986).

It is profitable to discuss these phases in a quest to understand the educational experiences of Samoan youth.

(1) Pre-European learning and education

In pre-European times, family-based education within the home served as the basis of the education of Samoan children. This is still very much in evidence today (Maiai, 1957). This style of teaching is characterised by three distinct phases. The first stage involved parents or adults within the *aiga* passing on aspects of culture and tradition to children which formed the basis of their subsequent socialisation and education.

The second stage can be equated to 'rites of passage', whereby youth aged between 11-16 years were initiated into performing various roles and responsibilities demanded by the adults of their communities. This change is characterised by the youths' movement away from the home and *aiga* and their widening contact with the wider community through a process of induction into various corporate groups, for instance the *aumaga* (young adolescent boys and untitled men), and *aualuma* (girls and women of the village) (Petana-Ioka, 1995). Such a transition was smooth and exposed adolescent males and females to more advanced observational learning and guided participation within group practices. Significantly, this stage enhanced the youths' links with the social and physical environments (Maiai, 1957). Young and untitled men were, for example, exposed to rituals and practises of *fa'alavelave*, the art of oratory, different guilds of craftsmanship, house building, and so forth. Gaining the skills and knowledge to perform such tasks served to reinforce one's sense of place and orientation within the Samoan tradition. In short, one acquired the *mana* of his/her ancestry which is a necessary tool for one's future educational voyage.

The third stage involved preparation for offices, such as assuming oratorship and chieftainship positions. This stage involved acquiring '*tofa mamao/manino*' (supremacy in specialised knowledge and cultural/traditional knowledge) which

included aspects of traditional craftsmanship, such as house-building and boat-making. However, only a chosen few acquired such knowledge. A range of reasons have been advanced to explain why this was so, although only several will be discussed here. The first (see Meleisea, 1987b) was because knowledge was regarded as power. Knowledge was closely guarded and the specialised knowledge of the art of oratory, mythical oral tradition and literature and different guilds of craftsmanship were disseminated only amongst descendants or close alliances. Gaining the necessary knowledge to become a *tufuga fau fale* (house builder), *tuua/failauga* (orator), *matuau'u* (weaver) or *taulasea* (medicinal person), for example, was acquired by only a select few. Secondly, pursuing such knowledge, even today, requires a high degree of dedication and is usually only open to the most talented youths. In summary, pre-European education was very much community-orientated, and permeated all aspects of the *aiga* or family and community as a whole. According to Petana-Ioka (1995), although Samoan traditional forms of education are still in existence today, they are under constant threat of Western cultural arrogance and rationalism.

(2) The arrival of the missionaries

The influence of Christian missionaries between 1830 and 1900 had a profound impact on the style of Samoan education which had been in existence for hundreds of years. After the arrival of John Williams' party from the London Missionary Society in 1830, Samoans quickly embraced Christianity. This trend continued as Roman Catholic missionaries entered Samoa between 1830 and 1845. The arrival of missionaries came to be recognised by Samoans as a fulfilment of the prophecy made by the Samoan Goddess *Nafanua* that King *Malietao's* kingdom would come from heaven, hence the name *papalagi* (sky bursters) for the first wave of Europeans, as it was believed that they had come from outside the universe and burst the domes of heaven (Meleisea, 1992, p.20). The widespread reception of missionaries by Samoans necessarily led to massive changes to Samoa's social and political structural organisation and traditional etiquette and protocol. One key change was the conferment of the '*Ao o fa'alupega*' (supreme status) upon pastors or church leaders, as well as the bestowment of the status '*feagaiga*'. The latter refers to the sacred covenant between sisters and brothers

which was extended to pastors/church ministers and their links with their congregation.

Missionaries' early work comprised of the establishment and development of various parishes and pastors' schools, the *Aoga Faifeau* (Pastor School system), which heralded the beginning of the history of Western Education in Samoa. The key feature of the school system was the emphasis on 'civilising' and 'christianising' Samoan people (Petana-Ioka, 1995). Noticeably, its most important task was teaching Samoans to 'read, write, and reckon' in the vernacular language of the missionaries (Tamati, 1981, p.1). According to Meleisea (1987, p.59), the aim was to educate men as pastors to take care of the parishes in the villages, so that every village had a Samoan pastor. This would thus enable the English missionaries to devote their energies to teaching in the church schools and colleges as well as taking care of church administration.

The overwhelming *speed* of the spread of Christianity through missionaries' work, in particular the increased establishment of *Aoga Faifeau*, mainly by London Missionary Society and Wesleyan Missions, soon pervaded all layers of the Samoan society. Following the New Zealand military administration of Samoa in 1914, through which New Zealand was awarded trusteeship over Western Samoa after the First World War, *Aoga Faifeau* was perceived to be equivalent to the 'Dame School' stage one (Beeby 1966, p.58). Significantly, the pastors' schools taught not only literacy and numeracy. Practical skills relating to house-building, boat-building, sewing, agriculture, horticulture, printing and commercial work emerged as a core function of such schools:

The pastors and their wives ran schools for children and adults (ie, there was no specific age) in villages throughout the nineteenth century, and up until the 1950s, most Samoans were educated by village pastors. In the Pastors' schools, people were instructed to read and write in Samoan; they learned the basic arithmetic, scripture and church music. The pastor taught the boys whatever practical skills he had learnt, while his wife taught the girls *papalagi* domestic arts...that education emphasised European women's work such as cooking, sewing and housekeeping (Meleisea, 1987).

The efforts of missionaries to penetrate Samoan society through their Christian doctrines resulted in almost all Samoans converting to Christianity by 1850 (Education

Department of Western Samoa 1986, p.3). While traditional rituals continued to be practiced, and superstitions remained, the doctrines of Christianity have to a large extent fused with *fa'asamoa* and remain deeply rooted in a host of day to day events, particularly education. The *tama failotu* (Samoan teachers of Christianity) played an integral role in the dissemination of the 'Word', as the education dimension was seen as a critical aspect of missionary work. The end result was that by 1900, visiting dignitaries from the London Missionary Society noted the remarkable spread of the 'Word' and literacy:

Samoans became literate when there was still much illiteracy in Victorian England; secondary education, even to a very limited extent, was being given when comparatively few adolescents in England were receiving it; and girls were gaining a good education under mission auspices when there were not many girls' schools in England. Furthermore, vocational and agricultural training was gradually introduced to enable islanders to build and preserve their society under new conditions of contact with outside world (cited by Petana-Ioka 1995:19).

(3) The New Zealand administration

The New Zealand administration (after 1914) established a publicly-supported secular school system which built heavily on the efforts of missionaries and Samoan enthusiasm for schooling. The new school system was characterised by the *Tulaga Lua* (Village Primary School) and later *Aoga Maualuga* (Secondary School). According to Maiai's (1957) explanation:

The New Zealand administration realised the fact that mission work was being conducted as separate entities and because their efforts were uncoordinated, the country could not progress as far as even the missionaries themselves wished. It was the policy therefore of the new administration to encourage and supplement the work of the mission, and also, to expand it further in the hope that a satisfactory national system of education might be built up (Maiai 1957, p.71 also in Petana-Ioka 1995, p.21).

At the outset of the New Zealand Administration, it was realised that a more advanced education system was required, although such a move was not realised for a number of

decades. In the interim, the New Zealand administration continued to work closely with the existing missionary schools.

(4) Post World War Two changes

The most influential figure in the history of Samoan formal education was Dr. C. E. Beeby. Beeby was seconded to look into and to recommend a strategic plan to better educate Samoans to prepare them to assume leadership and administration positions for a time when Western Samoa achieved independence. Under the authorisation of Sir Peter Fraser, the then Prime Minister of New Zealand, Dr. Beeby and his colleagues' were to initiate a number of key changes which furthered the ability of Samoans to receive post-primary education. In particular, the New Zealand Scholarship Scheme, inaugurated in 1945, enabled talented students to take up secondary and tertiary education in New Zealand. Upon their return to Samoa, these students were expected to assume leadership positions in the government (Maia, 1957). Other key changes at this time included the establishment of Secondary education in Samoa, with the creation of Samoa College in 1953 and a host of Catholic Secondary Schools in subsequent years. Furthermore, New Zealand school examinations, such as School Certificate and University Entrance, were introduced in the 1950s as part of an increased effort to ensure that all Samoan children engaged in formal education.

As stated above, the post-war Samoan school system was heavily influenced by a determination to lay the foundations of an independent Samoan state. According to Beeby:

When a country became independent, its first decision on educational policy was, in most cases, predominantly political in character, and that it was concerned with the needs of the state rather than with the rights of the individual. Absolute priority had to be given to building up an educated elite to staff the civil service, the professions and the higher ranks of industry and the defence services (Beeby, 1966, p.263).

While in some respects the emphasis on creating an educated elite was in contrast to the 'equality of opportunity' focus of New Zealand's own Educational Reforms of the 1960s, Beeby's philosophy was based in part on a sense of urgency:

The politicians, in desperate need of an embodied elite, has a ready-made model of a European school system in the institutions the colonial administrators had set up for their own nationals, and an extension of that was the quickest method of meeting their immediate purpose (Beeby 1966, p.266).

One noticeable legacy of Beeby's Commission was the continued focus on academic elitism.

IV. BOSOM OF MY AIGA: THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE

“A’oa’o le tama [po’o le teine] e tusa ma ona ala, a o’o ina matua e le toe te’a ese ai” (Teach the child the appropriate concepts and learning ideas inherent in Samoan tradition values, contexts and beliefs, and as he/she reaches maturity, he/she will never be able to forget them). This well known Samoan proverb is at the core of my own learning and development which was received and nurtured in the warmth peace and tranquillity of the bosom of my *aiga*. The purpose and nature of this study, and in particular this chapter, demands that I must develop rapport with the reader by describing from where/when/how the concepts and learning ideas I have acquired were derived and originated. It is necessary, however, to limit my discussion to a number of pertinent issues or events beginning with my *aiga*.

(1) *Aiga*

The word *aiga* was transmitted to contemporary Samoans by their pre-colonial ancestors, as part of a vibrant and living language, which encapsulates a multitude of meanings. Such meanings are constantly being re-constructed and re-interpreted to make sense of the intricacies of the Samoan language and culture as it continually evolves. In its simplest and most fundamental noun form, the concept *aiga* basically means a Samoan institution comprising of an extended family or a large group of numerous parent/s-children households, who have descended from the same kinship group or through marriage or adoption.

Common to various family units and households is the unofficial adoption and guardianship of children. Today, in spite of functional changes, the *aiga* continues to be the enduring basic social unit amongst Samoans. Validated by this popular Samoan saying “*O le aiga e malu ai le tagata*” (An *aiga* provides shelter/safe haven for a person), the *aiga* permeates every layer of society, and it will never fail to provide a permanent safe haven for its members. This is true not only in Samoa, but for Samoan communities abroad, such as those in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States of America. The *aiga* embraces all members, irrespective of the degree of to which some may stray from its norms. Significantly, the concept of *aiga* as a root word when combined with the verb *fai* (to make/reproduce), derives *fai'aiga*-literally to ‘reproduce a family’, the union of husband and wife and more importantly, a formal and sacred characterisation of the process of sexual intercourse relationship between husband and wife. In spite of changes in the principles and functions of the modern *aiga* (often now a nuclear family), the etiquettes and protocols - the essence of a traditional pre-European Samoan *aiga* - continued to prevail. It is the *hub* within which its etiquettes and functions serve to stabilise cooperation between and a sense of unity within its community of members.

The *aiga's* functions ranged from the transmission of valued cultural concepts to the encouragement of formal and informal learning and education for its children. A key focus is to educate its younger members to ensure that they are well equipped with the skills to positively contribute to the *aiga's* welfare, (and to the wider community) and to harmoniously lead the *aiga* into the next generation.

Surrounded and nurtured by my *aiga*, like many Samoan children, my total education was heavily influenced by Samoan cultural concepts, valued context emphases and institutions. While it is particularly difficult to translate into English the essence of cultural concepts, it is necessary here to discuss three important concepts - *Ava/Faaaloalo*, *Alofa* and *Lotomaulalo/Agamalu* – given their central role to the task of defining *fa'asamoa*.

(2) *Ava/Fa'aaloalo*

Ava/Fa'aaloalo can mean respect, reverence, courtesy and politeness, and is the core of *tu ma aga fa'atamalii* (the traditional characterisation of nobility) which is deemed to be the accepted behaviour pattern. I was taught that respect (*fa'aaloalo*) was the hub of *fa'asamoa*. One was to be perceived by the community as a good role model by the way he/she behaved according to the *fa'asamoa* protocols of *fa'aaloalo*. In its simplest form, *fa'aaloalo* is saying *fa'amolemole* (or please) when asking for something and saying *faafetai* (or thank you) after receiving something, and most importantly showing respect for yourself, loved ones and others, especially elders, women, and the sick and people in positions of authority. Furthermore, *fa'aaloalo* requires a person to respect the space between others and him/her.

I experienced being taught to respect my sisters in accordance with the *fa'asamoa* traditional protocol known as "*feagaiga*" (a covenant as between brother and sister). In this *tapu*/sacred relationship, the brother's sister is the apple of his eye, and vice versa: '*o le ioi mata o le tuagane lona tuafafine e faapena foi i le tuafafine i le tuagane*' A brother protects and guards his sister at all costs, and a sister respects her relationship with her brother. In a similar vein, the concept of *feagaiga* applies to the covenant between *tulafale* and *alii*, or between the pastor and his congregation.

(3) *Alofa*

Alofa literally means love and kindness. It can also mean sincere, genuine sharing, or reciprocity, characterised by the offering and exchange of gifts or assistance. A sense of *alofa* should be extended not only to those physically within one's kin group but to those beyond it. This is particularly important with members extended around the globe. Transcending the *aiga* to helping friends and neighbours by sharing food, resources and most importantly providing services or lending a hand were all carried out in the name of *alofa*. This sense of duty was reinforced by the following sermon which we memorised and recited many a time during evening prayers or at Sunday school as children: "And if there be any commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself (Roman 13:9)" *Alofa*,

along with *fa'aaloalo*, closely interrelate with the third concept - *Loto maualalo/Agamalu* – and shape an individual to meet the challenges of life.

(4) *Loto maualalo/Agamalu*

Loto maualalo/Agamalu can mean humility and modesty. It lies behind a child's silence in the presence of adults and people in authority. At home and in public places, I learnt to become humble, to let others go first, to give up my place/seat for an elder, a woman or the sick, and to always refrain from being boastful, and showing off in front of people. I experienced being told off by parents and other *aiga* members when I unconsciously stepped out of the protocols of *loto maualalo*.

I recall that at playtime or in the course of home activities, when we would behave inappropriately by acting bossy, assuming positions of authority or making fun of others, we were reprimanded by adults. In the light of these experiences, I was always consciously aware of the watchful gaze of adult relations, even though that they were not always physically present, and the *mana* of their words. This reminded me that whatever behaviour we engaged in that we should be mindful that our elders would know. Therefore, this could be equated to the following Samoan proverbial expression, “*E fai taliga o aupa*” (the walls have ears).

Thus, as a microcosm of the school and society, the *aiga* continues to be the source of the teaching and learning of traditional cultural processes—the concepts and learning ideas, valued contexts, institutions and emphases of *fa'asamoa*. The interconnections of the three concepts briefly described above forms a firm axis whereupon *fa'asamoa* (cultural tradition) pivots and revolves.

(5) The significance of the concept of *Fa'asamoa*

Definitions of *fa'asamoa*, firstly by Anthropologists and more recently re-defined by Samoan people, are not entirely free from hermeneutic confusion. In broad terms, *fa'asamoa* can be defined in many ways and forms. Put simply, the concept of *fa'asamoa* entails the psychological, socio-cultural and community processes that

surround control and influence the everyday lives of many Samoans. Two recent definitions are particularly useful. Firstly, Mulitalo (1998) departs from a social working perspective and refers to *fa'asamoa* as the total make-up of Samoan culture, comprising of both visible and invisible characteristics-the basis of principles, values and beliefs that influence and control the behaviour and attitudes of Samoans. The second definition, from a political angle, refers to *fa'asamoa* as a system based on affective ties, manifests in the *fa'amatai*, and encapsulates all aspects of life: economic, political, social and cultural (Aiono, 1992, p.120 cited in Iati, 2000).

On a more specific level, *fa'asamoa* entails the following: *vafealoa'i faatamalii* (sacred space between individuals); *fa'atulagaga o mamalu* (categorisation of individuals); *alofa le fa'atuaioia* (transcendental love); *fetausia'i ona tagata* (mutual respect and social collaboration between people); *gagana fa'aaloalo* (formal language of chiefs and nobility); *laumata fiafia ma le talimalo lelei* (gaiety, genuine hospitality and congeniality); *taumafataga ma palaplala malo ia lava* (providing food for everyone). Central to *fa'asamoa* is its language especially its oral tradition, which plays a significant role in the initial education of a Samoan child. According to Albert Wendt (1989):

Our elder's stories were our earliest maps and fictions; they were view of the dimensions, geography, values, morality and aspirations of the world and way of life we were born into. It was a world in which everything was one process: the web that was the individual person was inseparable from the web of aiga/village/tribe, which was inseparable from the web of *atua* and the elements and the universe. And in that process everything was endowed with the sacred or mana. (Albert Wendt, 1989, p.65 cited in Petana-Ioka, 1995)

The concepts and learning ideas based on the Samoan tradition and attuned with *fa'asamoa*, in particular oral traditions, have had immense impact on me and undoubtedly almost all other Samoans' learning and education. Despite what we aspired to achieve, and expected to get from Western education while growing up, we were inclined to thinking and learning in Samoan terms.

V. PHASE ONE: MY AIGA, MY FIRST SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM

I was conceived and delivered by my mum's village's traditional *fa'atosaga* (midwife), assisted by my grandmother and other woman relations, not in a hospital but behind the shutters of coconut leaves blinds of an open/wall-less, thatched-roof traditional Samoan *faleafolau* (oval house) in my mother's small rurally isolated village, located in the midst of two towering mountains, eastward end of the Island of *Upolu*, where the capital of Samoa is located. Conferred the initial 'S' after my father, my existence meant I was supposed to epitomise my father, my mother and the rest of the *aiga*. I was number five in a family of ten, inclusive of two cousins who as toddlers, were adopted by my parents when my aunt untimely passed away. Like my siblings, I was nurtured and brought up in my father's village surrounded by paternal *aiga*. The village, situated in an urban town area, was ten minutes by car, or half an hour walk eastward from the town of Apia, the capital city of Samoa.

Like most Samoan villages situated on the seaward side, my father's village housing, mostly open or wall-less faced the coastal road against a backdrop of murals of mangrove bushes and swamps. My father's village has been and is still the home to the best rugby legends and players in the country, renowned for producing some brilliant pianists like my father, as well as prominent professional people (for example clergymen, teachers, lawyers, electricians and medical doctors). In contrast, my mother's village was more traditional and isolated, which was home to many planters, tillers and cultivators of land, house and boat builders (*fautasi and paopao*), carvers, fishermen and most importantly brilliant longboat oarsmen (*fautasi*) who excelled throughout the history of longboat national competitions. Common to both villages was the fact that almost everyone was connected and related, in one way or another, whether through genealogies, marriage, adoption or *aigas'* interspersed histories.

Within the confines of my *aiga*, I was infused with the culture and valued contexts of *fa'asamoa* etiquettes and protocols. It was here that I was inducted into observational learning and learning through osmosis. I learned to be unselfish and to assume my place as a responsible member of a unit: my *aiga* and my village community. In the home setting, I learned to do everything the way it was done in accordance with the

traditional ways adult members of my *aiga*. In a similar manner, I learned to live side by side with my *aiga* and around extended family members, to advocate, to cooperate, to reciprocate and to share everything from food to toys to helping others execute menial tasks. From these experiences I learned how to apply what I have acquired to various contexts and tasks within and beyond my home.

Like almost all the children in my village, I observed and assisted male family elders and relatives with specialised or general tasks. These tasks involved boat building, fishing, planting or tilling/cultivating the land, hunting, collecting coconuts and cracking them for use, collecting firewood, cooking or making handicrafts and so on. On the other hand, my sisters followed my grandmother and female relatives in a different manner, and learnt how to weave mats, sewing, ironing and washing and cooking. From an early age, therefore, gender roles were well defined. Outside of the *aiga*, interaction with others in our *ekalesia* (church) or *nu'u* (village) and spending time in both rural and urban areas served to reinforce aspects of culture to shape our worldview.

My paternal and maternal *aigas* differed in many ways. Therefore, my learning and development was heavily influenced by my affiliation with both *aigas* and their alliances. Despite the differences between them, each was bound together through the fusion of traditional values and beliefs and Christian doctrines which resulted etiquettes and protocols that both *aigas* members steadfastly revered and embraced. As children we were encouraged to be ourselves and be kind to one another, as we were treated with love, warmth and compassion by our parents and adult relations. In turn, we showed them total respect. Similarly, others in authority or with high status, such as the village Minister, schoolteachers and village elders were treated with utmost reverence. This respect was fostered through the daily rituals of the *upu ma tala* or words and stories embedded in Samoan oral tradition.

In effect, the open *fale* in which I grew up was home to a number of key family members who each contributed cooperatively and collectively to the welfare of all. It served, through nurturing the learning of the young, to mould the future leaders of the family (*o le lumanai o le aiga mo a taeao*). This is the underlying philosophy of my home, my school and classroom. I call members of my *aiga* the “community of

teachers and learners” as everyone engaged in a two way process of “give and take” or taught and learned from one another. From an early age, I was quickly aware of an overarching social control structure, ascending from older siblings and cousins to parents, uncles, ministers and our chief (*matai*). Older siblings, cousins and adult relatives played a significant role in the parenting and supervision of young children. In the course of my life, I too have experienced the evolution of responsibility from early childhood, to being a sibling supervisor, to finally becoming an adult supervisor of not only those within my kin group but those outside of it.

My experience within my *aiga* proved to be of immense importance to my later learning undertakings at school and beyond. The open nature of the house itself cannot be under-estimated in my development. It fostered the close supervision and guided participation of children by all family members. In terms of discipline, it was impossible to participate in inappropriate behaviour without drawing the attention of others which meant that from an early age we learnt what was not acceptable. The close social interaction, and the need for compromise and negotiation, proved heavily influential.

(1)The unfolding of a new day

My *aiga* awoke to the dawning of a new morning, by neither a wall clock chiming, nor a sound of a radio or television sets, but the echoing tune of a hymn: “*Ala mai ma fa’asaga i feau ua tofia ai...*” (Awake and face the challenges of a day’s task). This was followed closely by the *vivigi fa’alausoso’o o moa* (the enduring cock crowing). We began a new day with the *lotu taeao* (morning worship ritual), which involved a hymn, a prayer and finally instructions regarding proceedings for the course of the day. The *lotu* would be conducted by either my grandfather, my mother or any adult relative temporarily staying over night in my household. Despite the dark and feelings of drowsiness, we needed to sing in tune and in harmony. This ritual not only seemed to strengthen my Christian values, but also developed my sense of spirituality, belonging and shared identity.

Most importantly in the formative years of my growing up was assuming *va fealoai* (respecting space) and learning how to respect this sacred space. This could include the space between me and sacred grounds such cemetery sites, traditional monuments and landmarks. I learnt to respect my *va* (space) between my parents/adults and myself, and most importantly between my sisters and myself. This involved my initiation into becoming conscious about my role regarding my “*va tapui*” which entailed my “*feagaiga*” relationship or covenant between my sisters and me. From an early age, I developed an acute awareness of my role and responsibility to respect, protect and guard my sisters at all costs. In the same manner, I was also made aware about my *va* or space between God and myself, which closely aligned with the *va* (space) between myself and others. The healthy maintenance of this space evoked a sense of building “mutual relationships” with family members and others, creating a sense of place and a sense of community.

Fanaafi Mai'ai's (1957) observations were very similar to my own experiences:

His parents as well as the other adults of his aiga were his first teachers. These teachers were under demands of the tradition to bring up children in accordance with the ethos of the people. This was expressed in the myths and legends, in proverbial sayings, in the songs and dances, in the reverential restraints and taboos, in parental and social comments on the actions of the children, as well as the minutiae commonly found in a tradition-bound society (Mai'ai, 1957, pp.165-166 cited in Petana-Ioka, 1995).

In my opinion, the socialisation process of children within the *aiga* can be likened to the building of a Samoan *fale* (house) where men, women and children would form a “community of workers” and share in the elaborate and arduous work involved in this big project. From here emerges the concept of “*o le fale fautele*” (the house that is collaboratively built with many hands). Put simply, Samoan learning and development, as I experienced it, stemmed from the concept of *fale fautele* or “building together”.

My induction into literacy and numeracy began at home by reciting aloud and familiarising myself with the letters of the Samoan Alphabet on a *Pi tautau*, (a hanging board containing the Samoan alphabet), followed by learning how to spell my name and to count numbers. I had managed to spell my name after learning what the

letters of the Samoan alphabet meant during many sessions of *Pi* recitals. This led to learning to spell my family members' names, the contents of my home, the names of plants, animals and so on. The process started off with easy words and as I became more competent, I was introduced to more difficult and longer words. Between the ages of three and five years, I was taught to write/print my name in an old exercise book. The first thing that I taught myself was putting pen, pencil, marker or charcoal not only on paper or book but onto any flat surface that I could access. I scribbled and drew all sorts of sketches senselessly in pages of books, shelves, cardboard and on walls. Learning to count numbers in ascending and descending order was not an easy task. However it was my mother's teaching expertise (my first teacher) that made the task enjoyable and easier by providing a range of tangible examples, for example my toes, fingers and face, the contents of my house and different plants surrounding my home. Through the dedication of my parents, adult relations, older siblings and cousins and through Sunday School and Pastor School, I was able to master basic spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic before I entered school.

The example of White Sunday (an important annual event in the Samoan Christian calendar) illustrates much about the learning experiences of Samoan children. When preparing for White Sunday, I faced the challenge of intense rehearsals for Biblical plays and presentations of Biblical sermons. Before making a full rehearsal of our items in front of our parents and other adults, I used to recite my lines aloud to myself and with others in my group, so that the older children who were more experienced could provide me and others with advice to ensure improvement in our performances. While I experienced a tremendous amount of support and encouragement from my *aiga*, there was always the fear that I would not perform to adults' expectations. I was told for instance "*Fai fa'alelei aua e maumau ofu fou ma meaai pe a le lelei le faiga o lau tauloto*" (You have to recite your lines with substance otherwise your new attire and all the special food will simply be a waste of time). These rehearsals went on for two to three months before white Sunday.

The centrality of religion in the learning process went further, and extended to such things as my initial experience of Bible reading. This task was shared between my mother, the church minister's wife, an older sister or adult relation. It was important for us to *faitau* (read) and, *tauloto* (memorise) important Biblical verses. These were

drawn mainly from the books of Psalms and Proverbs. God's Ten Commandments, which we learnt by heart, provided guidance for one's life. The end result was that I acquired reasonable reading skills and knowledge of my faith's teachings at the Pastor School long before I was introduced to formal education which laid the foundation for my life-long educational journey. Through shared-reading of the Bible, with an expert reader, I began to understand the subtext, as the expert periodically, paused to explain the contextual meaning of words and lines in collaboration with the *mana* of the Word of God. I became enthused and gradually developed the capacity for sustained reading. In the light of these constant remedial reading practises, I gradually developed competency in reading the Bible unassisted. As a novice, putting my reading skills into trial or test, I would read a Biblical passage or two on my own prior to joining in with older readers in an alternated collective Biblical reading. Constant coaching by parents/adults whether amidst our *lotu* (prayers) or afterwards were always punctuated with the phrase- '*iivi lelei ou mata, toe faitau*' which means sharpen your vision, and try again. Occasionally, I read silently while an adult went through the reading first, before my siblings and I were invited to take turns reading it. Having developed basic reading skills and understanding of the Bible, we were able to quickly learn other tasks, for instance role-playing Biblical stories, or preparing sermons for White Sunday.

One important part of learning within the home related to discipline to reinforce what we had been taught. For example, we were subjected to verbal ridicule or caning whenever we misbehaved or failed to recite what had been taught. These childrearing measures, while they may seem harsh today, were administered only when required and never to a level where a child was physically harmed. I vividly remember that after being caned by my mother I was immediately rewarded by being allowed the freedom to play sports, my passion in life, with my friends at the *malae* (a circular space, where village rituals and practises took place) followed by a long swim in the sea.

From an early age, my passion was for sport. I played both traditional sports like the *lape*, *pelega mapu*, *tafue*, *togiga nonu*, *taga tia*, *togitogiga ia*, *fuafuaelo*, *igavea*, *musa*, *kilikiti*, and a raft of contemporary sports. Through playing these sports, I not only benefited physically, but also came to understand the "essence of sport": the fairness

of play, cooperation as part of a unit, and learning to become either a gracious loser or winner. Other recreational activities also influenced my development. These included making our own toys out of recycled materials or natural resources. We were assisted by an adult relative or a village expert who had the necessary tools. Once built, the toys were soon put to use. We engaged in simulations of supposedly real events like car rallies, using our *ta'avale lapalapa* (coconut leaf stalk car) or *ta'avale atigi apa* (tinned fish can car). While boys were either engaged in car racing or *pelega mapu* (marble games), the girls were busy with their own games, such as *fa'ataga pine/mapu*, *musa*, *tafue*, (role-playing relating to minding babies). After a busy period of play, it was common for us to head to the beach at sunset to watch in wonderment as dolphins performed in response to our different calls. As night unfolded, I would guard my space in our mosquito net, sore and exhausted, but entertained by the sound of *fa'agono* (bedtime story telling myths and stories told by my grandfather).

In my formative years of both home-based learning processes and extra curricula activities, I acquired much practical knowledge and learned the values of *fa'asamoa*. While many people within my *aiga* helped to educate me, it was my parents, particularly my mother, who were very supportive of my many undertakings. It is to both my mother and father, therefore, that I now turn in recounting my journey.

(2) Mother: the matriarch

Like many Samoan mothers, my mother was “the mother of all mothers”, a mirror-image of my grandmother who raised and shaped four generations, and who was always positioned at the helm of my *aiga*. She fashioned my development with precision. While now passed away, she is still around as her spirit continues to linger on and hover around me as my guiding angel. Mother was perceived by her *aiga* as the matriarch, nurturer, facilitator, counsellor, provider and cultivator of knowledge. She was also a mediator between my father and us, especially my sisters or any female relations who were living in our household.

My mother's leniency and open-mindedness were evident whenever we brought to her awareness the many problems we had or when we wanted to get something or even

when we chose to engage in some extra-curricula activities outside the home, which were far from acceptable. She was always a good listener and would handle any situation with genuine and rational consideration. Before anything was deemed to be okay, both parents would have to come to a common consensus. My mother would indirectly sort out my father through a circular configuration of stories to convince him that it was all right to give us permission to go ahead.

(3) Father: the frontrunner

Like most Samoan fathers, my father was the frontrunner in every sense of the word and in terms of position and status in my *aiga* as well as in the *nuu* (village). Now reunited with my mother, he would always be remembered as the man of few words who delighted in our education achievements. He was a laid back person who always assumed his position at the periphery amidst family politics and family conferences regarding rituals and practises of *fa'alavelave*, such as *taulaga* (church offering), *maliu* (funerals), *fa'aipoipoga* (weddings), *aso fanau* (birthdays), *saofai* (bestowment of chiefly titles) and so on. Despite, mother's multiple tasks and duties as a doer, mouthpiece, decision-maker, and an education expert, my father would always get the credit. In brief, this validates a common expression that behind every successful man was a fine woman. In spite of dad's passivity, his authority was characterised by a one-word response of yes or no to confirm what was to be carried out.

Regardless of different orientations, both parents were active participants in the *aiga* forums. In particular, my mother was instrumental in family decision making where relatives would discuss contributions: how much money, how many fine mats, food and so forth each household would have to provide for *fa'alavelave*. Both parents were always busy in their various roles and responsibilities, not only within the family but within the church, community and in their occupations. Therefore, in their absence my siblings and I were often in the custody and care of aunts, uncles, adult cousins and grandparents who helped mould our informal and formal Samoan learning and education. I learnt to obey those in charge and developed a great sense of trust, the ability to give and take, the art of sharing, reciprocity and working for others.

VI. PHASE TWO: MY PRIMARY EDUCATION

I was six when
 Mama was careless
 she sent me to school
 alone five days a week

One day I was
 kidnapped by a band
 of Western philosophers
 armed with glossy-pictured
 textbooks and
 registered reputations

Holder of BA
 and MA degrees

I was held
 in a classroom
 (Petaia, Ruperake "Kidnapped", 1980:270)

My primary education in Samoa was almost exclusively conducted in the Samoan language, with some English on the periphery. While *fa'asamoa* and Samoan institutions of the *aiga*, the church and the village had an immense impact on my formal education and schooling, the influences of my peer group (*tupulaga*) also played a significant role in determining how I was to develop. Throughout my training and upbringing at home, my siblings and I were oriented to a raft of systematic structures which we had conditioned to and followed.

Like every Samoan child whose parents' and *aiga* were devout members of the *Lotu Taiti* (Congregational Christian Church of Samoan, formerly known as LMS), my basic orientation to formal learning and education was through *aoga faifeau* or Pastor's School. This was followed by my entry to the *Aoga Tulaga Lua* (Village Primary school). The *Aoga Tulaga Lua's* syllabus appeared to be an extension of some of the things which I had learned at the Pastor's School, for instance, elements of Samoan literacy and numeracy. The duration of the school day was from 8am to 1.30pm. Our teachers closely monitored our uniforms, hygiene and attitudes and were as concerned with our welfare as they were with delivering the curriculum. I recall that

the focus on examinations was very different from my previous learning. In my mind, it created a *competitive ethos* amongst Samoans in relation to formal learning and education. I saw this focus on exams as potentially dangerous, as it increased rivalry between children, *aigas*, and villages. Moreover, it suppressed the notion of the process-approach and cooperation that was strongly nurtured at the helm of the *aiga*.

In some respects, my schooling was unique. When I was three and a half year's old, my mother (a teacher) took me to school with her. By law, I was under age and should not have been there. Despite the warnings I received from my mother about the strict policy on under-age status, I persistently pressured her until I was given the nod to go with her to school. I was acutely aware that if a delegation from the Education Department paid a visit to the school, that I should immediately hide from them. I experienced hiding in the cupboards or roamed into the nearby bushes or the village shop opposite the school whenever the School Inspector paid my mother's school a visit. A very distinct mouth whistle was the signal that the School Inspector had departed, and that it was time for me to resume my duties as a Primer One pupil.

I ceased going with my mother to school on the eve of my sixth birthday as I was old enough to officially enrol at my village's *tulaga lua* (village primary school). I was delighted to see my new school environment and in particular other pupils wearing the same uniform as I did, which instilled in me a sense of belonging. The learning that I had accessed when in my mother's classroom had an immense impact, and strongly encouraged me to engage in classroom learning activities, particularly various educational games. Educational games were fun and very popular. At Primer One, the most commonly ones were numbered blocks on four sides that were used for numerical aptitude activities and mental capacity testing, and flash cards containing objects' names, which one needed to match up with their correct concrete form/s. Other games included verbal mathematical equations and English spelling and guessing games. Playing these games had fuelled my motivation and curiosity. Such games were either played in groups or in individuals. In my mind, I was the most experienced pupil given two and a half years of early primary education. I could sense the fear and anxiety of some of my classmates when chosen randomly as competitors in individual learning games. I suspected that the teacher, like me, could figure out when students tried to hide or avoid being selected. The most embarrassing scenario

was when the teacher imposed *fa'ama* (shame) upon an individual in front of everyone for not knowing the answer. Failure to produce the correct answers was sometimes rewarded with a stroke of the cane by either the individual contestant or the whole group. Often I pretended not to know the answer so as to gain the respect of my peers, although I had an inkling that my friends have envied my 'know how'.

(1) The Caning continuum

Corporal punishment was always perceived as a positive means to encourage us to learn such things as basic mathematics, including learning the times tables by heart. Now an outdated phenomenon, it is still embraced by some Samoan parents who believe in its effectiveness in terms of curbing mood swings and truant behaviour among young children, given their own previous experiences and misconstrued Biblical interpretations ("Spare the rod and spoil the child"). It was generally accepted as an essential aspect of Samoan child rearing practise. The decision to punish was largely left up to the teacher. In these formative years of my education, we were taught to behave according to whatever the teacher wished or told us to do. Every teacher was perceived by the community and society as the role model, facilitator, counsellor and the sole custodian of every child while at school. Thus, every pupil respected the authority vested in any teacher, teacher trainees included. Taught to refrain from any unconventional attitudes and behaviours, we learned to comply with classroom norms and culture through the administering of disciplinary measures. When we forgot or could not remember or retrieve what was memorised or learned by heart in previous learning sessions, we were punished.

Failing to perform to the best of one's ability in relation to the expectations of the parents and the *aiga* in those days brought shame not only on the child, but also his or her parents and the remainder of the *aiga*. Prize giving ceremonies for both the *Aoga Faifeau* and *Aoga Tulaga* were always great occasions for not only children but their *aiga* and villagers. Prize winners received a deafening applause (*fa'aumu ma ususu*) from *aiga*, while the less successful children and their families would become subdued and devastated. These parents reacted negatively, and often ended up in a beating of the children in front of everybody. This seemed to be the ugliest side of the

competitiveness ethos in formal education imposed on Samoan people. The beating up of children would relieve the frustrations of the parents, unaware that they were also beating up themselves. While corporal punishment may have worked for some, its long-term effects continued to traumatise and haunt others. I have never forgotten a cousin in my class who had suffered a classroom beating. His fear and insecurity continued to traumatise him throughout our primary education, which in turn has greatly impacted on his total education: he decided to give it all up before his thirteenth birthday.

I experienced beatings from the *Aoga Faifeau*, *Aoga Tulaga lua*, Intermediate, and High School teachers for speaking Samoan, misbehaving, not having a hair cut, failing to submit homework, or to provide the right answers and solutions to academic questions and problems. At primary education, caning was more prevalent. Like my peers, I was aware of the enduring pain that I got from caning and I feared it. At primary school, for example, we used sign language and cues to communicate with each other so as not to upset the teacher, which would result in the cane. Very often we were never caught misbehaving. But when we were not alert, the teacher would catch us.

“Cleanliness is next to Godliness”, was an important message extolled by all primary teachers, especially my Primer One teacher. As a traditionalist from the old school, she was not only ‘staunch’ and mean looking, but she was powerfully built, and any six year old was scared to death just by the mere sound of her deep, husky voice. As one of the most important aspects of the curriculum, cleanliness, hygiene and neatness were judged, including your physical appearance, your hair, your skin, your smell, what you wore and how you wore it (for example school uniform inclusive of underpants and handkerchief). We stripped to our underpants and were inspected by teachers in the presence of fellow (male) pupils. This was a particularly intimidating experience. Daily radio broadcasts reminded teachers that it was their duty to inspect, encourage and to closely monitor the cleanliness and hygiene of every child under one’s care. A stroke or two of the cane or detention after school was the result when we failed to meet the required standards. Echoed in the classroom was this common phrase: “*Ua tutusa pau lava le mafiafia o lou valea malou pau kanekanea*” (your

stupidity reflects on your unhealthy body). This was part of classroom pedagogy that was not always to curtail unhygienic behaviour but to encourage learning.

(2) Patterns of Samoan education pedagogies

Despite the fact that the medium of instruction at the Village Primary school level was basically in Samoan with some English, primary school education was very academic in focus, influenced as it was by New Zealand's primary curriculum. Indeed, the impact of the New Zealand administration on Samoan schools had been reflected in its pedagogical patterns and curricula, in particular the teaching of oral English. Thus, the purpose, nature and scope of the Samoan education system were very much based on the notion of westernisation. Both New Zealand and Samoan trained staff strived to continue to endure the legacy that their predecessors had unveiled. Primary education reflected the foundation and pattern erected during the New Zealand administration. Educational policies were determined by New Zealand administrators and teachers who filled key decision-making positions at the Education Department. In short, I engaged in a primary education that mirrored New Zealand educational policy and practise.

In my mind the influence of the tradition of *fa'aaloalo* (respect) on primary pedagogies continued to fuel the development of 'passive skills' within Samoan children. Teachers at primary school based their teaching on their previous knowledge of the past generations. Amazingly, some of the teachers had expertly drawn maps and many other illustrations on the chalk-board without consulting a book and only referred to their manual for the next item on their lesson menu. While teachers were engrossed in talking, explaining or solving problems such as in arithmetic, social studies and so on, they were also busy filling the board with notes for us to copy. Very often, instead of listening, we were always busy trying to copy everything down before the bell. At the end of the day, our exercise books would carry acres of notes that we struggled to comprehend.

My primary teachers were often frustrated when they could not get every child on track with their pedagogies. In my view, my teachers tended to have a 'one size fits

all' mentality. During primary learning activities we normally incorporated what we learned at the *Aoga Faiifeau* to make sense of what we encountered at primary school, since the two learning milieu were more or less similar in many aspects, particularly the use of Samoan as the main medium of instruction. The cultures of the two learning environments were almost the same in that they were both operated under strong exam-driven curricula, and hence championed a competitiveness ethos.

Almost all students would adhere to the culture of the school and classroom by being well groomed, silent and alert, with their eyes focused on exercise books/or the blackboard. As everything in the classroom was surrounded and controlled by fear of physical punishment, we struggled to achieve what we set out to do, whether it was reading, simulation or role playing, presenting impromptus speeches, and doing mathematical mental exercises and so on. Those who achieved were spared the cane.

Parental support for their children's education was such that many parents exceeded their budgets when paying for school fees, stationery and lunches. It was a common practise for some parents to auspiciously provide breakfast or lunches for school staff, as a means of goodwill, companionship or gratitude for the hard work the teachers were putting into their children's education. In fact this practise would develop rapport between teachers and parents or families, which very often teachers would manipulate to threatening admonishments against children if they were ever caught misbehaving or whenever they failed to comply with classroom norms and rules: "You had better watch out boy or else I will report you to your parents, I know where your parents live." This kind of remark was quite common throughout my primary education. I perceived it as a form of abstract disciplinary measure or punishment. However, the familiarity of teachers with our *aigas* could be a mixed blessing. It could be used against us, but more often it provided us with motivation and enthusiasm to actively participate in classroom learning activities and to make progress. In my observation, teachers' recommendations in our school term reports were like 'judgement day.' Harsh comments in such reports shamed my *aiga*, and in particular my parents. All too often we were judged solely on the contents of the reports. The frustration of our parents with us, and never the teachers, is an enduring memory.

The most important aspect of the primary education curriculum was the inclusion of 'Oral English', which comprised phonemes, interactive dialogue, questions and random responses and the practical usage of learning English with teaching aid(s) children provided. It was time consuming and intense, especially learning to pronounce words and mimicking them in an articulate manner through simple sentences. There were many instances in which we experienced struggling to come to grips with pronunciation, distinguishing different sounds as in 'p' and 'b' and so on, and the spelling of words. The four walls of the classroom were decorated with "let's learn English" resources. Apart from teaching-learning processes and resources that littered the classroom, we were enticed to learn by heart some of the well-known English rhymes so that they would 'ease off our heavy lips'.

2AP Samoa's Radio broadcasts of primary educational lessons, particularly lessons related to learning English, was a policy instituted by a New Zealand Superintendent in 1954. Since that time, radio lessons have continued to be a very integral learning media which teachers enthusiastically utilised. During these lessons, the whole school would congregate in one big room listening to them in silence. In many respects, the lessons were primarily conceived as a form of teacher training. Since these lessons were presented by New Zealand teachers, every Samoan teacher followed examples and mimicked what was said and how it was done. In Beeby's observations of radio lessons, he remarked:

Some village teachers heard for the first time a lesson that had structure that proceeded from a known beginning to a logical end. It gave them a sense of security; if it fell far short of being real education, it was at least the beginning of efficient schooling (Beeby, 1992, p.213).

Broadcasted lessons not only benefited school children, but also their parents, *aiga* and the whole village, as everyone accessed the same programme in their own home. According to the Department of Education in its 1986 Annual Report:

These programs are very much appreciated by both teachers and the pupils as they are not only informative and give some impact to the teachers' work in the classrooms but they also provide a break away from the normal routine of classroom teaching. (Education Department Annual Report 1986, p.28)

Through such a learning curve I managed to successfully complete my primary education (Primers 1-3, and Standards 1-4) with flying colours. As one stage was the prerequisite for the one that followed, I became aware that what I had learnt and assimilated so far was to be used in the stages to come.

VII. PHASE THREE: INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION

I successfully completed my primary schooling and embarked on the intermediate phase of my education. I was amazed to find that teaching-learning processes were exclusively conducted through the medium of English. Rules and regulations were strictly enforced. We were put on detention for speaking Samoan, and sent to the school's banana plantation, where we would engage in labouring work for two hours after school. English was the order of the day and *lingua franca* at all times, even amongst your peers.

My hungry mind was greeted with the names of different colours in the SRA reading and comprehension kit in my English class during the first period on Monday. Only a seamstress or saleswoman at a drapery store could hazard a guess at the rightful names of the colours contained in this reading comprehension kit. The SRA kit comprised not only reading comprehension of varying levels of difficulty, but also sets of analytical thinking problems-solving activities. Learning the names of different colours was a totally new thing for me. The function of the SRA was to test our English competency in literacy and comprehension capacity.

My first two weeks were a nightmare, but I gradually 'learnt the ropes' and soon developed confidence to move around with ease. Having acquired a good foundation from my primary education, I did not find intermediate to be too challenging. At the end of my first year's (Form One) final examination, I was placed second in my class and second for the entire form. At the end of my second year of intermediate education, I sat and passed the Form Two common examination, a prerequisite for admission to secondary education. Almost one hundred and twenty students sat this

exam, and only four students, including myself, were eligible to enter the most prestigious secondary school in the country at the time.

VIII. PHASE FOUR: SECONDARY EDUCATION

My secondary education was a “strictly English-oriented education”. Like all new entrants, my orientation to secondary education encapsulated a selective highly advanced academic education. Samoa College produced the future leaders of the nation. Its motto ‘*Atamai e tautua mo Samoa*’ (Wisdom to serve Samoa) inspired me. I took pride in its history, facilities, staff and, last but no means least, its all round excellence. Wearing tan and gold - the school colours - was every Samoan parent’s and student’s dream, and whoever wore these colours was highly regarded by society for their knowledge and intelligence. Samoa College was not only the ‘oasis for academic excellence’ but was also the nest for producing the best sports people in the country. It was here that my passion for all sports emerged. Expectations on us, however, were too high and one would either ‘shape up or ship out’.

Encountering streaming examinations at the end of every term, I struggled to compete with the best from all over Samoa for a place in the A or B stream. In many respects, this process was one of ‘sifting’ and ‘sorting’ the ‘good’ from the ‘bad’. In my view, the exam-driven curriculum served to gauge our failure rather than our success. Students were certainly more competitive at this phase of education than in the earlier phases. The cooperative learning ethos that I was used to at home and to some extent at primary school was undermined by the culture and academic tradition of secondary school. As every student strived for individual academic excellence, their uncooperative nature in terms of sharing information and knowledge with others became increasingly noticeable. The notion of ‘cooperation’ was only advocated by teachers when circumstances suited. These occasions included when we were involved in the school’s four houses (namely Calliope, Stevenson, Williams, and Vaea) or competing against other schools in drama, sport and other cultural activities.

The college was funded and established by the New Zealand government, under the advice and recommendation of Dr. C. E. Beeby, the then Director of New Zealand

Education. Indeed, it was Beeby himself who officially opened the college. Dedicated to the people of Samoa by the people of New Zealand, the college was regarded a token of friendship and as a help towards self-government (Maiai, 1957). Following the official opening ceremony, the college followed a blueprint of New Zealand education, in particular its academic exam-driven curriculum. Since most of the teachers were either New Zealanders, or New Zealand-trained, their teaching strategies reflected their training principles and subject knowledge, which to a large extent was based around students' individual prowess, logical, analytical and articulate English skills. The curriculum was based solely on the outcome rather than the process.

The exam driven curriculum was based on the guidelines and regulations of the New Zealand School Certificate and University Entrance Examination Board tradition and requirements. The emphasis on academic subjects, which ranged from Shakespearean English and 19th Century drama to the History of the Russian Revolution and European countries, was completely new and foreign to all of us who took these subjects. We were urged to attain excellence as it would enable us to enter more advanced studies, particularly at the university level. As Tevana writes: "Education in Western Samoa continues to be oriented almost exclusively toward purely academic endeavours and university preparation" (Tevana, 1994, p.71).

As a new entrant, I strived to perform to the best of my ability, which I did. During this time, I experienced various shifts in one year from one stream to another depending on how well I performed at the end of each term. Despite the passivity skills that I had acquired and which were very much part of my learning, I became an enthusiastic and conscientious student. However, this did not last, due to the untimely passing away of my mother. It was a major turning point for me, as it greatly affected my early secondary education. In turn, it tampered my aspiration and motivation to engage in classroom learning tasks. My mother, more so than my father, had encouraged, disciplined and provided me with the knowledge and moral guidance towards where I was supposed to be heading - a quality education. I was shattered by her untimely passing, as I tried to concentrate on my secondary schooling.

I began to experience a number of problems during fourth and fifth forms, like becoming inactive in classroom processes, inclusive of homework. I lacked the

motivation or interest to learn. My passion for learning and studying English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography began to deteriorate, but nobody (including my teachers) could recognise what was wrong with me. As social and emotional problems such as anxiety, stress, depression began to take their toll, they were never recognised, and if they were, they were never dealt with immediately. Social and emotional problems were only ever seen as a scapegoat. Fortunately, I managed to bounce back, but the impact on my studies was enormous, given that everything we learnt was subject to examination.

The classroom pedagogies that I was exposed to became more intense and demanding as my schooling progressed. At this level, we were treated as individuals. In order to successfully navigate your own way around to meet the requirements of the secondary education culture, we became quite arrogant and focused on our text books. We struggled our way through many text books, and the foreign concepts and ideas they contained. One was expected at all times to acquire as much knowledge as he/she could possibly internalise out of the mass of information documented in the prescribed textbooks and notes copied off the blackboard. I never fully read the texts, and was frustrated by what seemed a linear means of learning, which benefited those with reading materials at home.

As a teacher assumed a traditional lecturing position, he/she expected us to absorb the knowledge underlined in the teaching-learning processes. Sorting information in an organised manner so that we could understand it was often a struggle. Anxiety always emerged when exams were looming. I experienced teaming up with some of my classmates to study for some of these examinations. Despite the fact that we were dumbfounded by how to study, we memorised information, filling up many exercise books at a time. The more we wrote, the more we were confident that we could recall what was required for the examinations. Much of the time, however, learning was a selfish activity. School work which was to be graded was guarded and hidden from the rest of my classmates and even my close friends.

IX. SUMMARY REFLECTIONS

In Samoa, a relevant education for a child was generally agreed to as one which, at the very least, fused *fa'asamoa* and Christian values in both the home and at school (see Petana-Ioka, 1995, Fa'amanu-Moli, 1993). When I returned to formal education four years after I left secondary school as a secondary school teacher, I was faced with the issue of how I could best achieve the aim of educating the next generation. My initial task was to adopt a set of pedagogies based around curriculum content, subject matter and individual students' diverse needs. My role, as a supposedly expert facilitator, was to encourage students to incorporate their personal experiences in their learning tasks. I aimed to develop students' skills to enable them to cope with change, and to further their abilities to communicate, problem-solve and to make decisions. In line with those who developed the curriculum (see Department of Education in Samoa, 1986), it was agreed that children needed to appreciate the beauty of their environment, joy of learning new ideas, and the art of contributing creatively to the culture. Indeed, the curriculum was constantly under review, and re-designed to include educational programmes that were directly relevant to the needs of the community in which the school is located. Furthermore, the emphasis changed to providing appropriate opportunities to serve the diverse needs of students for vocations which would benefit society. The most key focus was to provide an education system that will be able to sustain and strengthen Samoan culture and values in a rapidly changing world. In many ways, these changes stemmed from the following principles:

1. That a thorough understanding of Samoan aspirations, needs and problems in order to find rational solutions will enhance the Samoan way of life.
2. That a focus be directed at recognising each child's basic level of understanding and penal development.
3. That children be able to understand their society, be able to ask questions and solve problems and learn to contribute positively towards enriching the life of the family, village, nation and country.

As a teacher, I experienced students' struggle to come to terms with the key processes in the curriculum. The first of these focuses on the development of enquiry processes, identifying and clarifying issues, gathering and organising data, interpretation, analysis and evaluation, generalising, problem-solving and making value judgements. The

second involved the development of communication processes and skills. The aim was to promote in students the ability to act both cooperatively and independently in expressing themselves creatively in a diverse of modes. For example, I vividly recall asking my third form Social Studies class to provide a simple and clear description of where one lived which a tourist could easily follow. For this activity, I started by offering the class the directions to my own home. Following my example, my students were inspired and motivated to communicate and articulate their stories both orally and in written forms. The aim of this activity was to provoke students into developing a concept of self and most importantly their 'cultural identity,' an important discourse in terms of Samoan learning. It is to this issue of cultural identity discourse that I now turn.

(1) Cultural Identity: the sense of belonging

Cultural identity is often defined in the contexts of cultural relationships and affiliations. According to social theorists or social scientists, the notion can be defined in relation to the collective self awareness of a group or in reference to the individual in relation to his or her group (cited in Helu-Thaman, 1988, p.90). Thus, cultural identity involves the shaping, moulding and sharing of cultural relationships between the individual and his/her group and vice versa. According to Thaman:

Cultural identity includes typologies of cultural beliefs and behaviour, appropriate and inappropriate ways of behaving, shared values, beliefs and definitions [which] are for the most part subconscious or unconscious patterning activities. (ibid)

To understand the construction of an individual's cultural identity, we have to gain insight into different perspectives, particularly through the relationships between Western social science discourse and traditional cultural contexts and standpoints. The origin of my own cultural identity is grounded in the intertwining, interweaving and interrelatedness of my different orientations to concepts, modes and contexts of Samoan thinking traditions and Western educational concepts as well as various cultural/sub-cultural groups to which I have been involved or affiliated. To gain my own cultural identity, I had to accumulate and access information and the 'know how' protocols through observational learning and active participation in everyday tasks and significant gatherings, such as family reunions, or community council or forums.

The evolution of cultural identity is based largely on a number of social factors, such as educational status, gender and ethnicity and different orientations and positions, both past and current. In Samoa, like many societies in Polynesia, blood remains the key and essential element of identity (Crocombe, 1994). In my view, a drop of Samoan blood in a person will suffice to make a person Samoan. Similarly, one's linkage and connection to his/her *aiga*, community and society is a crucially important aspect of educational motivation amongst almost all Samoans. A Samoan child is heavily shaped and moulded by the influence of *fa'asamoa*, its derivatives, etiquettes, practises and dictates, within the social setting of a close knitted typical Samoan *aiga*. I actively engaged in familial tasks and practises relative to my specific position (shifted according to age) and its responsibilities and obligations. When fulfilling and accomplishing my roles' objectives, I was constantly exposed to the richness and vibrancy of Samoan culture which gradually built my rigid cultural identity. I acquired a set of values, and knowledge of the intricacies of customs and traditional practices.

Much of my identity was shaped by the Church, the most influential institution on the lives of almost all Samoans. The impact of the Church on the lives of Samoan people has been profound. The Churches customs, traditions, rituals and ceremonial undertakings are very pervasive throughout the whole of Samoa. However, the Church has not weakened *fa'asamoa*, in particular one's obligations and duties to family *fa'alavelave* and village tasks. In many respects, one's cultural identity, learning and educational successes can be gauged by a person's consolidated connection to his/her *aiga*, community and society, regardless of socio-economic means, parental educational credentials and so on. In my own experience as a student, a teacher and currently a university student, the inspiration and motivation behind my undertakings and dispositions come from my empathetic relationship with my *aiga*, community and society. My cultural upbringing has become more and more entrenched each day, and I have come to uncover the joy of learning and education in tandem with the 'support' and 'prayers' of my *aiga*, village and society. Furthermore, my cultural connection to elders and mentors, both past and present, became the impetus for me to strive for success. In brief, any undertaking that I embark on becomes as much theirs as mine.

(2) A Samoan education

On December 30 1999, I boarded an Air New Zealand 747 flight bound for Samoa, arriving for New Year's Eve 2000, the start of the new millennium. There was no big reception for my arrival as my *aiga* members were busy making preparations for the coming millennium celebrations: mowing the lawn and grooming the hedges as well as the cleaning of our house. I gave a hand to my nieces, emptied the dusty contents of some old boxes and suitcases, and came across some relics of my school days: an old frail Samoan Bible, examination certificates, sports and school awards and prizes, some old school journals and science and maths text books.

It was fascinating to see that almost all of the textbooks bore some sort of inscriptions, either a favourable Biblical phrase or a traditional Samoan proverbial expression emphasising the importance of receiving a Western education while retaining one's traditional values. To my surprise and amazement, I identified my own hand writing in black fountain pen on the inside of the front cover of the Bible. It read: "**Silipa Silipa, Form 3, Samoa College: Atamai e Tautua mo Samoa (Wisdom to serve Samoa), Moata'a (my village).** Below was a highlighted Biblical phrase written in calligraphy which read "***O LE MATAU I LE ATUA O LE AMATAGA LEA O LE POTO: IA E AVA I LOU TAMA MA LOU TINA INA IA FA'ALEVALEVAINA ASO O LOU OLAGA***". This phrase literally translates as "The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom: Respect your father and mother as it shall prolong the days of your life". That message rings louder and clearer now than it did in my youth. This magnificent discovery of my early adolescent hand-written memoirs enkindled the memories of being a typical 14 year old school boy striving to develop in the realm that was vague and perplexing. It would have been quite common for every Samoan student who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, and even today, to have had similar experiences of listing their name, school and village and the phrases that served as the most important order and guide for them to follow in their pursuit for a value and life long education.

The process of compiling this chapter has triggered the development of some educational philosophical insights concerning the connection between understanding the meanings of concepts through thinking and learning in a Samoan context and their relevance to my own moral realism and concept of self. I concur with Carr's (1995)

argument that “it is impossible to understand either our concepts or ourselves without also understanding something of the social and cultural contexts in which each is embedded.” I can understand who I am, what I am, where I am from and where I am heading by reference to belonging to many social and cultural groups and communities in which my self-identity was (and continues to be) developed.

(3) Concepts, modes and contexts of Samoan thinking and learning

Samoan culture is extremely complex, and can be defined as the customs and traditions of each village going back to beginning of time. According to Mailo (1992), Samoan culture is constituted of three concepts, namely: benevolence, mutual respect, and cultural trivia. Cemented in the everyday implementation of respectful behaviours (both in thinking, speech and actions), specific protocol presentations and duties through diligence and dignity, Samoan culture’s essence revolves around the respect for human relations, hospitality towards all, and good order in the *matai* and land systems (Mailo, 1992). The substances of Samoan thinking and learning involved reverence for spiritualism (spirits of the dead and living), respect for the sacredness of land and landmarks (e.g cemetery), respect for flora and fauna, and respect for the concreteness of both inanimate and animate things. What bind all these together are Samoan culture and language which encapsulate compelling poetic genres, nuances and metaphors. Through anthropological lenses, many assumptions and generalisations have been made about Samoa, which are regarded by many as unreliable, unrealistic and inconclusive. These, however, have been drawn from European Anthropologists’ euro-centric and ethnocentric research methods and ethnographical interpretations. Their findings have resulted in a range of themes and discourses, ranging from Samoans physical and mentality to their day-to-day activities (such as adolescents relaxed sexual orientations etc.) and life styles (Mead, 1928), and from their familial obligations and their hierarchical structure in relation to land tenure and titles to politics (Freeman, 1984). Even though these findings have upset Samoan academics (for example, Malopa’upo, 1999; Tupuola, 1993; Wendt, F., 1984, p.96), they have established a platform to openly discuss contemporary issues.

Pacific Island communities in New Zealand have been proactive in their partnerships with various government bodies to facilitate and support the enhancement of *Pasifika* children's school participation, learning and achievements from early childhood to tertiary education (Ministry of Education 1998-99, 2001). Being the forerunner, the Samoan community has been as proactive as ever and has created initiatives for the teaching of Samoan from early childhood to tertiary level. The intention behind these remarkable developments was simply to provide every Samoan child the opportunity to strengthen their Samoan identity, and that learning Samoan and *fa'asamoa*, would bridge their understanding of English and the school culture. Nevertheless, statistics continue to illustrate the ever-widening gap between *Pasifika* students and their European New Zealand counterparts. Teachers have speculated that this ever-widening disparity is due to the mismatch between the home language/culture and those of the school. However, teachers can only do so much to accommodate the different needs of a school's diverse roll. I will now leave you with these lines from a presentation I made as part of an Art Exhibition titled "Coconut Dreams" held at Canterbury University.

My multi-layered covering is
 Protected and guarded at all costs
 With humility, modesty, fear and silence
 I am confined to a nutshell with utmost pride
 Preserved by the fluid of natural purity
 I am a tuna swimming in a pond within a pond
 A sharp point can only pierce through my softness
 And, only a good craftsmanship can crack me open

My cluster and I are now open for re-branding
 My functions speak for themselves
 They come in different forms and brands
 To be, or not to be accepted is the question
 Rhetoric or relics of the past
 Conceptualising my multiple concrete forms
 I merit a body of opinions and generalisations
 As I keep a coconut dialogue alive...

Pluck the bad coconut from a cluster
 As it spoils the taste of the cream...
 And creates hiccups in the Milky Way's Journey...

Ia ifo le fuiniu i le lapalapa...

May the cluster of nuts bow to the midrib of the coconut leaf

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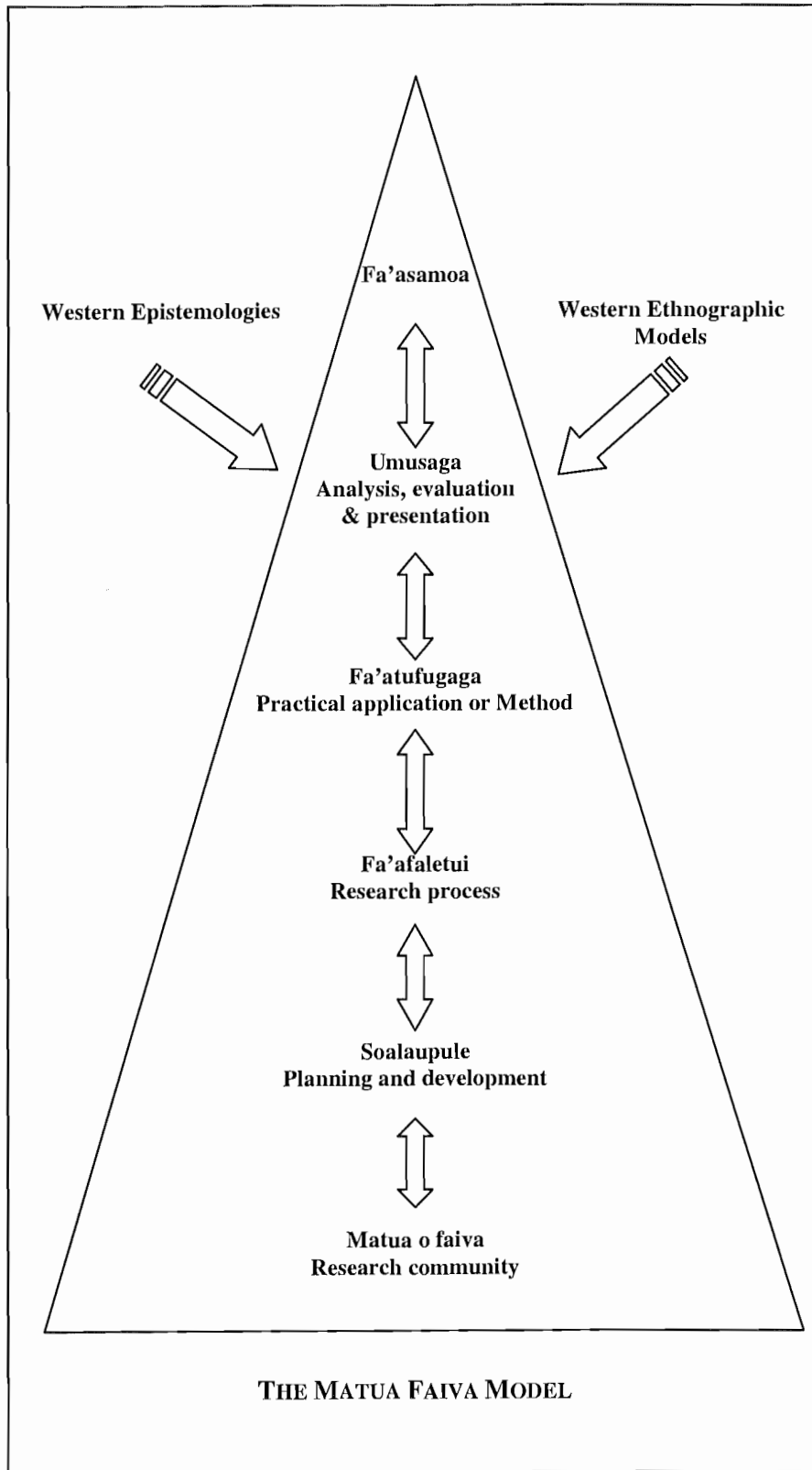
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APPENDICES

1. PYRAMID MODEL



2. SAMOAN GLOSSARY

aamu	making fun of
agamalu	modesty
agamalu ma le faamaualalo	modesty and humility
aiga	home, family
alii	congregation
alofa	love
alofa le faatuaomia	transcendental love
ao o faalupega	honorific traditional salutation
a'o	to learn, to study, practise
aoga	school/schooling
aoga amata	Samoan language nest
aoga faifeau	pastor school system
aoga maualuga	secondary school
aoga tulaga lua	primary school
aso fanau	birthday
aualuma	young women
auautasi/fulisia	majority's consensus
augaka	unwilling
aumaga	untitled men including young adolescent boys
ava ma le faaaloalo	reverence and respect
ekalesia	church/religion
fa'aaloalo	respect
fa'afetai	thank you
fa'alavelave	church obligations
fa'amagaia	self important
fa'amaualalo	humility
fa'amolemole	please
fa'ataga pine	young girls' game using marbles and hair pins
fa'atuatuaia ma le auautasi	trust and cooperation
fa'atulagaga o mamalu	categorizing of hierarchical status
fa'autauta	affirmed perception or well thought out ideas
fai	to make
faiaiga	to make a family; sexual reproduction
faikogafiki	put on or cunning act
faimea	maker/collector/creator referred to teacher
faitau	read
faleafolau	oval house
faleaitu	skit theatre
faletele	large round Samoan house
fauga o fale	art of house building
fautasi	long boat

fa'a	manner of
fa'aaloalo	respect
fa'asamoa	Samoan culture, Samoan manner, etiquette
fa'afaletui	discussion and sharing knowledge
fa'aילו	to signal or sound
fa'aipoipoga	wedding
fa'alavelave	family obligation where people
fa'ama	shame
fa'apapalagi	western education
fa'asinomaga	points of reference
fa'atosaga	midwife
fa'atuatuain	trust
fa'aumu ma ususu	blasting sound of jubilation
fa'autauta	cautiousness
feagaiga	brother-sister relationship
fetausia'i ona tagata	minding space and mutual respect between people
feti'i popo	pyramid of coconuts
filigaafa	sinnet rigging
fono	forum
fuafuaina o aga o se lagaga	measurements of a fine mat
gata ulu tolu	three headed serpent
gaua'i ma le usiusitai	submission and obedience
igavea	hide and seek
kaulaikiki	cheeky
kilikiti	cricket
lagaga	weaving
laumata fiafia ma le talimalo lelei	gaiety, hospitality, being a good host
lavalava	wrap around skirt
loto alofa	kind heart
loto maualalo	humble
lotu	church
Lotu Taiti	Congregational Christian Church
maliu	funeral
mana	respect, authority
mana o talosaga	power of prayers
mata	eyes
matua	parents
matua ma aiga	parents and family
matuau'u	master weaver
nuu	village/community
o le fale fautele	house built with many hands
o le lumanai o le aiga mo a taeao	future of family for tomorrow
pa ma'a	stone wall
paie	lazy
pakeha/palagi	New Zealander of European descent; non-Samoan
paopao	outrigger canoe
foafoa	conch shell

pelega mapu	game of marbles
pepelo	lying
pi tautau	hanging board with Samoan alphabet on it
poto	knowledge
Sa	colloquial word for Samoan
saofai	ceremony and ritual of bestowing chiefly title
Sina	name of woman
si'osi'omaga	environment
sogia	balance
suli moni	blood heir
su'ifefiloi	stringing of different flowers; method of story-telling
taavale atigi apa	toy car made of cans
taavale lapalapa	toy car made of coconut rib
tafa o ata	shredded shadow of dawn
taga va'a	boat building
tagata	person
tala	dollar
tama failotu	Samoan teachers of Christianity
tapuaiga	Samoan worship
tapuitea	morning and night star
taulasea	medicine person
tauloto	to memorize/ to recite/poem
taumafataga	banquet
tautua	to serve/services
ta'alili	echo
tofa mamao/manino'	supreme knowledge
to'omaga	peace of mind
tu ma aga faasamoa	etiquette and protocols of <i>fa'aamoa</i>
tu ma aga fa'atamalii	ways of nobility
tufuga fau fale	house builder
tulafale	orator
tulaga lua	village school
tuna	eel
tupulaga	peer/youth group
tuua/failauga	orator
ula/faasolo	flower garland
upu ma tala	words and stories
usiusita'i	obedience
va	space
va fealoai	good relationship
ava fatafata	congenial respect
va tapui	sacred relationship and respect of space

3. DOCUMENTATION

A) Information sheets for students

Talofa lava,

My name is Silipa Silipa and I would like you to be part of a study I am doing at university. It is called **Learning strategies and educational achievements of Samoan students.**

My study will help me find out how you learn at school so that in the future other Samoan students may get enough support to be able to do well. I also want to look at the reasons why many Samoans do not do as well as they can.

When I am at your school, I will be sitting in with you during your classes, mingling with you in the playground and going with you to assemblies and field trips. I will ask you questions sometimes about what is going on or about what it is you are doing in class.

Everything that you tell me will be kept confidential.

Feel free to call me if you have any questions or if you want to talk about anything I will be doing in my study.

My phone number is 364 2987, extension 7562 during the day or 343 5528 during the evening.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed the study.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully,

Silipa Silipa

B) Questionnaire for students

Talofa lava and greetings,

My name is Silipa Silipa, a full-time PhD student at the University of Canterbury. This questionnaire is purposely designed to gather relevant information regarding your total school learning and achievement as an integral part of my research. I hope the quality information that you will supply will be used to determine and also to address the educational concerns of Pacific Island students in contemporary New Zealand.

This questionnaire is confidential. Only myself will access to your answers. The questionnaire will be destroyed at the completion of the research. Please answer by writing your comments in the spaces provided. If you need more spaces for your answers please feel free to use the back page, circling the corresponding question.

1. Full name.....
2. Age.....
3. Class.....
4. Subjects.....
5. Are you a New Zealand-born?.....
Samoan-born?.....
6. How many sisters do you have?.....
7. How many brothers do you have?.....
8. Where are you living while attending school?.....
With your parents.....
With relatives.....
With guardian.....
Somewhere else-please say where.....
9. Please briefly describe your previous educational experiences at the following levels; put N/A if you have never attended an early childhood education/pre-school centre.
 - (a) Pre-school level.....
.....
.....
 - (b) Primary school level.....
.....
.....
 - (c) Intermediate school level.....
.....

.....

 (d) Secondary school
 level.....

.....

 10. What are your favourite
 subjects?.....

.....

 11. What are your
 strengths/weaknesses?.....

.....

 12. How do you make sense of your learning English, Maths, Science etc? (For
 example in relation to real life
 activities).....

.....

 13. What time do you do your homework?.....

14. What problems or difficulties do you have doing your homework and or other
 schoolwork?.....

.....

 15. Who could you ask for help or assistance with your homework? (For example
 mother, father, brother, sister, cousin or
 friend/peers).....

.....
 ..
 16. How often do you get help with your
 homework?.....

.....

 17. What type of work does your father do? Please say if he has more than one type
 of work and describe his different types of
 work?.....

.....

 18. Please briefly describe your father's educational and occupational
 background?.....

-

 19. What does your mother do?.....

 20. What is your mother's educational background?.....

 21. Which church do you belong to?.....
 22. How often do you go to church?.....

 23. What church/community groups do you belong to? (For example choir, youth group, clubs etc).....

 24. What sports do you play? (Club or school sports teams).....

 25. What language do you usually speak?
 At home?.....
 With friends?.....
 26. As a choice what work do you think you will probably do when you leave school?.....
 27. How would you improve your performances to enable you to meet your choice/s and or your parents' expectations?.....

 28. Which method of learning do you prefer- individual or co-operative learning and why? Explain your choice.

 29. Understanding how you learn and what you learn at school, what do you think of the knowledge that you have gained and how would you apply it to your everyday life?.....

 30. What role do you think the home culture or fa'aSamoa play in your education?

C) Questionnaire for teachers

Talofa lava and greetings,

My name is Silipa Silipa, a full-time PhD student at the University of Canterbury. The above-named project is the integral part of my degree. The questionnaire for this project is purposely designed to gather relevant information that will not only supplement my observational data but will also be used in the analysis process.

This questionnaire is confidential. Only myself will access to your answers. The questionnaire will be destroyed at the completion of the research. Please answer by writing your comments in the space provided. If you need more space for your answers please feel free to use the back page, circling the corresponding question.

1. What is it like to be a teacher of Samoan students?

.....

2. What do you think are the appropriate ways that would enhance students' learning and improve their knowledge and understanding of English, Mathematics, Science etc? (Please specify the subject that you teach).

.....

3. What roles do you think both the family and the school should play to encourage and motivate students to become enthusiastic learners?

.....

4. What do you think will be a strategic approach to addressing Pacific Island education concerns and also students' achievement in multi-cultural high schools like LHS?

.....

5. As a teacher of Samoan students, what lessons would you design to suit the learning needs of these students?

.....

.....

6 What do you think are essential tools needed to equip Samoan students in order for them to improve their grades and also to assist them in their learning to the best of their abilities and potential?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7 Please briefly describe your role in these students' total school learning.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8 What do you think will be an innovative schooling? (For example a flexible curriculum, assessment accountability and information and communication technology)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9 What do you see as possible interventions and solutions that would harness Samoan students' abilities to work and to relate with others? (For example peer networking , mentoring using ex-students, and perhaps homework/language units)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10 How would you instil in youths the desire to go on learning and also to curb truancy and perhaps to lift alienation from the education system?

.....

.....

.....

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

D) Consent form for teachers

I have read and understood the description of the above project. On this basis, I agree to support and assist the researcher in carrying out this project. I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

Signature _____

Date _____

E) Questionnaire for parents (Samoan version)

O A'OA'OGA MA LE A'OA'OINA O LE TAMA MA LE TEINE SAMOA INA IA POTO, AGAVA'A, ATAMAI FA'APEA MA LE FA'AUTAUTA:

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF SAMOAN STUDENTS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL.

FESILI MO MATUA (QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS)

Talofa lava,

O lo'u igoa o Silipa Silipa, tulou, o au o se tama fanau a Samoa o lo'o a'oa'oina i totonu o le Iunivesite o Kenetiperi (University of Canterbury). Ou te talitonu ua lausilafia uma e a outou susuga, le fa'apogai ma le sini o le mataupu e pei ona taua i luga o lo'o fia su'esu'eina ma fa'atalatalanoaina ma a outou susuga fa'apea foi o outou alo. O lenei mataupu e aofia ai le taliina o ni fesili faapea foi ni ou lava manatu e uiga i le mataupu. Ua iai le fa'amoemoe o outou finagalo, taofi, ma ni manatu o le a fa'agaoina lea e lagolagoina ai ni manatu maumautu aua le fa'aleleia o a'oa'oga a tama ma teine Samoa fa'apea le Pasifika i totonu o Niu Sila.

O a ni manatu o le a outou aumaia o lea faapea ona le fa'ailoaina lea fa'alauaitete. Ua na'o au o le a iai le aia e faitauina ai a outou tusitusiga. Fa'amolemole fa'aoga avanoa e tusia ai a outou tali po'o fa'amatalagan foi. E mafai foi ona e fa'aogaina tua o itulau taitasi mo le fa'alauaiteteina o ni ou manatu. Ua iai le fa'amoemoe o le a outou taliaina ma le fiafia le fa'atalauula atu. **Faafetai.**

- 1 Igoa atoa.....
- 2 Atunuu ma le alalafaga na fanau ai.....
- 3 Tausaga na taunuu ai i Niu Sila.....
- 4 A'oa'oga fa'apea galuega e masani ona faigaluega ai.....
- 5 Ekalesia.....
- 6 E to'afia le aofai atoa o oulua alo teine ma tama?.....
- 7 E to'afia e a'oa'oina i aoga maualuluga?.....
- 8 Fa'amolemole pe mafai ona e ootooa mai le talaaga o a'oa'oga a le fanau i vaega o loo taua i lalo, e aofia ai ni fa'afitauli sa fa'afeagai ai.
- (a) Aoga Fa'ataitai (Pre-school).....
-
-
-

(e) Aoga tulaga lua (Primary School).....

.....

(i) Aoga ogatotonu (Intermediate)

.....

(o) Aoga Maualuga (High school).....

.....

9 O lea se fa'amoemoe maualuga o lo'o ia te oe e uiga i le a'oa'oina o le fanau i totonu o Niu Sila?

.....

10 E fa'apefea ona e fesoasoani e fa'amalosia ou alo ia toaaga e fai a latou meaaoga po'o galuega fa'alea'oa'oga foi o lo'o aurnai i le fale (homework)?

.....

11 E masani ona e talatalanoa i ou alo e uiga ini faafitauli e aafia ai a latou a'oa'oga po'o nisi lava vaega o le olaga e aafia ai a latou uo, fa'apea mea latou te fiafia e fai?.....

.....

12 O a ni tulafono po'o ni aiaiga e masani ona tu'u atu i le fanau e fai ma taiala/tapasa i le mea e ao ona savavali ai i totonu o aiga po'o nofoaga faitele?.....

.....

13 O le a sou taofi, e iai se taua o le gagana Samoa faapea le aganu'u fa'aSamoa i a'oa'oga po'o le lumanai fo'i o le fanau?.....

.....

14 E fa'apefea ona e lagolagoina fa'alapotopotoga e aafai ai ou alo? (fa'ataitaiga ta'aloga, autalavou, aufaipese poo nisi o taleni e aafia ai le fanau).....

.....
.....

**FA'AMALO FA'AFETAI TELE LAVA AND MANY THANKS FOR YOUR
COOPERATION AND YOUR TIME.**

F) Questionnaire for parents (English version)

LEARNING STRATEGIES AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF SAMOAN STUDENTS AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

Talofa lava and greetings,

My name is Silipa Silipa, a full-time PhD student at the University of Canterbury. The above named research project is the integral part of my degree. The study aims to ascertain what learning styles pupils use to achieve highly in school. Additionally, I will be looking at any barriers to learning that pupils face. This study focuses on both the family and the school, examining the roles both institutions play in managing and also supporting young people to achieve a high quality education. The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather relevant information that will supplement my observational field notes in my data analysis. This research hopes to shed new light on innovations for effective school learning among Pacific Island and other ethnic minority students in contemporary New Zealand.

The questionnaire is confidential. Only myself will access to your answers. The questionnaire will be destroyed at the completion of the research. Please answer by writing your comments in the space provided. If you need more space for your answers please feel free to use the back page, circling the corresponding questions.

- 1 Full name.....
- 2 Nationality (Iwi affiliations).....
- 3 Age.....
- 4 Educational and Occupational Background.....
- 5 Denomination.....
- 6 How many children do you have? Girls.....
Boys.....
- 7 What high school do your children go to? (Please specify your choice or preference of school).....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
- 8 Please, briefly describe the following phases of your son/daughter's education:
(a) Early childhood education.....
.....
.....
.....
(b) Primary school.....
.....
.....
.....

(c) Intermediate school.....
.....
.....

(d) Secondary school.....
.....
.....
.....

9 What are your expectations and aspirations for your daughter/son after leaving high school?.....
.....
.....

10 What is your role in encouraging and in assisting with your daughter's/son's school learning and in doing their homework and or other schoolwork?
.....
.....
.....

11 How often do you engage in a conversation or dialogue with your daughter/son about her/his problems-familial, cultural, social life, school life etc?
.....
.....
.....

12 What do you think are the possible ways that prevent any problems that may arise, with your son/daughter's social life that may jeopardise her/his future education?
.....
.....
.....

13 Which family norms and rules would you want for your son/daughter to abide by and adhere to.
.....
.....
.....

14 What role would you play in your son/daughter's participation in social activities and church groups that is in developing their individual talents?.....
.....
.....
.....

.....
.....

15 How would you support and/or assist your son/daughter’s formal education to enable them to develop his/her potentials and abilities?

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

16 What do you think are the roles and responsibilities of the family, church, community and school in Samoan children’s education?

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

17 What role do you play in your son/daughter’s choice in selecting his/her subjects (name of subjects) (Please explain your reasons).

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

18 What would you do if you are invited to school to discuss the progress of your son or daughter with the principal or any teacher?

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

19 What would you like your son/daughter to do if he/she becomes successful after high school (For example would you consider tertiary studies or would you prefer employment)?

.....
.....

20 What cultural, moral and spiritual values and ideas would you like to instil in your daughter/son and

Why?.....
.....
.....

FA’AMALO FA’AFETAI TELE LAVA AND MANY THANKS FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND YOUR TIME.

G) Consent form for Parents

Learning Strategies and Educational Achievements of Samoan students.

(Auala e a'oa'oina ai mataupu fa'alea'oa'oga a tama ma teine Samoa fa'apea le maoa'e o le tulaga fa'alea'oa'oga).

I have read and understood the description of the above project. On this basis, I agree to participate and contribute to discussions on issues relating to the above project. I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw and or alter any information I have provided.

Ua mae'a ona ou faitau ma malamalama lelei i le auga poo le fa'apogai o le mataupu. O le ala lea o lou ioe ou te auai i le fa'atalatalanoaina o le mataupu, ma ua ou malie atoatoa e fa'aogaina ni fa'aiuga o le a maua mai, ini tusitusiga, ma lou ma'utinoa o le a le fa'aogaina suafa moni o e o le a auai. Ua ou ma'utinoa foi, e mafai ona ou fa'ama'amulu i so'o se taimi, e aofia ai le fa'afo'iina mai lea ia te au o ni fa'amatalaga sa ou faia.

Signed: (Sainia)..... Date: (Aso).....

H) Information sheet for parents (English version)

“Learning Strategies and Educational Achievements of Samoan Students”

You are invited to participate in a forum (fono) to discuss your son's/daughter's progress within the school in relation to this research project. My name is Silipa Silipa, the researcher for this particular project.

I am doing this study to see what learning styles are used by your son/daughter in order for him/her to do well at school. Additionally, I will be looking at the roles of the family, the church and the community and how they influence everyone. This includes you, your son/daughter, members of the extended family and the community.

This would involve me leading a forum (fono) in which we will all share our own opinions and I will answer any questions you may have about my project. If you are unable to attend, I would only be too happy to visit you at your home or wherever suits you.

My study will involve me sitting in with pupils in the classroom, mingling with them in the playground, and going to things like assemblies and field trips.

Feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions.

My phone number is 364 2987, extension 7562 during the day or 343 5528 at night.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed the study.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully,

Silipa Silipa

D) Information sheets for parents (Samoan version)

Talofa lava,

Auala e a'oa'oina ai mataupu fa'apea le fa'amanuiaina o galuega fa'alea'oa'oga a alo ma fanau a Samoa i aoga maualuluga i totonu o Niu Sila

(Learning strategies and educational achievements of Samoan students at the secondary school level)

O lo'u igoa o Silipa R. Silipa, o le, o lo'o fa'afoeina le mataupu o lo'o fia fa'atalatalanoaina e pei ona taua i luga.

I le ava ma le fa'aaloalo lava e tatau ai ou te fa'atalosagaina ai outou matua pe a tusa ai mo outou finagalo pe maua se avanoa tatou te talatalanoa ai e uiga i lau mataupu i totonu o outou aiga, tulou. E pei ona fa'afeso'otai atu a outou susuga e le alii pule o Mr. Lee Walker i le taimi ua fano e uiga i le aoga po'o le autu o lenei mataupu, ua iai le fa'amoemoe o le a ou tou taliaina ma le fiafia le talosaga vaivai.

O se fa'amatalaga pu'upu'u e uiga i lenei mataupu: O le fia su'esu'ina lea po'o a ni auala e a'oina/su'esu'e ai matupu a le fanau e mafai ai ona o latou ausia suega po'o a'oa'oga maualuluga. O le vaega lona lua o le fia sailiilia lea po'o a ni fa'afitauli o lo'o a'afia i le a'oa'oina o le fanau. Ua iai le fa'amoemoe o le a outou lagolagosua mai i le fa'atalauula atu.

O le mafuaaga autu o lenei fa'amoemoe o le fia sailiilia lea oni auala e fa'amalosia ai le a'oa'oina o fanau ma alo o Samoa i totonu o Niu Sila a'o sauniuni atu mo le senetuli 21, e aofia ai lou auai po'o le a se tofa/fautuaga po'o ni lagona foi e fa'atatau lava i lea mataupu.

Mo nisi fa'amatalaga fa'amolemole telefoni/valaau mai i le numera 364 2987 ext 7562 po'o le fale i le numera 343 4068.

Fa'afetai tele lava

Silipa R. Silipa

J) Example of Running Record**Student: M****Date:28:7:1998****Time and Subject:9.55-10.55 English****No. of students:18students**

Time	Sett.	Act.	Interactions	Non-Verb/Verbal
9.55				
10.00				
10.15				
10.35				
10.40				
10.50				
