

#### 4.9 The gaps of the literature

A random browse through the body of literature on or about the Samoan government and power affirmed that the gaps were implicated, first, in the restrained use of any critical methodology to analyse society. Granted the emphasis has been to identify the problem more than finding out how and why it persisted at a deeper level. So, the real impact of political power through culture could have been clarified through Bourdieu's insights on capital, or the notion of power as diffuse as Foucault asserted, or hidden as Lukes argued, or transformed in Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony pervading society. This is considered a risk in any research on power because the dilemma of relations has to do solely with the way power is positioned deep in societal discourses (Van Dijk, 2014; Geuss, 1981), or the dominant ideology lurking in the backdrop (Ramos, 1982; Gramsci, 1992), than with authority fronting up as usual in what Foucault called "the utopia of completely transparent communication" (Foucault, 1997b, p. 298).

Because power is diffuse and ubiquitous within Samoan society, it is not easy to identify the real agents of power (Foucault, 1991; Bourdieu, 1984). For example, the government regime in the guise of state authority and democracy also poses as an advocate of the matai system and traditions. As village leaders they are also active in church government. With the concentration of power on the government they are free to traverse between the systems for the advancement of own plans. Ratuva (2019a) noted that the intersection between nodes of power and the relationships between societal institutions could only create a complex configuration of overlapping discriminatory and unequal relationships. Thus, it can be argued that while critical theory approaches may have been around for a while, their employment in the study of Pacific societies is still developing relatively speaking. Political research is still constrained by the culture and its dominant discourses in the hands of the authority – secular and religious (*ibid.*; Bourdieu, 1986).

#### 4.10 Conclusion

In examining the theoretical framework of the thesis, two key concepts defined as well as summed up the whole chapter: power and the state. The rationale of selecting a critical framework was informed by the virtues of each concept, particularly their central stances in power relations understanding in a democratic society. Such a critical approach was meant to be flexible and collaborative. While the focus has been on Gramsci, Bourdieu and Foucault, other traditions have also been referred to. This approach adds value to the qualitative nature of the research. Selecting three reputable theorists to describe the Samoan reality was challenging but necessary. From a research perspective, only a complementary approach can cater effectively to the demands of the task.

In using the inquiry lenses of critical theory, power was identified and critically assessed in terms of its relations, dynamics, and multiple effects through the power-knowledge discourses. On the other hand, the role of the state was unravelled as an agency of power, whereby knowledge becomes a monopoly to the extent that state influence reigns on behalf of society (Foucault, 1991). Allusion to state influence needs to be understood in the hegemony of a culture. The culture in that sense is like an aggregate of all powerful things - political, social, religious, intellectual, technological, and so forth. Additionally, connections were made between critical theory and the local literature or gaps identified thereof, the overall aim was to provide a sound and robust framework that is responsive to the demands of the task.

I now turn to address the major indigenous concepts of Samoa's power discourse that will inform the conceptual framework with much more depth and finer nuances of power understanding from a Samoan perspective.